

Review

# The Application of Social Media in Digital Marketing

Kexue Yan <sup>1, \*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon (RMUTP) Faculty of Business Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

\* Correspondence: Kexue Yan, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon (RMUTP) Faculty of Business Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

**Abstract:** social media can quickly share and communicate while building personal and community online identities and interactive platforms. It can reach almost everyone and effectively promote brands, products, and services, attract potential customers, and encourage sales. It accelerates changes in the environment shared by enterprises and consumers and shapes market behavior. Through a literature review combined with the digital marketing research framework, we classify and synthesize the relevant literature research results, analyze the critical touch points where social media has or may have a significant impact on the marketing process and marketing strategy, and propose the role of social media in the field of digital marketing—existing future research directions.

Keywords: social media; digital marketing; literature review

## 1. Introduction

Marketing is an essential facet of any enterprise. As science and technology advance and society progresses, marketing methodologies are in a state of continual evolution. Over the past ten years, social media marketing has advanced significantly, and this trend is still going strong (Bryła et al., 2022). In this dynamic context, brands must concentrate on user experience and personalized needs, fostering active engagement with users by providing customized products and services. Concurrently, brands need to remain attuned to emergent marketing channels and approaches, such as social media marketing, to augment their visibility and influence.

Social media has comprehensive information display and dissemination characteristics and allows consumers to participate in interactions. Social media has functions such as content creation, consumer interaction, advertising, search, and sales. Therefore, it is widely used in digital marketing (Praditya, 2021).

## 2. Theoretical Basis

### 2.1. Marketing

The reorganization of the General Electric Company in the early 1950s signaled (Kilic, 2004) the ascendancy of a corporate philosophy that came to be known as the marketing concept. It was enthusiastically acclaimed as a new frontier in corporate development and attained a status comparable to an article that frequently questioned its validity in business and academic circles (Sachs & Benson, 1978). The marketing concept can be most simply explained as a belief that the organization can function in the best interests of its customer and itself where a balance is achieved between the needs of both of these parties (Kpalou, 2012).

Published: 14 October 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

### 2.2. Digital Marketing

Chaffey (Dave Chaffey, 2016) et al. define digital marketing as applying digital media, data, and technology to achieve marketing goals. The Financial Times describes digital marketing as using digital channels to reach consumers for product or service marketing. The American Marketing Association defines digital marketing as creating (Polonsky, 2005), communicating, and delivering value to customers and other stakeholders through digital technologies. Kannan (Kannan & Li, 2017a) adopts a more inclusive definition: digital marketing is an adaptive, technology-driven process. In this process, the company collaborates with customers and partners to co-create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders. Based on these definitions, this article defines digital marketing from an evolutionary perspective as being driven by evolving technologies, accumulating data, and adapting businesses and consumers around the core of creating, communicating, delivering, and maintaining value for customers and businesses. The shared environment and processes that shape market behavior.

P.K. Kannan, H. "A." Li. International Journal of Research in Marketing 34 (2017) 22–45

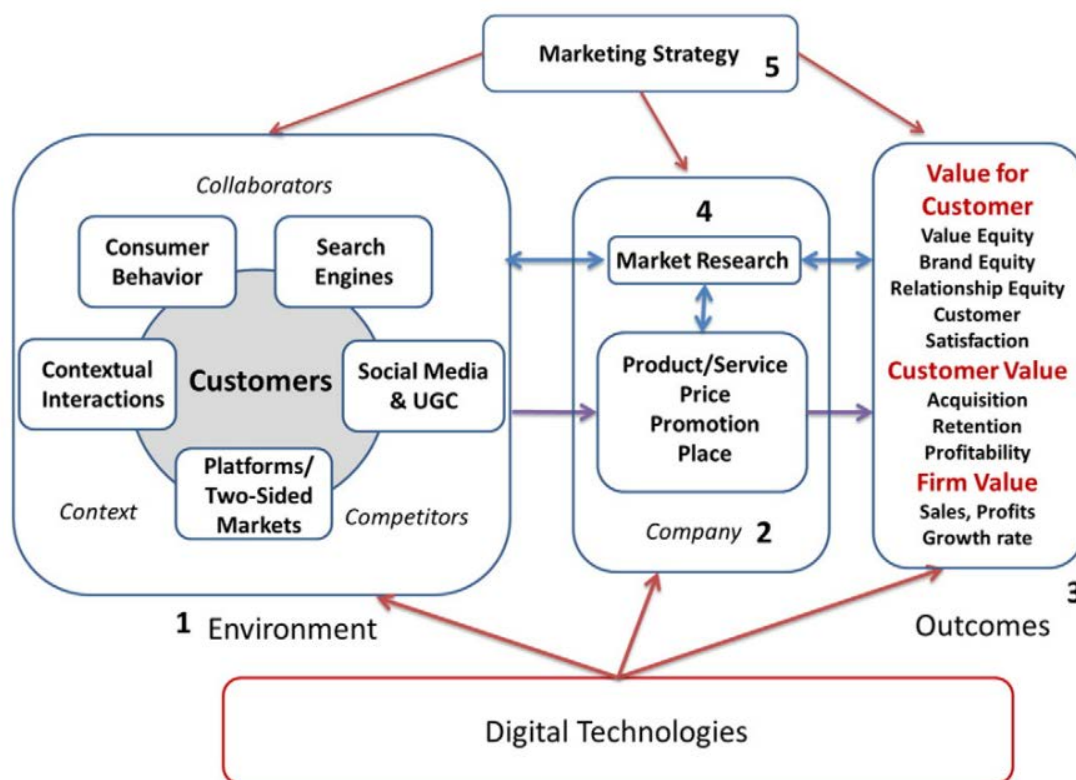


Figure 1. The Framework for Research in Digital Marketing(Kannan & Li, 2017b).

### 2.3. Social Media

Social media is a tool and platform that relies on communication, sharing, and dissemination between people. It is an online media that gives users space and controllability (Kannan & Li, 2017b). It is characterized by participation, openness, communication, community, and connectivity. With the inseparable development of technology, business, and data, how users live and entertain is gradually changing. Social media has evolved from blogs, forums, etc., to web1.0. The product spans mobile social networking, Weibo, WeChat, live broadcasts, etc., to today's content community and social media 3.0. Social APP, every step of development is inseparable from user behavior (Ellis-Chadwick & Chaffey, 2012). Brand marketing communication on social media platforms has the

characteristics of explosive solid power, which can gather extremely close attention in a short period. At the same time, users of social networking sites are very enthusiastic about participation and sharing, and hot events can be easily noticed by users with the click of a mouse. At the same time as mobile phones, it has been widely spread through various platforms. Through the attention and sharing of users, netizens, and word of mouth of offline, powerful energy exploded in a short quickly.

#### 2.4. Networking Services

The following is a list of the most popular social networking services based on the number of active users as of January 2022 per Statista.

**Table 1.** Social networking services with the most users, January 2022.

#	Network Name	Number of Users (in millions)	Country of Origin
1	Facebook	2,910	United States
2	YouTube	2,562	United States
3	WhatsApp	2,000	United States
4	Instagram	1,478	United States
5	WeChat	1,263	China
6	TikTok	1,000	China
7	Facebook Messenger	988	United States
8	Douyin	600	China

#### 2.5. Six Degrees of Separation

In 1967, Stanley Milgram, a professor of psychology at Harvard University, conducted a famous chain letter experiment: he randomly sent a letter to 160 people in Nebraska, in the midwestern United States. With the name of an ordinary stockbroker thousands of miles away in Boston, Milgram asked the recipient to send the letter to the recipient through his or her friends. As a result, most people only went through five or six steps. The letter finally reached the stockbroker's hands.

The "six degrees of separation" theory laid the theoretical foundation for social networks. Milgram's chain experiment embodies a seemingly universal objective law: socialized members of modern human society may communicate with each other through "six degrees of space." To connect them (Samoylenko et al., 2023), unrelated A and B do not exist.

In the development of social media, we can trace it back to Usenet in 1982. As an early discussion forum system, it provided users with a platform for publishing information and interactive communication. Subsequently, Six Degrees, which came out in 1997, pioneered social networking sites, allowing users to connect with friends and family.

In the 21st century, social media has experienced explosive growth. Facebook's rise to prominence in 2004 quickly made it the world's most popular social media platform (Samoylenko et al., 2023). Then, the launch of YouTube in 2005 completely changed how people watch and share videos. In 2006, Twitter became the first choice for people to share instant, short information and news.

As the years go by, social media continues to innovate and evolve, new platforms emerge, and existing platforms continue introducing new features to adapt to user needs. Nowadays, social media is an integral part of our daily lives and plays a pivotal role in marketing.

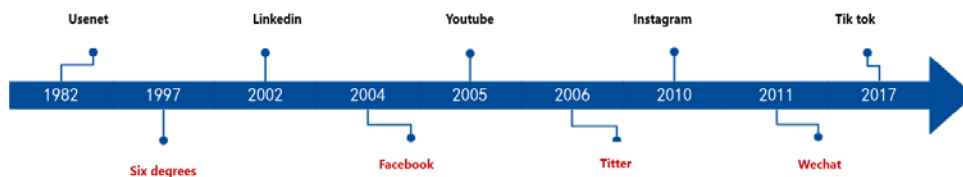


Figure 2. Social media timeline.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The literature review process of this article combines the three stages of an effective literature review process (Καπαντζάκης, 2018) and the literature search process, as shown in Figure 2. In addition, the research on social media marketing is interdisciplinary (Praditya, 2021). Research conducted in digital marketing may lead to some basic questions, which may be answered in consumer psychology, marketing analysis, economics, and communication. This article hopes to objectively capture all fundamental substantive research advances in social media in digital marketing through as many comprehensive and representative databases as possible.

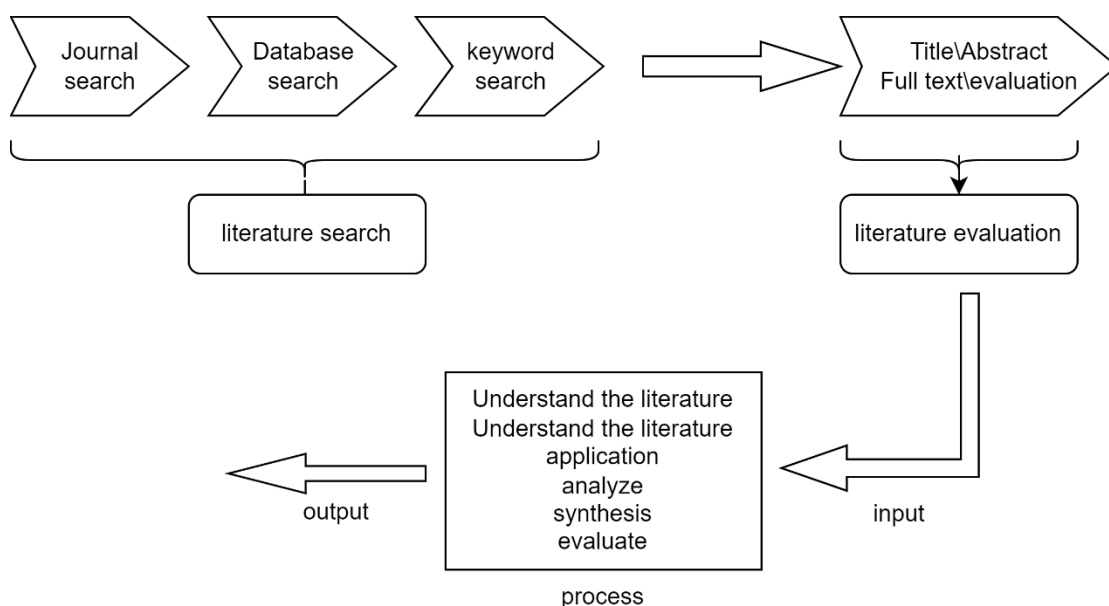


Figure 3. Literature search process.

According to the literature search process, this article searched seven relevant journals: "Marketing Science," "Journal of Marketing Research," "Journal of Marketing," "International Journal of Research in Marketing," "Journal of Consumer Research," "Journal of Consumer Psychology," "Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science" and obtained a related paper from "Marketing Science." Next, select multidisciplinary literature databases: EBSCOhost, Elsevier (ScienceDirect) ProQuest, and Google Scholar indexing to ensure the reliability and validity of the search results. The search mainly used the keywords "social media" and "marketing." Supplementary search terms were added to narrow the query scope with many search results during the search process. Search articles from the past three years. A query conducted on ProQuest resulted in the identification of 64 scholarly articles. After a preliminary screening of pertinent literature, a refined selection

process culminated in the retention of 41 articles. Using a methodology analogous to the abovementioned search and evaluation process, Google Scholar yielded 35 retained articles. The JSTOR database preserved 15 articles, the Wiley Online Library maintained 24 articles, and ScienceDirect preserved 47.

**Table 2.** Literature search results.

Database	Title (marketing and social media)	Delete irrelevant	Remove duplicates	result
ProQuest	64	12	11	41
Google Scholar	78	23	20	35
JSTOR	30	6	9	15
Wiley Online Library	26	5	7	24
ScienceDirect	69	13	9	47
<b>Final Results</b>				<b>162</b>

Extract meaningful information from relevant documents by listing, defining, describing, and identifying, and then grasp the meaning and importance of the information through activities such as summarizing, distinguishing, explaining, and comparing, and then based on Kannan's research Framework, which breaks down the concepts related to the topic into different units. Subsequently, highly relevant preliminary studies and research agendas are collated, discussed, integrated, and exported to raise insightful questions for future research. The output materials are modified based on feedback from expert reviews, and this process is repeated.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

As a network interaction platform supported by advanced digital technologies, modern social media has evolved into a virtual community space for public content creation, information sharing, opinion exchange, viewpoint elucidation, and experience exchange (Shaza Mahar et al., 2020). Within digital marketing, the strategic use of social media tightly links the macro environment, corporate entities, and marketing effectiveness and constructs a multi-dimensional, dynamic, and interdependent marketing ecosystem. In this integrated entity, the interactions and influences among various elements collectively drive the achievement of marketing objectives and market value creation.

In the modern marketing landscape, digital marketing, with a particular emphasis on social media, stands at the core, heralding a customer-centric approach (Sachs & Benson, 1978). This environment is characterized by the collaboration between brands and their consumers, competitors, and content creators.

##### 4.1. Social Media Creates a Customer-Centric, Multi-Element Marketing Environment

Social media has revolutionized how brands engage with their audience, fostering a two-way communication channel that enables customers to be passive recipients and active participants in the marketing narrative (Salvation & Sorooshian). This participatory approach has led to user-generated content, where customers co-create marketing materials, often blurring the lines between consumers and content creators.

Competitors in this space also play a unique role. The transparent nature of digital platforms allows brands to observe and learn from each other's strategies, leading to a more dynamic and rapidly evolving marketing ecosystem. This competitive observation often results in the cross-pollination of ideas, where successful strategies are adapted and refined across different brands.

Content is king in digital marketing, and the focus has shifted from traditional advertising to creating engaging, relevant, and valuable content (Elareshi et al., 2023). This content is designed to sell and inform, entertain, and connect with the audience on a deeper level. The aim is to build a lasting relationship with the consumer, turning them into not just customers but brand advocates.

In conclusion, the modern marketing environment is deeply intertwined with digital platforms, especially social media. It prioritizes customer engagement, co-creation with consumers and competitors, and crafting meaningful content, all of which are integral to a successful digital marketing strategy.

#### *4.2. Social Media Organically Connects Market Research and Product Sales*

As consumer expectations for products and services rise, catering to individualized user needs becomes a critical aspect of marketing. Consumers increasingly seek personalized products and services, indicating that brands must focus more on understanding and addressing individual preferences and offering tailored solutions.

Brands are tasked with comprehending consumer desires and behaviors through market research and data analysis. This understanding allows them to develop products and services that cater to diverse requirements. Enhancing the user experience through personalized recommendations and services is vital to securing customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

For brands, achieving higher customer satisfaction and loyalty not only boosts sales and profits but also strengthens their competitive edge and market standing (Heleta Švrakić & Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, 2023). The widespread use of internet technology and increased information transparency have empowered consumers with more knowledge and options. They can effortlessly compare different brands and products, finding the best satisfying their needs. This transparency also elevates consumers' focus on value for money and product quality.

Societal development and diversification have led to varied lifestyles, cultural backgrounds, and social values, prompting consumers to expect brands to recognize and meet their unique needs. Thus, brands must be aware of their consumers' diverse cultures, lifestyles, and needs, offering targeted services and experiences.

Advancements in technology and digitalization present both opportunities and challenges for brands (Punniyamoorthy & Prasanna Mohan Raj, 2007). Data analysis and artificial intelligence enable brands to understand consumer behavior and needs better, leading to more personalized service and experience offerings. Platforms like social networks and mobile applications make it easier for consumers to communicate their preferences and feedback (Denkova et al., 2018), guiding brands to offer more personalized products and services.

The rise in user demand for personalization presents a dual challenge and opportunity for brands. To earn consumer trust and loyalty, brands must understand and actively respond to these personalized needs. Continual adaptation to meet these evolving demands is crucial for a brand's sustained growth and development.

#### *4.3. Social Media Has Transformed the Market Landscape, Providing Customers with Platforms to Engage Directly with Brands*

This engagement is crucial for increasing customer involvement, satisfaction, purchase intention, and, ultimately, the sales of a company's products. The burgeoning popularity of social networks has facilitated closer interactions between brands and users (Ting et al., 2021). Through channels like social media, brands can understand consumer needs and feedback, offering more tailored services and experiences.

This enhanced interaction raises brand awareness and influence and helps build a positive brand image and reputation. Such engagement attracts potential consumers and fosters loyal users, promoting trust and loyalty between brands and consumers.

Consumers feel valued and cared for when brands interact with consumers, addressing their needs and feedback with personalized and user-friendly services. This feeling can lead to an increased willingness to purchase a brand's products and services and a higher likelihood of becoming loyal brand users.

However, the interaction between brands and users must balance time and frequency. Brands must engage with users at suitable times and frequencies to avoid over-promotion and intrusion into users' lives (Aldlaigan & Buttle, 2001). Attention to user feedback and evaluations is also crucial, necessitating continuous improvement and optimization of products and services to boost user satisfaction and loyalty.

Through brand-user interactions, brands can gain insights into consumer needs and preferences, enabling them to optimize and improve their offerings (Craig, n.d.). Collecting user feedback and opinions through social media and other channels is essential for understanding user evaluations and suggestions, which helps refine products and services, enhancing user satisfaction and experience.

In summary, the increased interaction between brands and users is a hallmark of marketing in the social network era. Brands must engage with consumers through multiple channels, offer more personalized and timely services, establish a good brand image and reputation, and use interactions to understand consumer needs and feedback. This approach is crucial in enhancing products and services and improving user satisfaction and loyalty.

## 5. Future Research Directions

### 5.1. Optimization and Innovation in Video Content

With the rise of short videos and live streaming, video content has become crucial to social media marketing. Brands need to explore how to produce high-quality, engaging, and attractive video content to captivate and retain their target audience. Simultaneously, there is a need to explore new video formats and creative approaches, such as applying technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in video marketing (Kuleto et al., 2021). This exploration is essential for brands to stay at the forefront of digital marketing trends and effectively engage with their audience in an increasingly competitive and technologically advanced marketplace.

### 5.2. Artificial Intelligence and Data-Driven Marketing Strategies

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data technologies has expanded the possibilities for social media marketing (Dong et al., 2023). Brands can leverage these technologies to analyze user data, gaining insights into user interests, preferences, and behaviors. This enables the formulation of more precise and personalized marketing strategies. Furthermore, AI can be employed to automate marketing processes, thereby enhancing marketing efficiency and effectiveness. These technological advancements are transforming the marketing landscape, offering sophisticated tools for brands to engage with their audiences in a more targeted and impactful manner. As such, AI and data-driven approaches are becoming indispensable in the strategic toolkit of modern marketers.

### 5.3. Integration and Development of Social E-commerce

Social e-commerce has emerged as a novel e-commerce model that amalgamates social media with online shopping, offering users a more convenient and personalized shopping experience. It is incumbent upon brands to investigate how to integrate social media platforms and e-commerce systems effectively to create a seamless shopping experience. This integration is pivotal in enhancing user engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, there is a necessity to explore new models within social e-commerce. This exploration involves understanding evolving consumer behaviors and preferences in the digital marketplace. Developing innovative strategies in this domain is crucial for brands to remain competitive and relevant in an increasingly digitalized commercial environment. The

convergence of social media and e-commerce represents a significant shift in consumer purchasing patterns, necessitating a strategic response from brands to capitalize on this trend.

#### 5.4. Cross-Platform Integrated Communication

As social media platforms become increasingly diverse and fragmented, cross-platform marketing and integrated communications have emerged as significant brand challenges. Brands need to investigate how to effectively execute cross-platform marketing across various social media platforms, ensuring consistency and synergy in brand messaging. This approach necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and user demographics of each platform to tailor communications appropriately. The goal is to create a cohesive brand narrative that resonates across different channels, maximizing reach and impact. Effect marketing and integrated communications strategies are crucial for brands to maintain a solid and consistent brand presence in the digital marketing help in.

#### 5.5. Innovation and Optimization of Social Media Advertising

Social media advertising constitutes a vital component of social media marketing. Brands must conduct research on creating compelling social media advertisements that enhance click-through and conversion rates. This entails a deep understanding of the target audience's preferences and behaviors and the nuances of different social media platforms. Additionally, there is a need to explore innovative advertising formats and deployment strategies, such as native advertising and programmatic buying. These approaches involve integrating advertisements seamlessly into the user's social media experience and employing data-driven techniques to optimize ad placements. Exploring these new formats and strategies is crucial in the ever-evolving digital landscape, where traditional advertising methods may not suffice. By innovating and optimizing social media advertisements, brands can effectively capture user attention, foster engagement, and drive desired marketing outcomes in a highly competitive digital space.

To sum it up, the most recent studies in social media marketing are primarily focused on optimizing and innovating video content, implementing marketing strategies that utilize artificial intelligence and data, integrating and developing social e-commerce, cross-platform marketing, and improving social media advertising. These research areas play a crucial role in helping brands effectively utilize social media for marketing purposes, ultimately leading to better marketing outcomes. This research is precious for brands seeking to adapt and succeed in the ever-changing digital marketing landscape, underscoring the importance of staying up-to-date with technological advancements and emerging consumer behavior trends. Brands must continuously explore and understand these areas to leverage the full potential of social media in their marketing strategies.

## References

1. Aldlaigan, A. H., & Buttle, F. A. (2001). Consumer involvement in financial services: An empirical test of two measures. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 19(6), 232–245. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM00000000006022>
2. Bryła, P., Chatterjee, S., & Ciabiada-Bryła, B. (2022). The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Engagement in Sustainable Consumption: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(24), 16637. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192416637>
3. Craig, J. (n.d.). A Framework for Conceptualizing and Measuring the Involvement Construct in Ad...
4. Dave Chaffey, F. (2016). *Digital Marketing (Strategy, Implementation and Practice)*.
5. Denkova, J., Lazarevski, P., & Denkova, B. (2018). The importance of the new public management for efficient public administration.
6. Dong, Y., Chen, Q., Tian, B., Li, J., Li, J., & Hu, Z. (2023). Advancing Microbe Detection for Lower Respiratory Tract Infection Diagnosis and Management with Metagenomic Next-Generation Sequencing. *Infection and Drug Resistance*, 677–694.



7. Elareshi, M., Habes, M., Safori, A., Attar, R. W., Noor Al Adwan, M., & Al-Rahmi, W. M. (2023). Understanding the Effects of Social Media Marketing on Customers' Bank Loyalty: A SEM Approach. *Electronics*, 12(8), 1822. <https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics12081822>
8. Ellis-Chadwick, F., & Chaffey, D. (2012). ELLIS-CHADWICK F. Digital marketing strategy, implementation and practice [M]. London: Pearson, 2019: 4-45. . Pearson.
9. Heleta Švrakić, E., & Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, M. (2023). How Do Brand Communication and Brand Personality Shape Consumer Loyalty? *Economic and Business Review*, 25(2), 118–127. <https://doi.org/10.15458/2335-4216.1321>
10. Kannan, P. K., & Li, H. "Alice." (2017a). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>
11. Kannan, P. K., & Li, H. "Alice." (2017b). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>
12. Kilic, C. (2004). An investigation of the antecedents and consequences of individual-level customer orientation: A comprehensive approach. Old Dominion University.
13. Kpalou, J.-Y. G. (2012). Difficulties Experienced by Small Business Managers in Marketing Their Businesses.
14. Kuleto, V., Ilić, M., Dumangiu, M., Ranković, M., Martins, O. M., Păun, D., & Mihoreanu, L. (2021). Exploring opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence and machine learning in higher education institutions. *Sustainability*, 13(18), 10424.
15. Polonsky, M. (2005). Stakeholder thinking in marketing: Guest editorial.
16. Praditya, N. W. P. Y. (2021). Literature Review Recommendation System Using Hybrid Method (Collaborative Filtering & Content-Based Filtering) by Utilizing Social Media as Marketing. *Computer Engineering and Applications Journal*, 10(2), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.18495/comengapp.v10i2.368>
17. Punniyamorthy, M., & Prasanna Mohan Raj, M. (2007). An empirical model for brand loyalty measurement. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 15(4), 222–233. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jt.5750044>
18. Sachs, W. S., & Benson, G. (1978). Is it time to discard the marketing concept? *Business Horizons*, 21(4), 68–74. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813\(78\)90117-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813(78)90117-9)
19. Salvation, M. D., & Sorooshian, S. (n.d.). Title: The role of social media marketing and product involvement on consumers' purchase intentions of smartphones.
20. Samoylenko, I., Aleja, D., Primo, E., Alfaro-Bittner, K., Vasilyeva, E., Kovalenko, K., Musatov, D., Raigorodskii, A. M., Criado, R., Romance, M., Papo, D., Perc, M., Barzel, B., & Boccaletti, S. (2023). Why Are There Six Degrees of Separation in a Social Network? *Physical Review X*, 13(2), 021032. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevX.13.021032>
21. Shaza Mahar, Nasir Farooq, Dr. Aslan B. Amat Senin, & Mawra Rauf. (2020). MARKETING STIMULI AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF CUSTOMERS FOR SMART PHONES: A CLOSER LOOK AT CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT. *International Journal of Management Research and Emerging Sciences*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.56536/ijmres.v10i3.107>
22. Ting, D. H., Abbasi, A. Z., & Ahmed, S. (2021). Examining the mediating role of social interactivity between customer engagement and brand loyalty. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(5), 1139–1158. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2019-0576>
23. Καπαντζάκης, I. (2018). Developing a web based application for student attendance management.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of SOAP and/or the editor(s). SOAP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.