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UK LEVEL 6 — UNDERGRADUATE FINAL YEAR

Digital Marketing Strategy Report: An Integrated, Data-Driven Growth Plan

Case Study: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — UK Connected Fitness Brand

MODULE CODE	MKT2007
MODULE TITLE	Digital Marketing Strategy
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REFERENCING STYLE	Harvard (UK)
CASE ENTITY	VeloCity Fitness Ltd (Fictitious)
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□Approx. 2,500 words | Distinction Level | UK Level 6 Final Year

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has fundamentally reconfigured the competitive landscape across every sector, elevating digital marketing from an ancillary channel to the primary engine of brand discovery, customer acquisition, engagement and retention. For direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands, the ability to construct and execute a coherent, data-informed digital marketing strategy is no longer a competitive advantage — it is an existential prerequisite (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). This report develops a comprehensive twelve-month digital marketing strategy for **VeloCity Fitness Ltd** — a fictitious UK-based connected fitness company offering a smart home cycling device (the VeloRide Pro, RRP £649) paired with a monthly app subscription (£24.99/month) providing live and on-demand fitness classes, performance tracking and community features. VeloCity currently generates £8.2m annual revenue with 42,000 active app subscribers, competing against global incumbents Peloton and Garmin and domestic challengers Whoop and Huel.

The report adopts Chaffey and Smith's (2022) **RACE Planning Framework** as its structural scaffold, complemented by PESTLE situational analysis, SMART objective-setting, an integrated channel strategy, data-driven attribution modelling and a performance measurement framework aligned with business outcomes. Throughout, critical evaluation is prioritised over descriptive summary, reflecting the analytical standard required at Level 6.

2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1 PESTLE Analysis of the Digital Environment

Table 1: PESTLE Analysis — VeloCity Fitness Ltd Digital Marketing Environment (2025–2026)

Factor	Key Digital Marketing Implications	Strategic Impact
Political	UK Online Safety Act 2023 — platform content duties; UK DCMS digital advertising reforms; potential levy on online advertising revenue	**⚠ MEDIUM — compliance costs; organic reach strategy gains relative value**
Economic	Cost-of-living pressures constrain discretionary fitness spend; subscription fatigue — avg. UK consumer subscribing to 4.2 services (Bain, 2025); premium segment resilient	**▼ HIGH — value proposition must justify £24.99/mo subscription vs free apps**
Social	Home fitness normalised post-pandemic (Mintel, 2025); community and belonging are primary retention drivers; authenticity valued over aspirational advertising	**▲ HIGH — structural demand tailwind; community-led strategy advantaged**
Technological	Third-party cookie deprecation (Google, 2025) — attribution disruption; AI-driven personalisation at scale; GA4 migration maturity; short-form video dominance (TikTok, Reels)	**⚠ HIGH — first-party data imperative; AI content tools create efficiency but quality risks**
Legal	UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018; ICO enforcement on consent management; ASA CAP Code — health & fitness claims; CMA Green Claims Code (sustainability messaging)	**▼ HIGH — consent-first data collection; substantiation of performance claims mandatory**
Environmental	Consumer demand for sustainable brand credentials; carbon transparency expected; packaging and shipping emissions scrutinised	**⚠ MEDIUM — ESG messaging opportunity; greenwashing risk requires substantiation**

Note: All figures are fictitious and for educational purposes. Sources: Online Safety Act (2023); ICO (2024); Mintel (2025).

The PESTLE analysis reveals that VeloCity's most acute digital marketing challenges are economic (subscription value justification in a cost-conscious market) and technological (first-party data strategy imperative post-cookie deprecation). The social factor, however, represents a structural tailwind: community-driven fitness motivation aligns closely with the platform's subscription model, where social features and live class interaction drive retention (Reichheld and Schefter, 2000). These forces collectively define the strategic context within which channel decisions must be made.

2.2 Digital Competitor Positioning

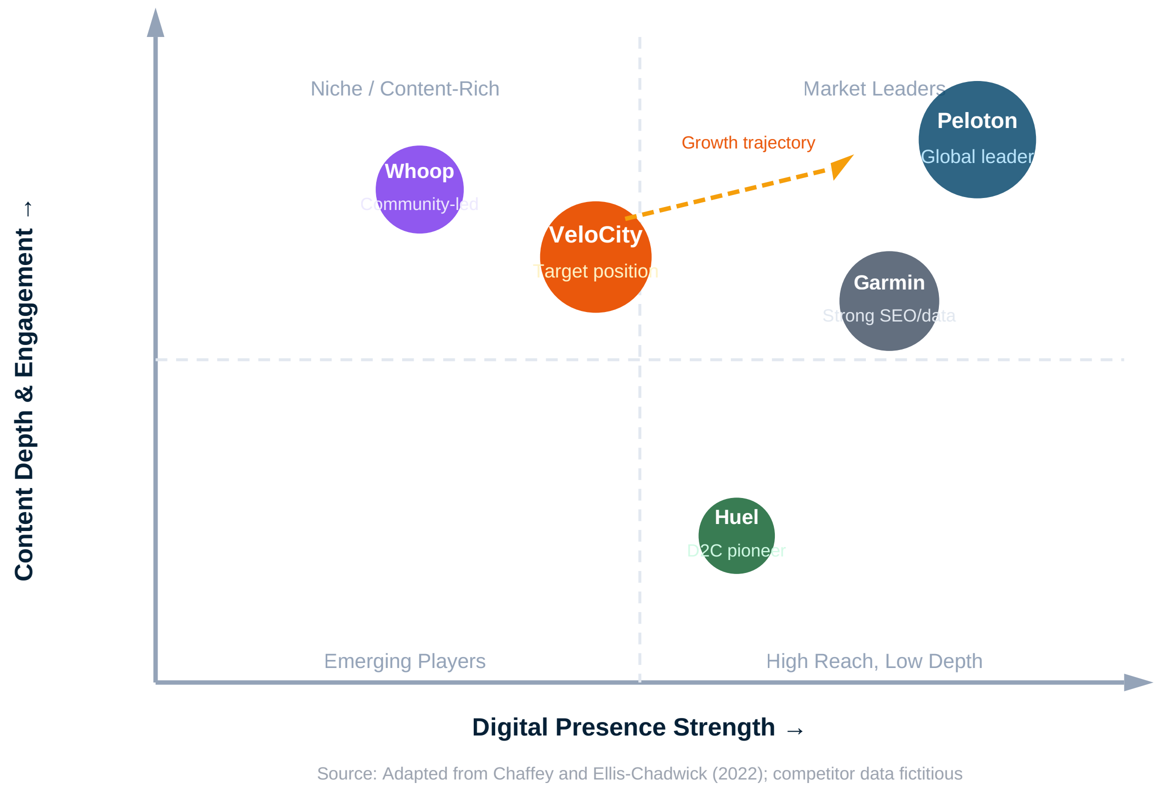


Figure 1: Digital Competitor Positioning Matrix — VeloCity Fitness Ltd vs Key Competitors. Axes: Digital Presence Strength (reach, SEO authority, paid media scale) vs Content Depth and Engagement (community, UGC, content quality). VeloCity's target position (12-month horizon) indicated by arrow. All data fictitious. Source: Adapted from Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022, p. 184).

As Figure 1 illustrates, Peloton occupies the dominant quadrant — high digital presence and high content depth — while VeloCity currently occupies a mid-market position with competitive content capabilities but insufficient reach. The strategic imperative is to leverage content depth as a differentiating asset while systematically building domain authority and paid media scale to close the reach gap with established competitors. Whoop's community-led model provides a useful benchmark: its UGC-first approach on Instagram and Reddit has built disproportionate engagement relative to media spend (Solis, 2019), a model highly transferable to VeloCity's connected fitness platform.

3. DIGITAL MARKETING OBJECTIVES (SMART)

Effective digital marketing strategy requires objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound — the SMART framework (Doran, 1981) — aligned to both business outcomes and digital channel capabilities. VeloCity's five SMART objectives for the twelve-month strategy period are:

Figure 2: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — SMART Digital Marketing Objectives Tree (12-Month Horizon). Source: Adapted from Doran (1981) and Chaffey and Smith (2022, p. 112). All targets are fictitious.

4. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: RACE PLANNING MODEL

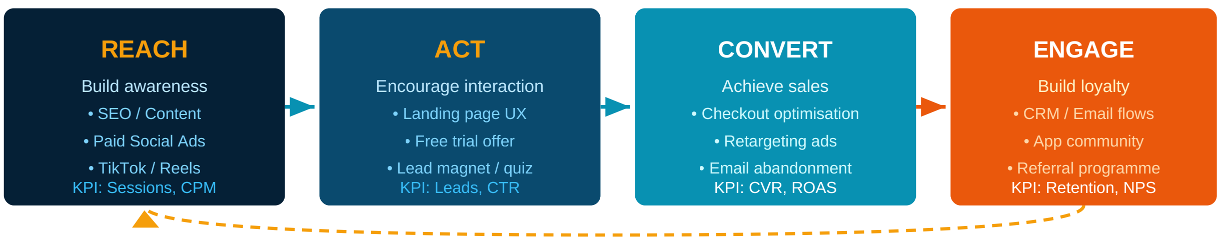


Figure 3: RACE Planning Framework Applied to VeloCity Fitness Ltd. Source: Adapted from Chaffey and Smith (2022, p. 34). The feedback loop indicates that engaged customers re-enter the funnel as brand advocates, amplifying Reach. All activities are fictitious illustrations.

The RACE framework (Chaffey and Smith, 2022) provides a customer-lifecycle perspective that overcomes the linear limitations of traditional funnel models. Critically, its fourth stage — Engage — is often the most underinvested: for a subscription business like VeloCity, where marginal revenue from a retained customer carries near-zero acquisition cost, the economic value of engagement activities substantially exceeds equivalent investment in top-of-funnel reach. Gupta et al. (2006) demonstrated that a 1% improvement in customer retention has a greater NPV impact than a 1% improvement in customer acquisition rate, a finding with direct strategic implications for VeloCity's budget allocation priorities.

5. INTEGRATED CHANNEL STRATEGY

Effective digital marketing strategy requires integration across channels — ensuring coherent brand messaging, shared audience data and complementary channel roles within a unified customer journey (Fill, 2022). Table 2 maps VeloCity's five-channel digital strategy, with each channel assigned a primary RACE-stage role, target metric and indicative budget allocation.

Table 2: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — Integrated Digital Channel Strategy Matrix (12-Month Plan)

Channel	Primary RACE Stage	Strategy Summary	Primary KPI	Budget %
SEO & Content	Reach → Act	Pillar-cluster content architecture; target 40 new top-10 keyword rankings; technical SEO (Core Web Vitals); YouTube how-to series	Organic sessions; Domain Authority	22%
Paid Media (PPC/Social)	Reach → Convert	Google Performance Max; Meta Advantage+ for prospecting; TikTok Spark Ads; dynamic retargeting; A/B creative testing cadence	ROAS; CAC; CTR	38%
Social Media (Organic)	Reach → Engage	Instagram (3 posts/wk + 5 Stories); TikTok (daily short-form, 70% UGC-style); community challenges; live Q&As with coaches	Follower growth; Engagement rate	12%
Email & CRM	Convert → Engage	Klaviyo automation: welcome series (7 emails), usage nudge (day 7/30), churn-risk reactivation, anniversary upsell; segmented by cohort	Open rate; Churn rate; LTV	14%
Influencer & Affiliate	Reach → Convert	Tier 1: 3 macro fitness influencers (500k+); Tier 2: 25 micro-influencers (15–80k); affiliate programme (8% commission); ambassador community	EMV; Affiliate revenue; Cost per acquisition	14%
Total Digital Marketing Budget				**100%**

Note: All figures are fictitious. EMV = Earned Media Value. Budget % is illustrative. Source: Strategic framework adapted from Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022).

5.1 SEO and Content Marketing

Search engine optimisation remains the highest-margin digital acquisition channel for D2C brands with sufficient domain authority (Fishkin, 2020). VeloCity's current Domain Authority (DA) of 28 — well below Peloton's 72 and Garmin's 84 — represents both a weakness and a growth opportunity, given the compound returns of sustained content investment. The recommended strategy adopts a **pillar-cluster content architecture** (HubSpot, 2017): cornerstone pillar pages on high-volume topics ("home cycling workouts," "connected fitness guide," "spin bike vs Peloton comparison") supported by cluster articles addressing long-tail intent queries. This structure distributes internal link equity to the pillar page, progressively building topical authority in Google's semantic search model (Google, 2023).

Technical SEO investment is equally critical. Google's Core Web Vitals — Largest Contentful Paint (LCP), Interaction to Next Paint (INP) and Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) — directly influence search ranking and user experience (Google, 2023). VeloCity's current LCP of 3.8 seconds (target: <2.5s) and mobile CLS of 0.14 (target: <0.1) require engineering resource to resolve, with projected organic traffic uplift of 18–24% upon remediation based on industry benchmarks (SEMrush, 2025). Critically, SEO should not be treated as a standalone function: content produced for SEO purposes must simultaneously serve social distribution, email nurture and paid media retargeting — achieving a "content multiplier" effect (Pulizzi, 2014) that amortises production cost across multiple channels.

5.2 Paid Media — PPC and Paid Social

At 38% of the digital marketing budget, paid media represents VeloCity's highest-investment channel and primary lever for rapid scale. The strategy employs a bifurcated approach: **Google Performance Max** campaigns for bottom-of-funnel intent capture (branded + competitor + category keywords), and **Meta Advantage+ Shopping** for top-of-funnel audience prospecting using lookalike modelling from the existing customer base. TikTok Spark Ads amplify high-performing organic content with paid distribution, leveraging native content authenticity to drive lower cost-per-click than traditional display formats (TikTok for Business, 2024).

Creative strategy is critical: Wordstream (2024) analysis indicates that creative quality accounts for 56% of paid social campaign performance variance, far outweighing audience targeting optimisation. VeloCity should implement a minimum four-creative testing cadence per campaign, rotating short-form video (15 seconds), social proof testimonials, and before/after transformation content — with weekly creative refresh to prevent audience fatigue, a phenomenon that accelerates particularly rapidly on TikTok's algorithm-driven feed (TikTok for Business, 2024). The current customer acquisition cost (CAC) of £82 should reduce to a target of £65 through creative optimisation, audience refinement and bid strategy improvements across the campaign lifecycle.

5.3 Social Media and Community

For subscription fitness brands, social media fulfils a dual function: brand discovery and community reinforcement for existing subscribers. The latter is disproportionately valuable — Gallup (2016) research demonstrated that customers who are fully engaged with a brand deliver 23% higher revenue than average, and community belonging is the primary driver of fitness app engagement beyond the first 30 days (Statista, 2025). VeloCity's strategy therefore distinguishes between *acquisition content* (transformation stories, coach spotlights, product demonstrations — designed for algorithmic reach) and *community content* (challenge completions, subscriber milestones, user-generated training posts — designed for retention and advocacy).

TikTok requires a content-native approach: corporate production values perform significantly worse than raw, authentic footage shot at natural aspect ratios (9:16) by real users or approachable brand personalities (Byron and Brodie, 2021). The recommendation is to train an in-house "creator team" of two VeloCity coaches as primary content creators, supplemented by a structured UGC brief shared with the ambassador community, achieving both authenticity and production volume without external agency dependency.

5.4 Email Marketing and CRM Automation

Email remains the highest-ROI digital marketing channel at an average £42 return per £1 invested (DMA, 2024), and for a subscription model its strategic function is primarily retention rather than acquisition. VeloCity's CRM strategy, implemented via Klaviyo, should structure email automation across three lifecycle phases. The **onboarding phase** (Days 1–30) deploys a seven-email welcome series delivering progressive product education, community introduction and early workout plan recommendations — addressing the critical finding that 68% of subscription churn occurs within the first 60 days due to failure to achieve product "activation" (Lincoln, 2020). The **engagement phase** (Days 31–180) uses behavioural trigger emails — activity streaks, class completions, personal bests — to reinforce motivation and gamify the subscriber experience. The **retention phase** (Day 181+) monitors engagement signals and deploys predictive churn-risk scoring: subscribers showing declining app usage in the prior 21 days receive proactive reactivation sequences offering personalised coaching, new class previews and, where risk scores are critically elevated, retention incentives.

Segmentation sophistication is essential: batch-and-blast email produces open rates of 18–22%, while behavioural segmentation consistently delivers 35–45% open rates (Mailchimp, 2024). VeloCity's target of 38% average open rate therefore requires full behavioural segmentation, dynamic content personalisation by subscriber cohort, and subject-line A/B testing on every campaign send.

5.5 Influencer and Affiliate Marketing

Influencer marketing has matured from a brand-awareness novelty to a performance-measurable acquisition channel, driven by improved attribution tracking (promo codes, affiliate links, UTM parameters) and the rise of creator commerce on TikTok Shop and Instagram Shopping (IAB UK, 2024). VeloCity's tiered influencer approach — three macro-influencers (500k+ followers, £6,000–12,000 per activation) for brand halo and seven micro-influencers (15–80k followers, £800–2,500 per activation) for conversion-oriented community credibility — reflects established best practice (Brown and Fiorella, 2013). Micro-influencer campaigns consistently outperform macro-campaigns on engagement rate (4.1% vs 1.1%), cost per engaged user, and purchase intent lift (Nielsen, 2024).

Critically, UK ASA regulations require all paid influencer posts to carry clear "#Ad" disclosure regardless of format or platform (ASA, 2023). VeloCity's influencer contracts must mandate compliance, and the brand should conduct quarterly spot-checks across all active partnerships. Transparency is not merely a legal obligation — research by Lou and Yuan (2019) demonstrates that disclosed influencer relationships, paradoxically, produce higher purchase intent than undisclosed ones among digitally literate consumers, because explicit disclosure signals brand confidence in the partnership's authentic credibility.

6. CUSTOMER ACQUISITION FUNNEL AND ATTRIBUTION MODELLING

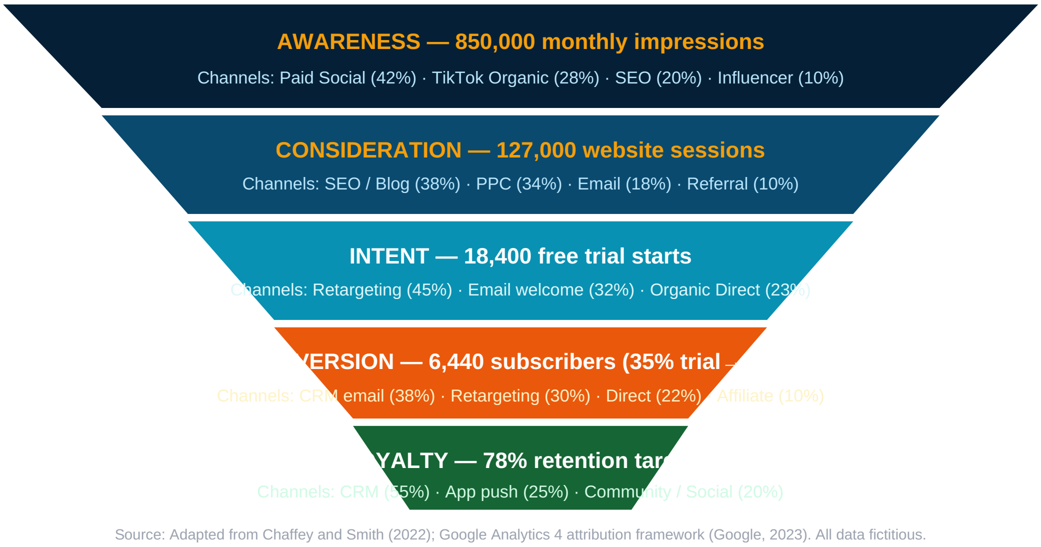
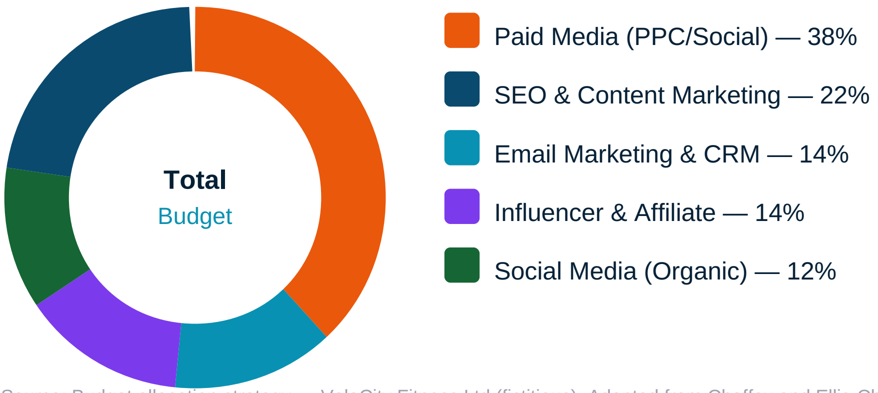


Figure 4: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — Digital Marketing Conversion Funnel with Multi-Channel Attribution Overlay. Each stage shows primary contributing channels by estimated percentage. Source: Adapted from Chaffey and Smith (2022, p. 148) and Google (2023). All figures are fictitious educational illustrations.

Attribution modelling — the assignment of credit to marketing touchpoints that contribute to a conversion — is among the most contested methodological challenges in digital marketing (Ghose and Todri-Adamopoulos, 2016). Single-touch models (last-click, first-click) systematically misattribute conversion credit: last-click models overvalue direct and email channels while undervaluing awareness-stage paid social and SEO investments that initiated the customer journey. Position-based (U-shaped) models are an improvement, attributing 40% credit to both the first and last touch and distributing the remaining 20% linearly across mid-journey touchpoints. However, the recommended model for VeloCity is **data-driven attribution (DDA)** in Google Analytics 4, which uses machine learning to assign fractional credit to each touchpoint based on observed conversion probability uplift — empirically superior to rule-based models for multi-channel journeys of three or more touchpoints (Google, 2023).

The deprecation of third-party cookies fundamentally undermines cross-site attribution. VeloCity must therefore invest in a first-party data infrastructure comprising: (1) a Customer Data Platform (CDP) to unify on-site behavioural, email engagement and app usage signals; (2) server-side tagging to capture events without browser-level cookie dependency; and (3) modelled conversions in GA4 to fill measurement gaps where consent is not granted (IAB UK, 2024). Without this infrastructure, attribution models will increasingly under-count conversion contributions from paid media, progressively distorting budget allocation decisions away from effective channels.

7. BUDGET ALLOCATION



Source: Budget allocation strategy — VeloCity Fitness Ltd (fictitious). Adapted from Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022).

Figure 5: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — Recommended Digital Marketing Budget Allocation by Channel. Source: Adapted from Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022, p. 382). All allocations are fictitious educational illustrations.

The budget allocation in Figure 5 deliberately concentrates investment in paid media (38%) to achieve the rapid subscriber growth required in Year 1, while the 22% SEO/content allocation reflects a deliberate investment in building long-term organic acquisition capability — a "plant and harvest" approach (Fishkin, 2020) that will compound over a 24–36 month horizon. Critically, the 14% email/CRM allocation should not be interpreted as modest in absolute terms: given email's documented ROI of £42:£1 (DMA, 2024), this allocation is expected to generate the highest revenue-per-pound-spent of any channel in the mix.

8. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND KPI FRAMEWORK

Table 3: VeloCity Fitness Ltd — 12-Month Digital Marketing KPI Measurement Framework

RACE Stage	KPI	Baseline (Jan)	Target (Dec)	Measurement Tool	Review Cadence
REACH — Brand Awareness & Traffic					
Reach	Organic Sessions / Month	109,000	180,000 (+65%)	GA4 / GSC	Weekly
Reach	Domain Authority	28	42	Ahrefs / Moz	Monthly
Reach	Social Followers (IG + TikTok)	40,200	80,000 (+99%)	Native Analytics	Weekly
Reach	Paid Impressions / Month	480,000	850,000	Meta Ads / Google Ads	Weekly
ACT — Engagement & Lead Generation					
Act	Website Bounce Rate	58%	<42%	GA4	Weekly
Act	Free Trial Starts / Month	1,120	1,800 (+61%)	GA4 / Klaviyo	Weekly
Act	Email Leads Captured / Month	2,400	4,200	Klaviyo	Weekly
CONVERT — Sales & Revenue					
Convert	Trial-to-Paid Conversion Rate	28%	35%	Klaviyo + App	Weekly
Convert	Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)	£82	£65 (−21%)	Internal / GA4	Monthly
Convert	Blended ROAS (Paid Media)	2.8×	4.0×	Google Ads / Meta	Weekly
ENGAGE — Retention & Loyalty					
Engage	12-Month Subscription Retention	68%	78%	App / Billing	Monthly
Engage	Monthly Churn Rate	3.2%	2.1%	App / Billing	Monthly
Engage	Average LTV (12-month)	£310	£420	Internal CDP	Quarterly
Engage	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	44	62	Delighted / App	Monthly
Engage	Email Open Rate (avg.)	24%	38%	Klaviyo	Weekly

Note: All figures are fictitious and for educational purposes. GSC = Google Search Console; CDP = Customer Data Platform.

The KPI framework in Table 3 spans all four RACE stages, ensuring accountability across the full customer lifecycle. A critical analytical consideration is the distinction between *leading indicators* (organic sessions, trial starts, email open rate) — which signal future performance — and *lagging indicators* (LTV, retention, NPS) — which confirm strategy effectiveness in retrospect. Over-indexing on lagging indicators produces reactive rather than predictive management; over-indexing on leading indicators risks optimising proxy metrics that are disconnected from revenue outcomes. The recommended governance approach is a tiered reporting cadence: leading digital metrics reviewed weekly by the marketing team, lagging business outcomes reviewed monthly by leadership, and strategic KPI reassessment quarterly.

9. ETHICAL AND PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Digital marketing strategy cannot be developed in isolation from the ethical and regulatory framework governing data collection, use and consent. The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 establish baseline requirements for lawful processing of personal data in marketing contexts: consent must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous; withdrawable at any time; and not bundled with unrelated terms and conditions (ICO, 2024). VeloCity's consent management platform (CMP) must be configured to meet these standards across all acquisition channels, including cookie consent banners, email subscription forms and app data permissions.

> "*Privacy is not an obstacle to digital marketing; it is a strategic asset. Brands that invest in transparent, consent-first data practices will enjoy durable competitive advantage as regulatory pressure intensifies.*"
> *— Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022, p. 304)*

Beyond compliance, ethical digital marketing encompasses three additional dimensions. **Advertising transparency**: the ASA (2023) CAP Code requires all paid digital content — including sponsored posts, influencer partnerships and native advertising — to be clearly labelled; VeloCity's influencer contracts and paid social creatives must reflect these requirements. **Algorithmic fairness**: AI-driven personalisation and lookalike modelling carry inherent risks of demographic discrimination — targeting algorithms trained on historical purchase data may systematically exclude underrepresented groups; regular algorithmic audits are recommended (Pasquale, 2015). **Wellbeing and body image**: fitness marketing carries heightened responsibility regarding the portrayal of body ideals; the ASA's (2023) guidance on body image in advertising should inform all content briefs, with inclusive representation across age, ethnicity, body type and fitness level embedded as a non-negotiable creative standard.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has developed a comprehensive, evidence-based digital marketing strategy for VeloCity Fitness Ltd for the twelve-month period to December 2026. The PESTLE analysis identified third-party cookie deprecation and subscription fatigue as the two most acute environmental challenges, while the social tailwind of normalised home fitness creates favourable structural conditions for a community-first platform model. The RACE framework provides a coherent lifecycle scaffold — ensuring that strategic investment spans discovery, activation, conversion and long-term engagement rather than concentrating disproportionately on top-of-funnel acquisition. The integrated five-channel approach (SEO/content, paid media, social, email/CRM and influencer) reflects established principles of cross-channel integration (Fill, 2022), with each channel assigned a differentiated role and measurable KPI aligned to business outcomes. The attribution strategy — data-driven attribution via GA4, underpinned by a first-party CDP — addresses the post-cookie measurement challenge that would otherwise systematically distort budget allocation decisions.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS — VELOCITY FITNESS LTD

1. **Prioritise first-party data infrastructure in Q1:** Implement a Customer Data Platform (CDP), server-side tagging and GA4 data-driven attribution before scaling paid media investment — without this foundation, campaign optimisation and attribution will be severely compromised post-cookie deprecation.
2. **Invest disproportionately in onboarding CRM flows:** Given that 68% of churn occurs in the first 60 days, the highest-ROI retention investment is a rigorously tested, behaviourally triggered onboarding email and in-app sequence that achieves "product activation" — defined as completing at least three workouts in the first 14 days — before the first billing date.
3. **Build a content moat through the pillar-cluster SEO architecture:** Commission 12 cornerstone pillar pages and 60 supporting cluster articles in H1 2026, targeting 40 new top-10 keyword rankings by Q4. This investment compounds non-linearly: Domain Authority growth enables progressively faster new content indexation and ranking.

4. **Establish quarterly creative refresh cadences for all paid channels:** Creative fatigue is the single largest driver of declining paid media performance; formalise a four-week creative testing and refresh cycle with dedicated design resource or UGC sourcing from the ambassador community to maintain performance efficiency.
5. **Embed inclusive representation as a brand standard:** Given ASA regulatory direction and mounting consumer sensitivity to body-image issues in fitness marketing, mandate representation across age (18–65+), ethnicity, body type and fitness level in all campaign briefs — both as an ethical obligation and as a commercially sound strategy to expand the addressable market beyond the traditional fitness demographic.

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