

MODERN DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS FOR TRADE COMPANIES

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In recent years, the rapid growth of digital tools has revolutionised the way businesses operate and, in particular, sell. Business operations in the present digital age require attention to digital marketing since consumers now interact with technology to the point of changing their fundamental behaviors. Organizations must transform their marketing methods for technological customers because digital platforms now dominate consumer habits and preferences. The food sector together with other industries which operate in competitive markets experience difficulties in directing attention from technology-focused consumers through traditional marketing practices. Business success in modern markets depends on companies using cutting-edge technologies that optimize marketing strategy and improve customer interaction.

Successful digitalization requires an integrated toolkit rather than isolated digital channels. The most important tools can be grouped into six strategic categories [1]:

- 1) customer data and analytics;
- 2) omnichannel and mobile commerce;
- 3) personalized CRM and marketing automation;
- 4) content marketing and storytelling;
- 5) social media and customer co-creation;
- 6) digital infrastructure supporting the “endless shelf”.

Let's discuss those categories in details.

1. Customer data and analytics. Marketing analytics is the foundation. In the digital era, data has assumed a role comparable to that of capital or labour in the traditional economy – it is now an indispensable asset that powers decision-making across all levels of marketing management. Marketing data refers to a broad set of information generated through customer interactions, market transactions, digital communications, and external data ecosystems. It includes variables such as consumer demographics, purchasing history, geographic location, behavioural data from websites and apps, social media activity, loyalty program metrics, email open and click rates, advertising impressions, and sales conversions. This variety and abundance of data give businesses a granular view of both individual consumer behaviour and broader market dynamics [2].

The strategic significance of marketing data can be understood through its contribution to three critical domains: understanding the customer, measuring marketing effectiveness, and improving operational efficiency. Firstly, marketing data enhances customer understanding by enabling the creation of detailed buyer personas and behavioral segments. This is crucial in the current environment, where personalization and relevance are the cornerstones of effective engagement. As Kotler emphasizes, “marketing is not the art of finding clever ways to dispose of what you make, but the art of creating genuine customer value”. Without data, this value creation becomes speculative rather than evidence-based [3].

So, TRADE companies must collect, integrate, and interpret customer data across all touchpoints – online stores, mobile apps, social media, and physical outlets. This enables segmentation, personalization, demand forecasting, and more accurate decision-making. In digital commerce, data is the new shelf space.

2. Omnichannel and mobile commerce. Customers no longer distinguish between online and offline channels. Effective digital trade requires a seamless omnichannel experience: unified inventory, pricing, communication, and service across e-commerce, physical stores, marketplaces, and mobile platforms. Mobile commerce is especially critical because it has become the default shopping environment for many consumers [1].

3. Personalized CRM and marketing automation. Digitalization allows trade companies to move from mass communication to individualized engagement. CRM systems [4], automated

campaigns, behavioral triggers, and recommendation engines help retailers deliver the right message, offer, or product at the right time [5]. This improves conversion, retention, and lifetime value.

4. Content marketing and storytelling. Content marketing has become a vital approach for businesses seeking to connect with customers and build lasting brand loyalty. Yet the rapid growth of digital content has created an overcrowded environment, making it increasingly difficult for brands to capture consumer attention. As audiences face an overwhelming volume of information, standing out has become a significant challenge. Content marketing (through blogs, videos, social media, and user-generated content) turns transactions into relationships [6]. Some scholars even argue that content marketing now functions as a sixth element of the marketing communications mix.

But in crowded digital markets, products alone rarely differentiate a retailer. Stories create emotional connection, trust, and brand meaning [1].

5. Social media and customer co-creation. Modern consumers are not passive buyers; they are active participants. Social platforms enable dialogue, reviews, advocacy, and collaborative product development [8]. Trade companies should use social media not only for promotion but also for listening, service, and innovation.

6. Digital infrastructure supporting the “endless shelf”. Tools such as integrated inventory systems, product information management (PIM), logistics platforms, and digital merchandising enable retailers to offer broader assortments beyond physical store limitations. This creates the “endless shelf” effect – customers can buy products regardless of local stock availability [1].

While the rise of digital platforms was initially viewed as a threat to traditional sales roles—particularly within business-to-business (B2B) markets, the reality is that the internet has become the primary arena for initiating and sustaining professional sales relationships. Rather than replacing the human element, online platforms now act as a critical opportunity for organizations to expand their market coverage and strengthen their industry presence. In high-stakes sectors like manufacturing and supply chain management, the digital environment serves as an indispensable engine for real-time data and lead generation, empowering sales professionals to operate with higher precision than ever before [7].

The most digitally mature trade companies build a marketing architecture with these characteristics [1]:

- customer-centric rather than product-centric;
- data-driven rather than intuition-driven;
- omnichannel rather than channel-specific;
- interactive rather than one-way;
- adaptive rather than static.

So, for trade companies digitalization can succeed when marketing evolves from a communication department into a strategic orchestrator of customer value. Trade companies that combine analytics, automation, omnichannel integration, storytelling, and customer co-creation will be best positioned for sustainable competitive advantage.

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