# The Role of Corporate Digital Marketing in Customer Loyalty a Survey Study on Customers of the Iraqi Cellular Communications Sector

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#### **Abstract**

The research aimed to identify the impact of digital marketing on customer loyalty in the Iraqi cellular communications sector, by knowing the impact of digital marketing in terms of attraction, participation and communication on customer loyalty in the Iraqi cellular communications sector. The researcher relied on the descriptive approach in the research to describe the topic to be studied through a correct scientific methodology, and the quantitative approach for accurate and unbiased measurement and analysis of numerical data collected through questionnaires or surveys, and statistical and mathematical analysis of data or through the SPSS program. The sample size was 371 respondents, and the sample was subjected to the stability test / Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The study concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation and impact of the role of digital marketing in terms of (attraction, participation, communication) in achieving customer loyalty in the Iraqi cellular communications sector. The study recommended the need to focus on the dimensions within digital marketing that are related to and have an impact on customer loyalty, with the need to focus on the importance of customer satisfaction in enhancing customer loyalty in the subject of digital marketing, with the need to conduct a market study and analyze data to know market trends before carrying out the digital marketing process, so that services are provided that satisfy customers in the first place, and then achieve customer loyalty towards them.

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

#### Introduction

Building brand names is an important investment factor and a significant element in creating sustainable competition. It helps companies differentiate themselves from others, enhances their ability to market goods and services, and can even assist in increasing market share and venturing into new markets (Bresnahan, T.F., Stern, S., & Trajtenberg, 1997). Most companies focus on customers as the foundation for designing their products and the reason for their existence. They work on making interactive relationships and gaining customers' trust by providing the various information they need. To achieve their goals, companies actively seek to use all means available to develop relationships with their customers. One of the most important methods currently is digital marketing, which stems from the tremendous technological and informational revolution. It appears to be a new form of marketing that allows direct communication between the company and potential and actual customers, providing them with the latest information about the services offered. The digital marketing environment includes a number of digital applications available through websites and social media, utilized in numerous business activities (Al Bediree, F.K., Al Jenaibi, T.H., 2020, 272). Digital marketing can be envisioned within the broader context of digital marketing theory, which indicates that a digital marketing strategy includes online branding, engagement, communication, and delivering products and services through digital channels. The framework must consider how organizations can leverage digital tools such as social media, content marketing, email campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), and digital advertising to create customer value and build brand equity (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Consumer attitudes towards advertising are one of the indicators that signify the effective impact of advertising, as purchase intentions will tend to increase when attitudes towards advertisements are more positive (Hameed, I., Khan, M.B, and Shahab, A.2020)

# Chapter One

First: Research Problem

The digitization strategy has revolutionized many fields such as marketing, consumer behavior, industry, e-commerce, mobile devices, smart products, the Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence. In the digital

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age, business organizations are focusing on advanced strategies to enhance their competitiveness and market share by leveraging the potential of digital content and strengthening their digital capabilities to build their brand, and reaching their target customers and retaining them, while promoting their products (Mohammad A.M., 2022). Thus, the researcher identifies the research problem within the cellular telecommunications sector in Iraq, based on the results of the exploratory study on one hand, and the shortcomings in previous studies that have not addressed a model testing the bilateral relationship between digital marketing and customer loyalty on the other. Consequently, the knowledge gap and the study problem are summarized in an attempt to examine the impact of digital marketing—through attraction, engagement, and communication—on customer loyalty, specifically within the context of Iraqi cellular telecommunications companies.

#### Second: Importance of the Research

The significance of the concepts and variables addressed in the current research lies in its contribution to scientific value, as it aims to test a model examining the impact of digital marketing through the core dimensions of attraction, communication, and engagement on customer loyalty. Additionally, the importance of this research extends to the organization under study. The research is conducted within a diverse community that has its own unique culture, specifically the Iraqi community and the Iraqi individual. Consequently, the uniqueness of the study stems from its execution in a cultural environment with distinct characteristics, which lends scientific specificity to the research findings when cited by other researchers. Understanding how digital marketing efforts impact customer loyalty is crucial for society as a whole and for the organization implementing digital marketing strategies aimed at enhancing its marketing approach. This scientific exploration of the relationship contributes to the academic literature by identifying and qualifying how digital initiatives retain customers over time, which is a key factor for business sustainability.

## Third: Research Objective

The objective of this research is to identify and understand the impact of digital marketing on customer loyalty within the mobile telecommunications sector in Iraq. It highlights the urgent need for such studies in Iraq's telecommunications industry and its significance in supporting the national economy. Additionally, the findings and recommendations of this research can serve as a database and a guide for the studied companies, helping them make critical decisions regarding their digital marketing strategies and assessing their effectiveness in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Understanding the level and reality of customer satisfaction with the telecommunications services provided, as well as identifying potential marketing gaps or untapped alternative opportunities. Moreover, this research aims to offer comprehensive insights into the impact of digital marketing on customer loyalty through the lens of customer satisfaction. It contributes significantly to the academic literature and the strategic approaches adopted in practical marketing, along with broader social and economic implications.

## Fourth: Research Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes a statistically significant positive relationship between digital marketing and customer loyalty. In other words, effective implementation of digital marketing will enhance customer loyalty within the mobile telecommunications sector in Iraq.

## Fifth: Research Population and Sample

The research population consists of all customers in the Iraqi mobile telecommunications sector. A sample will be selected from this population, specifically from the two major companies, Zain and Asia Cell, as they are among the leading mobile telecommunications providers in Iraq. A simple random sample of 390 customers from these companies will be selected.

### Sixth: Data and Information Sources

To achieve the research objectives, information was collected using the following methods:

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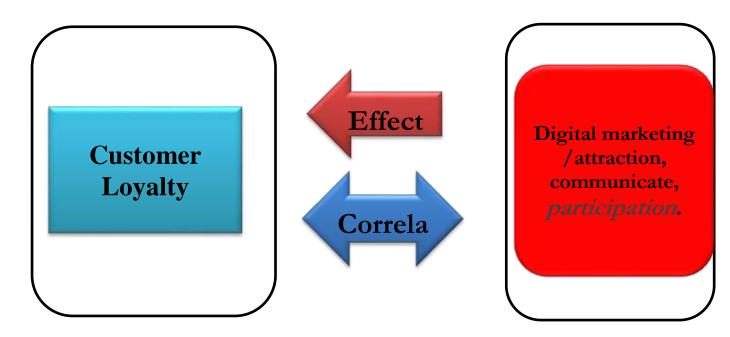
**First Aspect:** Theoretical and Academic\* This aspect relies on available local, Arab, and international sources, including peer-reviewed research studies, books, and various published studies related to the topics of this research.

**Second Aspect:** Practical and Applied\* Statistical equations were employed to assess the significance of digital marketing and customer loyalty in the mobile telecommunications sector in Iraq. Statistical analysis was conducted using software programs (SPSS V26) and (Microsoft Excel 2010) to derive the results.

Seventh: Research Model

The researcher employed a five-point Likert scale to categorize respondents' answers for each statement in the questionnaire. Accordingly, the researcher developed a conceptual framework for the study that illustrates the nature of the relationships between the variables in the current research, as depicted in

Figure 1.



Chapter Two: Theoretical Review

First: Concept of Digital Marketing

The concept of digital marketing refers to the marketing of products or services using digital technology, particularly over the Internet. This includes mobile phones, online advertising, and other digital devices. Digital marketing encompasses marketing activities that utilize the Internet or electronic devices through digital channels, such as search engines, social media, email, and websites, to engage with current and potential customers (Desai, V., 2019, p. 196). Both Kotler and Armstrong (2020) define digital marketing as a marketing activity that utilizes electronic tools such as websites, social media, mobile applications, online advertising, and email to engage customers. Additionally, Abdul Baqi et al. (2020, p. 587) describe digital marketing as the promotion of goods and services through innovative methods using digital platforms to reach customers in a cost-effective, timely, and personalized manner. Salam (2021, p. 122) defines digital marketing as the application of digital and interactive technologies—such as websites, email, social media, and mobile devices—that serve as marketing channels. These channels facilitate communication with customers, enabling the identification and efficient fulfillment of their needs.

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## Second: Importance of Digital Marketing

Desai & Vidyapeeth (2019, p. 196) note that digital marketing employs various methods and digital channels to reach customers where they engage with online platforms. This includes the use of digital locations, online branding, digital advertising, email marketing, and online brochures, along with a range of digital activities that fall under the umbrella of digital marketing. Mohamed (2022, p. 572) emphasizes that digital marketing enables small companies to compete more equitably with larger competitors, as most customers rely on computers, smartphones, and other digital devices. Additionally, companies aim to promote their products through electronic and global channels

# Third: Objectives of Digital Marketing

According to the objectives set by the company to strengthen and expand communication with potential customers, it is essential to study digital technology as a means of making customers aware of the company. When all online communication and service activities are integrated, the marketing plan for the target market will be achieved (Fauzi et al., 2023, p. 12). NALBANT & AYDIN (2023, p. 9) argue that digital marketing involves using digital device technologies to build channels for potential customers, with the aim of achieving business objectives by more effectively meeting customer needs. The terms "online marketing" and "e-marketing" are sometimes used interchangeably with "digital marketing," which has become more prevalent in recent years. The Internet is one of the most important channels through which customers can be reached due to its extensive reach; additionally, there are audio and digital visual devices.

#### Fourth: Dimensions of Digital Marketing

- 1. Attraction The first dimension of digital marketing is how to attract customers to a company's websites. This can be achieved through advertising boards, links from other websites, and leveraging marketing communications tools such as advertising and product packaging (Teo, 2005).
- 2. Communication This is one of the most critical elements for the success of digital marketing. It is defined as the process of conveying information and mutual understanding from one person to another. Once the company's management gains insights into customer perceptions, the focus shifts to the next phase of the digital marketing process, which involves interacting with those customers and delivering value to them (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019).
- 3. Engagement The third dimension of digital marketing relates to taking care of users and engaging them after they are attracted to and interact with the site. Engagement means establishing relationships with customers, where there is both giving and receiving, and where the customer becomes a component and active participant in marketing and production efforts (Zahay, 2015, p. 13).

#### Fifth: Customer Loyalty

Customers are the most crucial component in the marketing process, as they are fundamental to the growth of organizations. They serve as the essential support for business activities related to the survival and expansion of the institution, highlighting the importance of adopting a new approach to coordinated actions by providing innovative ways to acquire customers. Organizations recognize the need to become more marketing-oriented and customer-focused by creating shared value for their clients, contributing to their sustainable growth (Al-Hakim & Rasool, 2022, p. 39). Oliver (1999, p. 33) defines customer loyalty as the strong and deep commitment exhibited by a customer toward purchasing the company's services or products. This loyalty is evidenced by the customer's repeated purchasing behavior in a consistent manner, regardless of varying circumstances or the marketing efforts made by competing institutions to attract customers. According to Haji and Dole (2017, p. 221), customer loyalty is the degree of positive belief a customer has toward a brand, characterized by commitment and the intention to continue purchasing it. This is reflected in the repeated buying of that brand, as well as the company's commitment to providing more than what the customer aspires to, in order to retain them. Lenin Kumar (2017, p. 451) describes customer loyalty as a promise from buyers to purchase products, services, and a particular brand over a

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fixed period, regardless of new products and innovations from competitors. These customers are not compelled to switch; instead, loyal customers actively contribute to the company, speak positively about it to others, and engage in repeat purchases. Therefore, customer loyalty serves as evidence of ongoing patronage and recommendations from service recipients to other customers.

## Sixth: Importance of Customer Loyalty

According to Utami (2015, p. 639), the importance of customer loyalty lies in delivering the value that customers seek. Customer loyalty can create a competitive advantage, increase the organization's market share, and enhance long-term profitability. Furthermore, loyalty can reduce marketing costs among other promotional expenses. Therefore, organizations not only need to develop better marketing programs but also must maintain long-term relationships to foster customer loyalty. Linina and Zvirgzdina (2020, p. 3) found that a strong understanding of the influencing factors is essential for cultivating customer loyalty. At the same time, analyzing and evaluating these factors contributes to securing greater customer trust, enhancing competitiveness, and providing significant competitive advantages for the organization. The researcher argues that customer loyalty is more a matter of perception or preference for a particular brand, in behavioral terms, rather than merely the repetition of purchases. In fact, many organizational efforts focus solely on increasing the frequency of repeat purchases among existing customers. To enhance this effort, marketing strategists have developed predictive models that illustrate the significant profitability impacts of increasing the repeat purchase rate among current customers.

# Seventh: Objectives of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty has received significant attention in marketing literature due to its contribution to creating a sustainable competitive advantage for businesses. Izogo (2017, p. 1) notes that loyalty aims to provide competitive advantages specifically for different companies. Customer loyalty can be considered a critical success factor for others, necessitating the development of a smart marketing strategy and an approach to retaining loyal customers. Among the objectives noted by El-Adly (2019, p. 329) is the contribution of loyalty to attracting customers and enhancing profits. This is due to the fact that the cost of acquiring new customers is at least five times higher than the cost of maintaining relationships with existing customers. The findings provide valuable and practical insights for managers seeking to satisfy and retain their loyal customers.

### Eighth: Model of Customer Loyalty Factors

Khadka and Maharjan (2017:8 clarified that the relationship with the customer is equally important for customer loyalty, which necessitates that organizations operate within a broader context that extends beyond their immediate interests. No company can excel globally in all areas. The researchers categorized customer loyalty into three distinct categories: behavioral loyalty, cognitive loyalty, and emotional loyalty. Behavioral loyalty refers to the repetition of purchasing behavior, while cognitive loyalty pertains to the potential willingness to buy. In contrast, emotional loyalty is achieved when the customer feels that the brand aligns with their values, beliefs, and passions.



Figure (2): Customer loyalty factors model

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(Khadka, K & Maharjan, S. (2017). Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty case Trivsel Städtjänster (trivsel siivouspalvelut). thesis. business management. Centria university of applied sciences. P9)

The previous figure illustrates the extent of customer loyalty, which is a process like any other process, and according to the model of customer loyalty factors that shape customer loyalty such as understanding their needs and desires. The organization must pay attention to price, promotion, services and products in order to gain customer loyalty, and at the same time, creating a comfortable environment between the customer and the organization is vital, and investing in loyal customers brings benefits to the business such as increasing business efficiency and profits.

Chapter Three: The Scientific Aspect

First: The Certitude/ Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

The researcher used the Cronbach's alpha method to measure the degree of stability of the referendum, where the average internal correlation between the statements it measures can be expressed, and its value ranges between (1-0), and the acceptable value for it is considered 0.60 or more, and the closer the scale's degree is to the correct one, the higher the degree of stability of the tool and its suitability for use, and the results were as shown in Table (1).

From the results shown in Table (1), the value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was acceptable and ranged from 0.957 to 0.973. Thus, the researcher has confirmed the validity and reliability of the study referendum, which makes him completely confident of the validity of the questionnaire's phrases and their suitability for analyzing the results and the possibility of answering the study questions and testing its hypotheses.

Table (1): Describe Cronbach's alpha test result to measure survey readability

Independent	Phrases	Cronbach's	Dependent	Number	Cronbach's
Variables	Number	alpha	Variable		alpha
Attraction	5	0.957	Customer	15	0.973
Communication	5	0.963	loyalty		
participation	5	0.961			
Digital	15	0.970			
marketing					

Source: Done by researcher based on SPSS V26 Program

Second: Analysis of the correlation in the research variables

#### Prelude

The main objective of the correlation scale is to determine the strength of the relationship between variables and indicate whether the relationship is strong, weak, or non-existent, in addition to determining the direction of the relationship between the two variables, to show whether the relationship is positive or negative, as the study of correlation is the basis for studying and analyzing causal relationships. Correlation measures are also important indicators in measuring validity and reliability, due to their great importance in ensuring the integrity of tests and data collection procedures.

Proofing the main first correlation hypothesis which states: (Digital marketing has a statistically significant correlation with customer loyalty)

Table (2) shows that the value of the correlation coefficient between digital marketing and customer loyalty reached (\*\*0.756), with a significance of (0.000), which is less than the significance level (0.01), with a strong positive direct relationship, and is confirmed by the value of the (t) test, which reached (10.844), which

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increases the value of the (t) tabulated (2.33), and these results confirm the acceptance of the correlation hypothesis, which states (there is a significant correlation between digital marketing and customer loyalty), and the researcher attributes this to the fact that the company publishes (specialized pages to introduce customers to its services).

Tabel (2): Correlation test result between Digital Marketing Variable and Customer loyalty

	Digital Marketing X					
Customer loyalty	.756**					
Significant	0.000					
Calculated t Values	10.844					
T Tabel Values	2.33					
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Third: proofing the influence relationships in the research variables.

#### Prelude

In practical analyses, the researcher will answer the hypotheses related to the relationship of influence to show the effect between the variables and their direction. The positive effect between the variables is that the increase in one of the variables is met with an increase in the other variable, while the negative effect analysis indicates that the increase in one of the variables is met with a decrease in the other variable, and it is shown in the following hypothesis.

proofing the main effect hypothesis (first) which states: (Digital marketing has a statistically significant effect relationship with customer loyalty)

The results of Table (3) show that there is a significant effect of digital marketing on customer loyalty, as the value reached 0.572 (R2), which is an explanatory power that explains the value of (57.2) of the variance that occurs in customer loyalty resulting from the change in digital marketing in the companies under study, and that other unknown sources explain the percentage of (42.8%) attributed to side factors that were not included in the study model, and what reinforces this result is the value of (F) that was calculated, which reached (424.966), which is greater than its tabular value of (6.72) at a significance level of (0.01), and with two degrees of freedom (1.318), and this result is explained by the fact that the company under study shows good digital marketing through awareness of the importance of applying digital marketing and maintaining its use with all available capabilities to achieve the company's goals, meaning that there is a clear impact relationship between the two variables, and thus hypothesis is accepted in the form of proof, which is (Digital marketing has a statistically significant impact on customer loyalty.

Table (3): Statical Results for Digital Marketing Variable effect (X) on Customer loyalty (Y)											
Dependent	Digital Marketing		(R <sup>2</sup> )	(F)	(t)	Sig	Decision				
Variable	Variable (X)						Calculated				
Customer	Digital	( <b>a</b> )	1.078			7.417		Accept			
loyalty	Marketing			0.572	424.966		0.000	alternative			
		(β)	0.749			20.615		hypothesis			
Table (F) Value = 6.72 /// Table (t) Value = 2.34 / sample size 371											
Number of Accept hypothesis = 1											
Number Accept alternative hypothesis = 1											

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## Chapter Four: Conclusions and recommendations

#### First: Conclusions

- 1- The results of the statistical analysis showed that there is a statistically significant correlation and impact of the role of digital marketing in terms of (attraction, delivery, participation) in achieving customer loyalty in the Iraqi cellular communications sector.
- 2- The statistical results showed that the company under study enhances the feature of reminding its brand through all digital applications and tools.
- 3 The statistical results showed that the company is making (advertising) messages via mobile phone to communicate with customers.
- 4 The results of the study showed that the company's digital tools provide appropriate content of services for all customer tastes.
- 5 The statistical results showed that the company is making a feature (instant or direct service) in communicating with its customers.
- 6 The results of the statistical analysis showed that the company is making attractive digital tools that make it easy for the customer to search for its services.

#### Recommendations

- 1 The company that under the study must provide highly attractive advertising space to gain customers.
- 2 The company should work on publishing a specialized page to introduce customers to its service.
- 3 Provide the company with digital tools, forums and chat pages to enhance the participation with customers.
- 4 The company provides a variety of digital services to suit all tastes and categories.
- 5 The company must provide an electronic follow-up process for new data for new potential customers.
- 6 The company selects specialized employees to conduct online surveys to identify its customers' preferences.

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