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## Digital Marketing and its Role in Customer Engagement

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### Abstract:

The study aims to evaluate and measure the impact of digital marketing (DM) (learning-engagement-communication-retention-attraction) on customer engagement (CE), as digital marketing has become a crucial practice influencing sales and purchasing behaviors both locally and nationally. The primary aim of the research is to determine if electronic marketing tactics, by transforming the product into a numerical representation, fulfil customer satisfaction or lack added value. Consequently, Electronic marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing and supporting electronic enterprises. The investigation involved a cohort of 45 clients, including individuals who interacted with the company and those who did not employ electronic marketing strategies during the 2022/2023 timeframe. Drawing from the findings and analysis of the hypothesis, it is recommended to implement innovative strategies to engage customers online, employing promotional techniques to draw traffic to the website, ensuring customer involvement in advertising initiatives, and emphasising the importance of customer retention. Engaging existing clients and endeavouring to attract new clientele by establishing communication channels.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Customer Engagement.

### Introduction

Telecommunications companies in Iraq today face the challenges of competition and a set of variables at the local and international levels, including (technological progress, trade liberalization, openness policy, and the removal of restrictions on investment). This means the need to keep pace with developments, use modern management systems, and seek survival and continuity in the work environment. Accordingly, managers of various departments, especially marketing managers, seek to investigate data and process it into information that can be relied upon when making decisions. They often seek to monitor information about customers, competitors, distributors, and the market so that they have a clear vision for making appropriate marketing decisions. Therefore, the empty research aims to identify the role of digital marketing in customer immersion from the reality of Asia Cell Mobile Communications Company in the Middle Euphrates region - Iraq.

### Literature Review

#### 1. Digital Marketing

Many business organizations today have started using the Internet in their marketing activities, (Ngai, 2003: 24). The rapid development and growth in contemporary media (radio and television, increased Internet users, and mobile phones) has planted a firm belief among individuals and organizations working in the field of marketing in the ability of digital tools to open new markets that are completely different from existing traditional markets by relying on digital technology and the Internet.

(Ryan, 2014: 5. Kotler & Keller, 2006: 493) defined digital marketing as all efforts made by the organization to inform and communicate with buyers and promote and sell its products

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through digital channels. As for the researchers Koko & Koelane, 2013: 3100)), they defined it as the process of promoting products using digital distribution channels to reach consumers at the right time, in a personal and effective manner.

### Dimensions of Digital Marketing

The researcher adopted the model (Zeisser, 1996:8) as it is the most accepted and widespread in determining the dimensions of digital marketing, which are (communication, attraction, participation, learning, and retention). The subsequent section provides a detailed explanation of each of these dimensions:

1. **Attraction:** The attraction method involves establishing the organization's brand by prominently featuring its name or referencing it on a designated URL or webpage online. This serves to reinforce the organization's name and facilitates customer access to its brand, as these sites are apparent to customers and play a crucial role in drawing them to the organization's website. The global Hyatt Hotels chain is accessible via the website [www.hyatt.com](http://www.hyatt.com) (Teo & Tan 2002:260).
2. **Communication:** The process involves the transfer of information and mutual understanding between individuals (Fred & Lunenburg, 2010: 1). Once the organisation acquires the customers' private information, the focus will shift to the subsequent phase in the digital marketing process, which involves interaction and communication. Providing customers with added value and the capability to launch products while swiftly gauging reactions is a critical marketing opportunity that enhances customer value. The Internet serves as a key digital tool in facilitating and achieving effective communication (Carpenter, 2000: 40).
3. **Participation (Customer Engagement):** Innovative programs that offer interactive media that are beneficial to consumers can be advantageous to business organisations. Java programs and animations are examples of these programs that can capture the customer's attention, in addition to the direct interaction and communication that the organization's website, virtual communities, and forums provide with the customer and among customers (Teo & Tan 2002: 260-261).
4. **Learning (Identifying Customer Preferences):** A number of methods exist, such as web page monitoring devices, for determining what consumers want and need (Teo & Tan 2002: 262). In order to develop a strong online reputation for a company, one must pay close attention to what consumers want and how they want it implemented on the company's website (Carpenter, 2000: 40-41).
5. **Retention:** Organisations aim to cultivate profitable and enduring customer relationships by focussing on customer retention and promoting repeat purchases on their websites. Consequently, a crucial aspect that the organisation must consider when implementing digital marketing strategies is the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships with customers. This endeavour necessitates consistent commitments and resources over the long term (Teo & Tan 2002: 261).

### 2. Customer Engagement

Because of the increased recognition that consumers are co-creators of value, marketing practitioners and researchers have focused a lot of attention on the subject of customer involvement in recent years. Companies are searching for ways to engage with their customers in a mutually beneficial way in order to maximise the value that both the company and the consumer receive, as they realise that customer experiences contribute significant value to the business. Customer involvement is now a crucial part of a successful marketing plan as a result, it is a mental process in which new customers are developed and old customers are retained and loyal to a particular brand (Kuzgun, 2012: 4). Originally proposed in the context of human resource management as a psychological relationship to improve

employee loyalty, scholars have recently discovered the construction of customer engagement from a marketing perspective as the psychological relationships of a customer with a particular brand. The psychological relationship enables the customer to deal with a particular brand and become more loyal to it. Therefore, maintaining customer engagement is strategically essential to increase the number of loyal customers as they have a fundamental role in building value for most companies. The concept of customer engagement expands the scope of relationship marketing with its focus on the interactive relationship and perceived values. Customer engagement is viewed as a multidimensional concept that embodies customers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in interacting with a brand (Wei et al., 2013: 317). Thompson defined it as the level of emotional connection between companies and their customers. (Thompson, 2018: 11).

### The Importance of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is of great importance. Dovaliene et al. (2015) asserted that customer engagement is influenced by three primary axes: the mental state, active and sustained cognitive processing, and the guarantee of effective and experiential value, emotional connection, pleasure and satisfaction.

### Dimensions of Customer Engagement

There are three dimensions of customer engagement: (cognitive or perceptual dimension, emotional dimension, behavioral dimension), and these dimensions are the most common. The researcher adopted the scale (Okel & Ross, 2018: 10-11) and the reason for adopting this scale is that it is more comprehensive than other scales. Below is an explanation of the dimensions of this scale:

1. **Behavioral Dimension:** (Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015: 655) defined it as "the level of mental flexibility of the customer during interaction with the company or with the brand and other customers." As for (Chan et. al., 2014: 84), he defined it as "the intensive participation of the individual and his relationship with the company's offers and activities." It is also "the behavioral appearance on the part of the customer towards a brand or company that goes beyond purchasing behavior," as it reflects the customer's desire to devote energy, time and strive to participate in business activities. This dimension is known as positive behavior and participation in practical tasks, and it is represented by directing the individual's energy to complete a specific task (Guo et al., 2015: 2).
2. **Emotional Dimension:** It is a psychological state in which interest, care and effort for a specific task are also an important factor behind motivation and success in achieving the task, as the emotional dimension has a "direct positive effect on motivation" and an "indirect positive effect on academic success", and emotional Engagement leads to motivating the customer towards the company's activities, and is one of the most important predictors of success (Özhan & Kocadere, 2019: 5). This dimension was defined as "a sense of importance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge, and belonging towards the company or brand" (Symonds & Hargreaves, 2016: 6).
3. **Cognitive Dimension:** Ravindran et. al., (2005: 223) defined this dimension as "the customer's ability to mentally resist in his interaction with employees," Individuals' motivation depends on many factors, including the belief that the individual possesses the cognitive skills necessary for marketing. Comprehension refers to a complete and deep focus on dealing with the company (Cheung et. al., 2011: 3).

### Methodology

#### 1. Questions of the study problem

- a. Does the company's management have a clear picture of the concept and dimensions of "digital marketing"?

- b. Does the company's management have sufficient knowledge of "digital marketing" tools and how to use them?
- c. Does it enhance customer engagement with the company as a result of its use of "digital marketing"?
- d. Is there a trend among the company's management to adopt the dimensions of "digital marketing"?
- e. Is there a relationship and influence between "digital marketing" and customer engagement with the company?

## 2. Importance of the research

- a. Demonstrating the role of "digital marketing" in enhancing customer engagement with telecommunications companies.
- b. Telecom companies' adoption of "digital marketing" contributes to improving the quality of service provided to the customer, which is positively reflected in enhancing customer engagement.
- c. Benefit from the conclusions reached by the study and the recommendations consistent with it.

1. **Research objectives:** Our study seeks to achieve several objectives, namely:

- a. Determine the level of adoption of "digital marketing" in the company.
- b. Diagnosing the nature of the relationship between digital marketing and customer engagement with the company.
- c. Diagnosing the impact and contribution of "digital marketing" and its dimensions in customer engagement with the company.

## 4. Research model

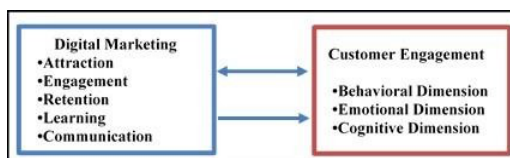


Figure (1) Research model

## 5. Research hypotheses

- a. **H<sup>1</sup>:** There is a significant positive correlation between digital marketing and achieving customer engagement.
- b. **M<sup>2</sup>:** There is a significant positive impact of the digital marketing system in achieving customer engagement.

## Results

### 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

The descriptive statistics provide information on the mean, standard error, and standard deviation of the variables. It can give the researcher an idea about the participant's responding to a questionnaire items. The descriptive statistics using SPSS V.29 of each variable can be seen as follow:

#### a. Descriptive Statistics of the Digital Marketing

Table 1 presents a summary of M, SE and SD, of the (DM). "The frequency distribution of the" 25 items is depicted with M= (4.039), SE= (0.056), and SD= (0.971). Consequently, the sample data is statistically significant in order to accomplish "the objectives of the current

research". Additionally, these findings suggest that organisations are more susceptible to (DM).

**Table 1: "Descriptive Statistics of the (DM)" (n=100)**

Items	M		SD
	Statistic	SE	Statistic
A1	3.974	0.058	1.014
A2	3.980	0.059	1.021
A3	3.970	0.058	1.003
A4	4.053	0.056	0.966
A5	4.036	0.055	0.962
AN1	4.056	0.056	0.968
AN2	4.073	0.054	0.934
AN3	4.060	0.055	0.956
AN4	4.030	0.055	0.962
AN5	4.182	0.055	0.949
R1	4.086	0.054	0.933
R2	4.043	0.055	0.962
R3	4.073	0.054	0.944
R4	4.056	0.055	0.951
R5	4.066	0.056	0.969
L1	4.063	0.055	0.954
L2	4.013	0.057	0.988
L3	4.003	0.058	1.003
L4	4.040	0.056	0.971
L5	4.033	0.055	0.964
C1	4.030	0.056	0.973
C2	4.017	0.056	0.970
C3	4.003	0.058	1.003
C4	4.013	0.055	0.954
C5	4.030	0.057	0.993
<b>DM</b>	<b>4.039</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>0.971</b>

**b. Descriptive Statistics of the (CE)**

Table 2 presents a summary of M, SE and SD, of the (CE). "The frequency distribution of the" 15 items is depicted with M= (2.152), SE= (0.075), and SD= (1.310). Consequently, the sample data is statistically significant in order to accomplish "the objectives of the current research". Additionally, these findings suggest that organisations are more susceptible to (CE).

**Table 2: "Descriptive Statistics of the (CE)" (n=100)**

	Statistic	SE	Statistic
BD1	2.076	0.072	1.254
BD2	2.298	0.075	1.311
BD3	2.192	0.077	1.331
BD4	2.209	0.078	1.356
BD5	2.162	0.075	1.303
ED1	2.007	0.077	1.329
ED2	2.020	0.074	1.294
ED3	2.073	0.071	1.239
ED4	2.258	0.072	1.247
ED5	2.351	0.075	1.310
CD1	2.232	0.078	1.351
CD2	2.229	0.079	1.365
CD3	2.172	0.075	1.306
CD4	2.003	0.077	1.346
CD5	2.003	0.075	1.303
<b>CE</b>	<b>2.152</b>	<b>0.075</b>	<b>1.310</b>

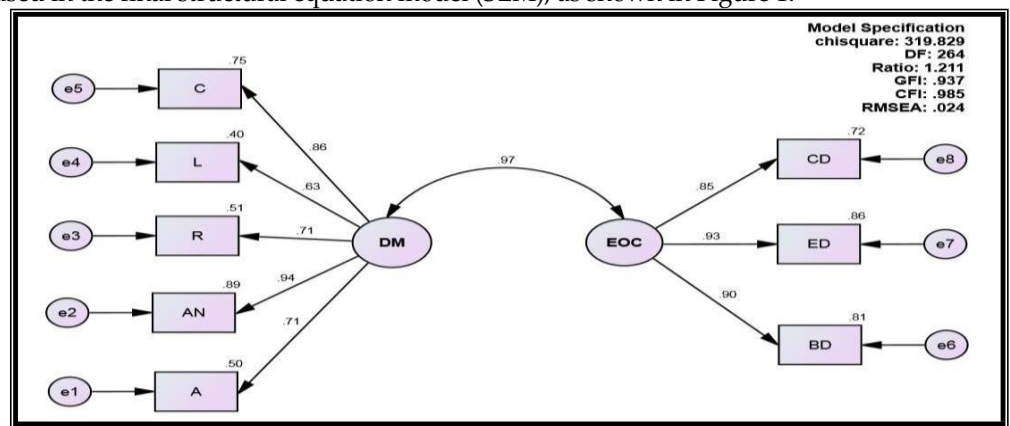
**2. Hypotheses Testing Using Structural Equation Model (SEM)**

Structural (equation) modeling, also known as SEM, is an approach to multivariate analysis

that is employed to investigate the causal connection among factors. This is achieved by estimating multiple correlated regression equations at the same time. The primary goal of SEM is to evaluate the fit of the proposed model, consisting of observed and latent variables, to the pooled sample data. Essentially, SEM delves into the covariance structure among observed variables, with the goal of condensing them into a smaller set of latent variables. Observed variables are directly measurable and serve as indicators of latent variables or constructs. In contrast, latent variables, often called constructs, are unobservable and require multiple measured indicators to represent them. The subsequent structural equation model, created using AMOS V.29, is as follows:

**a. Structural Equation Model of Relationship Between Variables**

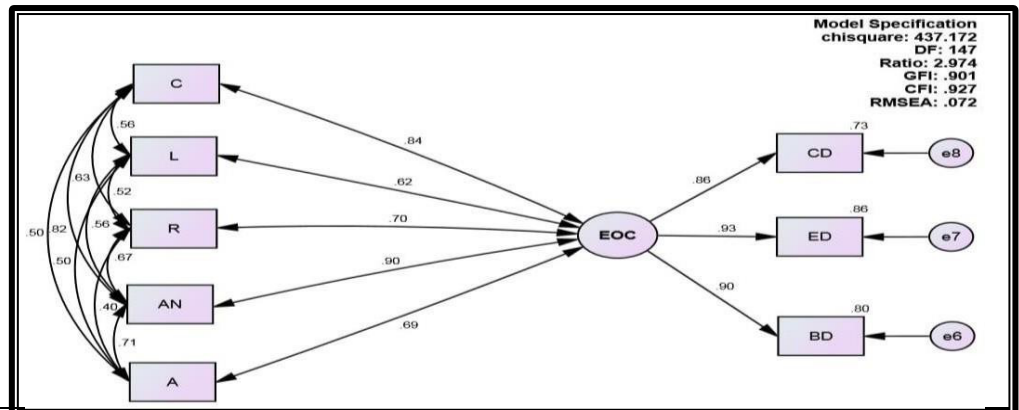
This study examined the relationship between (DM) and (CE) using exogenous models and relevant fit indices. The acceptable model fit (GFI= 0.937, "CFI= 0.985, RMSEA= 0.024). "While the chi-square index was significant" ( $\chi^2 = 319.829$ ,  $df = 246$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.211$ ), the residuals were used in the final structural equation model (SEM), as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Relationship between (DM) and (CE)**

Figure 1 shows a strong relationship between (DM) and (CE), with a path coefficient of 0.97. Furthermore, Figure 2 indicates acceptable model fit "(GFI = 0.927, CFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.072). "Although the chi-square index was significant" ( $\chi^2 = 437.172$ ,  $df = 147$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.974$ ), the figure reveals five statistically significant path relationships confirming" H1.

Comparing these results to the hypotheses, a standardized path coefficient of 0.71 indicates a "positive and statistically significant relationship between" attraction and customer engagement. Likewise, a standardized path coefficient of 0.94 indicates a "positive and statistically significant relationship between" Engagement and customer engagement. The path between retention and customer engagement was .71, indicating a "positive and statistically significant relationship between" them. The path between learning and customer engagement was .63, indicating a "positive and statistically significant relationship between" them. Finally, the path from communication to customer engagement is significant and

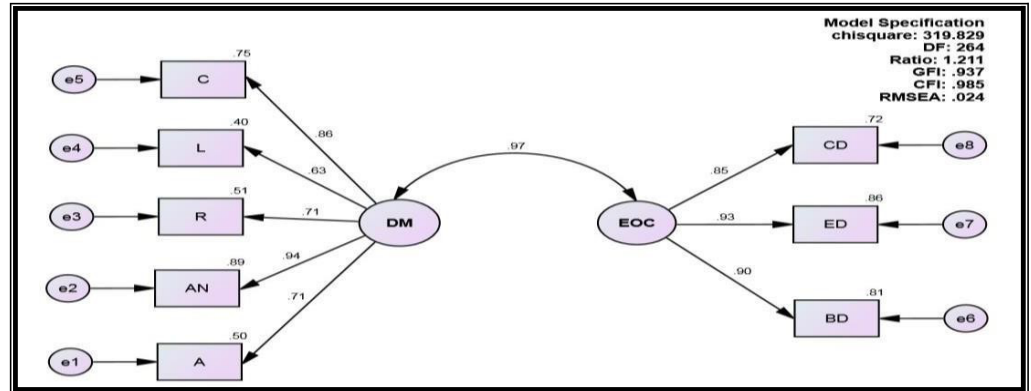


positive (standardized path coefficient .86), confirming H1.

**Figure 2: Relationships between Dimensions of (DM) and (CE)**

**b. Structural Equation Model Effect Between Variables**

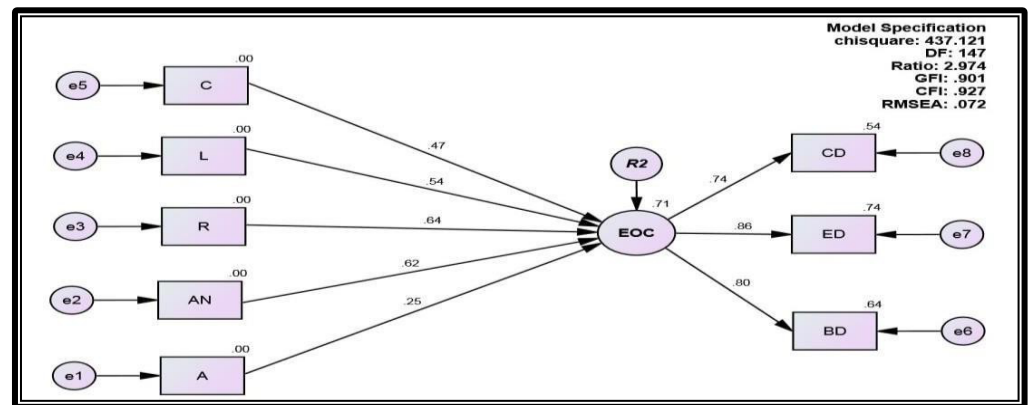
This study examined the of effect (DM) on (CE), using exogenous models and relevant fit indices. The acceptable model fit (GFI = 0.937, CFI = 0.985, RMSEA = 0.024). "While the chi-square index was significant" ( $\chi^2 = 319.829$ ,  $df = 246$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.211$ ), the residuals were used in the final structural equation model (SEM), as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Effect of (DM) on (CE)**

Figure 3 shows a strong effect of (DM) on (CE), with a path coefficient of 0.97. Furthermore, Figure 4 indicates acceptable model fit (GFI = 0.927, CFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.072). "Although the chi-square index was significant" ( $\chi^2 = 437.172$ ,  $df = 147$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.974$ ), the figure reveals five statistically significant path effects confirming (H2).

Likening, these results to the hypotheses, a standardized path effect of 0.25 indicates "a positive and statistically significant effect" of attraction on customer engagement. Likewise, a standardized path effect of 0.62 indicates "a positive and statistically significant effect" of Engagement on customer engagement. The path effect of was .64, indicating "a positive and statistically significant effect" of retention on customer engagement. The path effect of learning on customer engagement was .54, indicating "a positive and statistically significant effect" of learning on customer engagement. Finally, the path from communication to customer engagement is significant and positive (standardized path effect = .47), confirming (H2).



**Table 4. Effect Dimensions of (DM) on (CE)**

**Conclusions:**

The results of the relationship and influence hypothesis test showed the most important conclusions reached by the study, which were inferred through statistical analysis, and are as follows:

1. A significant positive correlation between attraction and (CE), as the correlation coefficient reached (0.71), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " attraction "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
2. A significant positive correlation between engagement and (CE), as the correlation coefficient reached (0.94), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " engagement "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
3. A significant positive correlation between retention and (CE), as the correlation coefficient reached (0.71), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " retention "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE)
4. A significant positive correlation between learning and (CE), as the correlation coefficient reached (0.63), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " learning "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
5. A significant positive correlation between communication and (CE), as the correlation coefficient reached (0.86), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " communication "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
6. A significant positive influence relationship between attraction and (CE), as the influence coefficient reached (0.25), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " attraction "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
7. A significant positive influence relationship between engagement and (CE), as the influence coefficient reached (0.62), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " engagement "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
8. A significant positive impact relationship between retention and (CE), as the impact coefficient reached (0.64), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " retention "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
9. A significant positive impact relationship between learning and (CE), as the impact coefficient reached (0.64), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " learning "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).
10. A significant positive impact relationship between communication and (CE), as the impact coefficient reached (0.47), which is a positive relationship, "indicating that any rise in " communication "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).

### **Recommendations**

1. The need for managers of telecommunications companies to work on making continuous improvements in their electronic services to gain customer confidence and thus attract customers, which is the basic rule for (CE).
2. Work should be done to provide electronic services that increase customer attraction and thus lead to an increase in the level of (CE).
3. The company concerned should adopt modern means that enable it to retain the customer and enhance the level of (CE).
4. 4. The imperative of enhancing learning, which results in an increase in (CE), is a result of its modernity, particularly in service companies.
5. It is worth noting the communication with the customer, which means that any increase in communication "will result in a rise in the degree of " (CE).

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