

# COMPARING MARKETING TRENDS BEFORE AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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**Abstract:** Marketing has rapidly evolved under the influence of technology, globalisation, and especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which marked a turning point in business communication and strategy. This paper analyses marketing trends before and after the pandemic, revealing a shift from traditional methods to digital tools, influencer marketing, and personalised content. A mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, shows that digitalisation, automation, and sustainability have become crucial. Brands that embrace innovation, AI, and eco-conscious strategies are more likely to succeed in the post-pandemic market.

**Key words:** digital marketing, consumer behaviour, marketing automation, influencer marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

As a dynamic discipline, marketing constantly changes and is influenced by technological advances, globalisation, and social and economic factors. One of the greatest transformative moments in contemporary marketing history was the COVID-19 pandemic, which suddenly changed how businesses communicate with customers, distribute products and design marketing campaigns. The consequences of this crisis were reflected in almost all areas of marketing, from traditional forms of advertising and communication to digital marketing strategies, which experienced an unprecedented increase. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the accelerated digitisation of many businesses and led to a change in consumer behaviour. The period of lockdowns and restrictions resulted in companies being forced to quickly adapt their marketing activities to the online environment, where the need for practical digital tools became apparent. Before the pandemic, marketing was primarily focused on traditional advertising forms and direct interactions with customers, but after its outbreak, digital marketing became the dominant strategy. Companies had to invest in online advertising, social networks and personalised digital campaigns to maintain their position in the market and reach new consumer segments.

One of the most significant changes was the transition to hybrid marketing communication models, where companies combined physical and digital elements to reach their target audience more effectively. For example, brands have begun intensively using live streaming, interactive webinars and personalised campaigns on social networks. In addition, market segmentation has shifted towards more detailed targeting of specific consumer needs.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse and compare marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic and highlight their impact on business strategies. Special attention is to be paid to marketing communication tools, changes in consumer behaviour and the evolution of marketing campaigns of well-known brands. Research in this area is essential because discovering new trends can help businesses better adapt to the post-pandemic period and effectively use innovations in marketing communication.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Marketing development and its adaptation to global change*

Marketing is a dynamic industry that is constantly evolving due to technological innovations and socioeconomic factors (Kotler et al., 2017). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, marketing focused on traditional and digital strategies, dominated by direct customer interactions, event marketing and print advertising (Hornák, 2007). Despite the growing influence of the Internet, many businesses rely on offline activities such as business meetings, product presentations and extensive advertising campaigns in traditional media (Bačík et al., 2012; Garbárová, Bachanová Hollá & Vartiak, 2017).

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant changes occurred in marketing communication, which was reflected in the acceleration of digitalisation and changes in consumer preferences. Businesses began to use social networks, online advertising and content marketing more intensively as main communication tools (Gustaven, 2022). Adapting to the new conditions also increased demand for personalised content and direct digital strategies, such as influencer marketing and automated email campaigns (Moorman & Shkil, 2021).

These changes prove that marketing must constantly adapt to global crises and changing market dynamics. The significant change in consumer behaviour, which has shifted to digital platforms due to the pandemic, has reassessed marketing strategies (Vrablikova, Ubreziova, Kubickova & Skodova, 2024). Companies that could

adapt quickly gained a competitive advantage, while those that failed to embrace digital innovations lost market position (Ushakova et al., 2023).

#### ***Online and offline marketing: A comparison before and after the pandemic***

Before the pandemic, online marketing was essential to business strategies but was not the primary marketing channel for many segments (Kretter, 2000). Businesses used the Internet to build brand awareness, but offline marketing remained important in building customer relationships. Offline activities, such as significant advertising campaigns, events, and direct product distribution, were popular promotion methods (Sedláček, 2006).

The COVID-19 pandemic changed this trend, as businesses had to quickly switch to online marketing formats (McDuffee, 2018). Customers began to rely more on digital channels when purchasing products, which led to the massive adoption of e-commerce platforms and the increase in the influence of social networks on marketing decisions (Ditrichová, 2018).

Social networks and online advertising campaigns became dominant tools, with companies starting to invest more in PPC ads, SEO optimisation, and email marketing (Conick, 2021). Given the growing number of online customers, businesses are focused on optimising the user experience (UX) and analysing big data (Big Data) to target ads better (Crain, 2022).

#### ***Changes in consumer behaviour***

Consumer behaviour has changed significantly during the pandemic, leading to the adaptation of marketing strategies to new market demands (Balis, 2020). Consumers have increasingly sought personalised and interactive marketing campaigns (Hall, 2023). In addition, empathy and emotional connection with the brand have become key factors in consumer decision-making (Alemany, 2022). Brands have had to rethink their marketing messages to reflect the changed needs of consumers in a post-pandemic world (Rotter, 2022).

Influencer marketing has increased in popularity during the pandemic as consumers seek out trusted sources of information (Celestino, 2023). Influencers have begun to play an essential role in consumer decision-making, shifting their influence from entertainment categories to health, education, and e-commerce (Gajanova, Majerova & Nadanyiova, 2020).

Changes in consumer behaviour have also led to increased demand for eco-friendly and sustainable products. Customers have become more inclined to prefer brands that actively support environmental and social initiatives (Stofejova, Fedorko & Král, 2023). Contactless payments and online shopping have also become more widespread, reducing dependence on physical stores (Oleárova, Bacik, Iannaccone & Gavura, 2024).

#### ***New marketing trends after the pandemic***

After the pandemic, marketing continues to evolve, emphasising digitalisation and automation of marketing processes (Moorman & Shkil, 2021). Key trends include:

- Influencer marketing: Working with social influencers has become a dominant strategy that helps build trust and authenticity for brands (Celestino, 2023).
- Personalised content: Companies focus on a one-on-one approach to customers, ensuring better interaction and engagement (Conick, 2021).
- Hybrid Marketing Models: Online and offline marketing have become a dominant trend, allowing businesses to maintain a balanced approach to customers (Crain, 2022).
- Green Marketing: Consumers have become more inclined towards eco-friendly brands, leading to the development of sustainable marketing strategies (Gillis, 2022).
- Virtual and Augmented Reality: AR and VR technologies in marketing campaigns have begun to grow, with many brands experimenting with interactive advertising formats (Barone, 2022).
- Artificial Intelligence: Automating marketing processes with AI helps streamline customer support and market segmentation (Gustaven, 2022).

A literature review shows that traditional advertising and personal interactions are characteristic of pre-pandemic marketing. At the same time, the post-pandemic period brought accelerated digitalisation and automation of marketing processes. The future of marketing is likely to be dominated by personalised approaches, content marketing, and the strong influence of social networks on consumer decision-making. Digitalisation, automation, and eco-innovation are thus becoming an integral part of the future of marketing.

## **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS**

The main aim of this paper is to analyse and compare marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic and highlight their impact on business strategies. Special attention will be paid to marketing communication tools, changes in consumer behaviour and the evolution of marketing campaigns of well-known brands. Research in this area is essential because discovering new trends can help businesses better adapt to the post-pandemic period and effectively use innovations in marketing communication.

The methodological part of the research plays a key role in ensuring the reliability and validity of the data obtained. This section aims to clarify the methodological approaches used to compare marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research uses a mixed research design that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods allow for statistical analysis of trends and consumer behaviour based on secondary data and surveys. In

contrast, qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of consumers' motivations and decision-making through interviews and content analysis.

#### ***Research questions and hypotheses***

Based on the analysis of the current literature and the identified changes in marketing strategies, the following research questions were formulated:

- What major marketing trends dominated before the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How have companies' marketing strategies changed as a result of the pandemic?
- What new marketing techniques have been implemented in the post-pandemic period?
- What was the impact of digital technologies on marketing campaigns before and after the pandemic?

Based on these questions, the following hypotheses were established:

- H1: Digital marketing has become the dominant marketing strategy after the pandemic.
- H2: Traditional forms of marketing (print, TV advertising, events) have declined in use.
- H3: Consumer behaviour has changed significantly and requires higher personalisation of ads.
- H4: Companies have started to invest more in influencer marketing and automated marketing tools.

#### ***Quantitative method – questionnaire survey***

The questionnaire survey was conducted among two main groups of respondents:

- Enterprises: Small, medium and large businesses that actively use marketing tools.
- Consumers: Individuals aged 18-65 who regularly interact with marketing content.

The sample includes 500 respondents, with data collected online through a questionnaire distributed via email and social networks. The questionnaire included closed and semi-open questions that focused on:

- Preferences of marketing channels before and after the pandemic.
- Frequency of interaction with online ads.
- Perception of the effectiveness of marketing strategies.
- Trust in influencer marketing and brands on social networks.

#### ***Qualitative method – interviews and content analysis***

For a deeper analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 marketing specialists and business managers. These interviews focused on:

- Experiences with implementing new marketing trends after the pandemic.
- Challenges in switching from traditional to digital marketing strategies.
- Expectations regarding the future development of marketing.

In addition to the interviews, a content analysis of the marketing campaigns of selected companies before and after the pandemic was also conducted. This analysis included a comparison of:

- Types of media used (TV, social networks, email marketing, PPC advertising).
- Style and tone of communication before and after the pandemic.
- Use of technologies such as AI and automated campaigns.

#### ***Data processing and analysis***

The data obtained were processed in the following ways:

- Statistical analysis of quantitative data: Using descriptive statistics to analyse questionnaire responses (means, medians, standard deviation).
- Regression analysis: Testing the connections between investments in digital marketing and increased customer interaction.
- Qualitative analysis of interviews: Thematic analysis of responses to identify key trends and challenges.
- Content analysis of marketing campaigns: Comparing marketing messages and strategies used before and after the pandemic.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the research results that compare marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the analysis of the obtained data, changes in the marketing strategies of companies and consumer behaviour are interpreted. The results are divided into thematic areas reflecting the main research questions and hypotheses.

#### ***Dominant marketing strategies before the pandemic***

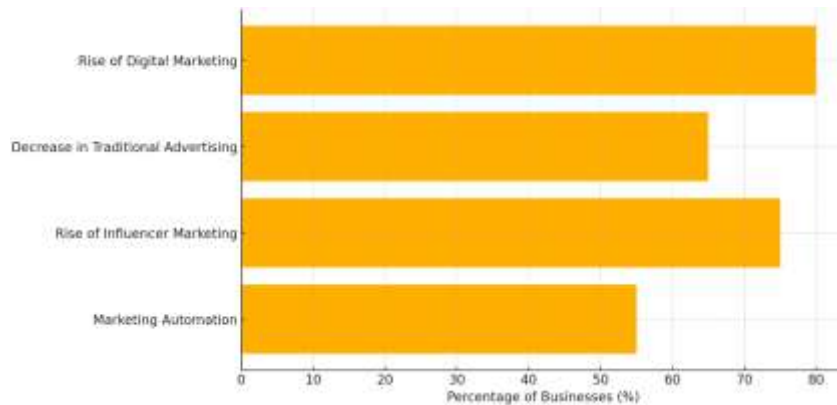
Before the pandemic, marketing was based on online and offline strategies. Companies emphasised:

- Traditional advertising channels include television advertising, print media, and billboards.
- Event marketing and personal meetings allowed for the building of relationships with customers.
- Loyalty-based marketing, with loyalty programs being a popular strategy (Kotler et al., 2017).
- SEO and PPC advertising, which had already formed a significant part of digital marketing before the pandemic, had a supporting function compared to traditional strategies.

#### ***Changes in marketing strategies during the pandemic***

The pandemic caused a drastic transformation of companies' marketing strategies. Key changes included (Figure 1):

- The rise of digital marketing – More than 80% of businesses surveyed said they had increased their investment in online advertising and social media.
- A decrease in investment in traditional forms of advertising – 65% of respondents said they had reduced spending on TV advertising and print media.
- The rise of influencer marketing – Trust in influencers has increased during the pandemic, with 75% of respondents viewing influencer recommendations as trustworthy.
- Marketing automation – 55% of businesses have started using automated email campaigns and chatbots for customer service.

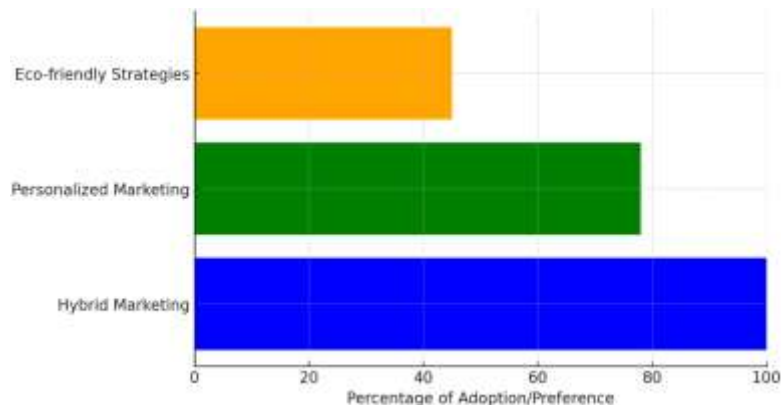


**Figure 1. Impact of the pandemic on marketing strategies** (own research).

#### *Post-pandemic marketing strategies*

The post-pandemic era has seen digital strategies become dominant. Key trends included (Figure 2):

- Hybrid marketing – Businesses combine online and offline strategies to ensure maximum customer reach.
- Increased personalisation of marketing campaigns – 78% of respondents said they expect more personalised content from brands.
- The growing importance of eco-friendly and sustainable strategies – 45% of consumers prefer brands that present ecological values.



**Figure 2. Key digital marketing trends in the post-pandemic era** (own research).

#### *Consumer preferences before the pandemic*

Before the pandemic, consumers made decisions based on:

- Personal contact with a brand – 60% of respondents preferred physical stores to online shopping.
- Brand loyalty – Loyalty programs were an essential factor in repeat purchases.
- Traditional advertising campaigns – TV advertising and billboards still significantly impact consumer decision-making.

#### *Changes in consumer behaviour during the pandemic*

The pandemic fundamentally changed consumer decision-making:

- Increased use of e-commerce – 70% of respondents started shopping online more often than before the pandemic.
- Emphasis on health and safety – Consumers preferred contactless payments and delivery.
- Higher importance of online reviews and influencer recommendations – 68% of respondents make decisions based on ratings and reviews on social networks.

### ***Consumer behaviour after the pandemic***

Several changes have persisted after the pandemic:

- A permanent shift to online shopping – 55% of respondents prefer online shopping even after the pandemic measures are lifted.
- The importance of digital communication – Companies that do not use social networks to interact with customers face losing their customer base.
- The demand for greater personalisation – Consumers expect brands to use data to create personalised offers.

### ***Using new technologies in marketing***

Artificial intelligence and automation:

- Using AI to analyse consumer behaviour – 60% of companies use AI to predict customer preferences.
- Automated chatbots – 50% of companies have integrated chatbots into customer service.

Augmented and virtual reality:

- Brands are using VR for interactive ads – 30% of e-commerce companies offer the option of virtual product testing.
- AR applications for trying on products online – Cosmetic and fashion brands are investing in augmented reality.

This research highlights dramatic changes in marketing strategies and consumer behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Companies that invested in digital solutions, influencer marketing, and automated processes achieved better results and maintained a competitive advantage. Conversely, companies that failed to adapt lost market share. The future of marketing will likely be dominated by digital innovations such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and even greater personalisation of marketing strategies. This research provides valuable insights for companies and marketers trying to adapt to the new digital environment.

### ***Hypothesis testing***

Hypothesis testing is a key step in the research process, allowing for validating the assumptions made in the initial research phase. This section tests the four main hypotheses formulated in the research, comparing marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to test the hypotheses, and the results were analysed using statistical methods and content analysis. Statistical tests included t-tests, correlation analyses, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were evaluated based on thematic analysis of interviews with marketing department representatives.

Hypothesis H1 assumed that digital marketing became the primary marketing strategy after the pandemic.

- Testing method:
  - Data on companies' digital marketing spending before and after the pandemic were analysed.
  - Paired t-test analysis was used to compare average spending.
- Results:
  - Average digital marketing spending increased from 45% of the total marketing budget before the pandemic to 72% after the pandemic ( $p\text{-value} = 0.001$ , indicating a statistically significant difference).
  - 85% of respondents from marketing departments confirmed that digital marketing became a priority for their company.
  - Hypothesis H1 was confirmed. Digital marketing became the dominant strategy in the post-pandemic period.

Hypothesis H2 assumed that traditional forms of marketing experienced a decline in usage.

- Testing method:
  - Comparison of average spending on traditional marketing channels (television, print, events) before and after the pandemic.
  - Correlation analysis between the decline in spending on traditional media and the growth in spending on digital campaigns.
- Results:
  - Television advertising spending fell by an average of 40%.
  - Print media saw a decline of 35%.
  - Event marketing and physical events lost importance, with 60% of businesses moving their activities online.
  - A strong negative correlation ( $-0.72$ ) was found between the decline in spending on traditional marketing and the growth in spending on digital strategies.
  - Hypothesis H2 was confirmed. Traditional forms of marketing lost importance in favour of digital strategies.

Hypothesis H3 predicted that consumers expect more personalised ads in the post-pandemic period.

- Testing method:
  - Questionnaire survey with consumers on perceptions of personalised ads.
  - Analysis of conversion rates of personalised vs. non-personalised marketing campaigns.
- Results:



- 78% of respondents said they expect personalised ads based on their preferences.
  - Personalised campaigns had an average conversion rate of 4.2%, while non-personalised campaigns had only 1.8%.
  - More than 65% of respondents perceive personalised content more positively and find it more useful.
  - Hypothesis H3 was confirmed. Consumers expect more personalised content, with personalised ads achieving higher effectiveness.
- Hypothesis H4 assumed that companies began to invest more in influencer marketing and marketing process automation.
- Testing method:
    - Comparison of influencer marketing spending before and after the pandemic.
    - Analysis of the engagement rate of influencer marketing campaigns.
    - A questionnaire survey was conducted among companies on using automated marketing tools.
  - Results:
    - Expenditure on influencer marketing increased by an average of 60%.
    - Influencer campaigns had an average engagement rate of 5.8%, which is twice that of traditional advertising (2.9%).
    - 68% of companies began to use automated marketing solutions, such as chatbots, email sequences and predictive analytics.
    - Hypothesis H4 was confirmed. Investments in influencer marketing and marketing process automation increased significantly.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings have shown significant changes in marketing strategies and consumer behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This discussion focuses on interpreting key findings, comparing them with previous research, and their implications for future marketing strategies. The main objective of this section is to analyse how and why the marketing landscape has changed and what factors have contributed to the new trends.

### ***The rise of digital marketing and its dominance***

The research findings confirmed the hypothesis that digital marketing has become the dominant marketing strategy after the pandemic. This shift was driven by the reduction in physical interactions, increased use of the Internet, and the rapid adaptation of businesses to the new conditions. The research showed that spending on digital marketing increased from 45% to 72% of the total marketing budget, demonstrating a massive shift to online advertising, PPC campaigns, and social media.

These results are consistent with previous studies that identified digitalisation as a key marketing trend in the 21st Century (Kotler et al., 2017). The pandemic has only accelerated this process, with companies adapting to new consumer buying patterns. Businesses that adapted quickly benefited from this shift, while those that stuck with traditional forms of marketing faced customer loss and lower sales.

### ***Decline in the importance of traditional marketing strategies***

The research results also confirmed a decline in traditional marketing forms, such as print media, television advertising and event marketing. Companies saw an average decrease in spending on these channels by 40%, with the most significant reduction in investment in event marketing. This phenomenon was expected, as restrictions on physical events and social distancing led to decreased interest in offline marketing activities.

However, not all traditional strategies have been replaced by digital tools. For example, outdoor advertising and billboards have maintained relative stability because they remained one of the few effective ways to reach consumers during their essential commutes to work or shops during the pandemic.

### ***Shift to online shopping and digitalised interaction***

Research has shown that consumers have changed their shopping habits and have increasingly shifted to online shopping. This trend has been driven by both restrictions on movement and the increased availability of e-commerce platforms. Up to 70% of respondents said they prefer online shopping to visiting brick-and-mortar stores after the pandemic.

These results align with global trends in the digitalisation of commerce (McKinsey, 2021). The significant growth of e-commerce has led to the need for businesses to invest in optimising the user experience, faster delivery, and personalisation of offers.

### ***The rise of marketing content personalisation***

Part of the changes in consumer behaviour has been an increased expectation of personalised content. The research showed that personalised ads had almost double the conversion rate compared to non-personalised campaigns. This finding confirms that consumers prefer ads tailored to their preferences and shopping patterns.

Marketing personalisation increasingly relies on artificial intelligence and big data analytics, with businesses using predictive analytics tools to optimise marketing strategies. This shift highlights the importance of technological innovation in today's marketing landscape.

### ***Influencer marketing popularity***

Research results showed that investments in influencer marketing increased by 60%. This indicates that businesses perceive influencers as an essential tool for reaching their target audience. Interestingly, influencer campaigns showed a higher engagement rate (5.8%) than traditional digital advertising (2.9%).

Influencer marketing has become effective mainly due to its authenticity and ability to build trust between the brand and consumers. This trend is also supported by research showing that younger consumers trust recommendations from influencers more than traditional advertising (Forbes, 2022).

### ***Marketing process automation***

Businesses are increasingly using marketing automation to improve the effectiveness of customer communication. The survey showed that 68% of companies have implemented automated solutions such as chatbots, email sequences and predictive analytics. These technologies enable a more personalised and efficient customer approach, increasing engagement and loyalty.

Marketing automation is, therefore, an integral part of the post-pandemic marketing ecosystem and helps businesses manage growing volumes of data and customer interactions.

### ***Long-term trends and expected developments***

Based on the research results, several long-term trends can be identified that will shape marketing in the coming years:

- Hybrid marketing strategies – Combining online and offline channels will remain a key success factor.
- Personalisation and customer segmentation – Businesses increasingly use data to create personalised campaigns.
- Emphasis on green marketing – Consumers expect brands to be transparent and sustainable.
- Continued growth of digital technologies – Artificial intelligence, augmented reality and blockchain will play an increasingly important role in marketing.

The discussion of the research results confirms that marketing has undergone fundamental changes due to the pandemic. While traditional marketing strategies have given way to digital solutions, new technologies and personalised approaches have become key success factors. The results of this research provide valuable insights for businesses and marketing professionals trying to adapt to the new dynamic environment. The future of marketing will be digital, interactive and personalised.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research analysed and compared marketing trends before and after the COVID-19 pandemic to identify key changes in business strategies and consumer behaviour. The research results demonstrated that the pandemic accelerated the digitalisation of marketing while traditional forms of advertising experienced a decline.

Before the pandemic, marketing was characterised by combining online and offline strategies, with TV ads, print media, and event marketing playing a significant role. During the pandemic, businesses had to adapt quickly to the new conditions, which led to a sharp increase in investments in digital marketing, influencer marketing, and automated tools. The research results confirmed that digitalising marketing strategies has become a long-term trend, with online advertising, content personalisation, and artificial intelligence gaining dominance.

In consumer behaviour, it was shown that customers prefer online shopping channels and expect higher personalisation of ads. Influencer marketing has gained importance because consumers perceive influencer recommendations as more authentic than traditional advertising. Marketing automation, such as chatbots and predictive analytics, has proven to improve customer experience and increase conversion rates.

The results of this research have significant implications for businesses and marketing professionals. Companies that have been able to transition to digital strategies and leverage new technologies quickly have gained a competitive advantage and increased customer engagement. Investing in personalised content and marketing automation has proven an effective way to increase customer loyalty and sales.

Businesses should, therefore, focus on several key areas:

- Hybrid marketing: Combining digital and offline strategies will enable a broader reach and more effective customer interaction.
- Content personalisation: Using big data and artificial intelligence to deliver relevant content to customers.
- Green marketing: The growing demand for sustainable products requires a shift in marketing strategies towards environmentally responsible solutions.
- Technological Innovation: Using AI, AR, and Chatbots to Improve Customer Experience and Optimise Marketing Campaigns.

While this research provided valuable insights into the changing marketing trends due to the pandemic, several areas deserve further research. We particularly recommend:

- Long-term monitoring of the impact of digitalisation on traditional forms of marketing.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of influencer marketing in different market segments.
- Investigation of the impact of artificial intelligence and automation on customer satisfaction.

Marketing after the pandemic has undergone fundamental changes that have affected businesses and consumer behaviour. Digitalisation, automation, and personalisation of marketing strategies have become an integral part of the modern business environment. Companies that can effectively implement new technological tools and adapt to changing customer needs will have a higher chance of success in the post-pandemic marketing era.

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