

Retail Digital Marketing Strategy and Its Impact on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour: Learning from the Literature

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Abstract: Digital marketing shapes consumer behaviours in today's competitive retail landscape. This review paper draws on the literature to explore the theoretical foundations of digital marketing strategies, with a focus on their application to consumer decision-making within Solomon's consumer behaviour model. Key elements such as personalisation, trust-building, and sociocultural influences are discussed to highlight their impact on consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Practical tools, including SEO, content marketing, and social media campaigns, are examined to provide actionable insights for businesses. A case study on Sainsbury's digital marketing strategies underscores the practical implications of these concepts and offers discussion points for real-world application.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Personalisation, Brand Loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive and digitally driven retail environment, businesses increasingly adopt digital marketing strategies to connect with consumers, influence purchasing decisions, and enhance brand visibility. The evolution of digital marketing has empowered companies to personalise consumer experiences, utilise advanced analytics, and leverage multiple platforms to achieve their goals. This review paper explores the theoretical underpinnings of digital marketing and consumer behaviours, focusing on frameworks such as Solomon's consumer behaviour model. Through an in-depth review of relevant literature, this review paper aims to provide actionable insights into how businesses can optimise their digital marketing efforts for enhanced consumer engagement and loyalty.

Digital marketing strategy significantly affects the purchasing decisions of consumers and also influences the sales volume of the company. E-commerce and digital technology have created a significant transformation in the retail industry. In today's world, consumers are now tempted by online purchasing, and business organisations such as Sainsbury's need to adopt this new trend in their business strategy and remain competitive. So, this review will help to understand the retail industry and its marketing strategy from the context of Sainsbury's. Sainsbury is a key player in the retail industry, and a case study of this organisation will help readers understand its digital marketing strategy and examine how traditional retailers leverage digital marketing tools to engage consumers and influence buying behaviours.

Consumer behaviours are one of the most crucial factors to success in the business world

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(Birtwistle and Tsim, 2023). So, this review paper will offer readers some valuable insights. This review paper will explain how digital marketing tactics shape online experiences, how different digital media influence and persuade target consumers, and how these tactics and media influence and persuade target consumers. So, this review paper will ultimately help readers refine the best digital marketing strategy and how digital marketing tactics adopted by different business organisations will influence the grocery and beyond shopping experiences of consumers in the digital era.

2. LEARNING FROM THE LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Aspects of Digital Marketing & Consumer Behaviours

Digital marketing has become indispensable for businesses seeking to engage customers and influence their purchasing decisions in a rapidly evolving retail sector. Scholars have consistently highlighted the role of digital strategies in enhancing brand visibility, fostering personalised communication, and cultivating consumer satisfaction (Cuthbertson, Rusanen and Paavola, 2023). Key approaches, such as social media campaigns, search engine optimisation (SEO), and email marketing, allow businesses to establish a robust digital footprint and connect with diverse audiences effectively.

Retail branding has emerged as a critical area of focus in the competitive landscape, emphasising the importance of developing a distinctive and memorable brand identity. Ailawadi and Keller (2014) explore the conceptual underpinnings of retail branding, identifying the core elements that contribute to building strong retail brands and highlighting priorities for future research. The authors argue that effective retail branding requires a cohesive strategy that aligns brand positioning, customer experience, and operational performance to create value for both retailers and customers. Incorporating insights from this discussion, retail branding should focus on building a strong identity and addressing key consumer touchpoints, such as the in-store experience, online engagement, and consistent messaging across channels, where digital marketing plays a central role in achieving these touchpoints for a brand. Moreover, the research underscores the need for retailers to adapt their branding strategies to accommodate shifting consumer behaviours, including increased reliance on digital platforms and personalised experiences. This perspective aligns with the broader discourse on branding within retail, emphasising that a well-structured retail brand can serve as a critical differentiator in a crowded market (Ailawadi and Keller, 2014).

Hart, Doherty, and Ellis-Chadwick (2020) explore the transformative impact of internet adoption on retail marketing strategies. They examine how retailers integrate online channels to enhance customer engagement, improve operational efficiency, and achieve competitive advantage. It highlights the evolution of digital technologies in shaping consumer expectations and the necessity for retailers to adapt their marketing practices. By leveraging the internet, retailers can offer personalised experiences, expand their reach, and streamline processes, though the transition requires addressing challenges such as technological infrastructure and customer data management (Hart, Doherty, and Ellis-Chadwick, 2020).

The discussion surrounding internet adoption in retail highlights a critical argument: traditional retail models must evolve to survive in an increasingly digital landscape (Hart, Doherty, and Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). It is essential for retailers to adopt a strategic approach to digital integration, balancing both online and offline channels to provide a seamless brand experience. Without this balance, businesses risk losing relevance and connection with their consumers. Moreover, the argument posits that the mere adoption of new technologies is insufficient; retailers must also prioritise innovation and strategic alignment. The ability to respond swiftly to changes in the digital environment demands organisational agility. Those who fail to cultivate this flexibility will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. Therefore, to thrive in a market that is continually shifting towards digitalisation, retailers must not only integrate technology but also develop a proactive and adaptive business strategy that meets the evolving needs of their customers (Hart, Doherty, and Ellis-Chadwick, 2020).

Transparency and trust-building are pivotal to successful digital marketing campaigns. Whalley and Curwen (2023) identify that integrating transparent communication and ethical practices in marketing enhances consumer confidence, ultimately driving brand loyalty. Furthermore, adapting digital strategies to consumer preferences and market trends has become essential for businesses to remain competitive in the dynamic e-commerce landscape (Newing *et al.*, 2022).

2.2 Application of Solomon's Consumer Behaviour Model in Digital Marketing Campaigns

Solomon's consumer behaviour model offers a systematic framework for understanding how psychological, sociocultural, and personal factors shape consumer decision-making. Integrating this model into digital marketing strategies enables businesses to design campaigns that resonate with their target audiences.

2.2.1 Consumer as Decision-Maker

The decision-making process outlined in Solomon's model includes the following stages:

1. **Problem Recognition:** Businesses can engage consumers by addressing their latent needs or potential problems through targeted digital content (Ci, 2016).
2. **Information Search:** Informative content on blogs, social media, and websites supports consumers during their research phase and enhances brand awareness and trust.
3. **Evaluation of Alternatives:** Allowing customers to compare products through detailed information and user reviews facilitates their decision-making (Crawford and Melewar, 2019).
4. **Purchase Decision:** Simplifying purchasing processes and providing incentives encourages transactions.
5. **Post-Purchase Behaviour: Maintaining communication via email marketing and social media outreach enhances customer satisfaction and drives repeat purchases (Dagher and Itani, 2021).**

2.2.2 Psychological Factors

Solomon's model also emphasises key psychological factors that impact consumer behaviour:

- **Motivation:** Tailoring marketing messages to align with consumer needs and aspirations boosts engagement (Djambaska, Petrovska and Bundaleska, 2015).
- **Perception:** Creating visually appealing, value-oriented content fosters positive perceptions of a brand.
- **Learning:** Providing educational resources through digital platforms raises consumer awareness.
- **Beliefs and Attitudes:** Aligning marketing efforts with consumer values fosters trust and loyalty.

2.2.3 Sociocultural Influences

Sociocultural elements significantly influence purchasing behaviours:

- **Social Proof:** Leveraging influencers, testimonials, and user contributions builds credibility (Earle, 2016).
- **Community Engagement:** Developing online forums and communities fosters brand loyalty and encourages peer recommendations.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Incorporating cultural norms and values into marketing strategies ensures greater resonance with diverse audiences.

2.2.4 Practical Implementation in Digital Marketing

Practical tools and strategies for implementing Solomon's model include:

- **Content Marketing:** Developing content that aligns with each stage of the decision-making process.
- **SEO and SEM: Enhancing visibility on search engines to attract consumers during their research phase (Basuki *et al.*, 2023).**
- **Social Media Marketing:** Engaging consumers through tailored campaigns and collaborations on popular platforms.
- **Email Marketing:** Maintaining post-purchase communication to strengthen customer relationships.

Example Case study: Sainsbury's digital marketing strategy

Sainsbury's PLC, a leading retailer, exemplifies how digital marketing strategies can influence consumer behaviour. The company has invested heavily in social media, email campaigns, and SEO to build a strong digital presence. By aligning its content with consumer interests, such as recipes, nutritional tips, and sustainability initiatives, Sainsbury's fosters engagement and loyalty.

The company also utilises data analytics to personalise marketing campaigns, tailoring them to individual consumer preferences. Transparency in its communications, including transparent pricing and ethical sourcing practices, reinforces consumer trust.

In the ever-changing retail world, digital marketing is essential for consumer engagement. This literature review examines Sainsbury's PLC's digital marketing strategy and its impact on customer buying behaviour. Moreover, in the contemporary landscape of intense market competition, digital marketing methods have become imperative for merchants.

Retail giant Sainsbury's PLC recognises the importance of digital marketing in consumer communication. Cuthbertson *et al.*, (2023) suggest that shops need a strong digital marketing strategy to reach more customers and create personalised and engaging experiences. Like other retailers, Sainsbury's has invested heavily in social media, email marketing, and online advertising to build a strong digital presence.

Sainsbury's digital marketing content and communication approaches influence consumer opinions. Mason and Jarvis (2023) stress aligning digital content with customer values and interests. Sainsbury's prioritises informative and engaging

content, including cooking ideas, nutritional information, and environmental initiatives, to meet consumer expectations. Positioning Sainsbury's as a socially responsible and customer-focused company method provides information and builds brand loyalty.

Consumer engagement and interaction indicators are vital for evaluating digital marketing initiatives. The importance of two-way communication in the digital world is highlighted by Smith (2023). Sainsbury's online forums, comment sections, and interactive content increase brand exposure and reveal consumer preferences. Positive interactions foster brand community and influence customer purchasing behaviour by cultivating trust and loyalty.

Targeted pricing and content show Sainsbury's commitment to digital marketing personalisation. Scholars agree that customisation boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty. Sainsbury's uses data analytics and consumer insights to tailor its digital marketing campaigns to each customer's interests, thereby making the purchasing experience more personalised. The phenomenon increases marketing effectiveness and improves the consumer experience, influencing brand-friendly purchases.

Sainsbury's digital marketing approach helps build and maintain consumer trust, crucial to buying choices. Mkansi and Nsakanda, (2023), found that digital communication openness boosts consumer trust. Sainsbury's transparent pricing, product information, and ethical sourcing practices boost consumer trust and confidence in its digital communications. Trust may lead to brand loyalty, affecting repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth.

The research shows that Sainsbury's PLC's digital marketing strategy has multiple effects on customer purchase behaviour. Active social media engagement, personalisation, and openness are integral to a successful online presence plan.

Whalley and Curwen (2023) underscore the importance of digital marketing for shops, as evidenced by several studies. Digital channels enable targeted marketing strategies, personalised communication, and continuous client engagement over the whole purchasing journey. Research suggests that a robust online presence has a beneficial influence on brand visibility, consumer engagement, and sales success. In light of the expanding e-commerce and online shopping landscape, retail enterprises must have a robust digital footprint (Newing *et al.*, 2022). Digital marketing is crucial for helping merchants build their

brand identity and effectively promote their products or services to a broader audience across various digital platforms.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a widely used marketing tool that focuses on enhancing the visibility and ranking of a company's website on search engine results pages. The internet is characterised by its vastness, encompassing numerous companies worldwide that strive to appeal to their intended target customers (Purnomo, 2023). Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a strategic approach to promote the content on a website and enhance its visibility and ranking in search engine results.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an academic discipline that uses research methodologies to augment the visibility and accessibility of a brand, hence catering to the specific target market demographic.

To enhance the visibility of websites in search engine results, it is necessary to optimise web pages by distributing high-quality content, engaging visitors, prioritising mobile-friendliness, and emphasising the acquisition of inbound links. Search engine optimisation (SEO) enables businesses to enhance various website elements and effectively direct clients to their online platforms (Saura *et al.*, 2023). The unpredictability of the SEO strategy stems from its reliance on establishing channels that effectively drive customers to websites. The objective is to prioritise and optimise website visibility to meet clients' search-specific requests.

Numerous search engines are available online, and specialists prioritise Google's ranking due to its widespread use among users. The quantification of SEO and its tactics through the outcomes is not feasible. The approach is driven by enhancing website visibility and increasing their popularity on search engines. The algorithms are updated frequently to maintain the website's ranking and improve forecast accuracy. Continuous monitoring of page performance is vital to effectively align initiatives aimed at enhancing the popularity of products and services (Basuki *et al.*, 2023). The website's user-friendly interface enables customers to navigate and make purchases online. According to Kumari *et al.*, (2022), the provision of pricing, promotions, and comprehensive product information is encompassed within the discussed context. Sainsbury's optimises its website for search engines to enhance the discoverability of its platform by potential consumers. The website's instructional material, recipes, and meal ideas have the potential to captivate and motivate customers.

Research has demonstrated that using social media marketing strategies has a discernible influence on several aspects of business performance, including consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and sales. Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of social media marketing campaigns by examining various factors, including social media platforms, content strategies, influencer partnerships, and analytics. Sainsbury's is active on many web-based entertainment platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. According to Nuseir *et al.*, (2023), Sainsbury's uses various media to provide information on specials, new items, and seasonal marketing. The firm actively communicates with clients through multiple means, such as replying to requests, addressing comments, and organising interactive competitions or giveaways. Sainsbury's uses social media platforms to conduct targeted advertising campaigns, effectively reaching distinct customer segments and driving traffic to its website.

The advantages of online retail store websites are readily apparent. Numerous organisations understand this concept and develop their websites accordingly.

Purchasers often consider factors such as cleanliness, precision, illumination, and odour in practical settings. In the virtual realm, an assessment is conducted to evaluate the usability, design, and download speed. The effectiveness of incorporating the website into the marketing plan depends on continuous analysis of client behaviours and the provision of feedback to optimise functionality (Poturak *et al.*, 2022). Social networks are a readily apparent marketing channel. Using sales platforms is an effective marketing strategy across various industries. Retailers should prioritise implementing this approach, as it is the most effective means of engaging with customers.

A social network serves a purpose beyond being a mere supplementary instrument for providing products. Today, we can analyse customer behaviour (Borucki, 2017). In this context, individuals discuss their uncertainties and anxieties, both positive and unpleasant encounters, aspirations, and individual necessities. Retailers are obligated to prioritise incorporating social networks as a fundamental component of their marketing strategy. By utilising this tool, one can effectively engage in dialogue with a customer and establish confidence and trust. Without the presence of buyer trust, transactions will undoubtedly be deterred.

Discussion Questions

1. Visit Sainsbury's website (www.sainsburys.co.uk) or a company of

your choice and evaluate its digital marketing strategies. How do they align with the theoretical frameworks discussed in this review paper?

2. How does personalisation in Sainsbury's campaigns reflect the principles of Solomon's consumer behaviour model?
3. How can other retailers adopt Sainsbury's approach to enhance their digital marketing strategies?
4. How can cultural sensitivity be integrated into global digital marketing campaigns?
5. Discuss the role of trust and transparency in building long-term customer relationships through digital marketing.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing is pivotal in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing purchasing decisions in today's highly competitive retail sector. This review paper explored the theoretical and practical dimensions of digital marketing strategies, emphasising personalisation, trust-building, and sociocultural influences as key drivers of consumer engagement. By integrating Solomon's consumer behaviour model, businesses can develop targeted marketing strategies that align with consumer motivations and decision-making processes.

Examining Sainsbury's digital marketing strategy provides a real-world perspective on how established retailers leverage digital tools to enhance customer engagement and brand loyalty. Sainsbury's use of SEO, content marketing, and personalised online interactions illustrates the effectiveness of data-driven marketing in fostering consumer trust and long-term retention. Furthermore, the review paper highlights the increasing reliance on digital platforms, demonstrating that retailers must adopt agile and innovative approaches to remain competitive.

Learning from the literature underscores the importance of adapting digital marketing efforts to evolving consumer preferences. Businesses must employ a combination of digital tools, including social media marketing, email campaigns, and search engine optimisation, to create a seamless customer journey. Additionally, transparency and ethical marketing practices are crucial in maintaining consumer trust, directly impacting brand reputation and customer retention.

In conclusion, digital marketing is no longer optional but a necessity for businesses seeking to remain relevant in the retail industry. Companies such as Sainsbury's exemplify how a well-executed digital marketing strategy can enhance customer experiences and drive sales. As digital marketing

continues to evolve, businesses must remain proactive in adopting new technologies and refining their plan to meet the expectations of digitally empowered consumers.

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