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# Digital Marketing: Some Trends in The Context of E-Commerce Development

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### ABSTRACT

Social network has developed significantly in recent years. In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, the Digital Marketing industry is changing strongly with digital platforms that are applied the latest technologies. Digital Marketing is marketing activities carried out on digital platforms. Digital marketing is one of the most important strategies of companies. Businesses will no longer approach customers in traditional ways. Instead, electronic information channels will be used, which can be mentioned as: Email, Website, Facebook. Through digital platforms, marketing professionals can boost customers' purchase intention and strengthen the brand image of the business. Therefore, digital marketing plays an important role in increasing the competitive advantage, attracting potential customers and contributing to improving business efficiency of enterprises. This study aims to investigate the conceptual understanding of digital marketing, analyzing some digital marketing trends in Vietnam and offer some recommendations for the businesses in the context of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method was selected.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, e-commerce platforms, consumers behavior, social media, social networks

### 1. Introduction

The development of information technology has strongly promoted the increase of digital marketing. Nowadays, companies are interested to increase their capabilities with focus on the purchase intentions of the customers to accept and use the modern marketing means that encourage these companies to integrate and employ digital marketing strategies and focus on the usage of online platforms like social media [1]. The marketing strategies used by the companies in this era of

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internet advancement for the purpose of selling the product are referred to as digital marketing. In the early stages, the concept of digital marketing emerged just to provide the text-based information of products and services offered by the company [2].

In addition to this, digital marketing serves as the platform for advertising while helping the manufacturers in terms of interacting with the customers [3].

After a long period of being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the change in consumers' online shopping habits and the explosion of many applications could lead companies to focus on the development of digital marketing. The consumers have spent millions on online shopping since modern applications and smartphones make this process easier and more available with lower costs, and most people spend many hours a day browsing various shopping services [4].

The finding of [5] provides that digital channels such as cell phones, social media and websites have abilities to arouse need understanding step of the consumer buying-decision process specially for high-involvement products. Branded cosmetics could consider as high involvement products. According to [6], the usage of digital channel communication is developing in its way gradually specially in COVID-19 pandemic situation. Now customers are mostly going through digital channel activities while buying any high involvement products such as branded cosmetics.

Moreover, along with individuals customer, now marketers, producers, sellers and companies are using social media to promote their products, encouraging buyer to buy their products, increasing brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand trust and ultimately maximize their profits. Companies also getting feedback from consumer online and then develop their marketing mix accordingly [7].

The concept of digital marketing in the narrow definition of the word means marketing products and services using digital channels, but in the broadest sense of the word, it means the use of digital technologies to attract customers, promote the brand, retain customers and increase sales [8].

There are some research about trends in digital marketing in the world. The study of [9] examines the trends of digital marketing in the context of information society development. These authors report that digital marketing is a method of adaptation to contemporary realities. They also identify and analyze marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges for the development of digital marketing by using relevant supportive studies. The finding of [10] identifies global digital e-marketing trends in the world. The author use the tools of economic and statistical analysis of modern trends in the development of e-marketing. Moreover, this study considers the current trends of marketing development in the world and predicts the development of digital marketing for the next 5 years. In Vietnam, the study of [11] analyzes market potential and growing condition of digital marketing, the reality of applying digital marketing in Vietnam firms and giving some recommendations for Vietnamese enterprises. The research of [12] shows opportunities for the development of digital marketing in Vietnam in the post COVID-19 pandemic. These authors represent development opportunities for businesses applying digital marketing in production and business activities.

The statistics of [13] shows that the trend of users accessing the Internet and social networking sites is growing strongly in Vietnam. Therefore, digital marketing is a field that businesses need to

focus on to survive and thrive. The purpose of this study is to represent theoretical framework of digital marketing. Furthermore, the research study will analyze some trends of digital marketing in Vietnam and give some recommendations for the business in the context of post COVID-19.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Definition of digital marketing**

A number of research documents provide a detailed insight on Digital Marketing.

The term digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels to market products and services in order to reach consumers. This type of marketing involves the use of websites, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other similar channels. Digital marketing became popular with the advent of the internet in the 1990s. Digital marketing involves some of the same principles as traditional marketing and is often considered a new way for companies to approach consumers and understand their behavior. Companies often combine traditional and digital marketing techniques in their strategies [14].

The concept of digital marketing could be defined as applications of modern digital technologies integrated with the traditional marketing strategies in order to achieve the ultimate marketing objectives. The companies adopt this new type of marketing also to gain big momentum to support the easy trade through advanced applications found in the smartphones which encourage the trading activities and have become a marketplace [15].

Digital marketing is often confused with online marketing. Nowadays, tablets continue to merge with phones and laptops and apps are now used across multiple devices. Touchscreen is now very common across all devices. Facebook (now Meta) and Amazon have also to become global powerhouses, playing in many markets. It is clear to see that is now much broader than the online channels of the late 1990s and must be embedded into every thing we do. Digital marketing is an integral part of all marketing activities. This includes PR, creative direction, brand, Consumer Relationship Management, retention, product development, pricing, click-throughs and other actions [16].

Digital marketing is the use of technologies to help marketing activities in order to improve customer knowledge by matching their needs [17].

### **2.2. Brief history of digital marketing**

The word Digital Marketing has been first introduced in the 1990s. Fiere competition pushed companies to include more features in their apps, such as advertising, marketing and sales implementation. Marketers have owned large online customers information through Electronic Consumer Relationship Management systems after the Web created. This led to its first searchable banners ad getting listed in 1995, that was the AT&T's "You Can" advertisement and 43 percent of viewers who have seen it have stuck on the commercial during the first few months. With ever more online users as well as the launch of iOS in 2001, consumers began to search for goods and to make decisions about their desires first, rather than contacting a salesman, creating a new challenge for a corporate marketing team. In 2008, business intelligence idea was introduced to address this above issue. Advertising automation support consumers in the segment of business, introduced multi-channel marketing strategies, and received customer data. In 2000 as well as in 2010, online

marketing had become more complex, as the explosion of computers capable of receiving digital content contributed to rapid growth. Reports created in 2013 as well as in 2014 indicated development in online marketing. With advancement of technology networks like LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, customers in everyday life are heavily dependent on digital systems [18].

### **2.3. Digital marketing channels**

Digital marketing aids marketers to reach their products for users through several channels such as email marketing, online advertising, social media marketing, mobile marketing, etc. [19].

#### *2.3.1. Email marketing*

Email marketing enable firms or an individual to connect to customers and to send advertisement messages that assist in building brands by creating awareness which further leads to gain customer loyalty [20]. Email marketing is a type of direct marketing that uses email to message or communicate promoting funds to connect audiences [21].

E-mail marketing is an important medium of marketing communication especially for companies seeking to build and maintain closer relationships with customers [22].

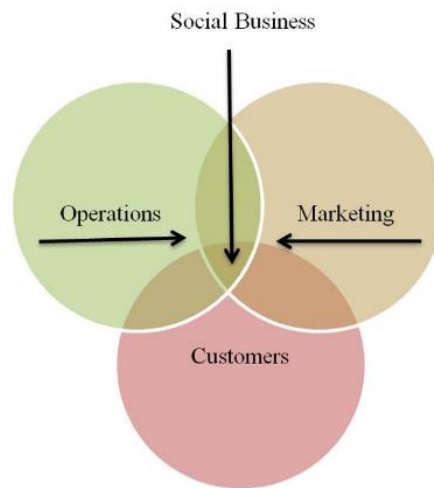
#### *2.3.2. Online advertising*

Online advertising is a form of promotion that convinces customers to make purchasing decisions and provides information to the audience marketing [19]. The consensus is that online advertising produces positive returns, but the magnitude varies significantly by product category, customer segment, and ad format [23]. Online advertising can help companies promote their products without geographical borders. Online advertising can seizure the chance to reach their users through numerous online platforms, to give awareness of their products, and to increase their sales in the future [24].

Thus, online advertising plays an important role in digital marketing. Online advertising's effectiveness in purchasing decisions, is fairly used to online advertising with a positive attitude towards online advertising [19].

#### *2.3.3. Social media marketing*

Figure 1 shows the alignment that needs to occur between what can be loosely be called "Operations" and the Marketing team in support of Customers. Included in "operations" are the functional areas that control product design and manufacturing, customer service and support polices, warranty services and similar. Instead, it is by changing the product design, the service policy or similar in order to align the expericence with the expectation or to ensure the replicable delivery of "delight", for example, as Zappos does when it upgrades shipping to "Next Day" for no other reason than to delightfully surprise a customer [25].



**Fig. 1. The Marketing – Operations Connection**

Source: [25]

Reference [19] shows that general forms of social media comprise Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. At present, social media is a platform for marketers to have conversations with consumers.

#### 2.3.4. Mobile marketing

According to [26], the difference between conventional media marketing and mobile marketing is that the former pushes products to consumers, while the latter pulls individual consumers with media contents that are specifically tailored to their needs.

Digital marketing budget, according to eMarketer is projected to enjoy a thirty- six percent increase in subsequent years as a result of mobile marketing [27]. Mobile marketing has emerged as one of the exciting interactive communication mode channels between firms and customers. Messages through such media affect their decision to buy [19].

The research of [28] implements with systematic mapping method including 121 studies. The result indicates that digital marketing channels dominated by social media marketing and website. The study of [19] analyzes the influence of digital marketing on purchasing decisions in Jordan. The authors showed that digital marketing, such as social media marketing and mobile marketing, has a profound impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Moreover, email marketing as a digital marketing channel is the most negligible influential factor in student purchasing decisions. However, according to the research of [29], email marketing has the strongest relationship and most effect on consumers' buying decision compared with social media, websites and online advertising.

### 3. Methodology

This study is a type of exploratory research using qualitative analysis. Secondary data and information were collected from various sources including articles, other researchers and some reports relating to this research. For instance, the authors use many figures published by “We are social” which is a global socially-led creative agency with unrivaled social media expertise. Their report provides an overview of digital marketing in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. In addition, a report published by Google, Temasek and Bain & Company is used to present the current situation of e-commerce development in Vietnam.

The methodology used was that of a literature review.

## **4. Analyzing some trends of digital marketing in Vietnam**

### ***4.1. Content creation will be an essential skill for a businessman***

In the past, brick-and-mortar sellers might not have needed to know much about product photography or video techniques, and didn't even need to write about their store. Only big companies and brands have a team of visual designers and content creators. When necessary, businesses can outsource banner services, billboards for their stores.

Today, everything has moved online, shoppers and sellers are on it. The demand to learn about products and stores before buying is increasing on digital platforms. Business people not only need to move their stores online, but also need to change the way they advertise their products. The fierce competition to sell goods on digital platforms depends largely on the images, videos and quality of the livestream hours of online stores. Besides, hiring people will cost a lot and the content on the online store needs to be updated regularly, so possessing content creation skills including photography, video recording and livestreaming is a necessary trend for a businessman.

“Adequate information support is becoming an urgent requirement of the time, because it is information, along with science and human intelligence, producing new knowledge, begin to gradually change the foundations of contemporary society, give it the characteristics of a new type of society – information society” [9].

There are many tools to help online shops quickly grasp the technology and create quick and quality content to meet the needs of the general retail business. For example: Canva, Facebook Footage, Tiktok, Capcut, etc. These tools can easily be registered for free and do not take too long to learn how to use. It is a far from expensive design tools that are difficult to use for non-designers like Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, etc.

In short, content creation skills are a trend that business people need to grasp when doing digital marketing.

### ***4.2. The trend of connecting e-commerce platforms***

Online stores are transitioning from traditional to online and especially on e-commerce platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exploded this transformation dramatically in recent years. Many famous online business and service platforms such as Amazon, Ebay, Airbnb, Uber, Grab,... or Shopee, Lazada, Tiki, Baemin, Foody, ... in Vietnam have become familiar to consumers.

A store can put its business on many e-commerce platforms for trading. The management of goods, warehouses and transportation is also difficult on separate e-commerce exchanges. And the trend can start from this challenge of real traders. Connect, synchronize stores on different platforms. With the development of technology, this trend is expected to come true not far away.

Maybe there will be a new application that connects the floors, or the floors can share together to support online shops with better business. Many other e-commerce platforms may appear and continue to inherit previous platforms.

It is noted that 73% of shoppers use multiple channels before completing a purchase, connecting e-commerce platforms provides additional revenue streams to traditional pillars of revenue such as in-store commerce. Headless and modular commerce systems like fabric promise scale, speed, and efficiency by leveraging APIs and microservices to connect channels together [30].

Wix Enterprise, Sellercloud, and Ecwid are some multichannel e-commerce software systems that can be helpful for online stores looking for ways to connect their sales channels [31].

In Vietnam, OnCustomer is the first multichannel customer communication platform. This is the product of the Novaon Group. OnCustomer helps the customer care staff communicate with clients anywhere, either on websites, mobile phones or social networks such as Zalo or Facebook [32].

#### ***4.3. Multi-channel advertising and Artificial Intelligence in digital marketing***

“Omnichannel promoting is a developed type of multichannel advertising that assists you with giving a comprehensive shopping experience to your purchasers” [33]. Omnichannel advertising has been talked about as much over the years as omnichannel selling. Selling on the website, on social networks, on Youtube, on Tiktok, on e-commerce platforms, ... and advertising also needs to run on those channels (email marketing, social marketing, Youtube marketing, Tiktok marketing, etc.).

Shopify Plus, Adobe Commerce, SellerChamp, and Algolia are some of the most popular examples of omnichannel e-commerce platforms [31]. There are three outstanding omnichannel examples in the world, including Amazon, Apple and Sephora. For instance, Amazon has an app and website that are automatically synced and create an omnichannel customer experience by enabling payment methods.

In Vietnam, the Omnichannel mixed-store model will continue to grow with the restructuring of operations from physical stores, warehouses to back office headquarters. The survey of [34] also shows that four of the top six factors that drive customers to shopping, specifically: Door-to-door delivery, and delivery speed (89.22%); Products are diversified and abundant (52.94%); Easy ordering method (50.98%); Save shopping time (49.02%); There are many promotions (49.02%); Do not have to wait in crowded queues and contact many people (34.31%). As a result, creating a more responsive network is the most important for retailers to build in order to stay competitive in omnichannel and will require a change of mindset and operating patterns among retailers [34].

Central Retail Vietnam topped the list retail companies in 2021 [34]. It has also built a winning omnichannel platform in food, modelled after the success achieved in the Thai market, with omnichannel sales accounting for over 8% of Central Retail Vietnam’s total sales.

Each advertising channel has different strengths and weaknesses and business people can take advantage to reduce costs with the desired effect. “Various YouTube, Instagram, TikTok influencers, opinion leaders inspire users of these social networks to buy “trendy” goods and services” [9].

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been applied and deployed in many areas of life, including marketing. “Today, digital marketing is becoming an increasingly important tool for promoting almost any type of product compared to traditional marketing. It is also possible that in the coming years, this type of marketing will become dominant due to the steady growth of its areas of application” [9].

AI algorithms are installed on social platforms, search engines, and applications to help detect and understand customers' consumption habits and then make accurate recommendations that match their needs. and connect to online shops to satisfy customers. Search Engine Optimization techniques, keyword selection or AI tools will be an indispensable thing that businesses or service

providers need to pay attention to to determine the needs of target customers. Customers can use AI to choose the best shades and colors for each skin color when buying Sephora's products [31].

There is another reason why AI is changing the future of digital marketing. It is now much easier to find them online and connect with them. Companies like Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple make it possible to recognize user's voice without having to spend too much time learning how to use it.

In Vietnam, AI marketing is a relatively new term. Unilever's CLEAR brand, for instance, pioneered to use AI in marketing activities by launching a digital version of female singer Toc Tien in 2020 with the character's appearance created by 3D technology and a brain developed with Natural Language Processing technology. In another case study, Dove Vietnam used machine learning and AI in the Dove Hair Rewind Women's Day campaign, helping users create their own journey videos, thereby spreading the message "Your hair, your choice" [35].

#### ***4.4. The boundaries between retail and wholesale are erased by technology***

In difficult times, agents and large companies also put their products on e-commerce platforms or applications to deliver to users. This causes unfair competition between retailers and wholesalers. To overcome these difficulties, entrepreneurs have to renew themselves with new platforms and innovations in marketing. For example, farmers have to livestream products themselves right from the farm, new circular business models also begin to appear and change in accordance with the economic situation at home and abroad.

"Contemporary globalization processes and open markets, on the one hand, increase the opportunities for sales of goods and services of entrepreneurs, on the other hand, lead to increased competition and the need for constant and balanced struggle for a potential customer" [9]. Technology does not distinguish one person or another, but only analyzes and compares based on real data. This is also a challenge as well as an opportunity for newcomers, who quickly grasp technical platforms to apply in their business.

#### ***4.5. Platforms, applications and technologies are increasingly diverse and constantly changing***

Technology in general develops every second and so does online sales or online marketing. Many social networking platforms were born, many technology applications were invented and built to meet the strong needs of the market and end users. In Vietnam, smartphones and trading applications on them are preferred by customers and are increasingly friendly and convenient. Accommodation services, transportation, experiences and many shopping applications are installed and regularly updated by users.



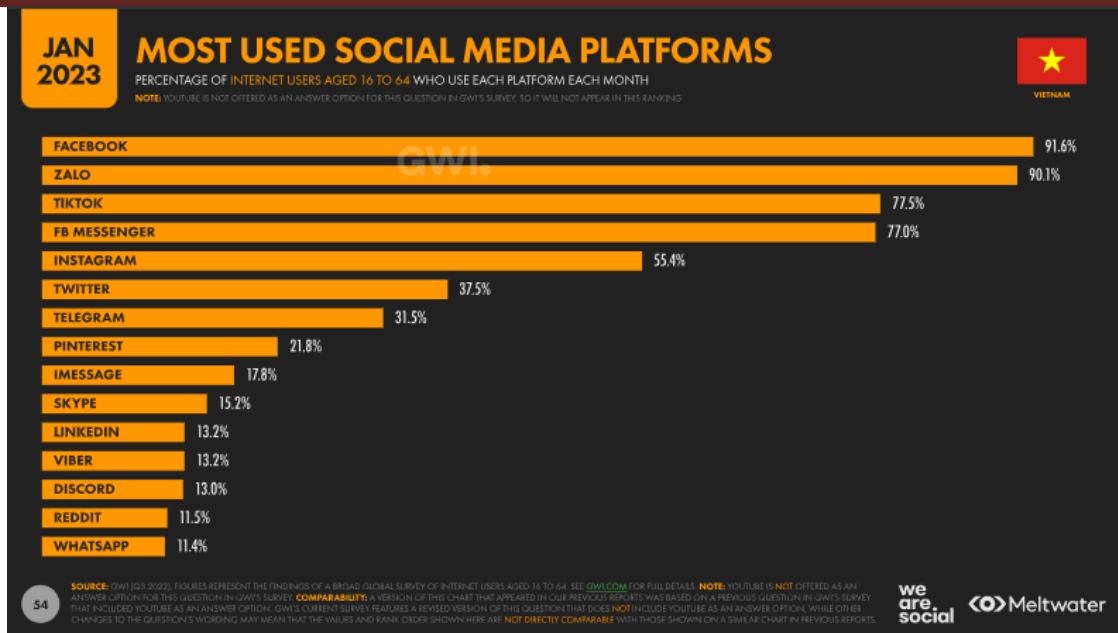


Fig. 2. Statistics about the percentage of the most used social platforms

Source: [13]

According to [13] in January 2023, Facebook and Zalo are the two most active social networking platforms in Vietnam. The majority of users use Facebook, with 91.6%, followed by Zalo, at 90.1%. Therefore, advertising on the Facebook and Zalo platforms is also being used more and more popularly. Facebook Messenger, Tiktok and Instagram also attract many people. Meanwhile, LinkedIn or Reddit is not widely used, with about 11%.

“Under the influence of informatization of society, the spread of innovative development of the economic environment are transformed all its components, including changing approaches to marketing, which uses more and more digital opportunities to increase its efficiency” “Internet services, web portals, e-shops, trading platforms and various online financial and banking services, systems of enterprise software, e-financial services, online learning, e-mail, e-media, e-government have become commonplace today. In these conditions, businesses must be competitive and effectively sell their goods or services to consumers, taking into account the characteristics of informatization of society” [9].

E-commerce platforms, such as Shopee, Lazada, Tiki, Sendo or social networks, such as Facebook, Zalo, Tiktok regularly change and update new policies on the platform. This makes the promotion of products on those platforms must also make appropriate changes and strictly comply with the principles and regulations on that platform.

#### 4.6. Smarter users and the influence of Key Opinion Consumer/ Key Opinion Leader

“Today, the consumer always has access to the Internet, the buyer is more aware due to the availability of information about the desired product, has ample opportunities to communicate with other users, get feedback and real characteristics about the quality of goods or services. Such a consumer makes his informed choice, relying not only on the advice of friends and relatives, but also on reviews available on social networks” [9].

Users now not only buy according to their needs anymore, but also demand higher requirements. They know how to compare prices, know how to look for reputable brands, they

evaluate the buying and selling process from ordering to receiving goods,... Customers are getting really smart. This leads to services, products and sellers to improve the quality of their products and services significantly.

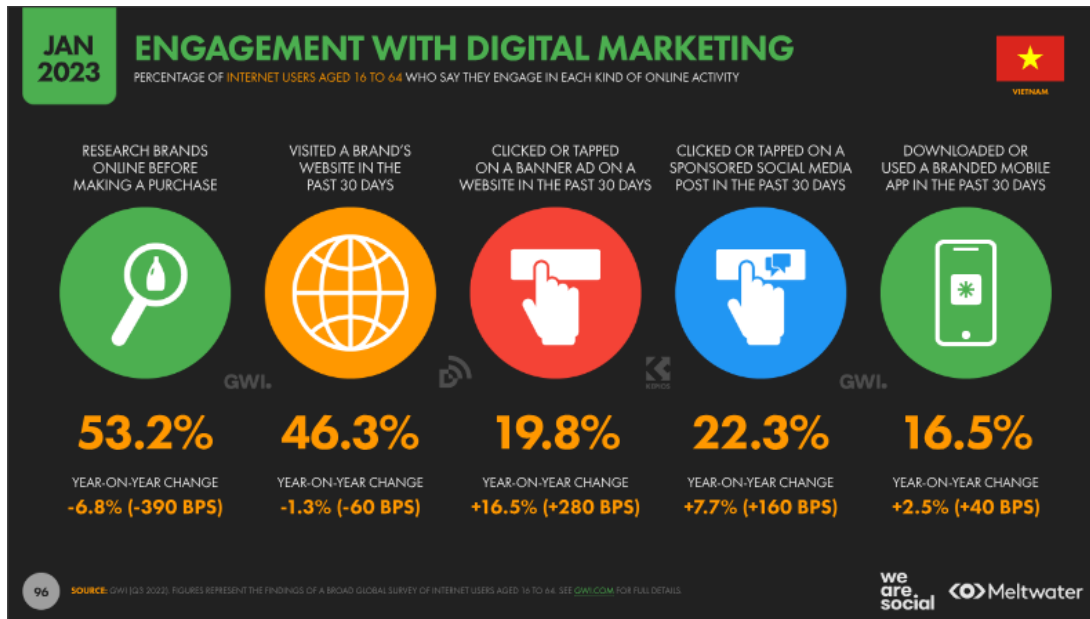


Fig. 3. Statistics about engagement with digital marketing

Source: [13]

Figure 3 shows that the rate of Internet users researching brands online before making a purchase is 53.2%. The second rank belongs to visiting a brand’s website in the past 30 days, with 46.3%. These figures are much higher than that of three remain kinds. This shows that customers tend to find out information about brands and products before deciding to buy.

Following the trend outlined in [36], "The Explosion of online video platforms creative multi-screen solution for video" lead to the trend "The influence of Key Opinion Consumer/ Key Opinion Leader (KOC/KOL)" in the coming years. KOC/KOL create a lot of content especially videos about their experiences and share with the community. The finding of [37] shows that KOL is effective in building the brand image. Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) are primarily employed as ambassadors for promoting the brand image of a company. These endorsers often achieve good results in marketing campaigns. The study of [38] indicates that the KOLs would represent some trustworthy people for other physicians to follow. The research of [39] applies content analysis on YouTube channels. They found an increasing trend of opinion leaders who are authentic and trustworthy on YouTube to promote beauty and fashion products in German.

Many customers are affected by the influence of KOC/KOL on social networks to purchase psychology. They put their trust in product quality through reviews or recommendations of KOC/KOL. Understandably, when one person has influence over many people, they can direct all consumers the way they want. The KOC/KOL rental service is growing rapidly and is also very effective for businesses in promoting their products. The social media users are mainly prone to depend on the comments they receive from friends or family members [29]. According to [40], each dollar invested in the campaign with an influencer is estimated up to 6.5 times. The report of [13] shows the percentage of Internet users aged 16 to 64 who use channels for researching online brand. The rate of social networks channel is the highest, at 58.9%, followed by that of search engines, at

51.3%. The figures for consumer reviewers is 39.6%. This means that KOC has a significantly impact on finding brands of buyers.

Besides, epidemics, political situations, wars between countries, economic recession or inflation that are happening in the world also lead to the psychology of shoppers. They also face many difficulties when prices escalate, so spending can be tighter and more economical.

## **5. The current situation of e-commerce development in Vietnam in recent years**

According to a report by [41] in 2022, 90% of digital consumers plan to maintain or even increase their use of e-commerce platforms in the next 12 months. The majority of consumers focus on "Food Delivery" (60%) and "Online Grocery Purchase" services ( 54%). Vietnam's economic growth slowed down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but in 2021, the digital economy in general and e-commerce in particular showed significant development. The total gross merchandise value (GMV) of the e-commerce industry in Vietnam grew dramatically from US \$5 billion in 2019 to US \$11 billion in 2021 with a growth rate of 47% and is expected to soar to US \$32 billion in 2025. Vietnam's digital economy hit US \$23 billion in 2022 and is predicted to reach US \$50 billion by 2025, making it the fastest growing market in Southeast Asia region thanks to the booming e-commerce sector. E-commerce has become a driving force in the growth of Vietnam's digital economy.

## **6. Conclusion**

The information society changes rapidly and continuously, leading to the need for digital marketing to adapt quickly and appropriately. Doing business on the digital platform has almost dominated the market share compared to the traditional one, everyone owns smart devices and has an internet connection and makes full use of the utilities on that device, including shopping. The convenience and time-saving when shopping through mobile applications or websites has changed the shopping habits of users, especially during the past pandemic years. So surely digital marketing methods must quickly adapt, grasp trends and stay ahead to be an effective and smart way of doing business for businesses and retailers. The gap of categories from large and small companies is narrowing and there is strong competition on e-commerce platforms. Support tools are increasingly friendly, intelligent and regularly upgraded with new development trends. However, everything has its downside, it is necessary to analyze and clearly identify the new needs of customers for sustainable development, which is necessary for businesses in general and retailers in particular.

The study offers some implications for the businesses in developing digital marketing. First, according to the figures 2 about social media platforms used the most, enterprises should advertise on platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, Facebook Messenger, Tiktok. For instance, building a ChatBot system to automatically reply on Messenger to customers effectively and quickly or considering TikTok social network because of its popularity and friendliness. Second, designing a professional website and optimize search engines to increase customers' experiences and brands search. Third, connecting sales channels, advertising channels and product distribution channels based on online platforms. In addition, marketers should implement digital marketing strategies in the direction of content creation on social networking and e-commerce platforms and consider using the influence of KOC/KOL. Last but not least, continuously updating trends in digital marketing and innovating processes, services and products play an important roles in meeting customer demands and keeping up with the pace of the world. However, businesses may face many challenges when applying these

solutions suggested above. For instance, keeping up with changing social trends. This can be explained by the fact that the lifetime of a trend is very fast and customers have many choice in making purchasing decisions. In addition, financial difficulties can become a barrier preventing companies from achieving its goals. Moreover, the issue of human resources needs to meet higher requirements when implementing digital marketing strategies.

The limitation of this study is the lack of primary data and based on implementing literature review. Future research directions can include investigating the impact of the trends mentioned above on purchase decisions.

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