The Digital Journey: Reflected Learnings and Emerging Challenges

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Our Perspective: The Digital Journey

This paper provides a literature-based examination of the four stages of marketing's digital journey to date and the key milestones or points of interest along the way. In reflecting on the path taken, intriguing insights emerge which pose ongoing challenges for businesses and for the marketing discipline. Arguably failure to heed the resulting warnings will impede marketing's ability to harness the benefits of digital and to effectively counteract the associated negative consequences of a digitally-enabled marketplace. The implications of marketing's digital journey are explored here along with their most pressing consequences.

Given the proliferation of digital technologies both within business and those used by consumers to interact with other consumers and 'their' brands, this paper aims to outline the emerging journey of digital marketing and the relationship between digital and marketing, with which we are all engaged consciously or subconsciously. Digital marketing involves computer mediated environments that allow consumers, firms and other stakeholders to create, interact and access digital content (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Yadav and Pavlou, 2014). The complexities of digital marketing have required a paradigm shift (Day, 2011; Quinton, 2013), are regarded as a research priority (Marketing Science Institute, 2013) and extend beyond the simple use of digital technologies to communicate and interact with a variety of stakeholders with a considered and deliberate orientation (Setia et al., 2013; Theodosiou, 2012). As a practice, digital marketing spreads beyond internet marketing to include also the use of non-internet based technologies, such as mobile and social media, to achieve marketing objectives (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Financial Times, 2015).

This paper offers an outline map of the journey to date, as an attempt to make sense of the trajectory. The coverage of digitalisation in marketing has generally been atomised into subject specific areas, such as technology adoption, information systems literature, consumer use of digital tools to access brands, multi-channel management and marketing communications, etc. Unlike previous work, this paper's contribution lies in its holistic stance in mapping the overall journey through a literature review without subject boundaries, in order to develop understanding and **to** delineate a rapidly shifting terrain, which Jones and

Gatrell (2014) suggest is needed. The synthesis of published works into a body of current knowledge provides value to both researchers and practitioners. Researchers will benefit as this paper will assist in explicating the state of digitalisation and identifying new research possibilities. Practitioners will also benefit as this paper attempts to span silos of thinking and practice within digital marketing. '*Spanning silos, is, in my view the marketing problem of our tim*e' (Aaker, 2013: 8). Therefore this paper is a response to the increased atomisation of marketing, the issue of silos, and the uncertainty of how digital will impact on marketing from here on.

The use of a metaphorical framework on which to hang ideas and discussion is not original. Many authors have employed a metaphor to communicate marketing ideas, including but not limited to Brown et al. (1994), who used the evolution of man to explain the development of services marketing thought; Mitchell (1995), who employed astrology to explain segmentation; Dennis and Macaulay (2003), who applied the foundations of jazz composition to marketing planning; and Rentschler, Jogulu, Kershaw and Osborne (2012), who applied spirituality to arts marketing. Indeed an illuminating discussion and defence of metaphor use in marketing was authored by Rindfleisch (1996). A metaphor is being employed in this paper as a representation to transfer meaning within a shared world view (Ardnt, 1985). The meaning can be transferred from a familiar domain – here a journey – to an unfamiliar domain – in the case of this paper this is the digitalisation of marketing.

The metaphor of a journey provides a narrative with which to carry the reader through the complex changes occurring in the digital marketing arena. The digital journey has as yet no end or a final destination, but it is possible to give it a start point, which is *Stage A: Waking up to the journey and starting out*. Three stages then follow, *Stage B: Identifying the travel essentials*; *Stage C: Travelling companions and communities*, and *Stage D: Early reflections and a post card home*. Likely routes and options for future research present themselves. First is an overview of the approach taken and the development of the digital journey as a conceptual contribution.

The Approach Undertaken and the Delineation of the Digital Journey

This literature review aims to make sense of past academic endeavour in the digitalisation of the marketing domain, to provide insights to shape the future research directions for the subject. The review creates an overview of the digital field to outline the subject's evolution,

delineate patterns, explore boundaries and provide foci. We recognise the dynamic and shifting nature of the digital sphere, but believe it is important to create baseline foundations for the benefit of other scholars and practitioners to draw from and extend as endorsed by Jones and Gatrell (2014). Through taking a different approach and structure to the creation of a conceptual framework, a different type of value may be created (MacInnis, 2011) by the framework. This new framework also offers a partial stemming of the decline of conceptual papers in marketing (MacInnis, 2004; Yadav, 2010).

This paper is not a systematic review *per se*, but rather a judicious collation of influential papers leading to a critical reflection of the emergence and direction of travel of the digitalisation of marketing. In line with the ethos of this journal, our paper is highly interdisciplinary in nature, following the explanatory form of research synthesis proposed by Rousseau et al (2008). Through the incorporation of diverse data via predominantly published papers, the boundaries of a domain and its context can be established in order to generate theory. Furthermore the use of a journey as a metaphor fits with the delineation of an emerging subject (MacInnis, 2011).

Our paper is positioned as both an explicating and summarising conceptual contribution (MacInnis, 2011). According to MacInnis, explicating papers delineate a domain and its development, to provide a grounding for others who come after; just as a cartographer maps a journey. An explicating conceptual contribution should explain why it matters to investigate the chosen domain and how subsequent thinking may be altered as a result of the contribution. Our pictorial map echoes other pictorial models in explicating studies (Sherry, 1983) as a way in which to explain and simplify the abstract so as to facilitate understanding. In summarising the digital journey so far, we offer a reduction or distillation of past research into '*a manageable set of key takeaways*' (MacInnis, 2011:144). Summarisation allows a stepping back from the detail to see the holistic 'bigger picture'; for example, Wilkie and Moore's 2003 paper on marketing's changes as a discipline grouped marketing into four eras to provide a wider viewpoint. Summarising conceptual contributions can also offer managerial implications, which our paper intends to do. Our digital journey thus both explains what the digitalisation of marketing might encompass and also distils the landscape down from complex to simple.

Previous literature reviews in this journal informed the development and scoping of this paper (cf: Dorotic et al., 2012; Greer et al., 2012). The review is iterative in that beyond

certain keywords searched within the databases of EBSCO and Emerald (for example, 'digital evolution', 'digital marketing' 'technicalisation in marketing', 'adoption of the internet', 'online trust') and the inclusion of seminal authors, we did not hold any preconceived notions of which literature would emerge or what the core themes would be. The sources cited are relevant to the development of thinking regarding the digitalisation of marketing and marketing's movement towards digital, determined by the digital journey focus within the paper. We do not claim this paper to be a fully exhaustive literature review for such a fast-moving field, although it includes pivotal material (Booth et al, 2012; Cooper, 1998) highlighting the key points in this evolution.

The journey has emerged from the literature analysis as a mechanism to integrate the seemingly disparate strands of the digitalisation of marketing into a congruent direction that sheds light on the development in academic research and practice of marketing. Indeed a recent McKinsey report authored by Hirt and Wilmott (2014) proposed that the very nature of digitalisation requires the mentality of a journey rather than a destination. The four stages highlighted along the journey so far provide a counterpoint of likely human behaviour when embarking on a journey. Stage A - the waking up - corresponds to the realisation of the potential of digital technologies in marketing; Stage B - identifying the travel essentials - mirrors the need to identify what is most relevant to an organisation to effectively operate in a digital economy; Stage C denotes an appreciation of the other people involved in a journey and in the case of digital marketing, the communities and relationships required; finally, Stage D offers the opportunity to pause, admire the scenery, review the milestones reached, before deciding the next part of the route. Marketing scholars and practitioners have begun to reflect on the impact of digital and to identify future directions of interest to the wider society, such as the Internet of Things. The four stages assist in simplifying a complex and multi-dimensional digital environment into a human scaled activity and by making the 'big' smaller offers a conceptual contribution. Thus the conceptual contribution is made up of both the route and the four stages of the journey.

- **Stage A: Waking up to the journey and starting out**

The realisation that marketing had changed and that the nature of the exchange process had been disrupted with the arrival and adoption of the internet, had been documented by Holbrook and Hulbert (2002). As early as 1985, Moor had pointed out the lack of comprehensive policies with which to manage human interaction with technology, and

Hoffman and Novak had proposed a new marketing paradigm for electronic commerce in 1997. Archol and Kotler (1999) outlined the implications for marketing of a connected and internet-enabled economy which placed the marketer in more of an advisory role to the buyer and not to the seller within the exchange process. Additional work which enthused and informed the debate included Zineldin's identification of the potential role of the internet for effective marketing (2000), and Trim (2002) mentioned the impact of the internet on the marketing mix and suggested that developing the appropriate strategic mindset to maximize the potential of the internet should be of interest to marketers.

Curiosity regarding the operationalisation of certain consumer-focused aspects of the internet, such as database marketing and e-commerce, was aroused by Rowley's (2001) work on the use of the internet for targeting and promotion. Suggestions by authors such as Broderick et al. (2002) and the later work of Moriarty et al. (2008) gave the impression that businesses, particularly small businesses, should have the flexibility to innovate and rapidly integrate technology into their marketing practices and so use the internet entrepreneurially. Papers demonstrating the evolving marketing ecosystem and also the gulf between the acknowledgement of the potential (where could we go on our journey) of the internet and the reality of embracing this environment strategically, included Strategic Direction's 2010 statement of the imperative of engagement with digital. Layton (2011) explored the dynamic nature of marketing systems and its social matrices, suggesting a need for more flexible and adaptable systems, whilst Powers' (2012) more recent work suggests there are lessons to be learnt from the past as the digitalised marketplace proliferates.

- **Stage B: Identifying the travel essentials**

As businesses began to incorporate internet-based technologies for marketing, there arose the issue of overcoming the reluctance on the part of the consumer to interact with those companies via the internet. A greater awareness of the factors that mattered to consumers was required in order for businesses to successfully implement on-line activity. A traveller, after starting a journey, will soon realise which are his or her most essential items of kit. For firms with an internet presence, and which now desire to sell directly to consumers, a transactional website was such a piece of kit. A critical element within that piece of kit was an understanding of what was important to a potential customer. The opportunity for mass customisation of products and the quantity of information available via the internet altered

the type and scope of relationships possible between the consumer and organisation or brand (Holbrook and Hulbert, 2002).

The antecedents of relationship-building in the offline environment, such as trust and risk, grew in prominence as research topics as marketers and academics wrestled with the transference of off-line activity to on-line activity. The concept of consumer trust and whether it was different in the on-line environment became of interest to researchers such as McCole (2002). Delgardo-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001) explored the relationship between consumer experience and developing trust, whilst Durkan et al. investigated how to encourage trust on-line (Durkan et al., 2003). The previously established parameters of risk were extended in 2002 to include technological risk (Liebermann and Stashevsky, 2002) as recognition of the role of technology in consumption. The adoption or not of technological innovations by consumers and the initiation into digitalisation for consumers was returned to as a research topic by Antico and Kleijnen (2010). Having begun to understood that the essential kit bag for a successful internet journey included the interrelationship of trust, perception of risk, e-commerce experience and on-line experience generally amongst consumers, the focus of researchers and practitioners moved on to thinking about how to assist businesses in understanding and implementing effective on-line marketing.

Merely having a website was not sufficient, as marketing and technology authors stated (cf: Hamill and Gregory, 1997; Varadarajan and Yadav, 2009). Whilst businesses rushed to create websites and thus be 'internet-enabled' in the early 2000s, many smaller businesses were oblivious to the concept of the consumer search journey (Ylokoski, 2005) and how to encourage consumers to a website through the use of search engine marketing (SEM) to improve page ranking techniques. Jansen and Spink (2006) noted that clearer understanding was required of the links between website design, content, SEM and the principles of web traffic. Limited practical advice based on scholarly work existed within the realms of on-line marketing, with the exception of de Chernatony and Christodoulides (2004), which illustrated how a brand's promise might be transferred to the on-line environment. The ability to drive potential traffic to a website through higher page rankings was found to be a further crucial piece of kit in the traveller's luggage.

The internet journey commenced: consumers were considered - in terms of what they needed to initially connect with a firm on-line – and also the firm's perspective on how to get consumers to their web-enabled business. Firms then had to progress along the route by

encompassing some or all of the concepts of relationship marketing in order to gather customers and consumers (travelling companions and building communities) in stage C.

- **Stage C: Travelling companions and communities**

Though a journey may start with a solitary traveller, travelling involves interactions with many others, both individuals and communities, with whom the traveller may form relationships, be they transitory or long-lasting. Communities have often provided shelter for travellers; for example, the Madan Marsh Arabs with whom Wilfred Thesiger lived prior to his 1964 book about them. As digitalisation took hold, there was an early appreciation of the usefulness of on-line communities for marketers by certain marketing academics (Armstrong and Hagel, 1996; Bickart and Schindler, 2001); the use of the internet to share information between consumers (Pires et al., 2006) and a realisation that intra-consumer relationships could be influential within and external to communities (Pitta and Fowler, 2005).

Zineldin in 2000 commented that the base principles of relationship marketing involved interaction and social exchange, which are also fundamental to the success of any social media activity within digital marketing. The lack of theoretical integration between relationship marketing and digital marketing is odd, considering that interactions between individuals - whether face-to-face or remotely through digital technology - are the bedrock for the formation of relationships. 'Community is arguably the fundamental social relationship, having its roots in the familial relationship often used to define relationship marketing' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001:427). The overlap between relationship marketing and the on-line community literature had been overlooked (Papadopolou et al., 2001), with the exception of Eiriz and Wilson's 2006 conceptual work, which included interactive marketing – and by inference, digital marketing – as one thread of research which fed into relationship marketing.

Developing relationships between consumers and businesses can lead to increased loyalty and the different levels of loyalty have been illustrated by the loyalty ladder, introduced in 1991 by Christopher et al. with later additions and augmentations. Communities within digital spaces also have levels and hierarchies based on contributions to the community (Kozinets, 1998). Szmigin et al (2005) reinforced this idea of the potential of the digitalised world to encourage relationship building, with their suggestion that the digital society offered new opportunities for relationship building between organisations and consumers. Drawing

these two areas together and identifying key members of communities who may be influencers, echoes the identification of the advocates within a loyalty ladder.

Interesting work on the nature of communities and making sense of them in a marketing context was produced by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). Their work was influential in taking a holistic view of communities and relationships within both society and consumption. McAlexander et al. (2002) continued this direction of study on off-line brand communities.

The realisation of the roles and types of relationships within on-line communities and other social networks is still work in progress for many firms, large and small (Gironda and Korgaonkar, 2014; Marzocchi, Morandin and Bergami, 2013). Businesses may find a period of reflection valuable to reconsider their use and strategic engagement with digitalised marketing, and - rather like a traveller - write a postcard home possibly in the form of a strategic audit about the journey thus far. Stage D of the digital journey represents the traveller's first postcard home.

- **Stage D: Reflections and a postcard home**

Having set out on a journey, the traveller often reaches a point at which rest is required in order to restore energy before moving on again. At this stage, reflections of what has happened so far along the trip are often made, entries written in travel journals, a postcard may be sent home giving a brief account, or a blog updated. The reflective postcard home for a business within the digitalised marketing environment might read, *'Exhilarating trip so far. So much to take in. A few near misses have forced the realisation that I knew nothing when starting out. The journey is definitely life-changing and I now view the world in a whole new light'*.

A review of the shortcomings of the established marketing management approach to digital marketing identified the same initial issue of there being a lack of strategic understanding and adoption. Marketing academics still assert the lack of real business understanding and actions on internalising the impact of the changed space, now digital. Christodoulides's comments (2009) about the asymmetry of information and the shift in power from brand to consumer provided a warning of the on-going need for brand management to revise its approach to brand management in the digital era. Authors such as Assael (2010) and Day (2011) continue to assert that marketers and marketing are not keeping up with the technicalisation of marketing that the digital era has brought. Palmer, Simmons and Mason's

recent paper (2014) explains how consumers can now gang-up online to disrupt marketing strategies. Gironda and Korgaonkar (2014) describe the extent to which social networking sites have fundamentally altered consumers' behaviours, while Campbell, Ferraro and Sands (2014) focus on how not all consumers behave the same on social media, but that marketers have been slow to appreciate that segments exist in terms of these behaviours.

Both marketing professionals and marketing organisations have yet to fully absorb, internalise and then practice strategic digital marketing (Analogbei et al., 2015; Simkin, 2013). Day (2011) outlines the capabilities gap that has emerged and offered organisational rigidity, lagging reactions and a shortage in digital skills, as possible causes. Day suggests that marketing organisations should move from an inside-out perspective of marketing management to an outside-in, and thus build adaptive marketing capabilities. Developing theory and frameworks to better understand how to achieve community-based brand management, which fully incorporates digital marketing, is now pressing (Quinton, 2013).

In summary, the digital journey is now well underway for businesses large and small, and whilst the end point is not yet known, most organisations are aware of the need to engage in digitalised marketing in order to remain in an increasingly competitive marketplace. They know they must be on the journey. Businesses now are using digital technology, but not to maximum effectiveness (Analogbei et al., 2015; Simkin, 2013). Though this narrative has been written with the benefit of hindsight and research in this domain over a twelve year period, some firms at stage A are now realising that the journey is imminent, whilst others, irrespective of sector, are at stages B and C. The proliferation of commercial services promoting advice to organisations wishing to embark on marketing digitalisation suggests that many firms across sectors are still at an early stage of developing their understanding of marketing digitalisation and are poised at stage A of the journey. Having realised that to move forward from stage A to stage B they need to embark on the digital journey, some organisations are attempting to operationalise the digitalisation of marketing. For example, within public services, digitalisation of marketing can be illustrated in several regions where local authorities have commenced sending local businesses emails rather than letters as invoices for services. Indeed, online registering for voting in local elections is also being implemented. Thus organisations are realising that marketing has experienced a paradigm shift and that the nature of the exchange process has been permanently altered (Holbrook and Hulbert, 2002).

Furthermore, GE - a predominantly B2B organisation - has trialled several different digital platforms as mechanisms for developing trust with business customers and consumers and as a series of pathways for communicating the brand (Davis, 2014), including YouTube videos to educate and explain complex jet engine engineering. GE exhibits aspects of stage B of the digital journey, specifically transferring a brand's promise to the online environment (de Chernatony and Christodoulides, 2004). Both the online fashion retailer ASOS and the children's toy manufacturer LEGO have been heralded as firms successfully engaging with their communities to co-create value for both parties and as such exemplify stage C of the digital journey, where understanding communities becomes central to digitalised marketing success (Szmigin et al., 2005; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). A few firms may even have sufficient experience to now pause at stage D, to reflect on what might have been or what could be coming next. An illustration of stage D can be seen in consultancy firms such as McKinsey, which is proposing to various client groups that a re-appraisal of digitalisation, including digital marketing is now necessary. McKinsey has outlined how pharmaceutical firms should reconsider their organisational structure and operations, including for marketing to operate across silos to fully benefit from the value potentiality of digitalisation (Akella et al., 2015).

The journey is far from complete, calls continue to be made for further research into the strategic views on and integration of digitalisation into marketing for firms (Analogbei et al., 2015; Piercy, 2009; Fortin and Uncles, 2011; Harrigan et al., 2012), and the value of a connected digital economy (Dutton et al., 2012), rather than the operational and descriptive case studies of implementation (Schibrowsky et al., 2007). Suggestions have been made for how to achieve worthwhile academic/practitioner knowledge exchange in contemporary marketing though not specifically to the digital domain (Hughes et al., 2008). Practitioners have also restated the need for greater integration in thinking and application across digitalisation, at agency and client firm level (Assael, 2010; Strategic Direction, 2010). Acknowledgement of the impact of digital technologies in society, and thus business, has begun to be recognised (Berman, 2012; Keegan, 2012).
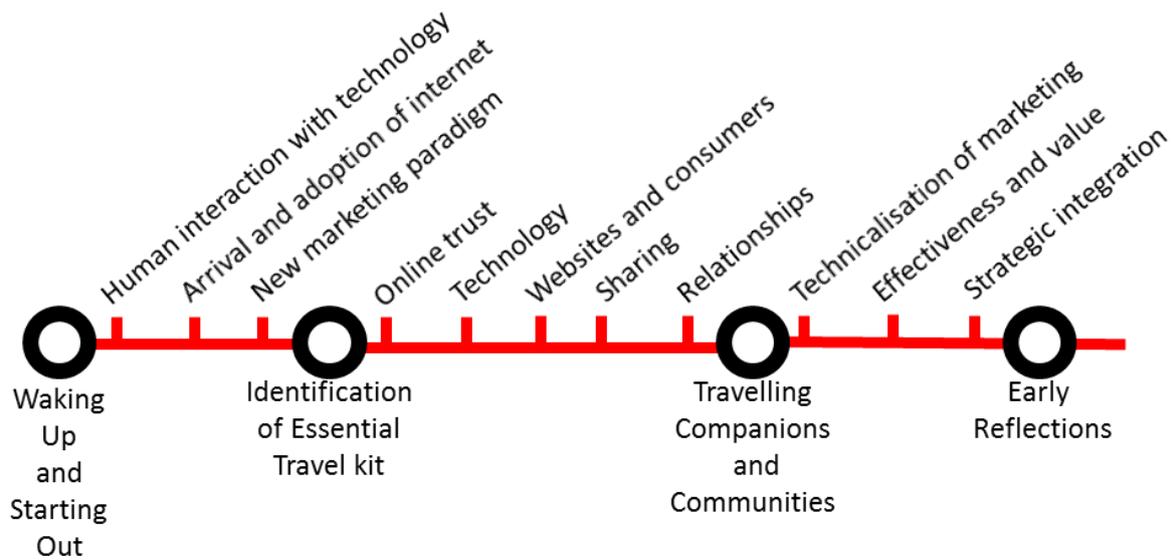
Figure 1: The Digital Journey Map

Critical Appraisal: Emerging Themes and the Implications to Date of the Digital Marketing Journey

From the literature review, certain key gaps emerge for the digital journey undertaken so far. The gaps comprise the strategic versus the tactical view, the technicalisation of marketing, as well as the speed of evolution and concept of time and consumers and empowerment. This appraisal explores the gaps in addition to the implications brought about by the digitalisation of marketing. The discussion moves from the broad to the specific, commencing with the theme of the strategic versus tactical view of digital marketing, then proceeds with the technicalisation of marketing and the linked area of the speed of change and the concept of time. Subsequently, the implications of digital marketing implementation for businesses are outlined.

- **The strategic versus tactical view of marketing digitalisation and its implications**

The last decade has experienced an unprecedented speed of change in the implementation of marketing digitalisation (Zwick and Dholakia, 2008; Hirt and Wilmott, 2014). Digital technology had brought further consumer insight for practitioners; a range of paid for and

free on-line assistance for businesses wishing to digitalise their marketing; the democratisation of marketing across large and small companies and brands; an immeasurable amount of consumption data, in addition to empowered consumers who are able to influence a brand in the marketplace. Yet, strategic understanding is still at best uneven.

The literature promotes digitalised marketing as creating value for a firm (Lanzolla and Anderson, 2008) and a lack of digital strategic thinking post the onset of the digital era can reduce value creation and thus firm success (Piercy et al., 2010). Zwick and Dholakia (2008) observed that the general response of marketers to the digital era had been to produce and use multiple tools as tactics with which to deal with specific needs, rather than strategic digital planning. Further emphasis, they suggest, should be given to the integration of digital activity into wider marketing, understanding the omni-channel realities of the contemporary consumer and the formation of a mindset of strategic vision. Day (2011) reminds readers that marketers' strategic thinking is still not keeping up with the proliferation of digital media or the effects of a digitally empowered world. Some businesses, and smaller firms in particular, continue to view the digitalised marketing environment as a tactical opportunity to acquire or retain customers or as a selling tool using eCommerce, rather than considering digital as a profound all-encompassing approach to marketing (Gilmore, 2011; Harrigan et al., 2012). Thus, despite the infiltration of digital marketing into consumers' and businesses' lives, many companies and brands are still not creating a digital-centric marketing strategy.

The implication arising from this is that marketing strategy needs to further incorporate digital marketing at its centre and develop dynamic capabilities internally to match the high velocity and rapidly changing external marketing environment. The emerging digital culture and its reshaping of consumer experience requires a new and different mindset which incorporates a more holistic and strategic perspective that encourages integration (Kaufman and Horton, 2014). The decade of digital development has resulted in limited internalisation and embedding of the potential offered by the digitalisation of marketing in firms. This limited embedding may be partially due to the acknowledged digital marketing skills gap (Analogbei at al., 2015; Royle and Laing, 2014; Technology Strategy Board, 2014).

Businesses embarking on strategic marketing should adopt a more flexible approach, even going as far as Mintzberg's emergent strategy (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) in order to adaptively market as a reflection of the digital environment. Adaptively marketing would include being dynamically responsive to the market, such as making small real-time,

adjustments and regularly reviewing the extent of digitally centric actions. The current, rather passive marketing strategies employed by many organisations, based on past activity, will be increasingly less impactful in the digitalised economy.

- **The technicalisation of marketing and its implications**

The increased accessibility of technology for consumers has led to increased complexity for marketers (Berman, 2012; Pitta and Fowler, 2005), who struggle to reach and engage those consumers. As marketing began to adopt digital practices, the realisation of the increasing complexity encouraged the fragmentation of functions into specialist subsections, which in some cases led to specialised companies and agencies being formed to serve the established non-specialists with expert knowledge. For example, the proliferation of SEO firms, on-line PR agencies and more recently mobile marketing consultancies. This fragmentation of the marketing discipline into specialist silos has created issues of cross-functional activity integration. Specialists have to be brought in as the rapidity of technology advancement creates a lack of currency of knowledge for many marketers, thus more reliance on specialists. The issue of the specialist silo has been recognised but not resolved. Indeed a recent McKinsey report acknowledged how digital technologies are changing the strategic context and outlined the value of integrating digital activity within a business to alleviate the silo issue whilst also providing examples of Chief Digital Officers in businesses, which in itself reinforces the silos (Hirt and Wilmott, 2014). Concern over silo-isation goes beyond marketing practice and into the academic arena. The editors of *Marketing Science* report the need to avoid subject silos or subdivisions of knowledge and methods in research outputs within Marketing in order to better reflect the changing international environment (Chintagunta et al., 2013).

Gronroos (1994 and 2004) articulated that relationship marketing is an overall process and not a separate set of functions. It has already been established that relationship marketing shares many principles with digital marketing and social media marketing, so the fragmentation of marketing into specialist subsections is at odds with the overriding principle of marketing as a cross-functional approach to viewing a market (Layton, 2011).

Zineldin recognised the role and potential of integrating what he called 'IT into marketing' in his paper of 2000, titled 'Beyond relationship marketing: technologicalship marketing', as a way to describe the conjoining of the two subjects. Both areas were in his mind requirements

of marketing, but needed integrating to maximise the effectiveness for marketers and enhance the principles of relationship marketing. The technicalisation of marketing is 'the development and use of information technologies and the internet in all aspects of marketing'.

A decade on from Zineldin, both Mulhern (2009) and Assael (2010) were still calling for greater integration of technology in marketing, particularly to avoid the silo-isation of digital marketing and the lack of real cross platform metrics. Drucker's 1954 outline of marketing as an overarching strategic idea, one that must be seen from the customer's perspective rather than operationally focused and fragmented into specialisations, has been lost in the increasingly technical nature of marketing. As a result of the 'technicalisation of marketing' (as coined by Zineldin, 2000), marketers have lost holistic insight and thus may be blinkered from appreciating a wider marketing and brand strategy (Marzocchi, Morandin and Bergami, 2013). As the depth of specialist knowledge increases to maintain the *status quo*, the breadth of professional knowledge may be lost.

A practical implication of this technicalisation is that the marketing industry continues to require more and more digitally-literate specialists. The 'situations vacant' listings in professional marketing journals consistently advertise for those professionals with highly technical skills. The trickledown effect for firms trying to incorporate digital marketing is that they are highly unlikely to be able to develop and implement digital marketing activity in-house and now also face a plethora of specialists from which to choose to implement one aspect of digital marketing. Importantly, this technicalisation of marketing also creates a lack of understanding and then a reticence to engage with digital activity on the part of smaller businesses. The rapidity of this technicalisation of marketing warrants the further discussion below.

A further implication from the increasing role of technology and growth in online interaction with consumers is how marketers develop the necessary rapport and reputation to be trusted. In traditional channels, with their greater propensity for face-to-face customer service and interaction, there is a large body of knowledge relating to how best to reassure consumers, build empathy and develop their trust (Ba and Pavlou, 2002; Durkan, Durkin and Gillen, 2003; McKnight and Chervany, 2001). Only now are marketers starting to recognise that in the more remote digital environment it is much harder to create a relationship that leads to

trust (cf: Li, 2012). As the digital journey continues, arguably this is a major challenge still to be tackled by marketers.

- **The speed of evolution, the concept of time and implications**

Further to the diffusion of internet innovation and its adoption amongst consumers taking marketing practitioners by surprise, the continued speed of technology development has created an ongoing challenge. Once personal computers were established in the workplace, consumers became familiar with the use of the internet for sending and receiving emails, then for searching for information. This familiarity with technology transferred itself into the non-work environment with the trial of early computer games, tentative purchasing on the internet and simple mobile phones with limited capabilities and short battery life. The internet began to encompass much of consumers' lives, music file sharing was made possible by Napster in 1999, LinkedIn connecting business people emerged in 2003, YouTube arrived on our screens in 2005 and the iPad was launched in 2007, closely followed by the first squawk of Twitter in 2009 and now including apps such as Periscope for live streaming launched in 2015. The speed of upgrades, new releases, greater data capacity and faster data processing, impacted on consumers, who are required to buy and use the latest tool in order to access information and products, as well as interact with others, increasingly on the move. For example, the need to download a QR code reader application on a mobile phone in order to access information only available via a QR code. In addition, this speed of evolution also necessitates companies to adopt current digital marketing tools in order to deal with customers and others in the distribution channel. eCRM systems with automated email campaigns and mobile compatible interactive websites are becoming standard even at the SME level.

The rate of digital change and new uses of digital technology for marketing are seen by some as continuing unabated (Carter, 2009), whilst others suggest the platforms may change, but that the trajectory is ever upward (Wilson and Quinton, 2012). Some authors suggest it is the implementation which is critical to success (Bughin, 2008), whilst others declare it is only slowed by the ability of marketers to actually employ the layers of complex technology that the digital developers have created (Assael, 2010). Technologists may argue that it is the marketers' lack of imagination which limits the application of digital technologies, whilst marketers argue that the complexity limits the ease of use. Web 2.0 emerged in 2002 and

moved into web 3.0 or the semantic web from 2007. Web 3.0 has morphed into web 4.0, using more powerful interfaces (Evans, 2011).

The time taken for technology to filter down into use by firms also needs consideration. For example, individual face recognition in outdoor digital promotional campaigns or NFC (near field communication) for payments are now being utilised by many firms; developments likely to enter most markets and reach smaller firms, too. The immediacy of internet technologies has also effected the management of marketing activity. Why should digital be incorporated? Which tools to use and how to use them? What return will they provide? These are all questions businesses must now address. Digital technology development has speeded up and the time to market has continued to shorten for digital marketing tools and platforms, with each new innovation claiming to offer more commercial advantages than the last. Real time metrics are now available for little or no cost to firms wishing to track marketing campaign activity, web traffic, location of customers, downloads, etc. Thus the pursuant implications of the 'shortening' of time spans offers potential for firms to maximise their marketing effectiveness through using real time data. However, a further implication is that the time taken to understand and keep abreast of developments for firms has lengthened owing to the increased complexity.

The importance of time and consumers' relationships with time have also changed during the period under discussion. Time as a chronological linear path broken into work and leisure elements, as debated by Davis (1994), is no longer reflected by how consumers are living their lives and thereby how businesses need to interact with consumers. The development of relationships between businesses and customers was said to take time (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), and trust was built incrementally over time (Bart et al., 2005). However, these established beliefs need to be compared with the expectation of immediacy of not only the the digital natives (those born after 1990) and the millennials, but all consumers who are digitally-enabled. An implication of this immediacy is the integration of real-time price comparisons, instant geo-location mapping and synchronous or asynchronous social media conversations in marketing activity to reflect the 'now' requirements of the digital consumer. Time is 'now' and marketers need to consider the speed of their processes and systems in order to respond in 'now' to nurture positive relationships with consumers, as part of their adaptive digitalised marketing strategy.

- **Consumers, empowerment, co-production and the implications**

Arguably the most significant impact of digitalisation from the consumer perspective has been the level of interaction possible between consumers and businesses and with other consumers, as a result of adopting the internet (Palmer, Simmons and Mason, 2014). As consumers increasingly incorporated the internet into their lives, businesses had to consider whether to mirror the spaces those consumers now inhabited (Rheingold, 1993; Cova and Pace, 2006). With the rise of the empowered consumer, businesses and brands became concerned as to their ability to continue to 'manage' or direct consumers, as had been previously possible prior to digitalisation (Urban, 2004; Kucuk, 2009). The corporate 'managing the consumer' perspective began to be reappraised by some businesses in an effort to evolve the marketing function.

The concept of 'part-time' marketers, originally coined by Gummesson (1987) in relation to a firm's employees, can be now extended to the empowered consumers. Previously the flow of information had been vertical from producer to consumer, whereas the information flow is now horizontal in nature between consumers themselves, as well as consumers and businesses. Information – its quantity, availability and the way in which consumers search and filter it – has changed with the advent of digitalised information (Nicholas et al., 2006). Furthermore how consumers interact with information and their subsequent behaviour has altered (Moran et al., 2014). Whilst the quantity of information has grown exponentially with digital developments, the filtering of information is often not consciously considered by consumers or businesses. The use of algorithms and predicative analytics to filter search results that are 'personalised' to individual consumers' recent past behaviour or modelled on assumptions made by computers, invariably means that information is increasingly filtered. This activity has implications for society and civic life, as consumers and citizens do not act as their own sifters of digital information (Pariser, 2011). This pre-filtering might be regarded as a retrograde step by those who initially perceived digitalised information and communication as improving access to information.

The democratisation of communication was brought about by digitally facilitated peer-to-peer sharing. Digitalisation has also facilitated the increasing reliance on peer-to-peer referrals by consumers (Moran et al., 2014). Blogs, micro-blogs in the form of Twitter, social networks such as Facebook and Linked-In, review-based communities such as Tripadvisor, are all expressions of a desire to share information and experiences. The positive influence of viral marketing and electronic word-of-mouth referrals (eWOM) is acknowledged and sought after

by brands (Gupta and Harris, 2010; Sweeney et al., 2014). The phenomenon of increased choice (within the boundaries of the filters discussed above), brought about by the plethora of information and sharing of this digitalised information, is coupled with the identity and authenticity seeking behaviour of the post-modern 'unmanageable' consumer (Yiannis and Lang, 2006), as illustrated by the emergence of social shopping to validate potential purchases pre-purchase.

The management of user generated content and negative consumer experiences has become contentious; whether to take issues off-line and out of the public glare, or whether in the interests of transparency to be seen to take a proactive stance in dealing with these problems publically and gain public approbation for doing so. An implication arising from the shift in consumer behaviour is the subsequent re-appraisal by businesses of how to embrace consumer interaction for mutual benefit, through re-aligning their marketing strategies.

The ability of consumers to interact with businesses across a variety of digital platforms - mobile, tablet, laptop, etc - and the growth of consumer-generated material on these platforms, created the potential for businesses and brands to use consumer-generated content beyond incorporating testimonials. Using consumer insight and creativity to develop new products and concepts is not uniquely tied to the advent of the internet, but the extent of the use of co-creation is (Hoyer et al., 2010). Interestingly, critical marketers are now questioning whether this co-creation is just another form of governing consumers by offering rewards (often inadequate compared to the commercial gain for the companies) for pro-brand creative activity (Cova et al., 2011; Cova and Dalli, 2009; Wilmott, 2010).

Learnings From The Journey and Theoretical Contributions

The disruption caused by the emergence of digital cannot be undone; railing against change will not enhance the ability of an organization to adapt to change, so digitalization should be seen as an opportunity irrespective of the size of business or sector or country. In the same manner as an argument/confrontation/heated debate sometimes leads to creative problem solving, so disruption allows organisations a reason to review and to appraise existing corporate thinking, systems and approaches to their markets and marketing. Positive potential is offered by this disruption to engage with digital technologies, for the benefit of all stakeholders. There are challenges and inherent risks, but digitalisation provides new routes to markets, new approaches to communication, new opportunities for relationship

development, new options for product development and trialling new pricing models (Hoyer et al., 2010), new sources of data (Salmons, 2013), and the platform for innovation.

If organisations do not adopt a strategic mindset, they risk losing any previously held advantage to competitors which do engage fully with digital. Arguably those organisations will not only optimise the potential financial returns, but also become the thought leaders and key influencers in the digitalised marketplace. There is a financial risk of considering digitalisation as peripheral, but also there are reputational consequences and the risk to brand development by not doing so. Furthermore, if organisations fail to adopt a strategic mindset and do not acculturise themselves with digital at the core of the business, then those organisations will increasingly be dis-engaged with the realities of how consumers/other businesses – and therefore their target audiences – are living their lives. This would be a significant risk to the long term viability of any organization. It is also a risk to traditional marketing teams in organisations now creating separate or parallel digital teams and who increasingly have the ears of their firms' leadership. For example, one of the world's largest retailers Tesco recently culled its marketing function and CMO, making dozens redundant, while transferring roles and influence to its newly created digital campus.

As a traveller journeys more, s/he discerns through experience the most useful pieces of kit. As the internet, eCommerce, marketing digitalisation and social media evolve, so those using them learn what are the most useful and value-adding aspects to this technicalisation of marketing in their particular contexts. Customer insight, SEO, rich content delivered across platforms, engagement opportunities, are already recognised as core elements of a successful digital survival kit. New capabilities range from rich feature creative and content management solutions, tailored copy design and deployment tools, through to instant messaging middleware solutions that initiate multi-streams of activity in a variety of analytical engines and operational systems. Further pieces of kit will emerge, not only as greater attention is paid to researching and testing new technical 'solutions', but also through consumer research about how exactly digital media are being used by consumers, businesses and citizens. Currently tools to evaluate social media and to establish its 'value' and contribution to business are being tested. Community spans and measurements are also being investigated and new media as tools for conducting market research are being piloted. New kit will continue to emerge, as the adoption of digital, attempts at integration of digital and the demands for return on investment from organisations increase.

There is growing use of new media via digitalisation for research in marketing. Marketing practitioners are beginning to embrace research which involves conceptualising digitalisation as both the site and a set of tools for research. For example, research into eCommerce purchase intentions and business use of webinars as selling vehicles both focus on the web as the site of research. The use of digital technologies as tools for research include eDelphi or market research online communities (MROCs). Thus digitalisation creates the potential for the identification and collection of 'new' data, both 'new' in terms of data now able to be accessed and 'new' in terms of data that simply did not exist previously. Academic researchers in marketing may find that the more innovative data collection now possible could create new insights and richer data, and they may wish to consider adopting some of the practitioners' approaches to give their own research more relevance to the digitalised economy (Beer, 2012).

The emergence of digital has been described here as life changing. For individuals in how they communicate with each other (from face-to-face to keyboard-to-keyboard and now image-to-image); life changing for organisations, in their ability to access information and increase the efficacy of decision-making (decrease of research costs and immediacy of information); life changing for citizens as they feel connected to real or virtual communities (for example victims of violence support groups or local history groups); life changing for governments in the levels of transparency now demanded (expenditure); life changing for research, with researchers' ability to connect diverse yet relevant findings to strengthen research outcomes (eg: medical research); life changing for educators in how subjects can be taught and assessed (on-line courses MOOCs); and, life changing for marketers in the reduction of response time of campaigns (real time interaction with promotions).

The theoretical contributions made by this paper are twofold. First the pictorial mapping of the digital journey creates novel insight for researchers trying to piece together the trajectory of marketing in the digital era. The mapping of the digital journey illustrates not only the major stages along the journey, but also the interim and integrated fields within the digital marketing subject domain. In doing so, this paper achieves the aim of an explicating and summarizing a conceptual contribution. As marketing's digitalisation increasingly incorporates still and moving images, a visualisation of the digital journey itself is an appropriate approach to explaining its evolutionary path.

Second, the interpretive literature review has suggested four gaps in research knowledge and tensions within marketing practice. 1) From the literature, it has emerged that there is a need to adopt a more strategic view of marketing's digitalisation (Day, 2011) and for this view to be embedded at the core of organisations. However, the practice of marketing indicates that digital remains utilised as a set of tools, rather than as a strategic approach (Analogbei et al, 2015; Harrigan et al., 2012; Zwick and Dholakia, 2008). This gap, whilst acknowledged, requires further investigation. 2) In addition, the issue of the technicalisation of marketing and the increasing specialisation within digital marketing – which has created silos – is at odds with the notion of marketing as an overarching strategic idea (Drucker, 1954; Hirt and Wilmott, 2014). Thus there exists another tension between the theory and practice of contemporary marketing. 3) Furthermore, understanding the changing conceptions of time and speed have emerged from the literature review as fundamental to our ability to develop knowledge of the effect of digitalisation on business and consumer behaviour. Identifying the concurrent shortening and lengthening of time is an important contribution. The shortening of time and expectations of consumers, in contrast with the lengthening of time required by organisations to interpret the plethora of complex data now available identifies a further tension (Analogbei et al., 2015). Pursuant to this is the established marketing theory of trust being incremental and time based (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and yet significant influence is afforded to real time unknown referrals. 4) A further straining within the literature has been illustrated by the juxtaposition of the empowered or unmanageable consumer, who defers to peers rather than marketers for guidance and product information and who also co-creates with businesses, and the emergence of pre-filtered information created by algorithms on which consumers unwittingly depend. Whilst identifying shifts in consumer behaviour is not new, raising awareness of the tension between the supposed 'empowered' consumer and the dis-empowered pre-selected information receiving consumer, creates significant opportunities for further research.

Thus stemming from our investigation of the literature suggestions for good practice in harnessing digital include:

> (1) The involvement of digital across all the marketing areas of companies, as well just as across the digital platforms; as illustrated by store-based bookmakers

harnessing on-line betting and in-store web-based gambling or retailers offering click and collect in-store.

(2) Consideration of whether there is a strategic social media policy, which may be dependent on industry and regulation; which is prevalent in financial services, the marketing of products to children and health products.

(3) Close consultation between suppliers/contractors at early stages of marketing planning, including sharing the common goals, which can then be broken down into the relevant and more specific technology-based goals; as in many technology and industrial markets, with suppliers and channel members increasingly collaborating and pooling market insights.

(4) The inclusion of groups of consumers and stakeholders at different stages of marketing - beyond product testing and standard market research - and the development of ongoing relationships with these knowledge creators; many brands now harness digital brand communities to collaborate longer-term in developing ideas and enhancing customer experience.

(5) The appointment of digital natives to all areas of the business; whether retailers such as Tesco or John Lewis or manufacturers such as Lockheed Martin and ABB.

(6) The inclusion of academic researchers in marketing into company activity and vice versa to create synergistic and valuable new subject knowledge.

(7) Acceptance that in a digital environment, the rate of change and immediacy, interaction and responsiveness, collaboration and involvement, operate very differently than in the past - for marketers, their customers and other stakeholders – as illustrated with the emergence of the Uber taxi app and a new business model.

(8) Realisation that digital communities provide consumers with more product and brand information than their marketers, not always fairly or accurately, but the rules of engagement nevertheless have altered.

Emerging Challenges and Directions for Future Research

The tipping point from information/choice scarcity to information/choice overload has been reached for marketers, with the data and options 'deluge' created through digital technologies (Simkin, 2013). This brings various options: (1) the gap continues to widen between the technologists and the practitioners, as specialist knowledge increases but breadth of

knowledge is forced to diminish, creating ever-increasing operational limits in marketing's overall offer; or (2) practitioners and technologists pull back and create a set of self-auditing questions, such as:

> What additional value does this new technology actually create?
>
> Do we have enough expertise to use it effectively?
>
> If it is consumer-facing, will our targeted audience understand it and see its value and thus adopt it?

Technicalisation and the fragmentation of marketing were discussed openly at the 2013 AMS Global Marketing Congress, as a cause of concern when looking to the future of marketing. There was stated to be the need to encourage marketers to take a holistic view of marketing again, to avoid perpetuating the fragmentation into specialisations and sub-specialisations that has occurred. Whether the continued rationalisation of major practitioners in the marketing industry (eg: the merger of Omnicom and Publicis) will encourage a re-appraisal of the structure of the industry, and force a review of the specialisation silos that have occurred over the last fifteen years, remains to be seen. Silos are often created unintentionally, but once developed they keep both people and specific knowledge in, and different people with different knowledge and skills sets out. Marketing would benefit from greater permeability of these barriers.

The speed of change has come in waves, as technologies are developed, launched, adopted or ignored, evaluated, tweaked and updated, and then more are developed. As an exemplar, mobile marketing's current challenge is how to overcome the resistance by consumers to provide location tracking as a norm. They are not yet convinced about the value and are unsure of organisations' motives for requiring such knowledge of their movements. Mobile marketing also requires reformatting of content to fit various phone formats which are not standardised and for which there are significant costs, particularly in an international marketing context.

Companies may need to reconsider their view of customer 'management' and perhaps contemplate shifting emphasis from managing a mass of passive recipients to understanding the paradigm shift brought about by digitalisation and the new realities of the digitalised economy. Understanding the different dynamics for establishing trust is also far from the

norm. Embracing consumers as marketing knowledge creators and fostering a collaborative approach to marketing 'with' rather than 'for' consumers, needs to be implemented by companies. Consumers acting as part-time marketers, digitally-enabled, provide significant scope as company ambassadors. The implication arising from this opportunity is that companies should challenge themselves to reverse their world view through the marketing telescope, and view their defined world more through the eyes of the digital consumer. This consumer-led stance is not a new mantra, but in terms of the digital arena is still far from the norm (Analogbei et al., 2015).

Overall, this review of marketing's digitalisation – fashioned as a journey – has provided the following findings for marketing:

- A greater visibility of the increased complexity of consumer modality, changes in behaviours and norms and the growing participatory nature of consumers, which businesses cannot afford to ignore or merely pay lip service.
- The realisation that digitalisation is bigger than just marketing, impacting upon society and citizens.
- Some businesses are reacting to digital by ignoring it through fear, attempting to embrace at the peripheries in order to limit risk, or diving into digital and learning whilst doing so, and thus taking an iterative approach.
- Collaboration, particularly with consumers, is an important potential gain of digitalisation, though one not yet fully optimised.
- Digitalisation connects people and technology, and both have equally valuable roles in its success or failure.

However, there are also concerns for both marketing scholars and practitioners associated with the digital journey, which require acknowledgement:

- The potential over-reliance on technology without understanding the need for how it inter-relates with consumers, staff and corporate strategy.
- Future losses for businesses which do not engage at a strategic level with digital.
- A loss to academics should they fail to embrace digital through increased use of digital opportunities for conducting research and gathering data.

- A loss of ownership of market intelligence and customer insight by traditional marketing functions and the emergence of new internal functions and external agencies providing these data.
- The potential to fail to create a sound basis for consumers to trust a brand encountered online.
- The impact of immediacy in a digital world suggests that losses may occur as there is less time for reflection and evaluation - if it is even obvious what is being evaluated - of marketing activity.

Arising from the contributions made by this digital journey and reflections, there are several potentially fruitful avenues for further research. Most importantly other researchers could add to the digital journey map through identifying further stopping points, as the journey evolves, to update this developing subject. Future studies could include the exploration of the tension between strategic intent and tactical implementation of contemporary marketing by businesses, perhaps following a longitudinal case study approach. This could result in the creation of a model which could provide diagnostic value to organisations. Research to establish the extent of a silo approach to marketing could elicit the identification of future skills requirements for the marketing industry. Greater appreciation of time as a key concept in marketing's digitalisation could be gained through posing the research question of how time can be conceptualised in the digital era, and from this the development and subsequent validation of a conceptual model. In addition, productive insight into whether consumers view themselves as empowered or dis-empowered in the digital era would create new knowledge of particular interest to the critical marketing community.

Whilst this review now guides our thinking, the limitations of this paper should be recognised. This paper is not a systematic literature review in the highly structured style of Denyer and Tranfield (2009); rather it combines the approaches of Rousseau et al. (2008) and Booth et al. (2012) to create conceptual value through employing a different approach (MacInnis, 2011). This holistic approach, resulting in a different type of paper, may cause alarm to some scholars and thus be deemed 'not a true and complete literature review'. The authors acknowledge the incompleteness, but as early cartographers of the emerging digitalisation of marketing, we set out to outline and explain the subject rather than detail its entire landscape, which is still emerging. The metaphor and visualisation we have employed,

one of a journey and the conceptual figure drawn of this, presupposes that there will be further stages and stopping points along the route. Critics might suggest that our journey map is overly simplistic or too distilled and should include greater complexity. For example, linking certain stops or redrawing the map to include dead-ends and backward/forward motion. In response, we suggest that the simplicity of Figure 1 contributes to the value for a wide range of audiences.

There has been an exciting journey to date, as marketing strives to embrace the promise of digital, with some trying moments along the way. This paper has identified the milestones and points of interest, suggesting where challenges remain for the next stage of this trek. Arguably failure to heed the resulting warnings will impede marketing's ability to fully harness the benefits of digital and to effectively counteract the associated negative consequences of a digitally-enabled marketplace. There are challenges and inherent risks, but digitalisation of marketing provides new routes to markets, new approaches to communication and brand building, new opportunities for relationship development, new options for product development, trialling new pricing models, new sources of data, and the platform for innovation. But, only *if* business leadership teams and their marketers appreciate the step-change necessary to embrace digital and seek to keep up with the pace on the next stages of the onwards journey.

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