

FROM DIGITAL MARKETING TO DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT: EVOLUTION OF CONCEPTS AND MANAGERIAL LOGIC

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SUMMARY

The digitalisation of the economy has significantly transformed marketing theory and practice, leading to the rapid development of digital marketing as a set of tools, channels, platforms, and technologies for customer interaction. However, the growing complexity of digital environments, the increasing role of data, and the integration of marketing with sales, service, analytics, and digital platforms require a shift from an instrumental understanding of digital marketing toward the managerial concept of digital marketing management. This conceptual review systematises existing approaches to digital marketing and substantiates digital marketing management as an integrated data-driven management system. Based on the analysis of academic literature on digital marketing, marketing analytics, customer experience management, omnichannel communication, CRM, marketing automation, and digital transformation, the paper identifies the limitations of the tool-based approach and defines the key components of digital marketing management. The findings show that digital marketing management goes beyond the use of digital channels and includes goal-setting, strategic planning, organisation, coordination, performance control, and continuous optimisation of marketing activities. The study contributes to the literature by clarifying the distinction between digital marketing and digital marketing management and by offering a managerial logic for understanding marketing transformation in the digital economy.

Keywords: *digital marketing, digital marketing management, digital transformation, data-driven marketing, customer experience, omnichannel marketing*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, digitalisation has significantly transformed the business environment, the nature of interactions between enterprises and consumers, and the methods used to promote goods and services (Kraus et al., 2022). Digital marketing has evolved rapidly through the increased use of digital channels, platforms, data, and technology for market communication, demand generation, and consumer relationship development. However, the further development of the digital economy has shown that digital marketing cannot be regarded solely as a set of promotional tools. The increasing complexity of consumer behaviour, the growth of data volumes, the development of omnichannel communications, and the integration of marketing with sales, service, analytics, and digital platforms have expanded the scope of marketing activities and changed the requirements for their management (Hanelt et al., 2021).

In practice, digital marketing has traditionally been understood as a set of digital tools and channels, including search engine optimisation, contextual advertising, social media, email marketing, targeted advertising, content marketing, and other forms of online communication. This instrumental interpretation played an important role in the early stages of digital marketing, enabling enterprises to adopt new channels for interacting with consumers and to improve the effectiveness of communication. In the current context, this interpretation is becoming insufficient, as it does not reflect the managerial nature of the ongoing transformations. Digital technologies are changing not only promotional methods but also decision-making processes, the organisation of marketing functions, the distribution of responsibilities, cross-functional interaction, customer experience management, and the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the

effectiveness of marketing activities (Plangger, 2022; Cioppi et al., 2023).

In this regard, there is a need to clarify the scientific meaning of “digital marketing” and to develop it conceptually toward digital marketing management. Unlike the instrumental approach, digital marketing management treats marketing as a data-driven, strategic, coordinated system of digital processes, channel integration, performance control, and continuous optimisation of the company’s interaction with the market. This approach reflects the transition from individual marketing campaigns to continuous processes, from intuitive decisions to data-driven management, from fragmented digital channels to integrated communication ecosystems, and from post-hoc evaluation of results to a continuous managerial framework.

Despite active research in digital marketing, the scientific literature still lacks sufficient conceptual clarity regarding digital marketing management. Therefore, it is relevant to theoretically examine the transition from digital marketing as a set of digital tools to digital marketing management as an integrated system for managing marketing activities. This served as the motivation for initiating the present study.

The aim of the study is to theoretically substantiate the conceptual transition from an instrumental understanding of digital marketing to digital marketing management as a holistic system for managing marketing activities in the context of the economy’s digital transformation. To achieve this aim, the article systematises existing approaches to interpreting digital marketing, identifies the limitations of the instrumental paradigm, and reveals the key managerial principles that shape the development of marketing in the digital environment.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is conducted as a conceptual review article, with the aim of providing a theoretical understanding of the evolution of digital marketing and substantiating the transition toward digital marketing management as an integrated managerial system. The choice of a conceptual review approach is determined by the fact that the research problem is less about quantitatively assessing publication activity and more about identifying the substantive logic underlying the development of scientific approaches to digital marketing, its managerial functions, and the organisational consequences of digital transformation.

The empirical basis of the study comprises scientific

publications on digital marketing, marketing management, business digital transformation, marketing analytics, customer experience management, CRM systems, omnichannel interaction, marketing automation, and data-driven marketing. The selection of sources was based on their thematic relevance to the study's aim. The methodological basis of the study includes theoretical analysis, a comparative approach, logical generalisation, and the systematisation of scientific concepts. Particular attention is paid to research areas that most fully reflect the transition from the use of individual digital tools to the formation of an integrated marketing management system.

DIGITAL MARKETING IN SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

Digital marketing is a complex phenomenon that involves using digital technologies, channels, and platforms, along with data, to perform marketing functions. In its broadest sense, digital marketing encompasses communication with markets and consumers, the promotion of goods and services, demand generation, the management of a company's online presence, and the development of interactions with target audiences (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Tarazona-Montoya et al., 2024).

Within the instrumental approach, digital marketing is interpreted primarily as a set of digital channels and tools used to achieve marketing objectives, including search marketing, content marketing, social media, online advertising, email marketing, mobile applications, and partner-based digital communications (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Tarazona-Montoya et al., 2024). This approach reflects the applied dimension of digital marketing and demonstrates its role as a means of promotion and consumer interaction in the digital environment.

A broader approach links digital marketing to the development of digital marketing orientation, in which digital technologies become part of a company's marketing strategy. In this case, the emphasis shifts to the use of online channels and digital platforms to increase awareness, engagement, and conversion among target audiences, as well as to data collection and analysis, communication personalisation, and the automation of consumer interaction (Paşcalău et al., 2024). At the same time, this approach still retains a predominantly applied logic, since digital technologies and tools are viewed primarily as means of achieving marketing results.

Recent studies increasingly emphasise an approach in which digital marketing is considered not only a means of communication but also a new model of interaction between a company and the market, based on data, omnichannel engagement, and customer experience management. Digital marketing communications are increasingly interpreted as a system for managing

multiple customer touchpoints, while the growing availability of data enables companies to make more informed decisions, personalise communications, and continuously optimise interaction with consumers (Shankar et al., 2022). The analysis of customer data, the application of artificial intelligence algorithms, and automated marketing solutions allow companies to better understand consumer preferences, develop more accurate marketing offers, and increase the likelihood of conversion (Shankar et al., 2022; Antczak, 2024).

Despite the diversity of approaches, most interpretations of digital marketing retain a pronounced focus on technologies, channels, data, personalisation, and promotional tools. This makes it possible to speak of the dominance of an instrumental perspective, within which digital marketing is most often understood as a set of online communication tools and technological solutions. However, in the context of the increasing complexity of the digital environment and the growing demands of marketing management, this approach has several significant limitations. One of them is the fragmentation of management. When digital marketing is reduced to individual channels, marketing activities risk losing their integrity. The effectiveness of digital marketing depends not only on the set of tools used but also on the quality of strategy, the coherence of actions, market conditions, and the company's ability to integrate digital solutions into the overall management system (Sharabati et al., 2024).

Within instrumental logic, digital marketing is often reduced to promotion and consumer interaction, while the functions of analysis, planning, organisational coordination, and performance control remain insufficiently developed. Meanwhile, digital transformation goes beyond the simple use of digital technologies and requires changes in a company's strategy, structure, and business processes (Verhoef et al., 2021). The digital environment also increases the need for coordination among marketing, sales, and service, as customer interaction becomes an end-to-end, cross-functional process (Enyinda et al., 2020).

Moreover, there is an overestimation of the role of technologies and an underestimation of managerial processes. The digitalisation of marketing should not be reduced solely to implementing new platforms, software solutions, or advertising tools. The effectiveness of digital technologies becomes evident only when they are embedded in the company's strategy, supported by organisational changes, and used within a holistic decision-making system. This argument is consistent with the view that strategy, rather than technology, is the key driver of digital transformation (Kane et al., 2015).

It should be noted that there is a lack of systematic data management. The digital environment generates large volumes of information on consumer behaviour, communication channels, campaign results, and interaction effectiveness. However, within the instrumental approach, data often remain fragmented, are used inconsistently, and are not integrated into a unified marketing management system. The absence

of a common customer database, unified measurement standards, end-to-end analytics, and centralised data processing means that managerial decisions continue to be made primarily on the basis of intuition or isolated performance indicators (Kupreichik, 2024).

Thus, the analysis of academic interpretations shows that digital marketing is gradually evolving from being understood as a set of digital tools toward a more complex managerial logic. However, the instrumental paradigm still limits the possibilities for both theoretical explanation and practical application of digital marketing amid the economy's digital transformation. The identified limitations — fragmented management, the dominance of the communication function, the overestimation of technology, and the absence of systematic data management — justify moving toward digital marketing management as a more mature model for managing marketing activities in the digital environment.

“DIGITAL MARKETING” VERSUS “DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT”

In academic literature, digital marketing management is considered a marketing management system based on digital technologies, data, and platform infrastructure, ensuring the planning, organisation, coordination, and control of an enterprise's interactions with the market (Gryshchenko, 2023).

Unlike digital marketing, understood as a set of channels, digital marketing management describes a managerial framework: who makes decisions, what data these decisions are based on, how roles are distributed, how results are measured, and how the continuous improvement of marketing processes is ensured (Table 1).

Table 1. “Digital marketing” versus “Digital marketing management”

Criterion	Digital marketing (instrumental approach)	Digital marketing management (managerial approach)
Focus	Channels, tools, and promotion tactics	Marketing management system in the digital environment
Role of technologies	Technologies as a means of promotion and communication	Technologies as an infrastructure for managing processes and data
Object of management	Advertising campaigns and communications	Processes of interaction with the market and customers (end-to-end)
Management horizon	Mostly short-term (campaigns)	Continuous (processes, customer lifecycle)
Key resource	Content and channel budget	Data, customer database, platforms, and competencies
Decision-making	Often intuitive or based on simple metrics (reach/clicks)	Based on data, analytics, and testing (data-driven)
Performance metrics	CTR, reach, CPM, CPC, followers	CAC, LTV, stage-by-stage conversion, retention, ROMI, process KPIs
Structure of activities	Fragmented activities across channels	Integrated system: strategy → processes → control → optimization
Work organization	Specialists in individual channels	Cross-functional team: marketing + analytics + sales + IT/product
Customer experience management	As an additional element (not always systematic)	Central object of management (customer journey, CX)
Tools	SMM, SEO, PPC, email, banners, blog	CRM, CDP/data, analytics, automation, omnichannel approach, KPI framework

Criterion	Digital marketing (instrumental approach)	Digital marketing management (managerial approach)
Control and improvement	Post-hoc evaluation of campaigns	Continuous monitoring and optimisation (PDCA cycle/tests)
Risks	Strong dependence on individual platforms/channels	Risks are managed through diversification, data standards, and processes
Result	Communication effect/leads	Managed marketing system and measurable contribution to business goals

Source: developed by the author based on literature analysis

The presented model reflects a qualitative transition from an instrumental understanding of digital marketing to a managerial one. Within the instrumental approach, digital marketing is viewed as a set of channels and promotional tactics, such as SEO, PPC, SMM, and email marketing, in which technologies serve as communication tools, while individual advertising campaigns are the objects of management. Management in this case is predominantly short-term and fragmented; decisions are often based on simplified metrics, such as reach and clicks, while results depend on individual platforms and channels. In contrast, digital marketing management operates at a systemic level, where marketing functions as an integrated mechanism for managing customer interactions in the digital environment. In this context, technologies serve as an infrastructure that enables the management of data, processes, and customer experience at all stages of the lifecycle. The object of management shifts to end-to-end processes, while decision-making is based on analytics and data-driven principles. Performance metrics shift toward business outcomes, such as CAC, LTV, and ROI, while the organisational model moves toward cross-functional interaction and continuous optimisation.

The transition from digital marketing to digital marketing management is driven by the growing complexity of the digital environment, changes in consumer behaviour, the increasing role of data, and the need to integrate marketing with other business functions. In contemporary conditions, digital marketing can no longer be understood merely as a set of promotional channels, since the effectiveness of market interaction depends on the coherence of strategy, processes, data, communications, and control mechanisms.

One of the key conditions for this transition is the increasing complexity of consumer behaviour. The digital environment has made the customer journey more complex: a purchase decision is no longer determined by a single advertising communication but is shaped by accumulated experience, information search, comparison of alternatives, reading reviews, and interaction with a brand across various digital channels. The customer journey comprises multiple touchpoints across platforms, channels, and stages of interaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Shankar et al., 2022). Therefore, digital marketing management should focus

on coordinating the entire customer journey. Digital transformation also requires firms to develop new managerial approaches to understanding and managing consumer behaviour in digital environments (Cioppi et al., 2023).

Another important precondition is the growing role of data in marketing decision-making. Digital transformation has shown that data is becoming one of the key resources of marketing. Data-driven approaches enable companies to improve segmentation, personalise communications, forecast consumer behaviour, and optimise marketing budgets. For example, Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta (2018) demonstrated that even simple personalisation of email communication increased the probability of opening an email by 20%, increased the number of potential customers by 31%, and reduced unsubscribes by 17%. This confirms that data are not only an analytical resource, but also a basis for managerial decision-making in digital marketing.

The transition to digital marketing management is also associated with the shift from individual campaigns to continuous marketing processes. Digital channels require a company's constant presence in the information space and continuous optimisation of marketing actions. As a result, marketing becomes a process that requires regular monitoring, adaptation, and improvement. Social media and big data contribute to the development of multichannel interactions and increase the need for systematic analytics (Sivarajah et al., 2017). At the same time, platform solutions, centralised data management, and end-to-end analytics create conditions for optimising customer experience (Nuseir et al., 2023).

In the digital environment, the boundaries between marketing, sales, and customer service are increasingly blurred, as a unified digital customer journey requires coordination among these functions. The study by Enyinda et al. (2020) shows that the alignment of marketing, sales, and service — the “marketing-sales-service interface” — contributes to a better understanding of customer behaviour and improves the effectiveness of organisational processes. This confirms the need for a common management system that integrates marketing activities with sales, service, analytics, and digital infrastructure.

Thus, the transition to digital marketing management is determined not only by the development of digital channels, but also by a change in the very logic of marketing management. The growing complexity of

consumer behaviour, the increasing volume of data, the need for omnichannel coordination, and the integration of marketing with sales and service require the formation of a holistic managerial system. Such a system should ensure goal-setting, planning, the organisation of marketing processes, data management, performance control, and the continuous optimisation of decisions.

Based on the literature analysis, digital marketing management can be understood as a management system that integrates strategy, marketing processes, data, digital infrastructure, and performance evaluation. Contemporary studies show that digital transformation requires a holistic managerial model that covers the organisational, technological, and analytical components of marketing (Amalia et al., 2026). This logic is also reflected in digital marketing maturity models, which identify strategy, process organisation, data management, and performance evaluation as key elements of digital marketing development.

The main objective of marketing management is to achieve measurable business results; that's why digital marketing should be embedded in the company's overall strategy and evaluated through specific KPIs (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). The use of digital tools can positively influence company performance when they are strategically integrated and aligned with measurable objectives (Paşcalău et al., 2024).

In the context of digitalisation, the organisational structure of marketing is also changing. New roles are emerging that focus on technologies, data, and digital processes, including performance marketing specialists, marketing analysts, content managers, CRM managers, and marketing automation specialists. Research shows that digital transformation requires new skills from marketing professionals, particularly managerial, analytical, and technological competencies, to interact

effectively with customers and improve company performance. (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022).

Digital marketing management also requires consistency across channels and messages, since customers perceive a brand through a combination of touchpoints. Studies on integrated marketing communications show that the perceived consistency of communications across different tools influences customer–brand relationships. Therefore, the management of content, advertising, websites, social media, and other digital platforms should be organised as a unified and coordinated system (Luxton et al., 2015; Suay-Pérez et al., 2022).

An important element of digital marketing management is the management of data and digital infrastructure. This includes creating a unified customer database, integrating information from various sources, and using CRM systems, web analytics, end-to-end analytics, and automation tools. Such an approach enables companies to gain a deeper understanding of customer behaviour, personalise communications, and optimise digital marketing processes. CRM systems and analytics enable the accumulation of customer information and the more effective management of customer requests (Martinho et al., 2025; Jabado, Jallouli, 2024).

Control and performance evaluation in digital marketing management acquire a continuous character. They include ongoing monitoring of indicators, analysis of channel effectiveness, assessment of marketing's contribution to business results, and adjustment of marketing actions based on data. The use of digital analytics and metric systems enables companies not only to measure the results of individual marketing campaigns but also to improve their effectiveness through continuous testing, feedback, and optimisation of managerial decisions (Järvinen & Karjaluo, 2015; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

RETHINKING MARKETING FUNCTIONS IN A DIGITAL MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

The transition from digital marketing to digital marketing management entails transforming and redefining marketing functions. Contemporary studies show that digital transformation affects not only promotional tools but also the nature of marketing activities as a whole (Verhoef et al., 2021).

In the digital environment, customer experience management and the management of customer touchpoints become central tasks of marketing (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2021). Marketing ceases to be exclusively communication-oriented and becomes a system for managing customer interactions, in which communications are integrated with data analytics, service, and sales. The role of marketing in managerial decision-making is also increasing. Due to digitalisation and analytics, marketing becomes not only a means of promotion but also a source of market knowledge, including information about customer preferences, channel effectiveness, and consumer responses to

changes. This enables the use of marketing data in managerial decision-making (Wedel & Kannan, 2016).

This transformation can also be interpreted through the lens of dynamic capabilities, which explain how organisations adapt to rapidly changing environments by sensing opportunities, seizing them, and transforming internal processes (Teece, 2007). In digital marketing management, sensing refers to the use of AI-based analytics, big data and digital monitoring tools to detect market signals, changes in consumer behaviour and emerging customer needs. Seizing involves mobilising technological, analytical and organisational resources to respond to these opportunities through personalised offers, CRM systems, automated communication and omnichannel interaction. Transforming reflects the renewal of marketing routines, as data-driven decision-making, continuous optimisation and cross-functional integration reshape the way marketing is planned, coordinated and controlled.

The time horizon of marketing is also changing, shifting from short-term advertising campaigns toward long-term customer relationship management based on data, personalisation, and continuous interaction with consumers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The object of marketing management represents a shift from individual campaigns to the real-time management of the customer lifecycle. Predictive models and AI-based analytics enable firms to monitor customer behaviour, anticipate needs and optimise interactions across all stages of acquisition, engagement, retention and loyalty. Digital marketing management requires technological and analytical skills. Thus, marketing management combines marketing activities, data management, digital technologies, and organisational processes (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022).

Digital transformation changes the role of marketing within the organisation. It is no longer only a promotional

tool, but a system for managing customer interactions based on data, analytics, and integration with other business functions. This underscores its importance as a managerial function and lays the foundation for the development of digital marketing management.

The transition from an instrumental understanding of digital marketing, based on the use of individual digital channels and promotion tactics, to a managerial model in which marketing is viewed as a holistic management system means that digital channels are not isolated tools, but elements of a unified managerial cycle. This cycle includes planning, implementation, data collection and analysis, performance control, and subsequent process improvement (Fig. 1). Such an approach ensures the integration of marketing activities with the company's business goals and forms the basis for continuous optimisation and improved marketing effectiveness in the digital environment.

Figure 1.

Digital marketing management framework



Source: developed by the author based on literature analysis

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Despite the active development of the literature, the distinction between digital marketing and digital marketing management remains a subject of discussion. In many publications, these terms are used interchangeably, complicating the development of a unified scientific framework.

One promising direction for future research is the development of maturity criteria for digital marketing management, which would enable the assessment of the level of managerial integration of digital tools within an enterprise. Another important direction is the analysis of organisational models for digital marketing, including how enterprises form teams, allocate responsibilities, and implement analytical controls. Further research is also needed in the field of ethics and regulation of digital marketing, since the growth of personalisation and data management intensifies issues related to privacy, transparency, and consumer trust.

Digital marketing management requires deeper theoretical reflection as an independent field that goes beyond the traditional understanding of digital marketing. Its development is associated with the need to integrate marketing theory with managerial approaches and digital technologies, thereby enabling the consideration of marketing as a system for managing interaction with the market in the context

of digital transformation. The formation of such a concept contributes to a more holistic understanding of marketing's role and its place within an organisation's overall management system.

The literature review indicates that, in contemporary practice and research, digital marketing is increasingly moving beyond an instrumental approach and requires a shift toward digital marketing management. Unlike digital marketing as a set of channels and technologies, digital marketing management is a managerial system that includes goal-setting, process organisation, communication coordination, data management, and performance control.

The digitalisation of marketing leads to the transformation of marketing functions: the role of analytics is strengthened, integration with sales and service increases, and marketing shifts toward a process-based logic and continuous optimisation. The scientific significance of this approach lies in the formation of a more mature conceptual framework that reflects real changes in marketing activities in the digital economy. Prospects for further research include developing maturity models for digital marketing management, clarifying its structural elements, and studying organisational mechanisms for its implementation.

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