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Providing a Digital Marketing Model Aimed at Increasing Consumer Value Growth in Startup Products

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to present a digital marketing model geared toward the growth of consumer value in startup products. Based on the research objectives, this study is categorized as an applied-developmental research. Employing a qualitative approach and using thematic analysis techniques, an attempt was made to construct the proposed model. The statistical population of the study includes experts and faculty members with specialized academic knowledge. The researcher employed the snowball sampling method, reaching theoretical saturation after conducting interviews with 16 experts and specialists. Data collection in the qualitative phase was conducted through semi-structured interviews. Model design and identification of main and sub-themes were carried out using Maxqda 2020 software. The findings indicate the identification of seven main themes, which include: digital market analysis and understanding, optimization of user experience (UX) and digital interaction, content marketing and influencer strategies, digital advertising and customer targeting, the use of innovative digital technologies in marketing, customer relationship management and loyalty enhancement, and digital marketing performance analysis and continuous optimization.

Keywords: digital marketing, consumer value growth, startup products.

1. Introduction

Digital marketing has experienced rapid growth. Millions of dollars have been invested in digital marketing tools. The growing investment in this field is due to its impact on increasing sales, improving brand image, enhancing customer perception, and reducing overall marketing costs for companies. Despite these advancements and positive effects, such phenomena are not clearly observed in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing and less-developed countries. This issue has served as the motivation for conducting the present study (Ashaari & Yusoff, 2025).

The concept of digital marketing, in its narrow definition, refers to the marketing of products and services through digital channels. However, in its broader sense, it signifies the use of digital technologies to attract customers, enhance brand value, retain customers, and increase sales (Cocco, 2017).

Accordingly, digital marketing content seeks to enhance consumer perception of the brand and, ultimately, sales—through developing consumer value, trust, and relationships. Hence, digital marketing content contributes to customer loyalty by providing valuable and consistent content to buyers (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). The critical success factors of digital marketing include deep knowledge of audience needs, shared values, affiliation, communication, trust, and consumer value growth. In this way, digital marketing can add value to individuals and consequently facilitate a reciprocal relationship with them (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, due to its advantages, digital marketing has gained greater importance for SMEs and startups. This has led to a surge of research employing innovation-driven approaches to understand the levels of digital marketing adoption (Levenburg et al., 2015). This is because SMEs and startups face unique challenges when adopting and utilizing digital technologies. More precisely, it can be argued that digital marketing plays a more substantial role in SMEs and startups because decision-makers operate based on opportunism, innovative tendencies, and entrepreneurial orientation (Chaffey & Patron, 2019).

Digital marketing has been acknowledged as an evolutionary concept that has generated significant concern among both academics and professionals. Understanding emerging technologies may provide valuable insights for individuals working in startups (Waheed & Jianhua, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the increasing importance of digital marketing, academic understanding of this area is still insufficiently developed (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), which can create a major knowledge gap. Moreover, although digital marketing has been used in marketing management processes since its inception, there is limited empirical evidence on the provision of a digital marketing model aimed at increasing the consumer value of startup products.

Yaghoubi Pour et al. (2024), in their study on designing a digital marketing excellence model, emphasized that such a model offers several advantages, including enhancing customer experience, anticipating and responding to future customer needs, increasing attractiveness, customizing services, expanding the range and timing of offerings, improving employee well-being, establishing effective communication with audiences, and leveraging digital technologies and tactics (Yaghoubi Pour et al., 2024). Babashahi et al. (2020) developed a digital marketing competency model using thematic analysis, identifying 114 codes and 26 concepts across three categories: technical-specialized competencies, human-behavioral competencies, and analytical competencies (Babashahi et al., 2020). Pakparvar et al. (2020) proposed a smart digital marketing model for promoting Iran's high-tech exports in Central Asia and the Caucasus, identifying ten key components such as smart marketing tools, consumer insights, analytics, concepts, applications, communication, e-commerce, smart knowledge collaboration, and cybersecurity-enhanced transactions (Pakparvar et al., 2020). Ashaari et al. (2025), using the decomposed theory of planned behavior (TPB), found that digital marketing adoption in small businesses is significantly influenced by variables like perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), and perceived behavioral control (PBC), though not by subjective norms (Ashaari & Yusoff, 2025). Ku (2024) showed that perceived anthropomorphism, warmth, and CAIX impact digital marketing innovation in restaurant service robots, and customer satisfaction influences continued usage intention (Ku, 2024). Finally, Dimitrios et al. (2023) highlighted the centrality of digital marketing in research on luxury hotels but noted the ongoing need to clarify current strategies in this sector (Dimitrios et al., 2023).

In this study, in order to address these gaps in the digital marketing literature, qualitative methods were used to identify and examine the key indicators and metrics of digital marketing aimed at increasing consumer value in startup products. Furthermore, based on a review of the literature and prior domestic and international studies, no research was found that presents a digital marketing model aimed at increasing consumer value in startup products within the paradigm of qualitative inquiry using thematic analysis as the research strategy. Therefore, in light of the above, the main research problem of this study is to design and validate a model for digital marketing to enhance consumer value in startup products. Accordingly, this study seeks to develop such a model using a qualitative approach.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study is exploratory in nature and utilizes qualitative data. The objective of this research is to provide a digital marketing model aimed at attracting customers in the medical equipment sector. The statistical population for the qualitative phase consists of experts and experienced faculty members at universities. The researcher employed the snowball sampling method, achieving theoretical saturation after conducting interviews with 16 experts and thought leaders.

The criteria for selecting participants and expert panel members included: having significant work experience or scientific publications related to the research topic, possessing academic qualifications relevant to the study, holding at least ten years of professional experience, and having a minimum of a doctoral degree. According to preliminary investigations, the number of such individuals at the national level is approximately 20. Due to the qualitative nature of this phase, the snowball sampling technique was applied, whereby each interviewee introduced one or more knowledgeable and relevant experts to the researcher.

After conducting semi-structured interviews with 16 experts, theoretical saturation was achieved. Prior to conducting the interviews, ethical considerations were observed—permission for audio recording was obtained, and interviewees were assured that their names would remain confidential. Each interview lasted approximately two hours on average.

This study utilized the thematic analysis technique to propose and validate a model titled "Digital Marketing for Enhancing Consumer Value in Startup Products." To ensure construct validity in this qualitative research, participant validation (member checking) was used. In addition, negative case analysis and alternative explanations were considered. Efforts were made to select interviewees with diverse experiences and perspectives to prevent any individual bias from skewing the research findings.

To achieve internal validity, a grounded, experience-based model was derived after coding, categorizing, and analyzing the qualitative data. This emergent model was then compared with the theoretically predicted model. In qualitative research, as participants do not represent the broader population, generalizability of findings (external validity) is not claimed.

To ensure reliability and confirm theoretical saturation, an inter-coder agreement matrix and a dual-coder chart were used, which will be explained in subsequent sections. Furthermore, the analysis was conducted using Maxqda version 2020, a qualitative data analysis software.

3. Findings and Results

This section presents the analysis of collected data and the research findings. The data collection tool consisted of semi-structured interview files, and the results were analyzed using Maxqda version 2020. Data analysis was conducted on 16 interview files.

Thematic extraction followed three coding stages: open coding, sub-theme coding, and main theme coding. Ultimately, a model titled "Digital Marketing for Enhancing Consumer Value in Startup Products" is proposed for this study. The coding stages are outlined as follows:

1. **Open Coding**: In this phase, the interview files were collected and categorized by the researcher. Notably, 16 interview files were gathered and coded in this study.
2. **Sub-Themes**: Sub-theme coding is performed when the researcher assigns a code to each paragraph or text section after reading it. Multiple codes can be assigned to a single paragraph.
3. **Main Themes**: In this phase, the extracted codes are displayed in the Code System section, allowing for their categorization and integration. This window represents the selective coding phase (main themes), where codes are categorized and organized to produce a classification diagram.

The main themes (initial organizing dimensions) extracted for the digital marketing model aimed at enhancing consumer value in startup products are as follows:

1. Main Theme 1: Digital market analysis and understanding
2. Main Theme 2: User experience (UX) optimization and digital interaction
3. Main Theme 3: Content marketing and influencer strategies
4. Main Theme 4: Digital advertising and customer targeting
5. Main Theme 5: Use of innovative digital technologies in marketing
6. Main Theme 6: Customer relationship management and customer loyalty enhancement
7. Main Theme 7: Digital marketing performance analysis and continuous optimization

One of the indicators of reliability in qualitative research is the assessment of two or more documents regarding reference to a specific indicator. Maxqda software supports this functionality. The reliability coefficient can be calculated through one or multiple tests, which may be applied at a single point or over multiple time intervals.

Accordingly, for each of the selected themes in the present study, the degree of agreement between interviewees is presented in Table 4-8, where an acceptable threshold is defined as greater than 60 percent. For instance, the intersection of a row and column for the same interviewee is always 1. To interpret agreement between participants, one compares the column of one participant against others. For example, Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 had an agreement rate of 0.71 (71%) on a selected theme. This means they had 71 percent thematic overlap on that particular theme. Other columns and rows are interpreted similarly.

Given that the degree of agreement among interviewees exceeds 60 percent, it can be concluded that theoretical saturation has been achieved.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of Interviewees for the Themes

Interview Document	Res01	Res02	Res03	Res04	Res05	Res06	Res07	Res08	Res09	Res10	Res11	Res12	Res13	Res14	Res15	Res16
Res01	1.00	0.71	0.67	0.67	0.63	0.71	0.61	0.63	0.66	0.63	0.65	0.78	0.66	0.64	0.61	0.64
Res02	0.71	1.00	0.64	0.64	0.69	0.61	0.71	0.69	0.65	0.69	0.66	0.73	0.65	0.67	0.71	0.67
Res03	0.67	0.64	1.00	0.60	0.77	0.67	0.60	0.64	0.67	0.75	0.62	0.62	0.65	0.78	0.71	0.63
Res04	0.67	0.64	0.60	1.00	0.78	0.65	0.69	0.78	0.61	0.73	0.75	0.64	0.72	0.67	0.71	0.67
Res05	0.63	0.69	0.77	0.78	1.00	0.63	0.73	0.75	0.65	0.78	0.71	0.73	0.76	0.79	0.71	0.76
Res06	0.71	0.61	0.67	0.65	0.63	1.00	0.75	0.72	0.71	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.69	0.71	0.79	0.69
Res07	0.61	0.71	0.60	0.69	0.73	0.75	1.00	0.69	0.67	0.69	0.78	0.75	0.74	0.70	0.66	0.74
Res08	0.63	0.69	0.64	0.78	0.75	0.72	0.69	1.00	0.77	0.66	0.69	0.78	0.72	0.74	0.75	0.70
Res09	0.66	0.65	0.67	0.61	0.65	0.71	0.67	0.77	1.00	0.74	0.70	0.67	0.71	0.66	0.67	0.75
Res10	0.63	0.69	0.75	0.73	0.78	0.67	0.69	0.66	0.74	1.00	0.80	0.75	0.76	0.79	0.73	0.81
Res11	0.65	0.66	0.62	0.75	0.71	0.67	0.78	0.69	0.70	0.80	1.00	0.78	0.83	0.79	0.80	0.79
Res12	0.78	0.73	0.62	0.64	0.73	0.67	0.75	0.78	0.67	0.75	0.78	1.00	0.74	0.88	0.78	0.79
Res13	0.66	0.65	0.65	0.72	0.76	0.69	0.74	0.72	0.71	0.76	0.83	0.74	1.00	0.75	0.83	0.80
Res14	0.64	0.67	0.78	0.67	0.79	0.71	0.70	0.74	0.66	0.79	0.79	0.88	0.75	1.00	0.81	0.82
Res15	0.61	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.79	0.66	0.75	0.67	0.73	0.80	0.78	0.83	0.81	1.00	0.83
Res16	0.64	0.67	0.63	0.67	0.76	0.69	0.74	0.70	0.75	0.81	0.79	0.79	0.80	0.82	0.83	1.00

In the next section, the design and presentation of the digital marketing model aimed at enhancing consumer value in startup products is addressed. In fact, the following model responds to the main research question.

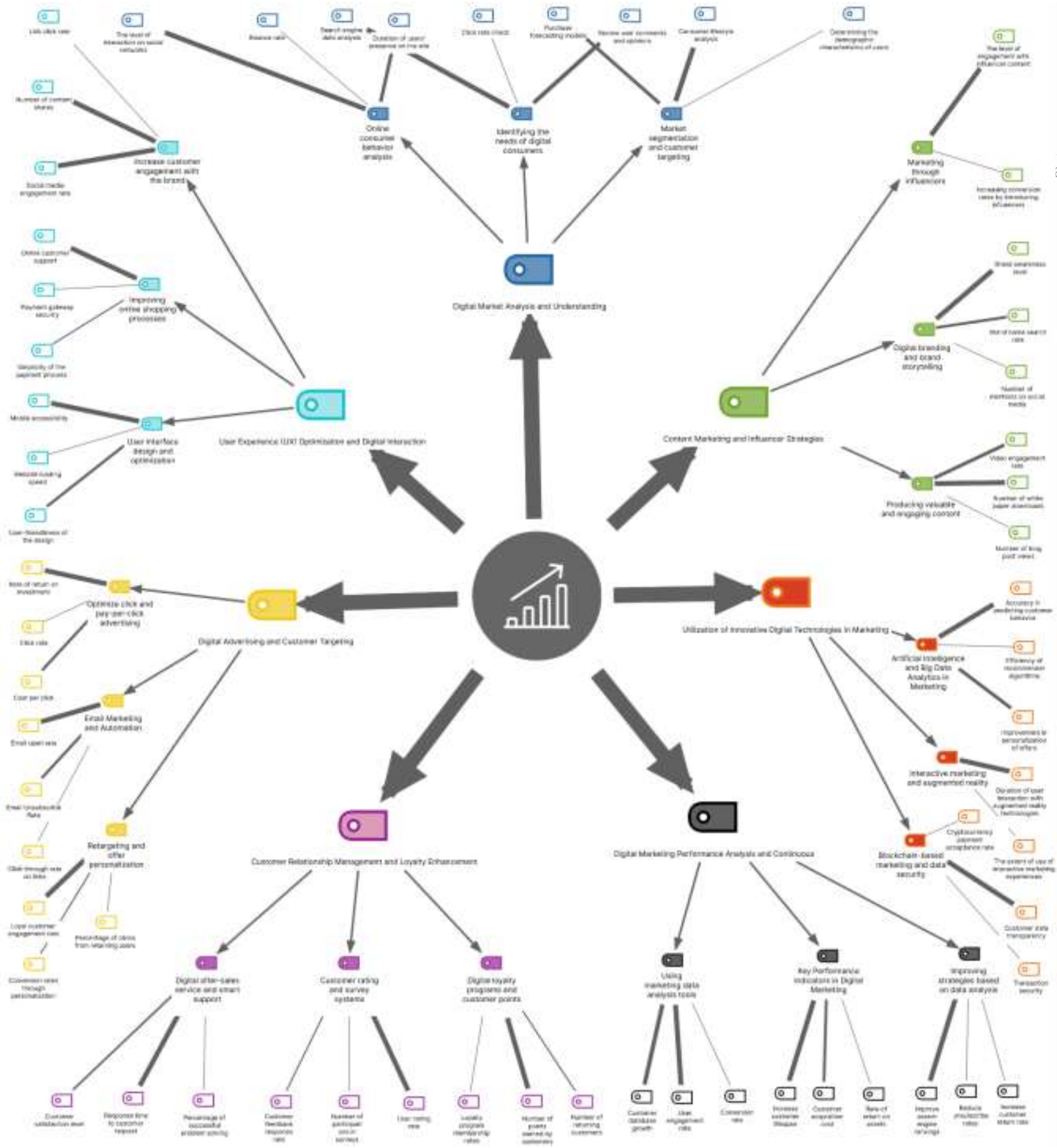

Figure 1. Digital Marketing Model for Enhancing Consumer Value in Startup Products

In the present study, seven main themes were identified within the framework of the digital marketing model for enhancing consumer value in startup products, as shown in the figure above.

Seven main themes were identified in this study within the framework of the digital marketing model for enhancing consumer value in startup products, as displayed in the figure above. One of the essential tools in Maxqda software is the Code Cloud tool. Among the extracted codes, the most frequent were related to influencer content engagement, purchase prediction models, consumer lifestyle analysis, content sharing, and response time to customer requests.

These elements form the core of the consumer lifestyle analysis pyramid, with influencer content engagement located at the top of the pyramid. Purchase prediction models appear at the base, while content sharing, customer behavior prediction accuracy, and response time to customer inquiries form the facets of the pyramid in the digital marketing model aimed at enhancing consumer value in startup products.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate the identification of seven main themes within the digital marketing model aimed at enhancing consumer value in startup products. These themes include digital market analysis and understanding, user experience (UX) optimization and digital interaction, content marketing and influencer strategies, digital advertising and customer targeting, utilization of innovative digital technologies in marketing, customer relationship management and loyalty enhancement, and digital marketing performance analysis and continuous optimization. Among the extracted codes, the highest frequencies were associated with influencer content engagement, purchase prediction models, consumer lifestyle analysis, content sharing, and response time to customer inquiries. These elements constitute the core of the consumer lifestyle analysis pyramid. At the apex of the pyramid is influencer content engagement, while at the base are purchase prediction models. The sides of the pyramid include customer behavior prediction accuracy, content sharing, and response time to customer requests within the digital marketing model aimed at increasing the consumer value of startup products. These results partially align with the findings of prior research (Ashaari & Yusoff, 2025; Babashahi et al., 2020; Dimitrios et al., 2023; Ku, 2024; Yaghoubi Pour et al., 2024).

Based on the findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed for each of the identified themes:

Digital Market Analysis and Understanding: Use data analysis tools such as Google Analytics, SEMrush, or SimilarWeb to identify customer behavior, market trends, and competitors. Also, consider surveys and direct interviews with target audiences to understand their needs and priorities.

User Experience (UX) Optimization and Digital Interaction: Enhance your website and application by focusing on loading speed, user-friendly design, and accessibility. Conduct A/B testing to evaluate different versions of your pages.

Content Marketing and Influencer Strategies: Create valuable content tailored to the needs of your audience (such as educational articles, videos, or infographics). Collaborate with relevant influencers in the startup sector to amplify your message to a broader audience.

Digital Advertising and Customer Targeting: Use advertising platforms like Google Ads and Meta Ads. Implement retargeting ads to re-engage previous visitors. Allocate budget to small test campaigns and optimize based on performance data.

Utilization of Innovative Digital Technologies in Marketing: Apply technologies such as artificial intelligence (for chatbots or personalized product recommendations) and augmented reality (AR) to create innovative user experiences.

Customer Relationship Management and Loyalty Enhancement: Use CRM systems like HubSpot or Salesforce to document customer information and track interactions. Design loyalty programs (e.g., discount or point-based systems).

Digital Marketing Performance Analysis and Continuous Optimization: Regularly monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) such as conversion rate, customer acquisition cost (CAC), and return on investment (ROI). Use the analysis results to refine strategies.

In conclusion, for optimal success, it is recommended to initially focus on market analysis and UX optimization, as these form the foundation for customer acquisition and retention. Subsequently, by integrating content strategies, targeted advertising, and advanced technologies, the growth of consumer value can be strengthened. Ultimately, continuous performance analysis will help keep your strategies dynamic and effective.

Ethical Considerations

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

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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