

The State of Digital Marketing in Vietnam: Trends, Challenges, and Strategic Insights

Nguyen Thi Thu Trang

Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: Vietnam is undergoing a rapid and multifaceted digital transformation that is reshaping consumer behavior, marketing practices, and business strategies. With over 79% internet penetration and more than 72 million active social media users as of 2024, Vietnam stands out in Southeast Asia for its mobile-first, youth-driven digital adoption. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the country's evolving digital marketing landscape, examining key trends such as the rise of short-form video, influencer marketing, AI-driven personalization, and platform-native commerce. It also identifies critical challenges, including a persistent digital skills gap, regulatory uncertainty stemming from the implementation of Decree 13/2023/ND-CP on data protection, platform dependency, and ROI measurement limitations. Using a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative interviews, survey data, and secondary research, the paper outlines strategic recommendations for businesses, agencies, and policymakers to navigate this dynamic environment. The findings highlight the importance of first-party data strategies, mobile-first content, digital upskilling, and agile marketing practices. By situating Vietnam within both global digital marketing trends and the ASEAN regional context, this study contributes to understanding how emerging markets are innovating amid digital disruption. It also underscores the need for localized, inclusive strategies to ensure sustainable and equitable growth in Vietnam's digital economy.

KEYWORDS: Digital marketing, Social media, Influencer marketing, E-commerce, Digital transformation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is undergoing a profound and accelerated digital transformation, reshaping not only how individuals interact socially and consume information but also how businesses operate and compete. As of early 2024, the country boasts an

internet penetration rate of over 79%, equivalent to more than 78 million users, with mobile devices accounting for over 95% of internet access (IMARC Group, 2024; We Are Social & Meltwater, 2024). This mobile-first reality reflects a broader global trend, yet Vietnam stands out for the speed and intensity of digital adoption, particularly among its youth-dominated population and rapidly growing middle class. This transformation is redefining the structure of marketing and brand engagement, leading companies to re-evaluate their strategies through a digital-first lens.

Social media platforms are central to this evolution. In 2024, Vietnam had over 72.7 million active social media users, with leading platforms including TikTok (67.7 million users), Facebook (66.2 million), and YouTube (63 million) (Yoshioka, 2025). Domestic platforms such as Zalo, with over 75 million users, also hold significant cultural and commercial relevance, particularly in communication and CRM contexts (Pham, 2025). These platforms serve as essential channels for content distribution, customer interaction, and increasingly, for direct commerce. The rise of short-form video, livestreaming, and influencer marketing has not only democratized content creation but also given rise to new consumer touchpoints and purchasing behaviors.

Vietnam's digital momentum is fueled by its demographic advantage. With over 50% of the population under the age of 35 and a high rate of smartphone penetration, the country's digitally native consumers are shaping the future of media consumption and online commerce (IMARC Group, 2024). This population segment is highly receptive to emerging technologies, favors interactive and visual content formats, and expects hyper-personalized digital experiences.

Consequently, e-commerce, mobile payments, and digital banking have seen rapid uptake. Vietnam's e-commerce market alone was valued at over USD 20 billion in 2023, with

continued double-digit annual growth projected through 2025 and beyond (Google et al., 2023).

For businesses, this presents both vast opportunities and significant strategic challenges. On one hand, the digital economy offers unprecedented access to data, scalable advertising platforms, and measurable marketing outcomes. On the other, it requires continuous adaptation to fast-changing technologies, platforms, and regulatory frameworks. Firms must navigate new consumer behaviors, optimize content for mobile-first consumption, and implement omnichannel experiences that seamlessly integrate offline and online touchpoints. This complexity is especially daunting for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often lack the internal resources or expertise to keep pace.

Compounding these difficulties is Vietnam's evolving regulatory environment, particularly regarding data privacy. The introduction of Decree 13/2023/ND-CP on personal data protection has created a compliance imperative for firms collecting and processing user data. While modeled in part on the EU's GDPR, the decree poses challenges in terms of operational readiness and legal clarity—especially for smaller businesses unfamiliar with formal data governance practices (Ngoc & Anh, 2023). Meanwhile, platform dependence remains a vulnerability. Many businesses in Vietnam rely heavily on Facebook, Google, TikTok, and Zalo for visibility and conversions, making them susceptible to algorithm changes, rising ad costs, or policy shifts beyond their control.

In this dynamic context, digital marketing has emerged as a strategic imperative. Companies are investing in AI-powered personalization, programmatic advertising, livestream shopping, and voice-enabled search optimization. Influencer marketing has matured, with brands increasingly favoring micro- and nano-influencers for their authenticity and relatability among Gen Z audiences. At the same time, businesses are beginning to realize the importance of first-party data strategies, owned media development, and platform diversification to reduce risk and build sustainable engagement.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of Vietnam's evolving digital marketing landscape, addressing both its opportunities and its most pressing constraints. The primary objectives are to (1) examine key trends in Vietnam's digital marketing ecosystem, (2) assess critical challenges such as talent shortages, regulatory uncertainty, and ROI measurement gaps,

and (3) offer strategic recommendations tailored to local market realities.

To achieve these aims, the study employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative research. In-depth interviews with marketing professionals from sectors such as consumer goods, finance, education, and technology provide grounded insight into current practices and obstacles. These findings are supplemented with survey data from digital practitioners across Vietnam, as well as secondary data from sources including Q&Me Market Research (2023), AppLabx (2025), and relevant Vietnamese academic and governmental publications. This triangulation of data ensures a holistic and evidence-based understanding of the Vietnamese digital marketing environment.

By drawing on both global digital marketing frameworks and local insights, this study contributes to the broader literature on digital transformation in emerging markets. It situates Vietnam not merely as a recipient of global digital trends, but as an innovator and key player in the ASEAN region. In doing so, it aims to support businesses, agencies, and policymakers in making informed decisions that reflect the unique dynamics of Vietnam's fast-growing digital economy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Global Perspective on Digital Marketing Trends

Digital marketing has undergone a profound global transformation, driven by rapid technological innovation and shifting consumer behaviors. In leading markets, McKinsey & Company (2023) reports that digital marketing budgets now comprise over 60% of total marketing spend, reflecting an increasing focus on data-driven personalization, precise ROI tracking, and customer lifetime value optimization. This shift is mirrored in forecasts from Sorrell (2024), who anticipates global digital advertising to account for approximately 70% of all advertising spend by 2025, with further consolidation around major platforms such as Google, Meta, Amazon, Alibaba, Tencent, and ByteDance.

Key global trends structuring the modern digital marketing landscape include the dominance of short-form video, the centrality of AI for predictive analytics and personalization, and the proliferation of omnichannel integration. Short video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have become essential media formats globally, enabling dynamic storytelling and immersive brand experiences. AI technologies are increasingly utilized for hyper-personalization at

scale, advancing capabilities for automated media planning and creative generation, as well as fraud detection and ROI optimization (Sorrell, 2024). Lastly, omnichannel strategies—coordinating content and user experience across online and offline touchpoints—are now considered foundational to sustaining brand coherence and customer engagement.

These global signals establish a benchmark for assessing regional developments, including Vietnam's digital ecosystem. While macro trends are consistent globally, regional adaptations reflect local culture, infrastructure, and consumer adoption patterns.

2.2.ASEAN Digital Landscape and Vietnam's Position

In the ASEAN context, Vietnam is widely recognized as one of the most vibrant and fast-growing digital economies. The e-Conomy SEA 2023 report by Google et al. (2023) forecasts Vietnam's digital economy to grow at approximately 20% compound annual rate between 2023 and 2025, reaching US \$45 billion in GMV by mid 2025. This places Vietnam third in Southeast Asia, behind Indonesia and Thailand. E-commerce is identified as the engine of this growth, while online tourism and digital media are also expected to expand rapidly.

Vietnam's positioning as the region's fastest-growing digital economy is further supported by metrics on digital payments, where its adoption rate exceeds many peers—driven by government initiatives and the banking sector's focus on innovation (VOVWorld, 2023). In terms of digital financial services, Vietnam ranks among the fastest-growing markets in Southeast Asia (Vietnamnet, 2023).

Vietnam stands out in the region for its mobile-first consumer behavior and high social media engagement. With over two-thirds of its population using the internet and social platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, YouTube, and TikTok achieving penetration rates over 80% among youth cohorts (Q&Me Market Research, 2023), Vietnam's digitally native consumers are shaping platform-native marketing formats and commerce strategies.

Compared to more mature ecosystems in Singapore or Malaysia, Vietnam may lag in infrastructure or digital regulatory frameworks. However, its youthful population, strong entrepreneurial activity, and fast-paced digital adoption position it as a hub of innovation within Southeast Asia (AppLabx, 2025; McKinsey & Company, 2023).

2.3. Historical Development of Digital Marketing in Vietnam

Vietnam's digital marketing trajectory can be divided into four phases:

- Early 2000s–2010s: Digital efforts were limited to static websites and simple banner ads. The adoption of smartphones and mobile networks like 3G/4G during this period sparked a surge in mobile marketing. Platforms like Facebook and the domestic messaging app Zalo became communication staples (Google et al., 2023).
- Mid-2010s to Late-2010s: Performance-based advertising gained traction. Businesses began to invest in influencer marketing, video content, and e-commerce integration. Platforms like Zalo and Shopee enabled robust mobile ad formats and shopping experiences (Q&Me Market Research, 2023).
- 2020–2022: The COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant turning point. Businesses were forced to adopt online sales platforms, remote customer service tools, and livestream-based engagement strategies (Q&Me Market Research, 2023).
- 2023–2025: Influencer marketing has become central to digital strategy. According to Advertising Vietnam (2024), 97% of surveyed Vietnamese businesses rated influencer marketing as effective, and 58% planned to increase their budgets in this area. TikTok dominates this space, used by 78.3% of brands, followed by Facebook (61.9%) and Instagram (26.1%). Micro- and macro-influencers are preferred for their reach and relatability. Additionally, short-form video and livestreaming formats (e.g., TikTok Live, Shopee Live) are now essential for real-time consumer engagement, often driving conversion rates above 4% and engagement rates over 15% (AppLabx, 2025).

2.4. Theoretical Frameworks

Several conceptual models underpin the study of digital marketing in Vietnam:

Digital Transformation Theory emphasizes how digital technologies are harnessed to create new value, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer experience. Vietnamese firms have applied these concepts through the use of CRM systems, e-commerce platforms, and AI-based customer service.

- The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) provide insights into how

Vietnamese consumers adopt and engage with digital platforms. Key drivers include perceived usefulness (e.g., convenience and discounts) and social norms (e.g., influencer trust, peer validation).

- Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory focuses on delivering consistent brand messaging across multiple touchpoints. In Vietnam, this has taken form through synchronized campaigns across social media, livestream events, and physical retail activations.

III. KEY TRENDS IN DIGITAL MARKETING IN VIETNAM

3.1. Digital Penetration and Demographics

Vietnam continues to demonstrate one of Southeast Asia's most vibrant digital landscapes. As of early 2024, internet penetration reached 79.1%, with 78.44 million users (IMARC Group, 2024). Mobile internet usage is even more striking, with over 168 million mobile connections—equivalent to 169.8% of the population (We Are Social, 2024).

The country is largely youth-driven, with over half the population under 35 (IMARC Group, 2024). This demographic is not only highly receptive to digital content but also quick to adopt emerging technologies and trends. While urban centers dominate digital consumption, improvements in infrastructure and mobile coverage are closing the digital divide in tier-2 and tier-3 cities (Nguyen, 2024).

3.2. Platform Trends

Vietnam has one of the most active social media user bases globally. As of 2024, there were 72.7 million active users—about 73.3% of the population (Yoshioka, 2025). The most popular platforms include TikTok (67.7 million users), Facebook (66.2 million), and YouTube (63 million) (Yoshioka, 2025).

Zalo, developed by VNG Corporation, is the dominant domestic messaging platform, with over 75 million active users (Wikipedia, 2024). It's widely used in government services, healthcare, and education, especially for CRM functions (Pham, 2025).

Smartphones account for 84% of web traffic, marking Vietnam as a firmly mobile-first market (Do, 2024). This explains the dominance of short-form content platforms like TikTok and YouTube Shorts and the continued relevance of Facebook for business advertising and community engagement.

3.3. Content Marketing Evolution

Short-Form Video: Content marketing in Vietnam is increasingly visual and fast-paced. Short-form videos (15–60 seconds) dominate user attention due to their entertaining, snackable nature (IMARC Group, 2024). TikTok, Reels, and YouTube Shorts are essential tools for brands trying to capture fleeting digital attention.

Influencer Marketing: There is a growing shift from celebrity endorsements to micro- and nano-influencers. Brands are prioritizing authenticity, especially among Gen Z audiences. Influencers who cater to niche markets, such as parenting, gaming, and eco-living, yield higher engagement and trust (Nguyen, 2024).

Live Commerce: Live-streamed shopping events are becoming a cornerstone of e-commerce strategy. Platforms like Shopee, Lazada, and Tiki allow real-time engagement with audiences during campaigns. As much as 60% of online sales in some sectors now occur via live-streaming events (Nguyen, 2024; Tran, 2024).

3.4. Search and SEO Trends

Although social platforms dominate brand discovery, search engines remain crucial for high-intent queries. Google Search is still the top choice in Vietnam, but brands are increasingly optimizing for local SEO and voice search, particularly on mobile (Nguyen, 2025).

A newer shift is the rise of Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), designed to make content more discoverable by AI-based systems like ChatGPT or Google's Bard. Instead of focusing purely on keywords, AEO strategies emphasize structured, informative, and question-driven content (Curry, 2025).

3.5. AI and Automation Adoption

Chatbots and CRM: AI-powered chatbots are now a standard in customer service for banking and e-commerce sectors. Vietnamese businesses—especially large enterprises and tech-forward SMEs—are using AI to automate responses, support product recommendations, and streamline customer relationship management (Le, 2025).

Programmatic Advertising: Many companies are implementing programmatic ad platforms to optimize ad placement and cost. Real-time bidding systems allow businesses to dynamically target users based on behavioral and contextual data (Blueseed Group, 2025).

Personalization and Predictive Analytics: AI tools are being widely used to deliver dynamic content and personalized customer journeys. Platforms like Shopee and Tiki employ predictive

analytics to increase cross-selling and retention rates (Hoang, 2025). Logistics and inventory systems are also leveraging AI to reduce delivery times and optimize warehousing (Hoang, 2025).

3.6. Emerging Technologies

AR/VR Applications: Brands in fashion, real estate, and beauty are adopting AR/VR to offer immersive try-before-you-buy experiences. For example, real estate apps now include VR tours, while cosmetic retailers allow virtual product trials (Do, 2025).

Blockchain for Transparency: Some marketers are exploring blockchain technology to prevent ad fraud and ensure data transparency in digital campaigns. Though still in early adoption, the potential for immutable tracking and decentralized verification is significant (Nguyen, 2024).

First-Party Data Strategies: With the phasing out of third-party cookies, marketers are prioritizing first-party data through loyalty programs, CRM integrations, and consent-based tracking (Do, 2025). Regulatory changes, including Vietnam's Personal Data Protection Decree, are also accelerating the move toward privacy-compliant strategies (Le, 2025).

Voice Commerce and AI Search: As Vietnamese consumers become more accustomed to smart assistants, optimizing for voice commerce is emerging as a competitive advantage. Brands are now restructuring content to be voice-search friendly and compatible with AI-driven shopping bots (Curry, 2025).

IV. CHALLENGES IN VIETNAM'S DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

4.1. Digital Skills Gap

One of the most persistent challenges is the shortage of skilled digital marketing professionals. Many marketers in Vietnam still lack proficiency in core areas such as data analytics, SEO, programmatic advertising, and content strategy. The demand for expertise in performance marketing, social media analytics, and AI tools significantly exceeds supply.

Educational and vocational institutions have been slow to respond to industry demands, resulting in a misalignment between academic training and practical needs (Nguyen, 2023). This disconnect forces brands to over-rely on external agencies or freelancers, often leading to weak integration with in-house strategies.

According to Reddit user Dixon (2023), digital teams globally recognize data analytics as critical but under-resourced—particularly in emerging markets like Vietnam.

4.2. Regulatory Uncertainty

Vietnam's regulatory landscape is evolving but remains complex. Decree 13/2023/ND-CP, implemented in July 2023, marks a critical step toward comprehensive personal data protection. It mandates explicit user consent, data protection impact assessments (DPIAs), and stricter cross-border data transfer rules (Ngoc & Anh, 2023).

However, compliance is particularly burdensome for SMEs, given the lack of internal legal and technical expertise (Australian Chamber of Commerce Vietnam, 2023). Businesses must contend with unclear enforcement mechanisms, high administrative costs, and a lack of official guidance.

Vilaf Law Firm (2023) highlights that many companies struggle to map data flows, implement technical safeguards, and train staff, especially in the absence of dedicated Data Protection Officers. Meanwhile, Vietnam Investment Review (2023) notes that pending regulations on administrative penalties continue to deter long-term investment in digital infrastructure.

4.3. Platform Dependency

Vietnamese brands remain heavily reliant on a few dominant platforms—Facebook, Google, TikTok, and Zalo. This overdependence creates vulnerabilities: algorithm updates, rising ad costs, and unexpected account suspensions can significantly disrupt operations (Nguyen, 2023).

Reddit contributors (2023a, 2023b) emphasize that Zalo is often the only communication channel many SMEs use—making businesses highly dependent on a closed ecosystem.

Furthermore, smaller brands often lack access to advanced ad tools or support services, placing them at a disadvantage in competitive performance marketing environments.

Additionally, an underinvestment in owned media assets like websites, CRMs, or email marketing lists limits data ownership and brand autonomy.

4.4. Consumer Trust and Ad Fatigue

Vietnamese digital consumers are increasingly wary of online advertising. Oversaturation of low-quality, promotional content has led to significant ad fatigue. Moreover, concerns about data misuse, click fraud, and fake reviews are prevalent, especially in sensitive sectors like e-commerce and fintech (Tran, 2023).

Influencer marketing has also encountered challenges. As audiences grow more sophisticated,

they are becoming skeptical of repetitive or undisclosed sponsored content. This calls for a shift toward authentic storytelling, greater disclosure, and consumer-centric messaging.

4.5. Measurement and ROI Issues

Another core issue is the difficulty of measuring digital marketing ROI. Many businesses, particularly SMEs, operate without clear KPIs or attribution models.

As a result, marketing success is often judged by vanity metrics (e.g., likes or video views) rather than meaningful business outcomes such as sales or retention (Pham, 2023).

This lack of actionable insight leads to inefficient campaign optimization and a reluctance to increase digital budgets—stifling scalability and innovation.

4.6. Rural–Urban Digital Divide

Vietnam’s digital growth has been concentrated in major urban centers like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. In contrast, rural provinces experience lower rates of smartphone penetration, broadband access, and digital literacy (Wikipedia, 2023a). National campaigns often overlook local dialects, cultural preferences, and platform usage patterns prevalent in rural areas (Wikipedia, 2023b).

However, this gap represents a significant opportunity for mobile-first, regionally adapted marketing. Brands that localize content and invest in rural connectivity can unlock new markets and drive inclusive digital growth (Le, 2023).

V. STRATEGIC INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vietnam’s digital marketing landscape is undergoing a profound evolution, driven by widespread mobile internet use, a digitally native youth population, and rapid e-commerce growth. Yet alongside these opportunities lie significant challenges, from skill gaps to platform dependency and regulatory ambiguity. To capitalize on the momentum while mitigating risk, businesses, agencies, and policymakers must adopt informed, strategic, and locally grounded approaches. The following recommendations offer a roadmap for navigating Vietnam’s complex but promising digital environment.

5.1 For Businesses

Invest in Local Consumer Insight Research

Vietnam’s fast-growing, youthful digital population exhibits unique consumption habits shaped by regional cultures, social norms, and

generational shifts. However, many brands continue to apply generic or foreign campaign templates that fail to resonate locally. Businesses must invest in tailored consumer research—combining quantitative tools (e.g., online surveys, usage analytics) with qualitative methods (e.g., in-depth interviews, digital ethnography)—to understand preferences by geography, age group, and platform behavior.

Segmenting audiences by lifestyle, language, and digital maturity—especially across urban vs. rural divides—enables businesses to personalize engagement strategies and increase conversion effectiveness.

Prioritize Mobile-First Content Strategies

Vietnam is a mobile-first market: smartphones drive over 84% of web traffic and account for the majority of e-commerce purchases. Brands must therefore design campaigns with mobile UX and user behaviors in mind. Vertical videos, thumb-stopping visuals, quick loading times, and interactive mobile touchpoints are now fundamental—not optional—for driving performance across TikTok, Facebook, Shopee, and Zalo.

Short-form video should be central to content strategy, reflecting the fast-paced consumption patterns and preferences of Gen Z and Millennial consumers. Repurposing this content across platforms enhances efficiency and reach.

Diversify Across Digital Platforms

Although dominant platforms like Facebook, Google, and TikTok account for a large share of attention and ad spend, over-reliance on any one channel creates strategic risk. Algorithm changes, ad policy shifts, or account suspensions can disrupt business continuity.

To build digital resilience, brands should diversify into:

- Local platforms (e.g., Zalo, Lotus) for CRM and messaging,
- E-commerce ecosystems (Shopee, Tiki, Lazada) for live commerce and influencer campaigns,
- Owned media (websites, mobile apps, loyalty programs) for data capture and direct engagement.

This channel mix also supports omnichannel strategies that reflect how Vietnamese consumers move fluidly between online and offline experiences.

Invest in Owned Media and First-Party Data Strategies

As third-party cookies are phased out and data privacy laws tighten, businesses must shift from renting audiences to owning relationships. Building robust owned media assets—newsletters, mobile apps, branded communities—and integrating CRM platforms enable businesses to gather first-party data ethically and efficiently.

Loyalty programs, gamified user engagement, and personalized email marketing are underutilized opportunities in Vietnam. These tactics not only reduce CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost) but also support long-term retention and repeat purchase behavior.

Strengthen Internal Capabilities in Data and Measurement

Many businesses still rely on vanity metrics (e.g., likes, impressions) and lack structured measurement frameworks. To improve ROI clarity and campaign efficiency, businesses should invest in:

- Attribution models (multi-touch, last-click, etc.)
- Performance dashboards tailored to sales, leads, and retention
- Internal upskilling in tools like Google Analytics, Facebook Ads Manager, and marketing automation platforms

This allows better optimization, budget allocation, and alignment between marketing efforts and core business outcomes

5.2 For Agencies

Develop Training and Talent Development Programs

Vietnam faces a widening talent gap in digital marketing, particularly in areas such as programmatic advertising, SEO, marketing automation, and AI adoption. Agencies should take the lead in closing this gap by creating structured internal training programs and fostering a culture of continuous learning. Collaboration with universities, certification providers (e.g., Google, Meta), and international partners can ensure teams remain competitive and deliver high-impact services.

Offer Value-Based, Performance-Driven Models

Given the growing demand for transparency and ROI accountability, agencies should transition from traditional retainer models to performance-based pricing—whether through CPA (cost-per-acquisition), ROAS (return on ad spend), or milestone-based incentives. This approach

builds trust, aligns objectives, and encourages data-informed experimentation—especially appealing in Vietnam’s high-growth, high-variance digital environment.

Provide Regulatory Compliance Support

With the introduction of Vietnam’s Decree 13/2023 on personal data protection, many businesses—especially SMEs—are overwhelmed by compliance complexity. Agencies must offer consultative services around:

- Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs)
- Consent management systems
- Influencer and sponsored content disclosures
- Platform compliance (e.g., Zalo verification, TikTok guidelines)

Agencies equipped to help clients navigate regulatory risks will gain a competitive edge and become trusted strategic partners.

5.3 For Policymakers

Clarify and Streamline Regulatory Frameworks

While Vietnam has made progress with Decree 13/2023, implementation remains ambiguous, particularly for SMEs. Policymakers should:

- Issue official implementation guidelines
- Provide accessible legal templates for SMEs
- Establish a Data Protection Office to support compliance

A balance must be struck between consumer protection and business growth. Predictable, transparent rules will encourage long-term digital investment and innovation.

Empower SME Digital Transformation

Many small and medium enterprises still operate with minimal digital capabilities. Government-backed initiatives—such as grants for e-commerce adoption, subsidized cloud services, and digital literacy programs—can help level the playing field and stimulate inclusive economic development.

Partnerships with fintech firms, telcos, and education providers can amplify reach and impact.

Promote Public-Private Collaboration in Education and Innovation

To align workforce skills with market demand, policymakers should foster stronger collaboration between universities and the private sector. Regular input from agencies and brands can guide the development of marketing, analytics, and technology curricula.

Public research funding and accelerator programs focused on digital innovation—especially in AI, AR/VR, and e-commerce logistics—can help Vietnam become a regional leader in digital marketing technology

5.4 Innovation Strategies

Adopt Data-Driven, Consumer-Centric Marketing

Marketing must shift from intuition-based execution to data-led personalization. Companies should harness:

- Social listening tools to identify trends and sentiment
- AI for real-time customer segmentation and dynamic creative
- Funnel analytics to improve lead nurturing and conversion

Vietnam's widespread use of mobile payments enables seamless tracking of customer journeys from discovery to checkout—empowering precise optimization.

Leverage AI and Automation for Scale

Artificial intelligence tools—from chatbots to predictive analytics—are increasingly accessible to businesses of all sizes. AI can now:

- Deliver hyper-personalized offers in real time
- Automate customer service interactions
- Generate customized creative content
- Predict churn and recommend retention actions

Platforms like TikTok and Zalo have already integrated such features, and local agencies are offering AI-enhanced campaign services. Early adoption will differentiate brands in a saturated market.

Experiment with Emerging Technologies

Vietnamese consumers are highly receptive to innovation, particularly Gen Z audiences who seek novelty and interactivity. Businesses should experiment with:

- AR for try-before-you-buy experiences
- Virtual influencers and avatars
- Blockchain for loyalty and verification
- Voice commerce and AI search optimization

Piloting new formats through test-and-learn frameworks allows companies to scale only what works—without overcommitting budget or resources.

Embrace Agile Marketing Operations

Vietnam's digital landscape evolves quickly. Agile methodologies—emphasizing rapid iteration, real-time testing, and cross-functional collaboration—allow marketers to adapt to changing consumer preferences, media trends, and platform policies.

Agile teams are better equipped to optimize budgets, pivot messaging, and scale high-performing content in response to performance insights and competitive dynamics.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of Vietnam's fast-evolving digital marketing landscape, situating it within both global and regional contexts. As one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic digital economies, Vietnam demonstrates remarkable growth driven by mobile-first consumer behavior, widespread social media engagement, and increasing e-commerce adoption. Emerging technologies such as AI, livestreaming, and short-form video are reshaping how brands engage with consumers, while domestic platforms like Zalo and Shopee continue to gain relevance alongside global giants like Facebook and TikTok.

Despite these advances, the digital marketing ecosystem in Vietnam faces notable challenges. A pronounced digital skills gap limits the ability of many businesses to fully leverage data analytics, AI tools, and performance-based strategies. Regulatory complexity—particularly surrounding data privacy and compliance with Decree 13—adds uncertainty for both large enterprises and SMEs. Moreover, overdependence on dominant platforms, consumer skepticism due to ad fatigue, and measurement difficulties related to ROI further complicate strategic execution. The rural-urban digital divide also restricts inclusive digital engagement, despite mobile infrastructure improvements.

To address these challenges and sustain growth, businesses are encouraged to prioritize first-party data strategies, diversify digital channels, and adopt mobile-first content formats tailored to Vietnamese cultural and demographic nuances. Agencies must invest in upskilling talent, adopt performance-based models, and guide clients through compliance frameworks. Policymakers, in turn, should focus on creating transparent, innovation-friendly regulations, supporting SME digitalization, and fostering collaboration between academia and industry.

This research contributes to digital marketing literature by synthesizing data-driven insights and theoretical frameworks, such as Digital

Transformation Theory and IMC, to contextualize Vietnam's unique digital trajectory. While comprehensive, the study is subject to limitations including reliance on secondary data and the fast-paced evolution of technology, which may impact the long-term applicability of certain insights.

Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of AI, voice commerce, and blockchain, and consider comparative studies with other ASEAN economies. A deeper understanding of local consumer psychology and rural adoption patterns will also be essential to informing more inclusive and adaptive marketing strategies in Vietnam's ongoing digital transformation.

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