https://doi.org/10.52326/mled2025.16

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

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Abstract. During a period in which digitalisation is redefining how companies interact with customers, digital marketing has become a crucial strategic component for the development and scaling of online businesses. E-commerce platforms—especially online marketplaces—have become a key pillar of the digital economy, and their success increasingly depends on their ability to implement and optimise effective digital strategies. In this context, analysing the impact of digital marketing on the commercial performance of online platforms becomes not only a relevant research topic but also a practical necessity for understanding modern consumer trends, technologies and market behaviour. The relevance of the topic is closely linked to the accelerated growth of e-commerce and digital communication environments over the last decade. Technological change and consumer behaviour have made digital marketing a key factor in the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend by shifting a large part of commerce online and forcing companies to strengthen their digital presence. Globally, e-commerce sales rose significantly—from about USD 3.5 trillion in 2019 to more than USD 5.5 trillion in 2022—and are expected to exceed USD 8 trillion by 2026. This evolution underlines the essential role of digital marketing in attracting and retaining online customers.

Key words: digital marketing, strategy, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, eMAG, performance indicators.

Abstract. Într-o perioadă în care digitalizarea redefinește modul în care companiile interacționează cu clienții, marketingul digital a devenit o componentă strategică crucială pentru dezvoltarea și scalarea afacerilor online. Platformele de comerț electronic, în special piețele online, au devenit un pilon cheie al economiei digitale, iar succesul lor depinde din ce în ce mai mult de capacitatea de a implementa și optimiza strategii digitale eficiente. În acest context, analiza impactului marketingului digital asupra performanței comerciale a platformelor online devine nu doar un subiect de cercetare relevant, ci și o necesitate practică pentru înțelegerea tendințelor moderne ale consumatorilor, a tehnologiilor și a comportamentului pieței. Relevanța temei cercetate este strâns legată de creșterea accelerată a comerțului electronic și a mediilor de comunicare digitală din ultimul deceniu. Schimbările tehnologice și comportamentul consumatorilor au făcut din marketingul digital un factor cheie în eficacitatea platformelor de comerț electronic. Pandemia de COVID-19 a accelerat această tendință prin schimbarea unei mari părți a comerțului online și forțarea companiilor să își consolideze prezența digitală. La nivel global, vânzările prin comerț electronic au crescut semnificativ - de la aproximativ 3,5 trilioane de dolari în 2019 la peste 5,5 trilioane de dolari în 2022 - și se așteaptă să depășească 8 trilioane de dolari până în 2026. Această evoluție subliniază rolul esențial al marketingului digital în atragerea și fidelizarea clienților online.

Cuvinte cheie: marketing digital, strategie, comerț electronic, inteligenta artificială, eMAG, indicatori de performanță.

Within modern businesses, digital marketing occupies a central and essential position. It represents a strategic component of a company's activity, given the significant changes in consumer behaviour and the business environment generated by the digital revolution. Digital marketing is an essential component of modern marketing strategies and represents the use of digital channels to promote and market products and services. It has numerous features and particularities that distinguish it from other forms of traditional marketing. Today it has become an essential component in the arsenal of modern businesses, offering significant opportunities for growth, innovation and direct interaction with consumers.

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital technologies and channels to promote products and services, interact with consumers and increase sales. It is a sub-discipline of marketing that involves online platforms (websites, search engines, social networks, email, mobile applications, etc.) for the purpose of reaching the target audience in the virtual environment [5].

Digital marketing comprises all marketing activities and strategies carried out via the Internet and digital technologies (websites, search engines, social media, email, mobile applications, etc.) to attract, convert and retain customers. Hanlon (2022) highlights that this sphere includes both communication through digital channels (online advertising, content marketing, SEO/SEM) and the digital customer experience (e.g. interaction on the site, applications, chatbots) and the analysis of the resulting data [4].

Digital marketing has a direct and quantifiable impact on the commercial performance of e-commerce platforms. The main performance indicators influenced by marketing strategies are: traffic on the site/application, the conversion rate of visitors into buyers, GMV (gross merchandise value), CLV (customer lifetime value) and AOV (average order value). We will comparatively analyse these metrics for eMAG and other players, highlighting how marketing efforts are reflected in results [2]. Online traffic: eMAG, thanks to brand awareness and continuous marketing investment, dominates web traffic in the retail category in Romania. In February 2025, emag.ro attracted more than 45 million monthly visits, consolidating its position as the most visited shopping site in the country. This traffic is orders of magnitude higher than that of any local competitor—for example, altex.ro and elefant.ro each register only a few million visits per month. Practically, eMAG captures a significant share of the online attention of Romanian consumers interested in shopping.

Aggressive campaigns such as Black Friday bring spectacular traffic peaks—on Black Friday 2022, more than 12.4 million visits were recorded on eMAG in a single day. By contrast, specialised competitors such as Elefant or Vivre had much more modest and fluctuating traffic, dependent on campaigns. Elefant, for example, benefited from increased traffic during the pandemic, but in 2022–2023 traffic stagnated or fell once offline retail reopened and marketing budgets were reduced.

A relevant indicator is the online penetration rate: ~79 % of Romanians with internet made at least one online purchase in 2024, and many of them started their shopping experience directly on eMAG. Thus, eMAG has become a main gateway for Romanian online commerce. Competing platforms often depend on Google or Facebook for traffic, while eMAG generates more and more direct traffic. Globally, Amazon illustrates even more clearly the marketing-traffic relationship: in April 2023, amazon.com had ~2.2 billion monthly visits in the USA, being not only a store but also a product search engine. This traffic autonomy comes from brand power and the integrated marketing ecosystem—a goal towards which eMAG aspires on a regional scale.

Conversion rate: This KPI shows how efficiently a site turns interest into purchase and is closely linked to user experience and the relevance of marketing. In Romanian e-commerce, the average conversion rate in 2022 ranged between 2 % and 3 %, according to GPeC data [3]. eMAG, due to its reputation and constant optimisation, is expected to have at least an average or above-average conversion rate. The fact that more and more visitors come from Genius subscribers pushes conversions upwards [3]. One clue: in 2023 eMAG reported a 25 % increase in the number of orders at only a 14 % growth in value, implying an increase in the number of transactions per visitor, hence more frequent conversions, though with smaller baskets. This drop in average order value, together with the increase in order volume, may suggest that eMAG attracted more new buyers and converted them more efficiently. By contrast, at Elefant a fall in conversion was a problem—amid reduced purchasing power in 2022, many visitors dropped out, indicating that marketing failed to convince them to complete purchases. Amazon globally displays very high conversion rates, between 10 % and 15 % in the USA. This "conversion gap" shows where eMAG and others still have room to improve: personalisation and recommendations can raise conversion. eMAG is already investing in AI to suggest suitable products to each customer, and the effects will probably appear in higher conversion. Also, simplified payment facilities help improve conversion by reducing checkout frictions.

GMV (Gross Merchandise Value): GMV represents the total value of goods sold through the platform, including those sold by third-party sellers. Digital marketing—especially marketplace expansion and traffic growth—directly affects GMV. eMAG reported significant increases: +14 % in order value in the first three quarters of 2023, reaching an estimated annual GMV of more than RON 10 billion when all group platforms are included, according to Economedia data. Expanding the assortment and attracting more sellers have tripled the number of orders regionally compared with four years ago, hence implicitly boosting GMV several-fold.

In 2022 the eMAG marketplace generated ~40 % of the platform's total order value, the remaining 60 % being eMAG's direct sales. This distribution shows the marketplace's importance in GMV—practically, eMAG's digital marketing no longer sells only its own products, but the seller ecosystem, amplifying total GMV. By comparison, Altex, with a hybrid model, still sells mainly from its own stock, so its GMV is practically equal to its revenue. Elefant, through its recently launched marketplace, has a GMV slightly higher than its revenue, as revenue includes only the margin on products sold via the marketplace; however, declining sales indicate a contracting GMV in 2022–2023. Amazon is unquestionably the global GMV champion, with hundreds of billions of dollars annually, the marketplace contributing significantly. Thus, a key observation is that a marketing strategy oriented towards the marketplace exponentially increases GMV, because diversity and competition among sellers attract more customers and more sales. eMAG has followed this strategy successfully and aims for double-digit GMV growth again in 2024. We can say that eMAG's digital marketing has moved from the paradigm "we sell our products" to the paradigm "we sell our platform as a shopping destination," propelling GMV beyond the limits of a single retailer.

CLV (Customer Lifetime Value) and retention: A fundamental effect of digital marketing—harder to observe directly, but very important—concerns customer loyalty and their long-term value. Through loyalty campaigns, subscriptions and CRM, platforms try to increase the frequency and value of repeat purchases from the same customer. eMAG, through its Genius subscription, has shown remarkable increases in CLV: if an ordinary customer places ~7-8 orders per year, a Genius subscriber makes ~78 orders per year, so a much higher value per customer. Even if the average basket per order may be lower, overall the subscriber's CLV is up to 10 times higher. This is a direct result of a marketing strategy focused on retention. In addition, eMAG invests in post-sale service quality precisely to keep customers satisfied and bring them back. The NPS indicator for eMAG is high among retailers, according to the company's statements. On the other hand, companies such as Elefant or Vivre have had lower CLV and retention issues: for example, Vivre had no robust loyalty system, so many customers were opportunistic, taking advantage of one promotion and then disappearing. Elefant tried an elefant-points loyalty scheme, a shared .ro and .md account for Moldovan customers, but without major impact—this shows in the difficulty of maintaining revenue without costly new-customer acquisition.

Altex relies heavily on a low-price reputation for retention but has no significant online loyalty club—hence its average CLV is probably lower than eMAG's: a customer buys a TV and then does not return quickly, maybe in 3-4 years; at eMAG the same customer might return for groceries, toys, fashion via Fashion Days, etc., thanks to diversity. Amazon excels in CLV through Prime: a Prime subscriber spends on average ~USD 1 400 per year, compared with ~USD 600 for a non-Prime customer. Amazon found that Prime raised yearly retention to more than 90 % among mature customers—practically almost all renew the subscription and continue to shop. This ecosystem-based loyalty is being replicated on a smaller scale by eMAG Genius, which surpassed 1 million Romanian users in 2024. Therefore, the impact of digital marketing on CLV is profound:

platforms that have invested in retention and membership programmes reach much higher CLV. eMAG data confirm this: "Genius users placed in 2024 more than 10 times as many orders as customers without a subscription." Consequently, eMAG has substantially increased its revenue per customer and probably its profitability per customer as well. Conversely, players like Elefant have reported higher marketing costs for customer acquisition which, combined with lower CLV, have led to losses.

AOV (Average Order Value): This indicator is influenced both by the product mix and by marketing strategy. In Romania, according to 2Performant/GPeC, the average online transaction in 2022 was ~EUR 70.75 on desktop and ~EUR 46.5 on mobile, equivalent to ~RON 330 and ~RON 218. eMAG, with a range that includes expensive electronics but also cheap consumables, has a composite AOV. Precise data are not public, but trends can be deduced: in 2023, since the number of orders rose much faster than value, eMAG's average order value fell compared with 2022. This phenomenon can be explained by eMAG's entry into lower-price and recurring product segments and by order fragmentation once Genius was launched—customers order more often but fewer products per order. Thus, eMAG's AOV probably approached RON 200–250 per order, compared to ~RON 300+ previously. By contrast, Altex traditionally posts a higher AOV because it mainly sells high-value electronics—the average basket in the Altex online shop may exceed RON 1 000, although purchase frequency is low. Vivre, with home-and-deco products, probably had a fairly high AOV, but no public figures are available after 2021 [7].

Amazon's AOV varies by market, but being "the everything store," the global average basket is less relevant than annual spend per customer. The impact of digital marketing on AOV appears through upsell/cross-sell techniques: eMAG, Amazon and others suggest on product pages "buy together with…" or "get free shipping if you add X lei to your cart"—such messages often raise the basket value. eMAG has also introduced bundles in promotions, a tactic to grow the average value per transaction. On the other hand, Prime/Genius-type subscriptions tend to reduce AOV per order because people no longer wait to accumulate many products in one order to justify shipping, but they raise overall CLV. Thus platforms make a deliberate trade-off: they sacrifice AOV per transaction but increase transaction count and CLV. Overall, eMAG and Amazon maximise customer value more through order volume than through each basket's size, while specialised competitors have AOVs determined more by product nature than by marketing tactics.

To illustrate the influence of digital marketing, we briefly analyse two notable situations [3]:

● Black Friday at eMAG (Romania): eMAG is recognized for turning Black Friday into a national shopping event, largely thanks to its marketing strategies. Each year, weeks in advance, eMAG runs a broad digital campaign: teasers on social media and YouTube, a countdown in the app, emails preparing customers ("how to catch the offers" guides, information on the start time, etc.), plus collaborations with tech/lifestyle influencers to build anticipation. On BF day, eMAG uses real-time notifications and live broadcasts showing sales evolution (they even had a public live ticker for the media). These digital marketing efforts converted into record figures: more than 560 000 customers placed orders on Black Friday 2022 at eMAG, spending RON 644 million in a single day. The platform practically sold in 24 hours what it would in a normal month. This success stems from the flawless orchestration of demand via digital channels—eMAG managed to capture the attention of millions of Romanians online at once, directing them to its app/site at the right moment. Moreover, it integrated Marketplace sellers into the campaign (more than 9 500 sellers listed offers, showing effective partner communication). Black Friday at eMAG is an example of peak digital marketing: using every lever (social, email, push, online PR) to generate a massive wave of traffic and sales in a short time frame. The event became so popular that eMAG expanded market share and solidified its brand as the main Black Friday destination—an advantage that later feeds long-term customer retention.

● Allegro in Poland vs Amazon: Allegro.pl is Poland's largest marketplace, with ~18 million active monthly users, dominating the local e-commerce market. Amazon launched Polish operations in 2021, entering into direct competition with Allegro. Allegro's response combined business strategy and smart digital marketing. On the one hand, Allegro boosted customer benefits via its Allegro Smart! programme (an annual ~PLN 49 subscription offering free deliveries and other perks, similar to Prime). On the other, it aggressively promoted these benefits and its status as a "local platform" across all online channels: targeted email to existing customers (to convert them into Smart! subscribers), online ads emphasising free delivery and the huge local selection, and continued heavy performance-marketing support for its marketplace. Meanwhile Amazon tried to attract Polish users by emphasising cheap Amazon Prime (with Prime Video) and local content (Polish series). Nevertheless, at the start of 2024 Amazon had only ~5.9 million users in Poland, versus Allegro's 18.2 million, while a new entrant (China's Temu) hit 13.7 million—proof that Allegro's position remains very strong [7].

Allegro's digital marketing, centred on customer loyalty and its positioning as the local leader with tailored services (including a classifieds marketplace and Polish-focused sections), helped keep buyers and sellers loyal. One analyst noted that Allegro's loyal customer base and wide range of services make it hard to dislodge, even for global giants. This case shows how effective digital marketing—combined with local market knowledge—let a regional player fend off Amazon and keep a majority market share. Allegro kept growing (in 2024 it expanded into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, using accumulated know-how) and invested heavily in technology and fulfilment, consistently communicating improvements to customers and partners through digital channels.

Based on these comparisons, one can say eMAG excels on most performance metrics thanks to well-calibrated digital marketing strategies. eMAG attracts the most traffic, converts efficiently, keeps GMV growing, boosts CLV and optimises the volume-to-value ratio. Local competitors try to keep up, but often with mixed results: Altex has high sales yet depends on offline and lacks online repeat-purchase strength; Elefant and Vivre failed to achieve the critical mass needed and declined without strong marketing or a unique offer. Amazon remains the global benchmark, showing outstanding traffic, conversion and huge CLV via Prime. For local players, the lesson is that investment in holistic digital marketing is essential for sustainable growth. eMAG invested early and heavily and now reaps market-leadership and solid financial rewards.

Given the analysis above, we can formulate several strategic and tactical recommendations for e-commerce platforms to increase digital-marketing efficiency and support commercial success. These recommendations focus on leveraging new technologies, refining segmentation and loyalty methods, and expanding addressable markets through internationalisation.

1. Advanced AI integration in marketing: E-commerce platforms should adopt AI solutions even more widely to personalise the shopping experience and automate marketing decisions [1]. Personalised recommendations can substantially raise conversion and basket value—McKinsey studies indicate advanced personalisation can boost revenue by 5–15 % and marketing efficiency by up to 30 %. eMAG already uses AI for recommendations and search but could extend usage to dynamic merchandising and omnichannel personalised communication. Intelligent chatbots can also improve satisfaction and cut costs—a 24/7 bot can answer order, return and other FAQs instantly, reinforcing perceptions of excellent service [6]. Smaller competitors could adopt existing AI tools to offer near eMAG/Amazon experiences without prohibitive R&D costs. Predictive analytics is another AI area: e-commerce firms can forecast demand and trends, adjusting campaigns early. For instance, AI can spot that a customer is likely to buy nappies and trigger a targeted offer—raising conversion and making customers feel understood. AI can also optimise ad budgets—modern bidding AI maximises ad ROI. In short, e-commerce must get even more data- and AI-driven; those who fail risk falling behind, as rivals already use AI for advantage.

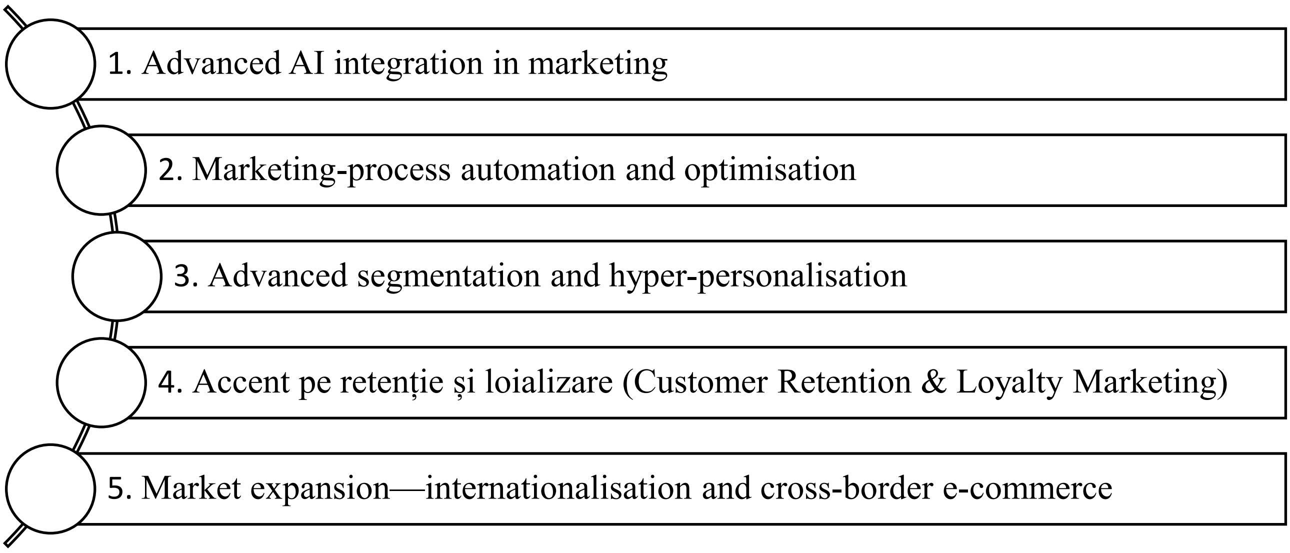

Figure 1. Strategic and tactical directions that can contribute to the efficiency of digital marketing for e-commerce platforms
Source: Prepared by the author

2. Marketing-process automation and optimisation: Platforms should invest in marketing-automation systems that manage lifecycle interactions automatically and efficiently—automatic email flows, smart notifications and automated ad retargeting. Automation eases manual workload and ensures quick, consistent responses. Average cart abandonment is ~70 %; a reminder email sent within 24 hours can recover many carts. All online retailers should implement this. Automation can also trigger flash-sale offers when stock builds up. Amazon already lets marketplace sellers set automatic promotions on slow-moving items [5]. Locally, eMAG could extend Marketplace with automated marketing tools for sellers. Dynamic-pricing automation is another tactic: an algorithm tracks competitor prices and adjusts own prices within limits—already used by eMAG on many SKUs and adoptable via SaaS tools for others. Automation allows a 24/7 scalable response to market and customer behaviour, boosting marketing efficiency. Implementing an integrated marketing-automation hub should be a priority for those still sending manual, generic messages.

3. Advanced segmentation and hyper-personalisation: Merchants must segment customer bases far beyond broad demographics—purchase behaviour, frequency, brand preference, price sensitivity, preferred channel. A retailer might identify "high-value gadget buyers who only buy on discount" and tailor campaigns [2]. Advanced segmentation ups marketing ROI via relevant messaging. eMAG could benefit from RFM-plus-preference segmentation and target each group differently: "high-value loyals" get VIP perks; "dormant" get revitalisation offers; "deal-only" see big-discount messages. Over 70 % of consumers expect personalised communications and get frustrated by irrelevant messages. Implementing omnichannel segmented campaigns—consistent content on email, site, app and external ads—uses CDPs to unify data. Segmentation also applies to marketplace sellers: small sellers need different marketing from big brands. Future e-commerce marketing is "segment-of-one" targeting, achievable via AI and automation.

4. Focus on retention and loyalty: CAC has risen; retention gives far better ROI. Platforms should strengthen loyalty programmes and build brand communities. Anyone competing with eMAG must develop membership/fidelity systems to stop customer leakage to Genius. Altex could launch "Altex Plus" with free shipping or premium services, spurring repeat buying [3]. Community also aids retention: VIP forums/groups where loyal customers share feedback and preview deals. eMAG could use its 560 k+ Genius base for exclusive events or special content. Retention ties to post-sale satisfaction: fast returns, prompt support. Constantly gauge satisfaction and remedy issues proactively—for a late delivery, a goodwill voucher keeps trust. Personalisation also prevents churn: if a Genius user hasn't ordered in two months, send an incentive. Allocate

more marketing budget to relationship marketing; retaining customers costs less and yields more—eMAG proves it.

5. Market expansion—internationalisation and cross-border e-commerce: Local platforms should look abroad to grow. Adopt gradual strategies: cross-border shipping or localised platforms. eMAG is active in BG and HU and is testing Greece. Cross-border sellers raised sales ~30 %, signalling demand. eMAG launched Genius and easybox regionally, replicating advantages. Other Romanian platforms could follow: Elefant already runs elefant.md in Moldova and might target diaspora markets.

Successful internationalisation needs localised marketing: language, culture, event calendar. Use global digital channels: Facebook targeting for destination countries, Google Ads in local languages. Cross-border marketplaces are rising: Amazon's FBA allows global selling. eMAG could aim to be a regional CEE marketplace, marketing itself to foreign sellers and buyers. Promote competitive advantages abroad—e.g. fast Sameday/easybox delivery in Hungary. Partnering with local influencers also eases entry. Smaller players can list on global marketplaces first but should build own sites to capture value. Internationalisation adds revenue, diversifies risk and lifts brand value. Logistics and support must match marketing promises; otherwise the brand suffers. The final recommendation: a globally oriented digital-marketing approach turning local platforms into regional players. eMAG's regional success and other East-European examples show the path is feasible.

Conclusions on recommendations: Implementing AI, automation, micro-segmentation, loyalty building and international expansion needs investment and strategic vision but can transform results. Smarter, better-targeted digital marketing cuts acquisition costs, lifts conversion, builds loyalty and opens wider markets—boosting profitability and share. eMAG can use these recommendations to cement leadership and push beyond borders; competitors such as Altex and Elefant can raise competitiveness and find niches alongside the market giant. In the 2025 digital economy, adaptability and marketing innovation will clearly separate winners from losers in e-commerce—companies must stay agile in adopting new technologies and practices.

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