



## DIGITAL MARKETING AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR :

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### ABSTRACT

The digitalization of marketing has posed a challenge for today's marketing landscape. Customers are spending increasing amounts of time online, compelling businesses to adapt to the new rules of the online environment and engage with them through digital channels.

This article explores key theories underpinning the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior. Utilizing a purely theoretical approach, we examine how digital marketing strategies such as personalization, social media, content marketing influence consumer attitudes and actions. Our literature review delves into robust conceptual frameworks to shed light on how digital marketing shapes consumer purchasing decisions and preferences.

### 1- Introduction :

In the era of digitization and globalization, marketing has undergone a profound transformation, reshaping how businesses engage with their audience and influence consumer purchasing behaviors. Digital marketing, a revolutionary phenomenon in the business landscape, has introduced new communication channels, interaction platforms, and personalization methods that have transformed the dynamics between brands and consumers. The rapid evolution of this digital age has sparked growing interest in understanding how digital marketing strategies impact consumer behavior, shaping decisions, preferences, and buying attitudes.

Consumers, once mere recipients of unidirectional advertising messages, have evolved into active participants within the digital ecosystem. They interact with brands on social media, consume personalized content, and are exposed to targeted advertisements all of which significantly impact their perceptions and purchasing choices. In the face of this changing dynamic, delving into the underlying mechanisms that govern the effect of digital marketing on consumer behavior becomes imperative.

This article delves into an in-depth and purely theoretical exploration of fundamental theories that shed light on the implications of digital marketing on consumers behaviors. By examining various digital marketing strategies such as personalization, social media, content marketing.. This research aims to lay the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interactions between brands and consumers in the digital age. This article seeks to elucidate the theoretical frameworks that underpin these interactions and highlight their role in shaping consumer attitudes and actions.

Through this theoretical exploration, this study aspires to contribute to the knowledge enhancement in the realm of digital marketing and consumer behavior. By dissecting the key components of digital marketing, we aim to provide an in-depth insight into how theories illuminate the link between digital strategies and consumer behaviors. Lastly, by identifying trends and future perspectives, we aim to offer an enlightened glimpse to guide marketing practitioners and researchers in effectively harnessing the opportunities presented by the ever-evolving landscape of digital marketing.

## 2- Literature review:

### 2.1 A brief history of Marketing evolution :

Since its emergence, the concept of digital marketing has been closely linked to that of the internet. François SCHEID defined it as achieving the marketing goals of a company, whether related to sales, market share, brand image, or other objectives, through the use of various digital technologies and connected devices (computers, tablets, smartphones, etc.)

According to Laurent FLORES, the goal of digital marketing is to promote brands, products, and services to consumers through digital media and touchpoints. Unlike internet marketing, digital marketing doesn't limit itself to internet-based touchpoints alone, but also encompasses various other media such as mobile (SMS or applications) and even interactive television as communication channels. Digital marketing aims to bring together all interactive digital tools and make them available to marketers, enabling them to promote the different products and services of the represented company while striving to establish increasingly direct and personalized connections with consumers.

This definition highlights the relational dimension of digital marketing. The Digital Marketing Institute, on its part, defined digital marketing as "the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted, and measured communication that will contribute to the acquisition and retention of consumers while building deeper relationships with them."

However, several terms are often used interchangeably. Between digital marketing or e-marketing, internet marketing, and web marketing, there are subtle differences to explain. Internet marketing refers to all the marketing activities of an organization carried out on the internet. The term "internet" here encompasses both the web, emails, and communication protocols designed for file exchanges (FTP). On the other hand, web marketing refers specifically to marketing activities conducted on the web.

These definitions can be summarized as follows:



**Figure 1: Digital Marketing, Internet Marketing, and Web Marketing :**

On the other hand, some authors prefer to adopt a process-oriented approach to define digital marketing. According to Gregory BRESSOLLES, digital marketing is a process that relies on planning, implementing development, pricing, communication, and distribution of an idea, service, or product to create interactions that take place entirely or partially through digital technologies, while respecting individual and organizational objectives. The e-marketing process according to BRESSOLLES aims to prospect and acquire new customers, work on retaining them, and enhancing relationships established with current customers. BRESSOLLES emphasized the importance of integrating digital marketing within the framework of other traditional marketing tools. The same author alluded to digital marketing strategy in his work "Digital Marketing." He asserts that "formulating a digital marketing strategy involves defining how e-marketing will support the achievement of the company's objectives, especially those of marketing."

Communication professional Youmna OVAZZA expresses within this context that a digital marketing strategy is not synonymous with a set of actions performed on the internet, web, or mobile platforms, and that a deep understanding of the company's target audience is crucial. This understanding must consider the internet as a space rather than just a channel. The concept of digital marketing has also been addressed by the digital agency RED ANT, which had the privilege of discussing it in its white paper using three different approaches: a process-oriented approach, an emotion-oriented approach, and a differentiation-oriented approach. Regarding the process-oriented approach, Red Ant believes that digital entails finding the best way to achieve an objective, which usually involves promoting a brand through electronically connected media that can be online on the web or in the form of applications. Digital planning can also be introduced into traditional

media by attracting a so-called traditional audience to a purely digital campaign.

## 2.2 The levers of digital marketing :

In "The Big Book of Digital Marketing," Rémy MARRONE and Claire GALLIC state that web marketing consists of three major categories of levers: paid, owned, and earned media. This diagram is considered a conceptual model.

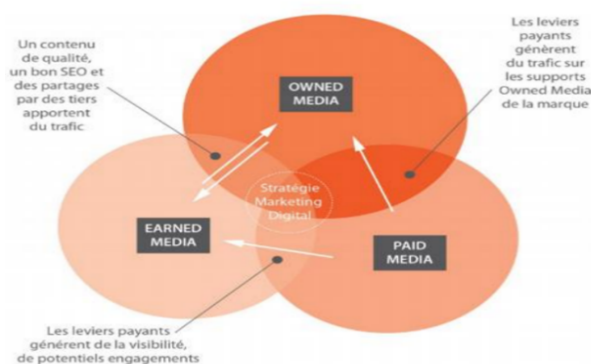


Figure 2 : The levers of digital marketing :

### a- Owned Media :

Owned media, as the name suggests, refers to all the marketing levers owned by the company. The company uses its resources to implement them for sharing. These levers are diverse and varied.

**The company's website :** The website is one of the most essential levers in the company's digital marketing strategy. Its design should primarily lead to visitor conversion.

**Emailing :** Emailing or email marketing is one of the earliest levers in the concept of digital marketing. Emailing is characterized by the personalization it offers. It provides the company with a lasting relationship with its customers and serves as a low-cost means of maintaining customer engagement.

**Social media :** Companies use social media to enhance their visibility through the virality they generate and to maintain communication with their customers. They remain a means of interaction with customers and collecting feedback.

**CRM :** Customer Relationship Management, defined by Stokes Rob and Quirk Team as "a strategy for managing interactions with different customers, current or potential."

The primary goal of CRM is to collect customer data for identification.

### b- Paid Media :

Paid media refers to all the paid levers engaged by the company to maintain its visibility.

**Affiliation :** Affiliation is a digital marketing lever that appeared on the web in 1996 by Jeff BEZOS, the founder of Amazon. Affiliation is based on a business principle that predates the internet, which is the payment of business providers. By implementing it on the internet, affiliation involves three main actors: the advertiser/affiliate who wants to highlight a specific offer, the affiliate who accepts sharing the offer in question in return, and the affiliate platform, which is the intermediary between the two previous actors and can only exist on the internet.

**Online advertising :** Advertising is considered an essential lever as it promotes a website. It is also used to generate traffic and improve sales and visibility.

Online advertising is divided into two categories. First, there's display advertising. This is the traditional advertising used on the web, involving the purchase of ad spaces on the web by advertisers. The ad will be displayed on portals visited by the company's target audience, on different devices (computers, mobiles, tablets), and in various formats (banners, tiles). Despite the cost of this lever, it enables more precise targeting by considering several key criteria of the target audience, which can present a potential opportunity for the company.

### c- Earned Media :

In "The Big Book of Digital Marketing," Rémy MARRONE and Claire GALLIC explain that earned media refers to the visibility and recognition a company gains through actions and spontaneous acknowledgment from third parties such as customers, influencers, and the media. Unlike paid media where the company directly invests in broadcasting its message, earned media grows organically from positive experiences and genuine interactions with stakeholders.

The authors emphasize that earned media is often considered the most credible and influential, as it originates from sources external to the company itself. It includes elements such as media mentions, social media shares, positive reviews and testimonials left by satisfied customers, as well as endorsements from trusted influencers.

Earned media is perceived as a measure of a company's success in creating a favorable reputation and delivering real value to its customers. The authors highlight that to cultivate this type of media, it's essential to offer high-quality products and experiences, build strong relationships with customers and influencers, and actively encourage sharing and discussion around the brand.

### **2.3 The Marketing Mix in the Digital Age Internet has altered the specifics of the so-called traditional marketing mix :**

The transformation is still ongoing, and new trends continue to emerge on the horizon. In this section, we will attempt to explore the most significant changes. Discussing the evolution from traditional marketing to marketing in the digital age inevitably involves addressing the marketing mix, the 4Ps that define marketing strategy through the lens of Product, Price policy, Place (distribution), and Promotion (communication). Digital marketing significantly enriches this framework of understanding; these 4Ps are not challenged but rather supplemented.

In addition to the 4Ps mentioned by theorists, The digital landscape has significantly enriched marketing strategies. Numerous theorists have expanded upon the concept of the 4Ps by introducing other key elements that have an impact on the success of a product or service in a given market. Here are a few of them 24:

#### **a- Personnel/People:**

Customer relations and dialogue are strong markers of the digital era, particularly through social networks, forums, and review-sharing platforms. These spaces for exchange and information sharing provide consumers with direct access to brands. Users no longer merely express their level of satisfaction with the product itself; they share their overall experience. This experience is based not only on the product's usability but also on the pre- and post-purchase customer relationship.

#### **b- Personalization:**

Personalization is a major focus of the digital landscape. It allows reaching prospects or customers by addressing them with offers tailored to their needs. The product or service must be adaptable to meet the specific expectations of each target audience. In the concept of personalization, the idea of customized use can also be included. Each customer can appropriate a product to transform and use it in a way not

initially envisaged by the brand. These users, often aligned with your cause, can become valuable ambassadors.

#### **c- Physical Evidence:**

The offer is intangible when presented online: there's no tangible proof of its existence. Internet users then seek reassurance signals. This is materialized by all the elements present on the website that contribute to securing the internet user regarding the offer and, more broadly, the company.

#### **d- Permission Marketing:**

Permission Marketing is a cornerstone of marketing strategy in an era where transparency and honesty are highly valued by consumers to maintain a lasting relationship with a brand.

### **3- The Role of Content Marketing in Influencing Consumer Behavior :**

In a context where consumers have become more discerning, advertisements produced by companies have become feared, and consumers actively seek to avoid them. Consequently, companies have embarked on an approach to create an ecosystem where all the content produced by the company, along with search engine optimization (both organic and paid), social media, targeted marketing, etc., interact to ensure the success of the company's digital marketing strategy (Scheid, Fontugne, Vaillant, 2019). For a company to be considered present on the internet, it must create and distribute content to inform, educate, and even entertain, using mediums like images, videos, and blogs. The term "content marketing" emerged in 2001 with Joe Pulizzi, the founder of the Content Marketing Institute, which is recognized as a global authority in this field.

According to Pulizzi (2013), "Content marketing is the marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience with the objective of driving profitable customer action." In other words, it's a marketing strategy centered around generating interesting, relevant, and consistent content to attract and engage a specific audience, ultimately leading to profitable customer actions. Content marketing should reinforce or alter behavior; otherwise, it remains mere content. Additionally, it must provide the audience with the information they seek in all the places they look.

Content marketing is also an art. According to Pulizzi and Barret (2013), it's the art of understanding the customer's thirst for knowledge and responding to it meaningfully and convincingly, building trust between the company and the customer, facilitating the transition to a purchase decision. As stated by Brian Clark, content marketing entails creating and sharing valuable free content to attract and convert prospects into customers, and customers into buyers. The type of content shared by the company must be closely aligned with what it offers. In other words, the company must educate its customers and visitors so that they know, appreciate, and trust it sufficiently before committing to a commercial relationship. The notion of trust is, therefore, vital for the company in its relationship with the customer. The digital age substantially reduces direct contact between the company and the customer. This leaves the customer with a dilemma: to believe or not in what the company presents as products and services on the internet. The only way to address this dilemma is for the company to create and generate content that is simple, engaging, and instills trust, attracting and converting its customers.

Content marketing was developed in response to a time of overexposure to promotional content on the internet. Traditional advertising relied on aggressive formats like display banners, which created a continuous pressure on visitors, resulting in their subsequent disinterest. As this type of advertising became less effective, companies started seeking solutions to recapture visitors' interest.

#### 4- The Digital Transformation of the Consumer :

The advent of the Internet and new technologies has clearly changed the way businesses operate. Companies have started to be more concerned about their fate, particularly their relationships with consumers, who have become increasingly savvy due to all the informations available on the web. Consumers refer to it to create a 'virtual experience of a desired product or service based on the opinions of others.'

Just like marketing strategies, consumers behaviors have also undergone changes. They have transitioned from being mere consumers to becoming consumer-actors. They are capable of initiating communication and evaluation as partners of the company, contributing to the creation of the company's product and service value.

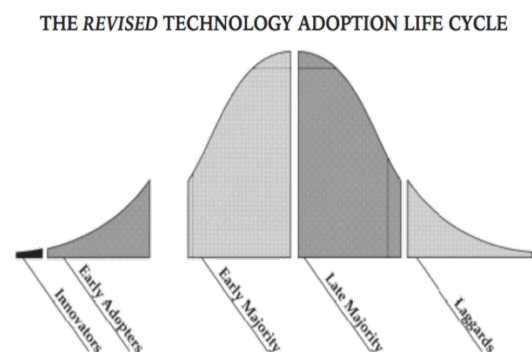
The emergence of Web 2.0 has led to the dissemination and access to information and data. It enables an exchange

among internet users about their experiences, for instance. However, the massive amount of information has left them perplexed.

Anthony PONCIER refers to this risk as 'information overload.' Companies must take this into account when formulating their digital marketing strategy. This strategy must undergo various adaptations in order to cope with the volatility of digital consumers.

The consumer thus compels the company to make modifications to its offering, and even its strategy, in order to satisfy their needs and meet their expectations. The knowledge they possess through connected tools and the information available on the internet enables them to have better control over their purchases. Consequently, the consumer exercises a sort of influence over the company. Thus, they become an empowered consumer.

According to Geoffrey MOORE, the curve representing the adoption of any innovation is not linear due to the gap between the 'early adopters' of the innovation in question and the general public. This gap signifies the difficulty the public encounters when trying to access it. This is why certain offerings don't reach the stage of being introduced and developed in the market.



**Figure 3: Technology Adoption Lifecycle According to Geoffrey Moore**

However, this gap is diminishing when it comes to the development of consumption due to innovations in communication tools. New consumer behaviors are spreading at an improbable pace. The new possibilities available to consumers allow them to gain expertise. They have more capacity and means to compare and judge company offerings and thus communicate with it. Constraints of time and space no longer take effect, allowing consumers to communicate with the company in real-time

and share their experiences. The enhanced consumer now holds more cards. They have the ability to make their own choices and maintain a power dynamic with the company.

The consumer has become more active, taking charge of their consumption. Previously, they positioned themselves in relation to the company that advertised the most so they could make their choice. Their judgment was based on the strength of advertisements, which limited their options.

Their online activity allows them to uncover information about the company and become a media outlet in the process. In other words, they are capable of influencing the company's reputation simply by sharing their opinions about its products. The role of the consumer is no longer limited to just making purchases. Now, they can also bypass, comment, share, or even access a service without having to make a purchase.

To further elaborate on the reflection, the model of online behavior stages developed by Lee, Cho, and Tharp in 2005 offers a comprehensive view of the various stages through which consumers interact online and make purchasing decisions. This model consists of four key stages of online consumer behavior:

**a- Online Information Search:**

In this stage, the consumer actively seeks relevant information for their purchasing decision. Digital marketing facilitates the provision of pertinent and quality information through websites, blogs, explanatory videos, and tailored content. Efforts in natural search engine optimization (SEO) help make this information visible in search results, thereby attracting consumers to the online platforms of brands that match their expressed needs.

**b- Alternative Evaluation:**

After gathering the required information, the consumer compares different available options. Digital marketing plays a role here by presenting specific benefits, unique features, and testimonials that influence the consumer's perception of a brand or product relative to others.

**c- Online Transaction:**

When the consumer decides to make a purchase, digital marketing streamlines the online transaction process by providing secure payment options, user-friendly navigation, and purchase incentives such as discounts. A positive purchasing experience can reinforce consumer satisfaction.

**d- Post Purchase Online:**

After the purchase, online interactions continue to play a role. Consumer feedback, comments, and interactions with online customer service influence long-term satisfaction and engagement. Digital marketing can encourage proactive follow-up to resolve issues and maintain a positive relationship.

In summary, the conceptual model of online behavior stages demonstrates how digital marketing guides consumers throughout their online buying journey. These stages are influenced by the quality of information, online interactions, and incentives provided by digital marketing strategies. This model helps understand how online interactions shape purchase decisions and consumer behaviors in a digital environment.

**4.1 The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior :**

The impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior is a topic that has attracted growing interest within the academic community and marketing practitioners. Social media has changed the way businesses interact with their customers to influence purchasing decisions and shape consumer behavior.

According to Philip Kotler, one of the forerunners of modern marketing, social media has reshaped business communication strategies. In the book "Marketing 4.0", he outlines how companies are leveraging these platforms to specifically target audiences, thereby building brand recognition and driving consumer interest (Kotler 2017).

A key element of the impact of social media on consumer behavior in the phenomenon of social influence. The authors discuss the influence of peers and influencers on purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to consider recommendations and reviews from online friends, family and people they admire.

Another crucial aspect explored by the authors is the virality of social media. Content can spread quickly and widely through sharing and interaction. Creative and engaging marketing campaigns have the ability to go viral in an instant, allowing businesses to reach a much larger audience than ever before. Social media has become an essential vector of influence, with peers and influencers playing a major role in purchasing decisions. Consumer

expectations have shifted towards personalized and seamless experiences.

#### 5- Conclusion and recommendations for future research :

The literature on consumer behavior in digital media and social media is growing rapidly and largely focuses on phenomena that are practically relevant and theoretically interesting. The researchers mainly looked at how consumer behavior evolved and became oriented towards augmented consumption behavior. Future research should pursue this approach, but in a broader way typically carry out empirical studies to be able to validate this approach.

In other words, it's important for future research to continue to explore how consumers interact with digital marketing in general and social media in particular.

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