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Data, Artificial Intelligence and Content as Levers of Sales Growth in Digital Marketing

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Abstract: The availability of customer data, the advance of artificial intelligence (AI) and the growing importance of digital content and influencers have changed the tools that firms can use to increase sales. This narrative review examines how these three levers—data and analytics, AI-enabled personalization, and content and influencer marketing—contribute to sales growth, and under which conditions they generate results. Peer-reviewed studies and reference works published up to 2023 were analyzed qualitatively. The literature indicates that marketing analytics improves decisions on targeting, pricing and resource allocation; that AI supports personalization at scale, from mechanical automation to analytical and feeling-oriented applications; and that content and influencer marketing build engagement, trust and purchase intention when they are relevant and credible. Generative AI, which gained prominence in 2023, expands content production and customer interaction capabilities but also raises concerns regarding accuracy, transparency and ethics. The review concludes that these levers produce the greatest effect when combined in an integrated system in which data informs content and personalization, and results are measured and fed back into decisions. It also emphasizes that privacy, trust and human judgment remain essential conditions for sustainable sales growth.
Keywords: Digital marketing, Marketing analytics, Artificial intelligence, Personalization, Content marketing, Influencer marketing, Generative AI, Sales growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has evolved from a set of online communication channels into a data-rich environment in which nearly every customer interaction can be recorded, analyzed and used to inform decisions [1, 2]. In parallel, technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), mobile devices and social platforms have expanded the ways in which firms can reach, persuade and serve customers [3, 4]. These changes have redefined the levers available to firms that wish to increase sales.

Three levers stand out in the recent literature: the use of data and analytics to support decisions, the application of AI to personalize offers and interactions, and the production of content, including content created by influencers, to attract and engage customers [5–7]. Each of these levers has been studied separately, but managers need to understand how they work together and under which conditions they produce results.

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This study therefore examines how data, AI and content contribute to sales growth in digital marketing. Its objectives are to synthesize the evidence on each lever, to discuss their integration and to identify the conditions and risks that firms must consider.

1.1. Theoretical Background

Marketing analytics is the use of data and quantitative methods to understand customers and support marketing decisions across the marketing mix [2]. AI in marketing can be understood through three types of intelligence: mechanical AI, used for standardized and repetitive tasks; thinking AI, used for analysis and decision support; and feeling AI, used for interactions that involve emotions and empathy [6]. Content marketing, finally, refers to the creation and distribution of relevant content intended to engage customers and build trust, rather than to interrupt them with advertising [7, 8].

These perspectives are connected by the idea that marketing is increasingly personalized and continuous. Instead of mass campaigns, firms seek to deliver the right message, offer or content to each customer at the right moment of the journey [9, 10]. Marketing 5.0 describes this movement as the application of human-mimicking technologies to create, communicate, deliver and enhance value across the customer journey [11].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Review Design and Source Selection

This study adopts a narrative literature-review approach. Peer-reviewed articles and reference books published up to 2023 were selected on four themes: marketing analytics, AI in marketing (including generative AI), content marketing and influencer marketing. Priority was given to conceptual frameworks, research agendas and empirical studies published in established marketing and information-management journals.

2.2. Analysis Procedure

The sources were analyzed qualitatively and organized according to the three levers investigated. For each lever, the review identified the mechanisms through which it may

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influence sales, the conditions under which results are reported and the risks highlighted in the literature. Because the studies differ in context and method, results were not combined quantitatively. No ethical approval was required, as the study relies exclusively on published sources.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Data and Marketing Analytics

The literature consistently associates marketing analytics with better decisions on customer targeting, pricing, promotion, product and channel allocation [2]. Data from digital interactions allow firms to segment customers more precisely, estimate their value over time and evaluate the effect of marketing actions, which in turn supports a more efficient allocation of budgets [1, 2].

However, data generate value only when the organization has the capabilities to interpret and act on them. The shortage of analytical talent and the difficulty of integrating data from different sources have long been identified as obstacles [12]. Moreover, the use of customer data must respect privacy and regulatory requirements, since loss of trust can offset the commercial benefits of personalization [13, 14].

3.2. Artificial Intelligence and Personalization

AI extends the possibilities of analytics by automating predictions and decisions at scale. Applications include product recommendation, dynamic pricing, lead scoring, chatbots and the optimization of advertising campaigns [9, 13]. Huang and Rust propose that firms use mechanical AI for standardization, thinking AI for personalization and feeling AI for relationship-building, matching each type to the stage of the marketing process [6].

Personalized engagement marketing, supported by AI, seeks to deliver individualized content and offers in real time, increasing relevance for the customer and, consequently, the likelihood of conversion [9]. The emergence of generative AI in 2023 expanded these possibilities to the production of text, images and conversational interactions [15, 16]. At the same time, authors warn of risks related to inaccurate content, lack of transparency, intellectual property and ethical concerns, which require human oversight and clear governance [15, 16].

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3.3. Content and Influencer Marketing

Content marketing contributes to sales by fostering engagement, trust and perceived value, which influence customers' attitudes and purchase decisions [7]. Storytelling, in particular, helps brands communicate meaning and build emotional connections with their audiences [8]. Social media amplify this effect by enabling sharing, comments and recommendations among consumers [17, 18].

Influencer marketing has become a significant component of this landscape. Influencers can reach specific audiences with high credibility, but their effectiveness depends on factors such as the fit between influencer and brand, the authenticity of the content and the characteristics of the platform [19, 20]. Studies recommend that firms select influencers based on audience relevance and engagement rather than on the number of followers alone [19].

3.4. Integrating the Levers

The literature suggests that the three levers produce the greatest effect when they are integrated, as summarized in Table 1. Data and analytics identify which customers to target and which messages are most effective; AI personalizes offers and interactions at scale; and content provides the substance that engages customers at each stage of the journey [4, 5]. The results of each action are then measured and used to refine targeting, personalization and content in a continuous cycle [2].

Table 1: Digital Marketing Levers, Mechanisms and Conditions for Sales Growth

Lever	**Mechanism supported by the literature**	**Conditions and risks**
Data and analytics	Improves targeting, pricing, promotion and budget allocation [1, 2].	Requires analytical capabilities and integrated data; must respect privacy [12, 14].
AI-enabled personalization	Automates predictions and delivers individualized offers and interactions at scale [6, 9].	Needs quality data and human oversight; transparency is essential for trust [13].
Generative AI	Expands content production and conversational interaction capabilities [15, 16].	Risk of inaccurate content, ethical and intellectual-property issues; requires governance [15].
Content marketing	Builds engagement, trust and perceived value that support purchase decisions [7, 8].	Content must be relevant and consistent with the brand and customer needs.

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Influencer marketing	Extends reach to specific audiences through credible voices [19, 20].	Effectiveness depends on influencer–brand fit and authenticity, not follower count alone [19].

Source: prepared by the author from the cited literature.

This integrated view is consistent with the concept of the customer experience as the result of multiple touchpoints across the journey [10, 21]. Technologies such as AI and analytics can enhance this experience, but they must be aligned with the firm's value proposition and with customers' expectations of privacy, relevance and respect [11, 21].

3.5. Practical Implications

For managers, the review suggests several practical steps. First, organize customer data around a single view of the customer, typically supported by a customer relationship management (CRM) system [1]. Second, start AI adoption with well-defined, measurable applications, such as recommendations or lead prioritization, before advancing to more complex uses [6]. Third, develop a content strategy based on customer questions at each stage of the journey and select influencers by audience fit [7, 19]. Fourth, measure results with indicators linked to sales and use them to reallocate investments [2].

3.6. Limitations

The literature on generative AI in marketing was still emerging in 2023, and many of its implications are based on early conceptual analyses rather than long-term empirical evidence. In addition, the effectiveness of each lever varies by sector, product type and market. The conclusions should therefore be interpreted as strategic orientations to be tested in each context.

CONCLUSION

Data, artificial intelligence and content are central levers for sales growth in contemporary digital marketing. Analytics improves decisions, AI enables personalization at scale and content builds the engagement and trust that support purchase decisions. Their effect is greatest when they are combined in an integrated, continuously measured system.

The review also shows that technology does not replace strategy or trust. Privacy, transparency, authenticity and human judgment remain essential conditions for these levers to

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produce sustainable results. Future research should provide empirical evidence on the combined effect of these levers on sales and on the governance practices needed for the responsible use of generative AI in marketing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI — Artificial intelligence

CRM — Customer relationship management

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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