

## Strategic management and digital marketing: analysis of their integration in modern business from the aspect of competitive advantage

### Strategijski menadžment i digitalni marketing: analiza njihove integracije u savremenom poslovanju sa aspekta konkurentne prednosti

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#### Abstract

*In an unstable and unpredictable business environment, companies face numerous challenges that require the adaptation of activities and strategies to constant changes resulting from technological progress, digitalization of the market, the evolution of consumer habits and the growth of global competition. Digital marketing, an inseparable part of this process, is increasingly being integrated into strategic business frameworks and is evolving into a key component of strategic management, going beyond its traditional promotional role. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to determine, through a theoretical analysis of the available and relevant literature and the conducted empirical research (396 respondents), to what extent and in what way the application of digital marketing techniques – such as content personalization, the use of digital communication channels, building trust in electronic transactions, measuring the quality of online services and encouraging interaction with consumers – can improve the strategic positioning and contribute to the achievement of a company's competitive advantage. The results of the conducted research indicate a clear connection between the application of digital channels and platforms and the realization of the company's strategic goals, primarily through improving the user experience, personalizing the offer and building consumer loyalty. Digital marketing techniques, especially channels and platforms, are proving to be an effective strategic management tool, enabling two-way communication, market adaptation and long-term competitive advantage.*

**Keywords:** strategic management, digital channels and platforms, purchase decision, Internet, competitiveness

#### Sažetak

*U nestabilnom i nepredvidivom poslovnom okruženju, preduzeća se suočavaju sa brojnim izazovima koji uslovljavaju prilagođavanje aktivnosti i strategija stalnim promenama nastalim usled tehnološkog napretka, digitalizacije tržišta, evolucije potrošačkih navika i porasta globalne konkurencije. Digitalni marketing, kao neodvojivi segment tog procesa, sve više se integriše u strateške okvire poslovanja i postaje ključni deo strategijskog menadžmenta, prevazilazeći svoju tradicionalnu promotivnu ulogu. Shodno tome, cilj ovog rada je da kroz, teorijsku analizu dostupne i relevantne literature i sprovedenog empirijskog istraživanja (396 ispitanika), utvrdi u kojoj meri i na koji način primena tehnika digitalnog marketinga – kao što su personalizacija sadržaja, korišćenje digitalnih kanala komunikacije, izgradnja poverenja u elektronske transakcije, merenje kvaliteta onlajn usluga i podsticanje interakcije sa potrošačima – mogu da unaprede strategijsko pozicioniranje i doprinesu ostvarivanju konkurentne prednosti preduzeća. Rezultati sprovedenog istraživanja ukazuju na jasnu povezanost između primene digitalnih kanala i platformi i realizacije strateških ciljeva preduzeća, pre svega kroz unapređenje korisničkog iskustva, personalizaciju ponude i izgradnju lojalnosti potrošača. Digitalne marketing tehnike, posebno kanali i platforme, pokazuju se kao efikasan alat strateškog menadžmenta, koji omogućava dvosmernu komunikaciju, prilagođavanje tržištu i dugoročnu konkurentnu prednost.*

**Ključne reči:** strategijski menadžment, digitalni kanali i platforme, odluka o kupovini, Internet, konkurentnost

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## 1. Introduction

"Today, brand and product visibility has become a key objective in attracting consumer attention and loyalty in the market."  
(Rodríguez et al., 2024, p. 624)

Digital transformation has become one of the key processes shaping the modern world- both globally and locally. Modern technological solutions are increasingly embedded in the daily life of a large portion of the world's population, as well as in the business operations of companies, whose activities- especially customer relations are increasingly grounded in the use of digital technologies (Blazheska et al., 2020). In an era of intensifying multipolarity, where economic and technological power shifts dynamically between different regions and markets rather than being distributed linearly, an organization's ability to respond to the challenges of the new digital age is crucial for its survival and development. Additionally, the modern business environment is characterized by instability, uncertainty, and rapid changes, driven by technological progress, market digitalization, shifts in consumer behavior, and intensifying global competition.

Information and communication technologies and especially blockchain technology are becoming a key factor in future financial and industrial management (Antanasković et al., 2025). In this sense, the technological revolution does not only refer to technological modernization, but also includes a fundamental change in the organizational structure, business models, but also in the way of delivering value to consumers and communicating with them. Consequently, in today's business environment, digital marketing is no longer viewed as a separate function within an enterprise, but as an integral part of the overall business process. Blazheska et al. (2020) emphasize that digital marketing has become a fundamental ally for both small and large companies striving to grow and operate at national and international levels, leveraging the democratization of access to this field through technological advancement. Digital marketing is also increasingly regarded as an integrated part of business strategies, plans, and activities. Olson et al. (2021) observe that "The Internet has altered the business landscape by creating a wide array of digital marketing tactics. However, with the emergence of new tactical options, there is a growing need for managers to prioritize what they want to achieve and decide which digital marketing tactics to invest in" (p. 285). Accordingly, digital marketing is no longer merely a promotional tool but has become an integral component of strategic management—supporting data-driven decision-making, shaping the customer experience, and contributing to the development of long-term competitive advantage. "The speed and ease with which digital media transmit information and help improve business performance are remarkable." (Pushpalatha et al., 2019, p. 4659).

These trends have led to the integration of strategic management, on the one hand, and marketing, on the

other. As a result, the literature increasingly refers to strategic marketing, which involves the pursuit of competitive and long-term advantages in customer relations, as well as the analysis and management of a company's strategic activities (Kerguignas, 2024, p. 17). Given that modern technological solutions and information and communication technologies are now almost invariably at the core of both competitive advantage and marketing activities, the focus of this study is the analysis of the integration of digital marketing techniques with strategic management. The authors' motivation to explore this relationship stems from the study's primary aim: to examine - through a theoretical review of relevant literature and an analysis of the results of empirical research - how and to what extent the integration of digital marketing techniques and strategic management contributes to the creation and maintenance of a company's competitive advantage. Special attention is given to identifying specific digital tools and practices that improve customer relations, enable offer personalization, increase the efficiency of business processes, and enhance market positioning in the context of the digital economy.

## 2. Literature review

In today's business environment, digital marketing and strategic management are increasingly seen as two sides of the same coin. Although they originate from different disciplines, both concepts have a common goal - creating and sustaining a company's competitive advantage. Digital marketing provides the operational tools for market communication and the development of strong customer relationships, while strategic management sets long-term framework for key decision-making and the company's overall direction. Given that the authors start from the basic assumptions that between digital marketing on the one hand and strategic management on the other, there is a mutual connection and conditioning, before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of their relationship and impact on the competitive position of the company, it is necessary to first look at their theoretical foundations and principles on which they are based.

"Digital and other technologies are maturing, leading to a digital society" (Horvat et al., 2025, p. 1), therefore digital transformation is becoming the main topic of scientific research, but also the basis of business strategies and plans. "Companies that are unable to adapt to the digital world are expected to fall victim to 'digital Darwinism,' where existing players may disappear, and only the most adaptable companies that align with technological trends will survive and thrive in the market, reshaping the competitive landscape." (Maksimenko et al., 2021, p. 1). "Today's era of digitization and rapid technological change presents an opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to significantly improve their competitiveness by following and applying these developments." (Jakšić et al., 2025, p. 63). Marketing, both as an academic discipline and a business function, has existed for a long time, as companies have always needed to inform consumers about their products and services. However, as a result of digital transformation,

globalization, and the technological revolution, marketing is increasingly being labeled as "digital." Digital marketing involves the use of technology to carry out marketing activities, build long-term relationships with customers, and adapt to their evolving needs (Ali Salayi, 2020). Similarly, Desai (2019) describes digital marketing as encompassing all marketing efforts that utilize electronic devices or the Internet, leveraging a wide range of digital techniques, tactics, and channels to connect with consumers - especially in the digital spaces where they spend the most of their time. On the other hand, Baranikumar et al. (2024) argue that the dynamic nature of digital marketing represents both an opportunity and a challenge for businesses. This group of authors also highlights the use of artificial intelligence - such as machine learning algorithms and chatbots - as one of the most significant trends in digital marketing. In this sense, Vukmirović et al. (2025), point out that artificial intelligence has led to significant changes in various aspects of marketing, especially in the areas of digital marketing and personalized advertising. Digital marketing can play the role of a "knight in shining armor," this is only possible if managers fully recognize the importance of using communication strategies to engage customers and create a distinctive user experience (Sharma, 2022). Although the literature mentions various digital marketing techniques and tactics, Olson et al. (2021) identify the following as the most significant:

1. Content marketing - creation and distribution of valuable, relevant, and consistent content, to attract and retain a specific group of consumers and encourage profitable customer action;
2. Search engine optimization - The ongoing improvement of content design and digital assets to achieve higher rankings in search engine results pages;
3. E-mail marketing - The direct delivery of timely and relevant information to potential and existing customers via email;
4. Search and social ads - The creation of ads that appear at the top of the search list or in the sidebar of the search results page. These are ads related to keywords;
5. Data-driven personalization - the process of audience segmentation and marketing decisions based on information about individuals, rather than on their previous choices;
6. Use of marketing technology - a set of software and technological tools and solutions used by marketing professionals to automate and simplify marketing processes;
7. Social media advertising - Any form of advertising that involves paying social media platforms to display specific content.

Pushpalatha et al. (2019) argue that digital marketing is critically important for modern businesses and is founded on the following principles: content capital, simplicity and efficiency, customer engagement, enhancement of essential functions, and social interaction. The theoretical foundation of digital marketing - which underscores a strong connection between strategic decision-making and

digital marketing - is further supported by the fact that 40% of marketing campaigns today use artificial intelligence in real time to optimize the return on advertising investment and campaign performance (S&S Insider, 2025). The digital marketing market was valued at USD 416.01 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach USD 1,478.03 billion by 2032, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 15.16% during the forecast period 2024–2032 (S&S Insider, 2025).

Strategic management, on the other hand, represents the second key component of this research, that is, the other side of the coin in the analysis of modern business. Strategic management is a methodological process involving the development, implementation, evaluation, and control of strategies to achieve both short-term and long-term company goals (Itohan et al., 2024). Similarly, Momoh and Itohan (2023) define that strategic management as a process by which managers develop and implement strategies aimed at creating a sustainable competitive advantage. Strategic management involves the use or planned allocation of resources to implement major initiatives undertaken by managers on behalf of stakeholders to improve firm performance in a specific environment (Kennedy, 2020). When it comes to resources frequently associated with strategic management, it is essential to note that digital transformation has not bypassed this domain. Namely, Rêgo et al. (2021), indicate that digital transformation represents a strategic response to economic and digital-technological trends, making it inherently strategic in nature. In this context, Maksimenko et al. (2021) highlight that the multilayered and heterogeneous nature of technologies makes the implementation process equally complex and multidimensional—transforming not only the IT environment but the entire strategic management system. As a result, contemporary strategic management cannot be viewed in isolation from digital tools and technologies, which facilitate faster market analysis, more efficient decision-making, and improved adaptability to environmental changes. The digitalization of strategic management has become a crucial factor in enhancing a company's competitive position and in building long-term value for all stakeholders. Therefore, in the face of digital transformation and the imperative to remain competitive within their respective sectors, business leaders must develop and execute strategies that incorporate the implications of digital transformation and lead to improved operational performance (Hess et al., 2016).

### **Why digital marketing and strategic management?**

Today, as consumers conduct most of their activities within digital spaces—that is, virtual environments—digital marketing has emerged as a focal area for companies, particularly in the context of efficiency and sustainability (Basal & Suzen, 2023). Marketing is an end-to-end system that permeates all other segments of a company and is directed toward the following objectives:

- understanding the market through supply and demand analysis;

- development of proposals for product (service) creation, determining its price, creating a sales channel, informing consumers about the product;
- market penetration (gaining market share, its expansion and maintenance) and
- adhering to a chosen philosophy of market interaction (Bondarenko et al., 2020).

The inclusion of a marketing plan in company management helps maintain market orientation, which facilitates stronger customer relationships and leads to desirable financial outcomes (Ribeiro, 2020). Also, by integrating digital marketing into their overall strategy, companies can create more consistent and relevant customer experiences, improve operational efficiency, and secure a broader market share (Hinayatulohi et al., 2023). The focus of this research on the interconnection and mutual dependence between marketing and strategic management arises from the growing significance of the concept of strategic management, which has been present in academic literature for more than two decades. More than a decade ago, Kirova and Trinquencoste (2011) defined strategic marketing as the contribution that marketing makes to the company's overall strategy, and its purpose is to align the company's actual capabilities with the promises it makes to the market, to generate a competitive advantage. Nearly a decade later, Kerguignas (2020) offered a more comprehensive definition of strategic marketing, noting that it encompasses: the study of organizational behavior in the market and its interactions with various stakeholders and competitors; alignment with the general corporate strategy; allocation of internal resources and capacities; the role of marketing as a boundary-spanning function that links the organization to its environment; and a focus on long-term strategic competitive advantage.

Although the relationship between marketing and strategic management, as well as its advantages, is often discussed, Piercy et al. (1997), believe that in the context of the aforementioned integration, it is necessary to consider how strategic issues in marketing relate to corporate strategy, then whether the concept of marketing and strategy overlap or compete, and finally what challenges and pressures arising from changes in corporate structures and practices are faced by these two areas. On the other hand, in terms of digital transformation, Saputra (2024) believes that the integration of marketing and strategic management can present several challenges, such as a lack of understanding of digital technology, difficulties in accurately measuring return on investment (ROI), as well as organizational and cultural changes that are necessary to successfully support digital transformation. Based on the theoretical analysis, the authors propose the following research hypotheses:

H<sub>0</sub>: The use of digital channels and platforms for consumer communication significantly influences purchasing decisions and user experience.

H<sub>1</sub>: A positive consumer perception of promotional content delivered through digital channels and platforms significantly influences purchasing decisions and user experience.

H<sub>2</sub>: The use of digital channels (such as social media and mobile applications) affects customer brand loyalty.

H<sub>3</sub>: For consumers who are receptive to promotional content delivered via digital channels, the quality of online services provided by the company significantly influences their purchasing decisions.

H<sub>4</sub>: Consumers who frequently use digital channels and platforms believe that personalization through digital channels is key to attracting new and retaining existing customers.

H<sub>5</sub>: Consumers whose purchasing decisions and user experience are shaped using digital channels and platforms perceive these technologies as the foundation of a company's competitive advantage.

### 3. Methodology

To test and validate the defined research hypotheses, a study was conducted consisting of two parts: a detailed theoretical analysis of available and relevant literature in the field, and empirical research focused on analyzing the relationship between digital marketing and strategic management, with particular emphasis on the contribution of digital marketing techniques to the development of a company's competitive advantage. Various scientific methods were applied in this paper to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and to facilitate a relevant theoretical analysis. The method of analysis and synthesis was used to systematize theoretical and practical insights from relevant sources. Additionally, an analysis of previous research findings related to the topic was conducted. A comparative analysis was employed to examine different approaches to marketing and strategic management in both domestic and international literature. Descriptive and historical methods were also used to illustrate the development of marketing and its impact on business operations across different time periods. The method of analogy enabled comparisons with similar phenomena in other sectors of the digital market, while inductive-deductive methods were used to draw conclusions based on observed theoretical postulates and empirical examples.

The empirical part of the research was carried out using the survey method. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to respondents in both written and electronic formats (Google Forms). Data collection took place from November 2024 to February 2025. A total of 396 randomly selected respondents from municipalities in the territory of the Republic of Serbia participated in the research. The questionnaire comprised 30 questions, divided into three groups. Namely, the first group of questions (10) addressed the basic sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, marital status, municipality of residence, level of education, employment status, average income, number of household members. The second group (10 questions) is focused on the use of digital platforms, channels and the Internet, and as such contains questions related to the frequency and purpose of Internet use, the respondents' attitudes, reactions and willingness to accept promotional content marketed through the analyzed techniques, willingness to engage in various electronic platforms, examining the

attitudes of the respondents regarding the realization of electronic transactions, as well as motivational factors that influenced the building of trust in them. Within this group, respondents evaluated various aspects that affect their satisfaction with the quality of online services. To this end, the Online Service Quality Scale (Yang et al., 2004, p. 1147) was used. While the original scale contains 26 items, 20 statements were selected for this study and distributed across six analyzed dimensions: reliability (3 items), responsiveness (3), employee competence (3), ease of use (3), product portfolio (4), and security (4). Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree). The final group of 10 questions focused on the contribution of digital marketing techniques to the creation of a unique user experience, personalization of the offer, engagement and, consequently, effective strategic management and competitive advantage of the company. These questions also examined respondents' perceptions of how marketing techniques influence their purchasing decisions. Respondents answered questions assessing their views on how digital marketing contributes to shaping a unique customer experience and its impact on consumer behavior. Based on their responses, the influence of these techniques on a company's competitiveness and strategic market position was analyzed.

To process the data obtained from the empirical research, the IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 26) was used. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, multiple regression analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were applied.

#### 4. Research results and discussion

To analyse respondents' views on the impact of digital marketing on strategic decision-making within companies and the development of competitive advantage, a five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the applied scales ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, indicating a very high level of internal consistency, as well as a strong degree of item homogeneity within each scale. This suggests that the questionnaire is reliable and that the measured dimensions represent stable and relevant constructs. In this study, the integration of digital channels and platforms with strategic management was examined through key aspects such as purchase decision-making, user experience, consumer loyalty, and offer personalization. These elements are recognised as fundamental to modern strategic goals and managerial decision-making in the digital business environment.

In this research, the integration of digital channels and platforms with strategic management was observed through the prism of key aspects such as the purchase decision, user experience, consumer loyalty and personalization of the offer, bearing in mind that these elements form the basis of modern strategic goals and management decisions in the digital business

environment. A total of 396 respondents participated in the survey, with a higher proportion of women – 220 (55.6%) – compared to men – 176 (44.4%). The gender composition of the sample indicates a relatively balanced distribution, with a slight predominance of female participants. This may reflect a greater willingness among women to participate in survey research or their more active engagement in the digital space, particularly in the context of consumer behaviour. The geographical distribution of respondents shows that most participants were from Leposavić (88 – 22.2%), followed by Kosovska Mitrovica (64 – 15.3%), Zvečan (53 – 12.7%), Raška (40 – 9.6%), Zubin Potok (24 – 5.8%), Niš (11 – 2.6%), and Gračanica (10 – 2.4%).

**Table 1.** Structure of the sample according to age, level of education and workplace

Variables	Number of respondents	
	N	%
<b>Age</b>		
16-25	122	29.3
26-35	145	34.9
36-45	74	17.8
46-55	43	10.1
over 55 years old	12	2.9
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary education	2	0.5
Secondary education	119	28.6
College/vocational college	79	19.0
Bachelor's degree	135	32.5
Master's degree	54	13.0
Doctorate -PhD	7	1.5
<b>Working status</b>		
Unemployed	135	32.5
Employed on a fixed-term contract	115	27.6
Employed on a permanent contract	132	31.7
Entrepreneur – self-employed	3	0.7
Retired	11	2.6

*Source:* Author's calculation based on SPSS version 26.

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that the largest number of respondents were aged 26 to 35 (34.9%), followed by a significant proportion aged 16 to 25 (29.3%). The fewest respondents were over the age of 55 (2.9%). In terms of education, the majority of respondents had completed undergraduate academic studies (32.5%), while 28.6% had secondary education. Regarding employment status, the sample is relatively balanced: 32.5% of respondents were unemployed, 31.7% were employed on a permanent contract, and 27.6% on a fixed-term contract. Only 0.7% were self-employed business owners, and 2.6% were retired. These data indicate that the majority of respondents actively participate in the labour market, which is important for understanding their experiences with digital business channels and their perceptions of strategic management. Employment status is naturally linked to the issue of average monthly income. The results show that the largest number of respondents (28.8%) stated that they earn between 40,000 and 60,000 dinars per month. Notably, 16.4% of respondents earned between 60,000 and 80,000 dinars, while 16.7% earned over 80,000 dinars - indicating that a significant portion

of the sample falls into the medium- and high-income brackets. On the other hand, 18.2% reported monthly earnings of up to 20,000 dinars, and 13.1% earned between 20,000 and 40,000 dinars, highlighting the presence of a less economically stable group within the sample. Among the 396 respondents, the majority were not married - 184 individuals (46.5%) identified as single, suggesting that nearly half of the sample belongs to a younger, potentially more flexible demographic in terms of professional and personal mobility. A total of 159 respondents (40.2%) were married, representing a substantial segment likely to be more focused on long-term career and family planning. Smaller portions of the sample consisted of individuals in cohabiting relationships (5.3%), divorced (5.3%), and widowed (2.8%), adding to the sample's diversity in terms of family status. Cross-tabulation analysis showed that most respondents live in households with three to four members - 194 individuals (49.0%). A significant number also reported living in larger households, with 129 participants (32.6%) living with five to six members. A smaller proportion (16.7%) lived in smaller households of one or two members, while only 1.8% lived in households with seven or more members, which is consistent with broader demographic trends toward smaller family units.

The basic hypothesis  $H_0$ : The use of digital channels and platforms for consumer communication significantly influences purchasing decisions and user experience.

In response to the question, "Is your decision to purchase a particular product and your user experience during the purchase influenced by interaction and promotional content distributed by the company via digital channels and platforms?", the majority of respondents gave an affirmative answer. Specifically, 37.6% answered "yes, partially" and 18.2% responded "yes, completely," indicating that more than half of the participants perceive

their purchasing decisions and user experiences as being shaped - positively or negatively - by promotional content and interactions facilitated through digital channels. Conversely, 26% of respondents selected the option "sometimes yes, sometimes no," suggesting a degree of flexibility in their responsiveness to digital promotions. This group may not be consistently influenced by content but remains susceptible under certain circumstances. These findings are supported by a statistically significant relationship ( $p = 0.011$ ) between the variables "Do you, and how often, use digital channels and platforms for communication and shopping?" and "Does interaction with a company via digital channels affect your user experience during the purchase?" The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $\rho = 0.128$ ) indicates a positive but weak correlation between the frequency of digital channel usage and the perceived impact on user experience. In other words, the more frequently respondents use digital platforms for communication and purchasing, the more likely they are to recognize positive effects of such interactions on their user experience. Given these results, which confirm a significant connection between the use of digital channels and platforms and both purchasing decisions and user experience, a logical follow-up question arises: Which specific digital channels and platforms influence purchasing decisions? „A special place in this context is occupied by social networks, whose integration into everyday life, especially of young people, has long since become a fact. Their influence has been recognized in numerous scientific studies, which point out that social networks represent a constant source of information - whether it is content that users are actively looking for, or content that is marketed to them through posts by other community members, as well as through paid and unpaid ads.“ (Alkier & Perić, 2021, p. 217).

**Table 2.** Regression analysis - relationship between digital channels/platforms and purchase decision/customer experience

Digital channels/platforms**	Respondents' answers to the question - Is your decision to purchase a particular product and user experience during purchase influenced by the interaction and promotional content of the company placed through digital channels and platforms?*			
	Sig. (p)	Coefficients Beta	Tolerance	VIF
websites	0.003	0.172	0.651	1.536
mobile applications	0.929	0.006	0.520	1.924
social networks	0.000	0.255	0.809	1.237
email	0.000	0.311	0.519	1.926
Internet browsers	0.001	-0.184	0.526	1.900
Model summary / ANOVA: R=0.476; R <sup>2</sup> =0.227; F=22.896; Sig. 0.000				

\* dependent variable

\*\* independent variables

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS version 26.

The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate that the regression model is statistically significant and explains 22.7% of the variance in the dependent variable. All Tolerance values exceed 0.1 and all VIF values are below 10, indicating that the assumption of no multicollinearity is satisfied. Regarding the influence of the analyzed digital channels and platforms on the prediction of purchase decisions and user experience, a statistically significant

relationship was observed for all channels except mobile applications. The beta coefficient values indicate that electronic mail has the greatest independent influence on purchase decisions and user experience ( $\beta = 0.311$ ), followed by social networks ( $\beta = 0.255$ ), websites ( $\beta = 0.172$ ), and Internet browsers ( $\beta = -0.184$ ), the latter exhibiting a negative beta coefficient. The positive beta values suggest that promotional content and interactions

via email, social media, and websites play a significant role in shaping consumer purchasing behavior and user experience. This could reflect the effectiveness of personalized newsletters, direct email offers, and notifications, as well as engaging content on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, including comments, influencer endorsements, and promotions. Additionally, it highlights the functional and informational roles of websites - such as detailed product information, ordering options, user-friendly design, and customer support. In contrast, the negative beta coefficient for Internet search engines suggests that frequent use of this channel may be associated with a weaker influence on purchasing decisions and user experience. This could imply that consumers rely on search engines primarily for information gathering and comparing products or prices, rather than for forming a positive perception of a specific brand or product. These findings support the conclusion that the use of digital channels and platforms significantly affects both purchasing decisions and user experience, thereby confirming the basic research hypothesis. The significance of digital technologies in facilitating interaction and crafting a unique user experience was recognized by Azul and Salleh (2012), who emphasized that interactive functions tend to enhance customer satisfaction when implemented via digital technology. A similar observation was made by Batat (2021), who argued that digital technologies allow users to fully experience and emotionally engage with the marketed information.

First auxiliary research hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>: Positive consumer perception of promotional content placed through digital channels and platforms significantly influences their purchase decision and user experience.

In addition to the use of digital channels and platforms, it is important to consider whether consumer attitudes toward their use influence purchasing decisions and the overall user experience. A statistically significant relationship was found between the variables attitude and purchase decision, specifically between the questions: "What is your attitude toward the use of digital channels and platforms for delivering promotional content?" and "Is your decision to purchase a certain product and your user experience during the purchase influenced by the interaction and promotional content of the company delivered through digital channels and platforms?" The analysis revealed a significant correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ), with a Pearson correlation coefficient of ( $\rho = 0.507$ ), indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. This suggests that the more favorable the respondents' attitudes are toward the use of digital channels and platforms for promotional purposes, the more likely it is that their purchasing decisions and user experiences will be influenced by such content. Moreover, a cross-tabulation analysis showed that this relationship is most strongly expressed among younger respondents, particularly those between the ages of 16 and 35. This demographic displays a higher openness to digital channels and a greater willingness to engage with brands through such platforms, make purchase decisions, and develop positive user

experiences. These findings support and confirm the first research hypothesis, demonstrating that consumers' attitudes toward the use of digital channels and platforms for promotional content significantly influence their purchase decisions and user experience. The importance of consumer attitudes as determinants of behavior is also highlighted by Malson (2019), who noted that implicit attitudes significantly impact consumer behavior and reactions—even in cases where the individual may no longer consciously remember the experience during which those attitudes were formed.

Second auxiliary research hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>: More frequent use of digital channels (such as social networks, mobile applications, websites, Internet browsers) affects customer loyalty towards a brand/company that utilizes digital platforms.

To the question "Does the use of digital platforms by the companies whose products you buy affect your loyalty to that brand?", the majority of respondents had an affirmative answer. Specifically, 61.6% of participants reported that company digital platforms partially (36.9%) or entirely (24.7%) influence their brand loyalty. This suggests that the active and strategic use of digital channels—such as social media, email, and websites—can play a key role in fostering long-term relationships with consumers. Conversely, 20.7% of respondents stated that digital platforms do not affect or do not affect their sense of loyalty at all, while 17.7% maintained a neutral stance. This indicates the presence of a consumer segment whose loyalty is shaped by other factors (e.g., product quality, price, or customer support), rather than digital communication alone. Given that the findings indicate an impact of digital channels on loyalty, the question arises as to whether the frequency of consumers' use of digital channels also influences their loyalty to brands or companies employing such platforms. A statistically significant correlation was identified ( $p = 0.000$ ) between the variables frequency of digital channel/platform use and brand loyalty, as measured by responses to the questions: "If you use digital channels/platforms, how often have you used them in the past month?" and "Does the use of digital platforms by companies whose products you buy affect your loyalty to that brand?" The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $\rho = 0.324$ ) indicates a moderate but meaningful relationship: the more frequently respondents engage with digital channels and platforms, the more likely they are to perceive those interactions as relevant to building or reinforcing their loyalty to a brand. This supports the conclusion that a company's digital presence is a crucial component of consumer retention strategies. Accordingly, the results confirm that frequent use of digital platforms and channels positively affects customer loyalty, thereby supporting the second research hypothesis. Similar conclusions were drawn by Batat (2021), who cited Coca-Cola as an example of a company leveraging innovative technological systems and modern platforms for two-way communication, alongside consumer-focused strategies that evoke positive emotions, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Third auxiliary research hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>: For customers who accept promotional content placed through digital channels, the quality of online services provided by the company significantly influences the purchase decision.

To gain a deeper understanding of the role digital channels and platforms play in shaping consumer behavior, the

relationship between respondents' perceptions of the use of digital channels and platforms for promotional purposes and the influence of online service quality on purchasing decisions was analyzed. This analysis aims to determine whether a positive perception of digital marketing further enhances the impact of online service quality on consumer behavior.

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis between respondents' attitudes and the influence of the quality of online services on the purchase decision

Quality of online services	What is your attitude towards the use of digital channels and platforms for the purpose of marketing promotional content?	
	Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	Pearson Correlation (ρ)
The company performs the service correctly for the first time.	0.000	0.251**
My online transactions are always accurate.	0.000	0.336**
The company keeps my records accurately.	0.000	0.294**
I get quick responses to my requests via email.	0.000	0.239**
The company is quick to resolve any issues I encounter.	0.000	0.186**
The employees of the company provide me with fast service.	0.000	0.198**
The employees of the company have the knowledge to answer my questions.	0.000	0.255**
Employees of the company properly solve all problems that arise.	0.000	0.208**
The employees of the company meet my requirements.	0.000	0.270**
Using a company website requires a lot of effort.	0.001	0.160**
The organization and structure of online content is easy to follow.	0.000	0.313**
It is easy for me to make a transaction through the company's website.	0.000	0.222**
All my service needs are included in the menu options.	0.000	0.279**
The company offers a wide range of products.	0.000	0.192**
The company provides services with the features I want.	0.000	0.185**
The company provides most of the service features I need.	0.000	0.249**
The company will not misuse my personal information.	0.000	0.188**
I feel safe in my online transactions.	0.000	0.250**
I feel safe providing sensitive information (e.g., credit card number) for online transactions.	0.000	0.174**
I feel that the risk associated with online transactions is low.	0.000	0.224**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS version 26.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate a statistically significant relationship ( $p = 0.000$ ), between respondents' attitudes and the quality of online services. Specifically, this relationship exists between the question, "What is your attitude towards the use of digital channels and platforms for the purpose of marketing promotional content?" and "To what extent do different segments of online services influence your purchase decision?" The Pearson correlation coefficients for all analyzed statements are positive, mostly of moderate strength. These findings suggest that the more positive respondents' attitudes are towards promotional activities carried out through digital channels (such as social networks, email, websites, etc.), the more likely they are to perceive the quality of online services - such as transaction accuracy, response speed, data security, information availability, and platform functionality - as a crucial factor influencing their purchase decisions. In other words, digital marketing that is perceived as relevant, professional, and user-oriented not only enhances the user experience but also strengthens the importance users place on the quality of service during online interactions with the brand. This outcome not only supports and confirms the third research hypothesis but also highlights the importance of an integrated digital strategy, which involves not only a presence on digital platforms but also delivering high-quality, user-friendly services. Further analysis,

specifically cross-tabulation, confirmed that the statistically significant correlation is also reflected in the distribution of responses. In particular, 55.8% of respondents believe that their purchase decisions and user experiences are influenced by companies' use of digital channels and platforms. Similarly, Trajković et al. (2023) found that the quality of online services, in addition to affecting purchase decisions, also has a statistically significant impact on user experience.

Fourth auxiliary research hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>: Customers who use digital channels and platforms more often believe that personalization is the key to attracting new and retaining existing customers.

Regarding the statement, "I believe that digital channels and platforms are an ideal means of communication and a 'place' where the voice of every customer can be heard," 67% of respondents agreed—36.9% partially and 30.1% completely. Slightly more than one-fifth of respondents (21%) held a neutral attitude, while only 12.2% disagreed. These results suggest that respondents perceive digital channels and platforms not only as tools for information or purchasing but also as spaces for two-way communication where their voices can be recognized and respected. The high percentage of agreement with the statement that these channels are "a place where the voice

of every customer is heard” indicates that consumers expect active participation in communication with companies, which creates opportunities to use digital channels for personalized offers. In this context, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the frequency of digital channel/platform use and respondents’ views on personalization - specifically between the question, “If you are a user of digital channels/platforms, how often have you used them in the past month?” and the statement, “Personalization of the brand and promotional content is key to attracting new and retaining existing customers.” This relationship is characterized by a highly statistically significant correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ), with a Pearson correlation coefficient ( $\rho = 0.483$ ), indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between the frequency of digital channel use and respondents’ attitudes toward the importance of personalization. This means that respondents who use digital channels and platforms more frequently are more inclined to recognize the importance of a personalized approach in communication and product promotion. This result further confirms the significance of digital tools in shaping modern marketing strategies, as personalization not only contributes to creating more relevant content for consumers but also strengthens their connection and loyalty to the brand. Supporting these findings is the degree of agreement with the statement, “I love and gladly accept personalized marketing content (prepared just for me), which is most often available to me via the Internet.” A total of 292 respondents (73.7%) expressed a positive attitude - 150 partially agreeing and 142 completely agreeing that they like and gladly accept personalized marketing content, most often available online. Sixty-eight respondents (17.2%) were neutral, while only 36 (9.1%) expressed disagreement, with 26 partially and 10 completely disagreeing. This distribution of attitudes shows that the majority of respondents are highly willing to accept marketing messages tailored to their interests, needs, and habits. These results confirm the fourth research hypothesis and further highlight the importance of personalization as an effective approach in digital marketing. Personalized content not only increases the relevance of messages but also enhances the user experience, aligning with the strategic goals of modern companies. Adaobi et al. (2024) emphasize that technological solutions and artificial intelligence greatly facilitate adapting interactions and offers to consumers’ needs and preferences.

Fifth auxiliary research hypothesis H<sub>5</sub>: Customers whose purchase decision and user experience are conditioned by the use of digital channels and platforms believe that the company's competitive advantage is based on the same.

The statistically significant relationships observed between the use of digital channels and purchase decisions, customer experience, loyalty, and personalization clearly demonstrate the comprehensive impact these platforms have on consumer behavior. Bearing this in mind, the question naturally arises: to what extent does the use of digital channels and platforms by

companies contribute to creating and maintaining competitive advantage in the market? To explore this, respondents were asked, “In your opinion, does the use of digital channels and platforms affect the development and preservation of a company’s competitive advantage?” The majority answered affirmatively. Specifically, 280 respondents (70.7%) expressed a clear opinion that digital channels contribute either fully (36.4%) or partially (34.3%) to competitive advantage. This indicates a widespread belief that the presence and active use of digital tools not only influence consumer decisions and experiences but also strategically position a company relative to its competitors. A statistically significant correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ), with a Pearson correlation coefficient indicating a moderately strong positive relationship ( $\rho = 0.443$ ), was observed between the questions: “Are your purchase decisions and user experience influenced by the interaction and promotional content delivered through digital channels and platforms?” and “In your opinion, does the use of digital channels and platforms affect the development and preservation of a company’s competitive advantage?” These findings highlight the interconnection between two key research aspects: consumers’ personal experience with digital channels (in the context of purchase decisions and user experience) and their attitudes toward whether these channels contribute to a company’s competitive advantage. This suggests that the more respondents believe that interaction and promotional content through digital channels influence their purchase decisions and user experience, the more likely they are to recognize digital channels and platforms as strategically important tools for differentiation and competitive advantage in the marketplace. Cross-tabulation revealed that 71.2% of respondents had made more than four online purchases, suggesting that these individuals are satisfied with digital channels and platforms, have a positive user experience, and therefore believe companies can base their competitive advantage on the efficient and high-quality use of digital solutions. These results confirm the fifth research hypothesis. Kuuru (2020) argues that emotional ties with an organization - strengthened, among other things, by the use of technology - reinforce consumer loyalty and can therefore be considered a source of competitive advantage, primarily due to their durability.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on all of the above, it can be concluded that modern literature increasingly emphasizes the strong connection between the use of digital channels and strategic management, with digital tools and platforms recognized as key instruments for achieving a company's strategic goals. Digital communication, personalization, and analytics are becoming integral components of strategic decision-making and competitive market positioning.

The research results clearly indicate a strong and multi-layered relationship between the use of digital channels/platforms and key aspects of consumer behavior, including purchase decisions, customer experience, loyalty, and the perception of personalization. Statistically

significant correlations between respondents' attitudes and their interactions with digital content suggest that digital marketing is no longer merely an optional addition but a vital part of overall business strategy. The majority of respondents confirmed that promotional content delivered through digital channels directly influences their purchasing decisions, while the quality of online services emerged as a crucial factor in shaping a positive user experience. Additionally, the role of digital channels in fostering consumer loyalty and enabling personalized offers was acknowledged, further underscoring their strategic value.

Particularly noteworthy is the finding that most respondents believe digital platforms contribute to the development and maintenance of a company's competitive advantage. This finding gains further significance considering the respondents' prior experience with online shopping and their positive attitudes toward digital communication channels. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that integrating digital marketing into strategic management should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment in long-term market positioning and competitive advantage. Companies that strategically and consistently utilize digital channels for communication, promotion, and service delivery not only meet the needs of modern consumers but also build a sustainable advantage grounded in innovation, efficiency, and strong customer relationships.

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