



A customer journey-based framework for performance measurement of digital marketing strategies

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Abstract

Title A customer journey-based framework for performance measurement of digital marketing strategies

Keywords digital marketing, online marketing, digital marketing strategy, marketing metrics, digital marketing, customer journey, customer experience, digital marketing framework, digital marketing channels

Background Developing and monitoring marketing metrics has been subject to research already 20 years ago (Ambler, 2000). Ever since, digitalization and the global dispersion of the world wide web have emphasized the need for effective and measurable digital strategies (Chaffey et al., 2015, p. 9). Despite the undeniable effects on the business results, researchers have not agreed on a common framework or single-best approach to measure the success of digital marketing strategies. As a result, many different approaches are adopted and the variety of channels involved (website, search, email, social, applications among others) increase complexity even further. Nevertheless, some similarities across measurement approaches for digital marketing can be identified (Gaitniece, 2015). Businesses that belong to the same industry can adopt completely different digital strategies (Egol et al., 2014, p. 2) with a varying importance of different channels (Ryan & Chaffey, 2016). Likewise, companies different in size and business model can adapt similar approaches. The question arises, which factors influence the measurement of digital marketing strategies, which overarching trends currently affect the digital strategy formulation across industries, and how could this information help building a framework that facilitates comparison, overview and understanding of digital marketing strategies?

Purpose The goal of the study is to combine theories and publications on the measurement of digital marketing strategies with insights from semi-structured interviews into a comprehensive framework. The theoretical foundation, building process and gathered insights of it will be explained thoroughly. The framework is intended to facilitate comparison, understanding and continuous improvement of digital strategies. Through highlighting the the most important channels and metrics in each phase of the customer journey, the model visualizes the current strategy. Areas that need improvement can be identified subsequently. Researchers can work on ways to improve the identified channels and metrics and use the obtained insights for further research in this area. Moreover, important trends that currently shape the digital marketing landscape will be identified and influence the elaboration of the framework.

Methodology The methodology involves first an in-depth literature review, including academic journal articles and relevant publications related to digital marketing terminology. Moreover, research on digital strategy, theoretical foundations and application of customer journey frameworks are analysed and combined with insights from performance measurement frameworks. Secondly, a qualitative research approach, more precisely structured interviews are conducted. The combination of theoretical groundwork and practical insights from interviews ensure a high degree of reliability and validity of the results.

Table of contents

Abstract	1
List of Tables.....	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1. Background	4
1.2. Problem statement	6
1.3. Purpose	6
1.4. Research questions	8
1.5. Propositions	9
2. Literature review	11
3. Theoretical Framework	11
3.1. First measurement/KPI frameworks	11
3.2. Financial and non-financial indicators	12
3.3. Existing frameworks to measure digital marketing performance	13
3.3.1. Quantitative and qualitative indicators.....	13
3.3.2. Visual frameworks for measuring digital marketing	14
3.4. Terminology: Digital Marketing Channels	15
3.5. Earned, Owned and Paid Media.....	16
3.6. Stage models: The Customer Journey and the Purchase Funnel.....	17
3.7. The Purchase Funnel and AIDA model	17
3.8. Customer Experience and Customer Journey	18
4. Methodology	21
4.1. Research design.....	21
4.2. Data collection and analysis.....	21
4.3. Quality criteria	22
4.3.1. Reliability	22
4.3.2. Validity, Transparency and Limitations.....	23
5. Expected contributions	23
6. Plan of work	24
7. Appendix	24
7.1. Literature Review table	24
8. Bibliography	28

List of Figures

Figure 1 Distinction of Digital Marketing Channels, own elaboration	4
Figure 2 Companies with the highest investments in online advertising in Germany with industries, own elaboration after ZAW, 2019	6
Figure 3 Online advertising spending in Europe from 2006 to 2018, Adapted from IAB Europe, 2019	7
Figure 4 Advertising expenditure in Western Europe 2017 - 2021, by medium, adapted from Zenith, 2018.....	8
Figure 5 Internet advertising spending worldwide by type, adapted from Zenith, 2018	10
Figure 6 Marketing Controlling: Kennzahlensystem nach Kiener, 1989, p. 186	12
Figure 7 Model for Measuring Marketing Performance, Gao, 2010, p. 26	13
Figure 8 Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators, Saura, 2017, pp. 7-8.....	14
Figure 9 Marketing metrics mapped on buyer's journey, after Gaitniece, 2018, p. 138	15
Figure 10 The intersection of the three key online media types, own adaption after Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2018.....	16
Figure 11 The evolution of direct media, Zahay (2015, p. 15)	17
Figure 12 The customer decision journey, original version, McKinsey, 2009	19
Figure 13 Customer journey layers connected with digital marketing metrics, Buchberger, 2016	20

List of Tables

Table 1: Terminology: Distinction of digital marketing channels, own elaboration	16
Table 2 Literature Review, own elaboration	28

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Developing and monitoring marketing metrics has been subject to research already 20 years ago (Ambler, 2000). Marketing managers capable of measuring, adapting and planning their marketing strategy often achieved better business results than those who didn't (Meffert, 1998). Due to the limited number of channels at the time, the comparability of different strategies was simple. Most marketing managers were able to adhere to a set of key figures that had been recorded in standard publications (for instance in Germany by Kiener, 1998). But ever since digitalization and the global dispersion of the word wide web radically changed the marketing landscape to digital, the corresponding analysis changed as well. The number of channels and ways to advertise digitally increased tremendously. An overabundance of marketing metrics for which a "bewildering range of labels and jargon" (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019) was created made it an overwhelming, almost impossible task for marketing managers to preserve an overview. Often, an oversupply of dashboards within organizations (Yigitbasioglu, 2012) and siloed measurement frameworks lead to wrong strategic implications (Florès, 2014).

Today, many different approaches are into practice with a variety of channels available. Forming a digital strategy "involves understanding a more complex, more competitive buying environment than ever before, with customer journeys involving many different forms of online presence" (Chaffey, 2019). Marketing managers are confronted with the task to combine website, search, email, social, mobile applications, affiliate and in some cases other channels in the most effective way.

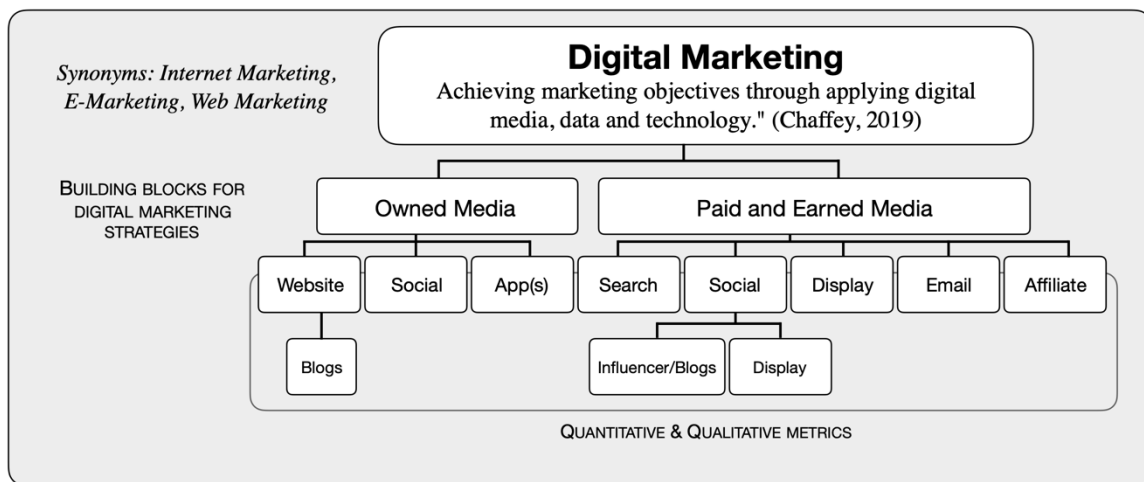


Figure 1 Distinction of Digital Marketing Channels, own elaboration

Figure 1 illustrates the available channels and building blocks for digital strategies. The complexity that lies in the task of building an effective strategy is evident. Gaitniece (2015, p. 138) identified similarities among some of the established measurement frameworks, but also recognized first and foremost the fragmented and confusing landscape of this field. Egol et al. (2014, p. 2) found that two businesses within the same industry can adopt fundamentally different digital strategies. An observation that parallels insights by Ryan and Chaffey (2016),

who emphasized the varying importance of the different channels in digital strategies. The question arises, which factors influence the measurement of digital marketing strategies, which overarching trends affect the digital strategy formulation and how could comparison, overview and understanding of digital marketing strategies be facilitated? The need for a comprehensive and intuitive framework is evident, considering the goals of successful digital marketing strategies stated by Kingsworth (2018):

- Knowing yourself
- Knowing the customer
- Reaching out to the customer
- Converting the customer
- Retaining the customer
- Measuring success

Research on digital marketing strategies is important in almost every industry nowadays, as the brands with the highest digital advertising spending belong to all kinds of industries, as Figure 2 shows (ZAW, 2019). Subsequently, record budgets should to be invested in the right channels and the right strategic goals. The development of digital advertising spending in the U.S. underlines the importance that this marketing domain continues to gain: All industries increased their digital marketing spending's over the last four years (eMarketer, 2019). Some industries, for example the retail industry have also been researched before with regards to their consumer journeys (Santos et al., 2019). Customers of this industry seem to rely heavily on digital channels (Wigginton, 2019). Another industry that has been disrupted by digital marketing is the tourism industry. The product in tourism is of an intangible nature, unlike the sold product in retail (Hudson and Hudson, 2018), and therefore highly interchangeable. Customers of this industry seem to be highly capricious (Lobaugh, 2019), jumping across channels. Some correlations have been revealed regarding the digital strategy and factors like industry or size of company, but a common framework that can be applied to any organization and industry type is still missing.

Companies with the highest investments in online advertising in Germany in 2018 (in million euros)		
Company	Industry	Mio.€
Google Germany	Internet	37
Opel	Automotive	19
Deutsche Telekom	Telecommunication	15
1&1 Internet	Telecommunication	15
Bayrische Motorenwerke	Automotive	15
Otto	Retail	14
VNR	Publisher	14
Amazon EU	E-Commerce (among others)	13
Europa Versicherungen	Insurance	13
Wirkaufendeinauto	E-Commerce	13
Aldi	Retail	12
TUI	Travel	11
Deutsche Bahn	Transportation	10
Ebay Marketplaces	E-Commerce	10
Eurowings	Transportation	10

Comdirect Bank	Banking	9,8
Citroen Deutschland	Automotive	9,8
Tchibo	Retail	9,7
Ford-Werke	Automotive	9,7
Jaguar Land Rover Deutschland	Automotive	9,6
Xing	Social Network	9,5

Figure 2 Companies with the highest investments in online advertising in Germany with industries, own elaboration after ZAW, 2019

1.2. Problem statement

The landscape of digital marketing metrics could be described as “cluttered” or even “unclear”. On one side, the terminology itself can be highly confusing (Florès, 2014), since many terms appear synonymous. But also the continuously increasing variety of channels and metrics make it difficult to focus. Marketing managers often have a hard time determining which are the most important metrics (Gaitniece, 2015, p. 135). Some frameworks show general digital KPIs but do not link them to the type of industry or a chronological order like for example a typical consumer journey. There is no framework that connects the metrics with the course of business to simplify the understanding and comparison of digital strategies among businesses and industries. It is therefore impossible to know whether the digital strategy is connected to certain factors such as size, industry type or typical consumer journey. Moreover, it is difficult to take into account the effect of overarching trends, such as a leading channel or strategic direction that the majority of companies are taking. From existing literature and conducted research, it is hard to develop an understanding for the micro- and macro digital environment of a company. Digital strategies seem to be highly specific and guided by individual motives, opinions and beliefs. They cannot be retrieved from general literature research or statistics available. In addition, the field of research is very new and constantly evolving, it is therefore difficult to quickly deduct the essence from the overabundance of available information. Insights need to be translated into a common language in order to be useful for a multitude of stakeholders.

1.3. Purpose

The digital advertising spending in Europe almost quadrupled from 2008 to 2018 with a total value of 55.1 billion Euros in 2018 (IAB Europe, 2019). On a global scale, the digital advertising market is worth 283.35 billion U.S. dollars (eMarketer, 2019). The development shows the tremendous recent growth and the total value underlines the necessity to invest budgets wisely. The advertising expenditure by medium in Western countries (**Error! Reference source not found.**, Zenith, 2019) demonstrates that digital channels are projected to surpass the traditional channels soon. The share of digital advertising spend worldwide already accounts for 44% in 2018 (Zenith, 2019). Marketers should therefore have a clear digital strategy in mind in order to succeed with their overall marketing strategy. But often, they are operating without a clear strategic direction and adopt a more “experimental rather than planned approach” (Chaffey, 2019). Marketers, especially in larger organizations run the risk of wasting marketing budget through siloed approaches, misinterpretations, over-investment in the wrong channels and ineffective measurement of the wrong metrics. The aim of this study is to develop

a framework that displays and connects the customer journey with the digital marketing channels and relevant metrics.

This master thesis combines scientific research on digital marketing performance measurement and digital marketing strategies with in-depth, qualitative interviews. The framework developed on the basis of insights from industry professionals should help improving digital strategies in all kinds of companies. Obtained conclusions can build the basis for further research on how to improve the identified metrics and channel performance.

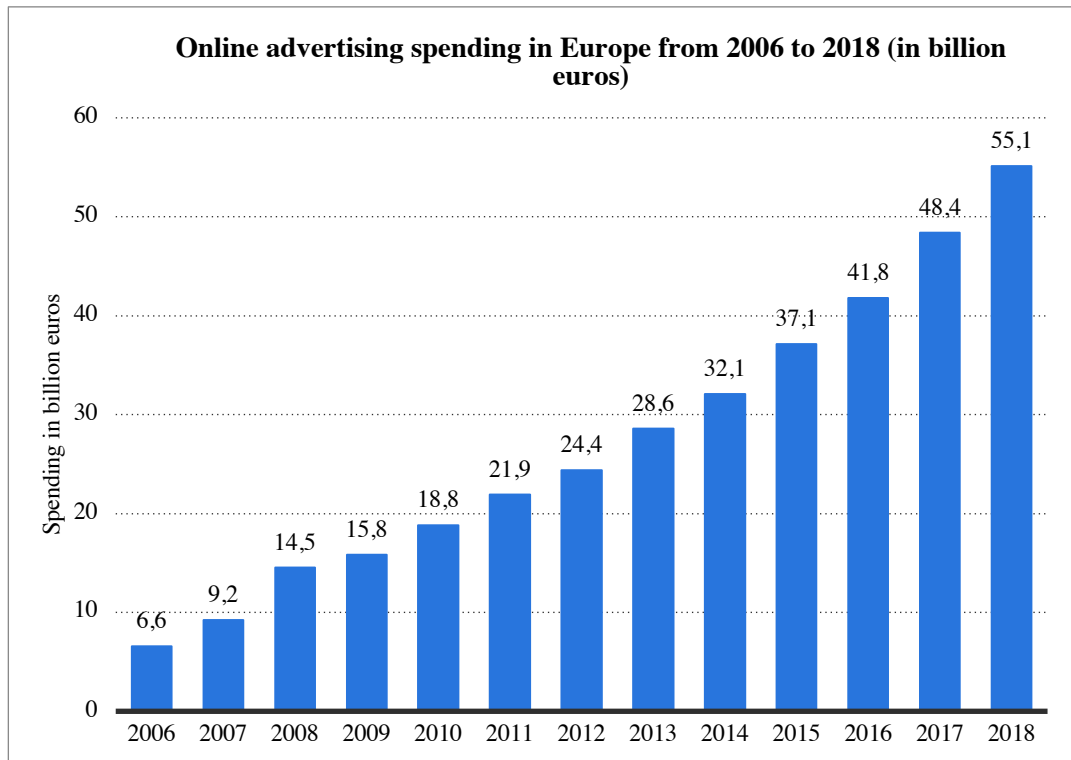


Figure 3 Online advertising spending in Europe from 2006 to 2018, Adapted from IAB Europe, 2019

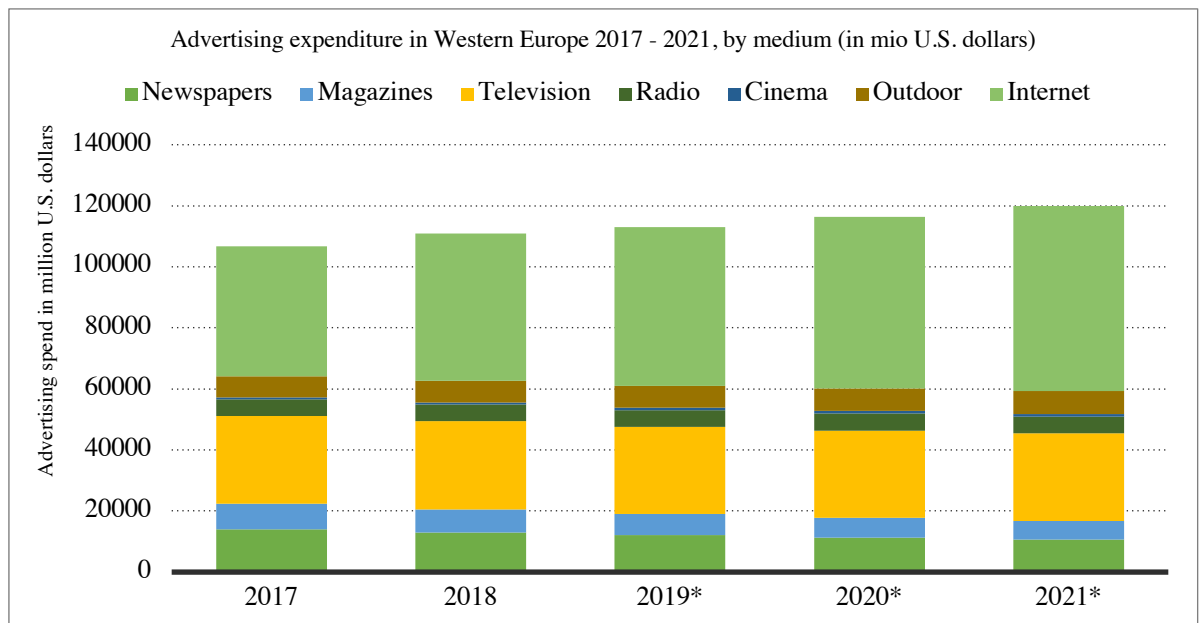


Figure 4 Advertising expenditure in Western Europe 2017 - 2021, by medium, adapted from Zenith, 2018

1.4. Research questions

This study aims to answer multiple questions related to the previously identified research gaps. For reference purposes, the main questions are listed and justified below.

1. What are the main challenges related to digital marketing strategies?

With the aim of a comprehensive framework in mind, one has to understand the challenges that currently inhibit or complicate the development, implementation and application of digital strategies. Evidence from the literature research will be confirmed or rejected through insights from the interviews.

2. Which are the (perceived) most important channels and metrics to focus on and why?

As part of the recorded strategy, one or more channels might appear as the most valuable. Identifying this channel can confirm or contradict current research on this topic. According to Zenith (2019), Display advertising represents the most expensive channel for most companies, followed by Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Advertising. Investigating this question can show alignment or a missing link between worldwide statistics and the current practice in companies. This question might seem more of a quantitative nature at first but will be investigated from a qualitative approach since the most important channel itself is a quantifiable variable, but the justification is highly subjective. The reasons behind and the whole digital strategy of the company need to be considered in order to really understand it.

3. Can we observe similarities among the digital strategies of companies with similar characteristics such as the same industry type?

While overall trends are vital to create the framework, links between the type of industry and the digital strategy might also lead to interesting results. They could help the development of

industry-specific digital strategies and provide indications about the best possible allocation of the marketing budget in a certain industry. Disproving the link between industry and strategy might also be a valuable insight. It can lead to combining resources of different industries and breaking down boundaries for further research.

4. Can we observe overarching trends in digital marketing that affect all companies and industries alike?

One of the most influential developments in digital marketing has been the rise of the mobile channel in the last decade: Mobile transactions outweigh desktop transactions (Williams, 2018) and are considered the most disruptive influence on e-commerce (Wigginton, 2017). In order to derive strategic implications for digital marketing strategy formulation, it is interesting to investigate to which extent companies have already tailored their mobile experiences. Moreover it is interesting to see if certain companies appear to be more progressive than others. Formulated as an open-ended question within the interviews, this research question leaves room to explore a wide range of trends currently influencing digital businesses.

5. Does a visual framework based on the customer journey promote and facilitate the understanding and formulation of digital strategies?

The fourth research question concerns the usability of the developed framework. If it turns out to be impractical or not intuitive to use, it fails to resolve all stated challenges in chapter 1.1. The major challenge in this thesis lies in understanding the challenges that come with measuring and documenting digital marketing strategies and developing a comprehensive framework that facilitates comparison and understanding of such. Developing the framework together with digital marketing professionals and finding out whether the customer journey model as an underlying concept proves to be useful is an essential part of this thesis. requirements for the construction of the framework as well as suggestions for improvements can be recorded.

1.5. Propositions

Insights from theoretical research and obtained results from the interviews and analysis will help validating or rejecting the following propositions, that correspond to the aforementioned research questions.

The main challenges related to digital marketing strategies are manifold. The difficulties depend on the size, industry, allocated budget as well as the number and skills of the employees. There are many factors that can negatively influence the formulation, implementation and implementation of the digital strategy. As found by Econsultancy (in Chaffey, 2016, p. 183) one of the main challenges is budget allocation, specifically the portion dedicated to digital and not classical marketing. Moreover, the coordination of different channels, management and integration of customer data, consistency in reporting and strategic decisions on insourcing vs. outsourcing pose challenges (Chaffey, 2016, p. 183).

A figure which raises assumptions about the outcome of the second research question is the global figure for internet advertising spend by medium (Figure 5). It shows that Search Engine

Advertising and Display Advertising are projected to represent the major advertising expenditures by 2021 (Zenith, 2018). Subsequently, the optimization of Display and SEA might be or become the strategic focus of most companies since the budgets are projected to rise.

One could logically argue that from the fact that two companies belong to the same industry, they could produce similar products and therefore target similar customer target. One could deduce as a proposition subsequently, that the digital strategies within the same industry are similar. However, Egol et al (2014, p. 2) have found the opposite.

Referring to the question about the overall trends, it is likely that results emphasize again the importance of the mobile channel and the influence and dominance of Search Engines, namely one particular Search Engine. As displayed before, this assumption is based on the the increased spending on Search Engine Advertising (Zenith, 2018), and research on the allocation of the digital marketing budget on various channels.

The corresponding proposition to the fourth research question is that a visual framework facilitates strategy formulation, implementation and continuous improvement. It is intended to ease understanding of the digital strategy among multiple stakeholders. Beyond the mere transport of information or facts, visualizations aim to create, assess capture not just (descriptive) facts or numbers, but contain also prescriptive and prognostic insights, principles, basic assumptions and relations. They can therefore be used as communication tools in order to trigger sense making activities and to motivate viewers to reconstruct meaning (Eppler & Burkhard, 2007). Using the customer journey as a visual guideline, managers will be able to gain an overview and can relate the steps along the journey to their metrics.

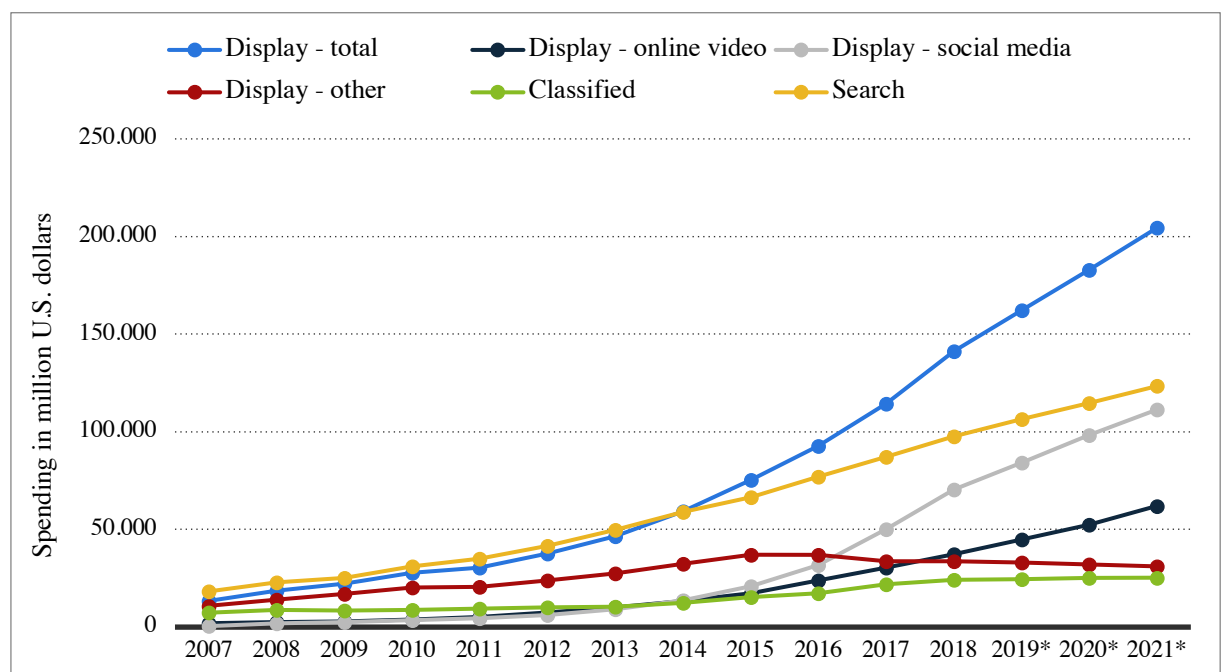


Figure 5 Internet advertising spending worldwide by type, adapted from Zenith, 2018

2. Literature review

The literature review involved searches in Google Scholar, Web of Knowledge, SpringerLink, Emerald insight and ScienceDirect and identified over 30 papers for the analysis. A detailed table is listed in the appendix. The papers were analysed with respect to digital marketing terminology, digital marketing strategies, performance measurement and industry-specific conditions. Moreover, academic papers related to the customer journey concept, customer experience and the use of visual frameworks were analysed. Additionally, the review included multiple publications on digital marketing, digital marketing strategies and marketing performance measurement, published within the last 10 years. The chosen topic inevitably demands a review of recent publications (ideally published less than 5 years ago), since the domain evolves so rapidly through technological progress that older papers might be misleading or obsolete.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section includes the main concepts and theories that are relevant to understand the aforementioned research questions and that guide the building process of the framework developed within this study. The key concepts include:

1. First marketing measurement/KPI frameworks
2. Recent frameworks to measure digital marketing performance
 - a. Financial and non-financial indicators
 - b. Quantitative and qualitative indicators
 - c. Visual approaches to measure digital marketing
3. Terminology: Digital Marketing Channels
4. Earned, Owned and Paid media
5. Stage models: The Customer Journey, AIDA Model and Purchase Funnel

3.1. First measurement/KPI frameworks

One of the first frameworks for measuring the efficiency of marketing activities was proposed by Kiener (1989, p. 186). His KPI framework combined fixed and variable costs to determine the overall return on invested capital for marketing activities. For the analysis of the sales and cost structure according to sales segments (customers and products), he used absolute indicators in the form of contribution margins, cost and sales indicators. Still, he was already well aware that financial figures alone are not sufficient to assess marketing performance. He therefore proposed to collect non-financial indicators separately (Kiener, 1980, p. 137). The model underlines the necessity to quantify, to structure and group marketing performance indicators and emphasizes the need to include non-financial indicators. Throughout the applied research in this thesis, motives and determinants that influence both non-financial and financial indicators are explored in the course of interviews with digital marketing professionals.

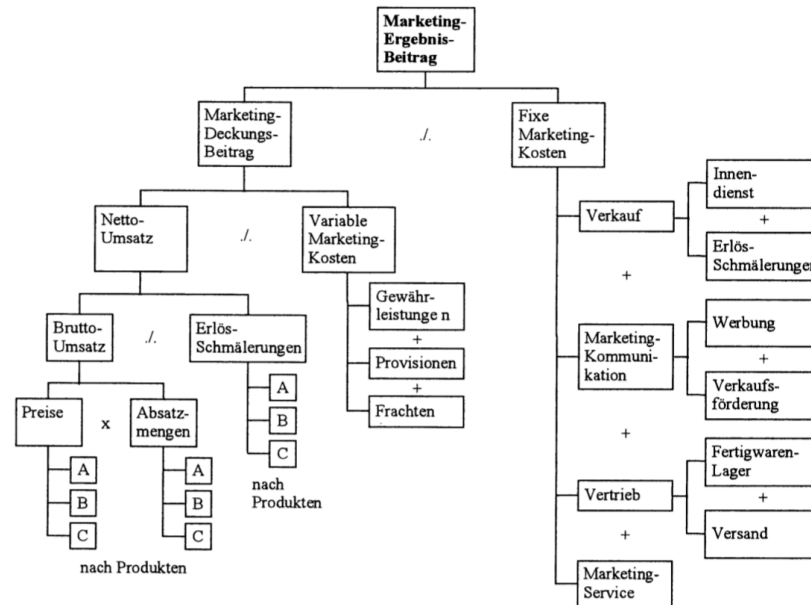


Abb. 14.4: Kiener-Kennzahlensystem (Version 2)
Quelle: Kiener 1989

Figure 6 Marketing Controlling: Kennzahlensystem nach Kiener, 1989, p. 186

3.2. Financial and non-financial indicators

The goal of marketing controlling at its very beginning stayed the same, with the difference that non-financial indicators gained more importance. As represented by Gao (2010, p. 12), the overarching goal for marketing optimization is still an improved financial performance. Nevertheless, *Figure 7* displays, that also nonfinancial performance with its five main determinants influences financial performance. Marketing activities can therefore indirectly boost financial performance through improvement of the nonfinancial components like market share, brand equity, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction and innovation. The elaborated framework should therefore also take non-financial aspects into account in order to give a realistic overview of the marketing touchpoints along the customer journey.

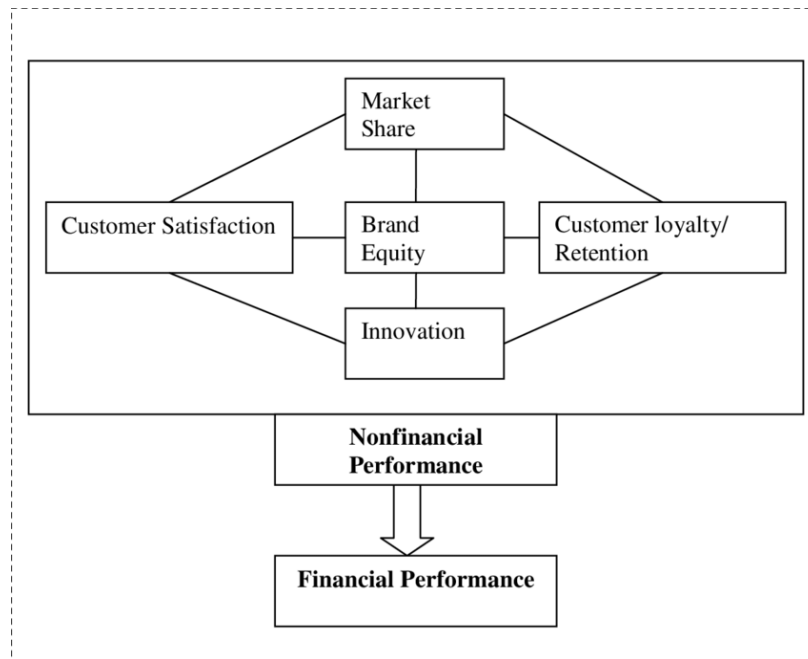


Figure 7 Model for Measuring Marketing Performance, Gao, 2010, p. 26

3.3. Existing frameworks to measure digital marketing performance

3.3.1. Quantitative and qualitative indicators

Saura et al. (2017) conducted a literature review on the most effective digital marketing metrics and categorized the indicators as quantitative or qualitative, as depicted in Figure 8 below. While they were answering the same question (“What are the most relevant metrics and KPIs that companies need to understand and manage in order to increase the effectiveness of their DM strategies?”), they recognized the need to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitative indicators in this case are based on measurable data related to increasing revenues (e.g. through more conversions) or reducing costs (e.g. through a higher conversion rate). It moreover involves the pure number of visitors (users) of the company’s website, which can be an indicator for customer loyalty or customer satisfaction. Qualitative indicators are intended to “measure user behaviour” and to “optimize service”(Saura, 2017, p. 8). Qualitative indicators serve to answer the question why users perform certain actions on a web page. It can be obtained through direct methods such as surveys, discussion groups or interviews with users, but also through hint methods such as A/B testing or usability studies. Saura et al. (2017, p. 8) recognized, that the great challenge hereby lies in analysing the information effectively. The elaborated framework should facilitate this process through displaying the most important qualitative and quantitative metrics for analysis at a glance.

Quantitative Indicators	Description
Impressions	An instance of an organic search-engine listing or sponsored ad being served on a particular Web page or an image being viewed in display advertising.
Traffic	Number of visitors who come to a website.
Unique users	Number of different individuals who visit a site within a specific time period.
Lead	When a visitor registers, signs up for, or downloads something on an advertiser's site. A lead might also comprise a visitor filling out a form on an advertiser's site.
Conversion	What defines a conversion depends on the marketing objective. It could be a sent form, a click on an ad or a purchase. It is an objective or goal.
Qualitative Indicator	Description
A/B Testing	A/B testing refers to two different versions of a page or a page element such as a heading, image or button. A/B testing is aimed at increasing page or site effectiveness against key performance indicators including click through rates, conversion rates and revenue per visit.
Call to Action (CTA)	A statement or instruction, typically promoted in print, web, TV, radio, on-portal, or other forms of media (often embedded in advertising), that explains to a mobile subscriber how to respond to an opt-in for a particular promotion or mobile initiative, which is typically followed by a Notice.
User experience (UX)	Encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with the company, its services, and its products through different devices. This term is also used with Information Architecture (IA), which is the structural design of shared information on a site based on user behaviour.
Rating systems	A system of classifying according to quality or merit or amount which could divide and organize the type of users.
Surveys and forms	Tools that allows users to send information to a website. It is usually used to set the number of conversions or conversion goals in a web site or DM campaign.
The Flow of Users	Graphical representation of the paths users took through the site, from the source, through the various pages, and where along their paths they exited the site. The Users Flow report lets you compare volumes of traffic from different sources, examine traffic patterns through your site, and troubleshoot the effectiveness of your site. It is used to understand the user behaviour on a site.

Figure 8 Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators, Saura, 2017, pp. 7-8

3.3.2. Visual frameworks for measuring digital marketing

The complexity of the measurement of the various digital marketing channels is shown in Figure 9, a replica of a model elaborated by Elena Gaitniece (2018, p. 138). A total of 6 methods, measuring one or multiple channels of digital marketing are examined and show the complexity of using measurement frameworks in digital marketing. The model distinguishes 5 phases, that consumers undergo when purchasing a product. The different phases are mapped onto different approaches to measure digital marketing performance. Each area, such as "E-mail marketing" is measured through different metrics. The phases originate from the "consumer decision journey", which was elaborated by McKinsey (2009, p. 3). The Trigger Phase, the Consideration Phase, the Evaluation Phase, the Purchase Phase, the Post Purchase and Loyalty Phase. This model shows that there are different methods to measure the available channels within the digital marketing landscape. All of the channels play different roles in different stages of the consumer's journey. The developed framework later adopts the linear design of the customer decision journey and the methodical approach of grouping the channels and matching them to phases.

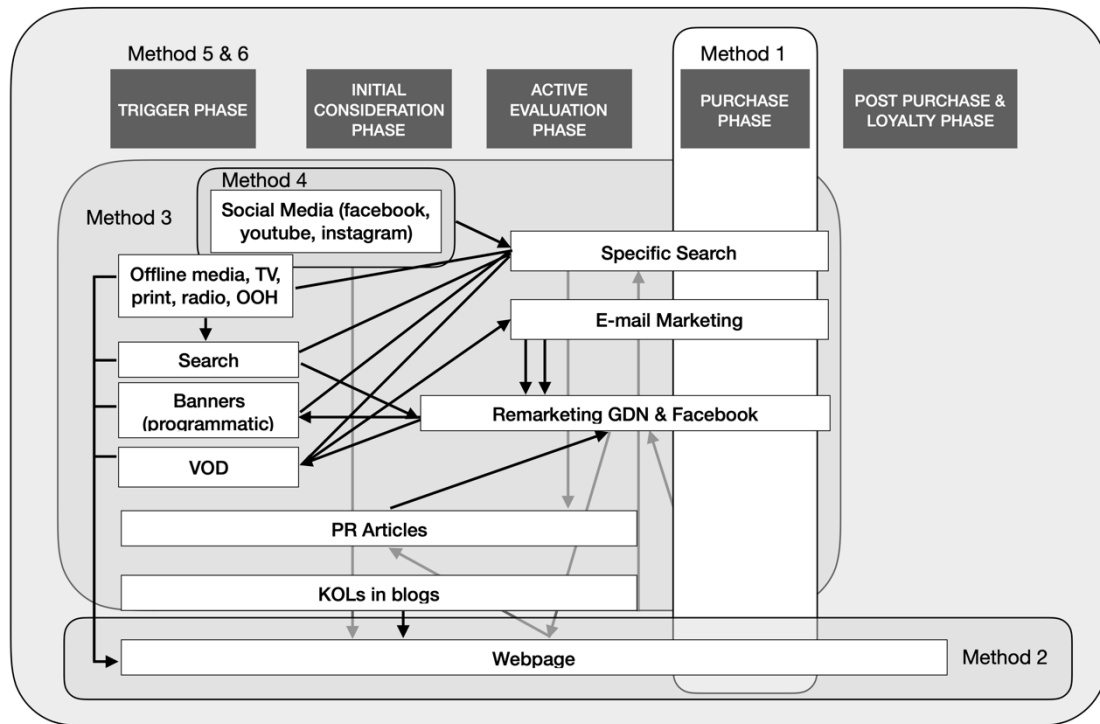


Figure 9 Marketing metrics mapped on buyer's journey, after Gaitniece, 2018, p. 138

3.4. Terminology: Digital Marketing Channels

The distinction of the various digital marketing channels is a difficult task since many of the channels overlap and can hardly be seen as completely independent. Moreover a “bewildering range of labels and jargon” (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p. 9) has been created to describe digital marketing strategies and channels. Some terms therefore appear synonymous and create further challenges in research and implementation. For the purpose of analysing the channels within an elaborated framework, the domain has to be clustered in subsectors. The large number of possible classifications has been reduced to the following subsectors: Website, search, email, social, mobile apps and affiliate. This classification follows the frequent and repetitious occurrence of these terms in several scientific publications related to digital marketing analysis and strategy formulation, as depicted in the table below. It allows a certain reduction in complexity.

Author	Source	Channel distinction
Florès, L.	Flores, L. (2014). How to Measure Digital Marketing: Metrics for Assessing Impact and Designing Success.	Search, display, affiliation, email, mobile, social media
Chaffey, D. & Ellis-Chadwick, F.	Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). Digital marketing.	Website, mobile, social, Search, Display, email, Social, affiliate
Chaffey, D. & Smith, P. R.	Chaffey, D. and Smith, P.R. (2017) Digital Marketing Excellence: Planning, Optimising and Integrating Digital Marketing. 5 th Edition, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, UK	Website presence, Social presence, Search, Online PR, Online partnerships, Social media marketing, Email, Display
Charlesworth, A	Charlesworth, A. (2018). Digital Marketing : A Practical Approach.	Website development, Social Media marketing, Online Advertising, Email Marketing, Search Engine Optimization

Kingsnorth	Simon Kingsnorth. (2019) Digital Marketing Strategy: An Integrated Approach to Online Marketing. London: Kogan Page.	Website, Social Media, Online Advertising, Email Marketing, Search Engine Optimization
Kaufman, Horton	p. 147	Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Paid Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Paid Search
Zahay	pp. 97-98	Website, Blog, Display advertising, Search (Paid and Organic), Affiliate Marketing, Webinars, RSS

Table 1: Terminology: Distinction of digital marketing channels, own elaboration

3.5. Earned, Owned and Paid Media

The concept of Paid, Owned and Earned media (or POE model) was introduced by Daniel Goodall in 2008 as part of the media planning for the Finnish telecommunications provider Nokia. It shows that developing a digital strategy today involves a “more complex and competitive buying environment than ever before”, with “customer journeys involving many different forms of online presence” (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2018, p. 10). Marketers must therefore take into consideration all types of digital channels: The ones that can be controlled because they are “owned” or “paid” and the ones that can be controlled less or not at all because they are “earned” (Corcoran, 2009). Figure 10 displays the three types of media and the associated channels. As shown in this model, a distinction between controllable and non-controllable channels and actions will become part of the elaborated framework as well later on. The framework must offer the possibility to show causality chains, intersections and relationships between the channels. Increasing complexity even further, this model withholds the areas of intersections, that require integration of campaigns, resources and infrastructure. This would require heavy investments in technology (notably application programming interfaces to facilitate program and data exchange) and human resources.

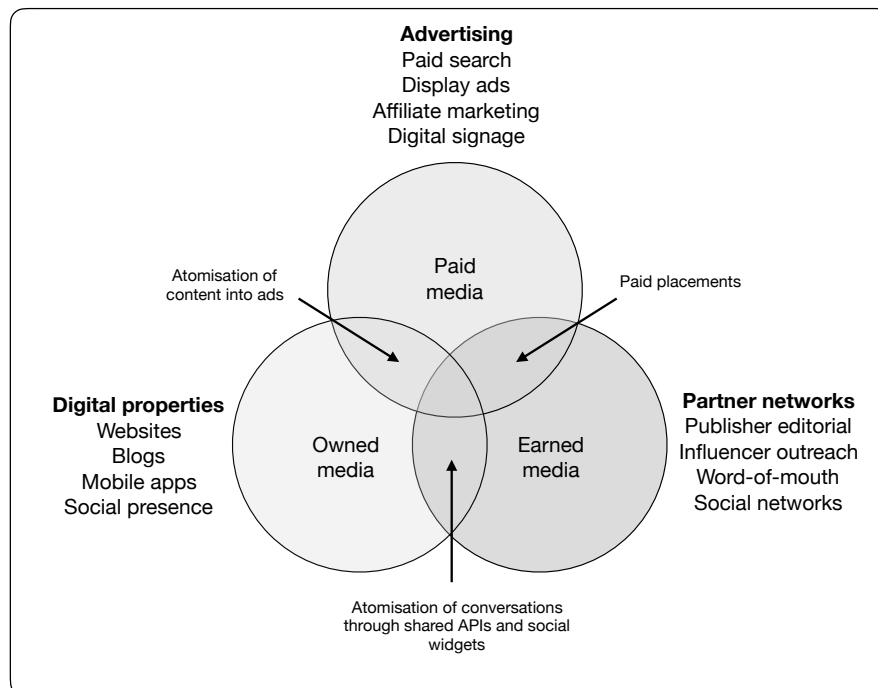


Figure 10 The intersection of the three key online media types, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2018

3.6. Stage models: The Customer Journey and the Purchase Funnel

With increasing widespread of digital technology, an increasing number of digital touchpoints emerged. The development has increased the number of possible channels in classic but also digital media, as shown by Zahay (2015, pp. 15-16) in Figure 11. The key challenge is subsequently to define a good mix of online and offline communication, that attracts visitors and invites them to interact with the company through various channels (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, p. 13). The concept of Customer Journeys can help understanding the various customer interactions with physical and digital touchpoints of a company.

In order to depict the differences or similarities among companies, it must be possible within the framework to depict the journeys and digital touchpoints that customers undergo. Sources that encompass this idea for the elaborated framework are 1) the Sales Funnel and 2) the Customer Journey. Both models show stages that consumers undertake when they purchase a product or service. In the following subsections both models are explained and critically questioned for relevance to being incorporated in the framework.

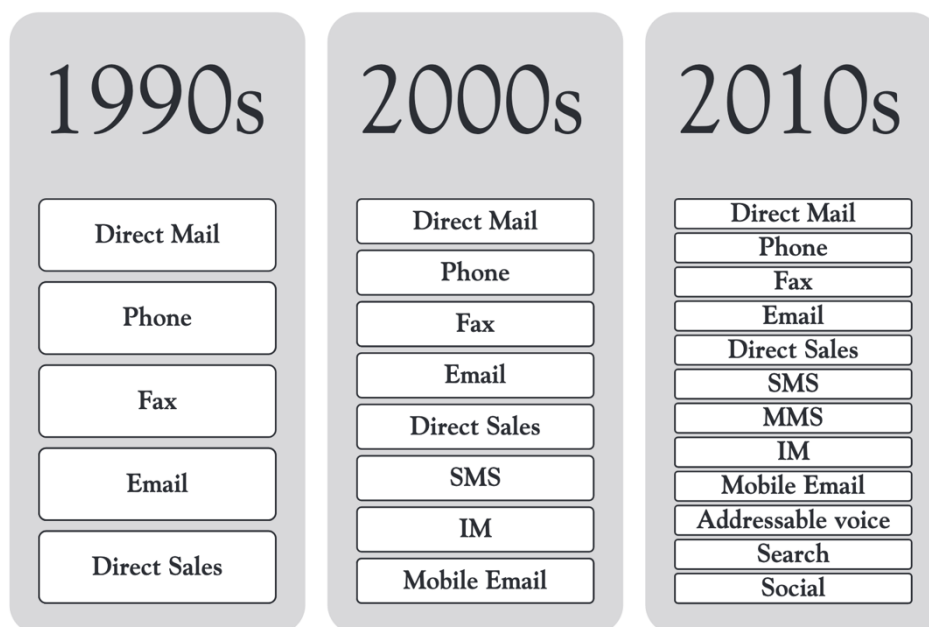


Figure 11 The evolution of direct media, Zahay (2015, p. 15)

3.7. The Purchase Funnel and AIDA model

The purchase funnel (“marketing funnel”, “sales funnel” or “conversion funnel”) is a consumer focused marketing model which illustrates the customer journey in five steps towards the purchase of a good or service. It was first proposed by Sir Elmo Lewis in 1898 (Bennett, 2017). Within this model, a theoretical journey from the moment a brand or product attracts the consumers attention to the actual purchase is shown. The funnel is also referred to as the AIDA-model, an acronym for “Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action” (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p. 448):

- Awareness – the customer is aware of the existence of a product or service
- Interest – the customer is interested in a product or service
- Desire – the product or service evokes a desire

- Action – the customer takes an active step towards the purchase

The Purchase Funnel was useful at a time when customers followed the path-to-purchase along the funnel hierarchically. But in today's digital marketing environment, things have changed: Marketers still have to attract leads, generate interest and engagement and prompt decisions and action, but not necessarily in the order of the steps of the funnel, and not using the same tactics (Satell, 2015). McKinsey researchers themselves state that "Today, the funnel concept fails to capture all the touch points and key buying factors resulting from the explosion of product choices and digital channels" (McKinsey, 2017). The idea of the purchase funnel will therefore not be directly incorporated into the framework.

3.8. Customer Experience and Customer Journey

There are many existing definitions and conceptualizations of customer experience as a construct. It can be traced back to the 1960s, when the initial theories on marketing and consumer behavior were developed and communicated. Namely Kotler (1967), Howard and Sheth (1969) were pioneers in this field of research. Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p. 71) summed up preceding research related to customer experience:

- Customer buying behavior process models: understanding customer experience and customer decision making as a process (1960s–1970s)
- Customer satisfaction and loyalty: assessing and evaluating customer perceptions and attitudes about an experience (1970s)
- Service quality: identifying the specific context and elements of the customer experience and mapping the customer journey (1980s)
- Relationship marketing: broadening the scope of customer responses considered in the customer experience (1990s)
- Customer relationship management (CRM): linkage models to identify how specific elements of the customer experience influence each other and business outcomes (2000s)
- Customer centricity and customer focus: focusing on the interdisciplinary and organizational challenges associated with successfully designing and managing customer experience (2000s–2010s)
- Customer engagement: recognizing the customer's role in the experience (2010s)

Hence, the customer journey as such is not a recent invention, it is rather a construct that has been modified and used for differing purposes over the last 40 years. Ultimately, it shows a step-by-step process. The customer decision journey proposed in 2009 by McKinsey was calling into question the well established purchase funnel from earlier and incorporating the customer experience theory. Defined as "a sequence of online and offline touchpoints that a customer [...] takes during a buying process" it is described to include "a range of digital platforms, communications media, websites, pages and engagement devices" (McKinsey, 2009, p. 14). The touchpoints together depict a linear journey including initial consideration, active evaluation, closure, and post-purchase phase, as depicted in Figure 12.

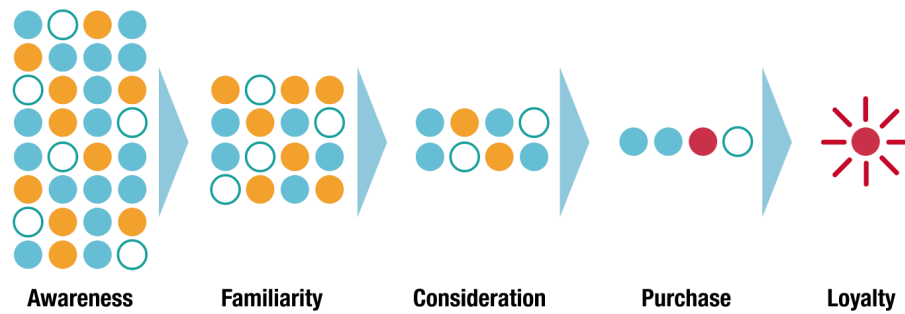


Figure 12 The customer decision journey, original version, McKinsey, 2009

Based on McKinsey’s insights of 2009, customer journey mapping became increasingly popular as a strategic management tool. But researchers that applied the tool found that designing an all-inclusive customer journey maps containing all possible touchpoints proved to be an incredibly complex and overwhelming task (Rosenbaum, 2017). Managers instead should identify the most critical touchpoints and neglect less important ones (Rosenbaum, 2017). Connecting the most important customer journey touchpoints with measurable marketing metrics represents a new approach that could facilitate the task of practitioners and researchers to gain an overview of the digital strategy of a company. Buchberger (2016) was the first to introduce this idea that is shown in Figure 13. His visual approach is presumably the most important influence for the design of the framework in this thesis, nevertheless it is not sufficient to compare and structure customer journeys to reach the stated digital marketing goals in 1.1. Buchberger combines the stages, steps, departments, duration of the stages and an exemplary journey along the phases with potential sources for metrics. What is missing though, is a clear outline of the metrics, connected to the phases of the customer journey. Also a division into qualitative and quantitative measures or a division into paid owned earned could be beneficial to see which type of metrics dominates the customer journeys.

Even though the method of Customer Journey mapping is now questioned again (McKinsey, 2009), the approach can still help resolving specific customer hurdles and foster understanding for the customer’s behavior (Verhoef, 2015). When interpreting the results of the developed model, one has to take into consideration that Customer Journeys increasingly become fragmented, non-linear paths. Customers have multiple channels at hand and “channel hopping” is nothing unusual nowadays. The developed model could nevertheless serve as a tool to reveal where additional investments would result in the biggest impact.

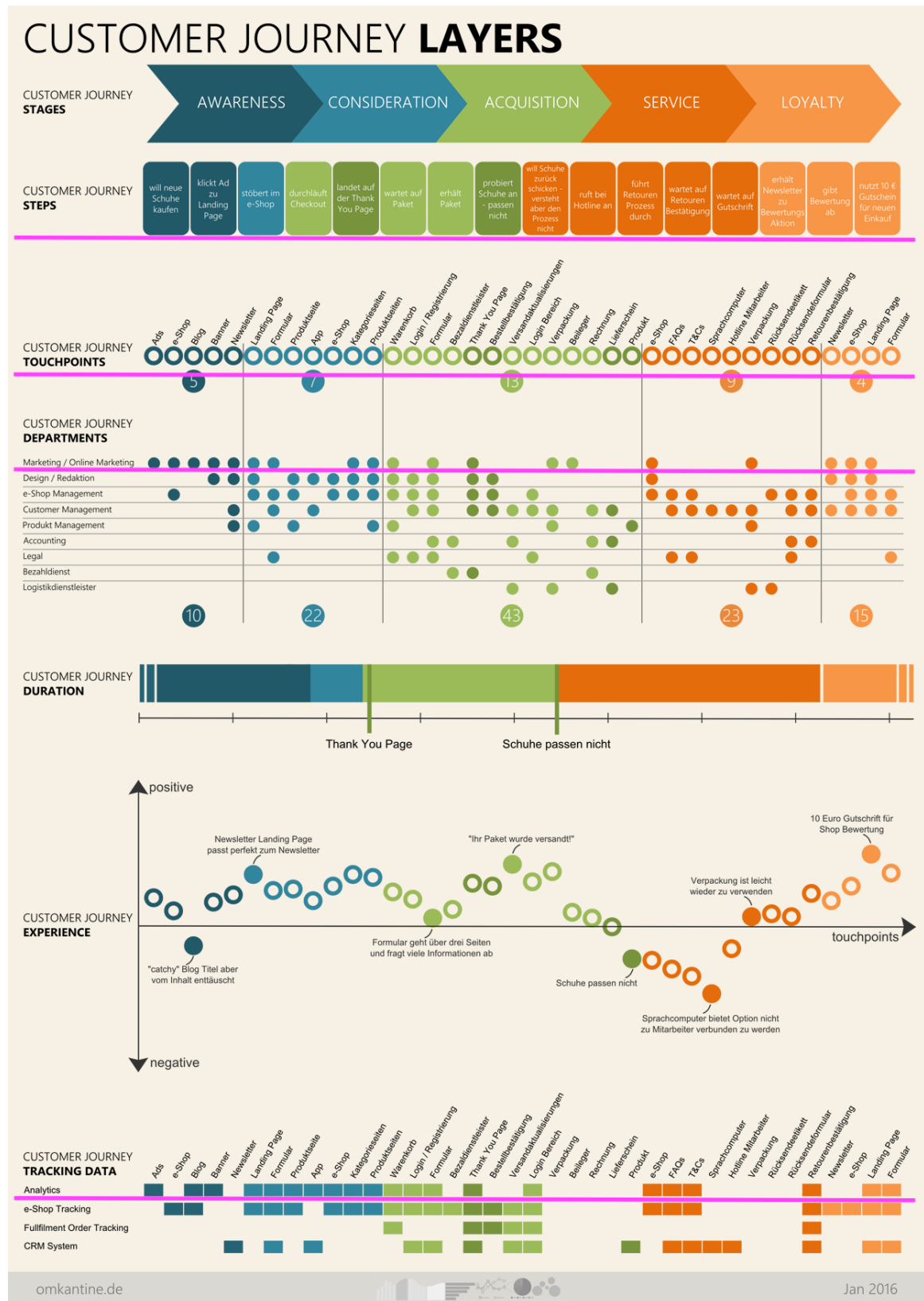


Figure 13 Customer journey layers connected with digital marketing metrics, Buchberger, 2016

4. Methodology

The following chapter aims to describe the chosen research methodology in order to validate the formulated propositions and to justify the building process of the framework elaborated within this study.

4.1. Research design

As stated above, this study aims to elaborate a framework that helps practitioners and researchers to gain an overview and to compare the digital strategies of various companies. The method of choice was semi-structured qualitative interviews. While quantitative methods serve as an objective, numeric measure of reality, qualitative approaches provide a “better understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation” (Williams, 2007). The “phenomenon under investigation” here is the digital strategy of various companies. In order to gain valuable insights on the current developments within the industry, 14 interviews with industry professionals are conducted to gain a deep, individual and comprehensive understanding for the complex subject. As opposed to quantitative approaches, qualitative approaches are “based on meanings expressed through words” (Saunders, 2009). The collection of results in non-standardised data is the best choice for the setting of this thesis. The nonprobability, self-selected sample is justified by the need for the interview candidates to possess a certain knowledge of and experience with digital marketing. The research design consists of three stages: First, extensive literature research builds the theoretical foundation. The framework is being developed and later on refined with the insights gained in the qualitative interviews. The interviews are analysed according to a coding structure. The final part, discussion and findings, will summarize the most important insights obtained during research and from data analysis and lead to a final evaluation of the usability of the framework.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

The selected participants are contacted either through e-mail or telephone and asked for a 30 minute face-to-face, Skype or telephone interview. The interview method of choice is semi-structured and based on an interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions and topics that need to be explored. The semi-structured approach allows to gather comparable insights but also to record unexpected elements in the course of conversation possibly yielding further insights. The interview will be designed and framed in order to better understand:

- The digital marketing strategy in place: Channels and metrics currently monitored
- Knowledge of and usability of the customer journey concept
- Industry specific conditions concerning digital marketing
- Relevance and usefulness of the elaborated framework

The semi-structured interviews are evaluated according to the prescribed framework and propositions and examined with regard to special patterns in order to make the results more comparable. Some questions are guided by the developed framework and formulated more restrictively; others more open. However, concrete questions on specific topics will dominate rather than open, explorative questions.

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and (if applicable) translated. The data collected is analysed through MAXQda, a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis in academic and scientific institutions.

The selected participants must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for the study:

- Work or study experience in digital marketing or digital performance management
- Minimum two years of experience

The overview below gives an overview of the interview partners and their respective company.

	Name	Branche	Type of Company	Company Name	Number of Employees
1	Bernd Plitt	Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing Agency	Super Digital Agentur	1-5
2	Alexandra Bortnick	Retail	Sporting Goods	Nike	75.000
3	Thomas Sommeregger	Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing Consultancy	Digitalbuero	1-5
4	Simon Frank	Information Technology & Services	E-Commerce and Information Technology Provider	Cyberport & Cybersolutions	500-1.000
5	Felicia Berto	Retail	Apparel & Fashion	HUGO BOSS	15.000
6	Jack Morgan	Retail	Sporting Goods	Adidas	57.000
7	Alexander Birk	Hospitality	Hotel Chain	Best Western Hotels & Resorts	
8	Marc Bacon Schulz	Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing Consultancy	Munich Digital Institute	1-5
9	Axel Puhlmann	Retail	Sporting Goods	SportScheck	1.300
10	Irene Molina	Retail	Apparel & Fashion	HUGO BOSS	15.000
11	Philip Ingenillem	Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing Agency and Consultancy	Online Birds GmbH Hotel Marketing Solutions	30
12	Andreas Unger	Digital Marketing	Digital Marketing Consultancy	Ungerconsultancy	1-5
13	Julia Schmieder	Computer Software	Software and E-Commerce Technology Provider	Adobe	25.000
14	Adriana Carles	Financial Services	Payment Technology Provider	Wirecard	5.000

4.3. Quality criteria

4.3.1. Reliability

Scholarly articles, primarily from academic and scientific journals and relevant, recent literature form the basis for the development of this thesis. More particularly, the articles and literature chosen to provide essential information on the area of research (digital marketing, performance measurement), definitions about the main concepts (customer journey, customer experience) and the main theories applied (measurement frameworks, customer experience and customer journey theory, the purchase funnel) to the topic. The information retrieved from literature, journals and articles leads to the formulation of the research questions and propositions. Selected literature and journal articles were chosen after recency, rating standards of the journal and citation number. Through the combined approach of a solid theoretical foundation,

qualitative interviews and a detailed analysis of the obtained results, a high degree of reliability is ensured.

4.3.2. Validity, Transparency and Limitations

Measuring the transparency, validity and therefore also quality of qualitative research often proves to be difficult. In literature, different approaches are applied. Meyrick (2006), emphasizes the role of continuous theory and data comparison. Credibility in this study is established through an ongoing process of matching obtained results with theoretical reasoning. Using iteration in the process of data analysis reduces bias and facilitates understanding of the investigated topic (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Data analysis is performed in a consistent and systematic way, which guarantees validity and transparency. Still, the nature of content and technological progress limits transferability of this qualitative study. In 5 years, the technological landscape could open other channels and metrics which could outdate the results of this study. In order to still achieve the highest transferability possible, research selection, data collection and sampling as well as interview script facilitate the judgement by potential users in other contexts. Transcripts and records of the conducted interviews will be kept and serve as evidence for the findings, which will further increase validity. Another limitation to transferability and validity is given by the small number of participants and conducted interviews due to the short timeframe of the study. Careful selection of the interview partners and consistent, accurate conduct of the interviews, however, is intended to partially compensate for this disadvantage. Due to the chosen research design, the subjectivity of the interpretation is unavoidable. Statements and thoughts cannot be schematized easily. In addition, some interviews might be conducted in German and will then be translated in the English language. Thus, there is a certain translation risk that some statements or opinions might be slightly different due to translation errors.

5. Expected contributions

The study is designed to achieve a number of theoretical and practical contributions. To begin with, the theoretical contribution consists in findings on current challenges in digital marketing and the developed framework as well as its implications. It should enable an overview and comparison of digital strategies and facilitate the understanding of those by multiple stakeholders. Through combining several theoretical frameworks and related terminology, it should serve to quickly present the current digital marketing approach and associated metrics for research or practical purposes. Through the visual presentation and logical composition, it should be easy to apply. The theoretical contribution moreover includes the validation or contradiction of the propositions and reveals common trends that currently guide experts in economy and business. Moreover it will provide insights on peculiarities that only affect certain industries and trends that affect all. The elaborated model is designed to overcome and address the major challenges related to developing digital marketing strategies: Complexity, Budget allocation, Accountability and Measurement (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The framework will facilitate the complex topic through displaying the customer journey phases, tied to the channels and metrics, grouped and structured. It will therefore be possible for both non-professionals and specialists alike to understand the current status of a company, possibly

improving communication between teams in companies. Moreover, it will be able to justify budget allocation and highlighting focus areas by outlining the most important metrics. Managers will also be able to determine the channels accountable for the most profit (or customers) generated. Ultimately it will prevent the concentration on the wrong or too many metrics. If the framework is applied correctly and leads to a continuous cycle of self-assessment, companies can benefit from all the practical implications stated above.

6. Plan of work

Plan of work		2019																2020			
		September				October				November				December				January			
Preliminary Analysis	Topic Definition																				
	Research Literature.																				
	Literature. analysis																				
Exposé	Work																				
	Deadline																				
Content	Research																				
	Evaluation																				
	Structure																				
Methodology	Interview Design																				
	Expert Approach																				
	Interview																				
	Interview Buffer																				
Data Analysis	Transcription																				
	Analysis																				
	Buffer																				
Final Stage	Finalizing																				
	Proof Reading																				
	Printing																				
	Submission Deadline																				
	Defence																				

7. Appendix

7.1. Literature Review table

Topic	Author	Title	Type	Contribution
Marketing Metrics	Ambler, T.	Marketing Metrics	Journal Article	Framework and measurement of marketing metrics
Customer Journey	Buchberger, O.	Customer Journey Layer model. Why it's so complicated and still worth it.	Online article	Visual customer journey layer model
Industry specific conditions (Tourism)	Buhalis, D.; Zoge, M.	The strategic impact of the Internet on the tourism industry.	Journal article	Industry conditions and digital

				marketing in tourism
Digital Marketing Strategy	Chaffey, D., Ellis-Chadwick, F.	Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice	Book	Digital Marketing Strategy, Related theories, Challenges and Strategy Implementation
Digital marketing analysis	Chaffey, D.; Patron, M.	From web analytics to digital marketing optimization: Increasing the commercial value of digital analytics.	Journal article	Digital marketing analysis, Performance measurement
Digital Marketing Strategy	Charlesworth A.	Digital Marketing : A Practical Approach	Book	Digital Marketing Strategy, Related theories, Challenges and Strategy Implementation
Customer Relationship Management	Christopher, M., Payne, M., Ballantyne, D.	Relationship Marketing	Book	Marketing Strategy, Implementation and Formulation, Customer Relationship Management
Customer Journey	Court, D., Elzinga, D., Mulder, S., Vetvik, J	The consumer decision journey	Journal article	Customer Journey
Digital marketing analysis	Davenport, T.H.	Competing on Analytics.	Journal article	Digital marketing analysis, Performance measurement
Marketing Analyse	Daum, D.	Marketingproduktivität	Book	Marketing productivity, KPI frameworks and analysis
Digital marketing strategy	Egol, M., Peterson, M. and Stroh, S.	How to choose the right digital marketing model.	Journal article	Digital Marketing Strategy, Related theories, Challenges and Strategy Implementation
Visual frameworks	Eppler, M. J., & Burkhard, R. A.	Visual representations in knowledge management: framework and cases.	Journal article	Visual representation of knowledge

Industry specific conditions (Retail)	Fulgoni, G. M.	“Omni-channel” retail insights and the consumer’s path-to-purchase: How digital has transformed the way people make purchasing decisions.	Journal article	Industry specific conditions and digital marketing strategy in retail
Performance measurement in digital marketing	Gaitniece, E.	Digital Marketing Performance Evaluation Methods	Journal article	Comparison and analysis of frameworks for performance measurement in digital marketing
Performance measurement in digital marketing	Gao, Y.	Measuring marketing performance: a review and a framework	Journal article	Performance measurement in digital marketing
Industry specific conditions (Retail)	Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A. L., & Nordfält, J.	The Future of Retailing	Journal article	Industry specific conditions and digital marketing strategy in retail
Performance measurement in digital marketing, AIDA Model, Purchase Funnel	Flores, L.	How to Measure Digital Marketing: Metrics for Assessing Impact and Designing Success.	Book	Performance measurement in digital marketing, distinction and explanation of metrics, AIDA and Purchase Funnel
Consumer Behaviour	Hirschman, E. C., & Holbrook, M. B.	Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concept, Methods and Propositions.	Journal article	Consumer behaviour, methodology
Industry specific conditions (Retail)	Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C.	The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun.	Journal article	Industry specific conditions and marketing in retail
Industry specific conditions (Tourism)	Hudson, S., & Hudson, L.	Marketing for tourism, hospitality & events: A global & digital approach.	Book	Industry conditions, marketing and digital marketing in tourism
Digital marketing analysis	Järvinen J, Karjalainen H	The use of Web analytics for digital marketing performance measurement.	Journal article	Digital marketing analysis, Performance measurement
Marketing controlling	Kiener, J.	Marketing-Controlling	Book	KPI frameworks for marketing,

				origins of marketing measurement
Digital marketing	Kingsnorth, S.	Digital Marketing Strategy: An Integrated Approach to Online Marketing	Book	Digital Marketing Strategy, Related theories, Challenges and Strategy Implementation
Digital marketing	Leeflang, P., Verhoef, P., Dahlström, P., Freundt, T.	Challenges and solutions for marketing in a digital era.	Journal article	Digital marketing analysis and digital strategy formulation
Mobile marketing, Consumer trends	Lobaugh, K.M.	The consumer is changing, but perhaps not how you think. A swirl of economic and marketplace dynamics is influencing consumer behaviour.	Whitepaper	Rise of the mobile channel, Consumer behaviours and global consumer trends
Consumer journey	McKinsey	Ten years on the consumer decision journey: Where are we today?	Online article	
Marketing	Meffert, H.	Internationales Marketing-Management	Book	Marketing, Strategy formulation, Success factors of marketing strategies
Industry specific conditions (Tourism)	Pan, B.	<i>E-Tourism</i>	Journal article	Industry conditions, marketing and digital marketing in tourism
Marketing	Patterson, L.	Marketing and sales alignment for improved effectiveness	Journal article	Marketing, Strategy formulation, communication of strategy across teams
Digital Marketing	Ryan, D.	Understanding digital marketing: marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation.	Book	Digital Marketing Strategy, Related theories, Challenges and Strategy Implementation
Industry specific conditions (Tourism)	Santos, J.; Silva, O. L.	Digital Marketing Strategies for Tourism, Hospitality, and Airline Industries	Book	Industry conditions, marketing and digital

				marketing in tourism
Digital marketing analysis	Saura, J.R.; Palos-Sánchez, P.; Cerdá Suárez, L. M	Understanding the Digital Marketing Environment with KPIs and Web Analytics	Journal article	Digital marketing analysis, web analytics, KPIs
Customer journey	Shostack, G.L.	How to Design a Service.	Journal article	Insights on customer journeys, design and structure
Customer Journey, AIDA Model, Purchase Funnel	Rosenbaum, M. S., Otalora, M. L., & Ramírez, G. C.	How to create a realistic customer journey map.	Journal article	Customer journey creation
Customer journey	Satell, G.	Marketers Need To Drastically Rethink The Customer Decision Journey.	Journal article	Customer journey creation, critical review of the concept
Performance analysis, Dashboards	Yigitbasioglu, O. M., & Velcu, O	A review of dashboards in performance management: Implications for design and research.	Online article	Elaboration of performance measurement frameworks and dashboards
	Lemon, K., & Verhoef, P.	(2016). Understanding Customer Experience throughout the Customer Journey 1. <i>Journal of Marketing</i> , 80. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420		

Table 2: Literature Review, own elaboration

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