

Digital Marketing and Information Technology: Leveraging Innovations for Business Opportunities and Growth in a Disruptive Economy

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DOI: 10.61090/aksujomas.11411

ABSTRACT

The convergence of digital marketing and information technology (IT) is redefining how business brands acquire, convert, and retain customers. This paper synthesises the skill sets practitioners need, the key issues they face (privacy, security, tech integration, budgets), and the most promising opportunities (AI-driven personalisation, omnichannel measurement, automation, among others). It concludes by reiterating the key takeaways as a reminder of the practical roadmap for workshop participants. Suitable recommendations were made and future research areas suggested accordingly.

Keywords: *Digital marketing, IT, Innovation, SEO, SEM, RACE*

1. INTRODUCTION

A production cycle is complete when the final consumer receives the finished goods, and at the heart of this process is marketing. The evolution of technology and the adoption of information technology

(IT) in our daily lives bring with them multidimensional changes and innovations in the way we market and conduct business in the market space (Esu, et al. 2024). Economic disruption, driven by inflation shocks, platform changes, privacy regulation, and AI, has compressed marketing cycles while expanding opportunity for firms that execute fast on data, creativity, and automation (Ekpo, et al. 2021). Rapid technological innovation shifts in consumer behaviour, and global uncertainties demand that firms rethink how they leverage innovation (Adobe, 2024; Harvard Professional, 2025). These changes bring the interplay of digital marketing and IT into the centre stage of business growth, stability and sustainability. Business growth in the modern world is driven by IT-enabled marketing capabilities, data collection, analytics, automation, experimentation, and cloud infrastructure, which enable precise targeting and rapid iteration across various channels.

For instance, personalisation alone has been associated with measurable gains in revenue and marketing ROI in multiple studies, underscoring the commercial stakes for retailers that master data and marketing tech (Gartner, 2025). Digital marketing and information technology (IT) are intricately linked, offering both significant opportunities and unique challenges. IT underpins the technological infrastructure for digital marketing, while digital marketing relies on IT infrastructure and tools for its execution. The implication is that IT provides the foundational support for digital marketing activities. The field itself requires a distinct set of skills focused on communication, content creation, and data analysis to effectively reach and engage audiences.

In the hyperconnected and rapidly evolving business landscape of today, the functions of digital marketing and information technology (IT) are no longer auxiliary — they are foundational enablers of organisational competitiveness, growth, and resilience (Hubspot, 2025). The convergence of digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and innovative marketing strategies has revolutionised how businesses interact with customers, streamline operations, and sustain long-term relevance. Consumers today are empowered like never

before — demanding personalised, seamless experiences across multiple digital touchpoints. This creates immense opportunities for businesses to harness data analytics, social media, machine learning, cloud computing, and agile marketing techniques to scale and optimise. Yet with these opportunities come significant challenges: cybersecurity threats, widening digital skill gaps, algorithmic biases, privacy concerns, and dependence on complex technologies (James & Perez, 2025; Digital Marketing Institute, 2025). It must, therefore, be recognised that mastering and applying digital marketing tools and IT infrastructure is no longer optional — but a strategic imperative.

This paper explores the transformative role of digital marketing innovations in creating business opportunities, ensuring growth, and building resilience. It highlights and discusses the skills required to maximise the interplay of digital marketing and IT in building a business structure/ecosystem that is progressive, stable, sustainable and resilient enough for the evolving competitive business landscape, while embracing the flowering opportunities provided by this marriage amid the ensuing challenges.

Digital Transformation and the Changing Business Landscape – The Disruptive Context

Economic and technological disruptions have transformed the business landscape. Innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), retail media networks, social commerce, and the Internet of Things (IoT) are reshaping consumer engagement and value creation, driving rapid changes in customer expectations and organisational processes. Digital transformation has changed how organisations operate across industries. In Nigeria, high mobile penetration and social media use are creating new opportunities in conversational commerce and influencer-led marketing. For example, e-commerce giants like Konga and Jumia use big data analytics to predict consumer behaviour, while financial technology (fintech) firms such as Flutterwave, Opay, and others in Africa are promoting financial inclusion through innovative IT-enabled payment solutions (Esu, et al, 2024). These shifts demonstrate that IT is no longer just a support function, but a strategic driver of innovation and long-term success. These disruptions are why “business as usual” no longer works.

Innovation Pillars for Growth

Digital innovation is the integration of digital technology into all aspects of a business, fundamentally changing how such business operates and deliver value to customers. This innovation is often targeted at the growth of such a business and can be summarised into five innovation pillars for growth. These pillars can be applied in any business – as long as the peculiarity of such a business is incorporated into the model – and achieve the expected result. The pillars are:

- i. Generative AI** - Generative (GenAI) is automating creative production, data analysis, and customer interaction. It enables marketers to scale personalised experiences while reducing time-to-market for campaigns (Adobe, 2024; Harvard Professional/Extension, 2025).
- ii. Retail Media Networks (RMNs)** - Retail media is emerging as one of the fastest-growing channels globally. It provides advertisers with high-intent audiences, closed-loop attribution, and strong return on ad spend (WARC, 2024; Insider Intelligence/eMarketer, 2025).
- iii. Creator and Influencer Commerce** - The creator economy has become a multi-billion-dollar industry, with influencer partnerships enabling brands to tap into trust, authenticity, and social commerce. In Nigeria, influencers on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube play a critical role in shaping consumer decisions (WSJ, 2024; eMarketer, 2025; PR Newswire, 2025).
- iv. First-party Data and Privacy-first Growth** - The decline of third-party cookies necessitates reliance on first-party data strategies. Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) enable firms to centralise consented data and activate personalised campaigns across multiple channels (Gartner, n.d.).
- v. Conventional Commerce** - Messaging platforms like WhatsApp, IG, and Messenger have transformed into powerful sales and engagement tools. In Nigeria, WhatsApp Business is widely used for customer service, transactions, and post-purchase engagement. (Gallabox, 2025;

Wapikit, 2025; DataReportal, 2025).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Framework

i. RACE Model - The RACE framework (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) provides a structured approach for planning, managing, and measuring digital marketing activities. It ensures businesses set goals, identify metrics, and optimise campaigns across the customer lifecycle (Smart Insights, 2024; Chaffey, 2025).

ii. AARRR Metrics - The AARRR framework (Acquisition, Activation, Retention, Referral, Revenue) allows firms to track performance across the growth funnel, ensuring alignment with business outcomes (McClure, 2007; 2025).

A Deeper Look at Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the use of websites, apps, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other digital means to promote and sell products and services. It harnesses digital platforms such as websites, mobile apps, social media, and search engines to efficiently promote and sell products and services. It supplements traditional marketing methods by offering an innovative approach for companies to engage with consumers and analyse their behaviours (Akpan, 2023). The popularity of digital marketing began with the widespread adoption of the internet in the 1990s. Today, companies integrate digital and traditional marketing strategies to effectively reach their audiences, although unique challenges arise, including the fast evolution of digital channels and data utilisation. Thus, according to the Digital Marketing Institute (2025), two broad issues to consider are the mechanics of digital marketing and various digital marketing channels.

i. Understanding the Mechanics of Digital Marketing

Marketing includes various techniques and media to promote products and increase market share. To be successful, it requires a combination of advertising and sales savvy. Professional marketers take on these tasks either internally at individual companies or externally at marketing firms that may serve many different clients (Akpan, 2024). Companies once focused on marketing through print, television, and radio because that was all they had. Although those options still exist, the internet gave companies another way to reach consumers and gave rise to digital marketing. New technologies and trends compelled companies to adjust their marketing strategies and budgets. Email became a popular marketing tool in the early days of digital marketing. Then the focus shifted to search engines like Netscape, which allowed businesses to tag and keyword items to get themselves noticed. The development of social platforms like Facebook made it possible for companies to track user data and deliver their messages to very specific audiences. Smartphones and portable devices enable companies to market products to consumers anywhere. For instance, a 2022 Pew Research Centre study found that 76% of American adults had made online purchases using their phones.

ii. Exploring Various Digital Marketing Channels

Digital marketing channels have evolved since the 1990s and continue to do so. In this paper we consider twelve of such channels commonly in use today.

a. Website Marketing - Companies often use their website as the centrepiece of their digital marketing activities. The most effective websites represent the brand and its products and services clearly and memorably. A website today must be fast-loading, mobile-friendly, and easy to navigate.

b. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising - PPC advertising enables marketers to reach audiences on news and other websites and digital platforms through paid ads. Marketers can set up PPC campaigns on Google, Bing, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Pinterest, and Facebook and show their ads to people searching terms related to their products or services. These campaigns

can segment users based on their demographic characteristics (such as age or gender), or their particular interests or location. The most widely used services for PPC are Google Ads and Facebook Ads.

c. Content Marketing - The goal of content marketing is to reach potential customers through the use of written, visual, or video content that interests them. That content is usually published on a website and then promoted through social media, email marketing, search engine optimisation, or even pay-per-click campaigns. Content marketing attempts to be more subtle than advertising, and the product or service the sponsor/attempts to market may or may not be conspicuously highlighted. Content marketing is a huge job in itself. You have to be able to create high-quality, SEO-friendly content for many channels and understand how to create an effective content marketing plan to engage and convert audiences. A great way to streamline your content and ensure it caters to your target audience is to create content pillars. These are the themes around which all your content will cluster and should be key topics that are relevant to your business and promote the products or services and values of your company. Since content can take different forms, from video to social posts, emails, web content, blogs, e-books, videos, whitepapers and so on, there is a need to shop for experience in crafting different formats. You should also consider trying out AI for content generation and creation. There are a number of AI tools for copywriting, including ChatGPT, Claude, Google Notebook LM and Perplexity. While content creation still requires the human touch (and a good proofread!), AI can help to craft ideas or outline a draft, saving time and energy.

d. Email Marketing - Email marketing is still one of the most effective digital marketing channels, though many people associate it with spam and treat such messages accordingly. It is an essential tool for any marketer, especially as first-party data is more important than ever, since the changes to the use of cookies on Google. The great thing about email marketing is that it helps you to communicate with and influence a captive audience and deliver personalised messaging through segmentation and workflows. Many digital marketers use their other digital marketing channels to collect names for their email lists. Then, through email marketing, they try to turn those leads into customers. Accordingly, 44% of marketers say email is their most effective marketing channel, a greater percentage than for any other channel (Litmus's State of Email Workflows report, 2024) There are a lot of great automation tools out there that can help with email marketing and many of them now have AI-powered capabilities (e.g. MailChimp, HubSpot and Omnisend), thus, it is important to familiarise yourself with them. It is also important to have lists to keep your contacts in order. For example, if you run a paid campaign on social media, collate your contacts into a list so you can target them with similar information or messaging. Triggered workflows and drip campaigns are an effective way to send relevant messages at regular intervals to re-engage prospects or customers based on actions. For example, let's say a list of people downloaded an eBook on your website. Based on the content of the eBook, you could target that audience with relevant messaging that is more likely to be read and clicked, as you're basing the content on past behaviour.

e. Social Media Marketing - The primary goals of a social media marketing campaign are to build brand awareness and establish trust. As a marketer, it is essential to have some understanding of social media marketing, because with over 5.3 billion users worldwide, it can help you attract, influence and engage an audience. You need to understand that it is not as simple as creating a post and putting it out there. The content you create needs to be relevant, targeted and stand out so people will stop scrolling and click. It is also about understanding the strengths of each platform and the formats and messaging that will suit your audience. As you go deeper into social media marketing, you can use it to obtain leads and as a direct marketing or sales channel. Promoted posts and tweets are two examples of social media marketing.

For example, if you're a fitness brand with a customer base of 20–30-year-olds then TikTok and YouTube may help drive brand awareness. You could post a video of customers at a fitness class or a promo video showing what you have to offer. Assume also that you sell software to companies, then LinkedIn could help to make connections and engage in niche groups that drum up business. For instance, software brand Dropbox posts regularly on LinkedIn to promote its brand and services. This post promotes its new AI-powered universal search tool, Dropbox Dash. Brands like Jewelsprings Ltd also find LinkedIn very useful. It is about

knowing your audience base, creating content that will resonate, and using the right social platforms.

f. Affiliate Marketing - Affiliate marketing is one of the oldest forms of marketing, and the digital world has given it new life. In affiliate marketing, companies and individual "influencers" promote another company's products and get a commission every time a sale is made or a fresh lead is added to their list. Many well-known companies, including Amazon, have affiliate programs that pay out millions of dollars to affiliates who help sell their products. software brand Dropbox posts regularly on LinkedIn to promote its brand and services. This post promotes its new AI-powered universal search tool, Dropbox Dash.

g. Video Marketing - A lot of internet users turn to sites like YouTube before making a buying decision, to learn how to do something, to read a review, or just to relax. Marketers can utilise various video marketing platforms, including Facebook Videos, Instagram, and TikTok, to run a video marketing campaign. Companies find the most success with video by integrating it with SEO, content marketing, and broader social media marketing campaigns. The average time adults spend watching social videos daily is rising. Statista.com (2024) pegs it at 52 minutes daily and has projected it to reach 57 minutes by 2028. For marketers, 93% report that video yields a positive ROI (based on metrics such as video views and engagement, including likes, shares, and reposts), according to Wyzowl (2025).

While these statistics may vary depending on who you ask, it is important to note that most statistics point to much higher conversion, engagement, and SEO rankings when it comes to video. It is so engaging because it is personal and relevant. When people can see your face (or the face of the person promoting the brand), they are more likely to trust your business. It's also a versatile content type to use across different platforms. Just think about the success of Instagram and the popularity of TikTok!

Digital marketing professionals do not have to know everything about video production. But knowing how to make videos without hiring a professional is a good place to start. Additionally, it is helpful to know the types of videos that are most popular with consumers. When marketers were asked about the most popular use cases for videos, the top purpose was explainer videos at 73%, followed by social media videos at 69%, and testimonials at 60% (Wyzowl, 2025).

There are some great tools to help you do that, such as Camtasia or an AI tool like CapCut. And if you have some training in this area and love it, your skills will never be wasted, as video will always be in demand. If you want to learn more on your own, you can try out video editing tools like Apple Final Cut Pro X or Adobe Premiere Pro.

h. Text Messaging - Companies use text messages (SMS) to share news about products and promotions. Nonprofit organisations and political candidates also use texting to promote themselves and solicit donations. Today, many marketing campaigns make it possible for consumers to make a payment or donation via a simple text message. The platforms that have driven this channel extensively are WhatsApp and Telegram.

i. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) & Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) work together as they leverage search engines like Google or Bing to drive traffic and boost visibility. However, there are differences between them which are important to know. While SEO is used to optimise a website to drive organic traffic, SEM uses both organic and paid search, such as Pay-Per-Click or programmatic advertising to boost traffic. This means that SEM covers organic and paid channels while SEO focuses on organic traffic, making it a subset of SEM. While you may be able to leave the technical SEO, back-end stuff to the more technical people on the team, knowing how SEO works and the basics of SEM is crucial for running a successful digital marketing campaign, as they can help get your content and brand found by the right audience. Let's look at some of the key SEO ranking factors you should focus on.

1. Keywords - Once you identify the right keywords or phrases, it is important to integrate them across your website.
2. Content - Content is king when it comes to SEO and SEM. It is not only about including the right keywords; you need to produce high-quality content that engages your audience.
3. User Experience (UX) - If you want to keep customers on your website, it is crucial to provide a good user experience by avoiding slow load times, poor navigation or irrelevant content.
4. Link Building - Quality is more important than quantity when it comes to backlinks. A high-quality backlink from a reputable site can help build your site's authority.
5. Video SEO - Optimise your videos for search engines and social networks such as TikTok and YouTube to help get your content and brand found.

You should also have some knowledge of the impact of AI on search marketing, in the form of Google's AI Overviews, as this can impact the visibility of your brand and content

j. Data & Analytics

No matter what area of digital marketing you go into, analytics will play a part in your role and help you drive better business insights. Monitoring and reporting via tools such as Google Analytics (GA4) are straightforward. The tricky part is how to gather and use that information to learn more about consumer behaviour and apply it to solutions that boost traffic and conversions. Most businesses (even small ones) have huge amounts of data to track, and great digital marketers need to understand how to gather and use this to their advantage.

Companies will always be on the lookout for people who not only know how to “read” data using their marketing technical skills, but also to extract value from customer data to improve future strategies. If you can do this in innovative ways that result in campaign success, you will be a valuable asset in any industry. Do not forget that you don't have to stick to one platform for your analytics; you can apply some alternatives to Google Analytics to see if they would work better for you.

k. AI and Automation

Marketing automation has advanced with the development of AI to create highly intelligent and adaptive tools. The technology is evolving so much that some systems are known as AI agents (autonomous systems that make decisions, take actions, and continuously optimize without human intervention). According to SurveyMonkey, 56% of marketers say their company is taking an active role in implementing and using AI, while 70% expect the technology to play a larger role in their work. So as AI continues to develop, there will be more opportunities for marketing teams to use automation to create personalised and scalable campaigns that convert and take over time-consuming and resource-heavy tasks.

Marketers can use AI effectively to analyse vast amounts of data, conduct market research, and automate bidding for paid ads. They can use chatbots for customer service and create triggered email campaigns. Other uses include leveraging visual recognition for social media and e-commerce, optimising and enhancing campaigns, as well as creating hyper-personalised content and delivering recommendations, amongst others.

Trying out AI tools like ChatGPT for automation purposes to have a good idea of what the technology can achieve would not be a bad idea.

3. DESIGN THINKING & PLANNING

Design thinking is a term that refers to a way of approaching problems from a user-centred perspective. The approach essentially encourages one to think in a human-centred way when solving large-scale complex problems. To develop an understanding of design planning online, it's worth knowing the four design fundamentals: colour theory, imagery, typography and composition (James & Perez, 2025). This will help you to design a great website or landing page, and also be useful for any visual content you produce. Consistency in brand is also important for brand recognition, so use this brand style elements template to keep track of all the key design elements. This can be used by everyone in the business to ensure you keep the

look of your brand on track. As employers look for people with unique skills and knowledge and a way to stand out from competitors, it is a good idea to have a solid understanding of design to pump up your marketing resume.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) IN DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketers use key performance indicators (KPIs) just as traditional marketers do. KPIs enable them to measure the long-term performance of their marketing initiatives and compare it to their competitors' efforts. The following are some of the most common KPIs that marketers can use to gauge how well they're doing:

1. **Click-through rate:** This KPI is commonly used to measure the effectiveness of online advertising by counting the number of people who clicked on a particular ad as a percentage of all the people who might have seen it.
2. **Conversion rate:** The conversion rate goes even further than the click-through rate to compare the percentage of people who took some desired action, such as making a purchase, to the total audience that a particular ad or promotion reached.
3. **Social media traffic:** This tracks how many people interact with a company's social media profiles. It includes likes, follows, views, shares, and/or other measurable actions.
4. **Website traffic:** This metric tracks how many people visit a company's website during a given period. Among other uses, it can help companies judge how effective their marketing efforts are at driving consumers to their site.

Skills for the Digital Era:

We need to consider these skills from two angles – digital marketing skills and IT skills.

i. **Digital Marketing Skills** - Success in the digital era demands a combination of technical and soft skills. Technical competencies include search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), customer relationship management (CRM) systems, marketing automation, data analytics, and familiarity with programming or coding basics. These enable businesses to target customers more effectively, personalise campaigns, and improve decision-making processes. On the other hand, soft skills include social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and an understanding of digital advertising platforms. Proficiency in content creation (writing, visuals, video) is also crucial for engaging audiences. Equally important are soft skills like adaptability, ethical reasoning, creativity, and collaboration. MBA students need to develop both sets of competencies to thrive in digital-driven organisations. However, reports indicate a persistent skills gap, especially in data literacy and analytics, with over a third of marketing teams struggling to interpret and apply data effectively (Overcoming the Digital Marketing Skills Gap, 2024).

ii. **IT Skills** - While not all digital marketers need to be coders, having a basic understanding of web development, IT infrastructure, and cybersecurity is advantageous. Knowing how websites operate, how data is stored and managed, and how to defend against cyber threats is becoming increasingly essential. Adaptability, communication, and problem-solving are essential for navigating the ever-evolving digital landscape. Collaboration with IT teams, other marketing professionals, and clients is also key.

Issues:

Technological Advancements: The rapid pace of change in digital technologies requires continuous learning and adaptation. Staying current with new platforms, tools, and best practices is a constant challenge.

Data Privacy and Security: Balancing the need for data-driven insights with the need to protect user privacy is a major concern. Ensuring data security and compliance with privacy regulations is critical.

Competition and Content Saturation: The digital space is crowded, making it challenging to capture audience attention and stand out from the competition. Creating high-quality,

engaging content is essential for success.

Measuring ROI: Accurately measuring the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns and demonstrating ROI can be complex, especially across multiple channels.

Skills Gap: There is a growing demand for digital marketing professionals with a strong blend of digital and marketing skills, and a shortage of qualified individuals can be a challenge.

Opportunities:

Exponential Growth: Digital marketing offers the potential for exponential growth and reach, allowing businesses to connect with a global audience.

Personalised Marketing: Advances in data analytics and AI allow for more personalised and targeted marketing messages, leading to increased engagement and conversions.

New Technologies: Emerging technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), AI-powered marketing tools, and voice search offer new opportunities for engaging with customers in innovative ways.

Evolving Career Paths: Digital marketing provides a wide range of career opportunities, from social media management and content creation to data analysis and digital strategy.

Increased Accessibility: Digital marketing allows businesses of all sizes to reach a wider audience and compete with larger companies.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while digital marketing and IT present unique challenges, they also offer significant opportunities for businesses to connect with customers, drive growth, and innovate their marketing strategies. A combination of strong digital marketing skills, a solid understanding of IT, and the ability to adapt to change is essential for success in this dynamic field. Thus, the following are the key takeaways from this conversation:

- ✓ Digital marketing involves using websites, mobile devices, social media, and search engines to promote products and services, offering an additional approach compared to traditional marketing methods.
- ✓ Since the 1990s, digital marketing channels have evolved, including key platforms like email, social media, and pay-per-click advertising. Each requires strategic planning to effectively reach target audiences.
- ✓ Key digital marketing strategies include website marketing, content creation, email campaigns, social media, affiliate marketing, and the emerging trend of video and text message marketing.
- ✓ Marketers face challenges such as the rapid proliferation of digital channels, the need for effective data analysis, and capturing consumer attention amid digital distractions.
- ✓ Successful digital marketers need strong communication skills, proficiency in data analytics, and a solid understanding of social media dynamics to effectively craft compelling marketing narratives.
- ✓ To stand out in the marketplace, every goal-oriented businessman is expected to deliberately learn and apply digital marketing skills to profit and improve ROI from the numerous digital channels available.

Future Research Area

It is highly recommended that future studies should focus on empirical measurements of digital marketing. Furthermore, rather than a disruptive economy, studies should aim at a particular functional business sector.

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