

Other

**Romanov Kim**

*Digital Marketing Director, Digital Marketing Agency Founder,*

*Romanov Agency*

*(Edmonton, Alberta, Canada)*

## **DIGITAL MARKETING AND THE SPECIFICS OF ITS APPLICATION IN THE B2B SECTOR**

**Summary.** *The article provides a detailed analysis of digital marketing and its integration into the business-to-business (B2B) sphere. It focuses on the main differences between the corporate world and the mass market, such as the multi-stage and lengthy transaction process, collective decision-making by groups of stakeholders, high transaction costs, and the priority of rational over emotional factors. The effectiveness of specific digital tools adapted for business is also discussed, including in-depth expert content, search engine optimization (SEO), account-based marketing, specialized webinars, targeted communication in professional networks, and CRM systems for comprehensive analytics. The text states that the main purpose of digital strategies in the corporate sector is not to stimulate spontaneous purchases, but to gradually attract the target audience, retain their attention, create a strong brand presence, and attract high-quality potential customers (MQLL). Based on current market data, the text contains practical recommendations on building multi-channel communication with customers and calculating return on investment (ROI), allowing modern companies to optimize their marketing budgets, reduce customer acquisition costs (CAC), and increase conversion rates at each stage of the sales funnel.*

**Key words:** *Digital marketing, B2B sector, corporate sales, lead generation, content marketing, marketing automation, sales funnel, end-to-end*

*analytics, Account-Based Marketing, CRM systems, omnichannel, decision cycle, expert image.*

**Relevance of the study.** The research is becoming particularly relevant in the context of the rapid digitalization of business processes and a fundamental change in the behavior patterns of corporate customers. In the modern world, traditional methods of B2B sales, such as cold calls and participation in highly specialized exhibitions, are rapidly losing their effectiveness, giving way to high-tech digital strategies.

The decision-making process in the corporate sector today is significantly influenced by a new generation of managers who prefer to independently conduct deep online searches and collect analytical data before entering into direct contact with supplier representatives. High competition in global and local markets requires businesses to implement innovative approaches to attract qualified customers, establish long-term expert relationships with counterparties, and accurately measure the return on marketing investment (ROI).

In this regard, a deep understanding of the specifics of the introduction of digital tools, which must be adapted to long transaction cycles and collective decision-making, becomes critically important for maintaining market share and ensuring the economic growth of B2B companies.

**The purpose of the study.** The purpose of this research is a deep theoretical and practical analysis of digital marketing tools. We strive to identify the key features, patterns, and limitations of their use exclusively in the B2B sector.

The work is devoted to the systematization of existing methods of promoting complex corporate products and services in the online space. Our main task is to develop scientifically based and easily scalable practical recommendations for optimizing digital strategies, adapting expert content funnels, and implementing end-to-end automation systems.

The realization of this goal will significantly increase the overall efficiency of lead generation, significantly reduce the cost of attracting a corporate customer (CAC), and increase conversion at all stages of the multi-level complex sales cycle.

**Materials and research methods.** The study's empirical base includes current publications by leading domestic and foreign experts in Internet marketing, as well as verified statistical data from global analytical agencies like Gartner, Forrester, and McKinsey on digital business transformation pace. Detailed reports on B2B companies' advertising campaign effectiveness were also studied.

A wide range of general scientific methods was used, including systematic and comparative analysis, logical synthesis, deduction, and scientific classification.

To objectively assess the study's practical significance, statistical methods for marketing data processing were employed, an in-depth content analysis of corporate websites and specialized social networks was conducted, and a structural map of the corporate customer journey was created. This ensures all conclusions are characterized by maximum accuracy, representativeness, and validity.

**The results of the study.** The history of digitalization of B2B marketing represents an impressive path from simple electronic business cards to high-tech predictive ecosystems.

In the 1990s, when the Internet was just emerging in Web 1.0 format, the first corporate websites appeared that served as static electronic brochures. The main digital communication tool at that time was direct email. During this period, the B2B sector remained very conservative, relying solely on personal connections, cold calls, and industry exhibitions.

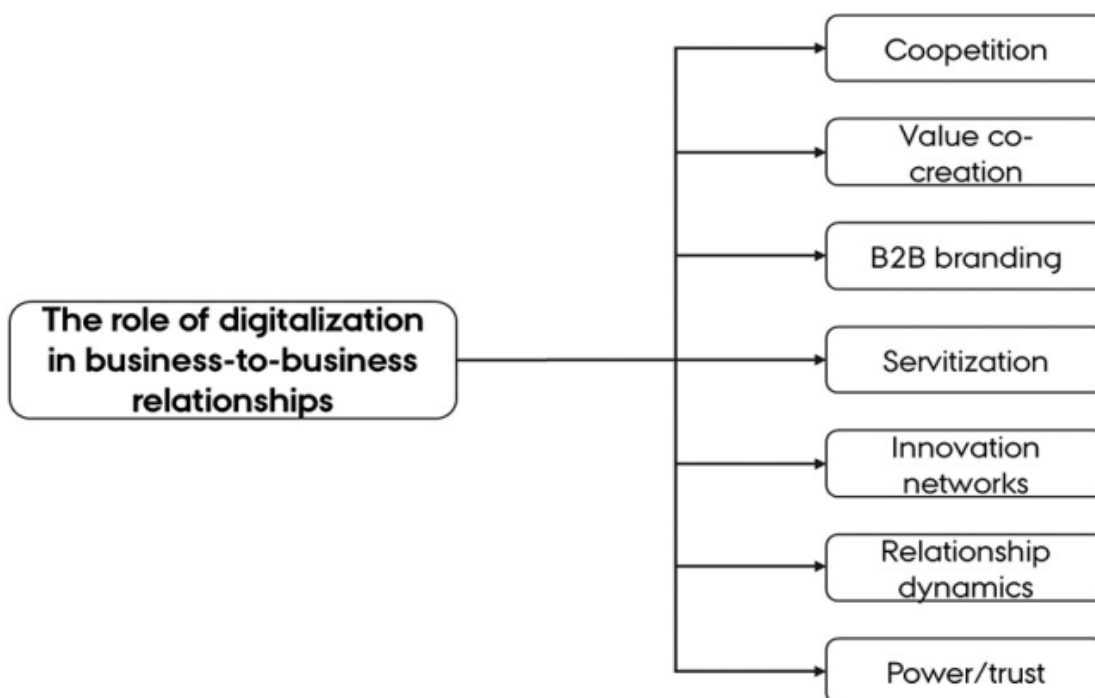
However, the real breakthrough came in the 2000s with the development of search engines and Web 2.0 technologies. The advent of SEO optimization and

contextual advertising opened up new horizons for companies to attract hot-targeted traffic. The concept of inbound marketing shifted the focus from aggressive direct sales to the creation of useful educational content, which significantly expanded the horizons for business development.

In the 2010s, there was a real breakthrough in the field of data and automation. Powerful marketing automation platforms appeared on the market, which made it possible to use mathematical scoring to evaluate potential customers and create complex trigger chains of interaction. The professional network LinkedIn became the main tool in the field of Social Selling, allowing you to establish individual contacts with decision-makers.

Significant changes have occurred in the marketing world in the 2020s. The era of artificial intelligence and full-scale Account-Based Marketing (ABM) has arrived. This modern stage is characterized by the use of neural networks for predictive analytics, hyperpersonalization of content in real time, and the creation of a seamless omnichannel experience that is no longer inferior to the best practices of B2C marketing.

It is important to note that the features of B2B marketing in the digital environment are determined by the fundamental differences between corporate procurement and mass consumer behavior. First, this is an extremely long transaction cycle, which can take from several months to several years. This requires marketers to create multi-stage content funnels to hold the attention and warm up customers at all stages of decision-making (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. The main B2B areas affected by digital marketing [2]**

The decision to purchase a complex corporate product is made not by one person, but by an entire procurement committee, consisting on average of 6-10 specialists of various profiles – from engineers to financial directors. In this regard, digital marketing should provide relevant arguments for each of these roles on the same platform, skillfully combining technical specifications with economic payback calculations.

The motivation of a corporate client is purely rational, so classic emotional advertising gives way to deep expert content [1]. The main conversion drivers are detailed reviews of successful implementations, technical documents, analytical reports, and niche webinars. The high cost of contracts and a clear focus on the long-term vital value of the client make large-scale marketing impractical. Traditional approaches have been replaced by the ABM strategy, which aims to find and attract specific companies through personalized advertising (IP targeting) and content targeted at narrow groups.

Another important feature of ABM is the integration of marketing platforms with sales management systems. This provides end-to-end analytics that accurately assesses the effectiveness of investments in each attracted corporate client [3].

The introduction of innovative technologies in the field of B2B is dictated by the need to effectively manage multi-month transaction cycles and complex decision-making processes. A key feature is the transition from traditional lead generation to the concept of creating demand and organizing customer experience at all stages (Table 1).

*Table 1*

**Digital technologies in the B2B sector**

No.	Technology	Characteristic
1	Process automation	Implementation of CRM systems for managing customer relationships. Using ERP systems to optimize resource and process management.
2	Data Analytics	The use of big data for deep analysis of the market, customer behavior and optimization of business processes. Forecasting demand and identifying trends using modern analytical tools.
3	E-commerce	B2B sales platforms that enable companies to operate online. Simplification of order, payment, and logistics procedures.
4	Cloud technologies	Data storage and processing in the cloud ensures the availability of information and the flexibility of operations. Collaboration on projects is possible in real time.
5	Artificial intelligence and machine learning	Personalization of offers and automation of customer service. Supply chain optimization and inventory management.
6	Internet of Things (IoT)	Continuous monitoring of equipment and assets. Collecting information to increase efficiency and reduce costs.
7	Cybersecurity	Protecting data and systems from cyber-attacks is essential in the B2B industry, where sensitive information is shared.
8	Digital platforms and ecosystems	Creating ecosystems that bring together different companies to create value together.

Unlike the mass consumer market, where digital algorithms often trigger an instant emotional purchase, B2B technologies are aimed at gradually strengthening expert trust. Sophisticated marketing automation systems develop multi-level; branched scenarios that help prepare the customer for the purchase. Each client's action, whether it's reading an article or participating in a webinar, automatically starts the process of sending the next relevant material. Thus, the progress of the deal is gradual but steady.

It should be emphasized that one of the key problems of modern corporate marketing is the fragmentation of data and the technical difficulties that arise when integrating new digital tools with outdated IT systems of enterprises. Many companies face the so-called data isolation syndrome, when information from various systems, such as CRM, marketing platforms, and resource management systems, is not synchronized properly. This leads to so-called "dirty data," which includes duplicate, outdated, or incomplete customer profiles. This situation significantly reduces the effectiveness of predictive analytics and automated scoring algorithms. Without a unified data architecture, the introduction of even the most advanced artificial intelligence technologies can lead to inappropriate spending of budgets and the dissemination of irrelevant messages.

In conditions of long transaction cycles, which can last from several months to several years, it becomes necessary to accurately assess the effectiveness of marketing investments. Classical attribution models may not always take into account the complex path of a corporate buyer. A significant part of professional interaction takes place in the so-called "dark funnel," which includes discussions in private chats, instant messengers, at industry events, and internal meetings. These discussions cannot be directly tracked using digital trackers. This creates serious difficulties for marketers in defending budgets to management. Mathematically, it becomes an extremely difficult task to prove the direct impact of a particular webinar or article on signing a multimillion-dollar contract.

The main feature of the B2B segment is that it needs to focus not on individuals, but on procurement committees. This requires a major change in the organizational structure. A serious obstacle to success is the chronic conflict and inconsistency between marketing and sales. In order to successfully apply digital technologies in this segment, it is necessary to establish agreements on the level of interaction between departments and move on to the revenue management concept. Analytical systems should be configured in such a way as to understand the intentions of the entire company as a whole. This will make it possible to link the digital behavior of a technical specialist with the requests of the finance director into a single decision-making chain.

In an age of abundance of information, creating truly in-depth expert content is becoming a daunting task. Corporate clients no longer believe superficial articles and require highly specialized expertise, which generative artificial intelligence algorithms cannot yet provide without the participation of qualified specialists.

In addition, the situation is affected by the tightening of legislation in the field of personal data protection and the gradual abandonment of third-party cookies by browsers. This forces B2B companies to completely rethink their lead generation strategies. Instead of aggressive retargeting, they focus on developing closed professional communities and collecting primary data directly from users, creating long-term trust relationships.

We believe that in order to eliminate data fragmentation, companies should switch to the Customer Data Platform architecture and start using the Revenue Operations approach. This approach allows you to combine marketing, sales, and customer service tools into a single technological ecosystem, eliminating the disconnect between different databases.

The complexity of integrating modern marketing platforms with legacy enterprise systems can be overcome through the use of API gateways and cloud connectors (iPaaS). This allows you to exchange information in real time without

any problems. The problem of low-quality data is successfully solved using strict corporate data hygiene protocols and automated validation and deduplication systems based on machine learning algorithms.

In conditions of long transaction cycles and the influence of the "dark funnel," classical valuation models are being replaced by hybrid systems. Companies are implementing multitouch attribution (MTA) at the level of entire accounts, rather than individual users. This is achieved by combining programmatic tracking with attribution based on the customer's words. By adding a mandatory open question about the source of awareness to application forms, you can accurately measure the impact of podcasts, word of mouth, and closed professional chats on demand generation.

An effective solution to the problem of inconsistencies between departments and difficulties in dealing with complex procurement committees is the introduction of Account-Based Marketing. This approach combines marketing and sales into a single mechanism focused on personalized interaction with specific companies with high profits. Instead of traditional goals for the number of leads, general performance indicators are being introduced, such as the speed of promotion of the transaction and the impact of marketing on final revenue. A strict service level agreement (SLA) is established between departments, which helps to improve the quality of work and achieve common goals.

The problem of the lack of deep expert content is solved by creating internal knowledge pipelines. In such pipelines, marketers play the role of corporate journalists, receiving information from in-depth interviews with specialized engineers and top managers. Artificial intelligence in this model is used only to accelerate transcription, text structuring, and content distribution, but not to create meanings.

In response to the rejection of third-party cookies and stricter privacy laws, B2B brands are actively implementing a first-order data collection strategy. This

implies abandoning aggressive advertising surveillance in favor of creating their own industry media, developing useful interactive calculators, conducting large-scale market research, and developing closed communities where customers voluntarily and consciously share their information in exchange for high value.

**Conclusions.** In an era of rapid technological change and global B2B competition, it is especially important to pay attention to data sovereignty and the quality of the content you create and distribute. Due to the gradual withdrawal of third-party cookies and stricter laws on information protection, brands are forced to invest in creating their own infrastructures for collecting first-order data through industry media, closed communities, and educational platforms.

The technological stack of a modern enterprise should include unified customer data platforms that, using machine learning, can process disparate signals and assess the impact of the invisible part of the customer's path using hybrid multitouch attribution. A content strategy should focus not only on superficial search engine optimization, but also on extracting unique knowledge from the company's internal experts.

As a result, the effectiveness of digital marketing in the field of B2B depends on how successfully a company can create a transparent technological ecosystem. Such a system should stimulate steady demand and confidently confirm the company's status as a valuable intellectual partner in the market.

### **References**

1. Shevchenko D. A. Digital Marketing: A Review of Channels and Tools // Practical Marketing. - 2019. – No. 10 (272). – pp. 29-37.
2. Hofacker C. et al. Digital Marketing and Business-to-Business Relationships: A Close Look at the Interface and a Roadmap for the Future // European Journal of Marketing. – 2020. – Vol. 54. – No. 6. – pp. 1161-1179.
3. Pandey N., Nayal P., Rathore A.S. Digital Marketing for B2B Organizations: Structured Literature Review and Future Research Directions //

Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing. – 2020. – Vol. 35. – No. 7. – pp. 1191-1204.