

# Managing B2C digital marketing communication

Daiva Zostautiene

*Panevėžys Faculty of Technology and Business, Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania*

Dalia Susniene

*Panevezys State Higher Education Institution, Panevėžys, Lithuania*

Justina Dubraitė Manaikaitė

*Panevėžys Faculty of Technology and Business, Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas, Lithuania, and*

Márta Konczos Szombathelyi

*Faculty of Economics, Szechenyi Istvan University, Győr, Hungary*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this paper is to improve the understanding of management of B2C digital marketing communication tools as a multifaceted phenomenon based on influences on customer behaviour in the modern marketplace. This study aims to develop a theoretical framework that integrates a selection of digital marketing tools and explains how they affect various aspects of consumer behaviour.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study focuses on the analysis of scientific literature and an empirical quantitative survey of Lithuanian consumers. It is aimed at finding out which digital marketing communication tools have the greatest and least impact on consumers' decisions at different stages of consumer behaviour. The survey results are based on 393 questionnaires.

**Findings** – Based on the analysis of scientific literature and our survey, the authors found out that a comprehensive framework should encompass four different stages of consumer behaviour and six of the most popular digital marketing communication tools. A model was developed based on theory and practice, which depicts the relevance of the particular B2C digital marketing communication tools at a given stage of consumer behaviour, where there is a greater impact on consumer behaviour. The findings of this study have implications that can serve as a theoretical basis for further research in this field.

**Research limitations/implications** – The limitation of this quantitative study is that it used a relatively small sample and cannot, therefore, be generalised beyond the Lithuanian context.

**Practical implications** – The study's results could have practical implications for organizations that wish to foster management of communication with consumers. The practical implications can help marketing managers develop effective strategies for managing B2C digital marketing communication tools. By understanding the four different stages of consumer behaviour and the effect of different digital marketing communication tools, managers can make informed decisions about their implementation that improve customer engagement and satisfaction. Therefore, these findings present an opportunity for a comprehensive understanding of how B2C digital marketing communication tools influence consumer behaviour, empowering managers to optimize their B2C digital marketing communication strategies.



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**Originality/value** – The lack of agreement in trying to categorize different types of B2C marketing communication tools does not allow us to see a wider perspective for managerial strategies to influence consumer behaviour. Most research has focused on the impact of single-channel marketing on consumer behaviour, but many modern digital marketing strategies use omnichannel approaches. This paper fills this gap by developing the relevant theoretical framework of managing B2C digital marketing communication.

**Keywords** Management of digital marketing, Marketing communication tools, B2C market, Consumer behaviour

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

This study analyses the impact of Business-to-Consumer (B2C) digital marketing communication tools on consumer behaviour from a management perspective. It gives an overview of how consumers perceive B2C digital marketing communication tools in terms of their impact at different stages of their behaviour. From the perception of a need to the completion of a purchase, an empirical study has been carried out with the focus on the consumer goods market.

It is built on previous research investigating the impact of digital marketing tools on consumer behaviour of decision-making. The study focuses on the use and effect of different digital marketing communication tools on the four different stages of consumer behaviour. Choosing the most relevant B2C digital marketing communication tools, which have a greater impact on consumers at a given stage of consumer behaviour, quantitative research was conducted in the fall of 2023, in Lithuania.

The development of technology in the world is driving companies to change and incorporate as many digital processes as possible, as digital networks play a key role in the development of the market economy. Social engagement and the effective dissemination of information through digital channels are a prerequisite for the evolution of digital marketing. External challenges of digital transformation require new theoretical and practical approaches to B2C management and communication development (Beccanulli *et al.*, 2022; Shankar *et al.*, 2022). However, digital marketing communication tools are an integral part of management because they enable data-driven decision-making, strategic alignment, resource management and customer engagement. Furthermore, they offer real-time feedback and insights, helping to optimize operations and align digital marketing with broader business goals. Kim *et al.* (2021) argue that digital marketing has created great opportunities for companies to reach, inform, engage and offer and sell their goods/services to consumers through new, digital channels. The internet is the most powerful tool for businesses (Yannopoulos, 2011). Marketing managers who fail to use the importance of the Internet in their business marketing strategy will be at a disadvantage because the internet is changing the brand, pricing, distribution and promotion strategy. All this strengthens the business-consumer relationship by informing about goods and services and encouraging the purchase of these products (Kapustina *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, it can be highlighted that digital marketing is cost-effective and has a significant commercial impact on businesses, as even small companies can reach their target markets with minimal costs and compete with larger companies on a level playing field in the market (Bala and Verma, 2018). Sahli and Lichy (2024) explored the potential of augmented reality to enhance the customer shopping experience, using mobile apps to provide special shopping experiences for customers.

Choosing the right communication tools for communicating and engaging with consumers, while taking into account their behaviour in the digital space, is crucial for the effective implementation of digital marketing in business management. Dwityas *et al.* (2020)

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and López-López and Giusti (2020) confirmed the statement that a management team needs to consider which marketing communication tools should be used in its operations to create value through new consumer experiences in the digital environment.

This research addresses a gap in knowledge that examines the impact of the management of the appropriate B2C digital marketing communication tools at the different stages of consumer behaviour. Recognizing B2C digital marketing communication as a complex managerial task, in conceptual and practical terms, this paper investigates the types of B2C digital communication tools for communicating and engaging with consumers, in different stages of their decision. To this end, a model was developed as a framework of relevance of digital marketing communication tools at different stages of consumer behaviour.

In terms of methodology, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, focusing on the analysis of scientific literature and an empirical study – a questionnaire-based survey. In this research, the terms “customer” and “consumer” are used interchangeably, as both concepts are often treated synonymously in various studies, without distinguishing between the buyer (customer) and the end user (consumer).

The paper starts with a literature review and theoretical background, presented in Section 2 and then presents the research methodology in Section 3, data analysis and findings in Section 4, followed by a discussion and conclusion in Section 5, which includes avenues for future research.

## 2. Literature review and development of theoretical background

The transformation of digital culture, the digital methods and tools influenced all areas of management (Cserkó *et al.*, 2024). Digital marketing can be interpreted as the achievement of an organisation’s marketing objectives using digital technologies. The development of technology and the digitalisation of marketing tools allow for a smoother, faster and more effective relationship with consumers (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021). As digital marketing evolves, management must adapt to new tools, technologies and platforms. These tie into change management, where management teams must ensure smooth transitions when adopting new digital marketing tools and retraining staff. Digital marketing tools enable management to quickly respond and manage communication with stakeholders. Rodríguez-Ibáñez *et al.* (2023), Ausat *et al.* (2023) and Shankar *et al.* (2022) have pointed out that, unlike classical marketing communication, digital marketing communication facilitates interaction between the organisation and the consumer and leads to higher quality communication in a digital space that is easily accessible to all. It is worth mentioning that digital marketing communication is often considered as an online process, which has become very dynamic in the past few years and became very important during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bailey *et al.*, 2024). Innovations and changes depend on the development of new technologies and consumer behaviour online (Slijepčević *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, one of the most important aspects and challenges for organisations remains the constant monitoring of changes in consumer behaviour and the desire to keep up with the continuous development of digital technologies, in other words, managing B2C digital marketing communication.

Mahoney and Tang (2024), Payal *et al.* (2024) and Kurdi *et al.* (2022) emphasised that when identifying digital marketing communication tools, it is important not to include as many as possible, but to choose those that provide the most value and allow one to reach and engage more consumers. The authors identified online advertising, email marketing, search engines and social networks as among the most influential digital marketing communication tools. Cho *et al.* (2024), Ausat *et al.* (2023), Katsikeas *et al.* (2020) and Cho *et al.* (2024) highlighted the internet, social media and mobile marketing as the most effective digital marketing communication tools, arguing that these tools ensure a company’s

internationalisation and allow it to develop and successfully coordinate its activities not only in the local market but also abroad.

However, the question is which of these tools are most effective and when. To identify the impact of digital marketing tools on the consumer, it is worth focusing on consumer behaviour, i.e. the emotions and sensations experienced by the consumer throughout the purchase of a product/service, from the point of interest in the product/service to the purchase decision (Echchakoui, 2016; Vavrová, 2024). Therefore, we will further explore the relevance of the main digital marketing communication tools identified in the literature: advertising, social networks, website, blogs and forums and email, which are based on the motives of consumer behaviour in the digital space.

Consumers in the digital space often have specific browsing habits. They use search engines, browsers, social networks and other platforms to find relevant information or to communicate with other consumers. To define consumer behaviour, it is necessary to mention that consumers can be both influences and influencers, using social media platforms, uploading and sharing content. Development of a theoretical background for understanding these habits and behaviours and, more importantly, selecting the right digital marketing communication tools that reflect consumer behaviour is crucial to reach and engage new consumers and meet the needs of existing consumers. Consumer behaviour in the digital space consists of four key stages:

- (1) perceiving a need;
- (2) searching for information;
- (3) assessing alternatives; and
- (4) buying.

The use of different digital marketing communication tools is determined by the consumer's behaviour at different stages, as digital marketing communication tools have different effects on the consumer's decision to buy at different behavioural stages.

In the first stage of consumer behaviour, *the perception of the need stage*, search engines and the advertisements they display, are often the starting point for consumers to form a perception of need and to start searching for possible solutions (Peter and Dalla Vecchia, 2021). In this step of identifying the consumer need, advertising plays a crucial role in attracting attention and encouraging consumers to understand their needs. Bastrygina et al. (2024) and Shankar et al. (2022) highlight that social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are popular channels where consumers spend a lot of time. Owing to engaging content, consumer's feedback and recommendations, social networking platforms can influence consumer awareness and perceptions of the need for goods/services (Mahoney and Tang, 2024; Ali et al., 2023; Konstantopoulou et al., 2019). Email marketing is also an effective tool to help consumers perceive the need for a product/service once they have shown interest in the brand or the goods/services offered. Personalised and relevant emails can provide additional information, highlight key features and benefits, offer exclusive offers or promotions and reinforce the consumer's perception of how the product/service offered can meet their needs (Puthussery, 2020).

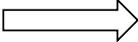
The *information-seeking stage* typically starts when consumers identify a need or desire for a particular good/service and seek to find out more information that may lead to a buying decision. In the information-seeking stage, digital marketing communication tools are important to help consumers get the information they want and make the best decision. To gather information, consumers browse various websites, blogs, forums, news articles and other online resources to read reviews, compare goods/services, their prices and evaluate various options to help them make an informed decision (Ziółkowska, 2021; Wuisan and

Handra, 2023). As a result, blogs, forums, social networks and websites are the most important digital marketing communication tools in this phase, as they help consumers receive accurate and useful information.

The *assessment of alternatives stage* is the stage where the consumer evaluates and compares possible options to make an informed decision on the buying of a product/service. In this step, consumers often use social networking platforms to obtain additional information and opinions about possible alternatives (Al-Quran, 2022; Rodríguez-Ibáñez *et al.*, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2023; Sokolova and Titova, 2019). As a result, social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, can be effective tools to engage and persuade consumers to choose one or the other alternative (Payal *et al.*, 2024; Shankar *et al.*, 2022). Reviews of the assessment of alternatives can be provided both on the company's website and on social media channels. Advertising is also an important digital tool in the alternatives assessment phase, as well-designed and integrated digital advertising (in the form of text, video or banners) can be very effective in finding other offers, as it draws attention and provides certain information that leads to the evaluation of the product/service (Matta *et al.*, 2020).

In the *buying stage*, functionality of the website, clarity of navigation and security are particularly important in this step (Bilkova, 2021). Consumers prefer websites that offer a smooth and secure online shopping experience with features that allow them to find information easily, give comprehensive descriptions of the goods/services of interest, provide secure payment methods and have quality service. At the buying stage, consumer's value personalised service, which include customised product/service recommendations based on their browsing history or preferences, and interactive tools to help them visualise how the product will look or work. For this step, companies often use cross-selling and up-selling strategies to encourage consumers to purchase additional goods/services. The most appropriate communication tool for this step is email, which can offer consumers a personalised offer of related goods/services that match their preferences (Omar and Atteya, 2020). It is important for consumers to feel secure when making online purchases, and it is therefore important for them to receive confirmation of a successful purchase and to be informed about the progress of delivery. Hence, email as a means of communication with consumers is an important tool to ensure consumer awareness, which can lead to greater trust in the company and increase brand loyalty.

Summarizing the scientific insights, it is clear that different digital marketing communication tools are only relevant at certain stages of consumer behaviour (Figure 1). In the first stage, the communication tools that allow the consumer to identify and understand

6 digital marketing tools		4 stages of consumer decision
advertising		1st stage: perception of need
social networks		2nd stage: information seeking
website		3rd stage: assessment of alternatives
blogs		4th stage: buying
forums		
email		

**Figure 1.** Different digital marketing communication tools and stages of consumer behaviour

Source: Authors' own work

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their needs are of particular importance. Moreover, in this stage, social networks, advertising, email, forums and blogs are among the most relevant tools, while the website is less important, but equally important for developing communication with consumers. In the second stage, information search, the most effective communication tools are those that allow people to search and read about the goods/services of interest. Social networks, websites, blogs and forums are the most appropriate tools for this purpose, while advertising and email are not so important tools for searching for information. The next step, the assessment of alternatives, is best carried out using social networks, the website and advertising. In the final stage of consumer behaviour, the two essential and most significant digital marketing communication tools identified are the website and email, which lead to the completion of the purchase process and satisfaction of consumer needs.

### 3. Research methodology

To find out how consumers perceive digital marketing communication tools in terms of their impact at different stages of consumer behaviour, from the perception of a need to the completion of a purchase, an empirical study – a questionnaire-based survey – was carried out with the focus on the consumer goods market. Consumers often evaluate, analyse and compare different products of a similar nature before making a buying decision on whether to buy or refuse to buy an optional product. As the study is focused on consumer behaviour and monetary transaction decisions, the respondents were adults aged 18 years and over, who are free to work and dispose of their earnings and to make their own buying decisions. Using the Paniotto formula, it is estimated that 384 people need to be interviewed to obtain reliable results with a margin of error of 5%, (the general population of the survey is 2,512,880 adults in Lithuania) The survey results are based on 393 questionnaires. Customer behaviour research helps to understand customers and their preferences. Moreover, it plays a primary role in customer retention and is a key factor in creating marketing management strategies oriented to the customer, as it helps businesses comprehend customers, how to target them and how to serve them better.

### 4. Data analysis and findings

#### 4.1 Need perception stage

The first set of questions analyses the most relevant digital marketing communication tools at the stage of perception of need. The results of the survey showed that more than half of the respondents agreed with the statement that “Advertising often creates a need to buy a certain product,” while 48.4% of the respondents agreed that *advertising* seen in digital space is oriented towards their personal needs. Advertising is a relevant communication tool to help consumers understand their needs at the stage of need perception. Consumers often pay attention to advertisements when they see them online and, according to the survey, 37% of respondents say that the product they see in an advertisement is often needed in their daily life.

When analysing the relevance of *social networks* in the stage of perceived need, it can be observed that most respondents agreed with statements related to the link between social networks and the perceived need to buy a particular product/service. The majority of respondents (58.9%) agreed with the statement that “I find consumer goods that meet my needs on social networks,” while a similar proportion of the respondents (57.7%) agreed that posts on social networks and recommendations from friends or followers had a positive impact on perceived need.

Another digital marketing communication tool, the *website*, was ranked the highest of all the communication tools in the perception of need stage. As many as 69.9% of the

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respondents agreed that the website is a good place to find products that meet their needs, and 53.6% said that the website usually draws attention and encourages them to take an interest in the products on offer.

*Blogs and forums* as digital marketing communication tools are also seen positively in the demand perception phase. The results showed that 51.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I often read blogs to find the product I need,” while in terms of the relevance of forums at this stage, the standout statement was “I can say that forums are an excellent tool to help identify the need for a particular product.” This statement was supported by 37.9% of respondents.

*Email* is not seen as one of the most relevant communication tools in the need perception stage. Only 30.1% of the respondents agreed that “email notifications about offers for certain products satisfy my needs,” 28.9% of the respondents agreed that “email offers for products draw my attention,” and 25.7% agreed that “email notifications are specialised and oriented towards the identification of a need.”

#### 4.2 The information seeking stage

The results show that 35.8% of respondents say that they often click on a banner to find out more about the advertised product. However, only 20% of respondents agreed with the statement that *advertising* is a reliable source of information. Advertising has less impact on consumer behaviour during the information-seeking phase. However, it is worth highlighting that a characteristic of online advertising is that the advertisements integrate links to the source of information. When a consumer is interested in a product featured in an advertisement and clicks on the banner, he or she is directly directed to an information source where he or she can find information about the product featured in the advertisement.

In terms of the relevance of *social networks* in the information-seeking phase, more than half of the respondents (54.1%) say that “Social networks are a convenient channel for searching for information about the product of interest,” and 50.8% of the respondents often search for information on social networks before buying the product of interest. The results of the survey reveal that 54.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement “Social networks are a convenient channel for searching for information on the product of interest.”

*Websites* score most favourably in the information-seeking phase of the digital marketing communication tools. Respondents agreed that the website usually provides informative and useful content (57.3% of respondents agreed) and that the information needed is always easy to find on the website (63.9% of respondents agreed). A website is mostly characterised by functional features such as a search box, which is very important for users during the information search phase.

Turning to the evaluation of *blogs*, 50.8% of respondents visit various blogs when looking for information about a product, while 48.8% of respondents say that they can find useful information about a product of interest on blogs. A significant proportion of respondents visit blogs when looking for information on a product of interest, as 48.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement “Most of the time, the product information on blogs is informative.” The relevance of *forums* in the information-seeking stage showed that 39.5% of the respondents searched for information about the product of interest in forums. Forums as a means of information communication are slightly less important in the information-seeking phase than the blogs reviewed above. However, 49.2% of respondents still visit forums to find out what other consumers think about a product of interest.

The evaluation of *email* at this stage shows that 27.2% of respondents agreed with the statement “email provides valuable information about a particular product,” while a slightly higher proportion of respondents (30.4%) agreed with the statement “email provides relevant

information about a particular product,” indicating that email as a communication tool is not relevant at this stage.

#### 4.3 Alternatives assessment stage

The main focus of the alternatives assessment phase is on the comparison of the goods/services of interest and the choice of the product/service that meets the needs, which is why, when analysing the relevance of *advertising* at this stage, it is noted that advertising is not a communication tool that allows the evaluation of possible alternatives. Only 23.6% of respondents agreed with the statement “The content of advertising allows you to evaluate different alternatives to the consumer goods of interest,” while 24.8% agreed that “Advertising helps you to choose the most appropriate alternative to the consumer goods.” These results show that advertising is more about attracting consumers’ attention and reminding them of the goods/services on offer, but not about evaluating the different alternatives to those goods/services. Advertising is not a means of evaluating goods/services, but rather a promotional tool aimed at stimulating the need to purchase a product and convince consumers that they need the good/service.

Consumers often use *social networks* to evaluate possible alternatives to goods. 52% of respondents agreed with the statement “Social networks are a place where you can find the most suitable product option.” 52% of respondents agreed with the statement “I often use social networks to find out how other consumers feel about a consumer product alternative.”

66.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement that consumer reviews and ratings on a *website* are the most important way of helping to evaluate the different options for the products of interest.

Analysing forums and blogs at this stage, the results of these marketing tools are quite similar. A total of 39.1% of the respondents agreed with the statement “Forums analyse the advantages and disadvantages of consumer products, which are important to me when evaluating different product alternatives.” In addition, 38.2% of respondents have a positive view of the recommendations received in the forums. Therefore, it can be highlighted that forums, consumer discussions and product/service reviews allow consumers to evaluate different product/service alternatives. Concerning blogs, only 34.2% of respondents agreed with the statement “Blogs usually provide informative comparisons of products.” However, blogs provide facts on how one or another product option can be superior and are positively evaluated, as 43.5% of respondents agreed with this statement.

The relevance of *email* is not particularly significant at the stage of assessing alternatives. The majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that email information about a particular product allows them to evaluate their options.

#### 4.4 Buying stage

According to the results of the study, *advertising* while making buying decisions has little impact on consumer behaviour. As many as 59% of the respondents disagreed with the statement “Advertising is the most likely to persuade them to buy a particular product.” In regard to the frequency with which consumers purchase the advertised goods, 60.6% disagreed with the statement “I often purchase consumer goods advertised.” This suggests that advertising is not a relevant communication tool at the buying stage.

An analysis of the relevance of *social networks* and the *website* in the purchase decision shows that a website has a greater impact on consumer behaviour at this stage than social networks. The results showed that 44.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement “Social networks have a significant impact on the purchase decision,” while a significantly higher proportion of the respondents, 58.2%, agreed that the website provides attractive

offers that encourage them to buy the product. As the functionality of the website is of particular importance during the buying phase, respondents were asked if “The online ordering process and payment options are usually easy to use on the website,” (73.6% of the respondents agreed) and “The functionality of the website usually allowed the purchase process to be completed without any problems” (65% of the respondents agreed).

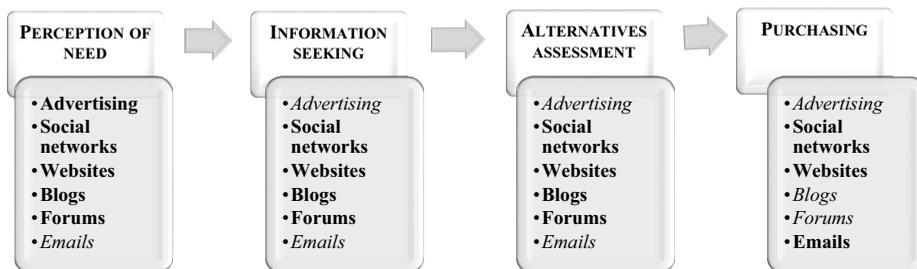
When assessing the relevance of *blogs and forums* in the buying phase, the results do not support their relevance in the buying phase. The statements “Discussions in forums and advice from other participants influenced my final decision to buy a consumer product” (26.9% of respondents agreed) and “The information I received on blogs helped me to decide on the consumer product of interest” (24.8% of respondents agreed) show that these means of communication are not relevant and therefore, do not have a direct influence on the buying decision.

*Email* is highlighted as one of the most relevant communication tools during the buying phase. The relevance of this communication tool is manifested through the sending of order confirmation messages and personalised offers/offerings, which often encourage the consumer to complete the purchase process. More than half of the respondents agreed on the importance of receiving notifications about the purchase process by email, and respondents also consider email notifications during the buying phase to be necessary.

The analysis of the perception of the need phase shows that the most relevant communication tools in this phase are advertising, social networks and the website, as well as blogs and forums. The assessment of the relevance of the communication tools in the information search phase shows that the most relevant communication tools in the information search phase are social networks and websites, as well as forums and blogs. The relevance of social networks and the website is highlighted in the alternatives assessment phase, and the impact of blogs and forums on consumer behaviour when evaluating possible alternatives to goods/services is also confirmed. In the final stage of consumer behaviour, the most relevant communication tools are social networks, the website and the receipt of notifications of the completion of the purchase process by email.

The assessment of the relevance of digital marketing communication tools in the different stages of consumer behaviour, based on the analysis of the scientific literature and the results of the study, has led to the development of a model for the selection of business-to-consumer digital marketing communication tools in relation to the stages of consumer behaviour (see [Figure 2](#)).

The model above highlights in bold the most relevant B2C digital marketing communication tools, based on theory and practice, which have a greater impact on consumer behaviour at a given stage of consumer behaviour. Based on the analysis carried out, it is recommended that



**Figure 2.** Framework of relevance of digital marketing communication tools at different stages of consumer behaviour

Source: Authors' own work

this model should be used by companies seeking to communicate effectively with their end users.

## 5. Discussion

Our findings are consistent with prior studies validating the existing most popular but fragmental frameworks. The results of our study support previous findings of other researchers. We aimed to enrich these previous frameworks.

Related to the *need perception stage* our results – the relevance of advertising – is supported by research of [Wuisan and Handra \(2023\)](#), who found that advertising in digital space leads to consumer interest and initiates the purchase process. Online advertising is one of the main tools to influence the perception of need and to encourage the transition to the next stage of consumer behaviour, i.e. information search. Therefore, it can be argued that the content of advertising and its presentation in the context of design choices are vital for capturing consumer attention through advertising. Our study supports the ideas of [Kurdi et al. \(2022\)](#), [Cho et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Ausat et al. \(2023\)](#) in that social networks can be described as one of the most versatile communication tools in digital marketing, as consumers can use social networks to interact, share recommendations and feedback and browse companies' social network accounts to find products that meet their needs. The results of the present study are supported by the findings of [Ghazie and Dolah \(2018\)](#), [Al-Quran \(2022\)](#) and [Bastrygina et al. \(2024\)](#), which confirm that consumers make high use of social networks, whose content is considered attractive and effective in reaching consumers quickly and stimulating their interest in the goods/services offered. Similar to [Xhema \(2019\)](#), we conclude that the website is the hub of digital marketing, as it is the channel that most often hosts all the relevant information related to the goods/services offered by the company and provides the opportunity to buy them directly. Findings of researchers [Ausat et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Shankar et al. \(2022\)](#) also identified a significant advantage of a website in that it has versatility in the whole purchasing process (from perception of need to buy), as the consumer can browse, read reviews, compare products, and thus perceive his/her own needs on a website.

The relevance of blogs and forums in the stages of consumer behaviour was confirmed by [Navarro \(2016\)](#), [Cho et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Vavrová \(2024\)](#) who stated that consumers find topical blogs relevant to keep up-to-date with news and trends.

Similar to our results, although email is an excellent tool for communication and connection with consumers, consumers tend not to read promotional messages to the end ([Omar and Atteya, 2020](#); [Al-Quran, 2022](#)). According to [Puthussery \(2020\)](#), email messages are more likely to encourage consumers to purchase a certain product/service through limited personal discounts, but not trigger the need to purchase a certain product/service.

Related to the *information-seeking stage*, the results show that advertising has less impact on consumer behaviour during the information-seeking phase. This feature of advertising at this stage is also highlighted in the research work of [Warokka et al. \(2020\)](#). In terms of social networks, our results are consistent with [Zhao et al. \(2022\)](#). They argue that social networks are one of the most technologically advanced means of digital marketing communication, where it is not only possible to share insights and recommendations with other consumers, but also to find all the relevant information about the product or service of interest and to choose the most suitable alternative. A study conducted by [Rodríguez-Ibáñez et al. \(2020\)](#) supported the importance of the website in the information search phase and identified that the informativeness of the content of the website is particularly important for consumers, ensuring that consumers find as much valuable information as possible about the product of interest in one channel. [Ziółkowska \(2021\)](#) argues that blogs not only provide additional

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information about the goods of interest but can also lead to a decisive influence on the buying decision.

Related to the *alternatives assessment stage*, similar to our results, [Li et al. \(2021\)](#), [Cho et al. \(2024\)](#), [Al-Quran, 2022](#) and [Bastrygina et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted the advantages of social networks in the context of evaluating alternatives. Another important aspect is that social networks allow users to monitor content that showcases different product alternatives. This could include videos, photos, or even live streams, which would help users observe and evaluate different products, allowing them to ask questions directly ([Jacobson et al., 2020](#); [Mahoney and Tang, 2024](#)). It can be argued that at this stage the website is one of the most relevant compared to other digital marketing communication tools. The results show that the website is an important and relevant communication tool, both in terms of searching for information about the products of interest and evaluating the different possible alternatives. Forums and blogs are quite similar in this phase. These results are supported by a study conducted by [Kurdi et al. \(2022\)](#), who found that forums and blogs could provide valuable information that is relevant for evaluating different goods/services, although they are not particularly convenient tools for comparing different alternatives for goods/services of interest.

The relevance of email is not particularly significant at the stage of assessing alternatives. This confirms the findings of [Kurdi et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Ausat et al. \(2023\)](#), who argue that email, like advertising, is a specific communication tool that is only relevant in a part of the consumer's behaviour, mainly in the perception of need and buying stages.

Related to the *buying stage*, the results show that advertising is not a relevant communication tool at the buying stage. This conclusion is supported by a study conducted by [Bílkova \(2021\)](#), which revealed a negative relationship between advertising and consumer behaviour in the buying phase. Based on the analysis of our results, the website has a greater impact on consumer behaviour at this stage than social networks. This result is supported by [Herrada-Lores et al. \(2022\)](#), which found that the dimensions of the website quality assessment (website design, security/privacy and fulfilment) have a positive impact on the buying phase and lead to consumer satisfaction.

Our results do not support the relevance of blogs and forums in the buying phase. These results are supported by the findings of the studies by [Slijepčević et al. \(2020\)](#), [Vavrová \(2024\)](#) and [Bastrygina et al. \(2024\)](#), which define that blogs and forums have a greater impact on the stages of consumer behaviour at the information search and alternative assessment stages than at the buying stage.

Email is one of the most relevant communication tools during the buying phase. This result is supported by the studies conducted by [Matta et al. \(2020\)](#), [Payal \(2024\)](#) and [Ali et al. \(2023\)](#), who examined the relevance of email at the buying stage and found that the use of email at the end of the buying stage increases consumer post-purchase satisfaction and promotes brand trust.

Measuring the relevance of digital marketing communication tools in the different stages of consumer behaviour, based on the analysis of the scientific literature and the results of the study, has led to the development of a model for the selection of B2C digital marketing communication tools in relation to the stages of consumer behaviour (see [Figure 1](#)).

## 6. Avenues for further research

The findings of this study have *theoretical implications* that can serve as a theoretical basis for further research in this field. The aim of this paper was to improve the understanding of management of B2C digital marketing communication tools as a multifaceted phenomenon based on influences on customer behaviour in the modern marketplace. Most research has focused on single-channel marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour, but many

modern digital marketing strategies use omni-channel approaches. This paper fills this gap by developing the relevant theoretical framework of managing B2C digital marketing communication. Based on scientific literature analysis and our survey, we found out that a comprehensive framework should encompass four different stages of consumer behaviour and the six most popular digital marketing communication tools. A model was developed based on theory and practice, which depicts the relevance of the particular B2C digital marketing communication tools at a given stage of consumer behaviour, which has a greater impact on consumer behaviour. The study's results could have *practical implications* for organizations that wish to foster management of communication with consumers. The practical implications can help marketing managers develop effective strategies for managing B2C digital marketing communication tools. By understanding the four different stages of consumer behaviour and the effect of different digital marketing communication tools, managers can make informed decisions and can optimize their B2C digital marketing communication strategies.

The *limitation* of this quantitative study is that it used a relatively small sample, and therefore, cannot be generalised beyond the Lithuanian context. However, it complements the findings of previous research. *Future research* should draw on a wider sample and comparative analyses with other countries. Furthermore, future researchers might focus on a particular product, compare different markets and evaluate generations and cultures.

The study nevertheless contributes towards identifying and improving areas of successful management of B2C digital marketing communication tools in the future. Undisputedly, these tools hold enormous potential, the value of which is becoming increasingly clear.

## 7. Conclusion

This study underscores the role of conscious strategy in managing B2C digital marketing communication tools. It particularly highlights its need to enhance efficiency of a streamlined categorization of digital marketing tools based on the precise influences on customer behaviour. Moreover, it presents a promising solution for managers with its comprehensive use of B2C digital marketing communication tools by testing their impact on different stages of consumer behaviour.

Our argument was that management of the B2C digital marketing communication is a multifaceted construct manifesting in data-driven decision-making, strategic alignment and customer engagement, as well as brand control, which helps management teams optimize operations and align digital marketing with broader business goals that should be based on consumer buying behaviour. Although various authors may employ different frameworks, our identified distinctions essentially represent wider and more precise understanding of customer behaviour from the B2C approach. Our devised model of framework provides a simple technique by which customer behaviour might be targeted more precisely. By exploring the most relevant B2C digital marketing communication tools, based on theory and practice, we can show which have a greater impact on consumer behaviour at a given stage of consumer behaviour. We can also present the process of how B2C digital marketing communication management has emerged as a solution capable of catering to diverse consumers, which is reflected in its potential to understand customer behaviour and react to it from the B2C approach.

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#### Corresponding author

Márta Konczos Szombathelyi can be contacted at: [kszm@sze.hu](mailto:kszm@sze.hu)