



Student Name: Mikel Shil

Student ID: 2434307

Module Name: Marketing Management

Module Code: LCMB7024

Lecturer's Name: Dr. JAYA GOPALKRISHNAN

Work Count: 2500

Table of Content

Introduction.....	3
Task 1: Critical analysis of Social (Cultural) and Technological actors.....	4
Actor A: Social Actors.....	4
Lifestyles (Remote work): Zoom vs Microsoft Teams.....	4
Values & beliefs (Privacy): Signal vs WhatsApp.....	4
Opinions & views (Trust): Airbnb vs Booking.com.....	5
Actor B: Technological Actors.....	6
AI & automation (Creative): Adobe vs Canva.....	6
Cybersecurity (Fintech): PayPal vs Revolut.....	6
5G & connectivity (Gaming): GeForce Now vs Xbox Cloud Gaming.....	7
Task 2: Strategic responses using Porter’s Generic Strategies.....	8
2.1 Differentiation strategies of pioneers.....	8
Differentiation Strategies of Pioneers.....	8
Focused Differentiation on Usability and Reliability.....	8
Value-Led and Experiential Differentiation.....	8
Professional-Grade and Trust-Based Differentiation.....	9
Performance-Led Technical Differentiation.....	9
2.2 Cost leadership and cost focus among followers.....	9
Broad Cost Leadership via Bundling and Scale Economies.....	9
Focused Cost Leadership in Targeted Segments.....	10
Adaptive Cost Positioning with Transparency and Convenience.....	10
Conclusion.....	11
References.....	12

Introduction

Marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and freely exchanging products and services of value. In the 2020s this societal process is increasingly mediated by digital platforms: around 5.56 billion people are online, giving a global internet penetration rate of about 67.9% (DataReportal, 2025; Statista, 2025). Social interaction, identity and trust now unfold through apps, platforms and data infrastructures as much as physical spaces. This report examines how Social (Cultural) and Technological actors jointly shape the “digital lifestyle”, and how firms respond strategically using Porter’s generic strategies.

Task 1: Critical analysis of Social (Cultural) and Technological actors

Actor A: Social Actors

Lifestyles (Remote work): Zoom vs Microsoft Teams

As people transitioned from working in offices to working remotely or in hybrid settings, the way people meet and communicate changed. Zoom's simplicity and reliability allowed it to become synonymous with video meetings during the pandemic, rising from around 10 million daily meeting participants in late 2019 to 300 million by April 2020 (Business of Apps, 2025). Studies on the adoption of remote work showed a 335% increase in daily Zoom participants from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies also showed that Zoom played a major role in allowing "face-to-face" interaction between members of dispersed teams (HRStacks, 2025).

Microsoft Teams took longer than Zoom to gain traction because organizations preferred to use all-in-one suite-type products for communications. Teams' user base grew to approximately 320 million by 2023, and it was reported that 93% of Fortune 100 companies used Teams and roughly 8 million U.S. businesses relied on Teams for collaboration (DemandSage, 2025; Notta, 2025). Therefore, due to hybrid work, we see a "winner takes most" situation where Zoom is dominant for standalone video and Teams provides a similar experience but built into the larger Office 365 system for communications (chat, meetings, file sharing and calendar). As such, social norms surrounding being available during hybrid work are increasingly aligned with whatever platform is the norm within an organization, locking users into their respective ecosystems.

Values & beliefs (Privacy): Signal vs WhatsApp

Concerns for privacy have developed as a leading social value in recent years, particularly after several high-profile data breaches. Although both WhatsApp and Signal support end-to-end encryption, they operate under two very different governance models and have very different business practices. In addition to supporting encryption, WhatsApp uses the data collected from

its users to enable advertising and operates as part of a larger corporate entity that has been subject to regulatory fines related to data usage. Signal, a nonprofit, presents itself as a privacy-first alternative to WhatsApp, limiting the amount of data it collects and operating its code openly so it can be reviewed by the public (Malwarebytes, 2025; PrivacySavvy, 2025).

After WhatsApp's announcement in 2021 regarding changes to its privacy policy, Signal saw a significant increase in the number of users that downloaded the app, specifically among users who consider surveillance and profiling to be major concerns. Articles refer to Signal as the "gold standard" for encrypted messaging for users worried about their data (World Financial Review, 2025). Here, the social actor is values and beliefs. A growing minority of users will select tools that reflect their values concerning data sovereignty, even if this limits the feature set or the size of the community. While WhatsApp still enjoys the advantages of network effect and convenience, Signal's increased usage shows a cultural shift in what some users believe are acceptable trade-offs between convenience and privacy.

Opinions & views (Trust): Airbnb vs Booking.com

Trust has shifted from institutions to platforms and peers. Peer-to-peer accommodations such as Airbnb have created a new way for travelers to assess the level of risk associated with booking places to stay: peer-based evaluations of hosts through ratings, reviews, photos and "real" experiences replace the standardization provided by hotel chains. Research has shown that the growth of peer-to-peer accommodations has resulted in a decrease in hotel occupancy and revenue in some areas and has shown that guests' perceptions of authenticity and local immersion are key factors driving Airbnb selection over hotels (Benítez-Aurioles, 2019; Zervas et al., 2017).

Booking.com, a company that has traditionally operated mainly in the hotel space, has adapted by adding peer-to-peer accommodations and apartment options, and by implementing review systems that mirror those of sharing platforms. Yet trust in peer-to-peer stays remains fragile: media coverage also points to safety incidents, regulatory disagreements and concerns about over-tourism. The social actor here is changing attitudes toward who to trust: standardized brands, algorithmic ratings or social proof from other travelers. The fact that Airbnb established the concept of "experiencing life like a local" has made peer-trust common and has positioned Booking.com as a safer, more curated entry point into similar experiences for many travelers.

Actor B: Technological Actors

AI & automation (Creative): Adobe vs Canva

Generative AI is transforming creative work. Adobe has integrated its generative AI models called "Firefly" into its Creative Cloud applications including Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere Pro and others. Firefly is capable of generating text-to-image, text-to-vector, Generative Fill, AI-generated audio and speech (Adobe, 2025a; Adobe, 2025b). Firefly was created to be commercially safe and trained on Adobe Stock and licensed content to reduce fears among creatives and brands regarding copyright. This will enable creatives to generate ideas more quickly while still maintaining control and ensuring brand safety.

Canva is targeting a different customer base: non-designers that need to create quick, good-looking designs. Magic Studio bundles AI-based tools for creating text, images and videos. These are all built on top of models from OpenAI, Stability AI and Runway to automatically perform layout, translate text, remove backgrounds and do many other tasks (TechRadar, 2025; Canva, 2025; AIAppGenie, 2025). The free trial model and browser-based design platform make design accessible to small business owners and individuals so they can avoid having to learn complex Adobe design workflows. Thus, the technological actor (generative AI) lowers the skill barrier needed to complete creative tasks, while social norms shift toward "good-enough" design at high speeds and challenge Adobe's long-standing premium pricing strategy.

Cybersecurity (Fintech): PayPal vs Revolut

Trust cannot exist without strong security in the Fintech space. PayPal uses machine learning models on a large amount of transactional data to identify unusual patterns and alert them to potential fraudulent behavior, increasing authorization rates for legitimate customers and minimizing friction (PayPal, 2023; TechWireAsia, 2023). Fraudulent behavior is becoming more common, therefore the use of artificial intelligence-driven risk models is becoming a key part of PayPal's value proposition. Marketing messaging from PayPal emphasizes both security and the convenience of checkout.

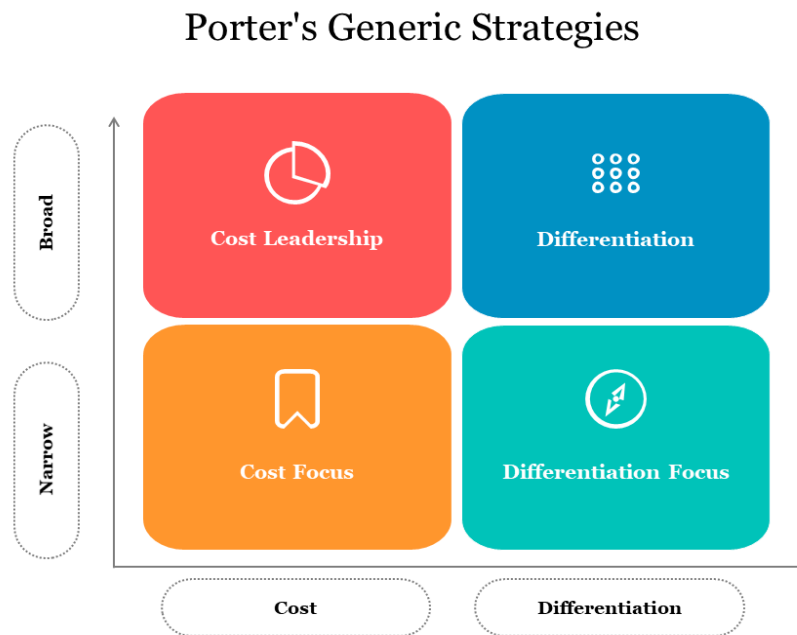
Revolut is a digital bank and payment application which provides banking licenses along with security features like one-time disposable virtual credit cards, real-time alerts and immediate card freezing. Its help centre describes single-use virtual cards whose details are deleted after each transaction to prevent reuse in case of merchant data breaches, supported by 24/7 fraud monitoring teams (Revolut, 2024a; Revolut, 2024b). Here, the technological actor is the cybersecurity infrastructure; however, there is an interaction between the technological actor and social (cultural) concerns regarding identity theft, scams and the digital “neobank.” Both PayPal and Revolut advertise their fraud detection capabilities as being key to gaining the confidence of their users when making cashless transactions.

5G & connectivity (Gaming): GeForce Now vs Xbox Cloud Gaming

Cloud gaming represents how connectivity transforms our leisure time. GeForce Now allows users to remotely play high-quality PC games in the cloud with RTX-quality graphics and very low latency. With its most recent update to GeForce Now Ultimate, the Blackwell upgrade now supports up to 360 FPS cloud gaming with low latency Reflex modes and L4S (Low Latency, Low Loss, Scalable Throughput) technology over 5G and fiber networks, decreasing lag for real-time gameplay (Nvidia, 2025; Tom’s Hardware, 2025; Wired, 2025; The Verge, 2025).

Xbox Cloud Gaming, included with Xbox Game Pass tiers, allows users to remotely play games on multiple devices, including Xbox consoles, smart TVs, cars and more, as Microsoft continues to expand its partnership with LG and offer cloud access to lower-tiered Game Pass users (Windows Central, 2025; Times of India, 2025; The Verge, 2025). The technological actor — high bandwidth and low latency connectivity — is allowing for a “Netflix for games” model where the idea of owning physical copies of games or downloading games is shifting to subscription services. The social norms surrounding gaming are also evolving: accessibility to play on any device, shared libraries of games for families and cross-platform play, assuming that the latency does not negatively affect the competitive aspects of the game.

Task 2: Strategic responses using Porter's Generic Strategies



Porter's generic strategies—cost leadership, differentiation and focus—provide a lens to understand how these firms position themselves in the converging socio-technological landscape (Porter, 1980). In many of these markets, pioneers pursue differentiation, while followers adopt cost leadership or cost focus, often exploiting bundling and freemium models.

Differentiation Strategies of Pioneers

Focused Differentiation on Usability and Reliability

A pioneer will often develop a large share of a new market by focusing on one or two key aspects of user experience that become defining characteristics of the category. Zoom developed its lead through an absolute commitment to simplicity and reliability, in particular through its use of: One-click joining, seamless guest access and higher-quality video and audio performance at lower latency than other platforms (HRStacks, 2025; Business of Apps, 2025), all of which combined to make it the platform of choice when millions of people began working remotely during the pandemic. Subsequent developments such as AI-driven meeting

summaries and additional features to enhance webinars also help to maintain Zoom's position as the go-to platform for professionals and educators who need reliability above anything else, while helping to maintain Zoom as the "term" for video calling.

Value-Led and Experiential Differentiation

While some pioneers may create differentiation through the appeal to users' deeper values or ethics beyond the function itself, others create differentiation by creating value for the user through experience and community. For example, Signal creates value through its commitment to privacy and transparency, including: The use of default end-to-end encryption, open-source code, no retention of user data for advertising and nonprofit governance (World Financial Review, 2025; Malwarebytes, 2025); serving users (e.g., journalists, activists, NGOs) for whom these are absolute requirements. Similarly, Airbnb created a differentiation around the idea of moving accommodations away from being purely functional to providing users with an opportunity to "belong," through a variety of means (e.g., using "authentic" local homes, connecting hosts and guests and enabling users to "live like a local") that were difficult for standard hotels to copy (Zervas et al., 2017; Maté-Sánchez-Val, 2022). Both rely on strong trust systems to protect their differentiating essence amid scale and regulatory pressures.

Professional-Grade and Trust-Based Differentiation

Pioneers targeting either professional-grade users or users that require assurance of some form of trust or security differentiate themselves through their ability to provide specialized capabilities or institutional assurances. Adobe has defended its Creative Cloud dominance through its integration of generative AI (Firefly) that provides commercial safety through: Ethical sourcing of training data, copyright protection and precise control of creative processes (Wired, 2025; Adobe, 2025a; 2025b) that address the concerns of enterprises about the safety of using consumer-grade creative tools. PayPal combines widespread acceptance with sophisticated AI fraud detection and buyer/seller protection to own "trusted global payments," especially valuable in high-risk cross-border commerce (PayPal, 2023; TechWireAsia, 2023).

Performance-Led Technical Differentiation

In performance-sensitive categories, pioneers differentiate by pushing technical boundaries that casual alternatives cannot match. GeForce Now delivers genuine high-end PC gaming in the cloud via RTX 5080-class hardware, ultra-low-latency Reflex technology, and native

high-resolution/high-frame-rate support, targeting enthusiasts who refuse visual or responsiveness compromises despite lacking local rigs (Nvidia, 2025; Tom's Hardware, 2025; Wired, 2025). ISP partnerships and emerging standards further sharpen this edge, framing cloud gaming as a full substitute rather than a convenience layer.

Cost leadership and cost focus among followers

Broad Cost Leadership via Bundling and Scale Economies

Lower-tier companies can be cost leaders due to bundling their products into an ecosystem that is already in place and/or indirectly monetizing customers through no cost of acquisition. Microsoft Teams exemplifies this through inclusion in Microsoft 365 subscriptions: for enterprises already paying for the Office suite, Teams incurs zero marginal cost, while tight integration with Outlook, SharePoint and OneDrive minimises training and switching expenses (Business of Apps, 2024; DemandSage, 2025). Due to being a “good enough” solution bundled with other products in the suite, Microsoft Teams is now outpacing competing stand-alone solutions such as Zoom and Slack (Windows Central, 2025). Similarly, the bundling of cloud gaming from Xbox is providing near-zero marginal cost for new gamers who subscribe to one of the three tiers of the Xbox Game Pass service (Standard, Core, Ultimate) (The Verge, 2025). These tiers provide access to a large game library at little cost and prioritise accessibility and breadth of library rather than the technical quality of the platform (The Verge, 2025). WhatsApp takes this model to the consumer level with free usage provided in exchange for customer data, which creates a barrier to entry for competitors, and has created a dominant position through network effects (PrivacySavvy, 2025).

Focused Cost Leadership in Targeted Segments

Smaller followers in terms of cost focus can be achieved through targeting specific user groups where they offer better value. Canva offers its free version of design software as well as a pro version, priced less than the equivalent Adobe product, to non-professional designers, students and small teams, all of which are targeted by the company's pricing strategy (AIAppGenie, 2025; TechRadar, 2025). Revolut also uses this strategy with digitally native and internationally active consumers with free bank accounts, free currency exchange and disposable virtual credit cards, all of which are positioned as the standard by the company, in order to attract

price-sensitive consumers who would otherwise pay PayPal's higher fees but do not sacrifice safety (Revolut, 2024a; 2024b).

Adaptive Cost Positioning with Transparency and Convenience

Some followers combine broad appeal with aggressive cost signalling. Booking.com serves as a one-stop aggregator, delivering transparent side-by-side pricing, deep discounts and trusted reviews across hotels and alternative accommodations, capturing convenience-driven bookers who prioritise visible value over Airbnb's peer-to-peer authenticity (Maté-Sánchez-Val, 2022).

Conclusion

Digital platforms now mediate how people work, socialise, travel, create and play. Social (Cultural) actors—lifestyles, values and trust—intertwine with Technological actors such as AI, cybersecurity and 5G connectivity to shape which platforms are trusted and how value is perceived. Zoom, Signal, Airbnb, Adobe, PayPal and GeForce Now largely pursue differentiation strategies built on quality, privacy, authenticity or performance. Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Booking.com, Canva, Revolut and Xbox Cloud Gaming respond with cost leadership or cost focus, using bundling and freemium models to disrupt incumbents. In an environment where nearly 68% of humanity is online (Statista, 2025), successful marketing increasingly means aligning strategic positioning with both social norms and digital infrastructures.

References

Adobe (2025a) *Adobe Firefly – Free generative AI for creatives*. Available at: <https://www.adobe.com/products/firefly.html> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Adobe (2025b) *Creative Cloud generative AI features*. Available at: <https://helpx.adobe.com/creative-cloud/apps/generative-ai/creative-cloud-generative-ai-features.html> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

AIAppGenie (2025) 'Canva AI Magic Studio review: features, tools, pricing & AI design'. Available at: <https://aiappgenie.com/post/canva-ai-magic-studio-review> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Benítez-Aurioles, B. (2022) 'Seasonality in the peer-to-peer market for tourist accommodation: the case of Majorca', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 5(2), pp. 331–349.

Business of Apps (2025) 'Zoom revenue and usage statistics'. Available at: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/zoom-statistics> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Business of Apps (2024) 'Microsoft Teams revenue and usage statistics'. Available at: <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/microsoft-teams-statistics> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Canva (2025) 'Meet Magic Studio – Canva's AI tools'. Available at: <https://www.canva.com/magic> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

DataReportal (2025) *Digital 2025: Global overview report*. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-global-overview-report> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

DemandSage (2025) 'Microsoft Teams statistics 2025 (users, revenue & market share)'. Available at: <https://www.demandsage.com/microsoft-teams-statistics> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

HRStacks (2025) 'Remote work statistics and trends'. Available at: <https://www.hrstacks.com/remote-work-statistics> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Harris, L. and Piercy, N. (2020) *Principles of Marketing*. 8th European edn. Harlow: Pearson.

Malwarebytes (2025) 'Moving from WhatsApp to Signal: a good idea?'. Available at: <https://www.malwarebytes.com/blog/news/2025/03/moving-from-whatsapp-to-signal-a-good-idea> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Maté-Sánchez-Val, M. (2022) 'Different voices between Airbnb and hotel customers: an integrated sentiment analysis approach', *Sustainability*, 14(13), article 7794.

Nvidia (2025) 'The next generation in cloud gaming – GeForce NOW'. Available at: <https://www.nvidia.com/en-us/geforce-now> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

PayPal (2023) 'Payment fraud detection with machine learning', *PayPal Business Resource Center*. Available at: <https://www.paypal.com/us/brc/article/payment-fraud-detection-machine-learning> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Porter, M.E. (1980) *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.

PrivacySavvy (2025) 'Signal vs WhatsApp: which one is good to use?'. Available at: <https://privacysavvy.com/security/mobile/signal-vs-whatsapp> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Revolut (2024) 'How does Revolut protect me against fraud?'. Available at: <https://help.revolut.com/help/security-logging-in/how-does-revolut-protect-me-against-fraud> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Statista (2025) 'Global internet penetration rate by region as of January 2025'. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/269329/penetration-rate-of-the-internet-by-region> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

The Verge (2025) 'Microsoft expands Xbox Cloud Gaming to Game Pass Core and Standard subscribers'. Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/news/766762/microsoft-xbox-cloud-gaming-game-pass-core-standard-pc-games> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Tom's Hardware (2025) 'Nvidia's GeForce Now gets an RTX 5080 upgrade – Ultimate subscribers now get Blackwell benefits in the cloud'. Available at: <https://www.tomshardware.com/video-games/cloud-gaming/nvidias-geforce-now-gets-an-rtx-5080-upgrade-ultimate-subscribers-now-get-blackwell-benefits-in-the-cloud> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Whittington, R., Regnér, P., Angwin, D., Johnson, G. and Scholes, K. (2023) *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases*. 13th edn. Harlow: Pearson.

World Financial Review (2025) 'Signal: the gold standard in encrypted messaging amid growing privacy concerns'. Available at: <https://worldfinancialreview.com/signal-the-gold-standard-in-encrypted-messaging-amid-growing-privacy-concerns> (Accessed: 19 November 2025).

Zervas, G., Proserpio, D. and Byers, J. (2017) 'The rise of the sharing economy: estimating the impact of Airbnb on the hotel industry', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 54(5), pp. 687–705.