



Digitalization of business marketing activities

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Abstract

Digital space, due to such advantages as accessibility and ease of use, has become a new direction of conducting marketing activities. The purpose of the research is to improve and develop theoretical provisions, to develop methodological and practical recommendations for the digitalization of business marketing activities. In order to realize the set goal, it is necessary to solve such tasks as to determine the specifics of the development and use of tools for digitalization of international marketing activities; to provide a description of the main areas of application of marketing activity digitization tools; to develop recommendations for improving tools for digitalization of international business marketing activities. Research methods used in the research are methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparison, matrix methods, modeling, generalization. The result of the research is the development of measures to improve the international marketing activities of business based on digitalization.

Keywords: digitalization, marketing activity, strategic management decisions, international marketing, education

Introduction

Today's realities indicate that electronic means are becoming the most popular source of information. Digitalization processes are rapidly developing and becoming a convenient part of everyday life and business style. According to the Digital report, 4.95 billion people are active Internet users in 2022, which is 62.5% of the world's population. More than half of Internet users made online purchases (Clement, 2021). In addition, 4.62 billion used social networks in 2022, which was 58.4% of the world's population, which indicates the high effectiveness of the use of social networks as a promotion of the company's products and brand. The age analysis of Internet and social network users shows a growing interest and loyalty to Internet technologies among middle-aged and young people (Report Digital, 2022). Most often, people use mobile phones to view information online, which indicates the feasibility of developing and supporting M-commerce trade. Thus, the population's awareness of online technologies actualizes the issue of digitalization of all spheres of business activity, and, above all, the marketing sphere.

The advantages of using online technologies in marketing activities are the motivation of consumers to make purchases. The biggest stimulators of the development of online trade are the accessibility of potential consumers to the Internet, the higher speed of the process of purchasing products, taking into account the 24-hour access to the Internet and the absence of geographical restrictions (Rudenko, 2018). Such factors contribute to the service orientation of the economy, the development of delivery services and effective promotion. Product manufacturers have an advantage in terms of cost minimization, which allows increasing the profitability of sales, expanding the number of potential consumers and expanding the opportunities of access to sales channels (Yarosh-Dmytrenko, 2020). The intensive development of online trade leads to the intensification of the development of the mobile marketing market. Mobile marketing volumes have been trending upwards for the past five years with an annual growth rate of around 10% (Cham, 2022), (Top 10 internet marketing trends, 2019).

The purpose of the study research is to improve and develop theoretical provisions, to develop methodological and practical recommendations for the digitalization of business marketing activities. To realize the set goal, such tasks as to determine the specifics of the development and to use of digitalization tools for marketing activities; to provide a description of the main areas of application of digital marketing tools; develop recommendations for improving digitalization tools for international business marketing activities were solved

Methods

Research methods used in the study of theoretical and methodological aspects of digitization are methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparison. In order to determine the level of influence of digitalization on business marketing activities, a survey of enterprise management was conducted. Based on the results of the survey, five clusters were formed that characterize the leadership of digitalization in one or another area of marketing activity, namely product policy, price policy, sales policy, communication policy, brand positioning, market and competitor analysis, customer analysis. The evaluation results were checked for consistency using regression analysis methods. Matrix methods, modeling and generalization make it possible to predict business activity depending on belonging to one or another cluster and to make a decision on the formation and development of a marketing strategy in relation to digitalization.

Findings

Digital marketing is studied by some specialists in terms of communication policy on the Internet, the use of web applications along with traditional communication technologies (Kuprina and Khazanova, 2016). There is also an approach to defining the concept of digital marketing as the ability to use mobile devices, the Internet, social and search networks to attract potential consumers (Colin, 2015). Approaches are used when digital marketing is considered as an additional tool for brand or product promotion and as a communication channel. It also considers the approach to digital marketing as the use of information technologies together with working with clients in a virtual environment in order to implement marketing goals and objectives (Savytska, 2017). Scientists use an approach that suggests integrating the Internet, advertising on mobile devices, and media advertising into digital tools and technologies (Copp, 2016). In the table 1 presents approaches to defining the concept of digitization.

Table 1. Approaches to defining the concept of ‘digitalization’

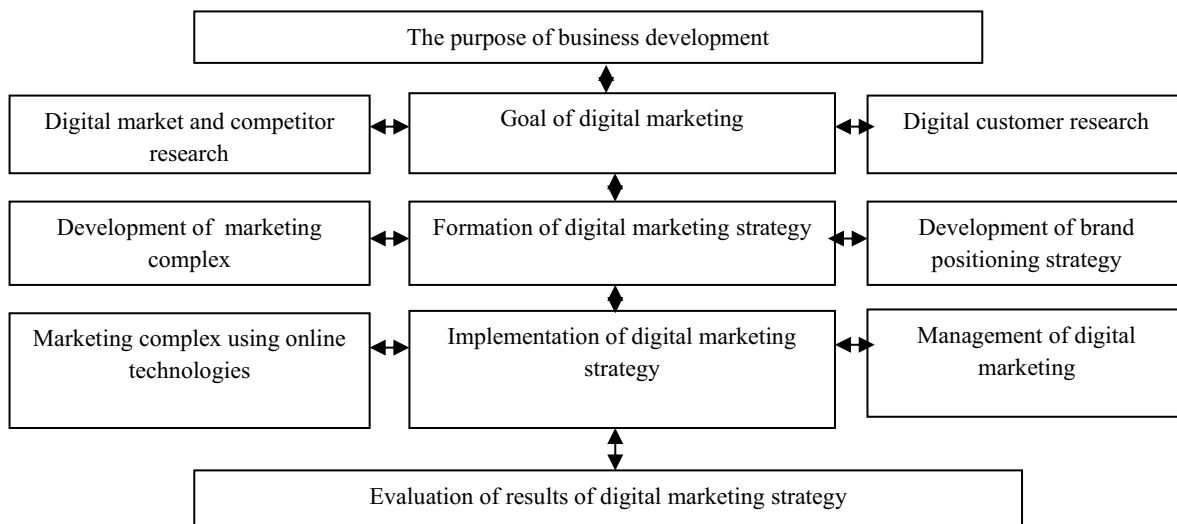
Approach	Understanding of digitalization	Author
As a tool	The method of bringing any information into digital form	(Kuprina and Khazanova, 2016)
As a process	The process associated with the conversion of various information into electronic form	(Halapsis, 2016)
As a phenomenon	The process that allows the enterprise to minimize costs and gain benefits thanks to the introduction of the latest technologies	(Boletta-Carrubi and Torras, 2019)
	The integration of digital technologies into human life through digitization	(Ochs, Riemann, 2018)
As a business	The process of applying information technologies by business entities for the purpose of economic activity	(Tetryatnik, 2017)
	Using digital technologies to modify the business model to create value	(Scuotto, Serravalle, Murray and Viassone, 2019)

Let's consider digital marketing as a direction of marketing activity, which involves managing marketing processes with the help of online tools. The criteria for evaluating the digitization of marketing activities are information channels that are aimed at providing information about the availability of products, services, and brands with the aim of expanding foreign sales markets, increasing sales, finding new opportunities in the competition to conquer new niches in the foreign market, and forming an information profile of the enterprise in the markets; communication channels that facilitate the exchange of information between customers and the seller or manufacturer, which involves gathering information about the international market and potential consumers, conducting advertising and PR activities to increase interactivity, establishing relationships with consumers (Sabaitytė and Davidavičienė, 2018), (Solomyanuk, 2013); sales channels that perform sales functions using automated sales tools; ways to optimize costs thanks to the use of online marketing and digitalization of business, which provides an opportunity to minimize labor and sales costs; additional channels as an alternative to online marketing, receiving additional benefits of multi-channel, online and traditional marketing (Yurchuk, 2019).

It should be emphasized that the model of the implementation of digital marketing in the marketing activities is cyclical, since business goals are constantly changing and expanding, taking into account the change in market

trends and taking into account the flexibility and dynamism of business processes. Let's consider successively each of the stages of the process of forming a complex of digital marketing in the activity (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The process of introducing digital marketing into the company's activities



The first stage of forming a marketing digital strategy in the marketing complex is the formation of digital marketing goals, which can be the main advantages of using digital technologies in the marketing activities, namely the goal of increasing the level of awareness of the purposefulness of activities and the scope of application, the goal of introducing an additional communication channel, the goal from the expansion of markets and the introduction of a new sales channel, the goal of reducing marketing costs and saving labor resources (Rabei, 2019). In order to realize the goals of digitization of marketing activities, it is necessary to conduct a study of the e-commerce market, the level of online competition and the corresponding market and potential target audience (Andrushkevich, 2020). A feature of preparing and conducting research online is the availability of monitoring and analysis tools to obtain the necessary information (Zubkoba and Chizhova, 2015). Google tools offer software tools for analysis and evaluation, which are based on current trends in search technologies (Ardito et al., 2019). The evaluation parameters are the number of visits to the company's websites and competitor websites, the competitiveness index, the web profile of the user of the website or social networks, the interests of consumers who are users of the website and social networks, etc. (Bahcecik et al., 2019).

The stage of forming a digital marketing strategy is aimed at forming the company's brand and developing a marketing complex (Caliskan et al., 2021). The development and formation of online brand strategy consists of the following actions as a building an informative message, repeating it for potential customers using web applications; development and application of brandbook (Ponomarenko and Vinnikova, 2018), (Miskiewicz, 2020) based on special design solutions using Internet technologies; formation of a positive image of the enterprise with the help of design of the web profile of this enterprise in online sources; constant increase in audience engagement through storytelling; adjusting the results for sleep features of the online instant feedback.

The next step of implementation in the system of digitization of marketing activity is the formation of an online marketing mix complex, the feature of which is the adaptation of the marketing strategy in accordance with the goals of digital marketing. Based on this, the price strategy, taking into account the high level of competition on markets, faces the convergence of prices. As a result, the efforts aimed at building the image in the international market and the position of the brand in relation to the price is leveled. The corresponding changes are due to the presence of web-based retail platforms that have the ability to influence small and medium-sized enterprises at the expense of large-scale sales (Davidson, 2022).

Commodity policy in the international marketing environment for the use of information technologies also has certain features. Thus, the three-level product model due to the digitization of marketing activities will consist of

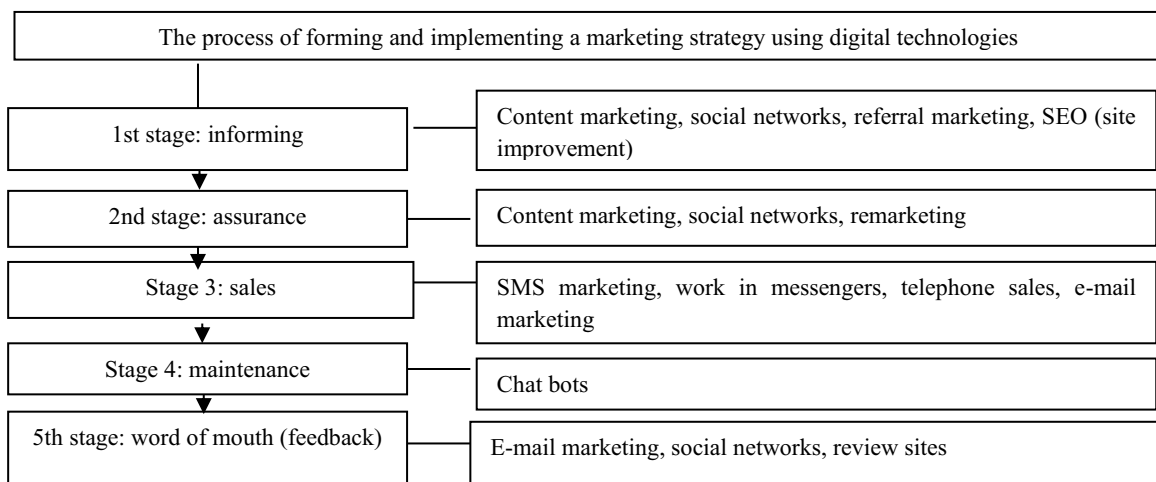
the following components as the product will be market screening using online applications, the use of photos, videos or text descriptions of products on a website or web platform for product sales, product development in electronic form; the product in real execution will be the formation of a trademark, the design of the appearance of products, as well as the provision of related services in the process of purchasing products, building loyalty to the brand; the product with reinforcement will be consumer satisfaction with the process of online purchase of products, as well as with after-sales service (Zabashtanska, 2021), (Krasovska, 2018), (Baranauskas, 2020).

Sales policy in the system of digitalization of international marketing activities will have a mixed form, namely online and offline. Informatization of the sales policy involves the automation of the sales process (Rossato and Castellani, 2020). Thus, the digitalization of sales activities involves the sale of products in an Internet store or special platforms; payment for goods is made in cash upon receipt or through bank transactions. The client can see the offered products in the electronic catalog of the online store, read the description and technical characteristics, evaluate the attractiveness of the product through videos, 3D images, etc. That is, the sale of products via the Internet is implemented on the basis of CRM management (order management system) (Aljawameh et al., 2020).

Policy of communications in the system of digitalization of international marketing activity provides an opportunity to use a wide range of tools depending on the audience, type of product or service, etc. The main tools of marketing communication in the digital marketing system are SMM, search marketing, banner advertising, PPC-targeted advertising, mailings in messengers, SMS mailing, advertising in blogs, E-Mail marketing, content generation, retargeting (Sshpak et al., 2020), (Digital Advertising, 2022), (Beketova, 2017). The main and priority difference of digital communications in marketing activities is that it is based on careful observation and study of the market and target audience (Hongwei and Harris, 2020), and the result of its application is the mandatory creation of content. Due to low-quality content or gaps in research, the company can lose customers. In order for this not to happen, the company needs to adapt the site for mobile devices, develop and use a mobile application. Incorrectly selected and used digitalization tools for marketing activities will be ineffective investments and cause losses for the company (Conti et al., 2023). Constant and flexible work with digital tools should be properly managed, i.e. the stage of managing the digitalization of marketing activities, evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the digitalization strategy of marketing activities are carried out to increase the return on the marketing policy.

Digitalization of marketing activity occupies a significant place in the marketing system at all stages of marketing, from planning, market research and monitoring, to sales and promotion of the brand and products using digital technologies. The process of forming and implementing a marketing strategy using digital technologies is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2. The process of forming and implementing a marketing strategy using digital technologies



Thus, the formation and implementation of marketing strategy using digital technologies begins with the information stage, the essence of which is the formation of a database for further work with potential consumers. The result of the stage is the interest of potential customers in the company's activities. At the stage of assurance, the company assures about the key advantages and informs about the interaction technology. At this stage, potential consumers are singled out from the general target audience and contacts are formed with them. Implementation of this procedure is carried out by providing additional information about the company and products and remarketing. The purpose of this stage is to maintain interest. At the stage of sales, the terms of the agreement are discussed and signed. The success of the stage consists in the number of sales made, the volume of orders, the time of order implementation, probable risks, etc. The last stage is feedback, aimed at receiving reviews, recommendations, etc.

In order to study the degree of digitalization of marketing and the impact of digitalization on the performance of the enterprise, a survey of Ukrainian companies was conducted. The questionnaire covered questions related to the main areas of digitization of marketing activities. Questionnaire questions covered general aspects of enterprise activity, the impact of digitalization on business marketing activity, and the level of innovation of the company in relation to digital technologies. The general aspects of the company's activity allowed characterizing the business from the point of view of the forms of ownership, the size of the business and the field of activity. The question of the impact of digitalization on the marketing activity of a business covered product (collection of information about innovations and product management through e-mail, websites, blogs, social networks, web mining based on reviews and offers), price (implementation of dynamic prices), sales (implementation e-commerce and multi-channel approach) and communication (communication and interaction with customers through websites, mobile applications, social networks) company policy, brand promotion (based on the company website, social networks, online advertising, direct interaction with customers), as well as the ability to analyze the market and competitors (analysis of large volumes of data from social networks, mobile applications, competitor sites, etc.) and customers (sources of collecting information about customers). The level of innovativeness of the company in relation to digital technologies makes it possible to assess the degree of implementation of the latest digital technologies, investments in business digitalization, as well as the impact of digitalization of marketing activities on the value of the client.

Respondents were asked to rate each of the survey parameters using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 is 'very negative' and 7 is 'very positive'. The evaluated companies are located in Ukraine. One of the company's top managers answered the questions of the questionnaire. Most of the surveyed enterprises are limited liability companies, state enterprises and individual entrepreneurs, that is, small and medium-sized enterprises. According to the field of activity, these are enterprises producing chemical products, pharmaceutical companies, agrarian business, manufacturers of food products and metal products, mechanical engineering, IT and consulting companies, educational sector etc. The questionnaire procedure was carried out via the Internet, letters or messages on social networks with a link to the questionnaire were sent to companies. The questionnaire was conducted in January-June 2023. Ward's algorithm was used to cluster the results, that is, a hierarchical technique of unsupervised segmentation with variance reduction, which allowed obtaining a natural automatic classification that maximizes the variability between groups. Five clusters of companies were formed. Multivariate statistics prove that there are statistically significant differences between clusters.

Table 2. Cluster analysis results

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Product policy	0.431	-0.171	0.164	-0.180	-0.317
Price policy	0.104	-0.059	0.145	-0.212	0.249
Distribution policy	0.165	0.321	-0.048	0.712	-0.462
Communication policy	- 0.171	0.518	0.224	0.411	0.233
Brand positioning	-0.174	0.466	0.216	0.368	0.225
Analysis of market and competitors	0.035	-0.113	0.529	0.156	0.169
Analysis of customers	0.146	-0.222	0.434	0.214	0.075

Cluster 1 – Digitization leaders in terms of impact on product policy

The first cluster is 27% of the entire sample. The influence of the Internet and the implementation of digital technologies in the marketing activities of the enterprise is greatest on the product policy (0.431). The impact of digitalization on customer analysis (0.146) and pricing policy (0.104) is above average. The impact of digitalization on sales policy (0.165), communication policy (-0.171), brand positioning (-0.174) is much lower than the average. As for the sample, the companies that mostly belong to the first cluster are machine-building enterprises and manufacturers of chemical products.

Cluster 2 – Digitization leaders in terms of impact on communication policy and brand positioning

The second cluster is 24% of the entire sample. The impact of digital technologies is significantly above average on communication policy (0.518) and brand positioning (0.466). However, digitalization is lower than the average level for pricing policy (-0.059), customer analysis (-0.222), market and competitor analysis (-0.113). This cluster is dominated by companies that belong to the sectors of production of mining products, agricultural business and educational sector.

Cluster 3 – Digitization leaders from analytical activities

Cluster 3 accounts for 14% of the entire sample. For these enterprises, digitalization has a significantly higher than average impact on market and competitor analysis (0.529) and customer analysis (0.434). Digital influence on sales policy (-0.048) is significantly lower than average. This cluster mainly includes IT companies.

Cluster 4 – Digitalization leaders in distribution

The fourth cluster is 25% of the entire sample. These enterprises have the highest and most significant impact of digitalization on sales policy (0.712). Digital technologies have a significantly higher than average influence on communication policy (0.411) and brand positioning (0.368). The impact on commodity policy (-0.180) is significantly lower than average. This cluster is dominated by pharmaceutical companies and enterprises manufacturing metal products.

Cluster 5 – Digitization leaders in price segmentation

This cluster represents 10% of the sample. In these enterprises, digitalization has a significantly higher impact on price (0.249), followed by communication policy (0.233) and brand positioning (0.225). Below the average, according to the respondents, digitization affects the product (-0.317) and sales (-0.462) policy. This cluster is dominated by consulting companies. Result of regression analysis (influence of digitalization on customer value) presents in table 3.

Table 3. Result of regression analysis (influence of digitalization on customer value)

Parameter label	Coefficient	Standard deviation	<i>p</i> -value	Test-value
Cluster 4	1.2560	0.238	0.002	4.42
Cluster 2	0.3926	0.344	0.301	1.18
Cluster 3	0.1364	0.287	0.929	0.11
Cluster 5	-0.7898	0.465	0.041	-2.24
Cluster 1	-0.6470	0.257	0.000	-3.43
Constant	4.6755	0.132	0.000	21.07

In the process of cluster analysis, variance analysis (regression with zero-sum parameters) was conducted to confirm the hypothesis that respondents' opinions about the importance of digitalization in creating value for the client may depend on which of the five clusters the company as a whole belongs to.

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

So, in the process of research, approaches to the concept of digitalization were determined, a sequence of actions was formed regarding the process of introducing digital marketing into the company's activities, as well as the process of forming and implementing a marketing strategy using digital technologies. Next, a hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted based on seven variables related to marketing operations: product policy, price policy, sales policy, communication policy, customer analysis, market and competitor analysis, brand positioning. The following descriptive variables were used to describe the five clusters as variables related to company

characteristics and variables related to digitalization. In the next step, regression studies were performed to test the relationships. Also in the research is the relationship between marketing activities, digitalization and value for the consumer.

Five clusters of enterprises were identified, which demonstrate a heterogeneous impact of digitalization on marketing activities, these are the leaders of digitalization in terms of impact on product policy, which mainly include manufacturers of chemical products and machine-building enterprises; leaders of digitalization in terms of influence on communication policy and brand positioning, which include food manufacturers, farmers and education sector; digitalization leaders from analytical activities (market, customers, competitors), which include IT companies; digitalization leaders from distribution, which include pharmaceutical companies and metal products manufacturers; digitalization leaders in price segmentation, which include consulting companies.

Clustering shows the orientation of the digitalization of each business area on some aspect of their marketing activities. None of the business areas fully embraces the digitalization of the entire marketing mix.

For example, in educational sector the digital marketing allows to use broader ways of presenting new educational products and services, to communicate more effectively with the target audience. Youth is the target audience that is most inclined to search for information on the Internet. In the process of choosing an educational institution for study, a study program, applicants familiarize themselves with information on the Internet. Therefore, the website of the educational institution should be constantly updated and optimized, have multimedia content, reviews of graduates and students, blogs from experts in the field of education. It is advisable to use social networks to collect information about the target audience, for communications. The involvement of famous people, leading experts in the field of student education positions the brand of the educational institution. Potential students spread information about the educational institution to their friends and classmates through social networks, motivating them to further transfer information and initiating word of mouth. Thus, digitalization of marketing of the educational sector is aimed, first of all, at improving the image of the institution, its position on the market, as well as obtaining new consumers, namely students in a rather competitive environment of educational institutions.

The results of the research show that in the process of cost growth, the company's innovative development and digitalization of marketing operations increase, which positively affects the competitiveness of the company and brand positioning. The education sector is no exception. To expand sales volumes, promote customer loyalty and loyalty, promote the company's products in new markets, increase revenues and competitiveness, companies must develop a strong culture of Marketing 4.0 as a transition from traditional marketing to digital, as well as the gradual application of Marketing 5.0 as the use of technologies that imitate a person, with the goal of creating, communicating, providing and increasing customer value throughout the customer journey. Technologies also include artificial intelligence, natural language processing technologies, sensors, robotics, augmented reality, virtual reality, the Internet of Things, and blockchain. Every marketing operation requires special digital technologies.

Receiving additional economic benefits can help develop a Marketing 4.0 and Marketing 5.0 management culture aimed at acquiring new digital tools (e.g. websites, social media pages, online advertising, e-commerce) and developing the skills of marketing personnel related to using these tools in all business sectors, including the provision of educational services. Digital marketing technologies can enrich marketing practices by making more informed decisions based on big data, predicting the results of marketing strategies and tactics, using content-based digital experiences, improving the productivity of interaction with customers (chatbots, augmented and virtual reality), and accelerating marketing processes. The further achievements can be the formation of marketing strategies for digitalization for five clusters, securing leadership positions in digitalization marketing, and the weak side. Finally, in the era of digitalization, the education system is the foundation for providing the digital skills necessary to master the new tools of Marketing 4.0 and Marketing 5.0.

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