

MODULE: MKT3012 — Digital Marketing & Consumer Behaviour

Digital Marketing Strategies for Modern Businesses

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Submission: [Month Year]

Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation, the audience will be able to:

- 1 Define digital marketing and critically evaluate its role within contemporary integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).
- 2 Apply the RACE Planning Framework and the 7Cs model to the strategic design of digital marketing campaigns for different business contexts.
- 3 Analyse the mechanisms and strategic applications of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), paid media, content marketing, and social media marketing.
- 4 Evaluate the concept of the digital customer journey, applying theoretical touchpoint models to map consumer behaviour online (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).
- 5 Assess the role of data analytics, attribution modelling, and key performance indicators (KPIs) in measuring and optimising digital marketing effectiveness.
- 6 Critically appraise the ethical implications of digital marketing, including data privacy (GDPR), algorithmic advertising, and consumer surveillance.

Introduction: Digital Marketing in Context

Defining Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is defined as "achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies and media" (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022, p.12). It encompasses all marketing activities conducted through digital channels including search engines, social media platforms, email, and websites.

Unlike traditional marketing, digital marketing offers:

- **Measurability:** every interaction is trackable via analytics platforms.
- **Interactivity:** two-way dialogue between brand and consumer.
- **Personalisation:** content tailored to individual behaviour and preferences.
- **Scalability:** global reach achievable at marginal cost.

Kotler et al. (2021) frame this transition as "Marketing 5.0" — the confluence of digital technology and human-centred values in marketing practice.

\$667B

Global digital advertising spend in 2024 (Statista, 2024)

5.35B

Internet users globally — 66% of world population
(DataReportal, 2024)

63%

of all purchase journeys begin online (Google/Ipsos,
2023)

Theoretical Framework

Four established theoretical models underpin this analysis of digital marketing strategy:

RACE Planning Framework (Chaffey, 2010)

The RACE model — Reach, Act, Convert, Engage — provides a structured lifecycle for planning and measuring digital marketing activities. It maps directly to stages of the customer journey and connects activities to measurable KPIs at each stage, making it a practical strategic planning tool.

7Cs Model (Rayport & Jaworski, 2001)

Context, Content, Community, Customisation, Communication, Connection, and Commerce — the 7Cs framework evaluates the design effectiveness of digital marketing interfaces. It links website and platform design choices to customer value creation and engagement quality.

Consumer Decision Journey (Court et al., 2009)

McKinsey's CDJ model replaced the traditional purchase funnel with a circular journey — Initial Consideration, Active Evaluation, Moment of Purchase, and Post-Purchase Loyalty Loop. It is especially relevant to digital marketing where consumers actively research and compare online.

Uses & Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973)

UGT posits that audiences are active consumers who select media to satisfy specific needs: information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity. Applied to social media marketing, UGT explains why different platforms serve different brand communication purposes.

Literature Review: Key Academic Perspectives

Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2022) — "Digital Marketing" — Pearson (7th edn.)

The seminal textbook in the field defines digital marketing strategy as the development of a plan to use digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives. Distinguishes between e-marketing (communication) and digital commerce (transactions). Advocates RACE as an integrative planning structure.

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) — Journal of Marketing, 80(6)

Developed the comprehensive Customer Experience (CX) framework, mapping the full journey across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases. Identified digital touchpoints as increasingly dominant, particularly in the consideration and evaluation stages, transforming the role of marketing communications.

Lamberton & Stephen (2016) — Journal of Marketing, 80(6)

Reviewed 40 years of literature on digital, social media, and mobile marketing. Found that social media marketing works through four mechanisms: information sharing, social interaction, entertainment, and trending — with firm-generated and user-generated content having distinct and complementary effects.

Li & Kannan (2014) — Journal of Marketing Research, 51(1)

Demonstrated through field experiments that the traditional last-click attribution model significantly undervalues early-funnel digital touchpoints such as display advertising and organic search. Advocated for Markov chain attribution models that distribute credit across the full customer journey.

Search Engine Optimisation & Content Marketing

Three Pillars of SEO

Technical SEO:

- Core Web Vitals & page speed
- Mobile-first indexing (Google, 2020)
- Structured data & Schema.org markup
- XML sitemaps & crawl optimisation

On-Page SEO:

- Keyword intent mapping (navigational, informational, transactional)
- E-E-A-T signals (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trust)
- Title tags, meta descriptions & header hierarchy

Off-Page SEO:

- Backlink acquisition through digital PR

3x

more leads than outbound
marketing at 62% less cost
(DemandMetric, 2023)

70%

of consumers prefer learning
about a brand through content
rather than advertising (CMI,
2023)

13x

higher ROI for businesses that
prioritise content marketing
(HubSpot, 2023)

53%

of all website traffic is driven by
organic search (BrightEdge, 2023)

Social Media Marketing: Academic & Strategic Perspectives

Lamberton & Stephen (2016) identify that social media marketing operates through four distinct mechanisms: information sharing, social interaction, entertainment, and trending content. Organisations must select platforms aligned with their target segment's Uses & Gratifications (Katz et al., 1973).

Meta (Facebook)

Target: 25–54, B2C

Mechanism: Community, retargeting, Groups

Instagram

Target: 18–34, visual brands

Mechanism: UGC, influencer marketing, Reels

LinkedIn

Target: Professionals, B2B

Mechanism: Thought leadership, ABM, Lead Gen

TikTok

Target: Gen Z (18–24)

Mechanism: Short-form video, viral reach, trends

YouTube

Target: All demographics

Mechanism: Long-form video, SEO, education

X (Twitter)

Target: Journalists, tech, news

Mechanism: Real-time, customer service, trending

The Digital Customer Journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) conceptualise the customer journey as a series of touchpoints across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases, each shaped by brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and external (social) stimuli.

1

Awareness

SEO, Paid Search, Social Ads, PR, Influencer content. RACE: Reach phase.

2

Consideration

Blog content, email nurture, review sites, comparison tools, retargeting. RACE: Act phase.

3

Decision

Landing pages, live chat, product demos, trust signals (reviews, accreditations). RACE: Convert phase.

4

Retention

Onboarding email sequences, loyalty programmes, personalised offers, NPS surveys.

5

Advocacy

UGC, referral schemes, branded hashtags, brand ambassador programmes

Case Study 1: Innocent Drinks — Social Media & Brand Voice

Sector: FMCG / Food & Beverage | AI Application: Content-Led Social Media Strategy & Community Building

Background

Innocent Drinks entered a commodity-like smoothie market and needed to differentiate through brand personality rather than product features. Traditional advertising was cost-prohibitive for a challenger brand at launch (Holt, 2004).

Digital Strategy

Innocent deployed an irreverent, conversational brand voice across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram — prioritising community engagement over promotional messaging. UGC campaigns and user competitions generated organic reach at minimal cost (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Measured Outcomes

Innocent grew from a niche UK brand to a multinational acquired by Coca-Cola for £500M. Social engagement rates consistently exceeded industry benchmarks. The brand voice became a Harvard Business School case study on digital brand authenticity (Quelch & Laidler-Kylander, 2006).

Critical Analysis

Holt (2004) would describe Innocent's success as "cultural branding" — using digital channels to participate in and shape cultural conversations. Critically, this approach is difficult to replicate at scale without authentic organisational values, raising questions about its generalisability.

Case Study 2: Airbnb — SEO & Content Marketing at Scale

Sector: Travel / Platform Economy | Strategy: SEO-Led Content Marketing + UGC Integration

Background

Airbnb faced the challenge of marketing millions of unique, non-standardised listings globally. Traditional advertising could not cost-effectively convey the variety and local authenticity of its accommodation offer (Parker et al., 2016).

Digital Strategy

Airbnb invested heavily in location-specific SEO, creating millions of neighbourhood guide pages targeting long-tail search queries (e.g. "places to stay in Shoreditch, London"). User-generated reviews and photos functioned simultaneously as E-E-A-T signals and conversion-driving content (Chaffey, 2022).

Measured Outcomes

Airbnb achieved 50% of all bookings from organic search, reducing dependence on expensive paid acquisition. Content-led SEO generated an estimated \$1B+ in equivalent paid media value annually (Skift Research, 2019). UGC reduced professional photography costs while increasing conversion rates by 15% (Airbnb, 2020).

Critical Analysis

Applying Li & Kannan's (2014) multi-touch attribution lens, Airbnb's organic search strategy generates brand discovery that paid media alone could not achieve at scale. However, critics (Edelman & Geradin, 2016) note that Airbnb's SEO success also relies on regulatory arbitrage that mainstream hospitality brands cannot exploit.

Email Marketing, CRM & Marketing Automation

"Email marketing continues to offer the highest return of any digital channel — estimated at \$36 for every \$1 invested — because it reaches opted-in consumers at their point of highest intent." — Litmus (2023)

Permission Marketing (Godin, 1999)

- Users opt in — high intent audience
- Personalised, relevant messages
- Builds trust over time through value exchange
- Contrasts with "interruption marketing"

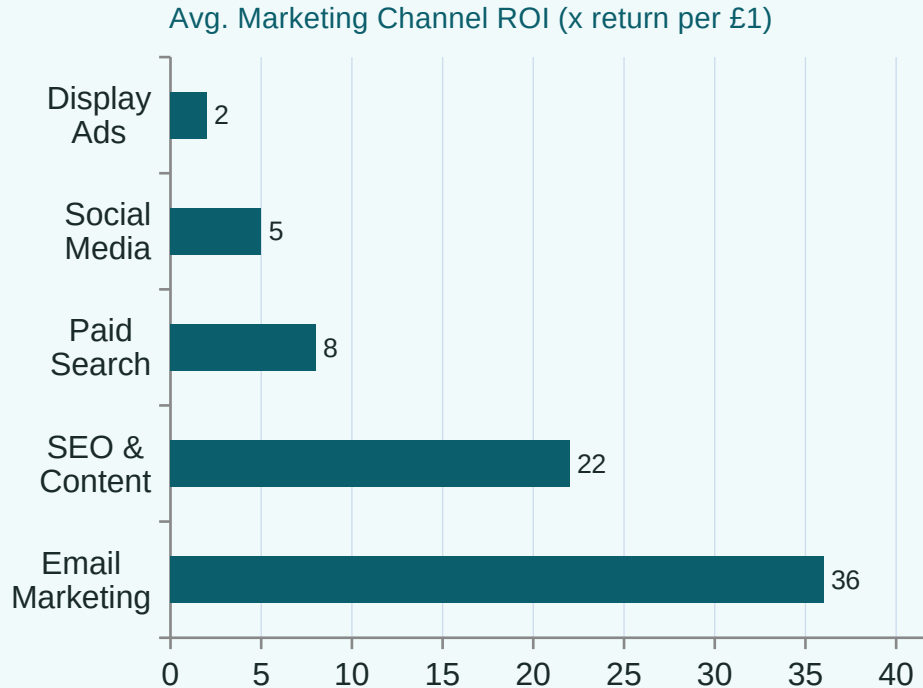
Segmentation & Personalisation

- Behavioural triggers (page visits, cart abandonment)
- RFM model: Recency, Frequency, Monetary value
- Dynamic content tailored per subscriber
- +760% email revenue from segmentation (HubSpot, 2023)

Marketing Automation Platforms

- HubSpot: all-in-one CRM + automation (SME)
- Klaviyo: e-commerce email + SMS sequences
- Marketo: enterprise B2B demand generation
- ActiveCampaign: SMB CRM + advanced tagging

Data Analytics, Attribution & Key Performance Indicators



Sources: Litmus (2023); HubSpot (2023); Nielsen (2023)

Attribution Modelling

Li & Kannan (2014) advocate multi-touch attribution over last-click models, crediting all digital touchpoints proportionally across the customer journey.

Key Acquisition KPIs

Cost per Acquisition (CPA), Cost per Click (CPC), Return on Ad Spend (ROAS), Organic traffic volume & keyword rankings.

Engagement & Retention

Email open rate, CTR, social engagement rate, time on site, Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), Net Promoter Score (NPS), churn rate.

Analytics Platforms

Google Analytics 4 (GA4): event-based measurement model. SEMrush/Ahrefs: SEO intelligence. HubSpot: CRM + marketing attribution.

Ethical Challenges in Digital Marketing

Data Privacy & GDPR (2018)

The General Data Protection Regulation mandates informed, explicit consent for data collection. Marketers must provide transparency about data usage, the right to erasure, and must not engage in covert tracking. PECR additionally governs cookie use and email marketing consent.

Algorithmic Advertising Bias

Automated ad-targeting systems can perpetuate discriminatory outcomes — Facebook's ad delivery algorithm was found to show job ads to racially skewed audiences (ProPublica, 2016). Platform accountability for algorithmic harm remains a contested regulatory space.

Influencer Disclosure

The ASA (UK) and FTC (US) require influencers to clearly disclose paid partnerships with labels such as #Ad or #Sponsored. Research by Boerman et al. (2017) shows that disclosure reduces perceived authenticity, creating an inherent tension for brands in influencer marketing.

Dark Patterns & Manipulative UX

Digital marketers have deployed "dark patterns" — deceptive interface designs that nudge users into unintended actions such as signing up for subscriptions or sharing data (Mathur et al., 2019). The EU Digital Services Act (2024) explicitly prohibits such practices.

Seminar Discussion Questions

Q1 To what extent does the RACE Planning Framework (Chaffey, 2010) adequately capture the complexity of the digital customer journey as theorised by Lemon & Verhoef (2016)? What aspects of the journey does RACE fail to account for?

Q2 Applying Uses & Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), critically evaluate why the same product might require fundamentally different content and messaging strategies on LinkedIn versus TikTok. Provide specific examples.

Q3 Li & Kannan (2014) argue that last-click attribution systematically undervalues brand-building digital channels. What are the practical implications of this for how marketing budgets should be allocated across the digital marketing mix?

Q4 Is it possible for organisations to pursue highly personalised digital marketing strategies while genuinely respecting consumer privacy under GDPR (2018)? Is this a trade-off, or can both objectives be achieved simultaneously?

Conclusion

This presentation has demonstrated that effective digital marketing strategy demands both technical competence and critical theoretical engagement. Drawing on the RACE framework (Chaffey, 2010), the Consumer Decision Journey (Court et al., 2009), Uses & Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), and multi-touch attribution modelling (Li & Kannan, 2014), it is clear that digital marketing is not a collection of tactical tools but a strategic discipline requiring systematic planning, measurement, and ethical governance. Organisations that integrate these elements are empirically better positioned to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the digital economy (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

1

Digital marketing is a strategic, data-driven discipline, not a set of isolated tactics — effectiveness requires integration across the full customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

2

SEO and content marketing consistently deliver the highest long-term ROI by building durable organic assets, while paid media provides scalable short-term demand capture.

3

Social media marketing effectiveness varies by platform, audience, and gratification sought (Katz et al., 1973); strategy must be platform-specific rather than broadcast-generic.

4

Ethical governance — particularly around data privacy (GDPR), algorithmic transparency, and dark pattern avoidance — is a strategic necessity, not merely a compliance obligation.

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