

Alan Charlesworth



Digital Marketing

A Practical Approach

FOURTH EDITION



Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing: A Practical Approach provides a step-by-step and comprehensive guide to implementing the key aspects of digital marketing. Building on the previous editions, this fully updated fourth edition takes an approach that prepares students for an active role in digital marketing.

As well as topic-based exercises, the text also includes practical case-study exercises – based on theory and recognized good practice – which will ensure that readers will be able to analyse situations within the work place, identify the most appropriate course of action and implement the strategies and tactics that will help the organization meet its online objectives. Key updates to the new edition include:

- The role of the digital influencer.
- Direct to Consumer (DTC) and omni-channel retailing.
- Individuals' privacy and the role of organizations in gathering and storage of their personal data.
- Ethical aspects of digital marketing and its impact on the environment.
- SEO and Google's development of the 'zero click'.
- Online ad fraud.
- Updated online resources available via the author's own site.

This essential text equips advanced undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education students with the tools to undertake any digital marketing role within a variety of organizations. Comprehensive support material available online for both students and instructors includes links to articles and opinion pieces, PowerPoint lecturer slides and questions based on the chapter material.

With a background in sales, service, marketing and education, Alan Charlesworth has been involved in what we now call 'digital marketing' as practitioner, trainer, researcher, teacher, writer and consultant since 1996.



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A Practical Approach

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Alan Charlesworth

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This one is for Chris ... a man of many shorts and few trousers.



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All those practitioners, writers, commentators, bloggers and researchers who do the work that keeps people like me informed.

All those organizations that have asked me to monitor or participate in their digital marketing efforts – you learn more in an hour at the sharp end than you do in days of reading the theory.

Chapter 1

Introduction

A writer's job is to make people think again about the things they take for granted. It's to question the comfortable banalities that evolve into questionable 'truths'. A writer who does not sometimes offend us is providing nothing of value. Why bother to write if all you're doing is parroting the platitudes and comfortable notions of the crowd?

Bob Hoffman, *the Ad Contrarian*

Okay ... I'll start with a confession. This is an academic text that starts with a deception; a ploy; a scam. Really?

Well, kind of. You see, in previous editions of this book some important stuff was included in the preface. That is, stuff that helped the reader to understand the *hows* and *whys* of the book's content and its presentation. And guess what? Hardly anyone read it. Indeed, quite possibly, *no one* read it. So ... I've trimmed out the boring stuff and called it [Chapter 1](#) on the chance that it might stand a better chance of being read.

What follows is important and I've divided it into a series of key points – take a few minutes to read them as they will help you to make sense of the rest of the book.

JUST SAYIN'

The JUST SAYIN' boxes contain personal comments on subjects. You might disagree. If you do; good ... discuss them in class as an exercise.

JUST SAYIN'

Twitter Marketing

Unless you want a laugh, avoid it at all costs. Remember, posts are there to make money for the poster – not the reader.

So, in no particular order ...

KEY POINT #1

This is a book about marketing on the Internet (see KEY POINT #2). It is not a book about *all* marketing. To get the best from this book, the reader should be aware of – though not necessarily an *expert* in – common marketing theories, strategies and tactics. It is also the case that online marketing is an element of any overall marketing strategy, and so the online aspect must mirror or compliment that strategy. For example; if the organization has decided to pursue a strategy of *brand purpose*, then the website, social media postings and advertising must reflect that.

SNIPPET

That's *Internet* with a capital 'I'

Okay, so I'm splitting hairs, but long before the World Wide Web came along a collection of connected computers was referred to as *an internet* – a noun. Naturally, when we then got a collection of connected websites (yes, that's *websites*, all one word), it was referred to as *the Internet* – which is a noun that designates a particular being or thing, i.e. a proper noun, and so – like your name – it is capitalized.

KEY POINT #2

Despite its title, throughout the book I frequently refer to *online* or *Internet* rather than *digital* marketing. This is deliberate. It has become common for *digital* to be used to represent marketing on the Internet, but my contention is that (just about) all marketing now uses digital technology – and this book concentrates only on the use of the Internet for marketing purposes.

MINI EXERCISE

The first edition of this book was called *Internet Marketing, a Practical Approach* for exactly the reason stated above. Perhaps I should have stuck with it. Why do you think the title was changed?

KEY POINT #3

Like its first three editions, this is not a book that evangelizes any aspect of digital marketing with the aim of converting every marketer to its use. In online marketing there are no certainties; there are probabilities, possibilities and likelihoods – but nothing is absolute. The essence of this book that underpins every section is that to

be effective each element of digital marketing must be assessed in the context in which it is going to be applied. To paraphrase an old saying;

Some digital tactics are right *all* of the time; and *all* digital tactics are right *some* of the time; but *all* digital tactics are never right *all* of the time.

It *depends* on the context in which they are being applied.

As Michael Porter notably pointed out;

The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.

KEY POINT #4

Any book that has pretensions as an academic text should have appropriate academic underpinnings, and this book has some. However, the practical nature of the content means that there are also significant *practical* underpinnings such as statistics or research findings from commercial organizations. Although there may be an element of bias in some of these, they are up to date and represent real-world issues, whereas much of the academic research in the subject area is outdated by the time it is published – and some is of dubious quality, particularly where the researchers have no marketing qualifications or experience. Note that my scepticism towards *academic* research is not absolute. For more on this subject, follow the link on the chapter's web page. In reality, if you're studying for a PhD this isn't the book for you. But if you're studying to help get a job ... you'll find this book useful.

KEY POINT #5

Following on from the previous point; the COVID pandemic drastically changed online behaviour over the periods of lockdown. Therefore, much of the *practical* research made available at the time of writing was skewed by folks being at home more than would be normal, e.g. e-commerce sales increased dramatically. Therefore, on occasion, I have used older data which I believe is still generally accurate and useful. I also try to stick to *what happened* research rather than predictions – particularly from industry experts who tend to predict whatever fits their agenda.

DISCUSSION; what do you think?

As you read this, any impact of the pandemic will – hopefully – have diminished from its 2020–21 peaks. How much of online buyer behaviour has returned to pre-pandemic rate – or did it bring about any permanent changes?

KEY POINT #6

An advantage of experiencing 'old school' marketing is that I'm aware of what has gone before the Internet brought change to our lives, business and marketing – and

so recognize when ‘new’ marketers reinvent *traditional* marketing tactics and present them as being new. This theme is a constant throughout the book.

EXERCISE

MINI EXERCISE

New ... or re-hashed?

It might have introduced faster, better and more efficient ways of practicing marketing, but the Internet has brought nothing new to marketing.

I’ve been saying this since 1996, and I have yet to have anyone successfully challenge my assertion. Can you?

KEY POINT #7

The length of each section or chapter should not be perceived as reflecting the importance of the subject within digital marketing – some subjects simply lend themselves to having more written about them.

KEY POINT #8

Throughout the book I occasionally refer to ‘companies’ or ‘firms’, but in the main I use ‘organization’. This is deliberately vague. Whenever you see the word ‘organization’ feel free to replace it with any other term that you feel is relevant to the context or your own circumstances. As well as ‘company’ and ‘firm’ other examples might include; ‘government department’, ‘university’, ‘hospital’, ‘foundation’, ‘school’, ‘society’, ‘not-for-profit’, ‘business’, ‘association’, ‘college’, ‘religious body’, ‘charity’, ‘club’ or any other entity – including ‘individual’. Rarely do I use the term ‘brand’ in this context. I’m not a believer in referring to a brand as if it’s an entity in its own right.

KEY POINT #9

I am very much aware that students who use this book as part of their studies are more likely to find work with SMEs and not go straight to a job as strategic marketer with a global brand. I have tried to reflect this in the book’s contents – not least with the case studies.

KEY POINT #10

As with previous editions of the book, some of the chapter exercises are based on a number of case studies. Although the case studies are fictional, they all characterize real-life situations – most are based on organizations I have worked with – or ex students are working at.

Completing the exercises in each chapter will not make you an expert – but it will help put you on the path to becoming one. It's not enough that you know something... you have to practice it until you learn it.

KEY POINT #11

Wherever possible, I have avoided promotion of specific brands or products within the text. This is particularly the case where digital marketing tools, services or technologies are concerned – naming a particular website-hosting company or software that helps with search engine optimization, for example. There are obvious exceptions. Try writing a book on digital marketing without mentioning Google, for example.

KEY POINT #12

Many of the marketers quoted or used for research into online marketing will have budgets in the millions of dollars/pound/euros/whatever – and so the findings of such research might be – at best – limited in respect to smaller organizations, in some cases useless and in worst cases damaging.

KEY POINT #13

Some things change ... and some don't. TikTok, for example, didn't exist when the third edition of this book came out. However, best practice in email marketing and website design was established in the last century. I mention this because there is an obvious impact on the content of the book in that some sections are (just about) cut and pasted from previous editions, whilst others have required significant updating – and some elements are brand new.

KEY POINT #14

For every business or marketing success story featured in TV news, at conferences, in the business section of newspapers and – more significantly – on a variety of web pages, there are thousands of untold *failures* we don't read or hear about. I make this point because it is folly to base any marketing strategy or digital tactic on the concept of 'well it worked for them'. It didn't work for many, many more.

KEY POINT #15

Online support

The book has its own website (alancharlesworth.com/Digital-Marketing), a feature of which is that each chapter has its own page that includes references to websites that provide more details and updates on subjects covered within the text, plus links to information, articles and stories that will enhance the book's content.



And finally ...

1. I have no outside affiliations, e.g. a consultancy or publishing business. The benefit to readers of this is that I have nothing to promote within the text, e.g. models, concepts or software that are products of those outside interests. As a result, I have tried to present an objective account of the various aspects of marketing on the Internet. If there is any bias within the book it is based on my opinion which is influenced by over 25 years of study, research and practice of marketing on the Internet – which itself was built on a foundation of sales and marketing practice in pre-Internet years.
2. Following on from this is that I have been on this planet for over 60 years.
Some readers – usually based on what they might have read on social media, and typically written by folk much, much younger than me – believe that digital marketing is a young person's game and older folk don't 'get it'. Naturally I would argue the opposite – though I do appreciate that some of my contemporaries have applied little or no effort in learning about the subject, which doesn't help my argument. But ultimately, would you rather study the point of view of someone who – with regard to digital marketing – has been there, seen it, done it and has the tee shirt ... or someone who wasn't born when that person started seeing and doing it?
3. I've written a number of books on this subject area and I find it impossible to re-write the basic content in a *different* way for every book – so there is some repetition. Sorry.
4. This content of this book is presented in the same manner that I went about my teaching. To paraphrase Greek philosopher, Socrates;

I cannot teach you anything ... only encourage you to think and to question.

Enjoy :-)

Chapter 2

Digital customers

Chapter at a glance

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Online buying behaviour
- 2.3 The only way is ethics
- 2.4 Digital marketing and the environment

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Before considering how consumers behave online, it is worth reminding readers about why they're using the Internet in the first place. Whilst users *might* be online to research or make a purchase, it is more likely that they are there for another reason. This is important because any marketing that they might come across – or is *forced* upon them – is disturbing whatever they were there for in the first place. Research by Perrin (2020), on behalf of eMarketer, investigated selected activities undertaken by Internet users in the US (see [Table 2.1](#)). Despite numerous newer and trendier applications since that time, the data found that one of the original applications of the Internet – email – still holds the top spot. Equally interesting to digital marketers is that *search* comes in at number two – though any search is just as likely to be non-commercial (e.g. lyrics of a song) rather than seeking a product or service. Note also that time is not a factor in this research – a search on Google, for example, might take only a minute or two, but a visit to TikTok may go on for hours.

Table 2.1 User participation in digital activities

<i>Internet activity</i>	<i>Percentage of users</i>
Email users	91
Search users	85
Digital video viewers	83
Digital audio	72
Social network users	72
Digital gamers	58
Smartphone messaging app users	50
Podcast listener	27

Comprehensive research from RRD (2021) proved to be something of a wake-up call for marketers when their expectations for various marketing tactics were measured against the behaviour of consumers (see [Table 2.2](#)). The question; ‘what is your preferred method for learning about a new brand, product or service’ suggested that marketers underestimated some and overestimated other methods.

When Campaign/Harris Poll (2020) asked consumers the question; ‘where do you turn first when looking for information; social media or the web?’ The results (see [Table 2.3](#)) might surprise some readers, e.g. those who mistakenly think that the web is *all* about social media.

SNIPPET

Helping the buyer to buy

The following paragraph is taken verbatim from my book, ‘Key Concepts in e-Commerce’:

Arguably one of the most significant developments the Internet has brought to marketing is to give impetus to marketers’ objectives shifting from helping the seller to sell to helping the buyer to buy. Consumers now expect to be facilitated in their research on the product or service that best meets their wants and needs.

Follow the link on the chapter’s web page for more on this notion.

There are a couple of things that need to be made clear prior to getting started on *buyer behaviour*. First off is that in marketing terms the *buyer* may not have handed over cash for a product. That would be the norm, but it also includes the customer meeting the objectives of the marketing efforts. Translating this online; it may be the case that the *aim* of a website might be to provide information. Therefore, downloading a pdf might

Table 2.2 Preferred method of learning about a new brand, product or service

	Consumers percentage	Marketers percentage
Word of mouth (offline)	28	4
Online ad	11	36
Social media	23	32
Streaming service	5	18
Cable TV	12	4

Note: the nature of social media is not identified, but as online advertising is a separate category it is assumed *social media* means posts by friends/relatives and brands that are followed.

be the required *sale*. Similarly, on a B2B site, the objective could well be to have the potential customer contact the organization – so as soon as a phone call is made, for example, the website has made its *sale*, i.e. met its marketing objective.

Furthermore, it is often the case that use of the term *customer* is not appropriate to the *selling* organization. Universities prefer *students*, hospitals *patients* and churches *worshippers*, for example – but essentially each of these groups will demonstrate customer-behavioural traits in choosing the provider of their education, treatment or religion. It is also necessary to clarify two other terms which are pertinent to the content of this book; customer/consumer and buy/sell.

- Put simply; a customer is the person who pays for a product – a consumer is one who consumes it. The customer for a product *might* also be the consumer (I buy and drink a bottle of beer) but this is not always the case (I buy two beers, drink one and give the other to a friend who drinks that bottle). This is particularly relevant in the case in B2B trading, where the person who agrees the purchase of a product is unlikely to be the one who uses (consumes) it.

Table 2.3 Where do users turn first when looking for information; social media or the web?

Information on	
A business	84% turn to the web
Updates on family/friends	68% turn to Facebook
Daily news (e.g. weather, sports results)	88% turn to the web
Products to buy	85% turn to the web
'How to' ...	59% turn to YouTube, 34% to the web
Current event articles	85% turn to the web
Ideas on gifts	81% turn to the web
A celebrity	66% turn to the web, 34% to social media

- The definition of *buy* is to *acquire by paying*. The definition of *sell* is to *transfer ownership in exchange for payment*. Some decisions to buy are made at the point of purchase (the vast majority of grocery goods are in this category). In these cases, having the right product in the right place at the right time for the right price is enough to *sell* it. However, for other products the buyer may take a long period – months or even years – to decide on its purchase (a car, for example); therefore, the marketer may spend years *selling* it. Once again, many B2B purchases fit into this category.

If you are not fully conversant with these issues I suggest you read up on them in greater detail before tackling the various elements of this book. If you are conversant with these issues, you have every right to question the use of *customer* and not *consumer* in the title of this chapter. Realistically, I could have used either. Or both.

2.2 ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

As with all aspects of marketing, buyer behaviour can be divided into consumer behaviour and industry behaviour.

Business to consumer (B2C)

Rather than covering the myriad of theories that exist in the social science that is customer behaviour, in this section we will briefly consider how people behave *online* and how that behaviour can be best exploited by the digital marketer.

One way to do this is to take one of the most common models in the subject and consider how it might be applied online. Before doing that, however, it is worth adding that buyer behaviour is inherent in many (if not most) aspects of marketing – for that reason the subject re-emerges throughout subsequent chapters of this book. Successful website development, for example, is dependent on the visitor being able to interact with the site (their behaviour) and in [Chapter 10](#) we consider digital marketing analytics – much of which revolves around tracking users' online behaviour.

Perhaps the most commonly used model of buyer behaviour is that which considers the purchase process as a cycle, taking the customer in the following series of steps: problem recognition ⇒ information search ⇒ evaluation of alternatives ⇒ purchase decision ⇒ post-purchase behaviour. Normally presented as a flow chart, [Figure 2.1](#) shows how the Internet can impact on that cycle.

A further consideration is the length of time that the potential customer takes to progress from problem recognition to purchase. For some products the decision-making process is swift – with all stages taking place almost instantaneously. For other products the decision is swift by necessity – a distress purchase perhaps. Other product

JUST SAYIN'

There are just two reasons folk use the Internet:

1. To save time
2. To waste time

So ... whatever marketing you're trying to complete online, remember the user is doing one of these. It will help. A lot.

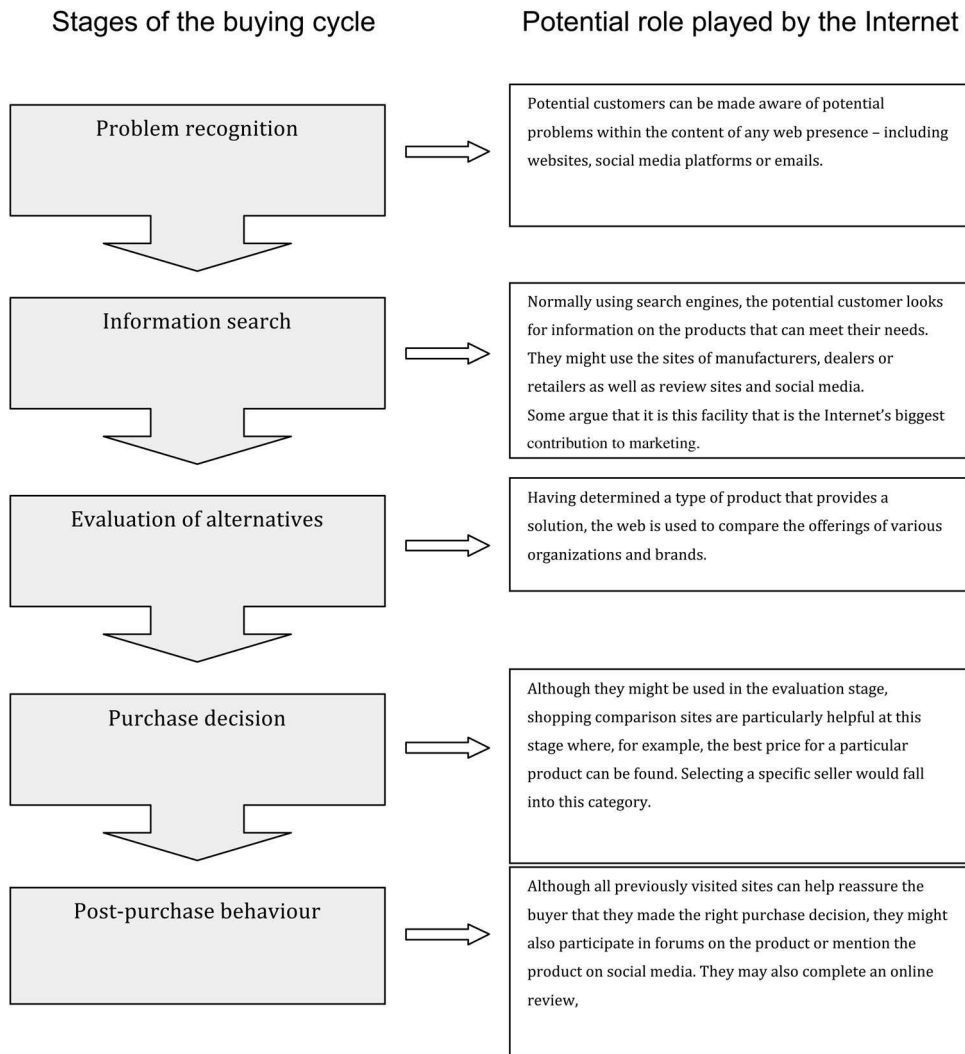


Figure 2.1 The Internet's potential impact on the buying cycle.

purchase cycles, however, might be much longer – a new kitchen would be an example of this where the buyer might take months, or even years, in coming to a decision.

The aforementioned buying cycle (see [Figure 2.1](#)) is a development from the AIDA concept which has been around since the 1890s. Introduced by salesman St Elmo Lewis and given even greater prominence when E K Strong included it in his 1925 book *The Psychology of Selling*, the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) the model requires the marketer to ask: did the promotion; grab *attention*, arouse an *interest*, stimulate *desire* and provide a call for *action*? Naturally, the flip side to this model is that it mirrors the buyer's behaviour in making a purchase – their attention is drawn to a problem which then sparks their interest, creates a desire and they then take action to meet that desire. Newer models such as the sales, or conversion, funnel are

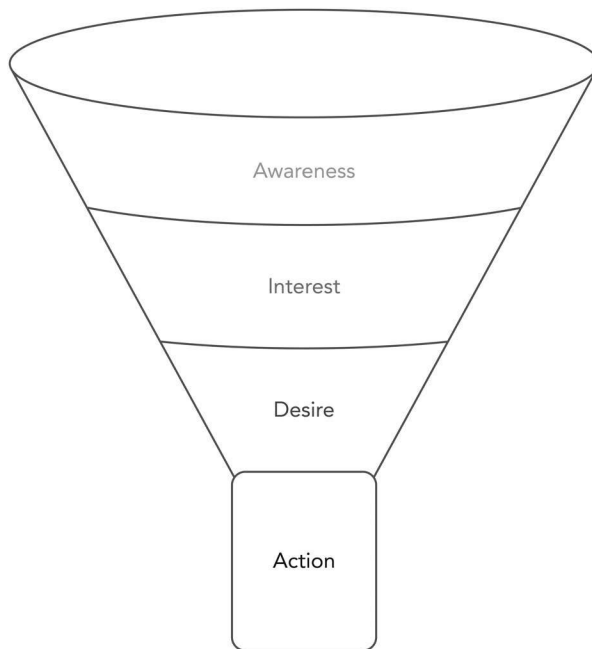


Figure 2.2 The basic AIDA sales funnel.

also based on the AIDA principle and – like all study into buyer behaviour – is used to help develop marketing strategy (see [Figure 2.2](#)).

Although the funnel concept can be adapted for many similar purposes – brand adoption, for example – in online marketing is most frequently used in developing, or assessing websites – where the top of the funnel is the home or entry page and the exit representing the site’s objective being achieved. The funnel model can be seen as a useful aid to marketers in that it (unlike the buying cycle which is more linear) represents the fact that people leave the buying cycle at various stages – hence the funnel narrows as it progresses to the *sale*.

A further extension of the AIDA/cycle/funnel concept is to combine them so that customer retention is taken into account – and so the process becomes circular, that is the last stage of one purchase leads directly into the first stage of the next. Commonly recognized as *relationship marketing*, this is the concept that sales should not be considered as isolated events and that customers should be encouraged to develop a relationship with the supplier – so increasing the opportunities for repeat purchases from the organization or brand. This is reflected in [Figure 2.3](#), which shows a contemporary sales funnel. For example; potential customers might be exposed to an advert (the widest part of the funnel). People interested in the product might respond to the ad by ringing up to request a brochure (they enter the funnel). After reading the brochure, the prospective customer then contacts the firm to arrange a demonstration of the product and so on until a purchase is made (they exit the funnel at its narrowest point). At each step the customer can either (a) go deeper into the funnel, or (b) step

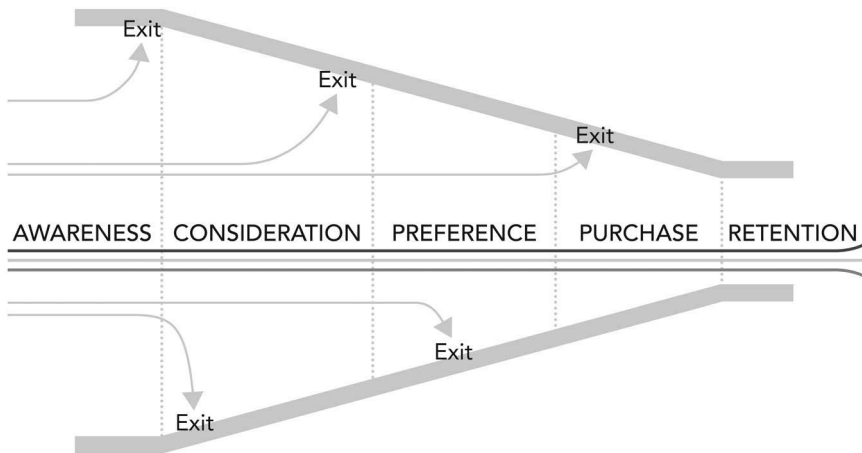


Figure 2.3 A contemporary sales funnel.

out by rejecting the offering. Sales (and marketing) teams can then study users' progression through the funnel and address issues that cause them to step out at the various stages. It is also the case that customers can be *rejected* at any stage if sales staff identifies them as *not-serious* purchasers. Note how the arrows indicate that potential customers can leave the funnel at any time – though it is also likely that they could join at any point. If you know exactly what you want you go straight in at *purchase* (addressing this issue is covered in [Chapter 6](#) on e-commerce websites).

It is worth noting that these models are lauded, criticized and debated in marketing – but this is not the forum for such discussion. Suffice to say that – like many marketing models – they are better than a blank sheet of paper (or blank screen) when starting out on the development of a tactic, plan or strategy.

As well as considering the relevance of traditional models in online buyer behaviour, there are also the *behavioural* traits of people when they are online.

A number of authors have attempted to segregate online shoppers, but rather than some of the theoretical academic proposals, I prefer the more pragmatic submission from digital marketing practitioner and author, Bryan Eisenberg (2011). Most of his *20 forces that influence whether people buy things* are fairly obvious (and should not be new to marketing students or retailers) but the reason I have included it here is so that you can consider how people would make these purchases online – and more importantly, how the digital marketer can meet their expectations in making those purchases. And don't forget that each category will be specific to each individual – *people buy different things at different times for different prices for different reasons*.

Eisenberg's 20 forces that influence whether people buy things are as follows:

1. **Basic needs.** We buy things to fulfil what Maslow describes as the bottom of his hierarchy; things like food and shelter.

2. **Convenience.** You need something now and will take the easiest or fastest path to get it. Think about the last time you were running out of petrol or were thirsty.
3. **Replacement.** Sometimes you buy because you need to replace old things you have.
4. **Scarcity.** This could be around collectibles or a perceived need that something may run out or have limited availability in the future.
5. **Prestige or inspirational purchase.** Something that is purchased for an esteem-related reason or for personal enrichment.
6. **Emotional vacuum.** Sometimes you just buy to try to replace things you cannot have and never will.
7. **Lower prices.** Something you identified earlier as a want is now a lower price than before.
8. **Great value.** When the perceived value substantially exceeds the price of a product or service. This is something you don't particularly need; you just feel it's too good of a deal to pass up.
9. **Name recognition.** When purchasing a category you're unfamiliar with, branding plays a big role.
10. **Fad or innovation.** Everybody wants the latest and greatest of something.
11. **Compulsory purchase.** Some external force, like something your boss asked you to do, makes it mandatory. This often happens in emergencies, such as when you need a plumber.
12. **Ego stroking.** Sometimes you make a purchase to impress/attract someone or to have something bigger/smaller and better than others.
13. **Niche identity.** Something that helps bond you to a cultural, religious or community affiliation.
14. **Peer pressure.** Something is purchased because your friends want you to.
15. **The 'Girl Scout Cookie effect'.** People feel better about themselves by feeling as though they're giving to others; and especially when they're promised something in return.
16. **Reciprocity or guilt.** This happens when somebody – usually an acquaintance, or someone rarely gift-worthy – buys you a gift or does something exceptionally nice and/or unnecessary. Now it's your turn to return the favour at the next opportunity.
17. **Empathy.** Sometimes people buy from other people because they listened and cared about them even if they had the lesser value alternative.
18. **Addiction.** This is outside the range of the normal human operating system, but it certainly exists and accounts for more sales than any of us can fathom.
19. **Fear.** Some things are bought out of fear of anything from flat tyres to personal protection.
20. **Indulgence.** Who doesn't deserve a bit of luxury now and then?

SNIPPET**At four pounds an hour, it's a bargain**

In 1997, I worked on a project to develop a website selling a series of *past times* books that featured photo-histories of UK towns and cities. Books featuring specific towns or cities were readily available in local bookshops, but our target market was ex-pats who wanted to revisit their past but could not physically return to their hometowns. The first subject city was our own – Sunderland. The office sweepstake for the country of origin for the first order had Canada and Australia as joint favourites. So it was something of a disappointment when the first online order came in from the village of Whitburn, a couple of miles up the coast from Sunderland's city centre. Contact was made with the buyer. Why had he paid full retail price plus postage for a book he could have purchased at a discounted price in a city centre shop?

On reflection, his reason was obvious – and many others in the still emerging practice of e-commerce were soon to realize it too. Our customer ran his own business and worked 7 a.m. until 7 p.m., Monday to Friday. On Saturdays he played golf. Sunday was his family day. To travel to the city centre on a weekend, park his car, walk to the shop, buy the book and return home would take at least an hour, nearer two on busy days. To this gentleman, ordering online during the evening and paying an extra £4 or so to have the book delivered to his house was a bargain. He valued his leisure time at well over £4 an hour.

Fast forward 25 years, and whilst people do bargain hunt on the web, they still value their time – and so *convenience* is still a – if not *the* – key reason for people buying online. Note that this notion predates the COVID pandemic which served to emphasize the advantages of having goods delivered.

Business to business (B2B)

Two issues are significant in B2B marketing, they are that (1) the method of both the decision-making process and the actual purchase differs from B2C, and (2) the range of products varies dramatically. The diversity of products purchased by an organization means that the marketer must be prepared to adapt their online selling to suit different product lines. However, in a similar manner to consumer markets, firms make use of the Internet in their purchasing as a source of information and, sometimes, as a transaction channel via an e-commerce site. For the majority of B2B products and services, although the organization's online presence can play a significant role in the commercial buying process, the website is rarely the medium on which the actual purchase is made. B2B buying behaviour is covered in more detail in [Chapter 7](#) which covers this and other aspects of *digital* B2B marketing.

2.3 THE ONLY WAY IS ETHICS

Strictly speaking, this section isn't really about digital marketing – but it is about the environment in which it exists and is practiced. And, ultimately, that might be more important than anything else in this book ... so if you take nothing else from it, takes this.

Access to the Internet

In the first two editions of this book I addressed the issue of folk who had no access to the Internet, concluding that;

... many governments have subsidised public Internet access in the more deprived areas of their countries (in schools and libraries, for example) because they recognised that a scenario where 'haves' had access to information that will improve their lives (e.g. through access to education or cheaper products) whereas the 'have-nots' did not – a situation often referred to as the *digital divide* – and so the have-nots would fall still further behind the haves.

In the third edition I omitted the section, partly as a word-count issue (*new* stuff meant some *old* stuff had to go) but also as I naively thought it was no longer a major issue. Well, I was proved wrong when during the COVID pandemic it became obvious that those with no – or limited – access to the web not only existed in significant numbers but were at considerable disadvantage to those with access. Although there are still some folk who choose to be without the Internet, the majority of those *have-nots* were in lower income groups – a double whammy as these were the folk who most needed to benefits offered by the web. Research by Vogels (2021) found that in the US, 24 per cent of adults with household incomes below \$30,000 a year don't own a smartphone, and 43 per cent with lower incomes have no home broadband services with 41 per cent not owning desktop or laptop computer. On a global perspective, a report from UNICEF (2020) found that at least a third of the world's schoolchildren were unable to access remote learning during school closures caused by the COVID pandemic. Similar research from the International Telecommunication Union (2021) produced similar results, suggesting that around 2.9 billion – 37 percent – of the world's population have still never used the Internet, with the vast majority – 96 per cent – of those people residing in developing countries.

According to research from Kin + Carta (2021) many folk in the UK and US still face difficulties when accessing basic online services, with nearly half (49 per cent) of people having either struggled, or know someone else who has struggled, to gain access to one or more services over the past year because of how they are offered online. This includes vital digital resources such as healthcare, education, grocery delivery and official information relating to the pandemic.

When Pew Research Center (2021) looked at use of the Internet during the COVID pandemic they found that 90 per cent of Americans said the Internet has been essential or important to them. However, despite the heavy reliance on the web, the research revealed that around 30 per cent of respondents had 'lower tech readiness' –

Table 2.4 Share of US adults with 'lower tech readiness'

<i>Age groups</i>	<i>Percentage of age group</i>
US adults	30
18–29	16
30–49	17
50–64	34
65–74	54
75+	68

saying they either were not at all or only a little confident using their computer, smartphone or other electronic device to do the things they need to do online. Although it might be expected that older users were the least tech ready, perhaps it's a little surprising that the lower age ranges had 16 per cent in this category. See [Table 2.4](#) for the full results.

With dependency on the Internet being established for education, healthcare and essential information, even those with a connection and skills to use it are still reliant on connection providers. Whilst local problems are a major cause of Internet-service failure, sometimes it is the sites themselves that are at fault. For example, the 12 months from December 2020 saw the following:

- December 2020: Gmail, YouTube, Google Drive and other Google services down for around 90 minutes.
- June 2021: Amazon, Reddit, Twitch, Github, Shopify, Spotify and several news sites down for an hour.
- July 2021: A DNS bug results in around 50 services, including: Airbnb, Expedia, Home Depot and Salesforce, to go down for an hour.
- September 2021: Thousands in the UK were left without the Internet as Virgin Media's broadband crashed.
- October 2021: Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are offline for six hours.
- Nov 2021: Tesla cars lock out their owners because of problems with the app.
- Dec 2021: An outage at Amazon Web Services (AWS) shut down Wi-Fi-connected devices in people's homes.

Source: Various news publications

Privacy

It is worth starting this section by reminding readers that data – their data – is a commodity that can be sold by those who collect and analyse it to third parties who are then free to use it as they wish. This has always been a pre-Internet business model, but the ease of collection and analysis facilitated by digital technology has increased disproportionately the potential financial benefits of the model. Indeed, for many

businesses, their brand – and stock exchange – value is built around the data it *possesses* on its customers and uses and its ability to gather more.

GO ONLINE

Follow the link on the chapter's web page to read 'These apps collect the most personal data'. Or maybe you don't want to find out who gathers what data on you? No – well try this: Amazon lets many third-party companies 'tag' people who visit its website so they can track and follow them across the web and seamlessly exchange data on them. Sorry.

Zhou and Li (2014) describe the concept of *privacy concerns* as referring to individuals' beliefs about the risks and potential negative consequences associated with sharing information. This is a reasonable place to start when considering the issue of privacy online – but what it does not do is relate to people's actions as a result of those potential negative consequences. A quick glance at the research (the majority of which is published in psychology publications rather than marketing) suggests that as the knowledge of the causes of these consequences has become more common, not only have the concerns increased, but so too have people's actions to address them. Throughout the first decade of the century, research found that although individuals had concerns about privacy, they did little to address these concerns in their online privacy management – an experience dubbed the *privacy paradox*. However, more recent research – in particular that of Baruh et al. (2017) which combined 166 studies in its survey – has suggested that those people who are informed about privacy issues have concerns which they address by using fewer online services, set stronger security settings and revealed less personal information. However, that meta-analysis by Baruh and his co-authors also revealed a new paradox in that even individuals who have concerns ignore them when it comes to social media where they seem happy to get involved in uncensored or inappropriate self-disclosure and allow a wide range of apps to access their data, so making much of their *digital footprint* available to the general public – and, significantly, both fraudster and marketers. It would seem that most of us prefer to feel safe and protected when we go online, but the perceived benefits of using free sites and disclosing personal information outweigh the perceived risks (Chamorro-Premuzic & Nahai, 2017).

SNIPPET

A poll by the Washington Post-Schar School (2021) asked respondents; *how much do you trust each of the following companies or services to responsibly handle your personal information and data on your Internet activity?* The results – shown in [Table 2.5](#) – are not encouraging for the tech sector.

Table 2.5 Trust in tech companies

Company	Trust not much/at all	Trust a great deal/a good amount	No opinion
Facebook	72	20	8
TikTok	63	12	25
Instagram	60	19	20
WhatsApp	53	15	32
YouTube	53	35	12
Google	47	48	4
Microsoft	42	43	15
Apple	40	44	16
Amazon	40	53	7

The digital footprint

At the core of people's privacy is the *digital footprint* that Internet users leave as they wander around the web. Every click; every web page they visit; every ad they are exposed to; every ad they tap on; every search they make; every email they are sent, receive, open, delete or reply to; every visit to a social media platform; every tweet they receive; every comment they make on a feedback form; everything they buy; everything they nearly buy; everything they look at but don't buy; where in the world they are when they do these things; when they do all of these things – minute, hour, day, month and year; how often they do these things; what device(s) they use to do these things is recorded. To give you just an idea of how much data we provide, try a simple exercise; keep a record of your own online activity over a week or so – just the web pages would be enough. Then study those pages to see what they would tell a marketer about you. For many people, that exercise is enough to prompt them to turn on all the privacy setting on their devices and surf anonymously.

JUST SAYIN'

'Tracking is just a prettier word for surveillance'. Bob Hoffman

JUST SAYIN'

Are you one of those folk – I'm one – who believes that your iPhone is always listening. Welllll ... the next smartphone from Qualcomm has, apparently, got an *always-on* camera.

SNIPPET

A survey commissioned by the Out of Home Advertising Association of America (OAAA) (2022) found that around three-quarters of US adults say they are concerned about privacy and the use of their personal information and online behaviour to target them with online ads.

Another simple exercise will also give you some idea of the data that people give to digital marketers every day. This data comes not from the individual, but from their mobile phone. So that many apps work, people have the device's *mobile data* setting on. This means that the owners of any app on your phone can track where the phone – and its owner – goes (Snapchat's *Snap Map* facility essentially turns the app into a tracking device, for example). So; now list everywhere you have been in the last few weeks. Having done that, review it and assess what it says about you. Shops, for example, will not only suggest your gender, age and brand loyalty but also your life-style (health food or vegetarian stores, for example). Other destinations will add to this data – a gym and a swimming pool, perhaps. It will also tell them where you live. And work. Once again, considering the data you provide to organizations might convince you to turn off the mobile data options for at least some of your apps.

You now have two examples of how/where organizations can gather data on you. Add that to information you may already have volunteered to organizations (registering on a website, for example) and any organization in the world can produce a pretty accurate profile of you. Note that this section is an introduction to the subjects of personalization and analytics.

SNIPPET

Oops

I could have included many more – but I'll settle for these two examples of personal data leakage.

April 2021: 533 million Facebook users' phone numbers and personal data leaked online.

Nov 2021: WordPress – which powers over 40 per cent of all websites – exposed the data of 1.2 million of its customers.

Source: News publications

Is help at hand?

May 2018 saw the first major initiative with regard to data protection – the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)* which had the aim of protecting all EU citizens from privacy and data breaches. It applies to all companies processing the personal data of data subjects residing in the Union, regardless of the company's location.

The US followed suit on January 1st, 2020 with the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) which applies to any business, including any for-profit entity that collects consumers' personal data, which does business in California, and satisfies at least one of certain thresholds, including:

- Has annual gross revenues in excess of \$25 million;
- Buys or sells the personal information of 50,000 or more consumers or households; or

- Earns more than half of its annual revenue from selling consumers' personal information.

Furthermore, the first two months of 2020 saw announcements that:

- The UK's regulator Ofcom was to have more authority over UK social media, including new powers for the media watchdog to force social media firms to act over harmful content.
- After announcing that it would start blocking third-party cookies on its Chrome browser from early 2022, Google delayed that decision until 2023.

However, although this augured well for a *privacy-related* future – as many have suspected – the measures are now being proved to have been largely ineffective, with profits seemingly overriding privacy issues for many of the major players in the online environment. March 2022 saw the UK government introduce – as per their press release – ‘world-first online safety laws introduced in Parliament ... new measures include tougher and quicker criminal sanctions for tech bosses and new criminal offences for falsifying and destroying data’. Later the same month the European Commission unveiled the *Digital Markets Act* which targeted the power of tech giants. Only time will tell, but for most of us it would seem that the privacy horse has long-since bolted, while politicians are still working out the best way to close the proverbial stable door.

SNIPPET

When *Privacy Shield*, the transatlantic data transfer framework was annulled by the European Court of Justice in July 2020, because of data protection violations it – effectively – meant that the data on EU citizens could not be held and processed on servers in the US. This prompted Mark Zuckerberg to consider shutting down Facebook and Instagram in Europe. There were many folk hoping that he would.

Online integrity

This section is new to this edition of the book. It is based on the premise that unethical practices will – eventually – be liabilities. The objective is not to simply offer a list of dubious actions by some of the major brands (though it may look like that), it is to raise the profile of these actions and suggest that somewhere along the line organizations might decide that they do not want to be associated with them. Currently, the branded social media platforms hold so much power in the digital world that not to have a presence on them could well be detrimental to any organization that chose to do so. But as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown, sometimes brands can make an ethical stand. I did have several high-profile examples to use here as examples of companies that have declared that they were leaving social media because of the

negative impact on mental health and posts about racial and social justice issues. However, at the time of writing (March 2022) all three had a presence on multiple social media platforms.

Stories of brands' misdemeanours abound, however – as do opinions on them. Here are a few.

- 'Alleged collusion (Facebook and Google), poor data governance (Facebook) and egregious conflicts of interest (Amazon) are among the more recent headlines about these platforms. Consequently, marketers have become cynical or numb to this cycle ... we've grown to tolerate and even expect this type of behaviour because, well, it happens a lot and the businesses we work for rely on the volume of users that are on those platforms. However, an apathy towards these issues means that they're likely to persist: if they can get away with it, they will take more of your levers away, they will rip off your products, they will find ways to make you dependent on them – because we were too busy with our work to see the larger picture or because we didn't care enough to speak out. *George Nguyen*, Editor, Search Engine Land. October 26, 2021.
- Trust in the platforms – led by Meta – has diminished (though some might argue they were never trustworthy in the first place). The basic problem lies in economic incentives. Social media companies make their money by keeping users on the platform, and the longer they stay, the more money they make through selling ads alongside the content.
- 'In a drab office building near a slum on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, nearly 200 young men and women from countries across Africa sit at desks glued to computer monitors, where they must watch videos of murders, rapes, suicides, and child sexual abuse. These young Africans work as outsourced Facebook *content moderators* they perform the brutal task of viewing and removing illegal or banned content from Facebook before it is seen by the average user' (Time, 2022).
- December 2021 saw a former content moderator file a lawsuit against TikTok, alleging inadequate safeguards to protect her mental health against a barrage of traumatic videos. Working for a third-party contracting firm called Telus International, she claimed to have witnessed acts of extreme and graphic violence, including mass shootings, child rape, animal mutilation, cannibalism, gang murder and genocide.
- HR and moral issues aside, this suggests that uploads to TikTok are far from being all fun and games.
- Reports on working conditions at Amazon seem to appear in the news so often that they are not really *news* anymore.
- Amazon destroys millions of items of unsold stock in one of its UK warehouses every year (ITV News investigation, 2021).
- In an article published in the MIT Technology Review (Basu 2021), the claim was made that 'the Metaverse has a groping problem already' when a woman beta testing a virtual element was *meta*-groped in the process. Meta – Facebook as was – chose to blame the victim, reporting that 'Meta's internal review of the incident

found that the beta tester should have used a tool called *Safe Zone* that's part of a suite of safety features ...'.

- Both Google and Bing have policies to protect children from *accidentally* being served X-rated sites on their *organic* search results. For example, a child might search on the term "Jack and Jill" to find books by that name – but there is also a legitimate company by that name which sells adult sex toys (the company also pre-dates the Internet by nearly 30 years). So, the search engines block the adult Jack and Jill site on their results pages when youngsters make that search. Full marks to them for that. However, both search engines deliver *paid-for* ads for the adult products on those SERPs ... money talks on SERPs, apparently.
- Amazon quietly removed criticism of President Xi's books by scrubbing bad reviews, ratings and comments from its Chinese site, it has emerged. The US retail giant agreed to Beijing's demand to have anything below a five-star review of Xi Jinping's book *The Governance of China* removed from Amazon.cn about two years ago. As reported by Reuters in December 2021.
- Although the methodology had a technical rather than legal or moral bias, Adalytics Research's 2021 report; *Are ad tech vendors in Europe ignoring user consent signals?* which include companies such as Amazon, Google and Yahoo suggested that; 'it did not appear that given transmission of user data are consistent with the GDPR or ePrivacy Directive, or with the IAB Europe's own Transparency & Consent Framework'.
- Research from online bank thinkmoney (2020) found that the combined terms and conditions of the 13 top apps (including TikTok and WhatsApp) contained a combined total of 128,415 words – longer than any one of the first three Harry Potter novels – and would take over 17 hours to read. Worst offender was Microsoft Teams at 18,282 words (that's longer than most university dissertations). So ... essential legal stuff, or designed to put you off reading them?
- March 2022 saw war raging in Ukraine, with countries and business taking sanctions against Russia in support of the Ukrainian people. However, as reported by Axios (2022), although Facebook had banned ads from Russian state media, the social media platform was still allowing countries close to Moscow, like China, from using their state channels to buy ads pushing a pro-Russian line.

I feel the issue of integrity in business is one that will grow in importance as time passes. I'll post more of these stories on the chapter's web page as and when they arise.

2.4 DIGITAL MARKETING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Another new subject that I think will develop over coming years; this is a look at how digital impacts the environment. I could have included the resources used in the manufacture of new devices and environmental damage caused by the disposal of old ones but felt they were too many steps removed from digital marketing. I have, however, included the disposal of waste packaging from e-commerce deliveries. As with the previous section it is difficult to write a narrative of the issues associated

with this subject – so, again, I’m presenting it as a series of short articles. Some are referenced, others taken from the news media. I wonder how long it will be – not *if* – before organizations will strive for low kilobyte websites as part of a *green* agenda.

- ‘Digital is electrical. When you are typing, your device is using electricity, when you press send it goes through network, it takes electricity to run network. It’s going to end up being stored in cloud, and those data centres use a lot of electricity’ (Tim Berners Lee).
- ‘E-waste is a huge emerging topic intersecting digital rights and the environment. E-waste also includes aspects of bad electronic and software engineering such as bloated web design, bad product design, fast delivery e-commerce’ (Dr Andy Farnell).
- A single Bitcoin transaction is estimated to burn electricity enough to power a typical US household for over 78 days (De Vries & Stoll, 2021).
- In the US alone data centres consumed an estimated 174 billion gallons of water in 2020.
- In addition to overall data centre growth, demand for cooling is being driven by new applications like machine learning, cryptocurrency mining and Internet of Things devices. Artificial intelligence workloads make extensive use of power-hungry graphics processing units and AI training algorithms can require days of heavy processing (datacenterfrontier.com).
- Media websites: 70 per cent of the Carbon Footprint is Caused by Ads and Stats (marmelab.com).
- Amazon’s plastic packaging waste could encircle the globe 500 times. Most of the packaging isn’t recycled and ends up in the ocean (zmescience.com).
- Leading ocean protection organization, Oceana, analysed e-commerce packaging data and found that Amazon generated 599 million pounds of plastic packaging waste in 2020 (Oceana 2021).
- ‘In the past decade, average web page weight has grown a whopping 356 percent, from an average of about 484 kilobytes to 2,205 kilobytes’ (HTTP Archive 2021).
- A website’s overall impact is minor, as is the effect of a single plastic bag. It makes no difference if there are one or two more. Isn’t it simply a plastic bag? We all know now that it’s not about just one plastic bag (or one website) – it’s the impact of millions of plastic bags, millions of websites. However, restrictions are starting to appear for plastic, a tangible and visible material, which the bulk of the Internet stays hidden (with no restrictions) (css-irl.info).
- November 2021. The French Senate passed a law that aims to reduce the environmental footprint of digital technology, which includes an obligation for French telcoms operators to disclose to the public what they are doing to this end.
- A thousand words of text weigh about 7 kB. A single photo that you take on your smartphone can weigh 3–10 MB. A one-and-a-half-minute video taken on your smartphone can weigh 200 MB or more (digitalwasteaudit.com).

- There are more than 70 data centres in Ireland with around 25 per cent of all centres in Europe now based in Dublin. At present, they use 11 per cent of Ireland's electricity grid capacity ([irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com)).
- Roughly 4.5 GB of data will be sent across the Internet if 20 people join a Microsoft Teams video call for 1 hour, all with their webcams broadcasting Standard Definition video. This doubles if everyone broadcasts HD video. If the University delivers 50 online lectures or virtual staff meetings like this every day, between 225 and 550 GB of data will be sent across the Internet. It is estimated that transferring 1 GB of data generates 3 kg of carbon. So, 225 GB of data generates 675 kg of carbon. A London to New York flight generates roughly 0.67 tons of carbon per passenger (Ayala Gordon, Southampton University).
- 5G will generate 7 billion tonnes of CO₂ – a sharp increase in power consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, according to a report just published by France's High Council on Climate (The Guardian).

Cloud software company Domo (2021) produces an annual report (drawn from numerous sources) on the amount of data generated every minute of every day. [Table 2.6](#) shows the results for 2020. The range of measurements used make

Table 2.6 How much data is generated every minute of every day?

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Data usage per minute</i>
Amazon	Ships 6,659 packages
Consumers spend	1,000,000 dollars
Doordash	555 diners' orders
Facebook	Users upload 47,000 photos
Facebook	Users share 150,000 messages
Instagram	Clicks on business profile ads 138,889
Instagram	347,222 user posts
LinkedIn	Users apply for 69,444 jobs
Microsoft Teams	Connect 52,083 users
Netflix	404,444 user streams
People make video/voice calls	1,388,889
Spent on mobile apps	3,805 dollars
Spotify	Adds 28 tracks to its music library
TikTok	Is installed 2,704 times
Twitter	319 new users
Venmo	Users send 239,196 dollars worth of payments
WhatsApp	Users share 4,666,667 messages
YouTube	500 hours of video
Zoom	Hosts 208,333 participants in meetings
Reddit	479,452 people engage with content

comparisons impossible, but there are some high – some might say frightening – numbers presented.

One of the most outspoken people on this subject is Gerry McGovern. Here are a few of his comments taken from a variety of publications. If you have an interest in this subject (you all should have) I suggest you follow his work online.

- Be very, very careful about Big Tech bearing gifts of technology, claiming that they will save the world. Technology has only ever increased overall energy consumption. It is because of the overuse of technology that we have a climate crisis.
- An average router consumes 6 watts of electricity an hour. Leaving a router on for a year creates about 24 kg of CO₂. If you switch your router off for an average of 8 hours a day, that's the equivalent of planting one tree.
- Residents of Bluffdale, Utah, face water shortages and power shortages as a result of the nearby Utah Data Center – a facility of the US National Security Agency (NSA) that uses seven million gallons of water daily (yes, every day) to operate.
- As content designers, we need to ensure that every piece of content we create has the lowest possible energy consumption. Text is the greenest way to create content. Video is the most polluting.
- Green designer: We can't be sustainable because we have to promote the brand, we have to be original. How to be original: every single *green* [focussed] website has huge image of earth. Such irony. They all have same wasteful branding because branding is why we have a climate crisis.
- The end of 2021 saw the viral rise of Wordle. Well, after it was commercialized by the New York Times, each game uses 730 kB of JavaScript and there's another 1,360 kB of JavaScript for the ads and tracking.
- 32 billion trees would have to be planted every year to offset the pollution caused by unread attachments, unread email and spam.
- I came across a piece of code that automatically changes the copyright year. That code adds a third of a second to the download time for every page, every day. Code only used once a year. In tech, whatever the question is, automation is always the answer.
- The Cloud is on the ground. Digital is physical, electrical. Digital has weight and the impact of digital on the environment is getting heavier every year.
- Three billion trees are pulped every year to produce 241 million tons of shipping cartons, cardboard mailers, void-fill wrappers, and other paper-based packaging.
- Ninety per cent of data is waste. In more than 25 years of working with some of the largest organizations in the world, this has been my consistent experience. Data management is amateur to non-existent.
- The philosophy of practically every organization is to collect everything – we'll sort it out later, and anyway it's cheap to store. As a consequence, many organizations have no idea how much data they have. In fact, many organizations have no idea how much technology they have.

- There's about 1.8 billion websites out there. One website for every four people on the planet. Digital has opened the floodgates of crap. Enormous, unbelievable quantities of crap. Data centres are really very expensive and very polluting Data Dumps.
- 90 per cent of data is not used three months after it's created.
- 95 per cent of apps are not used three months after they're downloaded.
- 91 per cent of Web content is not indexed by Google, which means that it's essentially invisible.
- We need a new culture when it comes to data. One that is frugal. One that is conscious that a byte saved is a leaf saved, that one less byte is one less unit of energy, one less piece of stress on a physical device.

I will add to this list on the chapter's web page as and when I come across any interesting stuff.

FURTHER READING

For additional content and links to articles and stories that supplement, enhance and update this chapter of the book, go to its web page on AlanCharlesworth.com/DigitalMarketing.



CHAPTER EXERCISE

Discuss the following quote from German theologian, Dorothee Sölle:

Technology no longer serves as a tool to improve human life, but to prostitute to the drive for profits. Greed drives technology as businesses compete to develop new technologies in order to generate more profits.

This could have been said this week, but it's actually difficult to date. However, given that Frau Sölle died in 2003 it does not refer to current shenanigans at the likes of Meta, Google, Amazon et al.

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Chapter 3

Marketing goes digital

Chapter at a glance

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Digital isn't the only option
- 3.3 Non-marketers in digital marketing
- 3.4 In-house or out-source?
- 3.5 Fads, trends, next big things and the occasional sustainable model
- 3.6 Digital marketing objectives

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Before considering the key elements of online marketing in detail in the following chapters, there are some concepts and practices which have relevance to some or every element of the digital marketing mix, and rather than trying to incorporate each of these issues in to each section in every chapter to which they're relevant, these holistic elements are addressed in this chapter.

Before that, some research from CRM platform provider HubSpot (2021) which gives an interesting view of marketing in 2021 and so makes for a good starting point for studying the various aspects of digital marketing with respondents being from a range of both B2C and B2B organizations of various sizes. The results are shown in [Tables 3.1](#) and [3.2](#).

Table 3.1 Organizations' primary approach to marketing

<i>Primary approach</i>	<i>Percentage of organizations</i>	<i>Primary approach</i>	<i>Percentage of marketers</i>
SEO	78	TV ads	20
Website	40	Inbound marketing	18
Account-based marketing	37	Tradeshows	12
Content creation	32	Outdoor ads	12
Targeted social ads	28	Cold calling	4
Generating referrals	21	Other	3

At first glance, there does seem to be more than a little of online bias with only one offline channel being listed in the *channel* findings. Although social media tops both the approach and channel charts, digging deeper into the report reveals that the primary tactic (62 per cent of respondents) for the use of social media in marketing is social *listening*, not *engagement*. If we were to exclude the *listening* marketers from social media in this data (note that I include social listening in the chapter on metrics and analytics) then social media drops down the table significantly in *approach* and *channels* – leaving SEO and website as the front runners ... the first two 'subject' chapters of this book. It also leaves email in a high spot, something I emphasize in my chapter on the subject.

Although there are a number of channels that surprised me – the high use of Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, for example – it is the absenteers that are most notable. Influencers and TikTok immediately spring to mind. I also find it interesting – and more than a little pleasing – that HubSpot hold similar views to me on the classification of the various element of digital marketing, in particular, that only advertising is identified as such (i.e. search, display and social media) and not included with other practices (e.g. SEO and marketing on social media). Similarly, I also find it interesting that SEO and content are separate in the *approach* chart, but combined in *channels*. I take this as an indication that it is accepted that content development/marketing is accepted as an element of SEO – as I do in [Chapter 4](#).

Table 3.2 Channels used in marketing

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Percentage of marketers</i>	<i>Channel</i>	<i>Percentage of marketers</i>
Social media	81	Events and tradeshows	32
Website	80	Facebook Messenger	25
Email marketing	62	Customer user group	20
Content marketing and SEO	42	WhatsApp	18
Paid social	38	Other	2
Search/display ads	35		

Anyhoo ... if we consider HubSpot's data purely in relation to this book, it does give an indication of the use of digital channels. The report also highlights that few of these channels are *stand alone*, with several being used in sync with others, e.g. content marketing can be used to direct customers to a website or engage on social media.

3.2 DIGITAL ISN'T THE ONLY OPTION

Although it may seem strange in a book on digital marketing written by someone who has been an advocate of the discipline for over 25 years, but marketers should always be aware that *digital* is just one aspect of marketing. Indeed, in the main, it is only one element of the promotional mix. Too often, digital marketing in general, and social media marketing in particular, are mistakenly perceived as; (a) the only route to market, and (b) a panacea that will improve bad marketing in other channels.

Certainly, *digital* has revolutionized some industries in a way unimaginable before the Internet came along. For example, who books a hotel or flight anywhere else other than online these days? Similarly, for some products and services, the web plays an essential part in consumers' purchase decision-making process. However, for many products, if the marketer puts them in the right place at the right time at the right price then customers will buy them – the ongoing success of Aldi and Lidl (neither of which sell online) is evidence of this. If you doubt this notion, try this simple exercise that I asked my students to complete in the first week of my digital marketing modules. List all of your purchases – of products and services – over the last week or month (longer is better) and divide that list into two sections: (1) those where the Internet played a part, and (2) where the Internet played no part. Some will fall clearly into the first section.

SNIPPET

Online goes offline for advertising

According to analytics firm Nielsen (as reported on [Marketingweek.com](https://www.marketingweek.com) in September 2021) online-born businesses (defined as those which began online, with no prior bricks and mortar presence) invested £559.9 million in TV advertising in the UK between January and July 2021, a £151 million boost. Collectively, these businesses now account for 20 per cent of all linear TV ad spend, ahead of food (10.1 per cent), finance (8.5 per cent) and entertainment and leisure (7.2 per cent).

Online purchases, obviously, and products that you research online – though you will find these are *normally* of a higher price and are not regular purchases. Then there are some that could fall in either list. For example, you might visit a restaurant purely on spec or you may have searched for a restaurant on Google if you were not in your home town. However, it will normally be the list in category number two that will be longest. If you are still a doubter, your *non-Internet* list will include things such as: *anything* from the university cafe, *anything* from an on-campus vending machine, fuel for your car, that ice cream on a hot day or the bottle of water on your

walk, milk or some fruit from the local shop. Or what about *every* item of groceries you have bought – be it from corner shop or supermarket? Staying with your grocery list – have you *ever* visited the website of the company that makes or processes *any* of those products? Or do you follow them on social media? And then there is your hair-dresser, or the car wash, or that little shop on the high street that sells all kinds of craft accessories. Indeed, every shop that is not part of a national chain. Yes, of course there will be exceptions – but hopefully my examples will have encouraged you to give the concept of *digital isn't the only option* some thought.

SNIPPET

Are all grocery sales going online?

1. A report on research from Boukarroum (2021) led with; 'Ecommerce will account for over 20 per cent of U.S. grocery sales by 2025'. Perhaps that should be 'Ecommerce will account for *only* 20 per cent of U.S. grocery sales by 2025'.
2. Lidl targets opening 1,100 stores in Great Britain by the end of 2025 (PR release, November 2021). Lidl does not sell online.

Furthermore, if you are a student it is unlikely that you will have had experience of buying in a B2B context – though some readers may well be working in such an environment. Again, for some industries, products or services the Internet has changed the mode of trading completely – but for others *offline* is still where business is done. In the B2B environment there is often a relationship between the buyer and seller that exists offline. If I was a buyer for Tesco, for example, I would expect sellers – with whom I might be spending millions of pounds each week – to show me a little more respect than communicating with me only via email or Facebook. Similarly, in some industries there will be a limited number of sellers of specialized products – so as I have their phone number, I don't need to do a search on Google.

JUST SAYIN'

Google, Amazon and Facebook are the three biggest providers of online advertising ... and yet they (are reputed to) have spent nearly \$1 billion on TV ads.

GO ONLINE

Marketing isn't about social media or advertising; that's part of Marketing but you need to start way further back than that. Otherwise, in the long run, you'll fail

Samuel Brealey

The article from which this quote comes is well worth a read – it'll only take you a couple of minutes. It mirrors my experience with micro businesses.

As Michael Porter famously said; ‘The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do’. I’ll go a step further and say that the elements you choose to implement must be done effectively and efficiently. And if that was easy, no business would ever fail.

I’ll finish the section with a quiz that will – hopefully – help make my point. For Christmas 2021, which promotion: ...

- Was in the top 2 per cent of all UK ads on its level of persuasion?

And in a survey ...

- Had 81 per cent choose ‘I love it’ from a six-point likeability rating?
- Had almost half say they would visit the brand’s website – rising to 95 per cent amongst customers?
- Had 37 per cent say they would visit a shop – rising to 90 per cent for customers?
- Had more than a third say they would talk to their friends and family about the brand, rising to 90 per cent among customers?

The answer?

It was Hotel Chocolat’s *paper* catalogue, delivered to people’s houses in the post. Perhaps it was successful *because* it wasn’t digital?

EXERCISE

As an extension of the ‘everything you bought list’, here’s a sort-of home-work task. When you’re next in or around the following places, take a look around at everything that has been purchased (e.g. machinery, tools, equipment ... and the components in each item) and consider the role that *online* might have played in their marketing (hint; a lot of it might be zero).

1. A construction site.
2. A hospital.
3. An airport (land and air-side).

3.3 NON-MARKETERS IN DIGITAL MARKETING

Since the birth of online marketing (1994, in my opinion) there has always been a variance between marketers and IT staff/computer scientists. My argument – as a marketer – is that *digital* is a platform for marketing messages, and so it is a *marketing* discipline. To be *really* successful in the digital environment there needs to be cohesion – team work – between the two skill sets. However, the technical nature of some aspects of digital marketing has led to those roles being taken by workers from computer science backgrounds – so creating a situation where there are a lot of people working as *digital marketers* who do not know even the fundamentals of

marketing. These people may well be good, excellent even, at one aspect of digital marketing, but they do not appreciate how that element is – or should be – an integral part of wider on- and offline strategies.

SNIPPET

Right skills – wrong place

The following are a couple of samples from folk offering web design/development services. I've selected them pretty much at random – there are thousands of similar examples out there.

1. At ***** we pride ourselves on knowing as much about IT as possible. Because we have a very broad knowledge of IT hardware and software we can diagnose hardware and software problems quickly as we are able to make logical assumptions on ... network installations, online data backup, security and surveillance, antivirus protection, laptop/PC repairs, software solutions – custom database design, custom windows based applications, custom web based applications. We are ... Associate Members of the Institution of Analysts and Programmers.
2. I am freelance website designer. During the day I work for ***** developing backend and frontend functionality for both the main site and microsites. I have a general broad knowledge of Dreamweaver, Photoshop, HTML, CSS, JQuery, WordPress, PHP & MySQL.

I'm sure these folk are skilled at their chosen careers. But those careers are not in marketing. The web presence of any organization, brand or product is part of its marketing, not its IT department.

The fault is not wholly one-sided, however. In the early days of the web, too many marketers eschewed the new media – mainly for *fear* of computers because they knew little about them or what they could do – and were happy to let the IT department control the organization's web presence. The realization by the successful online businesses (the likes of Amazon and eBay) that to be effective you need input from both technical staff *and* marketers had – too slowly – filtered down to some *lesser* organizations when another, related, problem came to be recognized by *some* of those with status in the discipline. Sadly, the situation is getting worse because non-marketers are being promoted to positions of *Digital Managers*, or even *Marketing Managers*. Furthermore, as was the case at the end of the last century and into this one, computer scientists in marketing posts will invariably produce tactics and strategies that are led by technology – not by the needs of the customer. Similarly, these *experts* are finding jobs writing about digital marketing – though normally online rather than in books, so a new generation is growing up learning that little or no marketing knowledge is okay to work in digital marketing. That's a situation that's unlikely to end happily for everyone involved. As Seth Godin said in his influential

book, Meatball Sundae (2007); ‘New marketing isn’t about technology any more than fast food (and the drive-through window) is about cars’. That said, marketers must accept that too many of their number have shown little enthusiasm to learning the *very* basics of digital technology.

SNIPPET

This quote is from author, marketer and man of wisdom, Bob Hoffman. Regular readers of his will appreciate that ‘wisdom’ could carry the prefix; ‘marketing’.

There is a battle going on for the soul of marketing. It is a struggle between two competing forces – technology and wisdom. Not all technology is the province of the young and not all wisdom comes with age. But, as a rule, tech is the territory of youth, wisdom the territory of maturity.

In the world of marketing, the conflict between technology and wisdom has been no contest. All it takes is a quick stroll through the halls of any marketing or advertising enterprise and it becomes immediately apparent which side has won. In the US today, 42 per cent of the adult population is over 50. But in the advertising industry only 6 per cent of employees are over 50.

The result is that the marketing industry is drowning in technology and starving for wisdom. Technology, left unbalanced by wisdom, is currently responsible for some of the most wasteful, idiotic, and ineffectual follies in the history of commerce.

The question of *what are digital marketing skills* was intrinsic to research by Altimeter (2020) which looked at what organizations said were the *most desirable digital marketing skills*. The answer was less than half of them were marketing – so *kind-of* supporting my contention in this issue. That one was actually top of the list (which I’m kind-of okay with – it is a chapter in this book) but given the other skills listed I have to wonder if analytical skills were on the more computer science side of that discipline (I cover this in [Chapter 11](#)). The majority of the skills listed are not marketing per se, they are *technical* (see [Table 3.3](#)). Do get me wrong – these skills are required for effective digital marketing, but the emphasis is on *digital*, not *marketing* – which may well result in folk with these skills moving into marketing management positions without knowing anything about marketing. The survey’s respondents also kind-of suggest that I’m on the right track – or that they are on the wrong one. You see, the research also asked *what were the top goals of their digital marketing*, which were: brand awareness, lead generation and customer experience – none of which would be in the education, experience or skill set of the top eight most

Table 3.3 The most desirable digital marketing skills 2020–2021

<i>Skills</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Data analysis	X ✓ *	42
Marketing automation/software expertise	X	39
UX experience	X	37
Graphic design	X	33
Video production and editing	X	32
Content editing and writing	✓	28
Coding development	X	27
Program/project management	X	21
Social media listening, publishing and advertising	✓	19
SEO/SEM expertise	✓	12

* Depending on the interpretation of the job specification.

desirable digital marketing skills. And the top metrics for *measuring digital marketing success*? Customer loyalty and Customer Lifetime Value – both of which require expertise in strategic and tactical marketing. On the plus side, the *best performing channel for digital marketing channels* was social media – skill in which came in at number nine in the research. I’m also going to add that the survey sample was 476 senior digital marketing executives across the US, Europe and China with over 1,000 employees. I wonder how many of them were from backgrounds in computer science or marketing? Or neither?

Linking this section with the previous one is input from teacher, author, speaker and marketing expert, Mark Ritson. On the subject of non-marketers in marketing; when a practicing digital marketer published a blog article entitled *24 Marketers You Should Follow on Twitter*, Ritson took a look at the background of the 24 named *marketers*. He found that only four had any formal marketing training or education. Ritson’s subsequent article in [Marketingweek.com](https://www.marketingweek.com) caused something of a furore amongst the non-marketing marketers – but then it would, wouldn’t it? This is not the only time Ritson has been outspoken on the subject. In another article (follow the link on the chapter’s web page to read it in full) he says;

50 per cent of marketers have no formal training in marketing. The worst part? Some think it’s something to be proud of.

And

The obsession with communications is one example of a lack of training, as most untrained marketers think marketing is just communications – but comms represents about eight percent of the total [marketing] challenge. Communications is a quarter of a third of marketing or about eight percent. And if you want to obsess

about *digital* communications only – as so many ignorant marketers do – then you have to halve that number because it only represents about 50 percent of current advertising spend, so four percent.

Ouch!

SNIPPET

The more you know about tech the less you know about people. And knowing about tech but not people is essentially useless. Or worst still, misleading.

Source: Tom Goodwin on Twitter March 2022

A final comment for this section is that I do not think that colleges and universities are the only places to gain marketing knowledge and skills. There are many courses out there which can do the same (some even use this book). Many are certified – the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) in the UK would be one. As a caveat, I would add the old saying; you get what you pay for. Free courses are free for a reason, and good courses are not free. But then, you can pay a lot of money for courses that are rubbish – so do your due diligence before signing up.

GO ONLINE

For a thoughtful and much wider consideration of this topic, follow the link from the chapter's web page to read Tom Roach's *Modern Marketing Myopia: Is Marketing Losing Perspective?*

The aforementioned Dr Ritson has lots of stuff on online, all of which is worth a read or watch. Not only is he knowledgeable, experienced and informative, but entertaining also. He also swears a lot, so beware if you're sensitive to bad language. I've links to a few.

For an alternative view on this subject – and that in the previous section – take a look at the Twitter Marketing group on that platform. I'm afraid I don't know whether to laugh or cry when I read some of the posts. I'll add the caveat that such is the nature of social media that some of these experts are looking only to increase their followers, and so often make outlandish comments. Sadly, others take the comments as advice which will forward their careers.

EXERCISE

Having read the stuff I have advised in this section ... discuss.

3.4 IN-HOUSE OR OUT-SOURCE?

Common in all aspects of organizational management is an issue which reoccurs throughout the book because it is relevant to every subject is whether the organization has employees who can complete the task *in-house* or whether the work needs to be *out-sourced* to other businesses and/or individuals that specialize in that particular task. Similarly, the task might not require *full-time* attention (few organizations employ solicitors as part of its permanent staff, for example), or the work – particularly services – can be completed at a lower price by an outside company rather than employees whose cost is more than simply their wages (cleaning, for example). It's worth noting here that many of this book's readers will, eventually, work for these service providers rather than the larger *employing* organizations. Such is the nature of the skills required in digital marketing – a combination of specialized marketing and technical – it is not uncommon for *digital* work to be out-sourced to specialist agencies or individuals. Indeed, every subject area in this book has *digital* specialists who will undertake the work for micro, small, large, national or global organizations. The early days of marketing on the Internet saw just about every task being out-sourced to the then small number of people who knew what they were doing in the new discipline. An obvious issue is that many of those tasks required *technical* expertise – a significant reason for the problem of non-marketers in digital marketing presented in the previous section.

JUST SAYIN'

Many so-called digital marketers often promote the ability of software to automate personalization.

I say that's a kind of oxymoron.

Discuss.

However, as time has passed these *specialist* skills have become more accessible to marketing staff – indeed, many of the people will be reading this book in order to gain at least the basics of the marketing-based skills. At the same time, developments in software have resulted in the necessary technical expertise being *relatively* easily gained by users who have not studied computer science. Similarly, since the advent of the Internet, a whole generation has grown up using computers as an integral part of their lives – and so the computing skills that were so rare in the 1990s are now commonplace in *Millennials* and *Generation Z*. For the newcomer to digital marketing a clue to how common out-sourcing is in various subjects is to check how many agencies exist in the subject. A quick web search will show a multitude of agencies offering digital advertising, web design, email marketing, search engine optimization, e-commerce and analytics – with more specialized subdivisions of those disciplines. If they exist then it is reasonable to assume that there is a demand for the skills provided by those companies.

3.5 FADS, TRENDS, NEXT BIG THINGS AND THE OCCASIONAL SUSTAINABLE MODEL

Since the birth of marketing on the Internet, *digital* has been home to a whole host of new ideas, models and concepts, most sporting an acronym or label to show how *trendy* they are. Some have stood the test of time; others never got off the ground.

Most cross-over the various elements of digital marketing and so some of the most commonly known are included here. Note that if anything new crops up during the lifetime of this edition of the book, I'll add it to the chapter's web page.

Personalization

The term *personalization* describes the models, concepts and actions that meet the philosophy of the concept that each customer – be that an individual or organization – can receive a marketing message that is bespoke to that individual or organization. That is, the marketing is *personalized* to him, her or it (an organization) rather than being *broadcast* to a wide audience – some of who will have no interest in that message. Within the field of digital marketing, personalization can be applied to websites, email, advertising and search engine optimization and can include recommendations, promotions and pricing and is made possible by a combination of digital metrics and analytics (which are covered in [Chapter 11](#)). Personalization is, in effect, the concept of *segmentation, targeting and positioning* (STP). However, whilst in the traditional application of the model it is difficult to narrow the constituent parts to specific individuals, the Internet, mobile technology and the availability of data has made it possible – *theoretically* – for segments of *one* to be targeted.

In basic website personalization, artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms can analyse the geographic location of users and how they arrived on the site before personalizing content. A retailer chain, for example, might personalize its home page to show where the nearest *physical* store is to the user and if they have arrived on the site from Google after searching for a brand-name product they are shown promotions for that brand. However, such is the broad scope of applications of personalization and so wide is the range of tools available to achieve it, it is rarely identified as a strategic objective in itself.

As all those who do or have worked in a sales environment will testify, one-to-one personal service is the most effective way to sell something. It is, however, extremely resource intensive – and so as a result, expensive. Which is fine if you are selling high-ticket items like cars, not so if you are selling fast moving consumer goods like bread. So it was that when the commercial Internet was gaining popularity in the mid-1990s some commentators predicted that the new medium would provide a platform where sellers could communicate with buyers on an individual basis with each customer having their own personal interaction with the vendor – something that many consider to be the Holy Grail for marketers. That communication – or *touch-point* – could be in person, on a website, in an advert, in an email or via social media.

However, offline the seller can ask pertinent questions of the customer and by listening to the answers can (if they are any good at their job) provide a product that will meet the needs of that customer – resulting in satisfaction all round. Online, the idea is that by their very actions online (for example; websites visited, search terms used in search engines, products viewed and/or bought, discussions on social media) the customer indicates their interests and buying preferences.