

THE IMPACT OF INBOUND MARKETING ON DIGITAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN ALGERIA

Ghozlan TELILANI* 
University of Skikda, Algeria

Djamel BOUTEDJA
University of Skikda, Algeria

Abstract: This research study aims to measure the impact of inbound marketing on digital consumer behavior. The researchers collected data from 126 participants who are customers of the startup Nrecycli. The researcher used structural equation modeling (SEM) through Smart PLS 4 software to analyze the data. The findings of this study indicated that the role played by inbound marketing processes (attraction, conversion, closure, and delight) on digital consumer behavior was strong and influential. The results also indicated a positive relationship between inbound marketing, increased consumer engagement and loyalty to the institution.

JEL classification: M30, M31, M37, M13

Keywords: Inbound Marketing, Consumer Behavior, startups, Loyalty, Digitalization

1. Introduction

In the era of modern digitalization, digital media has become pivotal in marketing operations and customer communication. With the increasing use of information and communication technology, there has been a radical change in the behavior and preferences of digital consumers. In this context, inbound marketing has emerged as the latest form of digital marketing and an effective strategy to reach customers and encourage them to interact with marketing content in a smarter and more targeted manner. However, despite the growing global interest in inbound marketing, research exploring its impact on digital consumer behavior in Algeria remains limited.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of inbound marketing on digital consumer behavior in Algeria, thereby contributing valuable insights to the academic literature. Firstly, the study analyzes the evolution of digital consumer behavior in light of the increasing reliance on digital technology, providing a deeper understanding

* Corresponding author. Address: University of Skikda - August 20th 1955, Laboratory of ECOFIMA, Algeria, E-mail: gh.telilani@univ-skikda.dz Phone number: +213 540 517 905
<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8372-0057>

of the changes in consumer preferences and behavior in the Algerian market. Secondly, it offers a comprehensive theoretical framework to understand how inbound marketing strategies influence consumer perceptions and decisions, focusing on the stages of awareness, consideration, purchase, retention, and advocacy. Thirdly, the study presents a detailed case of an Algerian startup, "Nrecycli," offering practical examples that can serve as a reference for other startups in the Algerian market and similar regions.

Furthermore, the study provides practical recommendations for startups based on findings derived from a structured survey method involving 126 responses. This contributes to improving digital marketing strategies and enhancing customer relationships, thus boosting business growth opportunities and increasing revenues. By synthesizing these insights, this research aims to offer new and comprehensive perspectives on the impact of inbound marketing on digital consumer behavior in Algeria, enriching the current literature and providing a robust foundation for future research in this field.

2. Literature review

2.1. Basic Concepts of Inbound Marketing

This term was coined in 2009 by Brian Halligan, owner of the HubSpot company. His approach is based on the development of a series of related actions which aimed to attract users by providing useful information during the entire purchasing cycle. (Thomas J. Steenburgh, 2009) The aim is to exert influence on the buyer from the moment they have a concrete need until a purchase is made, and accompany them throughout the process. (DAKOUAN et al., 2024)

2.1.1. Definition of Inbound Marketing

There are several definitions provided about inbound marketing the most important of which are:

Inbound marketing is a type of marketing that provides valuable and informative content using the internet in general and social media in particular. It is related to the needs of both actual and potential customers. Based on this, it can be said that inbound marketing and content marketing are closely linked. Inbound marketing relies on marketing content, and content marketing requires inbound marketing tools. (Hubspot, 2024).

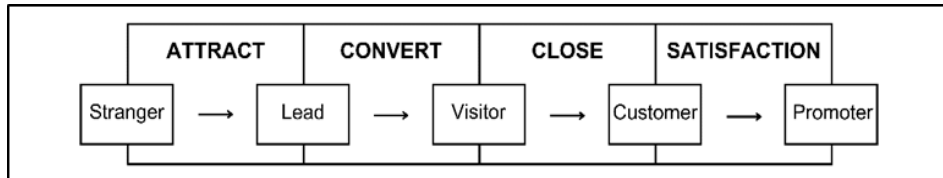
Inbound marketing is defined as content creation and sharing on a wide scale across the internet and social media platforms, which helps potential customers learn more about important information about the company or its brand by the consumer or the suspect in the buying process (stranger). This encourages them to engage with the company or its brand until they reach a customer status for the organization. (Chriswardana et al., 2024)

In addition, inbound marketing has been defined as a methodology that relies on creating great content that can be utilized through appropriate distribution channels such as blogs, search engines, and social media in the right path. This allows consumers or customers to access it smoothly and easily, prompting them to engage with and share this content.

2.1.2. Process of Inbound Marketing

The inbound marketing process consists of four distinct stages: attraction, conversion, closing, and delight, as illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1. Process of Inbound Marketing



Source: Stéphane Truphème, 2021, page 47

Attraction Phase: The first phase in the inbound marketing methodology is to attract targeted visitors or strangers. This can be done through various methods and techniques. (Alin and Simona, 2015) Unlike traditional marketing, inbound marketing does not require struggling to attract the customer's attention. Instead, optimal content placed on the company's website aims to capture their attention. The goal in this phase is to help potential consumer strangers find the company's website. The most natural way to attract the targeted customer to the company's website is to find it in search engine optimization results. (Patruti-Baltes, 2016) Additionally, the marketing content of the company's website is the key to finding it, thanks to the technique of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). (Brian Halligan, 2009) Furthermore, the company's pages on social media platforms are one of the best ways to increase its appearance in search engine optimization results. To attract the right visitors to the company, it is necessary to create rich and valuable content that makes it an important and trusted source of information about products and marketing offers, as well as a prominent center for solving and addressing customer problems. Among the tools used in this phase to achieve the attraction process include blogging, social media publishing, and SEO techniques. (PATRUTIU-BALTES, 2016) At this stage, the goal is not to convince visitors to make purchases but simply to focus on attracting them by making them aware of the company's services and brand through content tailored for this purpose. Therefore, knowing the buyer persona by the company at this stage is crucial in determining the rest of the following stages, as this is done by collecting specific demographic data about visitors to the company's website, such as the visitor's online path through the site and online behavior. This information is made available to the company through customization technology, whether explicit or implicit. (Høgenhaven, 2023)

The conversion phase: The conversion phase represents the second stage after the attraction process, where the web path of visitors is converted into potential customers. Potential customers can be defined as contacts who have consistently expressed willingness to receive the company's marketing offer by registering on the company's website in the hope of getting satisfactory answers to their questions and problems and then receiving the company's offers if they meet their actual needs. (Aljohani, 2020) The conversion rate from visitors to potential customers increases through discussions and interactions that take place between these visitors and the

company in the cyberspace. Among the tools used in the conversion phase are landing pages, which are standalone web pages created specifically for a marketing or advertising campaign. (Baranchenko et al., 2019) In other words, they are the place where the visitor lands on the company's website after clicking on a link or email message or through Google ads or similar places on the web. This is done through Call-To-Action (CTA) motivators, which act as magnets attracting visitors to the company's website and pages. The matter is not limited to these two tools, but extends to Contact Forms, which allow visitors to be converted into potential customers by instilling a spirit of connection and communication between them and the company. (Yazdanifard and Rashad, 2014)

Closing Phase: The closing phase represents a turning point in the company's efforts on one hand, and in the path of potential customers on the other hand, where they are converted from potential customers capable of making purchases to actual customers who want to make purchases, and here the sales task begins. On this basis, the company resorts to nurturing and strengthening the relationship with both potential customers and actual customers, and building brand awareness of the company by using various marketing tools such as E-mail marketing, Marketing Automation, and Electronic Customer Relationship Management (E-CRM). (Patel and Chugan, 2018).

Satisfaction Phase: If the sales process is completed in the closing phase and things go well, the inbound marketing methodology does not stop at the closing stage but extends to include the satisfaction phase, which works to ensure customer loyalty to the product, service, or brand of the company by providing optimal and attractive marketing content to them, as this allows these customers to continue dealing with the company and acquiring its products and services. (Bezovski and Zlatko, 2015) Among the tools and marketing techniques that the company can use at this stage to ensure customer satisfaction and make them happy in dealing with the company are customer care, which includes providing good customer service and after-sales services, guarantees, and follow-up with customers by email after purchase, in addition to offering exclusive offers and discounts to customers who have previously dealt with the company, with the necessity of including each customer's loyalty programs. (Anett and Ponzoa, 2021) All of these are techniques that work to delight customers and achieve their satisfaction, as this will make them promoters and ambassadors of the company's brand through word of mouth or through recommendations they provide to others, concerning the company's brand. (Salvador et al., 2018)

2.2. Digital Consumer Behavior

2.2.1. Definition of Digital consumer

The digital consumer is an individual who frequently uses digital technology and electronic communication channels in his daily life, whether for online shopping, browsing websites and applications, engaging on social media, or utilizing smart devices such as smartphones and tablets (José et al., 2018). digital consumer is characterized by his inclination towards using digital technologies to meet his needs and achieve his personal and professional goals. (Shafag and Oqtay, 2021)

2.2.2. Characteristics of Digital consumer

Group Dynamics: Researcher Seth Godin emphasizes that digital consumers form groups based on shared values and common elements among them, relying on these groups in their purchasing behavior. (Bidit and al., 2020)

Digital Empowerment: Digital consumers have gained more control over their relationship with brands in terms of expressing their desires and opinions about the products and services they want. This is due to the vast amount of information available and the ease of accessing it. (Ayşegül and Tuğace, 2022)

Communication Medium: Through digital tools, which are considered communication tools, individuals can interact with each other. Consumers can convey and spread their experiences with any brand through personal interactions. (Mónika et al., 2023)

Increased Volatility and Decreased Loyalty: Due to the abundance of available information and the ease of searching for alternatives and comparing goods and services, digital consumers have become more volatile and less loyal to brands. (Heather et al., 2024)

Through these characteristics, it becomes evident that the digital consumer has become more informed in the purchasing process and has more control over their relationship with brands through constant communication and direct interaction with all stakeholders in the purchasing process, including consumers, researchers, and influencers.

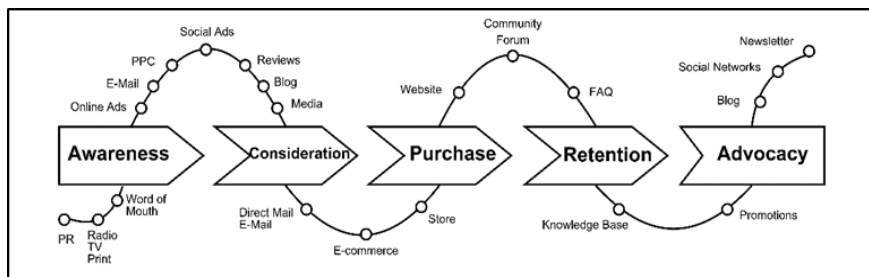
2.2.3. Definition of digital consumer behavior

Digital consumer behavior refers to the patterns and behaviors individuals exhibit when interacting with the digital environment and utilizing digital technology and electronic communication channels. (Yuruk-Kayapinar and Pinar, 2020) This includes how they search for information online, engage with websites and applications, conduct online shopping, interact with social media platforms, and use digital devices such as smartphones and tablets. (Mariana et al., 2021) Digital consumer behavior reflects individuals' preferences and tendencies in the digital world and how they integrate with digital technology in their daily lives. (Petra and Králová, 2021)

2.3. Stages of impact of inbound marketing on digital consumer behavior

The customer journey map is relevant to the inbound marketing process consisting of the four stages (attraction, conversion, closure, delight), where the path of visitors is tracked from the stage of strangers to the stage of becoming promoters. (Pongsiri et al., 2022) We can define the customer journey map as a visual representation of all customer interactions and behaviors with the company starting from their first visit to the company's website to the stage of becoming promoters. The process of inbound marketing's influence on digital consumer behavior passes through five stages, as follows: (Dharmesh and Brian, 2014)

Figure 2. Customer Journey Map



Source: Dharmesh Shah and Brian Halligan, 2014, page 38.

From the preceding outline, we can say that the goal of inbound marketing relies heavily on the customer journey map, which consists of five essential stages that can be elucidated in the following points:

Awareness Stage: In this stage, the company's brand is either unknown to strangers and website visitors or relatively new to them. There is a sense of apprehension about the company's brand, and strangers or website visitors are facing a problem or seeking solutions to an unmet need. Accordingly, the company works on educating website visitors about the solutions it offers to create awareness among customers about its brand and the value they receive by trusting the company. (Mario et al., 2019).

Consideration Stage: In this stage, the customer has a good understanding of the company's brand and has been positively attracted to it, leading them to enter into a communication and interaction relationship with the company. This can be through email, chat rooms, or visiting the company's page on social media platforms to request clarification about the company's products or services and other details such as delivery and warranty. This stage is considered an information-gathering phase. (Gardé, 2018).

Purchase Stage: In the third stage, the customer's decision-making process is complete after conducting research and comparing the offers and prices from different sources. They have settled on the company's offer. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the company to effectively communicate with the customer, welcome them, present its products, and address details to facilitate the purchasing decision-making process with ease, confidence, and to avoid buyer's remorse, which may result in subscription cancellations or reluctance to repurchase the product due to a bad user experience. (Katherine and Peter, 2016).

Retention Stage: In this stage, the company communicates with the customer after the purchase, provides post-sales services, and ensures understanding of their opinion about the service or product, as well as identifying any problems they encounter. (Mosa, 2022) In this critical stage, the role of customer service in retaining and delighting customers through the company's loyalty programs becomes crucial. (Mark et al., 2017).

Advocacy Stage: This stage is the culmination of the company's long effort. When the company successfully implements a robust customer retention program, the customer moves to the next level of advocating and supporting the organization's brand by recommending it to others through electronic word-of-mouth via social media platforms. Ultimately, this leads to acquiring new customers for the company. (Heekyung et al., 2016).

4. Method

4.1. Study Hypotheses

H1: There is a statistically significant impact of the attraction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

H2: There is a statistically significant impact of the conversion process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

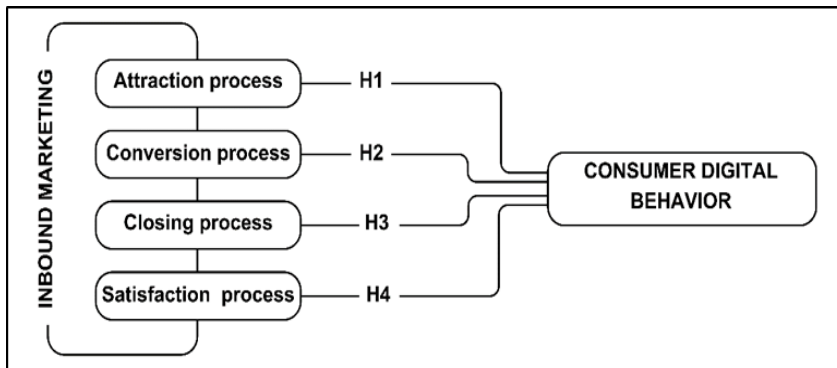
H3: There is a statistically significant impact of the closing process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

H4: There is a statistically significant impact of the satisfaction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

4.2. Study Model

The study model that emerged from the theoretical framework is as follows:

Figure 3. Study Model



Source: Prepared by the researchers

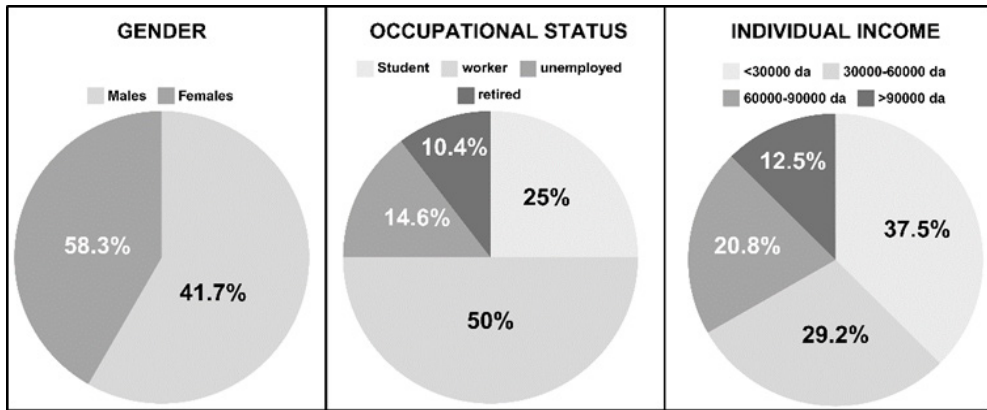
4.3. Study Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The current research community consists of customers of the startup company "Nrecycli," totalling 427 actual customers. This company is engaged in recycling recyclable materials and selective sorting. (Nrecycli, 2024)

To collect the primary data related to this study, a random sampling method was adopted.

The total number of responses was 131, and after examination and removal of invalid responses, the usable answers for statistical analysis were 126. The results of the sample characteristics analysis showed that 58.3% of the respondents were male and 41.7% were female. The sample included 50% workers and 25% university students, followed by 14.6% unemployed individuals and 10.4% retirees. Furthermore, 37.5% of the sample had an income not exceeding 30,000 dinars, 29.2% had an income ranging between 30,000 and 60,000 dinars, 20.8% had an income ranging between 60,000 and 90,000 dinars, and 12.5% had an income exceeding 90,000 dinars.

Figure 4. Personal variables for the study



Source: Prepared by the researchers

4.4. Study Tool

The study tool was designed online using Google Forms and sent via email to the customers of the startup company “Nrecycli”. The study was divided as follows:

Independent variable: In this study, “Inbound Marketing” is considered the independent variable, consisting of 16 statements distributed across 4 dimensions, as follows:

Attraction Dimension: Consisting of 4 statements, for example: “The distinctive design of the digital content of the institution attracts my attention”, it was coded as « TAP ».

Conversion Dimension: Consisting of 4 statements, for example: “Effective responses to my questions and concerns encouraged me to engage with the institution's offerings.”, it was coded as « COP ».

Closure Dimension: Consisting of 4 statements, for example: “Good digital content motivates me to make and repeat purchases.”, it was coded as « CLP ».

Satisfaction Dimension: Consisting of 4 statements, for example: “The digital content of loyalty programs contributes to my happiness and satisfaction with the institution.”, it was coded as « SAP ».

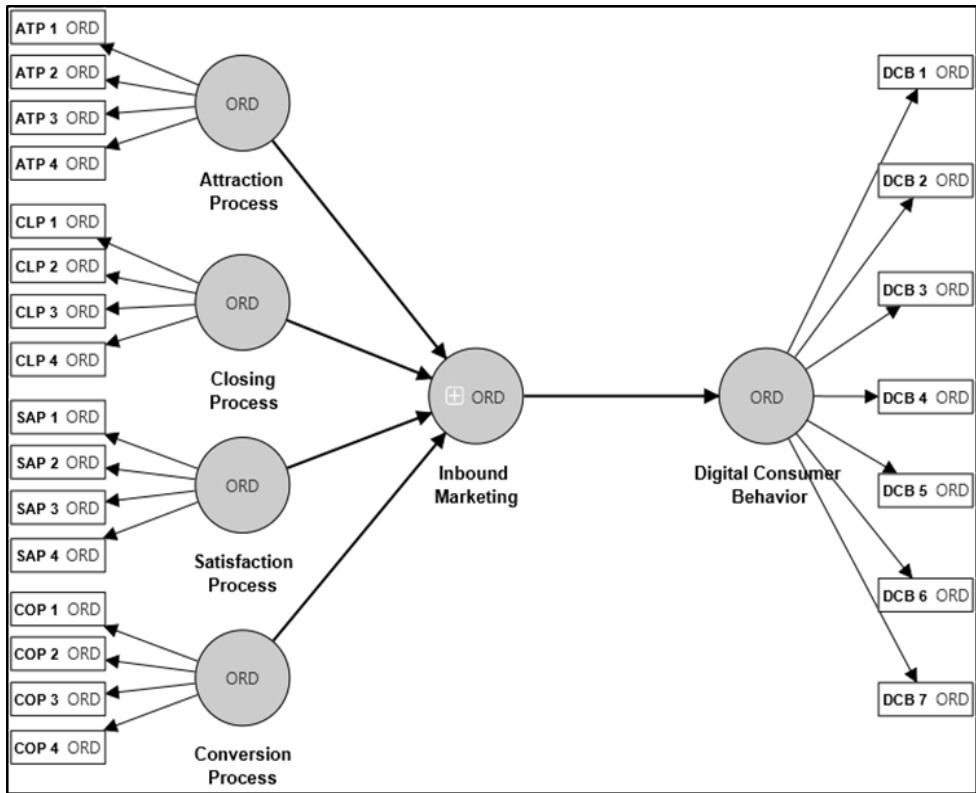
Dependent variable: “Digital consumer behavior”, adopted according to the customer journey map, consists of 7 statements, for example: “The information published on digital platforms about the institution's product increased my desire to purchase.”, it was coded as « DCB ».

All these elements were measured using a Likert pentagon scale.

4.5. Measurement Model

As shown in Figure 5, the measurement model illustrates the relationships between the indicators (items) and the latent variables that these indicators measure, in addition to the expected relationships between these variables. It demonstrates that inbound marketing consists of four processes: awareness, conversion, closing, and satisfaction, along with their measurable elements. It then shows the expected relationship between the independent variable, which is inbound marketing, and the dependent variable, which is digital consumer behavior.

Figure 5. The measurement model



Source: Outputs of statistical analysis using Smart PLS software considering the measurement model

In order to ensure that the indicators represent their latent variables and that the items meet sufficient convergent and discriminant validity, the researchers used factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), as suggested by Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2005). As a result of this test, all items met the required standards. Table 1 lists the converging credibility indicators.

Table 1 indicates that, as proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (Bagozzi and Yi, 1998), all reflective indicator loadings exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.60. Composite reliability values exceeded the recommended threshold value of 0.70 for all reflective combinations (Hair, 2005) where, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), AVEs are above the recommended value of 0.50 per build. As an embryo, the Cronbach alpha values are acceptable since, as suggested by Taber (Taber, 2018), they are between 0.70-0.85. These indications point to the validation of the affinity.

Table 1. Convergent validity

Item Indicators	Type of Measure	Item Loadings/Weights	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE
Attraction Process					
ATP 1	Reflective	0.929	0.885	0.826	0.664
ATP 2		0.909			
ATP 3		0.782			
ATP 4		0.703			
Conversion Process					
COP 1	Reflective	0.760	0.850	0.774	0.565
COP 2		0.826			
COP 3		0.891			
COP 4		0.778			
Closing Process					
CLP 1	Reflective	0.782	0.868	0.707	0.574
CLP 2		0.802			
CLP 3		0.867			
CLP 4		0.901			
Satisfaction Process					
SAP 1	Reflective	0.784	0.807	0.817	0.551
SAP 2		0.894			
SAP 3		0.779			
SAP 4		0.719			
Digital Consumer Behavior					
DCB 1	Reflective	0.766	0.835	0.786	0.542
DCB 2		0.886			
DCB 3		0.771			
DCB 4		0.736			
DCB 5		0.700			
DCB 6		0.881			
DCB 7		0.714			

Source: Outputs of statistical analysis using Smart PLS software

For a further validity check, as suggested by Bollen and Lennox (Bollen and Lennox, 1991), Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001), MacKenzie et al. (MacKenzie et al., 2005), the researchers conducted discriminant analysis to check the degree of variation between the different compositional

measures. They conducted the discriminant analysis by contrasting structural associations with the square root of the structure's AVE (Fornell, 1981). Table 2 presents the results of the discriminant validity:

Table 2. Discriminant validity

	Attraction Process	Conversion Process	Closing Process	Satisfaction Process	Digital Consumer Behavior
Attraction Process	0.815				
Conversion Process	0.278	0.688			
Closing Process	0.315	0.339	0.604		
Satisfaction Process	0.085	0.374	0.093	0.672	
Digital Consumer Behavior	0.217	0.499	0.365	0.522	0.654

Source: Outputs of statistical analysis using Smart PLS software

Table 2 shows that the values in the diagonals of the matrix representing the square root of AVEs were in all cases greater than the non-diagonal elements in the corresponding row and column. This means that the correlation of each variable with itself is greater than its association with the rest of the research variables. This confirms the fulfilment of the discriminatory validity.

4.6. Structural Model

The structural model involves an analysis of the model's presumed association of exogenous and endogenous variables. Table 3 summarizes the structural model's path coefficient and regression result.

Table 3. Structural model's path coefficient and regression result

Hypo	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
H1	ATP => DCB	0.751	0.048	12.601	0.000	Supported ***
H2	COP => DCB	0.630	0.054	7.451	0.002	Supported **
H3	CLP => DCB	0.628	0.056	7.099	0.003	Supported **
H4	SAP => DCB	0.707	0.046	11.235	0.000	Supported ***

Significant at *** p = <0.001, ** p = <0.01, * p = <0.05

Source: Outputs of statistical analysis using Smart PLS software

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a statistically significant impact of the attraction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

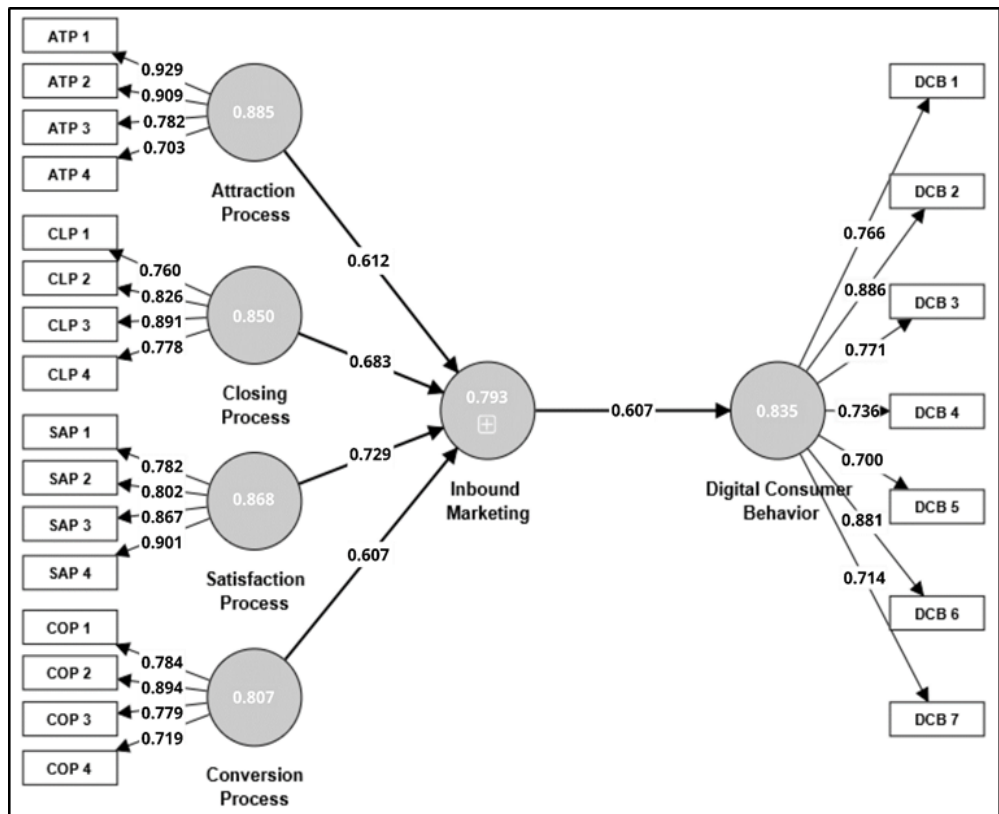
As shown in Table 3, the value of the standard beta (Std. Beta) was (0.751), which is statistically significant, and the p-value was (0.000), which is less than the adopted significance level of 0.05. This means that the first hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a positive effect of the attraction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a statistically significant impact of the conversion process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

As shown in Table 3, the value of the standard beta (Std. Beta) was 0.630), which is statistically significant, and the p-value was (0.002), which is less than the adopted significance level of 0.05. This means that the second hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a positive impact of the conversion process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup enterprise.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a statistically significant impact of the closing process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

Fig. 6. This study's final structural model



Source: Outputs of statistical analysis using Smart PLS software considering the measurement model

As shown in Table 3, the value of the standard beta (Std. Beta) was (0.658), which is statistically significant, and the p-value was (0.003), which is less than the adopted significance level of 0.05. This means that the third hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a positive impact of the closing process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): There is a statistically significant impact of the satisfaction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

As shown in Table 3, the value of the standard beta (Std. Beta) was (0.707), which is statistically significant, and the p-value was (0.000), which is less than the adopted significance level of 0.05. This means that the fourth hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a positive impact of the satisfaction process on the digital consumer behavior of the studied startup company.

5. Discussion of Study Results

The data was gathered and analyzed utilizing the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach with Smart PLS 4 software. The findings revealed that all dimensions of Inbound Marketing positively influenced the digital consumer behavior of the startup company Nrecycli.

The attraction process demonstrated the highest impact (Std.Beta = 0.751, t-value = 12.601, p-value = 0.000), underscoring the importance of attracting consumers and transitioning them from strangers to visitors on the company's website, where they engage with the offered services.

Subsequently, the satisfaction process (Std.Beta = 0.707, t-value = 11.235, p-value = 0.000) emerged, emphasizing the ongoing significance of post-purchase marketing efforts, including customer care, satisfaction assurance, repeat purchases, and bolstering brand loyalty.

Following that, the Conversion process (Std.Beta = 0.630, t-value = 7.451, p-value = 0.002) surfaced, indicating the favorable disposition of the sample towards the company and the impact of its strategies in influencing their digital behavior, leading to potential customer conversions.

Lastly, the closure process (Std.Beta = 0.628, t-value = 7.099, p-value = 0.003), achieved through cultivating strong relationships with potential customers, guarantees the shift in their behavior from digital engagement to actual purchases, thereby, solidifying their status as customers.

6. Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to measure the role of inbound marketing in influencing digital consumer behavior by analyzing the inbound marketing methodology according to its four stages: attraction, conversion, closure, and delight. Additionally, the study examined the characteristics and behavior of digital consumers and evaluated the role of inbound marketing in the customer journey map.

The findings of the study indicated that inbound marketing plays a significant role in shaping digital consumer behavior. The researchers found a positive relationship between inbound marketing processes (attraction, conversion, closure, and delight) and increased engagement of digital consumers with the brand and the startup under study. The results also showed that inbound marketing can enhance customer experience and increase loyalty by providing valuable content and an interactive experience.

Based on these findings, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

- Institutions should adopt inbound marketing strategies as a core part of their marketing strategy to achieve success in the digital environment, especially startups, as digital technology is a fundamental characteristic of these institutions.
- Institutions should enhance their knowledge of various aspects of digital marketing through the continuous development of their employees in this field to keep pace with the current digital surge.
- Efforts should be made to improve institutional interaction with customers by providing useful and engaging content and enhancing the user experience across all digital touchpoints.
- Institutions should study the risks associated with the digital environment and work to mitigate them to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for consumers.
- Institutions should also be transparent in their dealings with customers and strive to build trust through continuous communication and clear information dissemination.

Despite the importance of the findings, this study has some limitations:

- The research was conducted in a specific environment, and the results may vary in different contexts.
- The sample size of the study is relatively small due to the limited size of the studied population.
- The study relied on self-assessment by the participants, which may indicate a degree of social bias.

The researchers recommend that future studies should be conducted in diverse environments and over different periods, using various measures and research methods to enhance our understanding of the impact of inbound marketing on digital consumer behavior.

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