



DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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Executive summary

This study explores in depth how different digital marketing strategies influence customer loyalty in today's online environment.

Today, companies rely heavily on tools such as social media platforms, email campaigns, company websites, mobile applications, and various forms of online promotions to reach and engage customers. In many cases, the success of these efforts is judged by surface-level indicators such as the number of likes, clicks, shares, and website visits. While these metrics are easy to track, they do not clearly show whether customers are genuinely loyal to a brand or simply reacting once to a piece of content. In addition, there is still limited empirical evidence about which specific digital tactics are most effective for building strong, long-term loyalty rather than just short-term attention.

To address this gap, the study will use a structured online survey targeting approximately 150–200 active digital customers. The questionnaire will ask respondents to rate their experiences and perceptions of various digital marketing elements, including social media content, email communications, the level of personalisation they receive (such as tailored recommendations or targeted offers), and the nature and frequency of online promotions. At the same time, the survey will measure various aspects of customer loyalty, such as how often customers make repeat purchases from the same brand, how committed they feel to that brand relative to competitors, and how willing they are to recommend the brand to friends, family, or colleagues.

The collected responses will be analysed using basic statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics and simple correlation or regression analysis, to identify which digital marketing strategies are most strongly associated with higher levels of loyalty. By comparing the strength of these relationships, the study aims to highlight which approaches are more likely to encourage customers to remain with a brand over time rather than switch to alternatives.

The study expects to find that certain digital strategies, such as relevant, personalised messages or engaging social media interactions, contribute more to building loyalty than more generic or purely promotional tactics. Based on these findings, the research will offer practical recommendations for managers on designing and prioritising their digital marketing activities to nurture lasting customer relationships. However, the study also recognises its limitations: the relatively small, non-random sample, along with the use of a one-time (cross-sectional) survey, means that the results cannot definitively establish cause-and-effect relationships or be confidently generalised to all customer types or industries.

Table of Contents

Executive summary.....	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1. Background of the Study	3
1.2. Problem Statement	4
1.3. Aim and Research Objectives	4
1.3.1. Aim	4
1.1.1. Objectives	5
1.1.2. Research Questions	5
1.4. Significance of the Study	5
2. Literature Review	6
2.1. Digital Marketing	6
2.2. Digital Marketing Strategies	7
2.3. Customer Loyalty.....	9
2.4. Digital Marketing and Customer Loyalty	11
2.5. Theoretical Framework	12
2.6. Conceptual Framework	13
3. Research Methodology	15
3.1. Research Philosophy	15
3.2. Research Approach	15
3.3. Critical Evaluation of the Research Design	16
3.4. Population and Sample	17
3.5. Data Collection	17
3.6. Strengths and Limitations of the Methods	18
3.7. Data Analysis.....	19
3.8. Critical Reflection on the Statistical Approach	20
4. References	21
5. Appendices	31
5.1. Ethical Considerations	31
5.2. Expected Outcomes	31
5.3. Limitations of the Study	31
5.4. Proposed Timeline	32

1. Introduction

The rapid rise of digital technologies has transformed how organisations interact with customers, but this shift is often embraced uncritically. Traditional tools such as print, TV, and direct sales have been replaced or supplemented by digital channels, yet many firms adopt these tools reactively rather than strategically. Digital marketing is frequently assumed to guarantee global reach, real-time engagement, and personalisation via social media, email, websites, mobile apps, and search (Suwastika, 2025; Kamyabi et al., 2025), but these claims are not always supported by robust evidence.

In today's environment, customers are more informed and have more choice, but they are also less loyal and more willing to switch. Although organisations claim to prioritise long-term loyalty, much practice remains focused on short-term campaigns. The literature links loyalty to profitability through repeat purchases, resistance to competitors' offerings, and positive word-of-mouth (Sansome et al., 2025; Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos, 2025), yet it remains unclear whether current digital practices foster genuine loyalty or merely temporary engagement.

Digital strategies targeted advertising, personalised messaging, interactive content, and continuous engagement are widely believed to shape customer perceptions and relationships. However, customers now operate in saturated digital environments, where additional messages often generate weak or short-lived effects. Many organisations invest heavily in digital tools, but they typically evaluate success through superficial metrics such as traffic, likes, and click-through rates, which may not reflect loyalty (Rowi et al., 2024; Gadh, 2024). This reveals a gap between digital marketing activity and long-term relationship objectives.

1.1. Background of the Study

Digital marketing has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, driven by smartphones, high-speed internet, and social media. Organisations use a wide range of tactics, such as social media marketing, SEO, email marketing, content marketing, influencer marketing, and online advertising, to communicate with customers (Internet and Internet, 2024; Rockseller Marketing Company, 2025). Yet this variety can lead to fragmented activity and limited understanding of which strategies truly support loyalty.

Customer loyalty is widely recognised as a strategic asset because it stabilises revenue, reduces marketing costs, and enhances brand reputation. In digital contexts, loyalty depends not only on product and price but also on the quality of the online experience, ease of interaction, relevance of personalisation, and trust, including privacy concerns (Parker, 2025; Kleinberg, 2023). Digital touchpoints create data and personalisation opportunities but also increase scrutiny and facilitate rapid comparison with competitors, meaning digital channels can both strengthen and weaken loyalty.

Existing studies suggest that digital marketing can improve satisfaction, trust, engagement, and brand image, key antecedents of loyalty (Rajab, Yandi, and Mahaputra, 2025). However, much research focuses on single channels, relies on self-reported measures, and is concentrated in developed markets, limiting generalisability to emerging and developing contexts (Rajab, Yandi, and Mahaputra, 2025). Overall, the evidence base is fragmented and sometimes overly optimistic.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite significant investment in digital platforms, many organisations struggle to convert digital activity into sustainable customer loyalty. Managers frequently focus on easily measured indicators such as website visits, followers, likes, and click-through rates rather than behaviours that reflect genuine loyalty, such as repeat purchasing, advocacy, and reduced switching. This emphasis risks misallocating resources and overstating the effectiveness of digital marketing.

There is also limited and inconsistent empirical evidence on which specific digital strategies have the strongest impact on loyalty, especially in highly competitive and digitally saturated markets (Rowi et al., 2024; Gadh, 2024). Popular tools such as influencer marketing or intensive social media campaigns are often adopted because they are fashionable rather than because their long-term effects on loyalty are proven. This uncertainty makes it difficult for managers to design and justify digital strategies.

1.3. Aim and Research Objectives

1.3.1. Aim

To critically examine the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty and identify which strategies meaningfully influence loyalty outcomes.

1.1.1. Objectives

- ◇ To identify the main digital marketing strategies adopted by organisations.
- ◇ To examine the relationship between different digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty empirically.
- ◇ To determine which digital strategies have the strongest and most consistent influence on customer loyalty.
- ◇ To provide evidence-based recommendations for improving customer loyalty through more selective and strategic use of digital marketing.

1.1.2. Research Questions

- ◇ What digital marketing strategies are commonly used by organisations?
- ◇ Is there a significant relationship between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty beyond superficial engagement metrics?
- ◇ Which digital marketing strategies have the strongest effect on customer loyalty?
- ◇ How can organisations design and implement digital practices that enhance genuine loyalty rather than simply boosting short-term digital indicators?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to academic literature by offering a more critical, context-aware assessment of the relationship between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty, challenging overly positive assumptions where necessary (Suwastika, 2025; Kamyabi et al., 2025; Rajab, Yandi, and Mahaputra, 2025). It provides managers and marketers with evidence to allocate limited budgets more efficiently and to shift from activity-driven to outcome-driven digital strategies (Rowi et al., 2024; Gadh, 2024). Finally, it has implications for policymakers and educators by highlighting the need for analytical, evidence-based digital capabilities, informing curricula and training that move beyond tool adoption to a deeper understanding of how digital marketing can and cannot support long-term customer loyalty (Internet and Internet, 2024; Rockseller Marketing Company, 2025; Parker, 2025; Kleinberg, 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing encompasses social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok and LinkedIn; email campaigns; search engines such as Google and Bing; organisational websites; content platforms such as blogs and video-sharing sites; and mobile applications (Laila et al., 2024; Terason et al., 2025). Through these channels, organisations can communicate with customers in real time, respond quickly to questions or complaints and adjust their messages based on immediate feedback.

A large body of work, including reports by practitioners such as Adobe for Business (2025), presents digital marketing as a largely positive development that enhances reach, measurability and efficiency. For example, organisations can track website visits, click-through rates and social media interactions, using these data to segment audiences and personalise marketing messages to specific customer needs, preferences and behaviours (Byrne, 2023). However, this optimistic view is often based on conceptual arguments or case evidence rather than systematic, comparative studies. It tends to assume that more data and more digital activity automatically translate into better decisions and stronger relationships, an assumption that is increasingly questioned.

More critical studies highlight several constraints that complicate this narrative. First, many organisations lack the analytical capabilities and integrated systems required to transform raw data into actionable insight. Data are frequently fragmented across channels and platforms, which limits the effectiveness of segmentation and personalisation efforts. Second, the widespread use of digital tools has led to content saturation and message fatigue. As algorithms on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram prioritise certain types of content, organic reach for brand messages has declined, meaning that high levels of digital activity do not necessarily yield proportionate gains in engagement or loyalty. Third, privacy regulations and rising consumer awareness of data collection practices (though not always foregrounded in older literature) increasingly constrain how firms can track and target users.

Empirical research suggests that digital marketing can enhance customer engagement, brand awareness and, under favourable conditions, long-term loyalty. Social media marketing, for instance, enables firms not only to share information but also to interact directly with customers through comments, likes, shares and direct messages, thereby fostering online communities around a brand (Anwar et al., 2024; Habib et al., 2022). These communities can strengthen customers' emotional connection to the brand and encourage word-of-mouth promotion. Yet the evidence is not universally positive: high engagement in terms of likes or views does not always translate into repeat purchases or sustained loyalty, and some studies find only weak or indirect links between social media activity and long-term relationship outcomes.

Similarly, email marketing is frequently portrayed as a low-cost, highly personalised channel, allowing organisations to tailor content, offers and recommendations to individual profiles and interaction histories. Search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimisation (SEO) can increase brand visibility when customers are actively searching for information or solutions. However, these benefits are contingent on execution quality and contextual factors such as competitive intensity and algorithm changes. Poorly designed email campaigns may be perceived as spam, leading to unsubscribes and negative brand perceptions, while SEO and SEM outcomes can fluctuate substantially with changes in search engine policies. Overall, the literature recognises digital marketing's potential but often underestimates the organisational, technological and regulatory challenges that shape whether this potential is fully realised (Adobe for Business, 2025; Byrne, 2023; Laila et al., 2024; Terason et al., 2025).

2.2. Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies refer to the integrated use of multiple digital channels, such as social media, email, search engines, websites, and mobile applications, to achieve specific objectives, including brand awareness, lead generation, sales growth, and customer retention (Wildali, 2025). Rather than treating each channel in isolation, strategic approaches emphasise coordinated campaigns and consistent messaging across touchpoints.

The literature commonly highlights several strategic components:

- **Content marketing** – Organisations create and distribute valuable and relevant articles, videos, and posts to attract, inform and engage customers. Content marketing is often credited with building brand authority and fostering engagement. However, in increasingly saturated digital environments, the ability of content alone to sustain attention and foster loyalty is questioned. With many firms producing similar content, differentiation and continued relevance become challenging, and some studies find that content's effects on loyalty are modest once novelty wears off.

- **Personalisation** – Personalisation involves tailoring messages, recommendations and offers based on customers' preferences, behaviours and past interactions. Research suggests that personalisation can increase perceived relevance, satisfaction and purchase intentions (Bagul, 2024; Donlan, 2026; Wright, 2024; Lukes, 2026). At the same time, other work notes that when customers feel excessively tracked or when data practices are not transparent, personalisation can trigger privacy concerns or perceptions of intrusiveness, undermining trust and potentially eroding loyalty.

- **Online promotions and loyalty programmes** – Digital channels are frequently used to deliver discounts, coupon codes, limited-time offers, seasonal campaigns, bundle deals and loyalty points (American Marketing Association, 2024). These incentives can be effective in driving short-term sales and encouraging trial. However, heavy reliance on promotions can train customers to be price-sensitive and opportunistic, reducing their willingness to pay full price and weakening the emotional or attitudinal basis of loyalty.

- **Influencer marketing** – Organisations increasingly leverage influencers, including social media personalities and content creators, to reach and persuade target audiences. While this strategy can enhance reach and social proof, it also carries reputational risk: perceived inauthenticity, inadequate disclosure of paid partnerships, and controversies surrounding influencers can negatively affect the sponsoring brand. Additionally, research indicates that influencer impact may be short-lived or concentrated among specific demographics.

- **Data-driven targeting** – Using customer data and analytics to segment audiences and deliver highly relevant campaigns is widely promoted as a hallmark of advanced

digital marketing (Adobe for Business, 2025; Byrne, 2023). In practice, however, many organisations struggle with data quality, siloed systems and limited analytical expertise. These issues can result in poorly targeted or mistimed campaigns that fail to enhance customer relationships and may even harm them.

Conceptually, effective digital marketing strategies are those that deliver consistent value, build trust, and maintain coherent brand messaging across platforms, thereby creating a unified customer experience (Moorut, 2025; Wildali, 2025). Yet a critical reading of the literature reveals several limitations. Many empirical studies focus on single channels such as social media, email or mobile apps rather than examining holistic, multi-channel strategies. Outcomes are often measured using short-term indicators (e.g., click-through rates, conversion rates) rather than deeper relationship metrics (e.g., loyalty, advocacy). There is also a strong reliance on cross-sectional survey designs, which capture self-reported perceptions and intentions at a single point in time but offer limited insight into how digital strategies affect loyalty over longer periods.

2.3. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is generally defined as the extent to which a customer is willing to continue buying from the same company over time, despite competitors and alternative options. It reflects both behavioural repetition and attitudinal commitment, including emotional or psychological attachment to the brand (Wanjau, 2024; Ipek, 2025). The literature typically distinguishes between behavioural and attitudinal dimensions.

On the behavioural side, loyalty is assessed using indicators such as repeat purchase frequency, purchase volume, retention rate, and share of wallet, which indicate how often and how much customers buy from a brand (Digital, 2023). These measures are based on observable actions and therefore appear objective. However, several scholars argue that behavioural indicators alone can be misleading: repeated purchases may be driven by inertia, lack of alternatives, contractual lock-in or convenience rather than genuine loyalty.

Attitudinal loyalty pertains to psychological and emotional aspects, including brand commitment, preference, trust and resistance to switching despite attractive alternative offers (Alahmary, 2025). Customers with strong attitudinal loyalty are more likely to engage in advocacy and positive word-of-mouth. These constructs are typically measured using self-report scales, which introduce potential biases, such as social desirability, and may not always translate into actual behaviour. Thus, many authors argue for multi-dimensional approaches that combine both behavioural and attitudinal indicators (Wanjau, 2024; Ipek, 2025; Digital, 2023; Alahmary, 2025).

The literature identifies satisfaction, trust, perceived value and emotional attachment as key drivers of loyalty (Lloyd, 2025; Admin, 2024). However, their relative importance is debated. Some studies suggest that satisfaction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for loyalty, particularly in markets where products are highly similar and switching costs are low. Others emphasise that trust and perceived value can sustain loyalty even when satisfaction fluctuates, especially when customers believe that the brand is fair, honest and aligned with their values.

In digital environments, additional factors influence loyalty. Research points to the importance of website and app usability, with clear navigation, fast loading speeds and seamless checkout processes reducing frustration and supporting repeat use (Perceptions, 2025; Li et al., 2024). Responsiveness—such as quick replies to queries, efficient order processing and timely delivery updates—has been found to build confidence and encourage customers to return (Kassab, 2025; De Sousa Pereira et al., 2025). Effective online customer service via live chat, email, social media and self-service resources also contributes to loyalty when issues are resolved promptly and fairly (Perceptions, 2025; Kassab, 2025). Furthermore, perceptions of personalisation and security play a crucial role: tailored recommendations and offers can deepen engagement, while robust security measures and transparent privacy policies reassure customers that their data are protected (Li et al., 2024; BIMA, 2025).

Despite a substantial body of work, several conceptual and methodological issues remain. Many studies conflate repeat purchasing with loyalty, failing to distinguish between genuine commitment and passive behaviour. Cross-sectional, single-country designs dominate, limiting understanding of how loyalty evolves or varies across

cultural contexts. Moreover, much of the literature focuses on traditional drivers such as satisfaction and trust, paying less attention to emerging concerns such as data privacy, algorithmic transparency and digital fatigue, which may increasingly shape loyalty in online settings.

2.4. Digital Marketing and Customer Loyalty

A growing number of studies examine the relationship between digital marketing and customer loyalty across sectors such as retail, banking, hospitality and e-commerce. Overall, these studies support the view that well-designed digital marketing strategies such as personalised email campaigns, engaging social media content, SEO, content marketing, and mobile apps with user-friendly interfaces can enhance customer satisfaction, trust and engagement, thereby contributing to loyalty (Mohammad, 2022; Ouahchi and Chouchane, 2025; Kizi and Du, 2025).

For example, Mohammad (2022) and Ouahchi and Chouchane (2025) find that customer perceptions of digital service quality and of online interaction positively influence loyalty intentions in the service sector. Kizi and Du (2025) report similar findings in e-commerce contexts, where features such as responsive websites, clear product information and reliable delivery strengthen the likelihood of repeat purchases. Other studies note that interactive features such as two-way communication on social media, online reviews and chat support help build stronger relationships by making customers feel heard and valued (BIMA, 2025; Flynn, 2025).

However, a more critical review reveals that results are neither uniform nor unequivocally positive. First, much of the evidence is correlational and cross-sectional: higher perceived quality of digital marketing is associated with higher reported loyalty, but the direction of causality remains unclear. It is plausible that customers who are already loyal evaluate digital initiatives more favourably, while less engaged customers pay little attention regardless of quality. This raises the risk of overestimating the causal impact of digital marketing on loyalty.

Second, the same digital features that can strengthen loyalty may also create risks. Social media and online review platforms make it easier for customers to share positive experiences, but they also amplify negative feedback and public complaints.

If organisations fail to respond quickly or transparently, these channels can damage trust and discourage repeat patronage. Similarly, data analytics and personalisation can increase relevance and convenience, but when customers perceive data collection as opaque or intrusive, these practices may undermine, rather than build, loyalty (BIMA, 2025; Flynn, 2025; Yadav et al., 2024).

Third, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies appears to vary across industries, regions and customer segments. Yadav et al. (2024) emphasise that cultural differences and technological readiness can shape both how customers interpret digital interactions and how they form loyalty. BIMA (2025) and Flynn (2025) highlight that in some markets, customers are highly receptive to digital relationship-building. In contrast, in others, low trust in online channels or limited digital literacy may limit the benefits of even sophisticated strategies.

Overall, the literature suggests that digital marketing can contribute to customer loyalty. Still, the relationship is conditional, context-dependent, and mediated by customers' perceptions of value, trust, privacy, and service quality. There is still a lack of holistic, comparative evidence that examines multiple digital strategies simultaneously and assesses their relative impact on both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty, particularly in emerging and developing markets. This gap, along with the methodological limitations of many existing studies, provides a clear rationale for the present research, which aims to analyse the effects of different digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty using a quantitative, multi-variable approach.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in relationship marketing theory, which focuses on building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships rather than one-off transactions. Within this view, trust, commitment, and satisfaction are key drivers of customer loyalty (Da Costa Fernandes Luis, 2024; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

- ◇ **Trust** is the belief that the organisation is reliable and honest, and that it acts in the customer's best interests, thereby reducing perceived risk (Mitchell, 2017).

- ◇ **Commitment** is the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship and avoid switching to competitors (Marshall, 2010).
- ◇ **Satisfaction** is the extent to which experiences meet or exceed expectations, leading to repurchase and recommendation (Leninkumar, 2017).

Digital marketing strategies such as social media engagement, personalised email campaigns, loyalty apps and interactive websites are therefore seen as tools for creating value and reinforcing positive experiences, which strengthen trust, commitment and satisfaction and, in turn, loyalty (Mohammad, 2022; Ouahchi and Chouchane, 2025; Kizi and Du, 2025).

- ◇ The study also uses the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model to explain how digital marketing affects behaviour (Chaudhuri et al., 2025):
- ◇ **Stimulus (S)** – Digital marketing activities such as content quality, communication frequency, personalisation, responsiveness and platform usability (Hochreiter et al., 2023; Adobe for Business, 2025; Byrne, 2023; Laila et al., 2024; Terason et al., 2025).
- ◇ **Organism (O)** – Customers’ internal states, including perceived value, usefulness, fairness, enjoyment, trust and satisfaction (Jeong et al., 2022; Lloyd, 2025; Admin, 2024).
- ◇ **Response (R)** – Loyalty-related behaviours such as repeat purchase intention, continued platform use, word-of-mouth and reduced switching (Chaudhuri et al., 2025; Wanjau, 2024; Ipek, 2025; Digital, 2023; Alahmary, 2025).

Integrating relationship marketing theory with the SOR model shows what drives loyalty (trust, commitment, satisfaction) and how digital marketing strategies act as stimuli that shape perceptions and emotions, which then lead to loyalty outcomes such as repeat purchasing, long-term engagement and advocacy (BIMA, 2025; Flynn, 2025; Yadav et al., 2024).

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposes that digital marketing strategies (independent variables) significantly influence customer loyalty (dependent variable) (Adobe for

Business, 2025; Byrne, 2023; Laila et al., 2024; Terason et al., 2025; Wildali, 2025; Moorut, 2025).

Four main digital marketing dimensions are considered:

- ◇ **Social media marketing** – Use of platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn) to share content, interact with customers, run targeted adverts and build communities, enhancing visibility and engagement (University for the Creative Arts, 2025; Anwar et al., 2024; Habib et al., 2022; Mohammad, 2022; Ouahchi and Chouchane, 2025).
- ◇ **Email marketing** – Targeted email campaigns providing relevant information, offers, updates and recommendations, maintaining contact and encouraging repeat purchases (O'Brien, 2024; Adobe for Business, 2025).
- ◇ **Personalisation** – Tailoring messages, recommendations, content and experiences based on individual data, helping customers feel recognised and strengthening attachment (Bagul, 2024; Donlan, 2026; Wright, 2024; Lukes, 2026; Li et al., 2024; BIMA, 2025).
- ◇ **Online promotions** – Digital discounts, coupons, limited-time offers and loyalty points that stimulate purchases, reward existing customers and increase perceived value (American Marketing Association, 2024; BIMA, 2025; Flynn, 2025).
- ◇ **Customer loyalty** is captured through three dimensions (Wanjau, 2024; Ipek, 2025; Digital, 2023; Alahmary, 2025):
 - ◇ **Repeat purchase intention** – Likelihood of continuing to buy from the same brand.
 - ◇ **Brand commitment** – Psychological attachment and willingness to maintain the relationship despite alternatives.
 - ◇ **Word-of-mouth** – Voluntary recommendations to others, offline and online (BIMA, 2025; Flynn, 2025).

Overall, the framework suggests that effective social media marketing, email marketing, personalisation and online promotions improve customer experiences and perceptions of value, trust and satisfaction. These improvements are expected to translate into stronger loyalty, reflected in higher repeat-purchase intentions, deeper

brand commitment and more positive word-of-mouth, especially in digital environments (Mohammad, 2022; Ouahchi and Chouchane, 2025; Kizi and Du, 2025; Yadav et al., 2024).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Philosophy

A post-positivist research philosophy informs this study. Post-positivism recognises that social phenomena, such as customer loyalty, can be investigated using systematic, empirical methods, while acknowledging that findings are probabilistic rather than certain. Within this stance, reality is viewed as knowable but only imperfectly and tentatively, and knowledge is advanced through the testing and refinement of theories (Michael, 2025).

A quantitative, survey-based approach fits this philosophy because it enables the collection of standardised data from a relatively large number of respondents and the use of statistical techniques to test hypothesised relationships between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty. By operationalising key constructs (such as trust, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions) into measurable indicators, the study can evaluate the strength and direction of associations and assess the explanatory power of the conceptual model (Brice, 2025; Sreekumar, 2023).

However, this philosophical and methodological orientation also has limitations. While it can capture patterns, correlations, and general tendencies, it is less able to uncover the deeper meanings, evolving relationships, and context-specific interpretations that customers attach to their digital experiences. Nuances such as how individuals make sense of interactions, how loyalty develops over time, or how cultural and organisational contexts shape perceptions may not be fully captured through structured survey items (Sreekumar, 2023; McLeod, 2025).

3.2. Research Approach

This study adopts a quantitative research approach and employs a cross-sectional, descriptive explanatory survey design (Ghanad, 2023). This design is appropriate

because the study aims to describe current digital marketing practices and customer loyalty levels and explain the relationships between different digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty outcomes at a single point in time (Setia, 2016).

A quantitative survey enables the collection of standardised numerical data from a relatively large group of respondents, thereby allowing the use of statistical techniques to test hypothesised relationships. Compared with qualitative designs (such as interviews or focus groups), the survey design is better suited to measuring the strength and direction of relationships across a broader sample and to generating generalisable, pattern-based insights within the target population (Slater and Hasson, 2024).

3.3. Critical Evaluation of the Research Design

The choice of a cross-sectional survey design entails trade-offs relative to alternative approaches. A longitudinal design, which follows the same respondents over time, would offer stronger insights into how digital marketing strategies influence loyalty trajectories and how relationships evolve (Caruana et al., 2015). It could capture lagged effects and distinguish between short-term reactions and long-term commitment. However, longitudinal studies are more time-consuming, costly, and prone to panel attrition, making them less feasible within the resource and time constraints of this research.

Experimental designs in which specific digital marketing interventions are manipulated and their causal impact on customer loyalty is observed would offer greater internal validity and stronger evidence of causality (Simply Psychology, 2023). Nevertheless, such designs are difficult to implement in real organisational settings, may raise ethical concerns (e.g., unequal treatment of customers), and often require tight control over variables that are hard to isolate in natural digital environments.

Mixed methods design, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, could provide richer, more nuanced insights by complementing statistical patterns with in-depth narratives. While highly valuable, mixed-methods approaches require additional time, expertise, and resources for data collection and analysis, all of which exceed the scope of this study (Wasti et al., 2022).

Despite these limitations, the cross-sectional, survey-based design is chosen because it offers an efficient and practical means of obtaining empirical evidence on the relationships between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty across a relatively large, digitally active sample (Wang and Cheng, 2020). The design is well aligned with the study's post-positivist philosophy and explanatory objectives, while acknowledging that it cannot fully capture temporal dynamics or provide definitive causal conclusions.

3.4. Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises customers who interact with brands across digital channels, including social media platforms, company websites, mobile applications, and email marketing campaigns. These individuals regularly interact with brand content online, ask questions, provide feedback, or make purchases through digital interfaces.

A sample of approximately 150–200 respondents will be selected using a convenience sampling technique. Participants will be recruited based on their accessibility and willingness to participate, for example, by sharing the survey link via social media, email lists, and online communities. Convenience sampling is justified because it facilitates timely and cost-effective data collection from digitally active customers, which is appropriate for an exploratory study of this nature (Golzar et al., 2022).

From a critical perspective, however, online convenience sampling threatens representativeness and limits the generalisability of the findings. Respondents are likely to be more digitally engaged, younger, or more technologically literate than the broader customer population. As a result, the sample may over-represent certain demographics and under-represent others, such as older or less digitally active customers. These limitations are acknowledged and will be considered when interpreting and discussing the results.

3.5. Data Collection

Primary data will be collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed online. The questionnaire will use Likert-scale items (e.g., a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) to measure perceptions and attitudes related to digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty. Likert scales are

appropriate because they enable the quantification and statistical analysis of complex constructs such as trust, satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty intentions (Sullivan and Artino, 2013).

The digital marketing section will focus on two main areas:

1. Customer engagement and relationship tools – Items will assess the extent to which customers interact with the company through digital platforms (e.g., social media, email, mobile apps, chatbots, and loyalty programmes) and how these tools influence their satisfaction, trust, and long-term relationship with the brand.
2. Online promotion and discounts – Items will measure customers' exposure to and perception of various online promotional activities (such as coupon codes, limited-time offers, seasonal discounts, and bundle deals) and how these incentives affect their purchase decisions and loyalty intentions.

Customer loyalty will be measured using Likert-scale items assessing repeat purchase intention, willingness to recommend the brand, and overall commitment to continued use of the company's products or services.

While the primary emphasis is on quantitative data, a small number of optional open-ended questions may be included to allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences. These qualitative responses will not be the focus of the analysis but may be used to illustrate and complement the quantitative findings.

3.6. Strengths and Limitations of the Methods

The use of a self-administered online survey with Likert-scale items offers several strengths (Sullivan and Artino, 2013). It is efficient and scalable, enabling data collection from a relatively large number of respondents at low cost and within a limited time frame. Standardised response options facilitate statistical analysis and comparison across individuals, and the numeric nature of the data creates an appearance of objectivity and precision.

At the same time, this method has important limitations. Likert scales may encourage superficial responses, as participants may select options quickly without deep reflection. There is also a risk of response biases, such as acquiescence bias (a tendency to agree with statements), central tendency bias (avoidance of extreme

categories), and social desirability bias (answering in ways that appear favourable). Moreover, closed-ended items provide limited nuance and may not fully capture the complexity of customers' digital experiences, motivations, and evolving relationships with brands (Rosala, 2024).

Relying on online convenience sampling aligns with the focus on digitally active customers and is practical for accessing individuals who routinely engage with digital marketing content. However, as noted above, it threatens representativeness and generalisability. The sample may not reflect the demographic and behavioural diversity of the wider customer base, and estimates of relationships between variables may be biased if groups are over- or under-represented (Singh and Sagar, 2021).

3.7. Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Rahman and Muktadir, 2021).

First, descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) will be computed to summarise the sample's main characteristics and the key study variables. Descriptive statistics will be particularly useful in addressing the first research question, which focuses on the digital marketing strategies commonly used by organisations.

Second, correlation analysis (e.g., Pearson's correlation coefficients) will be conducted to examine the strength and direction of the bivariate relationships between the independent variables (digital marketing strategies) and the dependent variable (customer loyalty). Correlation analysis is appropriate for assessing whether statistically significant associations exist between each digital marketing dimension and loyalty-related outcomes, thereby directly addressing the second research question.

Finally, multiple regression analysis will be performed to test the hypothesised relationships while controlling for the effects of other variables in the model. Multiple regression is appropriate because it enables estimation of the unique contribution of each digital marketing strategy to predicting customer loyalty, thereby identifying which strategies have the greatest influence. This addresses the third research question concerning the relative impact of different digital marketing strategies.

The model's overall explanatory power (e.g., R-squared) and the significance of individual predictors will be reported. Assumptions of regression, such as linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity, will be checked before interpreting the results to ensure the validity of the conclusions.

3.8. Critical Reflection on the Statistical Approach

The choice of correlation and multiple regression analyses is consistent with the study's post-positivist, explanatory aims. It is well-suited to testing hypothesised linear relationships between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty. These techniques enable the identification of association patterns and the estimation of the relative importance of different predictors.

However, it is important to acknowledge that correlation and regression cannot establish causality, particularly in cross-sectional designs. Even when significant relationships are found, alternative explanations such as reverse causality, omitted variables, or unobserved contextual factors may account for the results. Moreover, linear models may oversimplify complex relationships, such as non-linear effects or interactions between different digital marketing activities. These methodological limitations will be considered when interpreting the findings, and causal language will be used cautiously.

- **The ethical considerations, expected outcomes, and limitations of the study will be presented in the appendices section, providing additional context and supporting information for the main findings.**

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5. Appendices

5.1. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles will be strictly followed throughout the study. Participation will be entirely voluntary, with no penalties or negative consequences for those who choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

All information collected from participants will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. Data will be anonymised where possible, securely stored, and accessible only to the research team. Before participation, respondents will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and potential benefits. Written informed consent will be obtained from each participant before any data is collected.

5.2. Expected Outcomes

The study is expected to demonstrate a significant relationship between the use of digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty. It aims to demonstrate how specific practices, such as social media engagement, personalised email campaigns, SEO, content marketing, and targeted online advertising, contribute to the development of long-term customer relationships.

By analysing customer responses, the research will identify which digital marketing strategies have the strongest impact on customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behaviour, and brand advocacy, thereby highlighting the most effective approaches for fostering customer loyalty. The findings are also expected to offer practical recommendations for managers on allocating digital marketing resources more effectively.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

Several factors may limit the study. First, the relatively small sample size reduces the statistical power of the analyses and may not capture the full range of variability within the target population. Second, the use of convenience sampling and self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, recall bias, and social desirability effects, which may affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Third, time constraints may limit both the data-collection period and the depth of participant follow-up, which

restricts the ability to explore certain themes in greater detail or to conduct longitudinal analyses.

The reliance on a cross-sectional survey also means that the study cannot fully capture the dynamic, evolving nature of customer loyalty or provide definitive causal evidence regarding the impact of digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, the use of Likert scales may oversimplify complex attitudes and experiences, and purely quantitative methods may overlook rich contextual and interpretive insights that could be gained from qualitative approaches.

As a result of these limitations, the findings may not be fully generalisable across all industries or organisational contexts, particularly those that differ substantially in size, culture, or regulatory environment from the sample studied. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal or experimental designs, using probability sampling techniques, and incorporating mixed methods approaches that combine surveys with in-depth qualitative inquiry.

5.4. Proposed Timeline

The proposed schedule for the study is as follows:

	Number of weeks
Introduction and background	2
Literature review	4
Data collection	4
Data analysis and conclusion	5
Total duration	15