PART ONE
Think

01

Strategy and context

In this chapter, you will learn:

» How to define and distinguish business strategy and marketing strategy.

» How to think about digital audiences.

» The key building block concepts that are essential to any strategy.

» The questions that need to be asked when assembling a digital marketing strategy.

1.1 Introduction

A strategy indicates the most advantageous direction for an organisation to take over a defined period of time. It also outlines which tactics and means should be used to execute this direction. Originating as a military term, strategy is about using your strengths, as well as the context in which you are operating, to your advantage.

In marketing, strategy starts with understanding what the business wants to achieve, or what problem it wants to solve. It then considers the context in which the business and its competitors operates, and outlines key ways in which the business and brand can gain advantage and add value.

In the early days of TV, when the medium was new and not yet entirely understood, there were separate 'TV planners' who created a 'TV strategy' for the brand. Over time, this was incorporated into the overall marketing strategy (as it should be). The same has happened with digital. Digital thinking should be incorporated into marketing strategy from day one. This chapter considers digital strategy separately in order to highlight some ways in which digital has affected our strategic approach to reaching customers and solving marketing problems.

1.2 Key terms and concepts

Term	Definition
Cluetrain Manifesto	A set of 95 theses organised as a call to action (CTA) for businesses operating within a newly connected marketplace, published in 1999. While some of the book's claims have failed to materialise, it was an early source of guidelines for social media and obtained a cult-like following.
Market share	In strategic management and marketing, market share is the percentage or proportion of the total available market or market segment that is being serviced by a company.
Metric	A unit of measurement.
Pay per click (PPC)	Pay per click is advertising where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert, not for the opportunity for it to be seen or displayed.
Return on investment (ROI)	The ratio of cost to profit.
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	SEO is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking for specific keywords in the search engines.
Short Message Service (SMS)	Electronic messages sent on a cellular network
Strategy	A set of ideas that outline how a product or brand will be positioned and achieve its objectives. This guides decisions on how to create, distribute, promote and price the product or service.
Tactic	A specific action or method that contributes to achieving a goal.

Table 1.

1.3 What is marketing?

A simple definition for marketing is that it is the creation and satisfaction of demand for your product, service or ideas. If all goes well, this demand should translate into sales and, ultimately, revenue.

In 2012, Dr Philip Kotler defined marketing as "The science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential" (Kotler, 2012).

The American Marketing Association (AMA), defines marketing as "The activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2017).

In order to motivate people to pay for your product or service, or to consider your organisation superior to your competitors, you need to create meaningful benefits and value for the consumer. The design of the product or service itself can arguably be a function of marketing. The value that a marketer should seek to create should be equal to or even greater than the cost of the product to the consumer. Doing this often and consistently will grow trust in, and loyalty towards, the brand and create strong brand equity.

1.4 What is digital marketing?

How does digital marketing fit into this definition? There is, in fact, no difference between 'traditional' marketing and digital marketing. They are one and the same, apart from digital being specific to a medium.

Ultimately, the aim of any type of marketing is to keep and grow a customer base and stimulate sales in the future. Digital communication tools contribute towards connecting and building long-term relationships with customers.

What is digital? Bud Caddell defines 'digital' as "A participatory layer of all media that allows users to self-select their own experiences, and affords marketers the ability to bridge media, gain feedback, iterate their message, and collect relationships" (Caddell, 2013). In other words, digital is a way of exploring content and ideas (for users) and connecting with and understanding customers (for marketers).

Digital marketing is powerful in two fundamental ways. First, the audience can be segmented very precisely, even down to factors like current location and recent brand interactions, which means that messages can (and must) be personalised and tailored specially for them.

Second, the digital sphere is almost completely measurable. Every minute and every click by a customer can be accounted for. In digital you can see exactly how various campaigns are performing, which channels bring the most benefit, and where your efforts are best focused. Cumulatively, access to data that measures the whole customer experience should lead to data driven decision making.

The complete scope of marketing is practised on the Internet. Products and services are positioned and promoted, purchased, distributed and serviced. The web provides consumers with more choice, more influence and more power. Brands constantly have new ways of selling, new products and services to sell, and new markets to which they can sell.

Digital marketing helps to create consumer demand by using the power of the interconnected, interactive web. It enables the exchange of currency but more than that, it enables the exchange of attention for value.

1.4.1 An exchange of value

If marketing creates and satisfies demand, digital marketing drives the creation of demand using the power of the Internet, and satisfies this demand in new and innovative ways.

A brand on the Internet can gain value in the form of time, attention and advocacy from the consumer. For the user value can be added in the form of entertainment, education and utility. Brands build loyalty among users who love their products or services and must align with users' values and aspirations. Users fall in love with products and services when their experience is tailored to their needs, and not the needs of the brand.

1.5 Understanding marketing strategy

1.5.1 Business and brand strategy

Before you can delve into marketing strategy, take a step back and consider the business and brand with which you are working.

The end goal of any business is to make money in one way or another. Business strategy asks the questions, "What is the business challenge we are facing that prevents us from making more revenue?" and, "What business objective should we strive for in order to increase the money in the bank?"

The brand is the vessel of value in this equation. The brand justifies why the business matters, what the business' purpose is and what value the business adds to people's lives.

The AMA defines a brand as, "A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The usual expression of a brand is its trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller" (N.A., 2011). To quote Cheryl Burgess, a brand presents, "A reason to choose" one product or service over another.

The value of the brand is measured in terms of its brand equity i.e. how aware are people of the brand? Does it hold positive associations and perceived value? How loyal are people to the brand?

When you have the answers to these questions, you can formulate a marketing strategy to address the challenge or objective you've discovered.

1.5.2 Marketing strategy

The purpose of a marketing strategy is to determine what the business is about, and to then address the business or brand challenge, or objective that has been revealed. An effective strategy involves making a series of well-informed decisions about how the brand, product or service should be promoted. The brand that attempts to be all things to all people risks becoming unfocused or losing the clarity of its value proposition.

For example, a new airline would need to consider how it is going to add value to the market and differentiate itself from competitors. Whether their product is a domestic or international service; whether its target market is budget travellers or international and business travellers; and whether the channel is through primary airports or smaller, more cost-effective airports. Each of these choices will result in a vastly different strategic direction.

To make these decisions, a strategist must understand the context in which the brand operates, asking, "What are the factors that affect the business?" This means conducting a situational analysis that looks at the following four pillars:

1. The environment
2. The business
3. The customers
4. The competitors.

Here are some considerations and tools for conducting your brand's situational analysis.

Understanding the environment

The environment is the overall context or 'outside world' in which the business functions. It can involve anything from global economics (how well is the local currency performing these days?) to developments in your industry. Every brand will have a specific environment that it needs to consider, based on the type of product or service it produces.

An analysis of the business and brand environment will typically consider political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) influences to identify a clear set of considerations or issues pertinent to the marketing strategy.

Understanding the business

There are several marketing models that can be used to understand the business and brand with which you are working. Since it's essential for all marketing messages to encapsulate the brand's identity and objectives, this is a very important step. A crucial consideration is the brand itself. What does it stand for? What does it mean? What associations, ideas, emotions and benefits do people associate with it? What makes it unique?

There are several levels of branding to investigate, as shown below.

Brand Pyramid Template

Figure 1. Understanding the business' brand.

Out of this, you can determine what the brand or product's unique selling point (USP) is. A USP is the one characteristic that can make your product or service better than the competition's. Ask yourself, "What unique value does it have? Does it solve a problem that no other product does?"

Understanding customers

To understand your customers, you need to conduct market research. Try not to make assumptions about why people like and transact with your brand, you may find their values and motives are quite different from what you thought. Ongoing research and a data driven business will help you to build a picture of what particular benefit or feature your business provides to your customers allowing you to capitalise on this in your marketing content.

One important area on which to focus here is the consumer journey which is the series of steps and decisions a customer takes before buying from your business (or not). Luckily, online data analytics allow you to get a good picture of how people behave on your website before converting to customers; other forms of market research will also help you establish this for your offline channels.

On the Internet, a consumer journey is not linear. Instead, consumers may engage with your brand in a variety of ways, for example, across devices or marketing channels, before making a purchase.
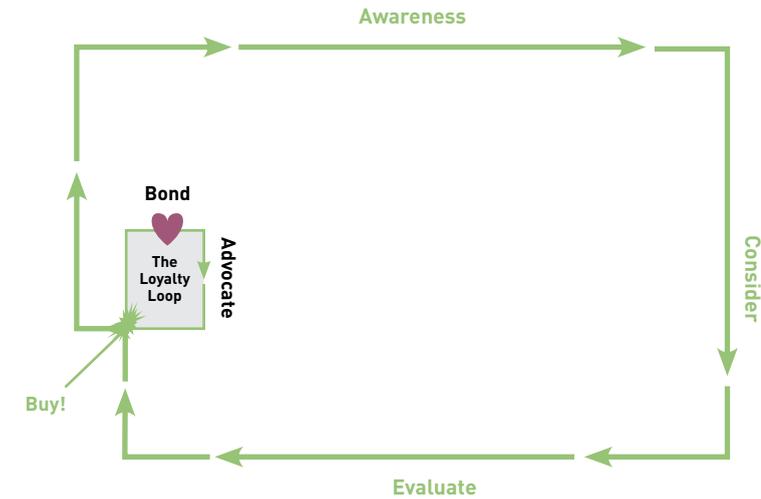
Figure 2. The customer journey is cyclical.

The goal is to reach customers with the right marketing message at the right stage of their journey. For example, you may want to use aspirational messages for someone in the exploration phase, but focus on more direct features and benefits (such as a lower price) when they're almost ready to buy.

Understanding competitors

Finally, it's important to know who else is marketing to your potential customers, what they offer, and how you can challenge or learn from them. Many competitors target the same needs in a given customer, sometimes through very similar products. Positioning places your brand in a unique place in people's minds. It is impossible to create a strong value proposition or USP without knowing your competitors' positioning strategy.

On the Internet, your competitors are not just those who are aiming to earn your customers' money; they are also those who are capturing your customers' attention. With more digital content being created in a day than most people could consume in a year – for example, over 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute (YouTube, 2017) – the scarcest resources these days are time, focus and attention.

When considering competition it's also worthwhile looking at potential replacements for your product. The Internet is disrupting and accelerating the pace of disintermediation in a number of industries, meaning that people can now go directly to the business instead of transacting through a middleman (look at the travel industry as an example). To stay ahead, you should be looking at potential disruptors of your industry as well as the existing players.

1.5.3 Digital marketing strategy

Once you have a clear sense of what the business challenge or objective is, you can define how your marketing strategy will leverage digital channels to fulfil it.

As discussed in the introduction, digital should not be considered as separate from your core strategy. Digital marketing builds on and adapts the principles of traditional marketing using the opportunities and challenges offered by the digital medium.

A marketing strategy should be constantly iterating and evolving. Since the Internet allows for near-instantaneous feedback and data gathering, marketers should constantly be optimising and improving their online marketing efforts.

User-centric thinking, which involves placing the user at the core of all decisions, is vital when looking at building a successful marketing strategy. The marketing strategist of today is offered not only a plethora of tactical possibilities, but also unprecedented ways of measuring the effectiveness of chosen strategies and tactics. Digital allows greater opportunities for interaction and consumer engagement than were possible in the past, so it is important to consider the ways in which the brand can create interactive experiences for consumers, not just broadcast messages.

The fact that digital marketing is highly empirical is one of its key strengths. Almost everything can be measured: from behaviours, to actions and action paths, to results. Insight tools can even be used to track the sentiment of users towards certain elements online. This means that the digital marketing strategist should be constantly measuring and adapting to ensure the highest ROI. Built into any strategy should be a testing framework and the ability to remain flexible and dynamic in a medium that shifts and changes as user behaviours do.

If we defined strategy as 'a plan of action designed to achieve a particular outcome', the desired outcome of a digital marketing strategy would be aligned with your organisation's overall business and brand building objectives or challenges. For example, if one of the overall objectives was acquisition of new clients, a possible digital marketing objective might be building brand awareness online.

1.6 The building blocks of marketing strategy

The following building-block techniques will help you structure a marketing strategy, both online and offline, that addresses your core business challenges. These strategy models are just starting points and ways to help you think through problems. As you grow in experience and insight, you could find yourself relying on them less or adapting them.

1.6.1 Porter's Five Forces analysis

Porter's Five Forces analysis is a business tool that helps determine the competitive intensity and attractiveness of a market. The Internet's low barrier to entry means that many new businesses are appearing online, providing countless choices for customers. This makes it important to consider new factors when devising a marketing strategy.
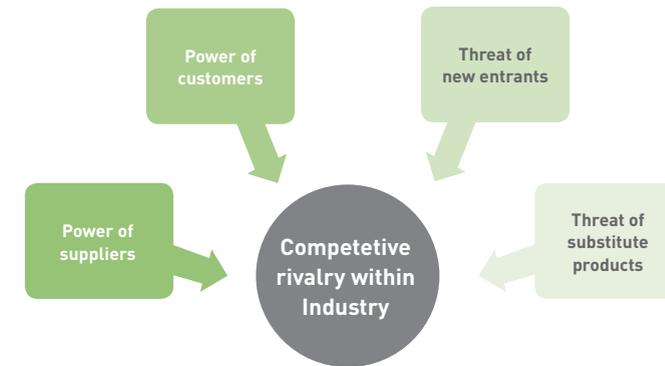

Figure 3. Porter's Five Forces.

1.6.2 The Four Ps

The Four Ps of marketing help you structure the components that make up a brand's offering, differentiators and marketing. They have been fundamentally changed by the Internet and need to be looked at in the context offered by digitally connected media and from the perspective of the consumer. How your brand is positioned in the mind of your consumer will ultimately determine your success.

1. Products (and services)

Products and services are what a company sells. The Internet enables businesses to sell a huge range of products, from fast-moving consumer goods and digital products such as software, to services such as consultancy. In fact, the Internet has in some cases made it possible for a product or service to exist. Consider Uber and Airbnb. Online, the experience the user has in discovering and purchasing can be considered part of the product the brand provides, or be the product itself.

The Internet has enabled hyper-personalisation. For example, Nike (nikeid.nike.com) and Converse (www.converse.com) allow customers to customise their own trainers. The Internet as a distribution medium also makes it possible for products, such as software and music, to be sold digitally.

2. Price

The prevalence of search engines and of shopping comparison websites, such as www.pricerunner.co.uk, and www.nextag.com, makes it easy for customers to compare product prices across a number of retailers. This makes the Internet a market of near-perfect competition (Porter, 2008). The internet allows for personalised and flexible pricing strategies to a level that traditional retailers would find almost impossible to achieve.

With price differentiation becoming a challenge, especially for smaller players in the market, businesses need to consider differentiating on value. Value is a combination of service, perceived benefits and price, where customers may be willing to pay a higher price for a better experience or if they feel they are getting something more than just the product.

3. Placement (or distribution)

Product distribution and markets no longer have to be dictated by location. By simply making their products visible online (for example, on a website or Facebook page), brands can reach a global market. The key is to reach and engage customers on the channels they are using. This is why choosing your digital tactics is vital. You want to engage customers on their terms, not yours.

4. Promotion

The Internet, as an information and entertainment medium, naturally lends itself to promoting products. The online promotional mix is an extension of the offline, but with some significant differences. For one, online promotion can be tracked, measured and targeted in a far more sophisticated way.

Promotion doesn't just mean advertising and talking at customers. On the Internet, it's crucial to engage, collaborate and join conversations, too. Interacting with customers helps build relationships, and the web makes this sort of communication easy. That's why a good portion of this book is devoted to engagement tactics and tools.

1.6.3 SWOT analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is an ideal way to understand your business and your market.

Figure 4. SWOT analysis.

Always have a purpose in mind when conducting a SWOT analysis. For example, study the external threats to your business, and see how learning from these can help you overcome internal weaknesses. This should tie back in to your business and marketing objectives and strengths should be promoted, opportunities should be sought out, while threats and weaknesses should be minimised as much as possible. A SWOT analysis is part of a situational analysis and identifies the key issues that direct the marketing strategy. Be mindful of the fact that weaknesses can be opportunities and strengths threats, especially in the world of digital disruption.

1.7 Crafting a digital marketing strategy

Any activity with an end goal (whether it's winning a war, building a city or selling a product) should have a blueprint in place for every person in the organisation to follow. In digital marketing, however, there is no single definitive approach so each business must create its own roadmap. However, there are questions you can use to guide this process.

A strategy needs to cover the questions of who you are and who you are not. It should also include what you are offering and to whom, as well as why and how you are doing so. The steps and questions below cover what an organisation should be aware of when creating and implementing a strategy that will meet its marketing objectives and solve its challenges.

1. Context

The first step in crafting a successful strategy is to examine the context of the organisation and the various stakeholders. We covered this under marketing strategy earlier in this chapter, but it bears repeating.

- What is the context in which you are operating (PESTLE factors) and how is this likely to change in the future?
- Who are you, why does your brand matter and what makes your brand useful and valuable?
- Who are your customers, and what needs, wants and desires do they have?
- Who are your competitors? These may extend beyond organisations that compete with you on the basis of price and product and could also be competition in the form of abstracts such as time and mindshare. Thorough market research will reveal the answers to these questions.

2. Value exchange

Once you have examined the market situation, the second step is an examination of your value proposition or promise: in other words, what unique value your organisation can add to that market. It is important to identify the supporting value-adds to the brand promise that are unique to the digital landscape. What extras, beyond the basic product or service, do you offer to customers?

The Internet offers many channels for value creation. However, the definition of what is 'valuable' depends largely on the target audience, so it is crucial to research your users and gather insights into what they want and need. Gathering the right data can help you evolve this value exchange over time.

3. Objectives

When setting your digital marketing goals, there are four key aspects to consider: objectives, tactics, key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets. Let's look at each one in turn.

Objectives

Objectives are essential to any marketing endeavour, without them your strategy would have no direction and no end goal or win conditions. It's important to be able to take a step back and ask, "Why are we doing any of this? What goal, purpose or outcome are we looking for?"

- What are you trying to achieve?
- How will you know if you are successful?

Sometimes, words like 'objective' can be used in different situations with slightly different meanings. Remember, the objective of a website or online campaign is aligned with the strategic outcomes of the business. The objective of a campaign may be to create awareness for a new business or increase sales of a product. The objective answers the question, "What do we want to achieve with this *marketing* campaign?" For example, an objective might be to increase the sales of a product, grow brand awareness or increase website traffic. A business objective (something that your business will either do or not do) and a marketing objective (a change in customer behaviour that your business wants to achieve) are not the same thing!

Objectives need to be SMART:

- **Specific** – the objective must be clear and detailed, rather than vague and general.
- **Measurable** – the objective must be measurable so that you can gauge whether you are attaining the desired outcome.
- **Attainable** – the objective must be something that is possible for your brand to achieve, based on available resources.
- **Realistic** – the objective must also be sensible and based on data and trends; don't exaggerate or overestimate what can be achieved.
- **Time-bound** – finally, the objective must be linked to a specific timeframe.

Goals

The goal of a website or campaign in web analytics refers to an action that a user takes on a website or a type of user behaviour. This action could be making a purchase, signing up for a newsletter, or viewing a certain number of pages in a visit. A completed goal is called a conversion. Goals are derived from objectives and answer the question, "What do we need users to do in order to achieve our objective?"

Tactics

Objectives are not the same as tactics. Tactics are the specific tools or approaches you will use to meet your objectives, for example, a retention-based email newsletter, a Facebook page, or a CRM implementation. As a strategy becomes more complex, you may have multiple tactics working together to try to achieve the same objective. Tactics may change (and often should), but the objective should remain your focus. We'll look at tactics in more detail in the next section.

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Key performance indicators or KPIs are metrics that are used to indicate whether tactics are performing well and meeting your objectives. There are many metrics to be analysed, and determining which are important will help to focus on what really matters to a particular campaign. KPIs relate closely to goals, and answer the question, "What data do we need to look at to see if goals are being completed?" For example, if your objective is to increase website traffic, you may look at the number of website visitors, the percentage of new visitors, and how long users stay on the site.

NOTE

Goals related to visitor behaviour, such as time spent on site or pageviews per visit, are referred to as engagement goals.

KPIs are determined per tactic, with an eye on the overall objective. The diagram below shows how a number of KPIs can feed into one goal, and a number of goals can in turn feed into one objective. A single objective can have a number of goals, each with their own number of KPIs, to ensure it is achieved.
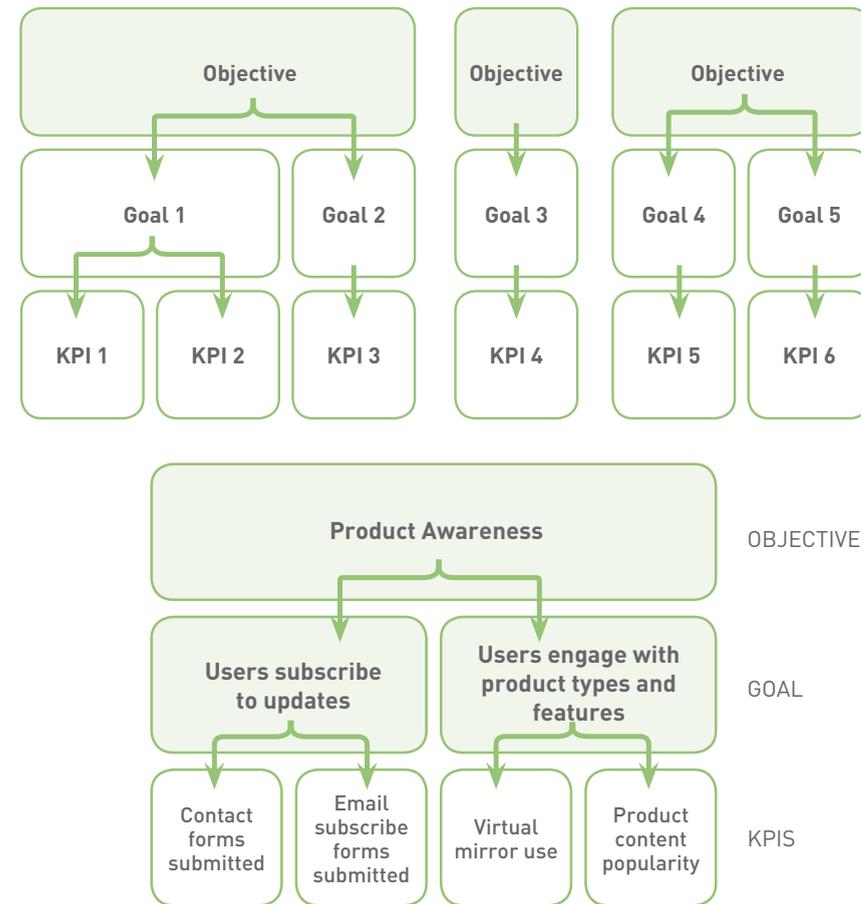

Figure 5. Objectives, goals and KPIs. (Adapted from Kaushik, 2010)

Targets

Finally, targets are the specific values that are set for your KPIs to reach within a specific time period. That is, they are the actual target values that KPIs need to meet in order for the campaign to be declared a success. Sportspeople need to reach targets to advance their careers, for example, come in the top ten to qualify for the final, or run 10 km in under 27 minutes. If you meet or exceed a target, you are succeeding; if you don't reach it, you're falling behind on your objectives and you need to reconsider your approach (or your target). If one KPI is 'newsletter subscriptions', then a target might be '100 subscriptions every month' so if one month falls short at 70, this will quickly reveal that a fix is required.

When setting objectives and targets for any campaign, remember to think about overlaps in customer behaviour that might impact how you measure your success. People might click on an ad and visit your website to buy something, but they could also browse and then go and buy something in the brick-and-mortar store. The total economic value of online activities needs to account for this so that you can get an idea of the true contribution digital is making.

Here is an example:

SMART objective:

- Increase sales through the eCommerce platform by 10% within the next six months.

Tactics:

- Search advertising
- Social media marketing using the Facebook brand page

KPIs per tactic:

- Search advertising – number of search referrals, cost per click on the ads
- Facebook brand page – number of comments and shares on campaign specific posts

Targets per tactic:

- Search advertising – 1 000 search referrals after the first month, with a 10% month-on-month increase after that
- Facebook brand page – 50 comments and 10 shares on campaign-specific posts per week

4. Tactics and evaluation

Many digital tools and tactics are available once you have defined your digital marketing objectives. Each tactic has its strengths – for example, acquisition (gaining new customers) may best be driven by search advertising, while email is one of the most effective tools for selling more products to existing customers. The table below expands on some of the most popular tactics available to digital marketers and their possible outcomes. These will be covered in far more detail in the Engage section of this book.

Tactic	Outcome
SEO	Customer retention and acquisition
This is the practice of optimising a website to rank higher on the search engine results pages for relevant search items. SEO involves creating relevant, fresh and user-friendly content that search engines index and serve when people enter a search term that is relevant to your product or service.	SEO has a key role to play in acquisition, as it ensures your organisation's offering will appear in the search results, allowing you to reach potential customers. A site that is optimised for search engines is also a site that is clear, relevant and well designed. These elements ensure a great user experience, meaning that SEO also plays a role in retention.

Search advertising	Sales, customer retention and acquisition
In pay-per click or search advertising, the advertiser pays only when someone clicks on their ad. The ads appear on search engine results pages.	The beauty of search advertising is that it is keyword based. This means an ad will come up in response to the search terms entered by the consumer. It therefore plays a role in sales, acquisition and retention. It allows the advertiser to reach people already in the buying cycle or are expressing interest in what they have to offer.
Online advertising	Branding and acquisition
Online advertising covers advertising in all areas of the Internet – ads in emails, ads on social networks and mobile devices, and display ads on normal websites.	The main objective of online advertising is to raise brand awareness online. It can be more interactive and therefore less disruptive than traditional or static online advertising, as users can choose to engage with the ad or not. Online advertising can be targeted to physical locations, subject areas, past user behaviours, and much more.
Affiliate marketing	Sales and branding
Affiliate marketing is a system of reward whereby referrers are given a 'finder's fee' for every referral they give.	Online affiliate marketing is widely used to promote eCommerce websites, with the referrers being rewarded for every visitor, subscriber or customer provided through their efforts. It is a useful tactic for brand building and acquisition.
Video marketing	Branding, customer retention and value creation
Video marketing involves creating video content. This can be wither outright video advertising, or can be valuable, useful, content marketing.	Since it is so interactive and engaging, video marketing is excellent for capturing and retaining customer attention. Done correctly, it provides tangible value – in the form of information, entertainment or inspiration – and boosts a brand's image in the eyes of the public.
Social media	Branding, value creation and participation
Social media is media in the form of text, visuals and audio, that can be shared online. It has changed the face of marketing by allowing collaboration and connection in a way that no other channel has been able to offer.	From a strategic perspective, social media, is useful for brand building, raising awareness of the brand and its story, and encouraging the customer to become involved with the brand. The shareable and accessible nature of social media platforms allows brands to communicate and engage directly with their customers. Social media also offers brands a way to interact with their customers, instead of just broadcasting to them.
Email marketing	Customer retention and value creation
Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that delivers commercial and content-based messages to an audience. It is extremely cost effective, highly targeted, customisable on a mass scale and completely measurable – all of which make it one of the most powerful digital marketing tactics.	Email marketing is a tool for building relationships with potential and existing customers through valuable content and promotional messages. It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, ultimately leading to greater profitability for the organisation a whole. A targeted, segmented email database means that a brand can direct messages at certain sectors of their customer base in order to achieve the best result.

Table 2. Marketing tactics.

Once the objectives and tactics have been set, these should be cross-checked and re-evaluated against the needs and resources of your organisation to make sure your strategy is on the right track and no opportunities are being overlooked.

5. Ongoing optimisation

It is increasingly important for brands to be dynamic, flexible and agile when marketing online. New tactics and platforms emerge every week, customer behaviours change over time, and people's needs and wants from brand evolve as their relationship grows.

This process of constant change should be considered in the early stages of strategy formulation, allowing tactics and strategies to be modified and optimised as you go. After all, digital marketing strategy should be iterative, innovative and open to evolution.

Understanding user experience and the user journey is vital to building successful brands. Budget should be set aside upfront for analysing user data and optimising conversion paths.

Social thinking and socially informed innovation are also valuable and uniquely suited to the online space. Socially powered insight can be used to inform strategic decisions in the organisation, from product roadmaps to service plans. Brands have moved away from being merely present in social media towards actively using it, aligning it with actionable objectives and their corresponding metrics. This is critical in demonstrating ROI and understating the opportunities and threats in the market.

Managing the learning loop (the knowledge gained from reviewing the performance of your tactics, which can then be fed back into the strategy) can be difficult. This is because brand cycles often move more slowly than the real-time results you will see online. It is therefore important to find a way to work agility into the strategy, allowing you to be quick, creative and proactive, as opposed to slow, predictable and reactive. The data collected around success of your marketing strategy should feed into a larger pool of information used to drive business decisions.

1.8 Case study: Vets now: Taking care of the brand

1.8.1 One-line summary

Vets now, an industry-known UK accident and emergency veterinarian service, wanted to become the brand of choice amongst consumers and veterinarians.

Figure 6. The Vets now Logo.

1.8.2 The challenge

Vets now provided their accident and emergency service to over 1 000 veterinary practices across the UK. But, with more and more smaller local emergency veterinary clinics opening, and day clinics starting to offer out-of-hours services, Vets now was experiencing intense competition. They decided to target pet owners directly and make themselves the brand of choice for pet owners, if and when their pet required emergency care.

However, the brand didn't deal directly with clients too often, and brand awareness of Vets now among pet owners was at about 8% (despite 1 in 4 UK vet practices using the service). The brand was also offering inconsistent sub-brands, which confused pet owners.

Vets now wanted to improve brand awareness, consolidate their offering, and offer a pet-owner led approach.

1.8.3 The solution

Vets now recognised that they needed to conduct a brand audit to determine their unifying core purpose. A brand workshop was held, and the key insight was that emergency and critical care was the heart of the brand. All other sub-brands and straplines were negating from this core message. The brand wanted to present a singular pet owner brand proposition and developed the single unifying strapline: Introducing Vets now – Your pet emergency service.

To appeal to customers directly, they needed to know who their potential customers were and what their feelings were towards their pets. Vets now conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups with over 1 000 pet owners. They identified 8 pet owner types, and highlighted the key drivers behind pet ownership in the UK. They then mapped out the owner types against these drivers.

Figure 7. Vets now's map of pet ownership

The key insight was that pet owners expect others to treat their pets as they would other human beings. This means that the care and professionalism offered to pets is paramount. Pet-owners

are dedicated to keeping their pet happy and healthy, and want the best care possible if an emergency were to occur. Pet owners needed emotional support and reassurance when dealing with an emergency involving their pet.

Vets now also identified three touchpoints of customers with the brand.

- Search and online – finding an emergency vet
- Clinical – referred to Vets now by another veterinary clinician
- Social space – engaging with other pet owners and online content.

Using these insights, the brand consolidated itself as one single brand offering. The brand also identified its essential brand principles and used these to inform all its branding and marketing communication. Vets now created new branding and imagery and chose a reassuring and expert but friendly and straightforward tone of voice to use across all communications. This unified and consolidated look and feel conveyed the core purpose of the brand and offered consumers brand recognition.

This new look and feel was rolled out across the website, Vets now hospitals and clinics, internal branding, and in print and digital marketing campaigns. These were chosen to ensure the new branding reached consumers at all three touchpoints.

The marketing campaign included various platforms and a mixture of traditional and digital tactics. There were print and digital ads, as well as content delivered across the website, social media, printed flyers and in-clinic posters. Content included emergency plans for if a pet becomes ill or has an accident, dangers that are present in the home over the Christmas holiday period, and how to ensure a pet stays happy and healthy over the festive season. This content was specifically created to resonate with the audience and used the insights gained from the in-depth research conducted by the brand to inform content development and creation.

1.8.4 The results

The research and ensuing strategy ensured the brand's awareness among customers increased. After the campaigns and rebranding, 59% of respondents had an unprompted recall of Vets now, up 20% from before the campaign. Within the sample of respondents, propensity to use Vets now after the campaign was up 138% from before. These were strong indicators of positive performance. The new website also saw a 23% drop in bounce rate within 5 days of going live, showing that the brand was now more in line with what users were searching for.

The importance of relooking at your brand and really investigating your customers is clearly demonstrated in this case study. It shows how a B2B brand can reposition itself as B2C with the right analysis and strategy. Clearly laying down your objectives, doing the necessary research and identifying how to address your customer across all touchpoints is essential to marketing strategy (Marketing Society, 2017).

1.9 The bigger picture

All of the chapters in this book are linked to digital marketing strategy in one way or another.

A solid business and brand strategy should be the starting point of any marketing venture, and you should always keep one eye on it as you develop specific campaigns, platforms and approaches. After all, you should always remember that you are trying to reach your chosen audience by communicating to them in the most effective way, to build rewarding and lucrative long-term relationships.

While strategy helps you understand the questions you should ask, data collected across your business, including market research, provides the information you need to answer them.

1.10 Summary

Strategy is the essential first step in positioning your brand within the market and creating a roadmap for achieving your business goals. While there are many different paths one can take, there is a clear process for understanding where you are, where you need to be, and how you will get there. It all starts with understanding the business challenges that your brand faces. From there, an effective marketing strategy looks at the market context, weighs the available options and makes important choices, based on solid research and data. Digital adds a layer of technology, engagement and iterative optimisation into the strategic process. The wide variety of tools and tactics offered by the digital medium should inform your strategic choices.

Digital can make marketing strategy highly empirical and your strategic thinking should be mindful of ROI and how it can be measured. This will allow you to optimise your tactics and performance in order to create a valuable brand story, an excellent user experience, the most optimised conversion funnels, and the highest ROI.

1.11 Case study questions

1. What was Vets now's new brand strategy?
2. Why was it necessary for Vets now to do such extensive customer research?
3. Could it be argued that this case study covers a business strategy rather than a marketing strategy?

1.12 Chapter questions

1. Why is it important to consider the business context when planning your marketing strategy?
2. How has the Internet affected marketing and the models we use to understand it?
3. Do you agree with the idea that customers are more empowered than they were before digital communications were so prevalent? Justify your answer.

1.13 Further reading

- www.sethgodin.typepad.com – Seth Godin's popular blog provides regular insight and food for thought.
- smithery.co – A marketing and innovation blog that teaches marketers to 'Make Things People Want, rather than spend all their energy and resources trying to Make People Want Things'.
- www.gigaom.com – GigaOM's community of writers covers a wide range of technological copies.
- Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind – This book by Ries & Trout published in 2002 offers excellent advice claiming space in the minds of consumers.

1.14 References

AMA, 2017. About AMA. [Online]
Available at: https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx
[Accessed on 27 October 2017]

Brilliant Noise, 2012. Brilliant Model: the Loyalty Loop. [Online]
Available at: brilliantnoise.com/brilliant-model-the-loyalty-loop/#more-3873
[Accessed 20 October 2017].

Caddell, B. 2013. Digital strategy 101. [Online]
Available at: https://www.slideshare.net/bud_caddell/digital-strategy-101-24081694
[Accessed 27 October 2017]

Kotler, P., 2012. What is marketing? [Online]
Available at: www.kotlermarketing.com/phil_questions.shtml#answer3
[Accessed 30 October 2017].

Marketing Society, 2017. Star Awards. [Online]
Available at: http://starawards.marketingsociety.com/results/
[Accessed 27 October 2017]

Porter, M., 2008. The Five Competitive Forces That Shape Strategy in Harvard Business Review,
January 2008, p86–104.

YouTube, 2017. Statistics. [Online]
Available at: www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html
[Accessed 30 October 2017].

1.15 Figure acknowledgments

Figure 1. Adapted from Noesis Marketing, 2011. http://www.noesismarketing.com/building-a-brand-pyramid

Figure 2. Adapted from Brilliant Noise, 2012. https://brilliantnoise.com/blog/brilliant-model-the-loyalty-loop/#more-3873

Figure 3. Own image.

Figure 4. Own image.

Figure 5. Adapted from Kaushik, 2010. https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/digital-marketing-and-measurement-model

Figure 6. Vet's now Logo. https://www.vets-now.com

Figure 7. https://d2aoenmdlpopxp.cloudfront.net/files/E/x/7/1/6/X/iZLJWelZ2x/file.pdf?Expires=1505734735&Signature=VHO6dhPwIKQftwPixK42bZxrbYi8B2JO8dR0dfkzW210qIg~ltAALm04bFGtmODX3tr-H6wTQBXogWmWzPepHz5ljX4shxUlxVTk3Kbs6pRVv1D1RO0rQ9kQLyNZ3xnSUt-~eIA~HkVPQ5tL8P5KbBi~7vqzgsIdmgA3e1NapWmiPRhfZuGGat1YsPYdV5y9Ox0XTzKkKwZ0216mxlyBNU34A1l8Z2spBLTEH8pU0yIjYhyoPSuVDUHJxkNBlzBrz93k8~kuvohFLvDolBAsMgVWju7A2iwXppLXbNDmPqSl6Fk6tOXabSdp2t2vwLfhzsR5vryNu0o7p5EDWPTl~Q__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAIXO2JKKMDKH6ZEQQ