The impact of digitalization on the marketing of the company Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM), headquartered in the city of Maputo: A study of brand relevance

The impact of digitalization on the marketing of the company Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM) based in the city of Maputo: A study of brand relevance

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SUMMARY

This study investigates the impact of digitalization on the marketing of Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM) and its relevance in the market, focusing on the city of Maputo, in the period from 2020 to 2023. The research analyzes how digital transformation influenced consumer behavior and expectations, the digital strategies adopted by LAM and the perception of the brand in an increasingly competitive and globalized scenario.

Digitalization, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, has accelerated LAM's adoption of digital tools, such as reservations*online*, social media marketing and customer service via digital platforms. The research revealed that social media has become the main source of information for customers, surpassing the official website in some aspects. However, the website is still considered a reliable source of information, and recommendations from friends and family continue to influence purchasing decisions.

The relevance of LAM's digital presence in choosing the airline for regional and international flights was unanimous among respondents, demonstrating the importance of maintaining a solid and active presence on digital platforms. The survey also identified areas for improvement, such as the need for more personalized and interactive digital marketing campaigns, optimization of the company's website and app, and more relevant and engaging content on social media.

In short, digitalization has transformed LAM's marketing landscape, requiring the company to invest in innovative and personalized digital strategies to meet customer expectations.

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and maintain its relevance in the market. LAM must continue to monitor digital trends and adapt its strategies to ensure it is always ahead of the competition and offering the best possible experience to its customers.

Keywords: digitalization, marketing, brand relevance and aviation

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of digitalization on the marketing strategies of Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM) and its relevance in the market, focusing on the city of Maputo from 2020 to 2023. The research analyzes how the digital transformation influenced consumer behavior and expectations, the digital strategies adopted by LAM, and brand perception in an increasingly competitive and globalized scenario.

Digitalization, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, prompted LAM to rapidly adopt digital tools such as online reservations, social media marketing, and customer service via digital platforms. The study reveals social media as the primary source of information for customers, surpassing the official website in some aspects. However, the website remains a reliable source of information, and recommendations from friends and family continue to influence purchasing decisions.

The relevance of LAM's digital presence in the choice of airline for regional and international flights was unanimously recognized by respondents, highlighting the importance of maintaining a solid and active presence on digital platforms. The research also identifies areas for improvement, such as the need for more personalized and interactive digital marketing campaigns, website and app optimization, and more relevant and engaging content on social media.

In summary, digitalization has transformed LAM's marketing landscape, requiring the company to invest in innovative and personalized digital strategies to meet customer expectations and maintain market relevance. LAM must continue to monitor digital trends and adapt its strategies to stay ahead of the competition and provide the best possible experience for its customers.

Keywords: digitalization, marketing, brand relevance and aviation

1. INTRODUCTION

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Digitalization has radically transformed several sectors of the global economy, and the airline industry is no exception. Mozambique Airlines (LAM), as one of the country's leading airlines, has faced the challenge of adapting to this new digital landscape. The influence of digitalization on business marketing has become a key concern for organizations that want to not only survive but also grow in an increasingly competitive and ever-changing business environment.

In this context, the relevance of the LAM brand becomes a crucial point of analysis, since its ability to stand out and gain the trust of consumers can determine its success in an environment where digital interactions and transactions predominate.

Digitalization is influencing the way companies communicate with their customers, develop their marketing strategies and promote their services. For LAM, this transformation offers both opportunities and challenges. New digital platforms enable more direct and personalized communication with customers, enabling brand strengthening.

However, competition with other airlines that are also investing in digital marketing strategies requires rapid and effective adaptation.

This study aims to explore how digitalization has impacted LAM's marketing practices and, by extension, its relevance in the market.

The digital tools used, consumers' perception of the brand and the strategies implemented by the company to ensure its competitiveness in a constantly evolving scenario will be analyzed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of scanning

According to the study by B2B Marketing and Deloitte (2022), digitalization in marketing brings a fundamental transformation in the way brands communicate and connect with their target audiences, enhancing the personalization of strategies and the construction of stronger relationships.

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Definition of marketing

Marketing is a broad concept that encompasses various activities and strategies aimed at promoting goods and services, seeking to meet the needs and desires of consumers. Kotler (2003) states that marketing is a process that aims to build lasting relationships with customers, through the creation and delivery of products or services that offer value and meet their needs.

Brand definition

A brand can be defined as a set of attributes, perceived as a whole, that differentiates a good or service from its competitors and adds value to the consumer experience. A brand represents the value added to a good or service, and is an intangible asset that differentiates a company's offering from its competitors (Keller, 2013).

Furthermore, Aaker (1991) enriches this perspective by stating that the brand is an asset that adds value to both the customer and the company, playing a fundamental role in the formation of lasting relationships. Thus, the brand does not represent just a name or a logo, it encapsulates the perception that consumers have regarding the quality, trust and emotional value of a good or service.

Relevance of digitalization in marketing

Digitalization is seen as a fundamental element for the competitiveness of companies in the contemporary era. According to Iansiti and Lakhani (2014), companies that adopt digital technologies as part of their strategy not only improve their operational efficiency, but also transform their innovation and customer engagement capabilities.

Furthermore, research by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018) highlights that digitalization creates new opportunities for brands to connect with their target audiences. Digital experiences allow brands to interact more effectively and in a personalized way with consumers, leading to greater relevance in the market.

Another important author in this discussion is Verhoef et al. (2021), who explore how digital transformation impacts the customer experience. According to this study, brands that use digital data to map the customer journey are able to create more fluid and relevant experiences, increasing consumer loyalty and the perception of value.

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The work of Kumar et al. (2020) addresses the issue of the competitive relevance of digitalization, stating that companies that apply coherent and engaging digital marketing strategies are able to not only capture consumers' attention, but also strengthen their brand in a saturated environment.

Consumer experience in digital environments

Consumer experience in digital environments is another central point in the discussion about digitalization. Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the concept of the experience economy, which is particularly relevant to the digital context. Consumers are not just looking for goods or services, they are looking for meaningful experiences that meet their emotions and expectations.

For Kotler (2010), consumer experience is composed of several dimensions, including usefulness, ease of use of the *website* and the aesthetics of *design*.

In a recent study, Verhoef et al. (2021) conclude that the consumer journey in the digital environment is non-linear and that brands need to be aware of all touchpoints that impact this experience.

Adapting traditional strategies to the digital age

The transition to the digital age requires brands to adapt their traditional strategies. Solomon (2018) argues that companies that maintain a digital approach *omnichannel* They can not only increase customer satisfaction, but also strengthen brand loyalty.

According to Pulizzi (2014), brands that produce valuable content that aligns with the interests and needs of their audience are able to stand out in an environment saturated with information. This reinforces the need for companies to invest in relevant content that is aligned with their brand identity.

Innovation and creativity in the digital environment

Innovation and creativity are central elements in building a strong digital presence. According to O'Reilly (2018), the ability to quickly adjust to changes in consumer preferences and new technologies is essential for brands seeking to maintain their

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relevance. Creative campaigns that use social media, for example, can generate significant engagement and go viral, increasing the brand's visibility and relevance.

Furthermore, the concept of *Design Thinking* has been widely discussed as an innovative approach that promotes creativity in problem-solving. According to Brown (2009), this methodology encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and experimentation, allowing brands to develop innovative solutions that effectively meet consumer needs.

Digital Consumer Targeted Marketing

According to Solomon (2018), the digital consumer is more informed, demanding and connected than ever before, which makes it essential for brands to offer personalized and relevant experiences.

Research by Gensler et al. (2013) highlights the role of social media in shaping digital consumer behavior, where interaction and engagement on social platforms not only influence purchasing decisions but also shape brand perception.

Regarding the digital consumer journey, Lemon and Verhoef (2015) explore how digitalization has transformed this experience, in which the consumer journey is now non-linear, with multiple touchpoints, and brands need to map these interactions to create cohesive and satisfying experiences.

Complementing this view, research by Harrigan et al. (2017) emphasizes the importance of personalization in digital marketing, as digital consumers expect brands to use data to offer personalized recommendations and experiences tailored to their preferences.

The concept of digital consumer loyalty is addressed by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), saying that trust and satisfaction are fundamental to building loyalty in the digital environment.

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Digitalization strategies in marketing

According to Davenport et al. (2010), real-time data analysis enables companies to convert information into actions, adapting offers and experiences to meet the particular needs of consumers.

According to Peppers and Rogers (2016), companies that use digital technologies to personalize communication and offers at scale are able to not only increase customer satisfaction, but also brand loyalty.

Another important strategy is the use of social media to build and maintain relationships with consumers, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize that social media represents a new form of communication between brands and consumers, where engagement is the key to building a lasting relationship.

The integration *omnichannel* It is an approach that has gained prominence in digitalization, as stated by Verhoef et al. (2015), the consumer experience must be consistent and fluid across all channels, providing an integrated journey that maintains the brand's relevance.

Furthermore, the concept of content marketing is central to digital strategies, Pulizzi (2014) defines content marketing as the practice of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content that attracts, engages and retains a clearly defined audience.

Marketing automation is a fundamental tool in the digital arsenal. According to Chaffey (2015), automation allows companies to carry out marketing campaigns in a more efficient and scalable way, using technologies to segment audiences and personalize communications.

The impact of digitalization on corporate marketing and the relevance of the brand on social networks

Kotler and Keller (2016) point out that digital marketing tools allow companies to target their actions to specific audiences, offering personalized messages and products. Digital communication, on the other hand, becomes a two-way street, where interactions between brands and consumers are more dynamic and immediate.

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A study conducted by Mangold and Faulds (2009) highlights that social networks offer an unprecedented space for brands to interact directly with their customers, generating engagement that is often impossible on traditional platforms. This interaction not only increases brand visibility, but also influences consumers' perception of it.

Building relationships through social networks can result in increased brand loyalty, as suggested by Laroche et al. (2012), an active and authentic presence on social networks are crucial factors in gaining trust and brand credibility in the market.

Digitalization allows brands to monitor consumer reactions in real time, as evidenced by (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to Aaker (1996), brand equity is made up of components such as loyalty, perception of quality and brand associations. This identity construction is intensified on social networks, where consumers actively participate in the brand narrative. Collaboration in user-generated content (*user-generated content*) strengthens emotional associations and consumer identification with the brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Brand relevance in a digitalized context is marked by companies' ability to engage and create memorable experiences. The use of branding techniques *storytelling* on social networks, as highlighted by Pulizzi (2012), can create a strong emotional bond with consumers, differentiating the brand in a saturated market. Thus, digitalization not only transforms marketing strategies, but also redefines the perceived value of the brand, essential in a highly competitive environment.

Brand equity pyramid model, by Keller (2001)

The model presents a pyramid composed of four levels, which go from the base to the top:

- Brand identity (*Brand identity*): At this level, the emphasis is on creating awareness around the brand, highlighting its presence in the market. It is crucial that consumers recognize and know how to differentiate the brand from its competitors;

- Meaning of the brand (*Brand meaning*): This level is subdivided into two dimensions: brand associations and brand attributes. Here, the brand begins to build meanings and associations that influence consumer perception. These associations can be emotional or functional.

- Brand Response (*Brand response*): At this stage, consumers evaluate the brand based on their experiences and perceptions. This may include judgments about the quality and trustworthiness of the brand; and

- Brand resonance (*Brand resonance*): The top of the pyramid represents the strengthening of the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Here, customers not only recognize the brand, but also develop loyalty and even a community around it.

BrandAsset Valuator (BAV) model by Young and Rubicam (2001)

THE*BrandAsset Valuator*(BAV) is a tool developed by Young and Rubicam in 2001 with the aim of measuring brand value through four main dimensions: Differentiation, relevance, esteem and familiarity. This model stands out for its comprehensive and strategic approach, allowing companies to better understand the positioning of their brands in the market.

Concept and Structure of BAV

BAV is based on the premise that brands that adequately differentiate themselves and maintain significant relevance in the market tend to have greater value. According to the authors, differentiation is the brand's ability to stand out from others, while relevance indicates the brand's connection with consumers. Esteem reflects the perception of quality and reliability, and familiarity concerns the public's recognition of the brand.

Customer-Based Brand Equity Model by Keller and Lehmann (2006)

Context of the model

Keller and Lehmann propose that brand equity is composed of different dimensions that influence consumer decisions. The main components include brand equity, which refers to the added value that a brand offers beyond the product itself, and brand loyalty, which represents the consumer's commitment to choosing a brand over its competitors.

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Measurement framework

The framework proposed by the authors is subdivided into several layers that help measure the impact of the brand on consumer behavior. This framework is useful for marketers as it provides a means to evaluate brand performance in different contexts and over time. The model is particularly relevant for understanding how brands can be managed to maximize their value in the market.

Brand equity model, by Aaker, 1996

David Aaker's model, proposed in his book *Building Strong Brands* (1996), is a milestone in the literature of *branding* and brand management. Aaker emphasizes the importance of a strong brand and its impact on market value and consumer loyalty. The author presents a model consisting of four main components: brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and brand relationship.

- Brand identity

Brand identity refers to the elements a company uses to define and communicate what the brand stands for. Brand identity is made up of several dimensions, including the name, logo, symbols, and the message the brand wants to convey. This identity is crucial for consumers to recognize the brand and associate it with certain values   or emotions.

- Brand meaning

The next stage of the model is brand meaning, which encompasses the associations consumers make with the brand. Aaker argues that these associations are key to creating a positive brand image and can include functional attributes, benefits, and emotional values.

- Brand response

Brand response involves how consumers react to the brand and its associations. This can include aspects such as consumer loyalty, perception of quality, and willingness to pay a price. *premium*. Aaker suggests that strong brands not only gain recognition, but also generate positive responses among consumers, creating a cycle of continuous appreciation.

- Brand relationship

Finally, the author highlights the importance of the brand's relationship with consumers. A strong relationship is characterized by trust and emotional attachment, and can result in greater

loyalty and *advocacy* of the brand by consumers. The concept of *brand equity* or brand equity, is widely used to measure this relationship and the impact it has on the brand's performance in the market.

Keller's 2001 brand equity pyramid model is suitable for this dissertation, as it offers a comprehensive framework that can be applied to analyze and understand the impact of digitalization on LAM's marketing. It allows for a detailed exploration of brand identity, meaning, response, and relationship in a digital environment, contributing to brand strengthening and better connection with consumers.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study adopts a mixed methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the impact of digitalization on the marketing of Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique (LAM) and its relevance in the digital environment. The research, of an applied nature, seeks practical solutions to the challenges faced by the company in the context of digital transformation, examining how digitalization influences marketing and consumers' brand perception.

The study population comprises the economically active population of Mozambique, estimated at 375,855 people, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) in 2017. The sample, selected for convenience, includes approximately 500 people from the economically active population in the city of Maputo, recruited at Mavalane International Airport and the surrounding area of Maputo, and 10 company employees, chosen for their experience in digital marketing. The inclusion criteria ensure that participants have relevant knowledge about LAM and its digital marketing practices.

Data collection encompasses several techniques: literature review of academic sources and market reports; structured qualitative interviews with LAM employees; application of Likert-scale questionnaires to LAM customers; analysis of secondary data, such as internal company statistics and reports; and observation and analysis of content from LAM's social media and digital advertising campaigns.

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Data analysis follows a mixed-method approach. Qualitative data from interviews are analyzed using content analysis, with relevant themes categorized and interpreted. Quantitative data from questionnaires are subjected to descriptive statistical analysis to identify trends and correlations. Finally, qualitative and quantitative results are integrated to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of digitalization on LAM's marketing.

The interpretation of the results is carried out in light of the theoretical framework on digitalization and digital marketing, with the aim of providing insights and practical recommendations for LAM to optimize its marketing strategies in the digital environment.

Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Results

The study analyzed the impact of digitalization on the marketing strategies of LAM (Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique) at Maputo International Airport and surrounding areas, between 2020 and 2023. Through interviews and questionnaires, data was collected on the perception of employees and customers in relation to digitalization.

Interview results:
- Importance of digitalization: There was unanimity among those interviewed about the importance of digitalization for the survival and expansion of LAM, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Change of strategies: Transition from traditional to digital marketing, with a focus on social networks and interactive content.
- Impact on consumer perception: Digitalization has strengthened LAM's image as innovative and adaptable, increasing consumer trust and loyalty.
- Consumer expectations: Demand for fluid, personalized, real-time digital experiences.
- LAM's digital strategies: Diversification of marketing channels, use of analytical and CRM tools, and measurement of effectiveness through ROI and customer satisfaction.
- Challenges and Opportunities: Addressing digital market saturation and investing in innovation and partnerships. Identifying opportunities in e-commerce, content marketing and immersive technologies.

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Questionnaire results:

- Demographic profile: Sample diverse in age, gender and education, with high frequency of air travel;
- Sources of information: Social networks and LAM's official website are the main sources of information for customers;
- Importance of digital presence: Unanimity on the relevance of LAM's digital presence in choosing the airline;
- Impact of digitalization on expectations: Predominance of positive impact of digitalization on customer expectations;
- Digital marketing: High adherence to LAM's following on social media, with a preference for promotional and discount content;
- Familiarity with digital campaigns: Most customers are familiar with the campaigns, but with room for greater engagement;
- Effectiveness of digital strategies: Perception of moderate effectiveness, with need for improvements;
- Use of website/app: Positive evaluation of the website/app, with potential for improvement.

General discussion:

The results indicate that digitalization is crucial for LAM, but there is a need to enhance digital strategies to meet customer expectations and maintain brand relevance. The company should focus on relevant content, social media engagement and improving the digital experience on its website and app.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the study carried out, it can be concluded that the digitalization of LAM's marketing is a crucial factor for the brand's relevance in Maputo. The company has been successful in adapting to consumer expectations, with positive perceptions regarding the changes implemented. However, there are areas that require attention:

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- Social media: It is essential to invest in digital marketing strategies that prioritize interaction and engagement on social platforms, using influencers and relevant content;
- Official website: Keeping the website updated and optimized for user experience is essential, as it is still a reliable source of information;
- Content: Adapt content published on social media to include more promotions, travel tips and company news;
- Personalization: Create more personalized and interactive digital marketing campaigns to increase engagement;
- User Experience: Improve digital infrastructure and support team training to avoid technical difficulties;
- Customer satisfaction: Investigate the causes of dissatisfaction and implement improvements to increase brand recommendation.

LAM must continue to monitor digital trends and adapt its strategies to maintain its relevance in the market and offer the best possible experience to its customers.

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