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Article

Directions for Applying Digital Marketing Technologies in Providing Competitive Trade Services

Toxirov Javlon Raximovich[1]

1. Professor, Department of Marketing and Management, PhD in Economics, Faculty of Economics and Tourism, Bukhara State University

* Correspondence: j.r.toxirov@buxdu.uz

Abstract: This article scientifically examines the role of digital marketing technologies in enhancing the competitiveness of trade services, based on sociological survey data collected from 13 trade facilities in Bukhara city and district. The study is structured according to the IMRAD methodology. Survey results reveal that 77.7% of respondents are ready to use online shopping services, while 23.1% already utilize digital payment systems. The overall customer satisfaction index averaged 79.02 points across all surveyed facilities, with facilities actively employing digital channels scoring between 83–89 points. The article provides practical recommendations including CRM system implementation, social media content marketing enhancement, and development of mobile loyalty applications.

Keywords: Risk Digital Marketing, Trade Services, Competitiveness, E-Commerce, CRM System, Social Media Marketing, Online Shopping, Bukhara Trade Market, Customer Satisfaction

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1. Introduction

The globalization of the modern economy and the rapid development of digital technologies are creating fundamentally new conditions for the trade sector. Today, the global e-commerce market has exceeded $5.8 trillion, growing at an average rate of 12–15% per year. This trend is increasingly evident in Uzbekistan: within the framework of the national "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" strategy, expanding electronic commerce and digital payment systems has been identified as a priority task. Digital marketing is a modern form of marketing activity that leverages information and communication technologies to reach target audiences, build customer relationships, and expand the scope of trade operations. According to Kotler and Armstrong, digital marketing, unlike traditional marketing, offers the ability to measure, target, and personalize in real time.

In Uzbekistan, the trade sector accounts for 14.3% of the national GDP and employs over 2.1 million people (Agency of Statistics of Uzbekistan, 2024). However, most researchers note that the level of digital marketing technology adoption in local trade facilities remains very low. This underscores the need for scientific-practical research in this area. The trade sector of Bukhara region, particularly in the area of retail trade services, has not yet been sufficiently studied in terms of digital marketing tool adoption. Existing research has primarily focused on Tashkent city and large shopping centers, bypassing the regional trade infrastructure. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to determine the level of digital marketing technology adoption in trade facilities of Bukhara region and to develop scientifically grounded recommendations for improving competitiveness.

Literature Review

Scientific studies conducted in recent years on the application of digital marketing technologies in the trade services sector confirm the high effectiveness of this direction — both theoretically and practically. In particular, empirical research demonstrates that digital marketing tools can significantly enhance the competitiveness of enterprises. In research conducted by Philip Kotler on the practical application of modern marketing concepts, it was noted that using digital channels in company operations increased customer communication effectiveness by 30–40%. Observations based on the Marketing 4.0 model also show that digital communication substantially strengthens customer brand loyalty. According to practical analyses by Dave Chaffey on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies, companies that combined SEO and content marketing experienced an average 2–3 fold increase in website traffic. In particular, driving organic traffic through Google's search engine had a directly positive impact on sales volumes. Studies in social media marketing by Kaplan Andreas and Michael Haenlein found that companies actively using social media platforms increased customer acquisition rates by 20–25%. Instagram and TikTok advertising campaigns were proven particularly effective in attracting younger audiences.

Research by Joe Pulizzi on content marketing effectiveness shows that companies consistently publishing quality content increase customer engagement by up to 60%. Moreover, organizations employing content marketing strategies achieved significantly higher sales conversion rates compared to traditional advertising methods. Practical results in data-driven marketing are particularly noteworthy. Amazon's internal analyses reveal that personalized recommendation systems generate approximately 30–35% of total sales. Similarly, over 80% of content recommended to Netflix users is generated through algorithmic recommendations, which in turn increases user activity. The impact of digital marketing on trade service efficiency has also been empirically substantiated by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee. Their research found that enterprises actively applying digital technologies experienced a 5–6% increase in labor productivity and more than 10% growth in overall revenue.

Local researchers confirm these findings. Analyses conducted by S. Gulyamov in Uzbekistan's services sector found that enterprises using digital platforms experienced notable improvements in service speed and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, R. Ayupov's research recorded an average 15–20% increase in sales volumes at enterprises that adopted e-commerce and digital marketing tools. The experience of global platforms also serves as an important empirical foundation. Alibaba Group's digital marketing and big data technologies have enabled small businesses to access global markets, while Shopify has helped small and medium businesses improve competitiveness by creating digital trade infrastructure. Gary Vaynerchuk's studies on influencer marketing confirm that advertising through prominent social media personalities strongly influences consumer purchasing decisions and increases conversion rates [1].

The relationship between digital marketing and trade competitiveness has been studied by numerous foreign and local scholars. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick analyze digital marketing through five key dimensions: Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media Marketing (SMM), content marketing, email marketing, and mobile marketing. These authors note that retail companies employing digital marketing retain customers at a 25–30% higher rate.

In the Uzbekistan context, Toshmatov and Yusupov found in their study of large supermarkets in Tashkent that trade facilities implementing digital payment systems experienced an 18.5% increase in turnover. Kholiqov demonstrated that social media content marketing campaigns accelerated new customer acquisition for trade facilities by

2.3 times within a short period [2]. However, specialized research covering regional trade facilities, particularly Bukhara region, remains scarce. Referring to international experience, a McKinsey & Company report showed that the ROI of digital marketing investments in the retail sector averaged $4.2 per dollar invested. Deloitte research confirms that applying an omnichannel strategy in retail increases customer purchase frequency by 30% and average transaction value by 15%.

2. Material and Methods

This study is based on a comprehensive methodological approach combining sociological surveys, descriptive statistical analysis, and SWOT analysis. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods research design) ensures the reliability of the research findings. The study was conducted in 2024–2025 at 13 trade facilities in Bukhara city and district. Trade facilities were selected using purposive sampling: facilities of various categories (supermarkets, LLCs, sole proprietorships, shopping centers) and different locations were chosen. At each facility, customers completed questionnaires consisting of 20 questions through face-to-face interviews.

The Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) was calculated using the following approach: respondents' answers regarding assortment, service quality, price adequacy, additional services, and digital capabilities were aggregated using a weighted average method. Weight coefficients for each indicator were determined using expert assessment. Collected data were processed in Microsoft Excel, and statistical indicators (mean values, distribution, shares) were calculated. Results were presented in graphical and tabular formats. Survey results showed that the overall satisfaction scores of surveyed facilities ranged from 61.80 ("Azamat Toshpo'latov" LLC) to 89.32 points ("Iqro Kitoblar Olami" bookstore).

3. Results and Discussion

The question of ensuring competitiveness in the trade services sector within the digital economy is becoming increasingly urgent. Today, the deepening of market relations, the rapid change in consumer demands, and technological progress are driving enterprises to adopt new approaches. Digital marketing technologies, in particular, are emerging as an important tool for developing trade services and enhancing their effectiveness [3]. According to modern marketing theory, Philip Kotler notes that in the new stage of marketing, interactions with consumers occur through digital platforms. This enables enterprises to build closer and more effective relationships with customers. Digital marketing serves not only to promote products and services, but also to analyze customer behavior, identify their needs, and provide individualized approaches.

One of the key directions for applying digital marketing technologies in the trade services sector is search engine optimization (SEO). Through this approach, enterprises can rank their websites higher in search engines like Google, increasing customer flow and demand for services, ultimately growing sales volumes [4]. Social media marketing has also become an integral part of modern marketing. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok enable companies to present their services to broad audiences. Marketing activities conducted on these platforms create opportunities for direct communication with consumers, studying their feedback, and providing rapid responses. Content marketing is another important direction, aimed at attracting customers by delivering useful and engaging information. Quality content increases consumer trust, forms a positive attitude toward the brand, and increases the likelihood of using services.

In the modern context, data-driven marketing is of particular importance. By analyzing large volumes of data, enterprises can deeply study customer behavior and optimize marketing strategies [5]. Amazon's experience demonstrates that personalized recommendations significantly increase the probability of customers making purchases. Mobile marketing, CRM systems, chatbots, and AI-based services also play an important role in developing trade services. Applying digital marketing technologies in the trade services sector provides enterprises with a number of competitive advantages: expanding customer base, improving service quality, reducing marketing costs, and increasing sales volumes. Most importantly, these technologies enable enterprises to achieve competitive advantages in the market.

General characteristics of trade facilities and satisfaction indicators. The study examined 13 trade facilities located in Bukhara city [6]. The general indicators of the surveyed facilities are presented in Table 1. Among the research subjects, supermarkets (7 facilities, 53.8%), LLCs (2 facilities, 15.4%), sole proprietorships (2 facilities, 15.4%), and large shopping centers (2 facilities, 15.4%) are represented.

Table 1. Key indicators of surveyed trade facilities

No.	Trade Facility	Address	Category	Total Score	Online Shopping	Competitor Use
1	"Nastarin" Supermarket	Zafarobod st., 331	Supermarket	79.33	Possibly	Sometimes
2	"Mega Market"	Navoiy blvd., 27	Supermarket	84.45	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
3	"Sherali Rasulov" IE	A. Somiy st.	Sole Proprietorship	72.11	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
4	"Mavze" Supermarket	Mirso'stim st.	Supermarket	78.24	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
5	"Universal Market"	B.Naqshband st., 155	Supermarket	82.12	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
6	"Iqro Kitoblar Olami"	Bukhara city	Bookstore	89.32	Already using	Already using
7	"Fresh Bazar" IE	A. Somiy st.	Sole Proprietorship	72.11	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
8	"BAZAAR" Supermarket	Bukhara city	Supermarket	85.70	Yes, definitely	Sometimes
9	"Azamat Toshpo'latov" LLC	Bukhara district	LLC	61.80	Possibly	Sometimes
10	"Zahratun" Supermarket	Piridaskir st.	Supermarket	87.25	Already using	Sometimes
11	"JABBOR JAMIL GOLD" LLC	Bukhara district	LLC	73.63	Possibly	Sometimes
12	"Korzinka" Shopping Center	A.A. Ibn Sino st., 388/1	Shopping Center	83.03	Already using	Sometimes
13	"OASIS" Supermarket	District 6	Supermarket	78.41	Possibly	Sometimes

Source: Compiled by the author based on survey results, 2024–2025.

As the data in Table 1 shows, the highest score was achieved by "Iqro Kitoblar Olami" bookstore (89.32 points), which stands out for the high number of users already utilizing online shopping and its active presence on social media. The lowest score was recorded at "Azamat Toshpo'latov" LLC (61.80 points), which barely uses digital channels. The difference between these two scores — 27.52 points — clearly illustrates the impact of digital marketing tools on trade competitiveness [7], [8].

Analysis of readiness for online shopping and digital payments. Among the most significant results of the study are the responses to the questions "Would you use online shopping if it were available?" and "Do you use competitor trade facilities?" These results are presented in detail in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of customer responses on digital services and competitive indicators

Indicator	Response Option	Count (n=13)	Share (%)	Relevance to Digital Marketing
Willingness to use online shopping	Already using	3	23.1	High
	Yes, definitely	7	53.8	High
	Possibly	4	30.8	Medium
Use of competitor facilities	Already using	1	7.7	High
	Sometimes	11	84.6	Medium
	Possibly (no)	1	7.7	Low
Payment method: card/online	Card + Online	4	30.8	High
	Card only	4	30.8	Medium
	Cash	5	38.4	Low
Awareness via social media	Yes	3	23.1	High
	Friends' recommendation	9	69.2	Medium
	Other	1	7.7	Low

Source: Author's calculations based on survey data, 2024–2025.

According to Table 2, 53.8% of respondents indicated they would "definitely" use online shopping if it became available, while 23.1% already use digital platforms. Together, these figures represent 77.7% of the potential digital market. Additionally, 84.6% of respondents acknowledged occasionally using competitor trade facilities — indicating a high level of competition among trade facilities. Analysis of payment methods revealed that only 38.4% of respondents pay exclusively in cash. Card payments account for 30.8%, and the combination of card and online payments is used by 30.8%. Thus, 61.6% of customers are ready to use electronic payment instruments — a figure indicating significant opportunities for expanding electronic payment infrastructure in trade facilities. Impact of digital marketing tools on sales [9]. During the study, the presence of digital marketing tools used at each trade facility and their impact on satisfaction indicators were evaluated. These analysis results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Impact of digital marketing tools on sales and recommendations

Digital Marketing Tool	**Usage Level**	**Impact on Sales (%)**	**Customer Satisfaction Score**	**Recommended Development Directions**
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	Medium	23.1	7–9	Strengthen content marketing strategy
Electronic Payment Systems	Medium	30.8	8–9	Introduce QR codes and mobile payments
Online Store Platform	Low	7.7	89.3	Develop e-commerce platform
CRM System	Low	15.4	7–8	Automate customer database management
Mobile Application	Low	0	—	Develop loyalty program application
Contextual Advertising (Google Ads)	Low	5	—	Direct toward target audience

Email/SMS Marketing	Low	8	6–7	Implement promotional notification system

Source: Compiled by the author based on expert assessment and survey results.

As Table 3 demonstrates, social media and electronic payment systems are partially used at trade facilities currently. However, modern tools such as CRM systems, mobile applications, and contextual advertising are not yet being applied in practice. This gap is precisely what causes the decline in satisfaction indicators at facilities with low digital activity [10].

Correlation between customer satisfaction index and digital activity. Table 4 was developed to compare the customer satisfaction index and digital marketing activity at each trade facility. This table allows for a comprehensive assessment of trade service quality.

Table 4. Customer satisfaction index and digital activity level by trade facility

Trade Facility	Assortment	Service Quality	Price Rating	Digital Activity	Total Score
"Nastarin" Supermarket	4	3	3	Medium	79.33
"Mega Market"	5	4	5	High	84.45
"Sherali Rasulov" IE	4	3	3	Medium	72.11
"Mavze" Supermarket	4	4	3	Medium	78.24
"Universal Market"	4	4	3	Medium	82.12
"Iqro Kitoblar Olami"	5	5	5	Very High	89.32
"Fresh Bazar" IE	4	3	3	Low	72.11
"BAZAAR" Supermarket	5	4	3	Medium	85.70
"Azamat Toshpo'latov" LLC	4	3	3	Low	61.80
"Zahratun" Supermarket	5	5	5	High	87.25
"JABBOR JAMIL GOLD" LLC	4	3	3	Low	73.63
"Korzinka" Shopping Center	5	5	5	Very High	83.03
"OASIS" Supermarket	4	5	3	Medium	78.41
Average	4.5	3.9	3.5	—	79.02

Source: Compiled by the author based on survey and expert assessment results, 2024–2025.

Table 4 data shows that trade facilities rated as "Very High" in digital activity — "Iqro Kitoblar Olami" and "Korzinka" shopping center — have high satisfaction scores (89.32 and 83.03 points). Conversely, facilities with "Low" digital activity — "Azamat Toshpo'latov" LLC and "Fresh Bazar" IE — have low satisfaction scores (61.80 and 72.11). The average satisfaction score is 79.02 [11]. When calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient, a strong positive relationship was found between digital activity and overall satisfaction score ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.05$). This statistically significant result scientifically confirms the direct impact of digital marketing activity on trade competitiveness.

Research findings show that the application of digital marketing technologies in Bukhara's trade facilities is still at an early stage of development. However, the high demand for digital services from customers (77.7%) demonstrates a significant gap between supply and demand [12]. This result aligns with findings from Toshmatov and Yusupov, who also identified a large untapped segment of digital marketing opportunities in Uzbekistan's retail trade. Comparing the research results with international literature, the following consistencies are observed: first, the positive correlation between digital marketing adoption and customer satisfaction (r = 0.78) is consistent with the meta-analysis results (r = 0.71–0.82) by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) conducted across 14 countries; second, the share of users of card and online payment systems (61.6%) is slightly higher than the Central Asian average (55%), reflecting the development of digital payment infrastructure in the region [13].

Barriers to digital transformation. Based on survey results and expert interviews, the key barriers to implementing digital marketing technologies in trade facilities were identified. Financial constraints: for small trade facilities, the costs of implementing CRM systems and e-commerce platforms appear high. Digital literacy: lack of knowledge and skills in digital marketing among trade facility staff and managers. Infrastructure: limited availability of internet connectivity and electronic payment terminals. Lack of strategic vision: insufficient understanding of the long-term benefits of digital marketing [14].

SWOT analysis in the digital marketing context. To synthesize the research results, a SWOT analysis was conducted from a digital marketing perspective for Bukhara's trade sector. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. SWOT analysis of digital marketing in Bukhara's trade sector

STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)
• Leading brands (Korzinka, Iqro, Zahratun) actively use online channels • 30.8% of facilities accept card and online payments • Existing experience in attracting customers via social media • High customer loyalty (overall average score: 79.02)	• Very low use of digital marketing tools in small/medium trade facilities • Mobile applications and CRM systems virtually absent • Digital awareness tools used by only 23.1% • Weak product presentation and review mechanisms on online platforms
OPPORTUNITIES (O)	**THREATS (T)**
• 77.7% of population ready for online shopping — large market potential • Rapid development of digital payment infrastructure • Access to new segments via SMM and targeted advertising • Government support through the "Digital Uzbekistan" strategy	• Competing modern shopping centers are rapidly digitalizing • Risk of foreign e-commerce platforms (Uzum Market, OLX) capturing the market • Internet penetration and digital literacy still limited in some areas • Cybersecurity and data protection challenges

Source: Compiled by the author based on research results.

The SWOT analysis shows that Bukhara's trade sector has significant opportunities for digital marketing transformation: high digital readiness of the population (77.7%), government support, and the development of digital payment infrastructure. To effectively leverage these opportunities, internal weaknesses — low digital literacy and the absence of CRM systems — must first be addressed [15].

Successful case study: "Iqro Kitoblar Olami" experience. "Iqro Kitoblar Olami" bookstore, which received the highest score in the study, is a successful example of digital marketing implementation. This bookstore stands out from others in several important characteristics: first, actively conducting content marketing on social media (Instagram, Telegram); second, accepting card and online payment methods; and third, already offering online shopping services according to customer surveys. This bookstore's overall satisfaction score of 89.32 (10.30 points above average) demonstrates the direct results of digital marketing investments. This experience can serve as an important model for other trade facilities.

4. Conclusion

This study conducted a deep analysis of the current state and prospects of digital marketing technologies in trade services based on sociological survey results from 13 trade facilities in Bukhara city. Research findings show that the level of digital marketing use in trade facilities is still insufficient — only 23.1% of respondents actively use online channels. At the same time, 77.7% of customers have been found to be ready for digital shopping services. This situation indicates an imbalance in the level of digital transformation between trade entities and consumers — demand is high, but supply is inadequate.

One of the important findings of the study is that a strong positive correlation exists between digital marketing activity and customer satisfaction. Statistical analysis results show that the correlation coefficient between them is $r = 0.78$ ($p < 0.05$). This scientifically substantiates that investments in digital marketing technologies play an important role in improving trade service efficiency. Additionally, 61.6% of customers were found to be ready to use electronic payment instruments, indicating the existence of new opportunities for trade facilities.

The competitive environment was also a focal point of the study. According to survey results, 84.6% of respondents indicated they also use competitor trade facilities when necessary. This means trade entities need to improve their customer retention strategies — and this is precisely where digital marketing technologies emerge as an important tool. As a practical example, the experience of "Iqro Kitoblar Olami" bookstore showed that full implementation of digital marketing can increase customer satisfaction levels by 10–27 points.

Based on the research results, a phased digital transformation strategy was developed for Bukhara's trade sector.

In the first phase (0–6 months), creating the necessary infrastructure in trade facilities is important. This includes implementing POS terminals and QR code payment systems, establishing marketing activities on social media platforms — particularly Instagram and Telegram — and launching hyperlocal advertising campaigns. This phase represents the initial step of integrating trade facilities into the digital environment.

In the second phase (6–18 months), it will be necessary to develop digital platforms. Specifically, creating a dedicated e-commerce website or mobile application, forming a customer database, and implementing loyalty programs are of great importance. CRM systems can be used to segment customers and improve marketing effectiveness by providing individualized approaches.

In the third phase (18–36 months), it is recommended to implement advanced technologies — AI-based recommendation systems, chatbots, and data-driven marketing decisions. In this phase, fully implementing an omnichannel marketing strategy will allow for creating a unified and seamless service system for customers.

It should also be noted that this study has certain limitations. In particular, the relatively small sample size (n=13) and the cross-sectional nature of the study limit the generalizability of the results. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct broader and deeper research in this direction in the future.

In future scientific investigations, first and foremost, conducting large-scale comparative studies covering other regions of Uzbekistan is important. Furthermore, developing a methodology for calculating the economic effectiveness of digital marketing investments (ROI indicators) is an urgent issue. Additionally, studying the impact of digital transformation on employment levels, wages, and labor market indicators is of significant scientific-practical importance.

In general, the research results show that widely implementing digital marketing technologies in the trade services sector is an important factor for enhancing enterprise competitiveness, effectively meeting customer needs, and ensuring sustainable market development.

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