



## Digital Marketing: Five Stages Maturity Model for Digital Marketing Strategy Implementation

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**Abstract:** *The new context of digital has reversed collegiate definitions and swayed power between companies and customers. As a result, meeting customer needs has become the focus and challenge of any business. With customer centric strategies, implementation frameworks have to be adjusted following marketing shift from mass marketing to digital personalized marketing. The changing technologies and customer behavior become daily challenges for marketers to improve their reaching and conversion techniques. Marketers are also challenged to nurture customer relationship across virtual world in fierce competitive markets. We propose in this paper a maturity model for digital marketing strategy implementation to help marketers and organization in their implementation journey. The goal of using maturity model is to help enterprises identify the current situation and identify the correspondent path of evolution to reach the desired situation. The proposed maturity model identifies 5 stages of growth: initiation, expansion, formalization, integration, and maturity, along with 9 benchmark variables: strategy, resources/Skills, organization, control, communication, culture, digital identity, customer knowledge, and technology. In this paper, after the introduction, we will be presenting the maturity model, and we will detail the benchmark variables in the second section. The third section present dominant problems, followed by the conclusion and research limitations.*

**Key Words:** Digital marketing, Marketing strategy, Costumer centric strategy, Maturity models, Stage of Growth, Implementation framework, Benchmark variables.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, digital marketing is no longer a new topic in need to be presented to enterprises. The exponential growth of social medias, mobile applications, internet users and their millions of daily interactions forced marketers to adopt a marketing digital approach or at least initiate a shy initiative. According to the 2018 Hootsuite report, we count today, 4.02 billions of internet users across the world and 3.196 billion active social media user, which represent respectively 53 and 42 per cent of wold population with 7 and 13 per cent of annual growth (Hootsuite 2018). About the half of the world population is actually using internet, representing for enterprises a prosper market to promote their offers and increase sales, and also, many challenges due to its complex and constant changes.

Product lifecycle is getting shorter (Jahanmir and Cavadas, 2018), and buying processes have changed: 91 per cent have visited an online retail store, 56 percent visited an online price comparison site or service and 75 per cent have purchased product or service online. Hence, business models are changing to embrace technology advance, customers’ needs and competitiveness. The openness of internet and social media gave the space for customers to express freely their opinions, feedbacks, sharing experiences and consequently challenging companies to improve the quality of their products/services or decrease the prices in front of the competitiveness.

To follow this transition, business models and strategies are becoming more customer centric to deliver a good customer experience across different acquisition channels: offline or online. Consequently, enterprises reconsidered their marketing approach and ventured in this new digital world to be in with a chance in the race. Marketing today is shifting from mass marketing to customized offers, placing the clients at business core of the company. Digital marketing is not only about developing website or spreading some messages through social media. It is about a “mindset” that firms must incarnate to reach people across digital channels and initiate a bilateral dialogue by means of a well define, formulated, integrated customer-centric digital marketing strategy. The firms should build a trusted relationship and nurture it to develop loyalty and customer experience in such virtual and complex world.

As companies increasingly develop their digital marketing, it is important to be able to evaluate the wandered journey before continuing and reaching the business objectives. The idea is to draw the previous journey of the firms in their digital marketing implementation and help managers to refine the paths to be taken in the future, optimizing the efforts and resources. Specific marketing dimensions should be clearly defined to overcome challenges and create opportunities of such not well-known ground.

The aim of this research is to contribute to developing digital marketing maturity model to foster digital marketing adoption and implementation to sustain businesses across digital.

### 2. MATURITY MODEL

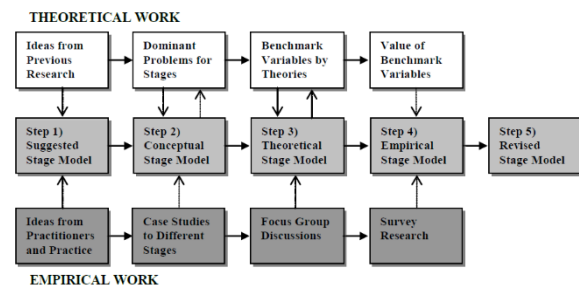
The adoption of digital has affected the ways enterprises are running. Shifting from the classic methods to more innovative and disruptive technologies, the organizations were faced to the drastic world of the digital, generating several changes across the companies at all levels. This forces and pushes the companies to embrace new ways of working and marketing their products to ensure sustainability of their businesses.

This involves the firm to challenge itself and critically review their implementation process of digital marketing. To succeed in their digital journeys, the companies must answer anytime asked the three questions below: Where is the firm today? What would it achieve by tomorrow? And how can the firm achieve it? By implementing a maturity model for digital marketing implementation the firm can answer the three question and dress the evolution paths to achieve the business objectives.

The maturity models or stage of growth (SoG) is a framework describing the ideal progression toward desired improvement using several successive stages or levels (T) man 2007). Historically, they were allied to Information system with the most popular maturity model (CMMI). A maturity model allows the firm better vision of the implementation progression. It also provides a continuous approach for improvement in many areas defined as maturity model dimensions. A mature organization is the one that is meeting its business needs ensuring an overall consistency and strategic alignment at all levels of implementation. The Sog model represent a picture of evolution where the current stage can be understood in terms of history and future.

Several fields were concerned by maturity models development, however digital marketing was not included. We aim in this paper to develop a maturity model for digital marketing implementation. Our maturity model for digital marketing implementation is based on the following model.

#### 2.1 Theoretical model:



According to (Solli-Sæther and Gottschalk, 2010), « Researchers have struggled to develop and test stages of growth models ». They suggested five stages procedure for developing stages of growth. In this procedure four core topics are identified:

- **Stages:** each stage of growth or maturity level matches with several factors that determine the transition point where from a level to another. To reach any level, it is necessary to satisfy the current level and those before.

- **Dominant problems:** the problems faced by the enterprise, their difficulty and nature categorize its level of maturity, at each stage of growth dominant problems will help to determine venture's position in a particular stage of growth and thus define the stages specificities.

- **Benchmark variables:** are used to indicate characteristics in each stage of growth. Their values are distinct for each maturity stage and will correspond with the conceptual formulation for the given stage

- **Path of evolution** describes the path followed by organizations in their way to gain maturity. Organization, going through transformation, show predictable patterns of growth from one stage to another, increasing maturity. Our maturity model is a five stages model, based on the framework presented below.

## 2.2 Stages of growth :



**Fig - 1 :** Five stages of the maturity model

**Stage 1** is the Initialization stage. At this level there is no « official » frame that orchestrate the digital marketing implementation. Variables evolve freely without being framed in a strategic plan. Without any formalized objectives, actions come from personal initiative and miss coordination between business units involved. Each department is taking by itself actions on the digital environment and channels. The company is in the discovery and learning phase, the management is unaware of the importance and wingspan of the digital marketing. This stage is characterized by experimentation

**Stage 2** is the Expansion where the management is implied and aware of the potential of the digital marketing implementation. The strategy is formulated, and the organizational changes coming from a holistic approach are starting, to achieve an overall cohesion. At this stage the implementation takes a considerable momentum to put the machine in motion for a change at all the enterprise's levels.

**Stage 3** is Formalization. The digital marketing strategy, at this stage, is formalized, communicated, and approved. Accompanying plans are implemented both internally and

externally, by defining the processes and interactions between all the transformation stakeholders (Top management, employees, client, providers...). The new marketing organization is taking shape to fit with the new orientation, and the skills of the teams are reviewed.

**Stage 4 :** The Integration stage is where the marketing strategy evolution is integrated into the overall strategy of the company, and the consequent strategies follow. The digital marketing strategy represent a major input for the board to insure the business continuity. Coordination between variables to ensure convergence of levels. The IS for all the departments are integrated to provide 360 customer view and centralized information to a predictive decision making.

**Stage 5:** Maturity is characterized by the overall absorption of digital marketing concepts. The ROI and customer cost as well as conversions are continuously challenged. The control mechanisms are business value oriented. Off line and online are integrated. Continuous improvement is implemented to keep pace with digital environment and anticipate the challenges of a continual changing environment.

## 3. BENCHMARK VARIABLES

We first defined our benchmark variables from the DMI definition of digital marketing, then we completed the list from the extant literature of digital marketing implementation. The DMI Digital Marketing Institute define digital marketing as "the use of digital technologies to create an integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them". By analyzing this definition, there are variables that fall short of this definition which will help us to design identify the first part of benchmark variables of our maturity model. The first ones that stand out clearly are: communication and technologies, while the strategic approach, customer knowledge and measurement are implicit variables that are deducted from the definition below. The second part which concerns Organization, Skills and Culture is presented in the section bellow. The Digital identity variable is adds to our benchmark variables given the specificities of digital marketing and the importance of owning an identity in the virtual and digital networks.

Thus, our model consists in 9 benchmark variables: Strategy, Organization, Resources/Skills, Digital identity, Communication, Culture, Customer Knowledge, Control, and Technology.

**Table - 1:** Maturity model for digital marketing strategy implementation

	Initiation	Expansion	Formalization	Integration	Maturity
<b>Digital marketing Strategy</b>	Lack of strategy  Personal and individual initiatives	Management is aware of digital marketing issues and the need of customer centric approach.  Strategy is formulated.	Strategy is formulated, communicated and approved.  Strategy is declined on the benchmark variables	Strategy is integrated into the global strategy  A strong management consensus  Implementing agile iterations and improvement	Online and offline strategies are integrated  A continuous improvement is settled to evolve in digital world  Driving a rapid customer centric innovation
<b>Skills and Ressources</b>	Classical skills recommended	Teams reinforcement to implement strategy  Resources plan is prepared to embrace digital sharing culture	Well drawn training plan for digital technologies and capabilities  Basics generalist roles	Strong people profiles joining technical, functional and analytical skills  Independent and transverse teams	Encouraging continuous training, agility and responsibility  Sharing learning experience
<b>Culture</b>	No digital culture	Accompanying plan are defined internally and externally  Change management is operated	Deeper integration of social and sharing culture  Embracing collaboration and transparency	Challenging teams to drive innovation  Spreading Data driven decision making culture	Marketing thinking is modernised  Data driven decision making culture is spread  Agile and cooperative structure, centred on customer needs
<b>Organisation</b>	No changes on the structure : siloed organization  The marketing business unit( department) is not involved in any digital campaign	Digital marketing structure is born, as a part of marketing department  Processes are not defined	Defined digital processes driving speed and collaboration  Breaking down silos	Strong and fluid cooperation between marketing and other department.  Layering organisation is being delayed  Digital marketing is send as facilitator and transverse bridge to reach customers	Clear and Cross functional process and governance are designed  Coordination between business units  Unified key performance indicators
<b>Customer knowlegde</b>	Customer knowledge relay on generic segmentation data	Collecting customer data across different platforms  Collecting customer insight	Customer touch point are identified  Customer journey is drawn  Convert customer insight into actionable action to improve marketing offers	Data is integrated to construct global customer image across departments  Customer insights are used across departments  Conversion costs are optimized	Customer data is refreshed and completed through time evolution  Historical information serve to predict customer decision and adapt  Online and offline information are integrated to expand segments
<b>Digital Identity</b>	No digital identity	Shy digital presence on web and social media  Generic	Approved and official digital presence  Security measures to prevent identity theft	Digital identity is co-created with online customers	Digital identity is preserved  Brand and digital identity are aligned
<b>Control</b>	Volume and flow indicators  Generic used tools  Irregular KPI and Dashboard	Control mechanisms characteristics are defined : frequency, baselines, interpretations  Every team identifies its own dashboards	Control mechanisms are documented and commonly shared.  Specific and personalized reporting tools	Dashboards and KPI are oriented business value.  Control mechanism of strategy implementation are balanced and corrective actions are setted  Online and offline dashboard are consolidated	KPI are challenged to improve enterprise performance  Control mechanisms evolve with marketing strategy continual improvement

<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>One direction communication : internal top-down and external enterprise to client</p>	<p>Community management bases are identified</p> <p>Starting pushing activity</p> <p>Bi-directional conversation with online customers</p> <p>Internal communication plan is defined</p>	<p>Customers and collaborators feedback is collected and analysed</p> <p>Content is personalised and differentiated across channels</p> <p>Nurturing internal and external communities</p>	<p>Content innovation</p> <p>Communication alignment across channels</p> <p>Integrated appealing content strategy</p>	<p>Maintained communication interaction internally and externally</p> <p>Nurturing communication funnel</p> <p>Improving social listening</p> <p>Optimizing communication costs</p>
<p><b>Technology and innovation</b></p>	<p>Lack of dedicated marketing tools</p>	<p>Elaborating technical platform to accelerate digital marketing adoption</p>	<p>Integrate customer data and tools to uniform customer understanding</p> <p>Initiate IT architecture and technical roadmaps</p>	<p>Optimize workflows to across business units</p> <p>Maintain IT architecture</p> <p>Optimize costs and time of IT tools</p> <p>Integrate IT security principles</p>	<p>Leading marketing automation</p> <p>Connecting online and offline systems</p> <p>Insuring Business activity continuity</p> <p>Improving IT security</p>

**3.1 Strategy**

In this changing world, there is an imminent need of strategic vision and clear strategy map to sustain business growth (Acuña-Carvajal et al., 2019). Consequently, organizations cannot go through digital marketing implementation without a clear definition of strategy that draws up the digital marketing orientations of the firm and the road to take in order to achieve the goals: creating a good quality customer experience.

The corporate strategy is defined as being “the direction and scope of an organization over long term: which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a challenging environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations”. The digital marketing strategy could be defined as the

The digital changes are consistent in way that the power balance has shifted to the customer side. In the transformation context of the marketing, buying processes are changing and the customer are more discerning than ever. Thus, the marketing strategy is constraint to change to meet the customer needs and fit the market and competitors.

Digital marketing is a disruptive force having a profound impact in transforming business models (Leeflang et al., 2014). In consequence, marketing strategy should be adapted to fit with the digital world, its challenges and barriers.

In extent literature, we found that the strategy definition and formulation processes alone, are not enough to realize the business goals (Galliers and Sutherland, 1991; Miller, 1997; Morgan, 2010; Noble, 1999; Raps, 2005; “The\_Silent\_Killers\_of\_Strategy.pdf,” n.d.).

The digital marketing strategy must be based on the marketing strategy, based itself on the global corporate strategy of the firm (mission vision and objectives of the company), to assure a global alignment of digital marketing

strategy. The objectives of the digital marketing as a part of marketing strategy have to be clearly defined.

Depending on the enterprise’s context, capacity, market competitiveness, the strategy must be fixed. To avoid drawing strategies and developing plans doomed to failure, managers, while designing and formulating the

digital marketing strategy, management should take in consideration some recommendations which will help them to imagine a realistic future position of the company. In addition this will help managers in the transition point between planning/ formulating and execution: a crucial point for a successful implementation strategy. The insights raised from extant literature of implementation strategy are:

Crossing the chasm from planning to implementation. The planning and formulation parts are hedonically more rewarding and gratifying than hard work of implementing and solving operational problems. This is due to the contrast between the positive affect planning loop creates by the projection in the “glowy” future and the negative emotion caused by the potential of failure when it comes to details and looking for ways to solve problems. Managers must control their desire to continue to plan and move forward to implementation to fill the gap between the different stages. This is self-control dilemma discussed by researchers. The transition point should not be too late because the digital world is a fast and continuous changing word. The risk of maintaining the formulation and plan phases is that the implementation, even if it is successful and respect the initial plan, of digital marketing strategy will not meet the market needs or the business objectives.

The perception of time scale at the digital age is different, the technology is growing faster than ever and the

customers' needs likewise. In formulation and implementation processes, managers should be watching of the time spent to realize the plans and making the necessary adjustment to the formulated strategy and consequent plans. The particularity of digital marketing strategy is that it should be flexible, modular and malleable to gently fit with the continuous change without breaking what was already done.

In the strategy literature (Noble and Mokwa 1999, Bourgeois and Brodwin 1984, Noble 1999, Parsa 1999), we highlight two important dimensions in the formulation and implementation journey: Structural views and interpersonal processes views. Noble and Mokwa 1999 assert that to combination of the both structural and interpersonal views together is crucial for understanding the key success factor for implementing strategies.

The structural views concern the operated adjustment to formal, structural elements of organization such as roles, reporting relationships and control mechanism in order to enact strategic decision (Noble, 1999) . It includes Organizational structure and control mechanism. Researchers have found that a strategy-structure alignment is required to succeed in implementing new business orientation. Especially in our digitally influenced context where the power balance has shifted. The reflection about a potential changing structure must be initiated from the beginning of the formulation process and potential aftereffects discussed. We will discuss this concerns later in our paper. In the later stages of formulation, the board must ensure how to monitor and control the implementation process. The strategy definition and implementation cannot overcome a well-designed control mechanism that allow board and managers to follow closely, control the performance and adjust the reign and optimize the resources allocated to the implementation stage.

The interpersonal processes views define a range of interpersonal and cognitive factors helping managers to interpret and respond to strategic initiative (Noble, 1999). The strategic consensus represent a shared understanding and approval from the board members concerning new strategic orientation of the firm. While higher level of consensus will lead to higher level of firm performance (Noble, 1999), the opposite will create divide and uncertainty and conducting the strategy to failure. This will lead "upset" managers to deviate and act individually. Consequently, the power and efforts are not focused on one global initiative, making the strategy implementation weak and vulnerable. The management involvement and strategic consensus are both important factors to realize advance in the transformation journey.

Digital readiness and digital impact are to factors identified by Remane and Hanelt 2017. They define digital impact as the impact that the digital transformation may have on the focal firm, and digital readiness as the capacity of the firm to adhere to digital change ("Remaneetal.2017-DigitalMaturityinTraditionalIndustries.pdf," n.d.) . This to dimensions disprove the previous studies according to whom all the firms are devoted to achieving a complete linear digital transformation, neglecting both: the potential impact or readiness of the firm to embrace change. The two

dimensions should be coupled and combined to better identify digital marketing limitation and improve the investment on digital marketing. These two dimensions will help managers to define the organization ability to progress or grow through digital marketing and identify the opportunities and potential barriers. In our model this to dimensions are implicitly projected into each benchmark variable.

Then, digital marketing strategy must be declined into micro strategies for each benchmark variable to ensure a global coherent growth for all defined variables, at the same strategy direction. Ensuring, consequently, consistency and cohesion in the implementation of the strategy.

To preserve innovation and competitive advantage, strategy must enroll in continuous agile improvement approach to drive rapid customer centric innovation and stay ahead of fast changing world through competitive and technological intelligence;

### 3.2 Resources/Skills

In any transformation context, the key to success for the enterprise is to construct an army of skilled teams through all organization levels. The success of digital marketing implementation and nurturing is the ability of the firms to unlock the full potential of the human capital and adapt their skills to the future landscape. Digital marketing is driving new emerging concepts and new various business models that challenges traditional ones and thus requires skills adjustments to first, understand the upcoming change, and then, operate the ongoing change and improve company performance.

Considered as strategic management and competitive tool, employee's skills should be developed to assimilate the market changes and customer centric strategies, filling the « Talent gap » occurred with the emergence of digital analytics, customer insights and disruptive technologies. With the emergence of social Medias, UGC platforms, search engines, mobile apps ... enterprise is faced to a huge and different data flow. Marketing teams need to identify the useful information and interpret it, among the river flows of data. Enterprises are thus in need of technical and analytical skills to manage data to build effective performance metrics (Royle and Laing, 2014) and enhance data-driven decision making process.

In digital context and continual change, the enterprise needs appropriate skills to operate the expected changes. With the rise of social media, UGC (user generated content), SEO, web pages, customer traffic ... the firm capabilities must be refreshed by developing new digital capabilities and proposing a resources and skills development plan to accompany employees in this new era. This plan should include technical, analytical, and functional training that fit with the organization context and technology used in the digital channels. The company should reinforce teams by introducing strong profiles to enhance change and help employees to better accomplish their part of strategy implementation and realizing their business objectives. The firms should invest in the appropriate continuous learning

programs and trainings to build a strong team bearing with the changing digital need of the organization.

Breaking up with the mass marketing and adopting more customized marketing, enforce enterprises to use technological platforms that initiate bidirectional conversation with online customers. The digital communication techniques and community management are needed in operational teams to maintain online conversation and skilfully dissipate misunderstanding and customer frustration.

Also, in this continual changing market, agility is an important capability allowing firms and individuals to thrive and prosper in dynamic and turbulent environment which is digital market, and meet changing customers' demands (Stachowiak and Oleśków-Szlapka, 2018). Employees must adopt agility in their product/service design to enhance the ability of the enterprise to deliver a rapid and effective response to customer needs. Marketing teams must implement specific agile practices and methods to improve time to market, stimulate innovation and emphasize enterprise flexibility to respond to customer needs. By adopting agile practices, company is increasing customer value and engagement, and implicitly engaging continuous improvement approach through which customer satisfaction and loyalty are gained.

To unlock this human capital, besides the « digital gap skills » enterprise need new management skills to help employees project themselves into the future (digital world in our case) and find their bearings. M.J Sousa and A. Rocha in their study that management skills needed for disruptive technologies are associated with three categories: Innovation, Leadership and Management (Sousa and Rocha, 2019a). The innovative skills refer to the manager's capability to innovate, lead team creativity, identify and convert business opportunities undertaking risks. Leadership is related to communication, motivation, integration, coaching, mentoring employees to enhance their performance and commitment to the new digital marketing strategy. The third category Management skills is associated with new forms of teamwork, initiative, decision making and responsibility. It also concerns developing social and relational competencies to create team spirit, adopt organizational change and workforce optimization of costs.

In defining the digital marketing strategy, management should determine transition plan to identify the human resources ability to deal with the change. The enterprise have to help, accompany its employees during this journey, and invest to retain them and gain competitive advantage (Sousa and Rocha, 2019b). The integration skills plan must be adapted to each employee according to its skills and personal carrier projection.

The traditional skills become obsolete (Sousa and Rocha, 2019b), however, the idea is not creating from scratch new ones (skills/ teams), but helping « old-teams » to became new ones, to collaborate and capitalize on the acquired knowledge in each side: traditional and digital.

### 3.3 Organization and structure

To embrace change and implement strategy, some organizational structures need to be adapted and re-designed. More enterprise is digitally equipped more organization issue gain importance (Leeflang et al., 2014). Extent literature of strategy implementation indicates that the objectives behind changing the traditional organization is to adopt adaptive and speed organization and processes to follow the speedy change of digital marketing without disrupting the marketing functions and interactions with the other business units.

First, organization structure must stop considering digital marketing as a siload set of actions that concerns digital networks as a part of portfolio networks. Instead, digital marketing should be blend to initial organization as « making marketing in digital world » (Leeflang et al., 2014) and implement inherent changes to digital marketing. In fact, realizing marketing in digital world, implies all organization involvement to follow the road and directives for such a particular network.

Given the new product/ service life cycle, the interaction between sales, traditional marketing, product development, human resources, IT ...must be fluid to improve time to market and make difference with competitors. Enterprise business units are in obligation to incorporate digital marketing needs in their operational works. To do so, organization structure should adopt digital marketing as a set a cross functional activities and define a clear functional support and process to avoid misunderstanding and confusion between teams which ultimately lead to digital marketing isolation and then the failure of digital marketing strategy. Digital marketing, as a cross functional activity, accentuate already existing tension between marketing units and the others functions (Leeflang et al., 2014). Cross functional organization success is determined by the ability of the firm to clarify governance, roles and responsibilities that functions play overall the implementation.

Digital marketing organization must be molten in the existing organization, instead of aside siload set of actions. Breaking up with the traditional organization allow the firms to have a clear cross functional support and rely on complementary teams to complete customer experience as well online as offline. The management helped by the teams, should design flexible, adaptable teams of multidisciplinary roles delivering rapid results. The teams should be empowered to organize, adapt themselves and lead the operational business digital changes.

Marketers should be empowered with access to meaningful insights from other teams such as IT, sales, or Customer service to improve customer experience quality and assure alignment between different channels acquisition.

### 3.4 Digital Identity

With the emergence of digital channels and the increased use of it, it becomes vital for any organization to prove its digital presence and defend the official version of its interaction with public. Through the presence on the web and social networks the company builds gradually digital identity. In the predigital age, organization identity was

managed internally. According to the brand strategy, companies unilaterally built and tightly maintained their images in front of customers and public opinion across conventional media. As business and marketing become increasingly digitalized, the enterprise must reconsider the way identity is built through the new ways of communicating with public and market. Branding literature defines identity as a stable entity which is internal to the firm and source of influence on consumers' perceptions and interpretations of the brand meaning. (Essamri et al., 2019). It is a static managerial creation (Aaker, 1996). Thus, the identity is inscribed in customers' minds and difficult to change or remove. The powerful emergence of social networks had reversed the common definitions especially the enterprise identity. Enterprise identity is no longer stable nor static, in the became complex socially networked environment, where the customer, community, and even the potential lead, take part of the identity creation. The digital identity could be defined as perceived attributes and associations that are linked to a corporate name (Essamri et al., 2019), created across digital networks resulting from multiple interactions of stakeholders, and maintaining cultural and social digital synergies. Stakeholders are here, referring to employees, customers, community, market, and any internet user which impact the « constructed image ». It represents the digital footprint through which it is known by the customers on the digital channels. The digital identity can also be determined by several factors such as the shared content, its format and attractiveness, the spread messages, the digital activity maintained across digital medias or the functionalities allowed through the mobile app. The entry point to digital identity and what makes the enterprise known at the first sight, is the graphical charter that should meet the traditional one. The client should transition smoothly to the digital world, and recognize the habitual brand, its defended values, and ethics. The exposure to complex environment of digital and social network underlines the potential vulnerability and risks that should be controlled.

The digital world is open and accessible for everyone which makes it difficult for marketers to master without monitoring the digital and mobile networks. Everyone connected to the web can easily create an account on the enterprise name and start to manage and to pronounce on behalf of the company. The digital audience, especially the beginners, cannot differentiate between the discourses received through digital networks. The real and counterfeit identity will create a confusion and separate the digital audience. Therefore, the company must make sure to "formalize" its digital presence and prevent identity theft that may occur and negatively affect its brand image and reputation not only on digital platforms but also in traditional medias.

The digital identity strategy must prevent digital brand crisis. The firestorm effect on social media can easily turn into disaster and cause irreparable damages to the company. Between hashtags, shares and the high connectivity of people, the firestorm takes disproportional dimensions in few seconds. The firm, has barely the time to

understand and react to stop the bleeding, hoping to fix the occurred damages.

Companies should include in their digital marketing activities: e-reputation management and e-branding to avoid such issues with irreversible consequences.

### 3.5 Culture: Modernize marketing thinking

Since the enterprise is transforming its marketing to digital, a change management approach should be initiated to prepare and support the employees and customers to upcoming change. Digital is a fast pace of change world where there is a strong sharing culture. The enterprise should instill employees and customers with this new way of thinking and working, by adopting fast changing procedures. This fast changing procedure allows the enterprise to attain small groups of people that are motivated and invest in this transformation journey. By means of social interaction, others people are affected and will include themselves in the experience. Social interaction affects the adoption behavior of member within a group already adopted the change (Yu et al., 2017). Thus, in our case, social interaction and early group digital adoption will foster the digital adoption behavior of refractory people as far for employees and customers.

In any context of change, the company faces resistance. The human nature as well as the socio-cultural environment people defines their belonging and their rejection degree to the upcoming and ongoing change. The transition to digital generates refractory at the internal and external levels. To anticipate and mitigate the refraction, the company must first design its migration and post migration plans.

The accompaniment in the transformation journey is important as well for employees and customers with distinct approaches to adopt by managers and marketers. To achieve a successful marketing transformation, managers should imply employees and marketers customers preparing them to embracing change.

In addition to socio-cultural factors, enterprises miss an important factor of change resistance which is digital techno stress. Techno stress is defined as "a modern disease of adaptation caused by an

inability to cope with new computer technologies in a healthy manner" (Brod 1984). In our case of digital marketing change, we define digital techno stress, as stress of adaptation caused by the new ways of working and thinking resulting from the digital emergence, the customer centric position and the inability to innovate in such fast changing environment (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Tarafdar et al., 2010, 2015). Consequently, enterprise must face this challenging factor and extend the digital literacy to reduce digital techno stress and create favorable conditions for consolidating existing and building the future. Consequently, resistance and potential customer dissatisfaction are reduced and transformed to embrace change, innovate, and remove barriers

Internally, the company needs to modernize its marketing thinking to increase creativity and accentuate the difference with competitors. Indeed, today's offered



content and features are similar in terms of presentation, navigation and functionalities. Which leads to a similar digital offer neglecting the importance of differentiation that apporportion clients and encourage their purchase decision. This was an expected result: Businesses use almost the same tools or the same presentation layer to reach the same target with the same product/service.

To improve the digital customer experience, marketers must "think out of the box" and surprise customers. They conquered by innovation, creativity and simplicity leading to widen the gap with the competition.

At the external level, the customer must be aware of this new strategic orientation of the company. The current demographic curve coexists several generations who have watched the rise of digital. Commonly referred to as Y, Z, Alpha and beta, these generations witnessed, totally or partially, the outbreak of the computer bubble, the birth of the internet, smartphones, mobile applications and today witness the new technological push related to artificial intelligence, machine learning and augmented reality. As a result, individuals have different levels of maturity and digital acceptance. The degree of rejection of the brand following the transition to digital marketing therefore varies from one category to another. The company needs to put in place as for employees an accompanying plan for the least comfortable with the technology. Marketers must create different and ergonomic content to accompany the transition to digital consumers: videos, images, text, tutorials, transition to conventional media. The goal is to keep a maximum audience during the transition to digital. Through this support, the company federates its consumers and potential customers. Without support, the company loses a significant amount of data on a target that is not yet present on the digital. This will make the task of harmonization and aggregation more difficult for teams

An accompaniment according to the target of the company must be carried out on the digital channels avoiding customer's dissatisfaction and reluctance for digital channels. Monitoring automation effects or personalizing online experience are to major techniques to fill the occurring gap with digital migration. (Leeflang et al., 2014)

### 3.6 Customer knowledge

Business models' evolution allowed customers to gain power over companies that were constrained to readapt the machine. To preserve the competitive advantage, enterprises must adopt a customer centric strategy where the focus is put on the client as a major part of the company. Consequently, for better serving the customer and understanding its continual changing needs, the company must learn to know him. The construction of customer knowledge is the turning point to widening the gap with competitors and optimize the investments on clients' acquisition and retention. It represents key element to create a loyal and engaged customer over virtual word.

This new strategic orientation aims to create more value along the processing path, increase efficiency, and effectively monitor the evolution of customer knowledge and control the risks of losing clients. This new

opportunities offered by customer knowledge allow marketing department to break the traditional siloed processes to customize digital customer experience.

The consumer's knowledge cannot be based solely on the traffic generated by the website or on the official pages of the company. It must be completed by other fragment resulting from the customer navigation and/interaction on digital networks. Knowledge is therefore built through the gathering of several parties that reveal the consumer's journey and behavior. The company must connect the dots to have the final image and learn more about factors leading the conversion act or buying decision.

In contrast to traditional medias, digital networks have brought an important element empowering the digital channels which is data. Data became at the heart of each company's business. The data allows company to better know its customer, prospect or lead to model and customize the offers and anticipate his decision. The knowledge of the internet user enables the company to gain efficiency and optimize its ROI. It is based on 3 main elements:

- Customer Data: It represents the basis data that identify the potential customer, such as its name, phone, address, age contact numbers, and more. This record is in fact, a descriptive sheet that gives general details of the visitor. It is the core of digital customer footprint and the first step to create personas and rank the potential client. The record is completed at first sight by some quantitative indicators that enable operational marketing to re-evaluate and refine the targeting criteria according to the visitor's flow, subscription numbers, and the influx, visits number and duration. It is and iterative process helping operational marketing to update general information about the potential customers. Currently, digital marketing team has no information about the lead intentions and the opportunities given for the firm to convert the lead.

Data driven Customer insights: it represents the second level of customer knowledge building. This is output from the analysis of the customer's activity across the web not only across the detained channels. Cross analysis from internet user activity through UGC, eWOM, like, dislike, comments, posts, hashtags ..., which allows the company to know what the user is conveying on digital channels and convert it into opportunities. This analysis allows the company to discover the client nature or character and what is he looking for. The company the, must make a personalized offer that goes with customer needs and nature. Building customer knowledge identify client preferences and help the company to respond with the relevant experience offer

This also, helps marketers to create the link between customer insights and product/ service development to not stifle innovation and became in radical decision-making process. The offers must be agilly designed, to fit with the customers' needs and expectation. The company should choose to promote the offer at the right time, the right channel, and the right version. Data driven Customer insight help marketers to break silos between marketing business units and the rest of the company, to construct one holistic view of the customer that can be used by any

business whether the interaction is initiated via online, offline, in-store, mobile application.

Creating high value customer experience requires more than one shot view or image. Enterprise must continually engage with customers across ongoing digital interaction to update the image through endless changes customer's faces in their personal or professional lives. The built knowledge so far is no more valid which help marketer to build customer history and continue to predictively adjust the offer and extend the personal user experience to the same category of leads. Therefore, the company can capitalize on customer data and predictive analytics to improve the overall customer experience with the firm across any acquisition and interaction channel. The evolution paths are now discovered by the firm and the marketers can determine whether the lead is worth the investment or not. The customer knowledge allows the company to adapt its offer, improve its product and its customer experience. The strategy is customer-centric, and the customer must be able to detect the shown interest. However, the customer must not feel followed, offended, or harassed at the risk of creating the opposite effect and causing him to flee. Regulations in several countries are being modified to preserve the consumer as well as his personal data. Companies are obliged to respect these rules and to have them respected by their entities and employees. The company must bring security and privacy to customer data use, supporting customer choices on privacy to prevent any violation of customer rights and choices. Marketers, IT, and compliance must solve the dilemma between users' right protection and optimizing customer's image.

### 3.7 Communication

All about the becoming scale of digital today is due to the new ways of communication offered through its networks. It helped people across the world the reduce distance, preserve relationships, and create new ones. With the expand use of new digital ways of communication, the enterprises should use the same ways as its customers and talk with the same language. The company must be heard and hear its customers' needs across the digital noise. In the digital networks the customers are flooded with the huge amount of information once on social medias, applications, navigators and so on. To avoid going unnoticed, the company, when implementing its digital marketing strategy should know how, where and when establish connection with customers and « aspiring customers ». The idea is not only to nurture already customers but also creating and engaging new one's sans les

External communication is customer-oriented through all media channels, both digital and traditional. As long as the traditional media exists the communication strategy must ensure that the conveyed messages across all channels, digital or not, are coherent and balanced. Customers must receive the same message through any communication channel. The digital channel idiosyncrasy is the digital content management. DCM is a new digital marketing tool that should be used to foster customer awareness, engagement, sales lead conversion and trust (Hollebeek

and Macky, 2019). It is defined as "creating, distributing, and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome." (Wang et al., 2017) .The content should be integrated to the communication strategy to inspire confidence, nurture awareness, and build customer's appreciation of the brand. Unlike advertising that detain the purpose of inciting explicitly customers to act and buy the offering service or product, the digital content aims to develop customer engagement to increase sales indirectly, and in long term (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019).

The digital doors are widely open for the companies and individuals. The company as well as an individual, create and share digital content, once published on digital networks, content can be relayed as many times as users want, by any means and can be openly interpreted without anyone's permission. Given the openness of digital networks, customers/internet users now, armed with freedom to express themselves openly without any limitation. In the predigital age, customers expressed their opinion individually with the firm. The aware circle of such opinion (positive or negative) remained restricted to the limited persons. The consequences were then, manageable for the company. The enterprise is losing control on its own created content and facing enforced content created by individuals. This content circulating over digital networks and not lunched by the brand is User Generated content or eWoM (electronic word of mouth) which is digital content created by individuals according to their experience with the brand the products. It is sharing feedback empowering customer's voice general public. Taking this into consideration, the company risks brand crisis if digital content (created by the firm or UGC) is not well managed.

At this point, to succeed in their implementation of digital marketing strategy, enterprises should shift, in their journey from selling position to helping position (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019) with non-opportunistic behavior. The sales activity and leads conversion will be affected, but differently and at to different scale time. Through digital content management the enterprise should not forget, the objectives of digital content management which is to bring an added value to the customer and implicitly introduce the firm to start and build a two -way communication.

The creation of such bi-directional channel to communicate with customers, is opening up the door for marketers to meet customers, and construct customers' knowledge.

By managing content through digital, the company have to generate quality content, which represent pushing activity to create funnel and engage with customers, generating thus, customer traffic. The quality content is defined not only by the capability of the published content to engage and generate traffic (likes and shares number) but also by the ability to generate customers insights and nurture communities.

The enterprises should be prepared to engage conversation and respond to the quest of information avoiding to the customer drowning in information flows. Social listening will help the lead, customer or prospect to be automatically

directed to the firm content affording him waste of time and patience. Being responsive, comprehensive and humble are the keys to engage and maintain conversation with customers. It is important for customers, to feel enterprise empathy and responsiveness across a virtual channel. The digital warmth creates comfort and sympathy fostering customer loyalty, engagement and respect.

Nowadays, prospects are becoming capricious and easily bored, consequently, the firm have to innovate and invest in creating appealing content. Users are in need of interesting, interactive and refreshed content, and marketers should seize the chance and convert the opportunity to drive a profitable customer action. The first impression is missed when the internet user, customer, lead is discouraged by the poor quality content found on the supposed being "official" brand frontage.

The starting touch point for the company is its official website and approved social media pages. This represent the first meeting point where internet users land when looking for information about the company becoming the reference to any required information. Marketers have to watch out for running the traffic too one platform to facilitate data gathering and analyzing. They have to privilege one entry point to any official communication and shared content. Every platform possesses its advantages, inconvenient and proper audience. However, marketers must choose the official presence to drive digital content, according to business needs and required audience.

Content management and digital communication is not a one shot work, but a continual process of improvement taking in consideration each user feedback, to improve the quality and broaden customer base. Marketers should learn from their interaction with internet users to increase the engagement power of their content and build a customer loyalty. Keeping with building trusted and engaged relationship, there is an obligation from marketers to include customers in their transformation journey and make them aware of the new strategic orientation maintain recognition of the firm while and after transforming. This sharing information in matters of vision and new ways of working offers the company a margin of error during the first steps of shift from traditional to digital marketing and reduce customer's judgment.

To preserve the holistic view of the communication, we defined in our model two types for communication: internal and external. Above we presented the external communication, based principally on digital content management. The internal communication is defined to complete the communication vision of digital marketing strategy deployment. It is a part of digital marketing implementation, to promote the strategy internally and put everyone in the firm at the same level of understanding. By communicating through internal tools (mails, intranets, mobile apps, professional social medias, conferences...) the objectives are well shared, understood and adapted to each business unit of the firm. The content of internal communication should be validated by the management in order to spread the right messages to the right persons. As well as external communication, bidirectional

communication is required to collect employees' feedback. This feedback should be analyzed by managers and middle managers to gauge collaborators engagement and faith in the new strategy and highlight unidentified operational risk or opportunities to optimize strategy implementation

The internal communication is the occasion for the management to share the news, advancement, and made decisions since the start of the journey. Communicating point, whether through mail or conference, must be iterative, periodically maintained and planned from the beginning. This allow employees to stay informed of the occurring changes and understand the challenges and issues of such transformation journey.

### 3.8 Control

As a part of strategy implementation requirements, control is a fundamental process that should be initiated while discussing strategy formulation and implementation. Controlling and monitoring strategy implementation allow the board better comprehension on what is going on the workers and middle management lines. This can be achieved cross a well-designed performance system that link operational and strategic issues, helping managers to make to react and make decisions. The firms are starting a new journey of digital marketing implementation, generating multiple changes across the company at different level. To assess and enhance implementation for the affected levels of the company. Increasingly interacting with customers and employees through digital tools and networks allow companies to make use of gathered data, measure actions performance and their reach, respect the roadmap and reduce risk of failure.

By the upcoming change, management should be aware of the importance of data-driven decision making instead of relying on intuition and experience. (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015). To help managers and marketers taking the right decision, a holistic well designed performance system should be implemented as a tool improving the decision-making process and building a learning base through different situations. The choice of control system nature is critical to succeed in implementing strategy (Noble, 1999). In our continual changing context, control system have to be flexible and evolve with the strategy implementation, helping organization to translate their mission into indicators fostering change adoption and implementation plans (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015) Designing controlling systems starts with the clear definition of objectives aimed to be reached at a given space of time. It is concerning strategic objectives as well as operational objectives and representing the starting baseline. Every business unit oversees tailoring the global strategy to the operational levels making sure of the alignment between the intermediate levels, concerning the strategic lines. Consequently, the key performance indicators and the measurement system include operational and strategic measures allowing managers, employees, and the strategic board to analyze and make decisions.

Every indicator should be placed to respond to a specific question or problem. The benefits of such controlling system depend on how companies understand and exploit it. This why gathered data should be used ingeniously to provide a holistic view as well as detailed one.

Given the specificities of each business unit a clear and defined processes of data treatment and indicators interpretation should be set and agreed commonly to enhance analyses and draw coherent conclusions.

There are no clear standards for building a metric system that would fit the needs of all organizations. Every company possesses its own capabilities, resources and means to achieve a determined objective, in front of its limitations, weaknesses that could jeopardize the strategy implementation. However, each dashboard should be discussed and documented to ensure control sustainability. The objectives, base line, periodicity, measure definition, data sources, horizon of time, responsible, and interpretation must be shared with concerned people (Acuña-Carvajal et al., 2019).

Then, to construct the holistic view of marketing strategy implementation, the specific measurement systems must be aggregated, allowing the board members to interpret, analyze and choose potential corrections to implement if the goals were not met.

At strategic and operational levels, success levels must be defined according to the global vision. Miller distinguish three levels of success: Completion, achievement and acceptability (Miller, 1997). Miller define completion as the degree to which intended actions are done within the expected time, achievement as the degree to which what was done performs as intended, and acceptability, the degree to which the method of implementation and outcomes are satisfying to stakeholders.

According to this definition, controlling systems should allow people at different levels, involved in this transformation journey, to determine whether their results and actions are complete, achieved or acceptable. According to this appreciation, corrections actions may be initiated or not according to the timeline or feasibility. Also, this allows managers to analyze the unintended and intended results and figure out the reasons behind the success or the failure of and action or made decision. Beyond that, a learning process is launched to construct a learning base and continual improvement cycles.

### 3.9 Technology

Nowadays, there is no denying that the technology is the critical weapon companies use to survive at the digital age. We can define strategies, communicate, modernize digital thinking, recruit the best talents, and detain the best capabilities, but cannot achieve the goals without a strong and advanced technology. The information system IS by all its layers should be able to support business units needs in their transformation journey.

Every process, business need should be reflected on the information system to optimize interactions between applications and platforms. Depending on the company

needs, budget and constraints, a solution must be adopted to optimize performance and minimizing risks.

Having a technical charter and roadmap is essential to ensure the technical integration of different components and their cohabitation in a technical environment. The different IT systems must dialogue to ensure coherence and avoid redundancy.

Marketing teams and technical teams must work together to implement the best solution for monitoring customers online activity and analyze data to identify data points and draw up the customer online journey. An integrated IT system should be able to align digital data collected from online campaign and data collected from traditional one. This alignment is the key to have a complementary vision of the offline and online markets allowing the company to adjust its strategy and optimize investment to increase sales, refine target, complete customer behavior, and smoothly transit between online and offline.

Given the digital exposure, there is no surprise that security is climbing up the agenda of used and using technology. Today's increasingly connected system on web and mobile make enterprises more vulnerable in front of digital attack. The risk is not only present for enterprise strategic information but also for customer personal collected data. Customers entrust companies with their personal and critical data such as credit card number, address, job detail, and authentication information, expecting a minimum of appropriate security to preserve customer privacy and security. The impact of such intrusion is irreversible and could be fatal on the firm and their customer's lives. It is important for the company to guarantee to customers secure and private navigation respecting their preferences without neglecting regulatory and compliance entities.

IT Security and privacy foundations and governance should be critically implemented to reduce risk of digital exposure and increase customer faith and trust;

## 4. DOMINANT PROBLEMS

Dominant problems are changing from one stage to another and between business activities. To identify the dominant problems of digital marketing implementation journey, we identified some existing generic problems faced in the extent literature. The reported dominant problems were :Ensuring activity alignment, media plan integration, explosion and diversity of data, proliferation of channels, shifting consumer demographics, managing and maintaining brand health, talent gap, redesign agile organizations, create actionable digital metrics, convert conversation into actionable insights, increasing prevalence of digital media, the ability to interact with digital customer, ability to reach and define new customer segments (Hansen et al., 2018; Jahanmir and Cavadas, 2018; Järvinen et al., 2012; Järvinen and Karjaluo, 2015; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Leeflang et al., 2014) ... The encountered problems were categorized by in three main categories: Business strategy and customer insights, go to market operations and execution, and organization and capabilities.

These categories will help managers to identify problems and understand how to cope with them choosing the plan to address or retain them according to their relevance and impact on benchmark variables.

In our empirical analysis we are trying to complete the exhaustive dominant problems lists and allocate to each stage its dominant issues and their severity or criticality. We aim in our study to also classify the dominant problems according to the business activity. The first results joined in majority with the extent literature. We prefer to not associate them until the end of the study to obtain the final image leading to better analyze and draw the conclusions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

We presented in this paper our « Theoretical » work concerning digital marketing maturity models, its stages, variables, and dominant problems. This model can help organization in their implementation journey to earn maturity and confidence while implementing new marketing strategy. A cross the nine variables, we aimed to offer to marketers and firms the possibility develop and project their strategies on different dimensions to implement effectively and not omit dimensions that showing up with the digital age such as customer knowledge and digital identity. We also reviewed some variable definition to better fit with the « mindset » of digital marketing. It is important for firms to constantly review their definitions of the benchmark variable, in this changing world and gauge the opportunity of gaining maturity in one of the nine dimensions. The model can be viewed as a holistic approach for digital marketing implementation, and the enterprise can choose the dimension to be improved according to the circumstances, business activity and segments, without neglecting the other dimensions and their importance for the imminent success of digital marketing implementation. The proposed maturity models will help companies to identify the gaps and customize the actions according to the current and upcoming level. Given one dimension maturity, the transition between the levels is not necessary one unit incremental, companies can move from level 1 to 3 or 4.

However, as digital marketing and social networks continue to grow and change, our maturity model is susceptible to change forward a new version, by adopting, dropping, or fusing benchmark variables. The model can change across time and potential birth of new dimension, levels, or dominant problems. In addition, the model cannot determine the impact of reaching maturity at all dimensions which could be a dominant problem for the stage 5: is there any need of achieving maturity at all levels? What are the impacts of such realization? What are the costs and benefits for this investment? How can we determine the optimum level of maturity according to enterprise business line? Future studies can focus on this raised question to develop a clear understanding beyond the maturity. Future studies may also lean toward the companies profiling to better understand digital marketing implementation.

To continue the adopted maturity model framework, we are conducting an empirical study based on in depth interviews with marketing professionals from different business line companies, to test the model, refine dominant problems and determine the generic paths of evolutions adopted by managers to remove barriers. The occurring study aim also to weight benchmark variables to realize global digital maturity score taking in consideration the impact of each benchmark variable.

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