




# Presentation of a Digital Marketing Model for Attracting Medical Equipment Customers

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to design and present a digital marketing model for attracting medical equipment customers. This study, based on its research objectives, is applied-developmental in nature. A qualitative approach was adopted for this research, utilizing thematic analysis to develop the proposed model. The statistical population of the study consists of experts and renowned faculty members from universities. The researcher employed a snowball sampling method and achieved theoretical saturation after interviewing 15 experts and scholars in the field. The data collection method for the qualitative part was semi-structured interviews. The model design and determination of main and sub-themes were conducted using Maxqda2020 software. The findings reveal the identification of six main themes, which include digital sales development, digital customer relationship management, digital advertising, digital marketing content, digital marketing tools, and attracting medical equipment customers. Additionally, the sub-themes for the main theme of digital sales development include modern digital sales models and the necessary platforms for digital sales. The sub-themes for the main theme of digital customer relationship management include tools for digital customer relationship management and the quality of digital customer relationship management. The sub-themes for the main theme of digital advertising include digital advertising tools, features of digital advertising, and digital word-of-mouth advertising. The sub-themes for the main theme of digital marketing content include educational digital content, digital tool content, and digital content updates. The sub-themes for the main theme of digital marketing tools include multimedia marketing, social media marketing, and internet marketing. The sub-themes for the main theme of attracting medical equipment customers include enhancing purchase intention, changing customer attitudes, and strengthening the brand.

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## 1. Introduction

Today, with the expansion of the online and internet economy, the number of websites and online shopping platforms has significantly increased, and every day hundreds of thousands of users purchase products and services through these platforms [1].

Digital marketing is rapidly becoming an essential sales channel for consumers, and it may no longer be merely an alternative to shopping at traditional stores. Simultaneously, marketers reported that 50.1% of their budget

was allocated to digital marketing channels in 2019, with a forecast of 60.5% of their marketing budget being spent on digital marketing plans by the beginning of 2023 [2-4].

The customer experience with a brand online is growing at an increasing pace. It is estimated that e-commerce accounted for more than 14% of global retail sales in 2019 and will represent 22% of global sales by 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic may have accelerated this growth, as 48% of consumers in May 2020 reported that the virus had caused them to purchase products online that they would typically have bought in physical stores [5].

The digital world is attempting to fundamentally change the way we shop, make decisions, and interact with others. This environmental shift results in a significant skills challenge for individuals and organizations. Marketing activities have not been immune to this change; as a result, despite the consistency of marketing processes, a subfield of marketing called "digital marketing" has emerged [6]. Digital marketing, in its narrowest definition, refers to marketing products and services using digital channels; however, in its broader sense, it involves the use of digital technologies to attract customers, enhance brand visibility, retain customers, and increase sales [7]. Based on this definition, the term "digital technologies" is not limited to internet technology but encompasses all modern digital technologies, including social media, mobile devices, augmented and virtual reality, big data, and the Internet of Things [8]. Digital media and social marketing enable companies to achieve their marketing goals at a relatively low cost [9]. In Iran, with the growth in information and communication technology and the increased penetration of mobile phones (over 110%), there are vast opportunities for digital marketing. Globally, digital marketing opportunities are so significant that from 2018 onwards, more than 40% of advertisements have been digital [6].

On the other hand, digital marketing reflects a company's sincere effort to optimize the perceived value for consumers [10]. In other words, digital marketing is based on a genuine desire to add value to the consumer's life (for example, by educating them about the application of a brand), thereby facilitating customer acquisition or retention [11]. Therefore, digital marketing content seeks to enhance the consumer's understanding of the brand and, ultimately, drive sales through the development of consumer value, trust, and relationships. Digital marketing content, by providing valuable and consistent content to buyers, fosters customer loyalty [12]. Key success factors in digital marketing include a deep understanding of audience needs, shared values, dependency, communication, trust, and consumer value growth. In this way, digital marketing can add value to individuals and thus facilitate a reciprocal relationship with them.

Meanwhile, digital marketing has gained increasing importance for small and medium-sized businesses due to its advantages, which has led to a wave of research focusing on innovation in understanding the levels of digital marketing adoption [13]. Small and medium-sized businesses and startups face unique challenges when adopting and utilizing digital technologies. More specifically, it can be argued that digital marketing plays a more significant role in small and medium-sized businesses because decision-makers act based on opportunity-seeking, innovative trends, and commercial interests [14].

The concept of digital marketing as an evolving phenomenon has caused considerable concern among both academics and professionals. Therefore, more empirical research is needed to explore the insights of digital marketing globally. This study aims to address such a need by providing empirical evidence alongside a thorough examination of the determinants of digital marketing, both collectively and independently. Understanding emerging technologies may provide valuable insights for individuals working in medical equipment [15]. However, despite the growing importance of digital marketing, academic understanding of this field is still inadequately developed [16], which may create a significant knowledge gap that this study attempts to address. To examine this knowledge gap, we conceptualize digital marketing and develop a conceptual framework.

In the context of digital marketing research, Hosseini et al. (2024) concluded that the results of their research provide significant insights for both consumers, to enhance the quality of their purchases, and online shopping platform managers, to improve services and increase sales [1]. Similarly, Rahmani et al. (2023) identified critical indicators in digital marketing, including offering choices to customers, retaining customers, providing services tailored to customer needs, maintaining appropriate customer relationships, and creating value [5]. Mosayebi Amidabadi et al. (2023) emphasized that digital marketing strategy is the foundational element of the model and acts as an exogenous independent variable. This strategy influences content marketing, consumer interaction, and the digital marketing mix, which, in turn, affects personalization, and eventually, personalization impacts digital branding as a dependent variable [17]. Sadeghi Boroujerdi et al. (2022) found that social media personalization significantly impacts brand loyalty, perceived value, and brand attachment, while brand attachment and perceived value mediate the relationship between social media personalization and brand loyalty [18]. Tariqi and Sajjadi (2021) demonstrated that the designed e-marketing model for Iranian sports federations possesses the required fit [19]. On a broader scale, Erdmann and Ponzoa (2022) highlighted that e-commerce is optimizing attraction-based digital marketing in alignment with their proposed model, with differences observed between purely traditional and online stores across regions like the U.K. and the U.S. compared to other countries [20]. Similarly, Vollrath and Villegas (2021), in their study "Avoiding Myopia in Digital Marketing Analysis: Revisiting Customer Decision-Making as a Strategic Marketing Framework," emphasized the importance of consumer decision-making in developing strategies and evaluating digital marketing tools in a theoretically sound manner [21]. Lastly, Rangaswamy et al. (2020) stressed the need for digital business platforms to carefully coordinate and manage interactions among users across different sides of the platform while providing opportunities to redefine traditional marketing roles [22].

Therefore, our analysis may improve insights into the digital marketing process for both consumers and companies, thus advancing our understanding of this rapidly growing field. Given the limited insights in digital marketing, we expect our findings to provide useful guidelines for stakeholders seeking a better understanding of the content of digital marketing and its theoretical connections. For scholars, our findings may offer a platform for future studies in this emerging field. For managers, these findings can contribute to the development of digital

marketing understanding and consumer value. Based on the above, the primary issue of the present research is the design and validation of a digital marketing model for attracting medical equipment customers. Therefore, the study attempts to utilize a qualitative approach to propose a digital marketing model aimed at attracting medical equipment customers.

## **2. Methodology**

The nature of this research is exploratory, and qualitative data were utilized. The aim of this study is to propose a digital marketing model for attracting medical equipment customers. The target population for this qualitative research consists of experts and experienced faculty members from universities. The researcher employed the snowball sampling method, and after interviewing 15 experts and specialists, theoretical saturation was reached. The criteria for selecting participants and panel members for the expert group included having relevant work experience, academic publications or articles on the research topic, academic qualifications related to the research topic, at least 10 years of professional experience, and holding at least a PhD degree. Based on initial findings, it was determined that approximately 24 experts meet these criteria across the country. Given the dominance of the qualitative approach in this section, one of the qualitative sampling methods, namely snowball sampling, was used. This means that each interviewee was asked to refer one or more other knowledgeable experts or researchers in the field of the study. After conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 experts, theoretical saturation was achieved. Prior to the interviews, ethical considerations regarding recording were addressed, and participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential. On average, each interview lasted approximately two hours.

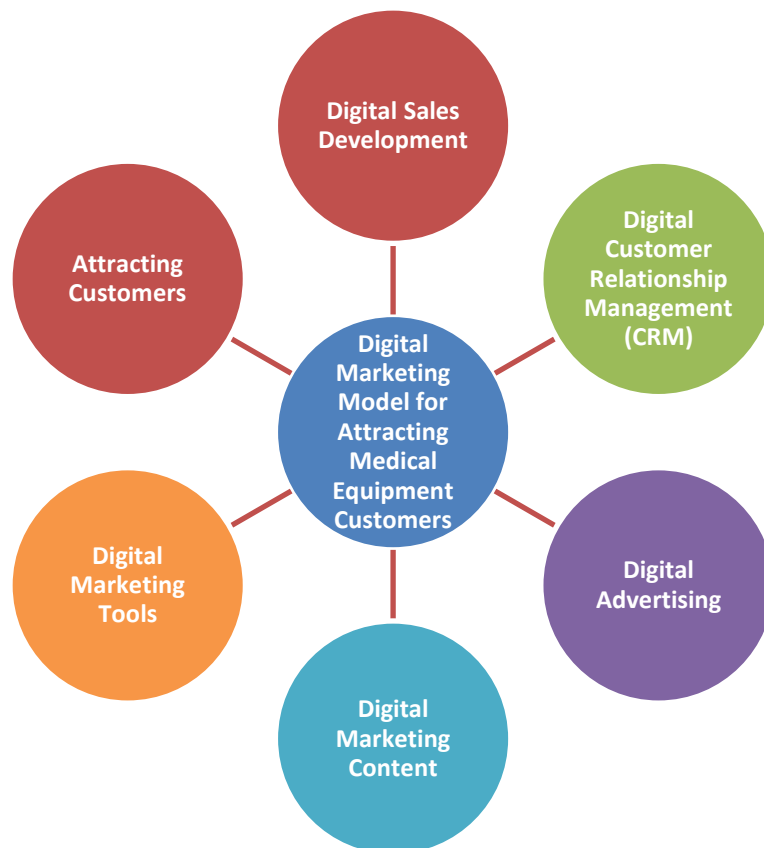
In this research, the thematic analysis technique was employed to explain the development and validation of the "Digital Marketing Model for Attracting Medical Equipment Customers." To ensure construct validity in this qualitative research, the method of participant validation was used. Additionally, a search for negative cases and alternative explanations was conducted. Efforts were also made to select interviewees with diverse experiences and perspectives to prevent personal biases from influencing the research subject. For internal validity, after coding, categorizing, and analyzing the qualitative data, an experience-based model was developed, which was then compared with the predicted model based on theoretical themes. Since qualitative participants are not representative of the entire population, generalizing the findings to the broader population is not possible, and therefore, external validity cannot be claimed in this research. To ensure reliability in the qualitative portion of the study and theoretical saturation, the researcher employed a correlation matrix test to assess the agreement between interviewees, as well as a two-coder agreement chart, which will be explained further. The analysis of the results was performed using the Maxqda 2020 qualitative analysis software.

## **3. Findings**

This section presents the data analysis and findings of the study. The data collection tool consisted of semi-structured interview files, and the analysis was conducted using Maxqda 2020 qualitative analysis software. The data analysis was carried out using 15 interview files. The analysis was performed through three stages: open coding, sub-theme coding, and main theme coding, which are explained in detail in Figure 1. Finally, a model for "Digital Marketing for Attracting Medical Equipment Customers" was proposed. The coding stages are as follows:

1. **Open Coding:** In this stage, the interview files were collected and categorized by the researcher. It is worth mentioning that 15 interview files were collected and coded in this study.
2. **Sub-Themes:** Sub-theme coding is performed when the researcher assigns a code to a specific section or paragraph of the text after reading it. In this stage, more than one code can be assigned to a particular section or paragraph.
3. **Main Themes:** In this stage, the extracted codes are displayed in the Code system, and the researcher can categorize and merge them. This window represents selective coding (main themes), where the researcher can organize the codes to form categories and create a classification structure.

The qualitative findings led to the identification of six main themes: digital sales development, digital customer relationship management, digital advertising, digital marketing content, digital marketing tools, and attracting medical equipment customers. Therefore, the thematic network of the digital marketing model for attracting medical equipment customers is displayed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Thematic Network of the Digital Marketing Model for Attracting Medical Equipment Customers**

**Table 1. Qualitative Analysis Results**

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Concepts
1. Digital Sales Development	- Modern Digital Sales Models	- Online store platforms - B2B and B2C sales integration - Automation in digital sales systems
	- Required Infrastructure for Digital Sales	- Payment gateways - Cloud-based platforms - Supply chain optimization tools
2. Digital Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	- Tools for Managing Digital CRM	- CRM software and apps - Data analytics for customer insights - Customer interaction platforms
	- Quality of Digital CRM	- Personalization of customer interactions - Responsiveness to customer queries - Efficient issue resolution
3. Digital Advertising	- Digital Advertising Tools	- Google Ads and social media platforms - Programmatic advertising - Retargeting and SEO optimization
	- Characteristics of Digital Advertising	- Cost-effectiveness - High targeting accuracy - Cross-platform integration
	- Digital Word-of-Mouth Advertising	- Influencer marketing - User reviews and ratings - Social sharing campaigns
4. Digital Marketing Content	- Educational Digital Content	- Tutorials and product guides - Webinars and blogs - Industry-related articles
	- Digital Content Tools	- Content creation software - Video editing tools - Graphic design applications
	- Updating Digital Content	- Regular updates to blogs and websites - Fresh visuals and infographics - Seasonal campaign adaptations
5. Digital Marketing Tools	- Multimedia Marketing	- Video advertisements - Podcasts and live streaming - Visual storytelling
	- Social Media Marketing	- Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn campaigns - Community building - Social media analytics
	- Internet Marketing	- Email marketing - Search engine marketing (SEM) - Affiliate marketing
6. Attracting Customers	- Enhancing Purchase Intention	- Discounts and promotional offers - Limited-time campaigns - Positive product testimonials
	- Changing Customer Attitudes	- Awareness campaigns - Rebranding efforts - Highlighting sustainability and social responsibility
	- Strengthening the Brand	- Consistent brand identity - Customer loyalty programs - Public relations and reputation management

One of the reliability indicators in qualitative research is the evaluation of two or more documents concerning a specific criterion. The Maxqda software offers such a feature. The reliability coefficient can be calculated with one or more tests and can also be applied to tests conducted at one or more points in time.

Thus, for each of the selected themes in this research, the level of agreement among the interviewees is presented in Table 2, with an acceptable threshold of over 60%. The intersection of the row and column for each interviewee with themselves is always 1, and the comparison should be made with other interviewees. For example, Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 shared a 0.68 (68%) agreement on the selected theme. This means that Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 have a 68% overlap on the selected theme. Given that the level of agreement among the interviewees is over 60%, it can be concluded that theoretical saturation was reached after the twelfth interview.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Interview Participants for Themes**

Interviewee	Res0 1	Res0 2	Res0 3	Res0 4	Res0 5	Res0 6	Res0 7	Res0 8	Res0 9	Res1 0	Res1 1	Res1 2	Res1 3	Res1 4	Res15
Res01	1.00	0.68	0.76	0.62	0.64	0.63	0.64	0.64	0.65	0.74	0.76	0.61	0.68	0.64	0.78
Res02	0.68	1.00	0.78	0.63	0.61	0.62	0.65	0.65	0.77	0.63	0.63	0.64	0.62	0.63	0.62
Res03	0.76	0.78	1.00	0.64	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.72	0.70	0.65	0.78	0.62	0.68
Res04	0.62	0.63	0.64	1.00	0.70	0.63	0.62	0.64	0.65	0.67	0.76	0.61	0.78	0.64	0.61
Res05	0.64	0.61	0.62	0.70	1.00	0.71	0.77	0.64	0.70	0.62	0.64	0.68	0.65	0.69	0.68
Res06	0.63	0.62	0.63	0.63	0.71	1.00	0.85	0.63	0.64	0.61	0.78	0.75	0.60	0.63	0.73
Res07	0.64	0.65	0.62	0.62	0.77	0.85	1.00	0.64	0.68	0.64	0.62	0.76	0.79	0.60	0.74
Res08	0.64	0.65	0.62	0.64	0.64	0.63	0.64	1.00	0.63	0.62	0.64	0.70	0.63	0.74	0.68
Res09	0.65	0.77	0.61	0.65	0.70	0.64	0.68	0.63	1.00	0.63	0.70	0.62	0.62	0.76	0.62
Res10	0.74	0.63	0.72	0.67	0.62	0.61	0.64	0.62	0.63	1.00	0.74	0.63	0.61	0.79	0.78
Res11	0.76	0.63	0.70	0.76	0.64	0.78	0.62	0.64	0.70	0.74	1.00	0.68	0.76	0.69	0.63
Res12	0.61	0.64	0.65	0.61	0.68	0.75	0.76	0.70	0.62	0.63	0.68	1.00	0.71	0.63	0.64
Res13	0.68	0.62	0.78	0.78	0.65	0.60	0.79	0.63	0.62	0.61	0.76	0.71	1.00	0.65	0.62
Res14	0.64	0.63	0.62	0.64	0.69	0.63	0.60	0.74	0.76	0.79	0.69	0.63	0.65	1.00	0.70
Res15	0.78	0.62	0.68	0.61	0.68	0.73	0.74	0.68	0.62	0.78	0.63	0.64	0.62	0.70	1.00

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The qualitative findings revealed six main themes: digital sales development, digital customer relationship management (CRM), digital advertising, digital marketing content, digital marketing tools, and attracting medical equipment customers. Additionally, the sub-themes for the main theme of digital sales development include modern digital sales models and the necessary infrastructure for digital sales. For the main theme of digital customer relationship management, the sub-themes include tools for managing digital CRM and the quality of digital CRM. For the main theme of digital advertising, the sub-themes include digital advertising tools, characteristics of digital advertising, and digital word-of-mouth advertising. For the main theme of digital marketing content, the sub-themes include educational digital content, digital content tools, and updating digital content. For the main theme of digital marketing tools, the sub-themes include multimedia marketing, social



media marketing, and internet marketing. For the main theme of attracting medical equipment customers, the sub-themes include enhancing purchase intention, changing customer attitudes, and strengthening the brand.

Based on the results, for the first main theme of the digital marketing model aimed at attracting medical equipment customers, two sub-themes were identified: modern digital sales models and the necessary infrastructure for digital sales. These findings are somewhat similar to the results of prior studies. Explaining these findings, it can be said that current market trends indicate that traditional sales will undergo significant changes in the coming decades due to the development of technologies, rendering them inefficient. The growth of digital technologies has transformed sales methods [1, 10, 20-22].

For the second main theme, digital customer relationship management, two sub-themes were identified and reported: tools for managing digital CRM and the quality of digital CRM. These findings are somewhat similar to the results of studies by Babashahi et al. (2020) and Yangjuan Hu (2020). Explaining these findings, it can be said that various types of CRM systems have been widely used to organize processes, execute logistical orders, obtain product and service inventory information, communicate with suppliers and wholesalers, automate marketing, and collect data.

For the third main theme, digital advertising, three sub-themes were identified and reported: digital advertising tools, characteristics of digital advertising, and digital word-of-mouth advertising. These findings are somewhat similar to the results of prior studies. Explaining these findings, it can be said that with the rapid growth of social media and the increasing inclination of various groups to use them, these media have become exceptional tools for business-customer interactions and implementing marketing programs [10, 15, 21].

For the fourth main theme, digital marketing content, three sub-themes were identified and reported: educational digital content, digital content tools, and updating digital content. Compared to previous studies reviewed in the literature, relatively similar results were found in this research. These findings are somewhat similar to the results of prior studies [6, 23, 24].

For the fifth main theme, digital marketing tools, three sub-themes were identified and reported: multimedia marketing, social media marketing, and internet marketing. Studies [17, 20, 21] are somewhat similar to the findings of this research. Explaining these findings, it can be said that another main theme in digital marketing within the medical equipment industry is digital marketing tools, which include critical sub-themes such as multimedia marketing, social media marketing, and internet marketing. The research literature also supports these findings. Therefore, it is essential for decision-makers in the medical equipment industry to plan accurately for the proper management of relationships. This management includes aspects ranging from employee behavior to the technologies used.

It is recommended that companies in the medical equipment industry plan effectively for establishing meaningful connections with customers by focusing on these themes and their elements. For example, through content creation, search engine optimization, CRM management, and attention to digital marketing, they can



establish two-way interactions with customers and attract medical equipment customers by improving the efficiency of their stores.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Authors equally contributed to this article.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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