

# Digital Marketing Management and Its Approved Strategies for A Furniture Company (An Applied Study in Ikea)

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to design a digital marketing management model and its strategies in the furniture industry at IKEA. In this Article, the qualitative content analysis method was used among 20 experts and university professors in the field of digital marketing and business management to reach the theoretical saturation and the quantitative method of the interpretive structural method was used. The current research is from the perspective of the goal of applied- developmental research and in terms of the way of collecting information, it is considered a descriptive and survey type research. In the research results of 80 components, which include micro and macro environment investigation, behavior of target people, threat investigation of new entrants, many changes of actors, measurement of system dynamics, customer contact points, investigation of platforms and transience of competitive advantages, explanation of content, provision of services and advertising pricing and user interface, upgrading and updating, scaling and feedback tools, SEO and data mining, business credibility and branding, people participation and collaboration, higher value provided, horizontal development, strengthening partnership and asset and information networking and extracted advertisements and in the following, the relationship between this component is presented in a process model. In addition to the effective factors on digital marketing management and its strategies, challenges and strategies for improving marketing strategies in IKEA furniture company were also extracted from the interviews. Finally, in the second stage of the research, three researcher-made questionnaires were designed and distributed among 386 people to meaningfully investigate the effective factors, challenges and strategies of digital marketing management. After collecting the data, Student's T-test was used to check the significance of the mentioned items, and the results showed that all the items extracted from the interviews are meaningful.

**Keywords:** P Marketing Management, Marketing Management Strategy, Digital Marketing.

Soon, technologies and digital devices such as smartphones, smart products, Internet of Things (IOT), artificial intelligence and machine

learning all promise important changes in the lives of consumers. It can be understood how digital technology developments are shaping

marketing trends and strategies and the implications of this development for research in the broader space we call "digital marketing" (Kannan et al., 2017).

Nowadays, the digital marketing environment allows consumers to search for information and purchase goods and services through direct communication with online stores. Digital shopping is not based on the actual experience of buying goods, but based on appearances such as images, shapes, information and advertisements. Therefore, accepting online shopping and doing it largely relies on consumer communication and how people interact with the websites. Beyond any purchase, there is an important decision-making and motivational process that needs to be explored. The steps that the consumer goes through to decide to buy what kind of product and from which website, depend on the mental structure of the consumer and the stimuli that marketers apply to turn the consumer's mind into purchase.

Advertisement programs are designed and incorporated into the marketing process to increase demand for the product by presenting product features. Sales is a significant part of marketing, especially in today's complex economy where sales will not occur if marketing processes are not addressed (Engle et al., 2016).

Furniture is a reflection of the culture and art of a land and a symbol of the social dignity of people, which has represented a diverse range of design styles throughout history. Now, the industrial development of society has caused a major transformation in the furniture industry, which requires special care and attention (Chadhiq et al., 2022). During the recent decades, the furniture industry, enjoying a rapid growth process, leaving behind the clothing and footwear industries, has been placed in the first place among the world's light industries, and it is considered as a growing, quick- yielding, fast-paced, employment-creating and high-added-value industry. It is mentioned (Haghighi et al., 2019). On the other hand, the furniture industry has a large share of the global trade market. High

turnover in this field has increased competition so that success in this field requires extensive marketing efforts (Naruoel et al., 2024).

One of the most important factors that can develop and improve the Iraqi furniture industry is the use of marketing tools and parameters, especially digital marketing; because the increasing progress of information technology in today's era and the increase in the number of internet users has become one of the creative and innovative tools in providing tourism information and international exchanges, and the use of traditional marketing methods keeps business enterprises, including the furniture industry, away from the global market. (Kim et al., 2021), digital marketing consists of a wide selection of services, products and marketing using tactics that deliberately use the Internet as a primary advertising medium (Ng'ang'a., 2015). Therefore, digital marketing is a broad term that refers to various advertising techniques to reach customers through digital and addresses a wider level of the target market than traditional marketing, which is also economically efficient (Aktas, 2018).

Digital marketing is actually a sub-branch of marketing which in the narrow definition of the word means the marketing of products and services using digital channels, but in the broad sense of the word it means the use of digital technologies to attract customers, promote the brand, retain customers and increase sales (Cocco, 2017). In fact, digital marketing is not limited to the internet technology and includes all new digital technologies including social media, mobile, augmented and virtual reality, big data and the Internet of Things (Kannan, 2017).

The furniture industry has gone through many changes in the current era. Traditional furniture manufacturers who operate in different parts of the world with traditional methods are on the verge of being removed from the market, and they, who were thinking of development, saw the way out in changing their marketing plans (Adamu et al., 2020). In this regard, marketing strategy plays a major role. Marketing strategy is

an underlying and central concept in strategic marketing, which is the center of all marketing activities of a business. Especially in today's era when the challenges and competitive pressures are very intense, marketing strategies are considered a key lever for the success of businesses and industries (Morgan et al., 2019). Businesses active in the furniture industry need a long-term and comprehensive marketing plan to succeed in this field. Only businesses in this market will be successful if they can do accurate marketing planning by looking at the rapid changes in the environment and monitoring the activities and innovations of competitors (Setiawan et al., 2021).

A solid strategy adapts to change. Online trends evolve quickly and a good app is flexible enough to keep up. This agility ensures that a business remains agile in the fast-paced digital landscape. Consequently, a digital marketing strategy is crucial for any company that plans to thrive in the modern age. It's the road map that guides people to their target audience, increases brand awareness, saves resources, delivers insights, enhances customer engagement, adapts to change, and keeps ahead of competitors. With a well-thought-out strategy, one's business can successfully navigate the digital arena and achieve its goals. According to the above, this research is looking for a model for managing digital marketing and digital marketing strategies in the furniture industry.

## Definition of Key Words

### 2.1 Marketing

Marketing is the study and management of relationships in exchanges. Marketing is a process through which companies engage customers, establish strong relationships with customers, and create value for customers in order to receive value from customers in return. Since marketing is used to attract customers, this activity is considered one of the main components of business management and commerce (Kotler, 2012).

In another definition, marketing refers to a set of activities that are carried out in order to promote, sell, and develop relationships with customers and markets. This process includes strategic planning, market research, advertising and promotional communications, sales, customer service, and marketing performance analysis. The main goal of marketing is to improve sales, increase customer return rates, build brand recognition and trust, and improve market position. The use of various tools such as advertising in different media, digital marketing, promotional events, and promotional strategies is essential to achieve marketing goals (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017).

### 2.2 Digital Marketing

The abundance and popularity of smartphones in today's societies have had a precedent. With the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, the smartphone was adopted on a global scale and at an unprecedented rate, which means that students in the category room can find the answers to the questions the professor is asking them before they even get to the end of the category discussion, which is possible owing to a simple search in Google. Even the modes of teaching need changes from the perspective of this information evolution, otherwise, the category rooms will be empty because students prefer to spend their time on things that are more valuable to them. Regarding the companies and the offers, services or physical products that they provide, company managers and marketing authors should lay the groundwork for user-friendliness of products concerning customers, make their online purchase a simple process and make it accessible for consumers that surf the Internet. Marketing officials should know how online social networks work, and at the same time be experts in the field of online advertising. Google and Instagram are popular and high-traffic channels that are highly functional in Iran, through which one can reach consumers (and sometimes exceed expectations). The evolution of information also means that the target consumer of the company is accessed with

increasing accuracy because privacy is still considered one of the controversial topics in this field.

With the growth of the Internet popularity, especially Web 2.0, over time, paying attention to the use of digital platforms to publish and expand the company's business process has found double importance (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). Day by day, we witness increasing requirements for small companies to have informed and secure knowledge in deciding to adopt a particular technology because they often face limited financial budgets, which limit the margin of error for companies to invest in new technologies (Gilmore et al., 2001).

Regarding digital marketing, many diverse and extensive definitions were provided by various experts and institutions in this field. Drucker defined digital marketing as the process by which the economy integrates with society and serves human needs. Skacel says what we do is to reach more consumers to use our services more or buy more products and meet their needs. According to him, digital marketing is a process to attract customers (Skacel, 1990). According to Kotler, marketing is a managerial and social process in which individuals and groups achieve what they need and desire through the creation and exchange of products and values (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). The Digital Marketing Institute defines digital marketing as the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted and measurable communications to help acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them. As seen, there is no consensus on the definition of marketing. The perspective of each of the presented concepts pertains to the social process of acquiring a customer and going through the sales process. However, regardless of their differences, there is a commonality between all of them, i.e. activity related to the market (Wymbs, 2011).

One of the main goals of digital marketing is to find out how consumers use new technologies and to use this information for the benefit of the organization, thus establishing an efficient

interaction with the target audience is possible. In short, digital marketing should not focus on the technology, but on the target audience/consumer. Basically, digital marketing is the application of marketing concepts in the digital environment (Zatalini et al., 2024).

### 2.3 Digital Marketing Strategies

Regarding digital marketing, many diverse and extensive definitions were provided by various experts and institutions in this field. Drucker defined digital marketing as the process by which the economy integrates with society and serves human needs. Skacel says what we do is to reach more consumers to use our services more or buy more products and meet their needs. According to him, digital marketing is a process to attract customers (Skacel, 1990). According to Kotler, marketing is a managerial and social process in which individuals and groups achieve what they need and desire through the creation and exchange of products and values. The Digital Marketing Institute defines digital marketing as the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted and measurable communications to help acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them. As seen, there is no consensus on the definition of marketing. The perspective of each of the presented concepts pertains to the social process of acquiring a customer and going through the sales process. However, regardless of their differences, there is a commonality between all of them, i.e. activity related to the market (Wymbs, 2011). One of the main goals of digital marketing is to find out how consumers use new technologies and to use this information for the benefit of the organization, thus establishing an efficient interaction with the target audience is possible. In short, digital marketing should not focus on the technology, but on the target audience/consumer. Basically, digital marketing is the application of marketing concepts in the digital environment (Vicente et al., 2023).

2.4 Categorization of Businesses and Macro Marketing Paradigms in the Digital Space

Kiani (1998) investigated the change of marketing paradigm from traditional marketing to internet marketing, and the changes that occurred during this change are shown in Table (1).

Table 1. The new marketing paradigm

From	To
Single or mass communication pattern	Mass-to-mass communication pattern
Mass marketing	Person-centered marketing
monologue	Two-waydialogue
Branding	communication
Supply thinking	Demand thinking
Wide range of brands	Variety
Centralized market	Decentralized market
Customer as target	Customer as partner
segmentation	societies

There are frameworks that fully online and hybrid companies can create strategies for themselves. The important point is that traditional structures are broken and strategy and tactics are combined. In this case, it can be claimed that the strategy has become more experimental in business, which has completely customer-oriented content. Strategy and practical tactics have been combined and a new concept called strategic has been created. In the business space, there are three main types of actors, which include, completely physical, completely digital and hybrid actors. Each of these actors needs a unique business model according to their field of activity (Febriyantoro & Arisandi, 2019). Facing the challenges of the fast-moving digital world, companies are no longer able to use traditional strategy approaches and must use strategies to win. A change in the structure causes a change in the buying behavior of the customer, their interactions with the brand, the cost and the pattern of doing business (Febriyantoro & Arisandi, 2019).

Consumers are adapting to technology at an astonishing rate, which in turn has raised expectations, such that customers want to interact with businesses in multiple ways (e.g. online access as well as in-store and physical and

multi-channel access). All these interactions mean a huge amount of information obtained from the customer that can help the business gain insight into the customer and their behavior. Enthusiastically, entrepreneurs identify markets and use this information, enter them quickly, and increase the intensity of competition among different sectors with great effectiveness and low cost (Tsang et al.,2022).

The conditions of the business structure are changing drastically due to the emergence of different digital models such as complementary channels, re-segmentation of the market, and even the creation of new markets. The cornerstone of these new patterns is the centrality of consumers. Consumers react and respond very quickly and have a good sense of using new patterns that improve their experience. Completely new online businesses can enter the market and compete, while hybrid models are forced to adapt and rebuild themselves, and these conditions cause a rapid change in the structure of the industry. Digital business models are more intuitive, faster, and cost- effective than traditional models. Therefore, the emergence of a large number of new business models is not a strange issue (Trischler & Li-Ying, 2023).

Table 2. Digital business models

Pattern	Description
Complementary and reinforcing pattern	Using the digital space to complete the existing patterns
Re-segmentation	Using the digital space for taking advantage of lower distribution costs and accessing to more information( ,faster, easier with lower cost to new parts of the market that were previously affordable)
Patterns of creative destruction	Replacing part or all of the traditional patterns. This model uses different cost structures so that new entrants can significantly reduce the existing price (improve product offering and customer experience).

Brand new patterns	Creating your own market (it is almost impossible for them to exist in a space other than the digital space, and they reach customers in a completely different way).
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2.4 Research Questions

- What are the digital marketing strategies in the furniture industry?
- What are the challenges of digital marketing in the furniture industry?
- What are the solutions to improve digital marketing management in the furniture industry?
- What is the digital marketing management model and approved strategies in the furniture industry?

Research Methodology

This research presents the digital marketing management model and its approved strategies for the development of the furniture industry. Considering that the presentation of such a model leads to the expansion and development of research literature, the research method is considered practical in terms of purpose and in terms of exploratory and explanatory approach. The method of conducting this research is a combination (qualitative-quantitative) were qualitative data form quantitative data. Therefore, in the current research plan, the researcher first emphasizes qualitative data instead of quantitative data and then resorts to quantitative data to confirm the qualitative findings. In this research, the following tools were used to collect data. Library studies (foreign and domestic books and publications, databases, internet sites, etc.) b) Semi-structured interviews with furniture industry managers active in digital marketing. c) Questionnaire. In the qualitative phase, pluralism was first used in library sources and then the interview method was used to collect data. Qualitative data analysis was done using content analysis method and

based on grounded theory. In this step, three types of coding were done, which are open, central and selective coding. After open coding and extracting concepts from the data, axial coding was done. In the following, after the axial coding, the research components were extracted and the challenges and strategies were determined. The statistical and demographic sample community and a sample in the qualitative section are made up of furniture industry managers who have been active as experts in the field of digital marketing. The non-probability/snowball sampling method is purposeful and the sample size was determined using the theoretical saturation method. In this research, 10 and 15 interviews were conducted until the interviews reached theoretical saturation. In the quantitative

sampling section, Morgan's table was used to determine the sample size, which according to the size of the statistical population, the statistical sample size is equal to 386 people.

Research Findings

4.1 Finding of the qualitative part of the research

In this section, the necessary data were collected through interviews, and for the analysis of the data, the contextual theory was used by the MAXQDA software.

4.2 Interviewees' demographic characteristics

Data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with experts. The research community includes experts, activists and managers of IKEA in Iraq. Interviews and feedback were recorded, corrected and coded using grounded theory. In total, 20 participants were interviewed. The demographic characteristics of the interviewees including gender, level of education, level of work experience and job are presented in the Table below.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of interviewees, gender, level of education, occupation, work experience

No.	Gender	Education	Job	Working experience
1	male	MA	Business manager	30 years
2	male	MA	An agency owner	32 years
3	male	PhD	University professor	25 years
4	male	PhD	University professor	29 years
5	male	PhD	Business manager	27 years
6	male	MA	Business manager	26 years
7	male	PhD	An agency owner	24 years
8	male	PhD	An agency owner	20 years
9	male	MA	An agency owner	19 years
10	male	PhD	University professor	26 years
11	male	MA	Business manager	25 years
12	male	PhD	University professor	30 years
13	male	PhD	University professor	26 years
14	male	MA	An agency owner	24 years
15	male	PhD	An agency owner	23 years
16	male	MA	Business manager	17 years
17	male	PhD	An agency owner	29 years
18	male	MA	Business manager	24 years
19	male	PhD	An agency owner	30 years
20	male	PhD	Business manager	16 years

#### 4.3 Analysis of Interview Data

Several methods are used to extract the required research model variables in solving the problems of the experts' field of work. This research uses the direct method and after conducting the interview, these concepts were first open-coded, then categorized, and finally,

axial coding was conducted to extract the research pattern to understand and extract the required variables of the research.

#### 4.4 Open Coding

Table 4 and 5 show the example of open coding in the current research in MAXQDA software.

Table 4. Sample interview quotes

The respective quote	Open code	Concept	No. Interview	The main category
The platform is one of the challenges that businesses face today. In my opinion, platforms are one of the main ways of communicating with another important component called the customer. For today's businesses, most digital businesses are not based on what service they provide, rather, the main theme of this style of business is based on how this service is provided and which channel is easier, faster or even cheaper to receive the said service. The platform selection component is determined according to the customer touchpoint strategy and its updating	Platforms and their updates	The effect of contacting the customer through the updated platform on the proper management of digital marketing	3	Causal conditions

according to the customer journey strategy.				
In any business, the customer is the most fundamental component among the other proposed components and is the cornerstone of directing other components. The main question in this section is who is the customer? Where is he? What is he doing? How does he see us? And how does he find us? Customer component in strategies such as content strategy, content marketing strategy, customer touchpoint strategy, and customer journey strategy are becoming more relevant.	Customer: the touchpoint with the customer who initiates digital activity; The importance of identifying customer touchpoints; touchpoints as the foundation for explaining the customer journey	The importance of the customer in digital marketing and knowing the details related to it and its role in the success of businesses	19	
Each customer has his own personality, behavior and mood. One must know the customers and segment the market based on their behavior and mood, otherwise, one will be condemned to failure due to the lack of communication with the target customers.	Segmentation by understanding customer behavior Product failure	The importance of knowing customers and audiences The result of neglecting the important component of the customer	4	Strategy Outcome

By reviewing the interview data, other concepts have been extracted in the same way. This process is fully shown in Tables 6.

Table 5. Open Coding Process of Interviews with Experts (IKEA Company's Digital Marketing Strategies Challenges)

Row	Code	Frequency	Interview number
1	Lack of financial resources, especially after the COVID-19 epidemic, to provide a new product	7	3,9,10,12,15,17,19
2	Lack of sufficient business development and agency in recent years	7	4,6,8,12,15,16,19
3	Failing to consider the customers' interests in the design of their products	6	5,9,13,14,17,20
4	Lack of sufficient understanding of the psychological and demographic characteristics of customers	14	1,2,3,5,7,8,10,11,12,14, 15,18,19, 20
5	Failure to choose the right platform for advertising	12	1,4,5,7,9,10,13,14, 15,16,18, 19
6	Failing to focus advertisements on the customers' needs and interests	7	7,8,9,10,14,15,17



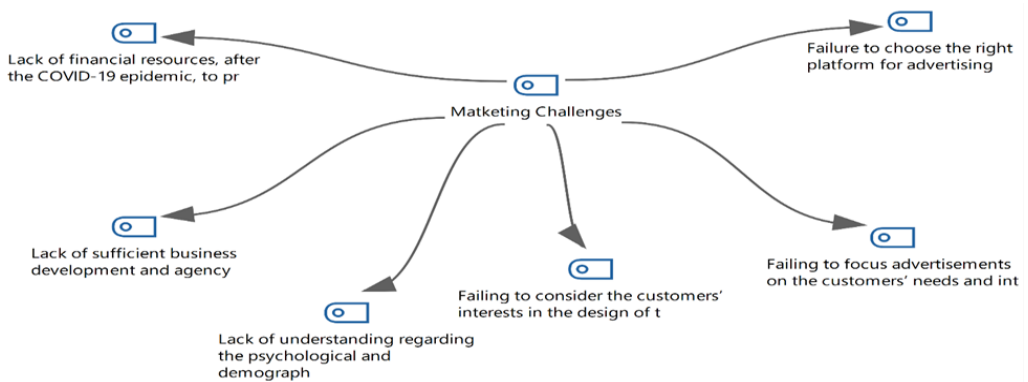


Figure 1. Open coding (IKEA company's digital marketing challenges)

As seen in the Table above, six challenges for the digital marketing of the IKEA furniture company in Iraq have been extracted according to the opinions of the interviewees.

Table 6. Open Coding Process of Interviews with Experts (Factors Affecting Digital Marketing Management and Its Strategies)

Row	Code	Frequency	Interview number
1	Customer-centeredness	7	2,4,5,6,15,18,20
2	The requirement to understand customer behavior	6	1,7,13,14,17,19
3	Formation of the customer journey concept	8	1,3,4,5,8,9,14,16
4	The difference between in-person and online shopping and explaining the customer journey	8	4,6,7,10,11,18,19,20
5	Defining the requirements needed at each stage of the customer journey	7	2,8,9,12,15,16,19
6	Dependability of the product according to the customer journey	6	1,2,7,8,12,15
7	Stability of customer journey stages	5	4,9,10,11,20
8	Understanding the behavior and mood of the addressees and customers	7	4,8,10,14,15,17,18
9	Segmentation of customers based on their personality	10	1,2,3,5,7,8,9,11,16, 19
10	Considering the demographic characteristics of customers	8	3,10,11,12, 15,18,19, 20
11	Considering proper communication with the target customer to reduce the failure rate of products	9	1,5,9,10,13,15,16, 18, 19
12	Identifying the customer touchpoint as the initiator of the purchase activity	8	2,10,13,14, 15,17,18, 19
13	touchpoint as the foundation to explain the customer's purchase journey	11	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10,15,16, 17
14	The importance of identifying customer touchpoints	7	2,7,9,12,15,16,19
15	Priority of content over advertising	6	2,8,9,12, 16,19

16	Customers affect the content	7	3,6,8,12,15,16,18
17	Limit of information provided to the customer	11	1,4,5,8,9,10,11,13,15,16, 19
18	Creating awareness to facilitate decision making	9	1,5,9,10,13,15,16, 18, 19
19	The importance of the type of expression and effect of the customer journey	10	3,4,5,8,9,10,12,13,15,17, 19
20	Marketing objectives affect the content	7	3,9,10,12,15,17,19
21	Message and media selection through content	7	4,6,8,12,15,16,19
22	Greater stability of content over time	5	5,9,14,17,20
23	The importance of having information and promotion media	6	6,7,8,12,15,19
24	The focus of advertisement on special customers	7	2,3,5,8,14,16,18
25	Advertising based on consumer (customer) behavior analysis	12	1,2,3,5,7,8,10,12,13,16,19,20
26	Advertising focused on building credibility	10	4,6,9,11,12,13,14,15,17,18
27	Using mass advertising to create awareness	6	1,2,9,14,16,17
28	Identifying customer needs	13	1,2,3,4,7,9,10,11,12,14,17,18,20
29	Creating targeted advertising strategies	11	2,3,5,7,9,10,11,13,15,16, 19
30	Direct interaction with customers	10	2,4,5,6,7,10,13,14,15, 18
31	Advertising emphasis on creating common interests of customers and businesses	8	3,10,11,12, 15,18,19, 20
32	Emphasis on greenness and environmental friendliness of products in advertisements	9	1,5,9,10,13,15,16, 18, 19
33	Competitive prices in the market	7	2,6,9,12,15,16,17
34	Appropriate pricing strategies	6	1,7,13,15,17,19
35	Free price strategy in ancillary and additional free services (assembly and disassembly of products)	8	3,5,8,9,13,17,18
36	Building trust to fulfill promises for products	9	2,4,6,7,11,14,15, 17, 18
37	Giving importance to the product core in the digital environment	6	2,3,5,6,8,16
38	Paying attention to unique product designs	9	1,4,7,9,10,12,13,14,19
39	The existence of different capabilities in the realization of SEO	7	3,9,10,12,15,17,19
40	The importance of checking all related lexicons	6	4,6,8, 15,16,19
41	Affection from content	7	4,7,10,11,14,17,18
42	High SEO changes over time	10	2,3,8,9,12,14,15,17, 18,20
43	Reproducibility in word search through experience transfer	9	1,5,7,10,13,15,16, 18, 19
44	Examining emerging vocabulary in search	11	2,3,5,7,9,10,12,13,15,16, 19
45	Establishing mutual relationships with customers	12	2,4,5,6,7,10,13,14,15,17, 18,20
46	Quick feedback awareness of actions through some online tools	9	1,3,4,5,8,9,14,16
47	Improving the digital system based on people's opinions	9	2,4,5,7,8,11,15,17,18
48	The need for improvement in business development	9	1,6,9,10,12,14,15,16,19

49	The necessity of defining the required people on the platform	7	6,8,9,12,14,15,17
50	The difference between digital business platforms	5	12,13,16,17,20
51	Change in the rules of activity	9	2,5,8,9,12,14,15,16,20
52	Less complicated rules	9	2,4,5,10,12,13,14,18,19
53	different available choices and tools to every business	7	6,9,11,13,15,16,19
54	More number of influential and leading areas	13	1,2,3,5,8,9,10,11,12,14,17,18,20
55	Little understanding of the effect of other people's behavior on business	11	3,4,7,8,9,11,12,15,17,18,19
56	Low ability to predict the future movements of actors	8	3,4,7,9,12, 17,18,20
57	Wide distribution of information and aware customers	6	1,8,9,12, 16,19
58	High impact of laws on the territory	11	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,15,16, 17
59	High impact of culture on the territory	8	4,6,7,14,15,16,18,19
60	Defining competition beyond industry players	7	2,3,10,11,13,17,20
61	The definition of competition based on the understanding of the environment	9	1,2,3,5,7,8,9,11,16
62	The definition of competition based on the purpose of the business	7	3,6,7,10,14, 17,19
63	The definition of competition based on the defined value of the business	6	4,9,11,12,19,20
64	The definition of competition based on the understanding of the market and its share	11	2,3,5,7,9,10,12,13,15,16, 19
65	High threat of substitute and improved products	8	3,5,7,10,13,17,18,20
66	The possibility of the entrance of new actors into the competition	7	2,6,8,14,15,16,19
67	Providing more content than others	6	1,7,13,15,17,19
68	Credit experience	10	2,5,9,10,13,14, 15,17,18, 19
69	Credit communication through customer perceptions	11	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10,15,16, 17
70	Providing specialized content tailored to the audience	8	2,10,11,14, 15,16,18, 20
71	Completely related product package	5	3,10,15,16, 17
72	Providing more services by covering all the services of others	9	1,5,7,10,13,15,16, 18, 19
73	The rapid ability of others to gain an advantage	11	2,3,5,7,9,10,12,13,15,16, 19
74	Fleeting and short opportunities	7	3,9,10,12,15,17,19
75	Need for quick action	7	4,6,8,12,15,16,19
76	The role of information in competitiveness	9	1,2,5,9,11,13,14,17,20
77	Having information about consumers' behavior	8	3,10,11,12, 15,18,19, 20
78	Knowing the side effects of business	10	1,5,7,10,13,14, 15,16,18, 19
79	Importance of customer involvement	7	7,8,9,10,14,15,17
80	Investigating the effectiveness of available tools from the perspective of the audience	10	2,4,5,6,7,10,13,14,15, 18

The codes related to the effective factors in the digital marketing management model and its strategies are 80, which were extracted from 20 conducted interviews. As seen in the above Table, some factors are related to the customer, knowing the customer and creating targeted marketing.

In addition, some factors pertain to the competitive market, knowing competitors, and

product pricing. Also, there are some factors related to the digital environment, including the ways of communication, the quality of customer communication, the platform and its updates.

Also, in response to the question related to the improvement of digital marketing and its strategies, some codes were extracted which can be seen at the end of the Table (7).

Table 7. Suggestions for improving digital marketing management and its strategies

Row	code	Frequency	Interview number
1	Networking with other actors	8	2,3,5,6,8,14,16,18
2	Ability for the internal development of businesses	10	1,2,3,5,7,8,10,12,13,20
3	Attract more financial and non-financial resources	10	4,6,7,11,12,13,14,15,17,18
4	Attracting international investors	10	1,2,5,6,9,12,14,15,16,17
5	Cooperation with other famous brands to inject investment	9	3,4,7,9,10, 12,14,18,20
6	Informing the audience and creating an advertising platform	12	2,3,5,7,9,10,11,13,15,16, 17,19
7	Using the facilities and power of other actors	13	1,2,4,5,7,9,10,11,12,14,17,18,20
8	Attracting more information sources	11	2,3,5,7,9,10,12,14,15,18, 19
9	Development of activities with customer knowledge	8	1,5,9,10,13,15,16,17

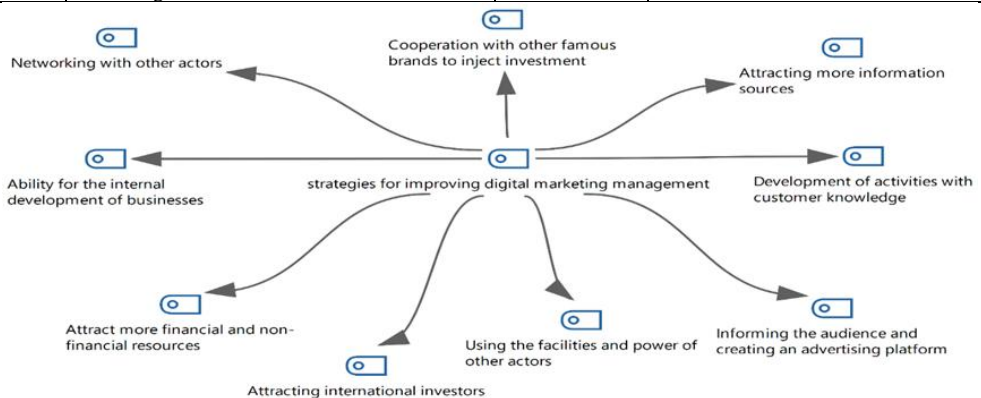


Figure 2. Open coding (strategies for improving digital marketing in IKEA company)

#### 4.5 Formation of Categories

After identifying and extracting the codes from the interviews, it is time to determine the categories and summarize the concepts. In this section, according to the concepts of codes, categories or main dimensions of the model are

determined. At this stage, each of these concepts was compared with each other. For example, the codes competitive prices in the market, free price strategy in side and additional services (assembly and disassembly), and appropriate pricing strategy are considered as price category. Table

(8) shows the results of converting conceptual codes to themes.

Table 8. Concepts and topics obtained from qualitative data

Theme (theme or category)	Conceptual code
The behavior of people in a field	Customer-centeredness
	The requirement to understand customer behavior
Explaining the customer's purchase journey steps	Formation of the concept of customer journey
	The difference between in-person and online shopping and explaining the customer journey
	Defining the requirements needed at each stage of the customer journey
	Dependability of the product according to the customer journey
	Stability of customer journey stages
Market segmentation and target customers	Understanding the behavior and mood of the addressees and customers
	Segmentation of customers based on their personality
	Considering the demographic characteristics of customers
	Considering proper communication with the target customer to reduce the failure rate of products
Clarification of customer touchpoints	Identifying the customer touchpoints as the initiator of the purchase activity
	explain the customer's purchase journey based on Touchpoints
	The importance of identifying customer touchpoints
Explanation of content and information	Priority of content over advertising
	Customer
	Limit of information provided to the customer
	Creating awareness to facilitate decision-making
	The importance of the type of expression and impact of the customer journey
	Content is affected by marketing objectives
	Message and media selection through content
	Greater stability of content over time
Targeted advertising	The importance of having information and promotion media
	The focus of advertising on special customers
	Advertising based on consumer (customer) behavior analysis
	Advertising focused on building credibility
	Using mass advertising to create awareness
	Identifying customer needs
	Creating targeted advertising strategies
	Direct interaction with customers
	The emphasis of advertising on creating common interests of customers and businesses
	Emphasis on being green and environmentally friendly products in advertising
Product or service pricing	Competitive prices in the market
	Appropriate pricing strategies
	Free price strategy in ancillary and additional free services (assembly and disassembly of products)

Service or product provision	Building trust to fulfill promises for products
	Giving importance to the product core in the digital environment
	Paying attention to unique product designs
SEO in search engines	The existence of different abilities in the realization of SEO
	The importance of investigating all related lexicons
	Affection from content
	High SEO changes over time
User interface	Repetition in word search through experience transfer
	Examining emerging vocabulary in search
customer feedback	Establishing mutual relationships with customers
	Quick feedback awareness of actions through some online tools
Media upgrade and update	Improving the digital system based on people's opinions
	The need for improvement in business development
Platform	The necessity of defining the required people on the platform
	The difference between digital business platforms
System dynamics	Change the rules of activity
	Less complicated rules
	The existence of different choices and tools available to every business
	More number of influential and leading areas
	Little understanding of the impact of other people's behavior on business
macro environment	Low ability to predict the future movements of actors
	Wide distribution of information and aware customers
	High impact of laws on the territory
	High impact of culture on the territory
Internal organizational factors	Defining competition beyond industry players
	The definition of competition based on the understanding of the environment
	The definition of competition based on the purpose of the business
	The definition of competition based on the defined value of the business
	definition of competition based on the market and its share
Newcomers	High threat of substitute and improved products
	The possibility of new actors entering the competition
Business credit from the customer's view	Providing more content than others
	Credit experience
	Credit communication through customer perceptions
	Providing specialized content tailored to the audience
	Completely related product package
transience of the competitive advantages	Providing more services by covering all the services of others
	The rapid ability of others to gain an advantage

customer behavior information	Fleeting and short opportunities
	Need for quick action
	The role of information in competitiveness
	Having behavioral information of consumers
	Knowing the side effects of business
Customer engagement in digital business media	Importance of customer involvement
	Investigating the effectiveness of available tools from the perspective of the audience

The final concepts and topics of the qualitative section are the factors affecting the management of digital marketing and its strategies in IKEA as described in the table below.

Table 9. Final concepts and topics of the qualitative part of factors affecting digital marketing management and its strategies in IKEA Company

No.	Index
1	Knowing the behavior of people in a field
2	Explaining the stages of the customer's purchase journey
3	Market segmentation and target customers
4	Clarification of customer touchpoints
5	Explanation of content and information
6	Targeted advertising
7	Product or service pricing
8	Providing a service or product
9	SEO in search engines
10	User interface
11	customer feedback
12	Media upgrade and update
13	Platform
14	System dynamics
15	Macro environment
16	Internal organizational factors
17	Newcomers
18	Business credit from the customer's point of view
19	The transience of the competitive advantages
20	customer behavior information
21	Customer engagement in digital business media

As seen in the Table above, the codes extracted from the interviews are categorized into 21 main categories or dimensions.

#### 4.6 Axial Coding

Conditions are referred to as a set of events that create topics, situations, and issues related to the phenomenon under investigation. The conditions that are used in the paradigm model include causal conditions, field conditions, intervening (mediating) conditions, central categories, strategies and consequences, which are described and coded below.

#### 4.7 Causal Conditions

In this article, by analyzing the text and content of the interviews, explanation of customer touchpoints, behaviour of people in a field, explanation of customer journey stages, market segmentation and target customers, explanation of content and information, targeted advertising, product or service pricing, service or product provision, explanation of SEO in search engines, user interface, emphasis on customer feedback, media promotion and updating, platform and system dynamics are considered as causal factors, because these factors directly affect digital marketing and its strategies.

#### 4.8 Axial Coding of Intervening Conditions (Microenvironment)

In this research, according to the interviews conducted, internal organizational factors, customer participation in the digital business media, acquiring information from customer behavior, transience of the advantage of actions, newcomers and business credit from the customer's point of view are among the intervening conditions.

4.9 Grounded Conditions

In the current research, the factors related to the "macro environment" are among the background condition.

4.10 Strategies

Strategies are generally answering that lead to problem solving. Based on the interviews analyses, the strategies in the present research are presented in the Table (4-9) and the figure below.

4.11 Outcomes

Understanding the actions/reactions enables the researcher to do more analysis on the data by asking questions about the outcomes of these actions/reactions.

In this Article, the outcome is to create a suitable model for improving digital marketing management and its strategies.

4.11.1 Selective Coding and Theoretical modeling

The research paradigm model shows the flow of processes and activities that happened in the context of the study. This model is one of the main pillars of the grounded theory method, which is used in the Strauss and Corbin method. This model consists of causal conditions, background conditions, intervening conditions, the main category, strategies and outcomes. In axial coding, categories are systematically refined and linked with subcategories. In the third stage of coding, it is selective coding and presentation of the research paradigm model.

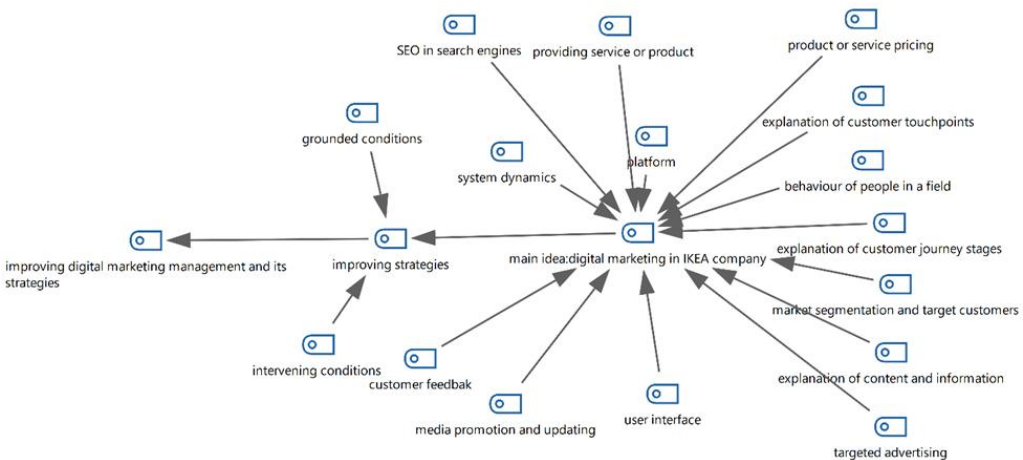


Figure 3. Digital marketing management model and strategies

As seen in the diagram above, the causal factors are explanation of customer touchpoints, knowledge of people's behavior in a field, explanation of customer journey stages, market segmentation and target customers, explanation of content and information, targeted advertising, product or service pricing, service or product provision, explaining SEO in search engines, user interface, emphasis on customer feedback, upgrading and updating media, platform and

system dynamics directly affect the digital marketing management of IKEA furniture company and should be considered in formulating strategies.

In addition, using strategies that are influenced by the intervening conditions, internal organizational factors, customer participation in digital business media, getting information from customer behavior, transience of the advantage of actions, newcomers and



business credibility from the customer's point of view and the background conditions (macro environment), one can achieve the proper management model of digital marketing and its strategies.

The strategies provided to improve digital marketing management and its strategies include networking with other players, internal business development, attracting more financial and non-financial resources, attracting international investors, cooperation or integration with other brands, informing the audience, and creating a suitable digital advertising platform, using the facilities and resources of other actors, attracting information sources and developing activities with customer knowledge. In fact, through the presented strategies, IKEA can reduce its challenges or turn them into opportunities with strategic planning.

#### 4.11.2 Quantitive Section Anlysis

In the previous section, the factors affecting digital marketing management and its strategies

and challenges were extracted from 20 interviews with experts and the factors were classified into 20 main categories. Next, it examines the importance of effective factors, strategies and challenges of digital marketing management of IKEA furniture company. In this section, 3 questionnaires of effective factors (80 questions), challenges (6 questions) and strategies (9 questions) were used to collect data. The statistical population of this department includes all customers, managers and employees of Ikea furniture company agencies in Iraq, experts and university professors in the field of reopening and marketing activities, whose volume is considered infinite. Based on the size of the statistical population, the sample size is equal to 386 people. In the following, first the descriptive statistics of these people are presented and then the results of the structural equations are analyzed.

#### 4.12 Descriptive statistics of research sample

Table 10. Frequency distribution of people

Gender	Frequency	Education	cumulative frequency	Experience	Frequency
Female	77	B.A. and lower	0	Less than 5 years	0
Male	309	M.A.	85	Between 6 and 10 years	170
Total	386	PhD	301	Between 11 and 15 years	162
		Total	386	15 years and more	54
				Total	386

#### 4.13 Student's T-Test Results

In this section, the significance of the extracted codes is analyzed using student's t-test.

The results are presented in Tables (11), (12) & (13).

Table 11. Results related to factors affecting digital marketing management and its strategies in IKEA furniture company

Factors	Mean	DoF	T- statistic	significance	Results
Knowing the behavior of people in a field	2.9608	385	23.081	0.000	Significant
Explaining the stages of the customer's purchase journey	3.9020	385	39.693	0.000	Significant
Market segmentation and target customers	3.3627	385	26.786	0.000	Significant
Clarification of customer touchpoints	3.6373	385	33.868	0.000	Significant
Explanation of content and information	3.0761	385	36.022	0.000	Significant

Targeted advertising	3.7941	385	39.056	0.000	Significant
Product or service pricing	3.2353	385	29.228	0.000	Significant
providing service or product provision	3.7745	385	39.889	0.000	Significant
Explanation of SEO in search engines	3.5490	385	32.798	0.000	Significant
User interface	3.3039	385	29.953	0.000	Significant
Emphasis on customer feedback	3.8137	385	43.976	0.000	Significant
Media upgrade and update	3.6863	385	38.913	0.000	Significant
Platform	3.2451	385	28.791	0.000	Significant
System dynamics	3.9020	385	40.980	0.000	Significant
Macro environment	3.6667	385	38.552	0.000	Significant
Internal organizational factors	3.0588	385	24.799	0.000	Significant
newcomers	3.8235	385	43.698	0.000	Significant
Business credit from the customer's point of view	3.6275	385	37.483	0.000	Significant
The transience of the advantage of actions	4.0980	385	49.456	0.000	Significant
Obtaining information about customer behavior	3.8725	385	43.018	0.000	Significant
Customer engagement in digital business media	3.2353	385	31.350	0.000	Significant

Table 12. Results related to digital marketing challenges and its strategies

Factors	Mean	DoF	T- statistic	significance	Results
Lack of financial resources, especially after the corona epidemic to present a new product	3.7843	385	33.600	0.000	Significant
Lack of sufficient business development and granting representation in recent years	4.0098	385	47.702	0.000	Significant
Not considering the interests of customers in the design of their products	4.0980	385	50.955	0.000	Significant
Lack of sufficient understanding of psychological and demographic characteristics of customers	4.3529	385	52.466	0.000	Significant
Failure to choose the right platform for advertising	4.1961	385	47.026	0.000	Significant
Failure of advertisements to focus on the needs and interests of customers	4.2647	385	47.284	0.000	Significant

Table 13. Results related to digital marketing strategies and its strategies

Networking with other actors	Mean	DoF	T- statistic	significance	Results
Ability to internally develop business	4.1176	385	47.805	0.000	Significant
Attract more financial and non-financial resources	4.0196	385	42.015	0.000	Significant
Attracting international investors	3.3333	385	30.089	0.000	Significant
Cooperation with other famous brands to inject investment	4.1176	385	49.140	0.000	Significant
Informing the audience and creating an advertising platform	4.0784	385	52.193	0.000	Significant
Using the facilities and power of other actors	4.0784	385	47.734	0.000	Significant
Attracting more information sources	4.1569	385	53.158	0.000	Significant
Development of activities with customer knowledge	4.0000	385	43.232	0.000	Significant
Networking with other actors	3.8824	385	41.327	0.000	Significant

In the above Tables, the mean column indicates the mean of the responses that can be seen, all of them are higher than 3, which

indicates the high level of agreement of people with the extracted factors. In addition, the column related to the T statistic shows the

calculated value of this statistic for each of the factors.

If the calculated values for the T-statistic are greater than 1.96, the extracted factor is significant at the 0.05 level, and if the values are greater than 2.58, the factor is significant at the 0.01 error level. As can be seen in the Tables (11), (12) and (13), all the calculated values are greater than 2.58, therefore, it can be said that the factors affecting digital marketing management and its strategies, namely, the challenges of IKEA in digital marketing management as well as suggestions for improving digital marketing management in this company are significant at the 0.01 error level.

It can be seen from the relevant Tables that the significance level for all the items is equal to 0.000, which is due to the large values of the T statistic.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Considering that the Internet and digitalization have led to changes in marketing paradigms, business classification, and even marketing mixes; The problem is, how should digital marketing management and its strategies be? This is the issue that this treatise has addressed. In order to answer this question, contextual theory was used and the following model was presented to improve digital marketing management and its strategies in IKEA in Iraq.

According to the results obtained, the causal conditions include "explanation of customer contact points", "behavior of people in a field", "explanation of customer journey stages", "segmentation of the market and target customers", "explanation of content and information", "advertisements". Targeted", "Product or service pricing", "Service or product offering", "Explaining SEO in search engines", "User interface", "Emphasis on customer feedback", "Updating and updating media", "Platform" and "measurement of system dynamics" which directly affect the main category and can be considered related to the

investigation of market territory and activity. Intervening conditions are "internal organizational factors", "customer participation in business digital media",

"Acquiring information from customer behavior", "temporary advantage of actions", "new entrants" and "business credibility from the point of view". "Customer" is the background conditions of macro environmental factors.

According to the extracted factors, companies in their digital marketing strategy do a preliminary investigation of their field of activity and evaluate their environment and internal conditions. Also, these factors refer to the examination of customers and the definition of the foundations of the company's marketing activity in order to attract customers in the digital environment.

On the other hand, some of these factors are related to marketing tools in the digital environment, for which the company must plan and use the strategies presented in the model to achieve future growth paths in the digital environment through digital marketing management and appropriate strategizing.

As can be seen, the factors extracted in the current research can be grouped into 5 elements: customer, platform, networking, fast and substitute competitive advantages, and SEO and digital branding, which are in accordance with the presented model by Hambrick and Fredrikso (2001).

The results of the present research, on the one hand, in line with the fact that some researchers have emphasized that the Internet and digitalization have led to changes in marketing paradigms, business classification and marketing mix, showed that these things absolutely need attention and It is an investigation and the extraction of the digital marketing strategy model in this research shows the necessity of a deep paradigm analysis to understand the competition and content of the strategy in cyber space.

One of the most important operational limitations of the current research was the lack of

possibility of providing a customer journey in the digital space for the business under investigation, as well as the rapid change and evolution in the variables under investigation due to the nature of the environment of the IKEA company and the

lack of competitors for this particular industry under investigation.

Conflict of interest

All authors declare no conflicts of interest

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