Scale development of digital customer engagement effectiveness: a game-changer for online retailers in India

Monika, Kavita

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Monika*

Institute of Management Science and Research,
Maharshi Dayanand University,
Rohtak, Haryana, India
Email: monikasehgal34@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Kavita

UIET, Maharshi Dayanand University,
Rohtak, Haryana, India
Email: drkavita.uiet@mdurohtak.ac.in

Abstract: Owing to the rise of digital marketing, many industries have witnessed a significant transformation in their marketing operations. The ongoing expansion of digital marketing and integrated marketing communication channels allows for an improved customer experience and maintenance of the sales funnel. The study underlines the importance of customer-centric digital marketing approaches and an intelligent customer journey map to enhance long-term customer engagement and drive conversions. The focal point of this study is to investigate effective digital marketing strategies for engagement and mapping tactics to customer journeys. Practical implications for brands and marketers are discussed, emphasising the benefits of a multi-channel approach and integrated marketing communications in increasing customer engagement and loyalty in the digital marketplace. This study contributes valuable insights to the existing literature on digital marketing effectiveness for customer engagement, which would be helpful for marketers to design, tailor, and adopt digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: digital marketing; customer engagement; integrated marketing communication; IMC; customer journey mapping.

Biographical notes: Monika is an Enthusiastic Research Scholar with a focus on Digital Marketing. She is currently pursuing Doctoral studies and is deeply committed to exploring online consumer behaviour, social media analytics, and the changing world of digital advertising. With a strong background in marketing, she is passionate about advancing the theoretical and practical aspects of digital marketing through thorough research and innovative methodologies.

Kavita is a Faculty in Management at Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana. She has around 17 years of teaching experience in academics. Her areas of research interest include marketing, digital marketing, electronic customer relationship management (ECRM), and human resource management.

1   Introduction

The rise of online shopping has transformed the marketing landscape. With the internet, social media, and mobile apps, customers now have a wealth of options at their fingertips. This digital environment has significantly influenced shopping decisions, as customers are drawn to brands and retailers with a strong online presence. The internet has grown rapidly in recent years and is now interwoven in the daily lives of billions of people worldwide (Habib et al., 2022). Digital marketing is not only beneficial for large organisations but also for small and medium organisations (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser, 2024). Owing to the rise of digital marketing, many industries have witnessed a significant transformation in their marketing operations.

Digital marketing is the online channel used to promote goods and services and drive traffic to websites (Kannan and Li, 2017). Digital marketing is crucial for engaging customers and boosting sale (Chaffey, 2020). Social media, search engines, and e-mail provide businesses with new and innovative ways to reach their target audience. By utilising these digital channels, companies can effectively convey their brand message, display their products, and establish meaningful connections with customers (Jayadeva, 2022). Digital marketing proposes huge benefits to businesses through lower costs, enhanced brand awareness, enlarged customer engagement, increased revenue, and company reputation (Ajina, 2019). With Social media, businesses can now reach out to a much larger and more diverse digital audience and achieve their goals at a low cost (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser, 2024; Trad and Dabbagh, 2020).

Customers typically start as visitors to a brand's website or mobile application, after which the business/brand employs tactics to engage them and turn them into loyal customers (Desai, 2019). Online retailers need an all-inclusive digital tactic that includes website design, SEO, content, and e-marketing to stand out and create positive customer experiences (Tafesse and Wien, 2017). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) emphasises coordinating various marketing channels and touchpoints to create a consistent brand experience for customers (Batra and Keller, 2016). This approach ensures that messages and brand identity are conveyed seamlessly across all marketing activities, from social media to email campaigns to in-person interactions. By aligning digital marketing tactics with an IMC strategy, marketing professionals can effectively guide customers through their purchasing journey, fostering stronger brand loyalty and driving measurable business outcomes. An integration of digital marketing and marketing communication approach allows for a deeper understanding of customer preferences,

better-informed decision-making, and the optimisation of marketing resources for maximum output. IMC is a strategic marketing approach that synchronises all communication channels to deliver a unified brand message across all touchpoints. Moreover, it involves digital tactics like website content, social media engagement, SEO, and targeted advertising, enhancing the customer journey by building trust, fostering targeted engagement, and utilising data-driven optimisation for improved conversion rates.

Customer engagement is crucial for the success of digital marketing campaigns. In the digital landscape, where attention spans are limited and competition is fierce, businesses must prioritise fostering meaningful connections with their target audience (Jashari-Mani and Zeqiri, 2023). Customer engagement is the emotional connection between customers and corporations. Corporations' primary goal is conversion rather than just attracting traffic (Hendriyani and Raharja, 2018). Conversion is the process through which visitors become customers, who subsequently become devoted customers (Purnomo, 2023). The customer journey, a complex web of touchpoints, has evolved from a linear path to a more dynamic one. It necessitates a cohesive marketing approach that integrates various marketing communication channels. The customer journey map, a visual representation of a customer's experience, includes initial awareness, consideration, decision, purchase, retention, and advocac (Hamilton and Price, 2019). IMCs with digital marketing tactics significantly impact the customer journey map from awareness to conversion (Ariste-León et al., 2023). The digital revolution has blurred the distinction between traditional marketing communications and customer touchpoints. Today's customer experience is a complicated web of online and offline encounters. IMC, when paired with digital marketing approaches, has the potential to greatly impact this journey (Fillery, 2019). Businesses may increase top-of-funnel recognition by using consistent brand messaging across all platforms, from social media advertising to public relations efforts (Bala, 2018). Engaging website content and targeted email marketing initiatives help to build client attention and consideration (Corey, 1916). Ultimately, smart remarketing and personalised offers can encourage customers to convert at the bottom of the funnel (Kotler, 2000). This integrated approach promotes a smooth consumer journey, increasing brand loyalty and, ultimately, generating sales. According to Ait Yassine (2023), the impact of digital marketing approaches on each stage of the customer journey is as follows:

- Awareness: digital strategies such as search engine marketing (SEM) and social media campaigns can help brands raise their profile and reach new audiences.

- Consideration: engaging website material, useful blog entries, and user-generated content on social media platforms all help buyers throughout the research and comparison stage.

- Decision: targeted advertising, email marketing efforts, and internet reviews all have the potential to greatly influence purchasing decisions.

- Purchase: easy-to-use websites with secure payment processors make it easier to complete your transaction.

- Customer retention and advocacy are enhanced by personalised email marketing, loyalty programs, and great customer service delivered via social media channels.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate effective digital marketing tactics that have a major impact on customer engagement. Cautious consideration of customer engagement practices is vital. It allows marketers to identify key touchpoints and tailor their digital marketing strategies accordingly. The rationale behind placing this research is that very little literature is available on the scale development process of effective digital marketing strategies on customer engagement. In the context of digital marketing, this study answers the following series of questions and broadens the body of knowledge on digital marketing effectiveness for customer engagement

a   Which digital marketing tactic, from awareness to conversion, can be used on the customer journey map?

b   What is the most effective digital marketing tactic for raising conversion rates?

c   How can digital marketing tactics work well for engaging customers?

These questions will be examined in a descriptive research design. The findings and conclusion are discussed in subsequent sections for marketers as well as future research perspectives.

2   Literature review

With the integration of the internet in marketing, customers are bombarded with information, and brands are constantly vying for more and more attention from the customers which gives rise to the prominent field of digital marketing. Research into digital marketing began in the late 20th century. Initial research focused on the integration of marketing principles in the digital landscape (Chaffey, 2020). The rise of Web 2.0 impacted marketing strategies by providing user-generated content and focusing on social interaction on websites. Social media interactions are the greatest tool for care brand health (Ahmad et al., 2016). Digital marketing offers a vast array of strategies and tools for mapping customer journeys and achieving the marketing goals of the company (Ariste-León et al., 2023; Purnomo, 2023).

Customer engagement fosters brand loyalty and brand advocacy. Customer engagement is like a spinal cord for successful digital marketing strategies. Brands use vast tools and strategies of digital marketing to achieve customer engagement. Based on the foundation laid by van Doorn et al. (2010) propose four dimensions of customer engagement in a digital context:

Attention	Interest	Desire	Action

Attention denotes customer focus; Interest denotes the degree to find the brand's offerings; desire denotes emotional connection and action denotes the customer's willingness to interact with the brand. These dimensions provide a framework for phases of the customer journey in a digital context. According to Srivastava et al. (2023), if brands provide content quality, interactive experience, and personalisation, they can easily achieve higher engagement rates in virtual marketing. Hollebeek (2024) explains

the evolving landscape of customer engagement in a digital context in her research and highlights the importance of virtual community building to achieve customer engagement.

Rehman et al. (2022) highlights the significance of the integration of social media in marketing communication channels as it defines brand identity, brand reputation, and brand performance which in turn to growth in revenue of the company in the dynamic digital marketing landscape. Companies are actively engaged with customers through social media interactions which reinvented the IMCs strategies through the removal of confusion and enhanced transparency about market offerings among customers (Aslam (and Luna, 2021). Trad and Dabbagh (2020) states that social media marketing can drive revenue growth by fostering long-term relationships with customers. Arora and Sanni, (2019) highlights that businesses can build brand awareness, foster a community, and provide value to customers which can impact long-term sales. SMART goals, tracking KPIs, and continuously refining their social media strategy, businesses can ensure that their campaigns align with their overall business objectives (Alves et al., 2016; Arli, 2017). According to Fiore et al. (2016), Gautam and Sharma (2017) Social media marketing not only drives sales but also fosters a sense of belonging and loyalty, resulting in increased customer lifetime value. However, sometimes, social media interactions can also backfire as negative word of mouth spreads faster than positive which leads to negative results (Arli and Dietrich, 2017).

Although the liaison between social media interactions and customer engagement is highlighted by several scholars (Ajina, 2019; Kulikovskaja et al., 2023; Mohammadpour et al., 2014; Ortiz-Ospina and Roser, 2024). However, the lack of studies fails to drive a theoretical model, as a result, this study will develop a scale which can further help in the development of a theoretical framework.

Considering the Indian market, digital marketing is still a new phenomenon as it evolves consistently. There is a lack of studies available for adopting digital marketing to engage customers in India. Even though much research work done on 'digital marketing' as cited by Desai (2019), Dwivedi et al. (2021), Elizabet (2022), Faruk et al. (2021), Kannan and Li (2017), the research work did not set any variables to study customer engagement in a digital marketing context and also fails to describe which digital marketing strategies are useful in mapping the customer journey from awareness to engagement.

2.1 Theoretical framework/ hypothesis development

Traditionally, the core of marketing was delivering a single message through only a single medium, but in a complex digital landscape, consumers communicate with brands through a variety of channels. IMC and Omnichannel marketing offer frameworks for understanding how multiple digital channels affect specific customer functional needs. During the route to achieving the first objective, this study attempts to explain the relationship between digital channels and functional needs using the functional attitude theory framework, which other literature fails to do. As per this theory, customers appraise matters based on their perceived outcomes, which might be utilitarian (practical advantages), informational (knowledge acquisition), social (prestige or belonging), or emotional (evoking sentiments). Brands may satisfy these diverse demands by effectively employing numerous digital marketing strategies to achieve higher customer engagement rates.

- Search engine optimisation (SEO): as per Nyagadza (2020) SEM has become a prominent trend in marketing strategies. SEM involves both SEO and paid advertising, which allows businesses to enhance their online prominence and attract and reach more qualified leads effectively (Desai, 2019). SEO refers to organic advertisement methods used to improve website ranking in browsing results. High ranking on search engines places a brand as a credible source of information, satisfying the customer's desire to learn about products or services (Al-Mukhtar et al., 2021; Bennett et al., 2024; Shodiq, 2018; Jaap, 2010), etc. This strategy addresses the informational needs of the customers (Hollebeek, 2024). On the other hand, pay-per-click (PPC) advertising primarily caters to utilitarian needs (Banerjee and Pal, 2023). Targeted ads shown on search engines or social media platforms can lead customers directly to a brand's website (Wanjale et al., 2023) When they are searching for specific products or services, providing a convenient purchasing solution (Shodiq, 2018).

- Collaboration/celebrity marketing: it denotes the partnership with popular influencers or celebrities to increase visibility and credibility. This strategy is useful in the awareness phase of the customer journey. According to Jung Ah Lee (2022) Consumers follow influencers because they trust them and feel a family-like relationship with them and influencers have traits they appreciate. In digital media, Influencers on social media play a significant role in reaching new audiences as they have a strong fanbase (Freberg, 2011; Adam and Hussain, 2017). Asserted that celebrity who possesses attributes such as credibility, and likability has a positive influence on customer purchase intention. This type of technique reaps dividends in terms of building emotional connections with their fan base and converting them into consumers (Cernikovate, 2019; Khan, 2021).

- Online public relations: online public relations or say digital public relations are the strategy which raises awareness of a brand on digital platforms such as social media, websites, etc. Public relations is a management function (Broom, 2009) but in the digital marketing era, it has become an essential tool of marketing which establishes mutually beneficial relations between brands and people who connect with the brand on any digital platform (Anani-Bossman and Mudzanani, 2021). Public relations on social media have strongly emerged to improve customer experience and enhance customer retention rates for the brands (Wang, 2021).

- Membership marketing: (Vincent, 2013) explored effective relationships leads to memberships, and the membership association is a rip fruit for the businesses, however, customer retention became difficult in the membership associations. The cost of customer retention is higher in membership models either free or paid memberships (Bhattacharya, 1998). Membership marketing has been affirmed as an interactive technology that generates an environment in which customers feel more positive toward brand and user experience enhancing engagement (Patricia Rich, 2016). Wirtz (2000), George (2018) stated in their study that integration of membership models in the virtual marketing landscape can address the consideration phase in the customer journey and also play a significant role in fulfilling social needs.

- Social media marketing: social media marketing is a strategy in which all the principles of marketing followed in social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Arora and Sanni, 2019). The global usage of social media platforms allows brands to build communities, to reach a larger audience, fostering a sense of belonging and social validation (Syed Sardar Muhammad, 2021; Christian and Baccarella, 2018) and also plays a significant role in fulfilling social and emotional needs (Arli, 2017; Mohammad, 2021), but there is also a dark side to social media (Christian and Baccarella, 2018) as most user-generated content is misleading, negative word of mouth creates bewilderment (Giandomenico Di Domenico, 2021), (Yubo Chen, 2011). However, every advancement comes with its challenges, social media marketing is still becoming fruitful and having a positive impact on businesses as social media platforms enhance emotional connection with the brands through establishing trust, and credibility (Abreu, 2019; Godey, 2016; Vinerean, 2021).

- Email marketing: email marketing is a cost-effective and interactive technology in marketing communication as it reaches worldwide (Sayeed, 2023) , involves sending commercial messages to a group of people (Sabbagh, 2021). The e-mail is the most recent credible and fastest source of marketing communication. Fariborzi (2012), it can address all functional needs but is particularly effective for utilitarian and informational needs. Personalised emails with targeted offers and product recommendations cater to utilitarian needs. Educational newsletters and informative content within emails address informational needs (Payne, 2001). Jeshurun (2018) stated the effectiveness of email marketing depends much on the content as well as the relationship with customers. Thomas et al. (2022) assert that if emails are strategically managed it becomes fruitful for the business for a long span of time.

Figure 1 Hypothesised framework (see online version for colours)
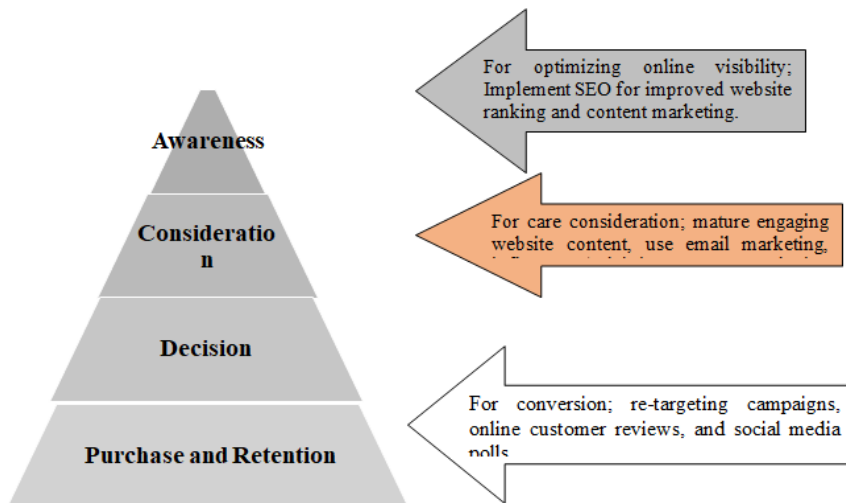
The above literature review section helps us to better understand the research in the area of digital marketing strategies effective for customer engagement and the adoption of these strategies to gain higher engagement rates. However, the literature and debates on digital marketing strategies fail to describe which strategy is most effective for customer

engagement. The literature guided that by strategically uniting numerous digital marketing tactics, businesses can create a cohesive and impactful customer experience. However, clear evident that there are limited studies that have explored and examined digital marketing strategies useful in customer journey maps from awareness to conversion and from conversion to engagement. The focus of this study is to investigate the most effective digital marketing tactic for attaining customer engagement and analyse the strategy useful in the phases of customer journey mapping. The hypothesis statement is based on Figure 1:

3   Research objectives

- To investigate the most effective digital marketing tactic for attaining customer engagement.

- To analyse which digital marketing tactic is useful in a customer journey map, from awareness to conversion, and make them engaged customers.

4   Research methodology

Developing a scale for digital marketing strategies to increase customer engagement is the primary goal of this study. For this investigation, primary data was gathered. A structured questionnaire that was created based on the study's goals was the instrument used to collect responses. Based on data availability and willing participants from the marketing business and the consumers who shop online, the sample was chosen. Convenience sampling, or non-probability sampling, was the method of sampling employed for this investigation. The five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was split into three sections: one asked for basic information, while the other contained statements asking customers to understand what tactics resonate with them and keep them engaged and the third part contained statements to achieve a second objective of mapping tactics to customer journey derived from the body of literature on the topic. Data was collected from 500 respondents in the metropolises of Delhi and the National Capital Region.

There was a mix of 27 statements to achieve the research objectives. Recognising the fact that digital marketing in India is growing at a very fast pace as cited by Dwivedi et al. (2021).

The SPSS software is used for data analysis. The data collected was encoded into SPSS software and then factor analysis was applied. The secondary data for this research is collected through various journals, research papers, and reports available on Google Scholar and Scopus database.

5   Results

The questionnaire was formed to collect study purposes such as which digital marketing approach is most effective in achieving customer engagement and which digital marketing tactic is employed in different phases of the customer journey. The

questionnaire was made up of open-ended questions in English -language, of three sections: one pertaining to demographics and the other two with questions on the goals of the research. Convenience sampling was used as one of the sample approaches for data collection. Out of the 523 responses that were gathered, 23 were excluded because the information provided was insufficient or inefficient. Data analysis was performed on 500 responses from the final sample. 56% of the survey's respondents were female and 44% were male. Compared to men, the female ratio was higher. Compared based on the Income group, the middle-income group (48%) is more reliant on digital marketing tactics like web designs, emails, and user-generated content than the higher (36%) and lower-income group (16%). Customers between the ages of 20 and 30 (56%) are more aware of digital marketing methods than customers between the ages of 30 and 40 (33%), likely because younger consumers are more likely to shop online (Mohammadpour et al., 2014).

Table 1 Demographic profile of respondents

Criteria	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	280	56%
	Female	220	44%
	Total	500	100%
Age	> 20 years	15	3%
	20–30 years	280	56%
	30–40years	165	33%
	< 40 years	40	8%
	Total	500	100%
Income	Lower income group (> 2.4Lac per annum)	80	16%
	Middle-income group (2.4 Lac – 6 Lac per annum)	240	48%
	Higher-income group (6 Lac –12 Lac per annum)	180	36%
	Total	500	100%

Figure 2 Marketers' responses to digital marketing tactics for customer journey mappin
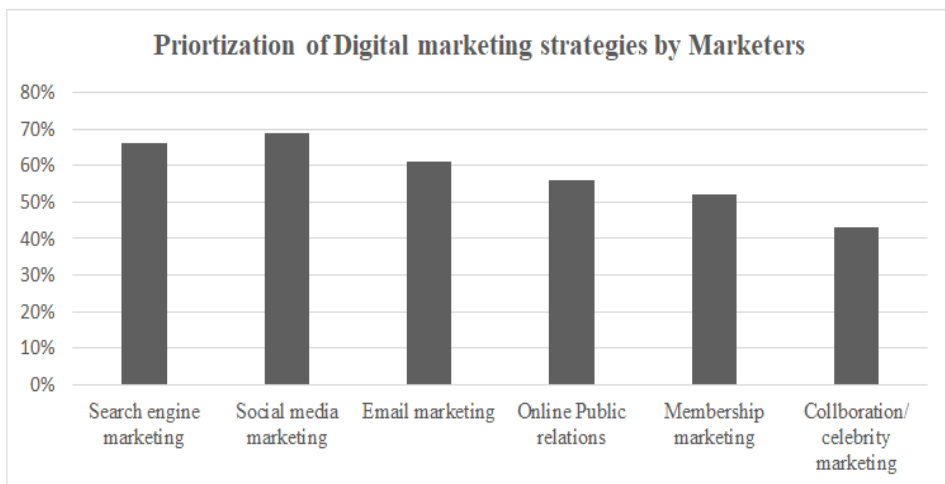
To map digital marketing tactics to customer journey map in the E-commerce industry, it was necessary to understand the perspective of marketers towards digital marketing tactics like SEM, collaboration/celebrity marketing, email marketing, and membership marketing. Most respondents (66%) believed that SEM is a useful tool for attracting customers while respondents (61%) believed that email marketing is the most beneficial tactic for engaging customers. More than half of respondents (56%) believe that online public relations provide an edge over traditional public relations. Most respondents (69%) stated that using social media marketing will propel them to the top of their sector. Most respondents (52%) believe that membership marketing is an effective tool, but only a small percentage (43%) believe that collaboration or celebrity marketing is considered an investment.

Table 2   Exploratory factor analysis

Factors	No.	Items	Factor loadings
Search engine marketing	SEM3	Browsing product information is easy	0.855
	SEM4	Search engines are time-saving	0.846
	SEM2	I find all reliable information on search engines	0.841
Collaboration/ celebrity marketing	CM5	I follow the links of products shared by celebrities on their social media	0.814
	CM1	I search for the brands shared by the celebrity on digital media	0.839
	CM3	I buy the products suggested by influencers on social media	0.808
Online public relations	OPR2	I enjoy receiving customised offers and products	0.836
	OPR3	I enjoy participating in video recording campaigns on products bought online	0.814
Membership marketing	MM4	Paid memberships provide different kinds of offers rather than no memberships	0.738
	MM5	Paid memberships provide better customer service	0.714
	MM2	I usually click on notifications of prime memberships	0.633
Social media marketing	SMM1	I always buy the product after going through reviews on Facebook/YouTube	0.826
	SMM2	I prefer to go to the links shared by WhatsApp community/Facebook groups	0.828
	SMM4	I use vouchers from various websites to buy products online	0.765
	SMM5	I click on the product while reading blogs or visiting page	0.748
Email marketing	EM3	I am interested in product email promotions	0.844
	EM5	Emails from online shops compel me to purchase their product	0.821
	EM2	I click on the links emailed to me by online retailers	0.806

The objective of this study was met by the factor analysis technique. Factor analysis is regarded as appropriate because it is one of the steps of the scale development process. Factor analysis simplifies the complex relationship among a set of observed variables (Ather and Balasundaram, 2009). Principal component analysis with coefficient matrix and rotate matrix was used as recommended by Meglen (1991), Bandalos (2017). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measured 0.862 and as the value lies between 0.8 and 1, stated that the sample was adequate and enough for applying factor analysis. The significance level in Bartlett's test of sphericity was 0.000 (less than 0.05) indicating that data was suitable for factor analysis; refer to Table 3.

The SPSS output explored five factors and the rotation of factors considered three main factors. Based on attributes, factors were labelled as 'SEM', 'collaboration and celebrity marketing', 'online public relations', 'membership marketing', and' email marketing'. The rotated factor matrix considers three main factors labelled 'SEM', 'social media marketing' and 'email marketing'. The first factor labelled as 'SEM' has five attributes, out of which three attributes that are related to 'easy browsing', time saving', and 'credible sources' have higher factor loadings. The second factor labelled as 'email marketing' consist five attributes out of which three attributes related to 'convenience', 'cost-effective', 'customisation' has higher factor loadings and the third factor labelled as 'social media marketing' has five attributes out of which four attributes have higher factor loadings. (refer to Table 2).

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.862
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	1,804.110
	df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Table 4 Rotated component matrix

	Rotated component matrix		
	Component		
	1	*2*	*3*
SEM3	0.845		
SEM4	0.842		
SEM2	0.832		
EM4		0.774	
EM5		0.789	
EM2		0.781	
SMM1			0.812
SMM2			0.802
SMM4			0.799
SMM5			0.721

Note: Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.

6   Conclusions

Digital marketing has been implemented throughout the last decade; nevertheless, other industrial sectors adopted it as the internet and SEO became prominent. Although the literature has several studies on digital marketing, little research has been conducted on how customers might engage in the digital marketing landscape. While a variety of digital marketing techniques and methodologies exist, it has proven challenging for businesses to implement all these strategies at each stage of the customer journey, from awareness to engagement. Furthermore, most of the literature is available in the Western environment, whereas there is very little literature available in the Indian context, indicating that digital marketing is still emerging in India. This study was conducted to resolve the uncertainty of digital marketing methods for achieving client engagement.

The objective of this study was to investigate the most effective digital marketing tactic for the attainment of higher customer engagement and to analyse the digital marketing tactic which is useful in the customer journey map, from awareness to the engagement of customers. The major digital marketing strategy in each phase of the customer journey is derived under six dimensions:

- search engine marketing

- collaboration/celebrity marketing

- online public relations

- membership marketing

- social media marketing

- email marketing.

The hypothesised framework suggests that SEO will be beneficial in the awareness phase, collaboration marketing, website quality, and email marketing will be beneficial in the consideration phase, social media reviews, and polls will be beneficial in the decision and purchase phase, and online public relations and memberships will increase the retention ratio. The six tactics underpinned as factors represent the perspectives and applications of digital marketing strategies for increasing conversion and engagement rates. Along with this, this study further suggests that businesses should conduct cohort analyses.

This study also examined the marketers' perspectives on the use of various strategies in each phase of the customer journey in the digital marketing landscape. It was necessary to understand the perspective of marketers toward digital marketing tactics like SEM, collaboration/celebrity marketing, email marketing, and membership marketing. The majority of respondents believed that SEM is a useful tool to attract customers and make them aware of the products. Keywords and backlinks are powerful tools of this strategy. Most marketers believe that email marketing is the most beneficial tactic to attract and grow a customer base. Marketers feel that sending the correct marketing emails with an attractive subject line and text can help engage new client prospects, increase revenue, and improve customer experience. The main contributor to propel businesses to the top of their sector is social media marketing which includes collaboration/celebrity marketing tactics also.

According to the findings of this study, the use of 'SEM' was an excellent way to raise awareness about the product/service and attract a targeted audience. According to the experience of marketers who have used this strategy, 'SEO', 'keywords', and 'backlinks' can be viewed as investments rather than expenses. The second factor 'social media marketing' states that social media is vital for customer experience since it is always available to customers in their everyday lives. Customers want brands/businesses to be available on social media anytime they need help. Real-time effective communication, social media polls, reviews, engaging in conversations, and responding to consumer queries on time help brands/businesses reach the top of their industry. The other four factors are also considered significant to not only attract but also to retain the customers and grow the customer base. Marketers believed that the factor 'collaboration/celebrity marketing' cost a fortune but they were confident that it provides them better returns. The adoption of 'email marketing' has proven beneficial for large as well as small companies as it is cost cost-effective strategy and has higher applicability to the pan level.

Based on the findings of this study, it has been observed that customers have responded overwhelmingly positively to various digital marketing methods. Through channels such as search engines, social media, and email, customers have expressed a strong liking for the informative and captivating content that they come across. Furthermore, the study highlights that email content has effectively prompted customers to act, signifying a successful conversion journey. The research also underscores that digital marketing strategies centred around the customer result in increased brand loyalty and establish brands for sustained success in the digital marketplace.

Consequently, the research study suggests practical implications for brands, marketers, and business owners. It emphasises that employing customer-centric digital marketing approaches and an intelligent customer journey map can lead to long-term customer engagement and ultimately contribute to a thriving and profitable business.

The study makes a valuable contribution to the digital marketing literature by demonstrating the effectiveness of employing a multi-channel approach and IMCs to enhance customer engagement. The findings not only validate previous research on the customer journey. Lewis (1898), Katz (1957) and effective consumer outreach (Han, 2020) but also establishes a clear link between these strategies and the different stages of the customer experience. This practical framework offers detailed insights into how relevant and entertaining content across diverse digital platforms can significantly impact customer engagement and conversion rates. As per the study's findings, SEM and social media marketing are effective tactics for attracting and growing a consumer base while also increasing engagement rates. This study is distinct in the sense that it not only investigates effective digital marketing tactics for engagement but also maps the tactics with the customer experience journey from awareness to engagement.

7 Limitations and future scope

This study has a few drawbacks, which can be addressed in future research on effective digital marketing methods for engagement. Additional strategies can be investigated and analysed in future investigations. The sample of 500 respondents has limitations in its ability to reflect the Indian population. Another significant drawback of the sample size

of marketers. Respondents, i.e., marketers were less likely to engage in this study. The convenience sampling method has limitations.

This study focused solely on digital marketing methods; however, it did not compare them to competitors in terms of adoption and engagement rates. Comparing the use of digital marketing methods by different sectors might provide a broader perspective. There are insufficient resources and funding available to carry out this investigation. Another limitation of our study is that customer questionnaires rely on self-reported data, which can be incorrect. Customers may not remember their interactions with marketing strategies or their reasons for acting. Clearly, there is a need for additional research on this topic in the Indian context.

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