National College of Ireland

Project Submission Sheet

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Dissertation

An Analysis of The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Customer Loyalty: The Supermarket Sector in Ireland

Your Name/Student Number	Course	Date
Semih Tunc	International Business	06.01.2025

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Abstract

This research explores the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in Ireland's supermarket sector. As digital marketing continues to expand in this evolving environment, understanding its influence on customer loyalty becomes essential. The specific aims were to look at the effects of social media marketing, mobile marketing, content marketing and email marketing on customer loyalty and suggest some of the best digital marketing strategies in improving customer loyalty. The use of quantitative research was made for the study because data was collected, using online surveys, and structured questionnaires. To capture the sample, 100 respondents who are aged from 18 to 40 years who are in Generation Z in living in Ireland who use Instagram, Facebook, and email frequently to shop and interact with brands were administered with a survey through a convenience sampling technique. All data collected in this study were analyzed mathematically, via descriptive and inferential statistical methods, such as correlation and regression tests and were processed by the application of SPSS software. Consequent research findings highlighted that social media marketing, mobile marketing and email marketing had a positive correlation with customer loyalty whereas content marketing did not. The study suggests that supermarkets should focus more on engagement strategies that employ the use of social media platforms, mobile application marketing and e-mail marketing. Also, consumer insights that regulate the approaches of content marketing must be rebuilt. The recommendations of this study offer guidance on how digital marketing can be used to improve customer loyalty within the supermarket industry in Ireland.

Key Words: Digital Marketing Strategies, Customer Loyalty, Supermarkets, Ireland

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Chapter 01- Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale of the study

Due to the development of digital marketing, retailers are using social media apps such as Instagram to pull the customers closer and build loyalty. Researching on Ireland which has emerged as one of the countries with fast-growing supermarkets businesses and a high level of competition between organizations can prove to be valuable in understanding how digital marketing can play a role in building long-term relationships with customers (Antczak, 2024). Personalized content, 2-way interactive campaigns, and direct customer interactions via sites like Instagram, have redefined the way enterprises engage with the customer and may be altering the degree of their brand commitment (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Customer loyalty is an essential factor in maintaining a competitive position among competitors in the same industry. Customer loyalty in the supermarkets industry has in the past been a product of price, quality and the experience the customer gets in the shop or store. Nonetheless, as more social touch points appear the factors engaging the consumer's loyalty are changing as well. This shift is especially significant in Ireland as a significant portion of brand consumers use them interactively and make purchase decisions based on their online experiences (Sagar, 2024). It is relevant to ask how digital marketing impacts customer loyalty with the view of helping retailers make an improved market stand. The scope of this research, therefore, results from the conviction that targeting young consumers aged between 18-40 years will be adequate to capture the impact of digital marketing on loyalty across a mature segment on the digital platforms.

The supermarkets industry has experienced considerable change over the past decade because of an accelerated growth in the adoption of digital technology, and social media websites have a considerable influence on customer buying behavior and engagement. However, technology has taken a more innovative role as the primary tool for branding, consumer engagement, and sales in organizations' focused digital marketing. Customer loyalty as consumers' demand for repurchase/continued use of a brand, is also affected by new and emerging digital marketing approaches, which involve close consumer engagements and management of direct pathways to

consumers (Kumar and Shah, 2015). Currently, the market in Ireland is very receptive to innovations and therefore Ireland's businesses are aiming at establishing long term customer relations through the consistent use of digital marketing tools which young and informed customers are more likely to engage in.

The Irish retail industry is fiercely competitive with a number of the larger supermarket players including Tesco, Dunnes Stores, Aldi and Lidl always seeking to strengthen their market positions and gain consumer affluence. With the shift of customer shopping patterns towards supermarkets, these have adopted elevated digital marketing techniques to increase on their activities and customer relationship. For instance, Tesco has recently used segmented e-mail promoting where one can enter the Clubcard number and would get a unique code with individual prices. By using 'conversation' for promotional offers on a Facebook page and fun and interactive Hashtags on Instagram, Dunnes Stores has been successful in mobile marketing. Likewise, Lidl's "Lidl Plus" Internet-enabled mobile application that has deals and offers include faith in the use of mobile marketing. Whereas Aldi advantageously leverages joke content marketing, for instance, through recipe-sharing websites and on social media, it is flaunting seasonal foods and beverages. These are as follows The examples enumerated above indicate the various techniques through which supermarkets in Ireland are trying to portray digital marketing such as social media, e-mail, content and mobile marketing to consumers. Thus, by discussing these strategies in detail this research contributes to the understanding of the efficiency of approaches to increase customer loyalty in a contemporary retail environment.

Of course, one of the platforms that has touched upon this shift is Instagram, an application for sharing and viewing images with interactive elements on the web. Based on (Statista, 2023), Instagram counts 1.5 million of users in the Ireland and it becomes a great opportunity for retailers to tell stories about brands, products, use paid advertisements, in collaboration with influencers, gamification, etc (Statista, 2024). The use of such platforms is a proponent of Social Media Marketing Theory (SMMT) which posits that consumers' engagement of a brand on the social media may have a profound impact on how the consumer perceives that brand (Tuten, 2023). This theory put emphasis on communication comprising an exchange of messages between the brand and the customers and this is very vital in building of loyalty.

Specific online marketing techniques like private consumer targeting, influencer advertisement, and content advertising have been discovered to increase customer involvement since they incorporate emotional connection between consumers and brands (Hollebeek, Srivastava and Chen, 2019). Personalized content is especially effective in that it enables retailers to target specific groups of people, as such the marketed content is more likely to be interesting and relevant.

In this regards, Customer Engagement Theory postulates that when consumers are meaningfully interacting with a brand through relevant and personal content, their chances of brand conversion are higher according to the authors Brodie et al. (2013). This association is especially applicable to the Irish retailing domain since digital resource promotion of firm-customer bonds can also assist focused retailers to stand out from the competition.

In addition, Relationship Marketing Theory also enlightens that changing consumer behavior allows dynamic interaction between retailers and consumers instead of the one-shot selling process. The use of social media marketing means that consumers are not only exposed to a message of a specific brand but they can also be activated, engaged and elicited to participate with the brand resulting in increased loyalty (Grönroos, 2015). This is especially so in Ireland where reliance on the internet grows to communicate and engage with customers by the supermarkets industry.

Consequently, the context of this research lies in analyzing the impact of the digital marketing environment, with reference to Instagram, on customer loyalty within Ireland's supermarkets industry. Ideas like social media marketing, customer communication and relationship marketing and other serve as theoretical constructs when discussing and analyzing the efficiency of digital marketing strategies in regards to customer retention and building customer loyalty in a specialized and diverse supermarkets environment.

1.2 Research problem

The growth of digital marketing is exponential, changing the ways that companies can interact with customers especially those in the supermarkets industry (Nuseir et al., 2023). In the case of Ireland, the players in the supermarkets industry play prominent social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and content that is personalized for consumers. Digital marketing is predominantly practiced, its influence on customer

loyalty is not evident with relatively few studies targeting Irish supermarkets industry. This points out an important gap that needs to be filled and that is, the identification of which of the digital marketing strategies is most effective in the establishment of long-term customer relations and which strategy is most effective in encouraging successive purchases. This research tries to solve this problem by examining the impact of different types of digital marketing initiatives on customer loyalty in Ireland's supermarkets industry. The conclusion will try to contribute to the existing literature by explaining how various digital marketing strategies affect consumer loyalty and proposing recommendations for enhancing customer loyalty.

1.3 Research question

What is the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in the supermarkets sector in Ireland?

1.4 Thesis outline

There are mainly five chapters in the thesis. The first chapter discusses the background details of the research as the introduction chapter. As well as, it discusses the rationale or the significance of conducting the research, problem identification, research question and research objectives. These are the main sections of the introduction chapter of the research.

The second chapter is the literature review chapter which includes the theoretical and empirical literature findings on the selected research area. Further, this chapter will include the past research findings that are related to the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty with the relevant theories. At the end of this chapter, it will identify the literature gap that needs to be filled at the end of this research study.

The third chapter of this research is the research question chapter which discusses the research questions and objectives with the conceptual framework and hypotheses.

Then the fourth chapter of the research is the research methodology chapter. This chapter will include the methodological selections of the study such as research philosophy, approach, strategy, method, data collecting tools and techniques, sampling framework as well as data analysis techniques. This will be the design part of the research.

The fifth chapter of the research is the data analysis and findings chapter. This will include the findings of the data analysis process of the research. The findings can be generated through descriptive and inferential statistical tools and techniques. It will present the findings using tables and graphs.

The sixth chapter is the discussion chapter which reviews the objectives with the existing research findings.

The final chapter of the research is the conclusion. This chapter will summarize the main findings of the research. Further, this chapter includes the recommendations, limitations, and further directions for future researchers.

Chapter 02- Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The literature review chapter is designed to review existing literature evidence in the study area and contexts. This chapter is going to review relevant literature findings regarding digital marketing strategies, customer loyalty and the link between digital marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarkets sector. Further, the literature review chapter is designed to review the theories related to digital marketing and customer loyalty. Finally, this will find out the literature gap which is going to be covered through the existing research.

2.2 Theoretical literature

Marketing communication through the Internet has gradually emerged as a critical tool in the management of customer loyalty within supermarket industries since it creates direct interfaces between business organizations and the consumer. Marketing theories in the digital environment offer easy ways of analyzing and understanding the role and impact of the various elements of a digital marketing mix, such as SMM, content and email marketing. Through discussing these theories, it is possible to understand how benefiting and valuable technology-provided personal and reliable interactions shall enhance customer trust and satisfaction and contribute to loyalty.

The most widely accepted theory used in the sphere of digital marketing is called the Relationship Marketing Theory. This theory argues that marketing effectiveness is anchored on the ability of the organization to develop long-term relationships with the customers as opposed to the exchange of goods for money. While relationship marketing focuses on the long-term interaction with a customer this type of interaction is crucial for retaining customers. Digital platforms enable retailers to communicate and engage customers on a regular and direct basis to forging a relationship which physical store cannot offer. Kotler and Keller (2016) described relationship marketing as an integrated process of using data and communication technologies for developing and sustain the Customer Relationship in a Digital World. This is more evident in the supermarkets industry because companies within the Ireland area have embraced e-mail and social networking sites as methods of creating rapport with consumers in order to graduate their loyalty and likelihood to consuming their goods and services.

The second theory is known as the customer loyalty theory that provides information about customer loyalty and its determinants. Customer loyalty is composed of satisfaction, trust and commitment as postulated in this theory which postulates that positive experiences over time leads to their formation. And this is made possible by the various digital marketing techniques like content marketing and the use of influencer marketing to provide useful, interesting and relevant content to the customer. For instance, the use of social media, and more specifically influencer marketing is a modern way to create brand loyalty or, at least, social loyalists' community in Ireland's supermarkets sector, as the given theoretical framework for loyalty implies. Customer-community members have been by evidence more likely to remain loyal customers as they adopt a psychological bond with the brand (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996).

Another theory of relevance to the analysis of the impact of digital marketing on customer loyalty is Social Exchange Theory (SET). Seventeen days of the course, SET argued that relationships are built on mutual give and take. Industry analysis shows that loyalty programs, sales promotions, and a number of other special offers form the basis of loyalty mechanisms existing in Ireland retailers as added values received from them make customers loyal. According to Blau (2017), such reciprocal exchange brings about trust that is pending on loyalty in a cutoff competition environment. These benefits and rewards identification help brands establish a relationship with customers where the customer feels important and thus will be loyal (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

In addition, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) gives an understanding into the attitude and customer loyalty of digital marketing. In TPB, the theory postulates that behavior can be explained by attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control as put forward by Ajzen (1991). Online advertising and reminder ads for example, have a positive potential of altering customer attitudes by constantly purposing positive information about the brand. This theory is specifically useful for Irish retailers desirous of changing purchase intentions and fostering customers' loyalty through changing perceptions by employing online content (Ajzen et al., 2018).

2.3 Empirical literature

2.3.1 Digital Marketing

Electronic marketing, sometimes known as digital marketing, encompasses a far wider range of tactics than just promoting products and services on the Internet. Grubor and Jakša (2017) state that there are two subsets of digital marketing: online marketing and non-internet marketing. Advertising on online platforms, such as websites, social media, and mobile devices is known as internet marketing, whereas advertising through traditional offline mediums, like television and radio, is known as non-internet marketing. Advantages of digital marketing abound. Excellent customer interaction, high-quality data, precise customer targeting and segmentation, social media network outreach, and adaptability are all made possible by this. However, the writers did note a few problems with digital marketing, such as customers not trusting the brand and bad reviews potentially hurting the company's reputation. Marketing in the digital realm encompasses a wide range of strategies, such as PPC, social media, mobile, content, SEO, SEM, web, and television ads (Kaushik, 2016). The efficiency and effectiveness of such methods are crucial to the success of digital marketing. The capacity of an organization to carry out digital marketing activities is a factor in its digital marketing performance, according to a new study on the topic by Herhausen et al. (2020).

This paper focuses on the use of digital marketing as a way of initiating and sustaining communication between firms and their customers with a focus on the supermarkets industry where personal and responsive communication is likely to be more effective. Research shows that different digital marketing communication platforms like social media, e-mail and applications affect consumers' buying behavior and brand loyalty (Teresa and Cristóvão, 2014). According to Kim and Ko (2012) a study that focused on luxury brands, social media was confirmed to influence customer loyalty through improving engagement and brand image of the company. The study also established that a high level of interaction with the brand on social networking sites does not just enhance recognition but also improves customer loyalty resulting from a feeling of belonging.

Another sample-based research done by Constantinides and Fountain (2008) also stressed the role of content in persuading consumers to buy products. Their research suggests that blogging facility, customer reviews and social networking account allow brand engagement that fosters loyalty. Consequently, positive digital experiences are more helpful in creating customer bonds given that digital channels call for real-time engagement in the case of retail. Hudson et al. (2016) affirm this understanding noting that use of social media fosters an open and direct dialog between the brand and the customer creating an emotional connection that fosters lifetime loyalty.

Lister (2012) has also established that email marketing is a great way of building customer loyalty. The results by EllisChadwick and Doherty (2012) show that the use of email marketing fosters customer loyalty through information on new products, promotions and recommendations. In this case, the research established that properly developed and targeted e-mail correspondence produced a marked enhancement ind in customer retention rates especially where reinforced by loyalty reward programmes. Their research supports the need to provide value and value added information that will keep the customers interested and loyal in a competitive supermarkets environment.

An example of a digital strategy that has been of help in customer loyalty is mobile marketing. One of the reasons why mobile apps successfully attract consumers' attention and SMS marketing campaigns are effective, according to the studies by Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009), is that they deliver messages at appropriate moments and places. Their studies show that the use of mobile marketing can enable the brands to come up with customized promotions, relevant alerts and one deal which can have a positive impact on customer loyalty. Mobile effectiveness in retailing is enhanced by the convenience of the messages and the fact that consumers prefer mobile marketing since it can be done anywhere.

In addition, internet advertising (Google and Facebook) had a positive impact on brand recognition and could improve the degree of loyalty. Rutz and Bucklin (2011) conducted the evaluation of the impact of paid-search advertising on brand that has established that customers got exposed to a brand through the ads are more able to

interact and stay loyal with the brand. Therefore, the research found that the digital ads act as cues that help customers to 'think again' about the brand so when they are making their decisions, they recall the brand.

Finally, customers posts and reviews have emerged as key tools in the use of digital marketing tactics. Another research on online reviews by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) indicated that there is a relationship between positive consumers' postings and purchasing behaviors and customers' fidelity. Such kind of feedbacks bring into light the credibility, satisfaction and LG's customers loyalty towards the product brand. In retail, user generated content offer validity since consumers are more inclined to listen to other consumers rather than companies. The same corresponds to the evidence by Smith et al. (2012) where the authors suggested that brands that seek customer opinions on social media provide more credibility and ensure greater customer loyalty.

2.3.1.1 Social media marketing and customer loyalty

Social media marketing has done a great job of driving personal and community communication within the retail business. Ningthoujam et al. (2020) found that social media platforms have a substantial direct influence on consumer involvement and are a crucial predictor of consumer engagement. Additional findings validated the direct relationship between consumer involvement and brand loyalty. In the study of Siregar et al (2023), it has been established that; engaging social media activities have a positive impact on customer loyalty through improving brand-consumer connection. Moreover, the use of games in social media promotions like contests promoted by hashtags also creates platform loyalty through customer engagement (Nobre and Ferreira, 2017). These studies remind that consumer loyalty is a major point that is built through social media and answers to the sub-question about how it influences loyalty.

2.3.1.2 Mobile Marketing and Customer Loyalty.

Smartphones have become prevalent in society making mobile marketing crucial for supermarkets that want to capture technology literate clienteles (Shankar et al., 2016).

Baye, Reiz and Sapi (2024) also observed that the feature such as geo-targeted notifications and loyalty app increases the convenience of the customers. For instance, Lidl has a store application that allows users to use coupons and digital receipts which Nguyen, Emberger-Klein and Menrad (2022) assert are preferential ways of shopping. The ease of use mobile strategies, such as the Payment Systems in apps that Aldi has adopted are also strategic, according to (Yong et al., 2021). These thus show how mobile marketing strategies factor loyalty the answer to the corresponding sub-question.

2.3.1.3 Content Marketing and Customer Loyalty

Content marketing has turned out to be a vital asset that would help brands and consumers to engage significantly. Mufadhol et al. (2024) emphasise that sharing credible, valuable content creates trust, which is a primary customer loyalty factor. Ireland based supermarkets are no exception to this trend as they engage their customers with recipes, sustainability advice and product inside information. Writing for Julaeha (2024), the author found out that content that reflects customer values like buying locally made products increases loyalty. The studies show that by creating and delivering value in every content marketing communication, one is able to sustain customer relationships, thus answering the sub-question on how it is done.

2.3.1.4 Email Marketing and Customer Loyalty

Email marketing remains one of the most effective channels for personalized customer communication. According to Sahni, Wheeler and Chintagunta (2018), well-designed email campaigns with targeted offers and updates significantly boost customer retention rates. Tesco's personalized email discounts, based on loyalty card data, exemplify this, as consumers perceive these offers as tailored to their needs (Turner and Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, emails with dynamic content, such as product recommendations and seasonal updates, keep customers engaged and loyal (Tastsidou, 2023). The results of this research point out the influence of email marketing on customer loyalty, and they answer the connected sub-research question.

2.3.2 Customer loyalty

One definition of customer loyalty is the attitude and actions that lead up to repeat purchases (Ngo and Nguyen, 2016). Loyalty from customers is a direct outcome of their complete contentment. Therefore, consumers who remain loyal are happy and likely to buy more (AlDmour, Ali and AlDmour, 2019). There are behavioral and attitudinal ways of looking at customer loyalty. Donio, Massari and Passiante (2006) stated that consumers' actions in regard to their prior purchases and their attitudes towards a brand constitute customer loyalty. Therefore, consumer loyalty should be defined using criteria pertaining to both attitudes and actions. Customer pleasure, trust, and commitment are addressed by the attitudinal aspects of loyalty, according to Donio, Massari and Passiante (2006) model of customer loyalty, whereas the behavioral dimensions are associated with the consumer's purchasing habits.

The relationships between customers have been examined as one of the key factors of company performance, especially in a supermarket's environment. Research evidence indicates that the 'high-revenue' customers generate more revenue because they tend to repeat purchase and refer other people, and because they are likely to speak of their experience in a positive manner (Reichheld, 2000). For instance, Hallowell (1996) empirical research in the banking industry, demonstrated a strong positive relationship between loyalty and profitability where it was clearly established that whilst loyal customers continue their relationship with a brand they also are repeat customers, they also purchase more often. All these studies have supported the above theoretical finding that customer loyalty is a significant determinant of competitive advantage in both high and low involvement industries.

In supermarkets for instance, aspects like satisfaction, perceived trust and value are often used as a reason for loyalty. The studies done by Kumar and Shah (2004) based on supermarkets banking sector revealed satisfaction as the most important predictor of loyalty where it evident that customer who rates their experience high are more likely to be loyal in the long run. In a study carried out on the telecommunications industry by Deng et al. (2010), it was established that the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction significantly influenced customer loyalty, thus supporting

the view that an organization should endeavor to deliver high standard services in order to achieve long term customer relationship.

Furthermore, this study found that loyalty programs played a very important role in influencing customer loyalty across different supermarkets environments. In a case study by Meyer-Waarden (2008) on the European supermarket by means of using loyalty card a consistent purchase frequency was established with attendant emotional bond to those brand. These results are consistent with the literature review of Leenheer et al. (2007), where the authors establish how the proposed programs promote the retention of customers and the frequency of purchases because the offered rewards improve the perceived value for the brand. Such programs are often seen in the supermarkets industry and must be well-designed so they can continue to satisfy the clients and results might be consistent.

Digital contact and interaction also continue to be responsibility factors and the presence of personalized marketing strategies are also important in enhancing increased customer loyalty in the contemporary supermarkets context. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) argued that the customer experience in its digital nature and across multiple digital touchpoints should be consistent and joined-up to build customer loyalty. According to their research customers react the same way when performing the switching between online and offline channels and expect that the brands or companies they are dealing with will give them continuous, personal and integrated communication. This finding is especially novel in the mass customization and Omni-channel environment in order to improve the overall customer experience and sustainability.

Furthermore, the studies indicate that the trust affected brand loyalty intentions. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) have established the positive effect of brand trust and brand affect on customer loyalty where brand trust resulted in behavior and attitudinal loyalty. In their work they found out that customer trust is essential in developing a loyal customer base and especially in industries where customers are used to buying risky goods and services. Likewise, Hunt and Morgan (1994) identified that trust and commitment help customers affect loyalty because they minimize perceived risk enhancing the customers' emotional connection with the brand.

Last but not the least the role of ''Customer Engagement'' has been brought out in enhancing customer loyalty. For instance, Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft (2010) showed that through loyalty programs, social network sites and other forms of customer relationships, customer become emotionally and behaviorally committed to the brand. Customer interaction has therefore been associated with improved customer allegiance since the customers feel that they are part of the specific brand. It would be particularly useful in the highly contested consumer markets since customers can distinguish brands and stick with them for the long term.

2.3.3 Customer loyalty and digital marketing

Many businesses believe that customer loyalty is a key component in their ultimate success or failure. Organizations in this digital era should devise cutting-edge plans to boost their competitiveness and market share through the utilization of digital content and the enhancement of digital capabilities (Mohammad, 2022). There has been a proliferation of digital media platforms that businesses may use to advertise their wares, connect with their target audience, and strengthen their brand in recent years. Investing in digital media became a need for organizations to be competitive in the business world due to the revolutionary nature of digital media. Availability of products, digital strategy, social media participation, and service quality are crucial to attracting and retaining customers in today's cutthroat e-commerce market (Iqbal et al., 2023). For organizations to successfully navigate consumer pleasure and loyalty, they must have a deep understanding of the intricate interactions between these elements. Electronic client happiness, reusability intentions, and word of mouth are all greatly affected by electronic service quality, which goes by the acronym e-servqual (Sitompul and Setyowardhani, 2023). Efficient, fulfilling, private, responsive, compensating, and contact are some of the indicators that play an active, conative, and effective role in e-customer loyalty and the variety of e-service quality. There is a one-to-one relationship between the quality of an online service and the happiness and loyalty of its users. The significance of service quality in the context of greater information symmetry is further underscored by the fact that retailers' decisions to use

social media are influenced by service quality, whether it be online or offline (Muharam et al., 2021).

Companies need to fine-tune their strategy to attract and retain customers in today's ever-changing market. Gaining insight into customer preferences, making use of new technologies, and implementing successful marketing techniques can all lead to this goal (Zhang, Ghosh and Ali, 2024). Businesses may strengthen their ties with customers and inspire more loyalty to their brand if they prioritize their happiness. To keep customers coming back, you need to use price strategies, diversify your products, and make sure they're happy. Also, digital marketing is a great way to build a loyal consumer base, and companies should target certain demographics like millennials, women, and internet users (Mustafa and Shkurti, 2023). To keep throughput rates high and customers happy, businesses should invest in workforce levels and service quality while also balancing their efforts to acquire and retain customers. Brands may build loyalty among consumers by studying their purchasing habits and coming up with innovative sales strategies (Rane, Achari and Choudhary, 2023).

Digital marketing has emerged as a tool that the supermarket sector cannot do without, as it can create loyal customers through specific strategies like social media campaigns, email promotions, and content marketing. In the Irish context, large supermarket chains like Tesco, SuperValu, Aldi, and Lidl have increasingly resorted to digital platforms to facilitate customer engagement. Lidl's "Go Full Lidl" campaign is a very good example where the brand has used Facebook and Instagram to drive home the value-for-money and quality messages (Stanikzai and Ali, 2024). Similarly, SuperValu's "Community Supports" initiative leverages its digital presence to highlight its connection with local suppliers and communities, resonating strongly with Irish values. These examples show how supermarkets in their operations integrate digital marketing and create loyalty among their customer base.

Social media marketing is very important in engaging the 18-40 age demographic-a tech-savvy generation highly dependent on digital platforms for making purchase decisions. Studies indicate that this group is highly influenced by personalized advertising and interactive content (Tingley, 2015). For example, Dunnes Stores use Instagram to showcase seasonal offers and competitions, calling for direct customer

interaction and fostering loyalty through user-generated content (Dunnesstores, 2020). Research into the preferences of this generation outlines a love for authenticity and transparency, both of which Irish retailers are increasingly showing in their digital campaigns.

Email marketing is another cornerstone of digital marketing. It has proved very effective in driving customer retention. Supermarkets like Tesco and Aldi use email newsletters, sharing tailored promotions and exclusive deals with their customers (Fatricia, 2017). These strategies are supported by studies that show how personalized email campaigns very much enhance customer engagement and repeat purchases. For example, Tesco Clubcard users are able to obtain regular information about loyalty points and personalized discounts, therefore enhancing the perceived value of being a member (Yawson and Yamoah, 2022).

It also plays an important role in establishing long-term customer relationships. The "Aldi Recipes" section on their website and mobile application gives some pretty cool uses of the items Aldi is carrying in stock and places it, quite firmly, not just a retailer of food but one for ideas for daily cooking. It is also focused on providing customer loyalty, adding value to what it offers more than just from a transaction-based relationship.

With the rapid penetration of smartphones, mobile marketing has also picked up a good amount of adoption. A prime example is an app by SuperValu, where the customer can get customized discounts, digital shopping lists, and instantaneous notifications regarding in-store promotions. These features are in line with what today's consumers want: convenience. Research shows that mobile marketing leads to higher, immediate engagement, owing to the fact that customers are very likely to act upon notifications and offers received on their mobile phones (Tarnanidis, 2024).

The emphasis on digital marketing strategies in Irish supermarkets underlines the importance of the need to understand local demographics and consumer preferences. Targeted, platform-specific campaigns show just how retailers have aligned their strategy with consumer behavior in order to drive loyalty (Rijitha , 2021). But it also showed a lack of understanding of long-term implications, especially regarding the

younger generation of Irish consumers. Future research could be done to see how these campaigns impact loyalty, but also brand perception and market share over time.

This review will therefore present the importance of these strategies in customer loyalty and also explore the dynamic nature of the Irish retail environment. In this regard, the integration of specific examples regarding digital marketing in the Irish supermarket sector, along with theoretical insights, will help to ensure that the research is conducted in a balanced manner, keeping both practical and academic perspectives in mind.

2.4 Literature gap

Although the research has covered a wide area regarding customer loyalty and effects of digital marketing initiatives, there are still several loopholes when it comes to the customer loyalty in supermarkets sector in Ireland market. First, many works have focused on the use of social media, e-mail, and mobile marketing to increase customer loyalty, although there is lack of knowledge of the interaction of these channels while using the integrated multi-channel digital marketing approach. Moreover, much of the extant research appears to often be limited by industry or geographic scope, with few cross-industry studies being conducted, thus particularly scarce are multi-sector studies set in the supermarkets climates popular in Ireland. While trust, customer personalization or customer involvement have been pointed out as decisive loyalty drivers in research, there is still a discussion on how advanced forms of digital consumer engagement like artificial intelligence-based individualized personalized consumer experiences generated through new technologies and integrated marketing communication tools as forms of digital marketing communication affect current and future loyalty. Finally, there is a lack of literature exploring the long-term effectiveness of digital marketing as far as its ability to retain customer loyalty is concerned since most works tend to register short-term outcomes only. Thus the existing study could fill the literature gap by investigating the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyaly in the supermarkets sector. Based on the literature review it can be give as a base for the study variables to determine the link between independent and dependent variables.

2.5 Conceptual framework
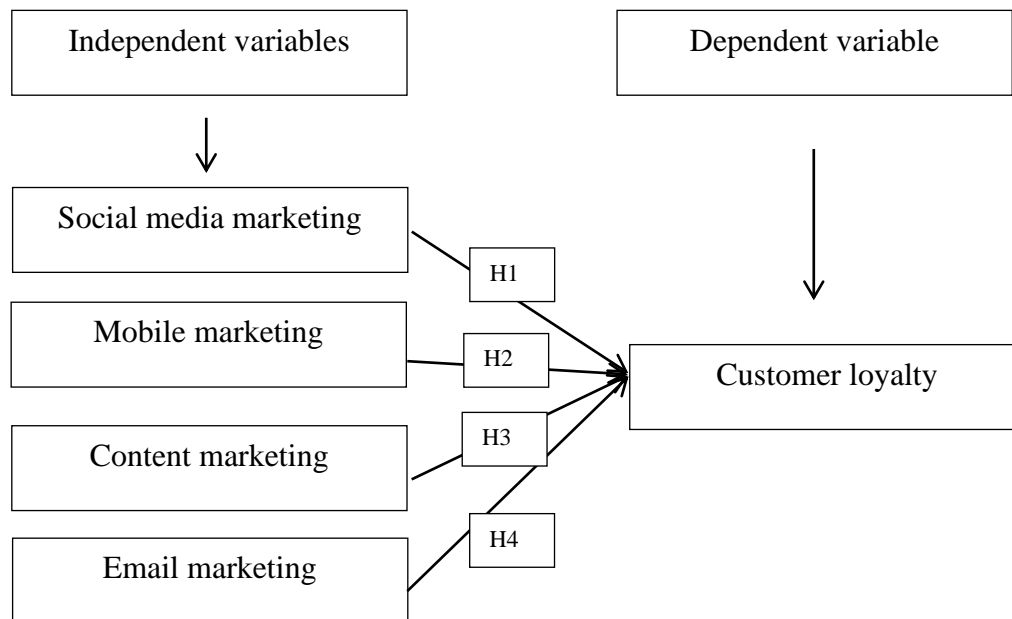
Figure 1- Conceptual model

Chapter 03- Research question

Based on the literature review on the research context, it was identified there were different digital marketing tools in the current context such as social media, mobile, web, emails, and content creation. Based on these aspects it can derive the following research question and sub-questions under this research area.

3.1 Main question

What is the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland?

3.2 Sub questions

What is the effect of social media marketing on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland?

What is the effect of mobile marketing on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland?

What is the effect of content marketing on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland?

What is the effect of email marketing on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland?

What are the strategies to implement effective digital marketing strategies toward enhancing customer loyalty?

3.3 Main research objective

To identify the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

3.4 Sub objectives

To identify the effect of different digital marketing techniques on customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

To propose strategies to implement effective digital marketing strategy toward enhancing customer loyalty

Based on derived research questions and sub-questions. Based on the conceptual model it can be developed research hypotheses. Through primary data collection, it tested the relationship between each independent variable and dependent variable and tested the hypotheses.

3.5 Research hypotheses

$H_1 1$: There is a significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_0 1$: There is no significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_1$2: There is a significant positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_0$2: There is no significant positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_1$3: There is a significant positive relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_0$3: There is no significant positive relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_1$4: There is a significant positive relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

$H_0$4: There is no significant positive relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland

Chapter 04- Research Methodology

4.1 Research Philosophy

Based on the type of research methods used in this study, this study uses positivism research philosophy common in quantitative research since it entails and deals with factual, real and measurable reality (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019). As described by Saunders et al., (2019), positivism permits forming hypothesis, which in this case, we are then able to test and determine correlation or even the entire sets and relation of variables within the outside world. This philosophy is in line with the study objectives of assessing the impact of social media, mobile marketing, e-mail and content marketing on customer loyalty in the Irish supermarket industry. First, the use of positivism ensures minimal impact of bias in the study while guaranteeing generalizability which is imperative in expanding the existing marketing knowledge and application. Positivism holds basic premises that social facts are observable and that this means that the researcher is capable of conducting a search for cause and effects relationships. Consequently, by accepting and employing the positivist paradigm, this research guarantees the researcher's impartiality to the identification of how digital marketing techniques impact customer loyalty in the Irish retail environment. Like most previous studies on digital marketing including Chaffey and Smith (2022) the current study qualifies to use positivism since it seeks to examine the physical and tangible parts of the marketing mix such as the social media presence and its effects on customer loyalty. As such, this philosophical choice is essential for two reasons: reliability – future research supported by this study can be carried out in various other retail settings; and generalizability – the results can be applied in multiple other retail papers (Saunders et al., 2019).

4.2 Research Approach

The study adopted a deductive reasoning in line with positivism paradigm. Deduction according to Saunders et al. (2019) entails using theories that are already developed, and hypotheses employing previous research, in order to study a phenomenon. For example, Social Media Marketing Theory developed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Customer Engagement Theory developed by Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) are the foundation on which one can hypothesize that specific digital marketing tactics

have positive impact on customer loyalty. Such an approach is appropriate as it affords a methodical approach to analyzing theoretical propositions together with a systematic reflection on the results against extant literature to improve the study validity as well as reliability. deductive approach allows social paradigms to be used to test for the presence of positive effect of digital marketing on customer loyalty in the context of Irish supermarkets industry as identified by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022). This work adopts conventional hypothesis testing via the formulation of hypotheses drawn from the existing theoretical and empirical literature on digital marketing and customer loyalty. Deduction helps to move from theory - Social Media Marketing Theory, Customer Engagement Theory, to empirical research. For instance, these theories imply that approaches such as target marketing or social media interaction boost customer retention by a wide margin, a possibility this research aims at establishing. The use of a deductive approach is especially suitable for this research as it allows for the direct implementation of the existing knowledge to a particular context of the Irish retailer industry. Also, the deductive method corresponds to the approach applied by Kotler and Keller (2016) where the authors pursued the analysis of the role of marketing strategies in various fields. This way the study remains methodical, theoretical and aims to fit the assumption using theoretical propositions.

4.3 Research Method

The method of research chosen for the study is quantitative since it is effective in establishing the correlation between the use of Digital Marketing Activities and the customers' loyalty, based on quantitative information (Saunders et al., 2019). Meaning that, the study aimed at achieving the following objectives and therefore, a quantitative research method was used. According to Bryman (2016) and supported by Saunders et al. (2019), quantitative research is numerical in that allows the qualitative characteristics of variables to be measured and interpreted statistically. It consists of interviews where questions are set in advance to increase comparability of the answers received. This approach was chosen because it is possible to gather a large dataset, which help to make statistically significant conclusions about the impact of digital marketing initiatives on customer retention (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019).

Implementing quantitative approaches is useful when measuring numerical data because by doing so the results are more accurate and objective than when using qualitative measures; thus, using quantitative approaches to assess variables such as social media interaction, email marketing performance, and repeat purchasing behavior makes sense. Structured surveys were selected for this research study because they enable considerable comparability of the collected data across a broad range of participants. On this methodological approach, relevant academic literature in digital marketing has been consulted which relies on the same type of statistical constructs to make scientific generalizations about consumer behavior. The research is based on objective criteria in an effort to give straightforward and practical recommendations of the role of DM in building customer loyalty.

4.4 Research Strategy

The research undertakes the use of survey approach, which is the most preferred source of gathering primary data within surveys for quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2019). Nevertheless, surveys remain most suitable for acquiring the data concerning customer activities and attitudes toward digital marketing endeavors. A set of questions was designed for survey as questions concerning important aspects of digital marketing including the frequency of posting to social sites, the importance of content marketing, and the value of personalized marketing promotions. To build customer loyalty, the survey also incorporated variables of customer repurchase and satisfaction with the brand. Other similar works by Tuten and Solomon 2017 has shown that surveys are efficient in gather big data about consumer preference in large sample size population. The use of a survey strategy guarantees capturing and comparing various due to nature consumer opinions within the targeted demographic of Irish retail consumers aged between 18 and 40 years thereby providing a rich understanding of effects of digital marketing strategies.

4.5 Sample of the Study

The sample consists of people aged from 18 to 40 years living in Ireland who use Instagram, Facebook, and email frequently to shop and interact with brands. This age group is chosen because they are the population that is often targeted by digital marketing channels thus would probably be more susceptible to such approaches. Respondents will be targeted 100 so as to attain 95% confidence level, which will

make the results generalizable across the Irish supermarket sector. The sampling strategy utilized to select the sample is convenience sampling which is categorized under non-proability sampling techniques (Golzar, Noor and Tajik, 2022). Targeted subjects for the study will be sampled conveniently basing on online platforms, and the survey shall be administered online via Google Forms with open responses.

4.6 Data Collection

The survey which will be used to collect primary data for this research will be in Google Forms. This method was chosen for its effectiveness to reach the wide audience among the Irish audience within the age of 18-40. The survey participants are chosen based on active usage of digital platforms and making retail purchases, thus the respondents are relevant to the study goals. The surveys will be conducted among 100 respondents based on age (18–25, 26–30, 31–35, 36-40) gender, and other characteristics like income and education level. This is helpful in making sure that the data collected is a representative sample with regards to the venture between the different digital marketing initiatives and customer attachment.

The survey instrument in this study was a structured questionnaire that contained closed ended questions, which would give measurable responses. The questionnaire includes sections to collect:

Demographic Information: The factors may include; age, gender, income and education level.

Digital Marketing Interaction: Interacting with the digital marketing content such as social media marketing, email marketing, and content marketing and mobile marketing

Customer Loyalty Indicators: Customer loyalty, brand trust, recommendation intention and brands' satisfaction.

For every question, special attention is paid to its relevance to the research objectives, and the questions themselves involve both Likert-scale items and multiple choice to eliminate ambiguity (See appendix 1). The questionnaire consists of five-point Likert scale questions because of the easiness of the analysis of data.

This is done by posting the survey link (https://forms.gle/nEFMFeDPBvH7gzsKA) by sending an invitation to participate, to the members of social networks, email lists and online forums where the target customers are found. Participation is encouraged through simplified, informative invitations stating the reason for the survey and its anonymity. The survey will take three weeks to complete so that there is enough time for people to give their feedback while not taking too long. There will be also follow-up messages to ensure high response rates among the target population.

4.7 Data analysis

This study gathered primary data through survey questionnaires. The data was analyzed using SPSS software by utilizing inferential and descriptive statistical techniques and tools. This paper employed survey questionnaires to gather the primary data which was analyzed systematically to derive relevant and valid positive correlation between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty. The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, better known as SPSS, much applicable in evaluating large quantitative data.

At this stage, the dataset has been cleaned and structured in order to exclude the cases which were not entirely filled or where the answers were inconsistent. Frequency analysis, mean, and standard deviation were used as preliminary test statistics on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, manner of shopping and their engagement with DM instruments. This has served a useful purpose of developing some of the characteristics and trends in the data.

In order to determine the strength and direction of relationship between the digital marketing activities and customer loyalty, correlation analysis was performed on the survey data collected.

Where questions regarding the predictive strength of various digital marketing strategies for customer loyalty were of prominence, conventional regression analysis was employed.

Besides these tests, reliability analyses, including Cronbach's alpha were used in order to assess the internal consistency of the scales that were used in the

questionnaire. It was done in order to make the conclusions derived from the data as accurate as possible.

This part reconstructed quantitative research making the main analytical aim to find out parameters, which are significant from the statistical point of view and can contribute to the understanding of the objectives of the research. This structured approach facilitated adequate treatment of the data, hence guaranteeing the credibility and value of the results.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Several objectives of ethical considerations were considered in conducting research in order to safeguard the participants and the credibility of the study. The participants were also advised on the objectives of the research, and their willingness to volunteer and withdraw at any time without being forced would not attract any consequences. Before proceeding to the survey, participants were given an informed consent note that explained how the data collected from the survey would be used only for research purposes and would kept discreet.

There was a high level of confidentiality with regard to the respondents in the entire course of the study. This step meant that any data collected could not be identified with any participant and therefore no personally identifiable information was compiled. Security features were employed; all the responses were saved in password and accessible only by the researcher.

In addition, the study was carried with the aim of avoiding jeopardizing participant's comfort by developing bias questions. This ethical framework helped to minimize the risk for this study and promote the creation of trustworthy relationships between the researcher and participants.

4.9 Limitations

It is noteworthy that some limitations should be mentioned in this connection and consider this study's findings while interpreting the results. First, the data was collected by self-generated questionnaires offered online, which predisposes to social desirability bias and misunderstanding of questions by respondents. This risk was

mitigated to some extent through the development of clear and easy-to-complete survey items; however, assessment is always somewhat subjective.

Second, although the sample covers the target audience of the investigation, the pool of respondents may not provide a complete picture of actual customers in Irish retail industry. Respondents could only represent users with internet availability or users with sampling knowledge of internet-based tools, thus excluding users in other strata of society.

Third, due to their cross-sectional nature, the current studies limit the opportunity of proving causality between the use of the digital marketing strategies on the one hand and customer loyalty on the other. Though patterns can be discovered, more studies, in this case, would require exploration of these correlations in a longitudinal plane.

Chapter 05- Data analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the heart of the dissertation since it supports making the final decisions based on collected data. They are analyzed by using the SPSS software. Mainly, demographic, descriptive and inferential statistics are analyzed, and initial step is to analyze the demographic variables as well reliability statistics are also explained. Thereafter, not only the correlation analysis but also regression analysis are also conducted. As the final step, hypotheses testing is also done based on the findings.

5.2 Demographic variable analysis

Features of a population that may be used to examine social groupings or cultures are known as demographic variables.
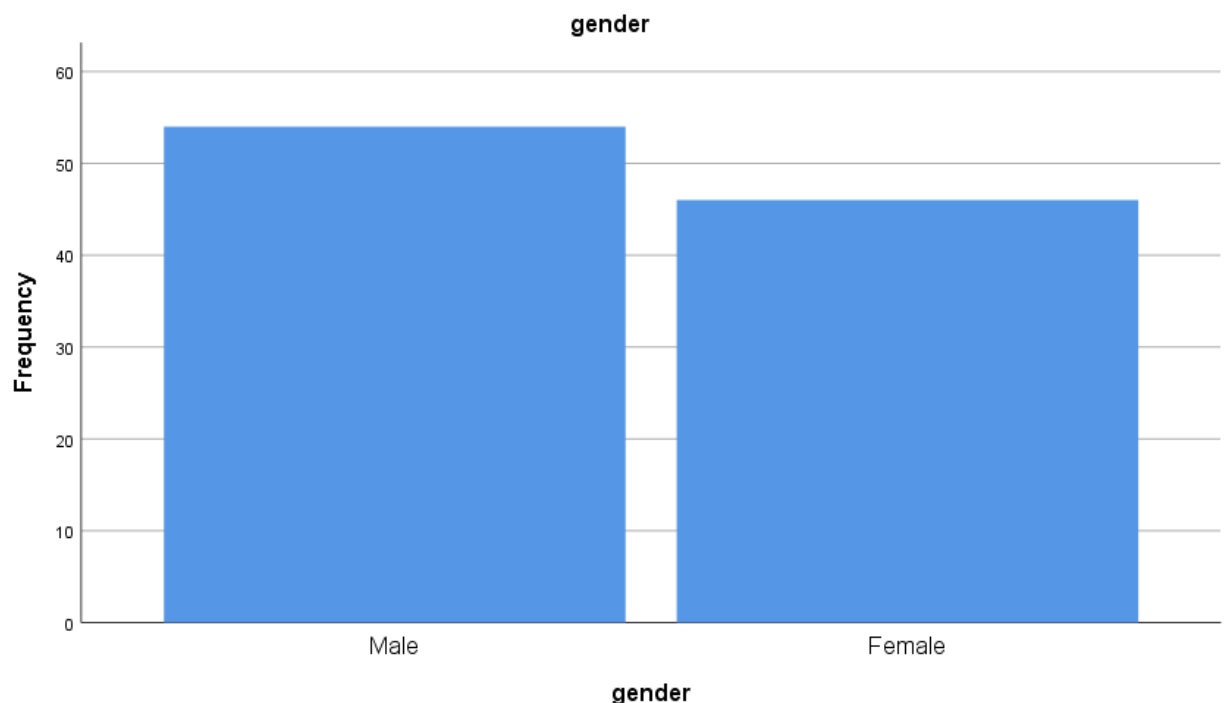
5.2.1 Gender

Figure 2- Gender analysis

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

Among 100 respondents, more than 50 respondents are male while other respondents are female. According to the secondary data, there were over 2.6 million males and 2.67 million females making up Ireland's population of 5.28 million in 2023 (Statista, 2024b). Thus, the secondary data also confirmed that there were the majority of males in the population in Ireland.

5.2.2 Age
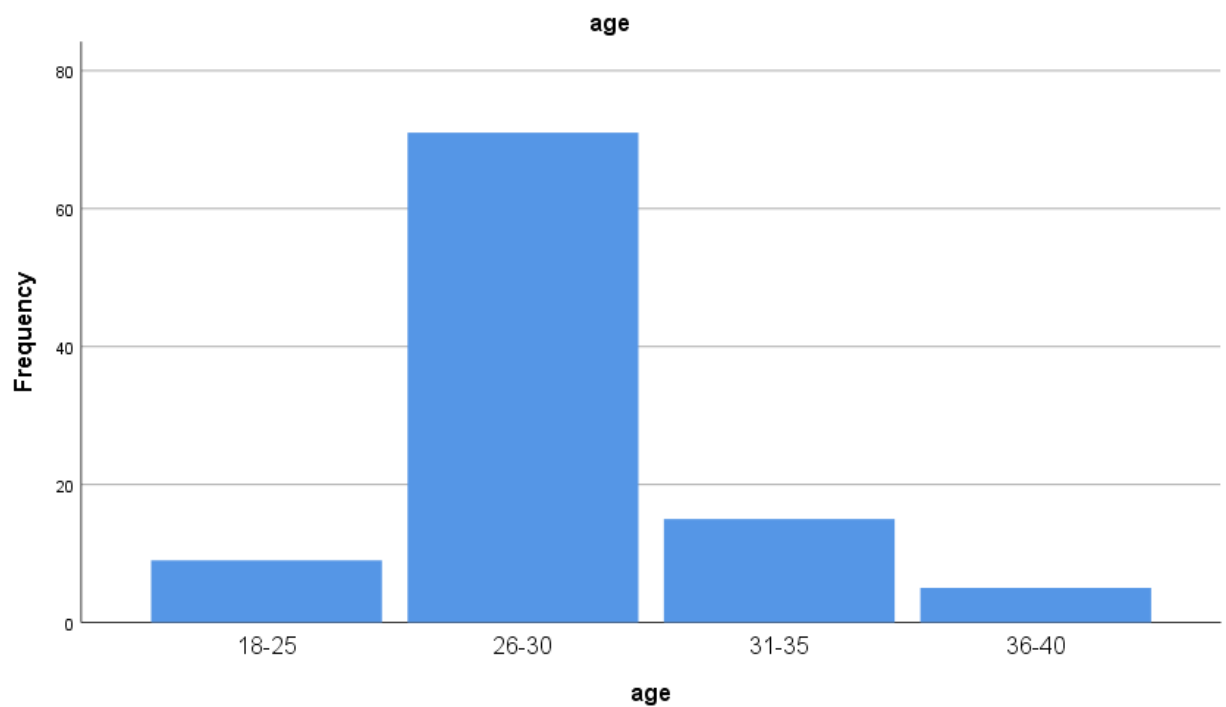
Figure 3- Age analysis

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

Mainly 4 age groups are used for the easiness of the analysis. Among them, more than 60 respondents are between 26 and 30 while all other age groups have less than 20 respondents. The least number of respondents are between 36 and 40 years old. According to the secondary data obtained from CSO statistics, there is a decrease in the population who are in aged between 25-44 from 30.8% to 27.6% in 2023 in Ireland (CSO, 2024). The current sample of respondents consists of the majority aged between 26 and 30, because of young population is the persons who engaged with digitalization nowadays rather than old persons for grocery shopping.

5.2.3 Education

Figure 03: Education
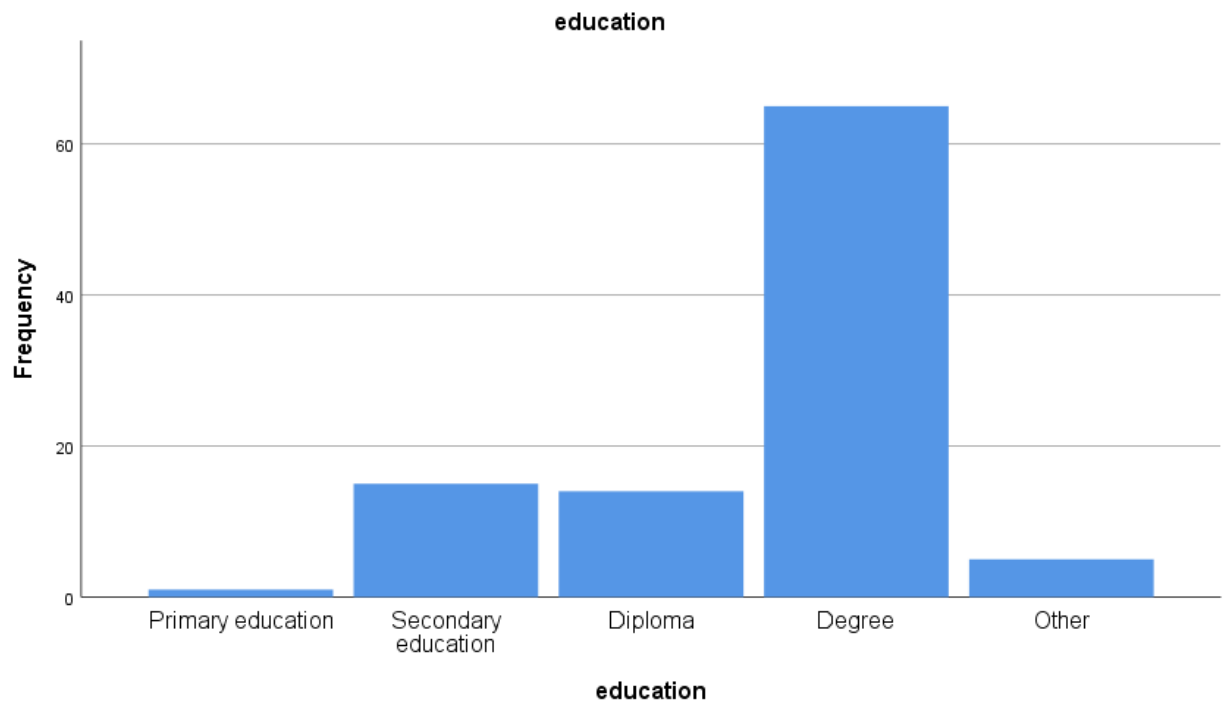
Figure 4- Educational analysis

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

Based on the highest education qualification, 4 age groups are made and among them more than 60 respondents have bachelor degrees while few respondents have only primary education qualification. As well less than 20 respondents have only secondary education and diploma. Someone have other education qualifications other than primary education, secondary education, diploma and degree. The statistics of CSO showed that The number of third-level students increased by over a quarter (25.2%) between 2012/2013 and 2022/2023, rising from 205,030 to 256,785 students in Ireland (CSO, 2024). Thus the secondary findings also showed that there are people who are aged between 26 to 40 are well educated with degree level educational qualifications.

5.2.4 Income

Figure 04: Income
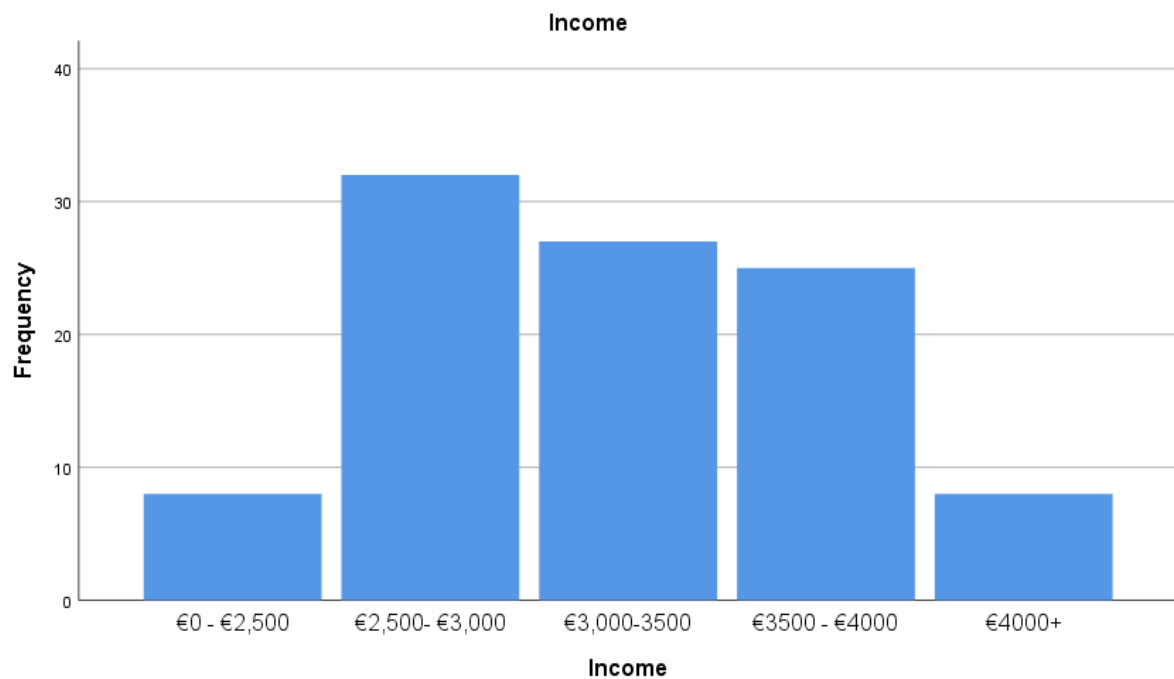
Figure 5- Income analysis

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The bar chart illustrates the income distribution of a sample of 100 persons, divided into five income brackets. The predominant segment, comprising 32% of the population, resides within the €2,500–€3,000 income range. This is followed by 27% in the €3,000–€3,500 range and 25% in the €3,500–€4,000 range. Collectively, these three middle-income brackets constitute 84% of the overall population. Conversely, merely 8% of persons earn below €2,500, while another 8% make above €4,000, denoting the lowest and greatest income brackets, respectively. The cumulative percentage indicates that 67% of the population earns €3,500 or less, and 92% earn €4,000 or less, underscoring the concentration of income within the mid-range groups.

5.2.5 Status

Figure 05: Status
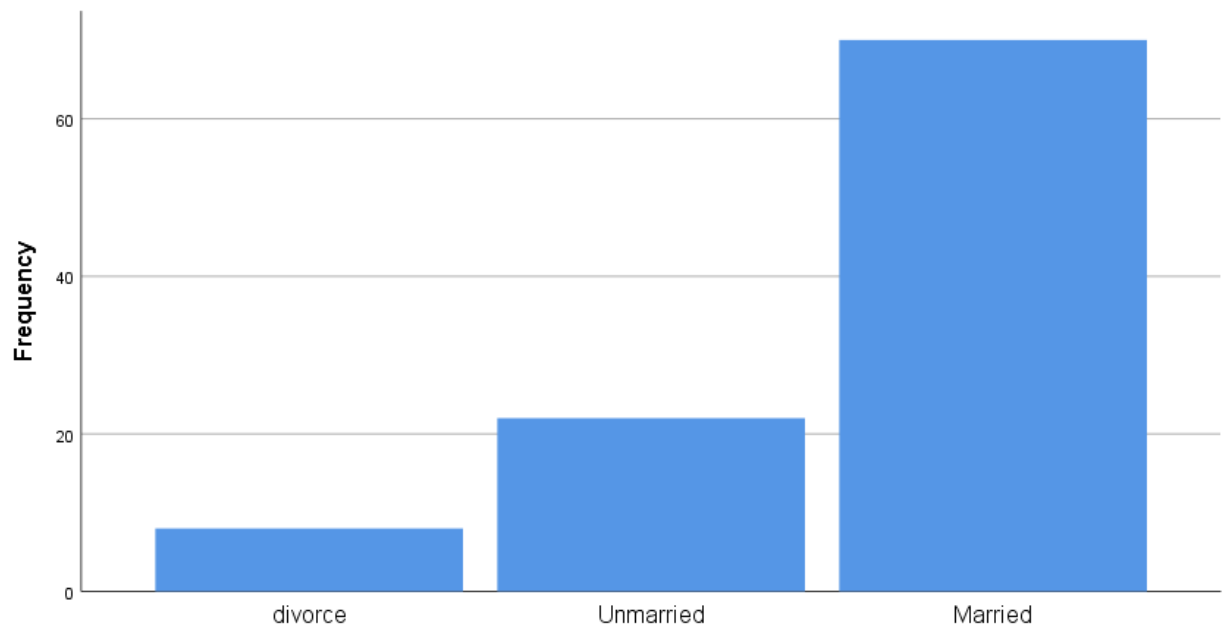
Figure 6- Marital status

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

Among 100 respondents, more than 60 respondents are married while around 20 respondents are unmarried. Furthermore, less than 20 respondents are divorced. With 0.9 divorces per 1,000 persons, Ireland has the second-lowest divorce rate among the EU27 in 2021. With only 0.6 divorces per 1,000 people, Malta ranked lowest (CSO, 2024). The existing findings also showed the very lowest number of divorced respondents among the sample respondents.

5.3 Descriptive statistics

Table 1- Descriptive statistics

 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
CMM	100	5.00	19.00	13.7000	4.84820	-.638	.241	-1.096	.478
MM	100	5.00	18.00	13.0400	4.36450	-.778	.241	-.617	.478
CM	100	6.00	18.00	14.0400	4.00232	-1.277	.241	.138	.478
EM	100	7.00	18.00	14.1900	3.45153	-.839	.241	-.265	.478
CL	100	15.00	30.00	23.2500	3.78027	-.378	.241	-.063	.478
Valid N (listwise)	100								

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The above table presents the distribution of the data set which are gathered for this data analysis process. This table presents the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the data set. The mean value of the data set presents the average data points in the data set. It was presented the mean values of each variable separately. According to the values in the above table, the minimum mean value is 13.04 posits for mobile marketing and the highest mean value is 23.25 which posits for the dependent variable. The standard deviation is the value that presents how far the data points are distributed to the mean value. If the value of the standard deviation is high,

it denotes that the data points are distributed far from the mean and if the standard deviation has lower values, it denotes that the data points are around the mean value. According to the above table, the standard deviation is deviated from 3.4 to 4.8 value. Thus, the data points are distributed far from the mean since it has higher standard deviations in each variable. The above table presents the findings under skewness and kurtosis, skewness is the shape of the data distribution curve and kurtosis denotes the peak of the distribution curve. Since the skewness values are negative, the distribution curve is negatively skewed.

5.4 Reliability test

The consistency of a measurement or the capacity to yield the same outcome for identical situations is known as reliability in statistics.

Table 2- Reliability statistics

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Social media marketing	4	0.918
Mobile marketing	4	0.882
Content marketing	4	0.851
Email marketing	4	0.799
Customer loyalty	4	0.787

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The reliability of variables those are selected for the research was investigated by using Cronbach's alpha value. If the value is greater than 0.7, it can be considered that the variable is reliable and has higher internal consistency. According to the above table, all the independent and dependent variables have used 04 items to measure the reliability of the variables. The variable of social media marketing has a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.918 which is higher than 0.7, thus it can be determined that the variable has acceptable internal consistency and reliability. The variable of mobile marketing also has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.882 which is greater than 0.7 and this variable also has an acceptable internal consistency and reliability. Content marketing has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.851 which is also considered has a higher internal

consistency and reliability. The variable of email marketing has 0.799 Cronbach's alpha which is near to 0.7, however, it was greater than 0.7 and can be considered as a reliable variable. The final variable, customer loyalty has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.787 also near to 0.7, and it also has an acceptable internal consistency. Therefore, all of the selected independent and dependent variables have an acceptable internal consistency and reliability and they can be used to determine the relationship between digital marketing strategies and customer loyalty.

5.5 Correlation analysis

Table 3- Correlation statistics

		CL	CMM	MM	CM	EM
CL	Pearson Correlation	1	.370**	.694**	.639**	.705**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
CMM	Pearson Correlation	.370**	1	.821**	.765**	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
MM	Pearson Correlation	.694**	.821**	1	.838**	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
CM	Pearson Correlation	.639**	.765**	.838**	1	.843**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
EM	Pearson Correlation	.705**	.660**	.734**	.843**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The relationship between independent and dependent variables can be measured through correlation analysis. There is a positive but weak correlation between social media marketing and customer loyalty since its Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.37. There is a strong and positive correlation between mobile marketing and customer loyalty since its Pearson correlation efficient is 0.694. Pearson correlation coefficient of content marketing is 0.639 and it means that there is a positive and strong correlation between content marketing and customer loyalty. Moreover, 0.705 is the

Pearson correlation coefficient of email marketing as well it means that there is a positive and strong correlation between email marketing and customer loyalty. These all correlations are statistically significant at 1% level since their significant values are 0.000.

This result is in accordance with the fact that there is tendency of the Irish supermarkets to use stages like Facebook and Instagram for sharing of informative and engaging content, offers, and recommendations that are mostly preferred by the 18-40 age bracket. With social listening monitoring, and consistent community creation, supermarket retail brands are more likely to enjoy steady loyalty than observed from current industry reports on retail dominance from online social communities (Profile Tree, 2024).

This is informing the need to explore app notifications, SMS promotions, geolocation marketing, which are m-communication tools that give customers real time, convenient and easy access to offers and promotions (Ifigeneia, 2015). Since smartphone usage is highly prevalent in Ireland particularly among the young and middle aged population at 93%, using the connectivity opportunities presented by the same, supermarkets can optimally appeal to customers to ensure more frequent store traffic, improving customer loyalty. From examples like redemption of personalized app rewards received from leading chains such as Tesco or SuperValu we get the picture of how mobile marketing brings about a feeling of privilege, which enhances customer loyalty (Son et al., 2020).

Still, there was no statistically significant, positive correlation between content marketing and customer loyalty, which requires a more detailed look at. Despite the fact that content marketing is becoming more popular to develop brand awareness and trust, it's not very strong when it comes to loyalty, if the content doesn't answer customers' needs or does not generate a direct call to action. For example, Ireland supermarket blog or recipe site will provide information utility but it may not necessarily mean the customer has an emotional or financial connection with the company. Ideally, content strategies should be better aligned with more loyalty-connected objectives, including the inclusion of action links or member perks in content articles (Ledin and Machin, 2018).

It is noticeable that Irish consumers pay attention to personalized emails, updates through the loyalty program, and exclusive offers shared through email campaigns. Further, in this case, the client Dunnes Stores assure customers specific offers on everyday products through their email newsletters and also highlights on the loyalty benefits, thereby corroborating with the study (Sweden, 2017). Supermarkets, thus, have the ability to undertake a long-term "friendship" relationship with their customers by continually communicating with them through value-added emails.

Altogether, these research propositions underscore the contextual nature of the effectiveness of various forms of digital marketing communication and call upon the supermarkets to increase direct and interactive Internet marketing communication efforts while revisiting the value proposition of content marketing to achieve the overarching goal of customer loyalty.

5.6 Regression analysis

5.6.1 Model summary

Table 4- Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.850[a]	.722	.710	2.03439

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

R-squared (R2) is a metric that measures how well the independent variable(s) in a statistical model explain the variance in the dependent variable. It runs from 0 to 1, with 1 representing a perfect fit of the model to the data.

R squared of the model is 0.722 and it means that social media marketing, mobile marketing, content marketing and email marketing explain customer loyalty by 72.20%.

5.6.2 ANOVA

Table 5- ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1021.571	4	255.393	61.708	.000[b]
	Residual	393.179	95	4.139		
	Total	1414.750	99			

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The fitness of the model can be tested by using ANOVA table. If F statistic is greater than 2 and significant value is less than 0.05 it can be said that overall model is with the good fit. According to above table, overall model is with the good fit since its F value is 61.708 and significant value is 0.000 as well the overall model is statistically significant at 1% level.

5.6.3 Coefficients

Table 6- Coefficient statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	12.692	.866		14.648	.000
	CMM	.545	.076	.698	7.145	.000
	MM	.781	.100	.902	7.795	.000
	CM	-.022	.121	-.024	-.186	.853
	EM	.574	.110	.524	5.199	.000

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

The effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable is measured through the coefficient statistics. As well, it the t statistic is greater than 2 and significant value is less than 0.05, it can be said that the variable is statistically significant.

12.692 is the beta coefficient of the constant value and it means that when social media marketing, mobile marketing, content marketing and email marketing equal to zero, customer loyalty will be 12.692. It is statistically significant at 1% level since its t value is 14.648 and significant value is 0.000. 0.545 is the beta coefficient of social media marketing and it means that when social media marketing increases by 1%, customer loyalty will increase by 0.545%. Beta coefficient of mobile marketing is 0.781 and it means that when mobile marketing increases by 1%, customer loyalty will increase by 0.781%. These both variables are statistically significant at 1% level since their t values are greater than 2 and significant values are less than 0.05. Beta coefficient of content marketing is -0.022 and it means that when content marketing increases by 1%, customer loyalty will decrease by 0.022%. However this variable is not statistically significant since its t value is -0.186 and significant value is 0.853. 0.574 is the beta coefficient of email marketing and it means that when email marketing increases by 1%, customer loyalty will increase by 0.574%. it is also statistically significant at 1% level since it has a t value of 5.199 and 0.000 of significant value.

Then, final model can be developed as follows.

$$CL = b_0 + b_1 (SMM) + b_2 (MM) + b_3 (CM) + b_4 (EM) + e$$

CL = Customer loyalty

b_0 = Intercept

$b_1 - b_4$ = Beta coefficient

SMM = Social media marketing

MM = Mobile marketing

CM = Content marketing

EM = Email marketing

e = Error term

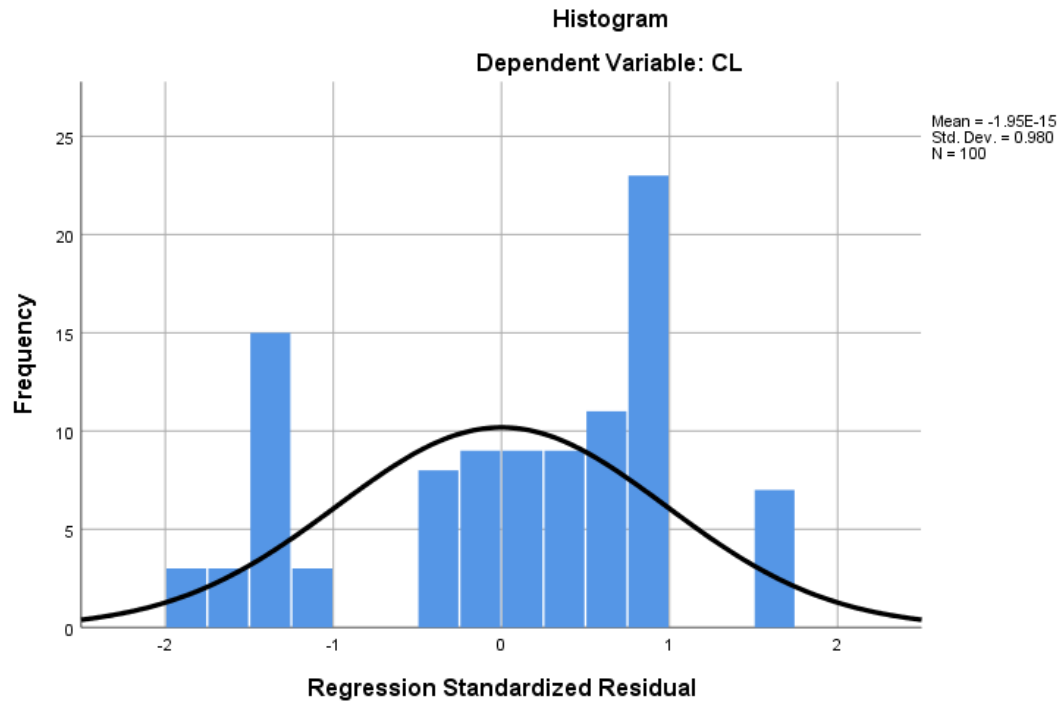Moreover, following plots and graphs can be presented related to the above model.

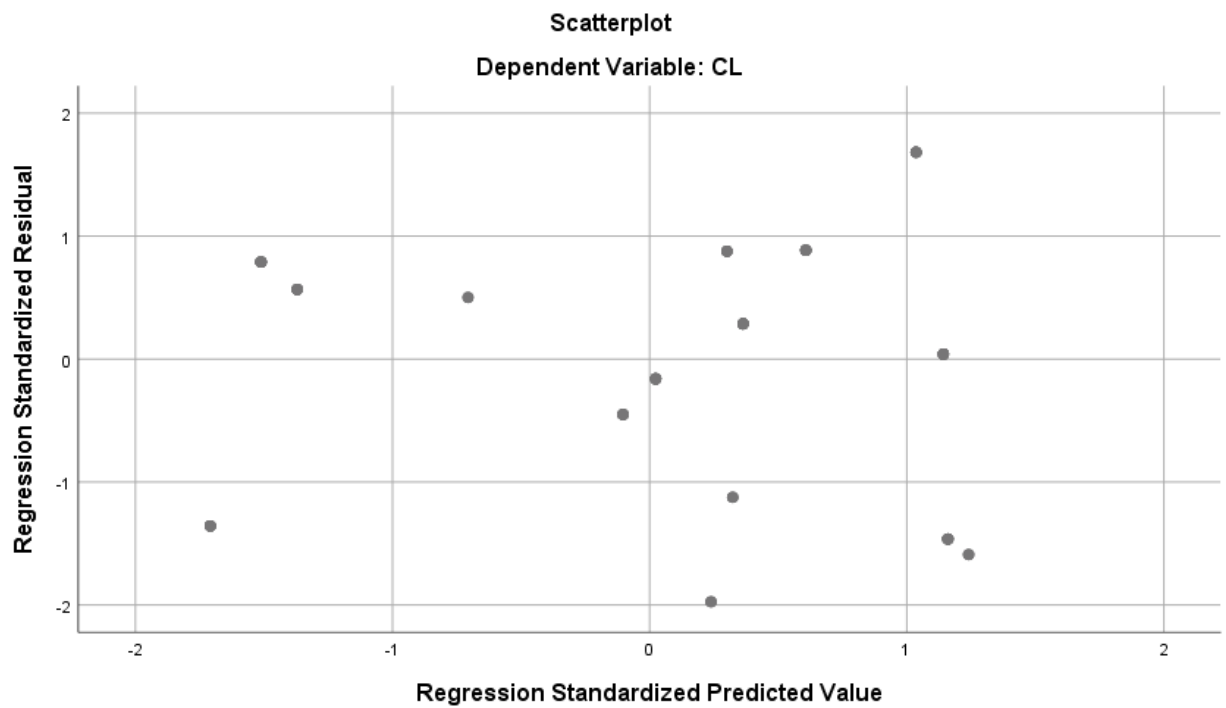**Figure 7- Histogram**

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

Figure 8- Scatterplot

Source: Researcher's SPSS computations

5.7 Hypotheses testing

Mainly, four hypotheses have been designed to conduct this analysis. First one is said that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland. As per the analysis its null hypothesis can be rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Then it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland. The second hypothesis analyzes the relationship between Mobile marketing and customer loyalty. As per the analysis it can be said that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland. Then, null hypothesis can be rejected and alternative hypothesis can be accepted. The next hypothesis examines the relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty. According to the analysis, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant positive relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland. Therefore, null hypothesis can be accepted and alternative hypothesis can be rejected. Final hypothesis examines the relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty. According to the analysis, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland. Therefore, again null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 7- Hypotheses summary

Hypotheses		Accept/Reject
01	H_0 = There is no any statistically significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Reject
	H_1 = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between social media marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Accept
02	H_0 = There is no any statistically significant positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer	Reject

	loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	
	H_1 = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between mobile marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Accept
03	H_0 = There is no any statistically significant positive relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Accept
	H_1 = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between content marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Reject
04	H_0 = There is no any statistically significant positive relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Reject
	H_1 = There is a statistically significant positive relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland	Accept

The analysis has revealed that social media marketing has a highly statistically significant positive correlation with customer loyalty in the supermarket sector in Ireland, so supporting H1. The availability of such social media opportunities for brands supports the research of Mangold & Faulds (2009) that opines the environment offered by social media allows brands to directly interact with customers through developing strong bonds, thus promoting customer loyalty. In the same regard, Bruhn et al. (2012) point out that benefits of social media marketing includes deepening of customer trust and their emotional connection to the brand- the two factors that underpin and fuel loyalty. These results also support the conclusion of Cheung et al. (2020), who found that when customers interact with good content on social media platforms more decision to make repeat purchases and advocacy behaviors are likely to be observed among the retail customer.

In view of this, the results provide strong support for H1, and show that there is a positive association between mobile marketing and customer loyalty that is

statistically significant at p < 0.001. This is in line with the findings of Shankar et al;(2016) the authors stressed that mobility enables message personalization that increases satisfaction and loyalty. Mobile marketing was described by Filmteresting to be especially useful where customers use their mobiles close to the point of purchase in a timely manner. These conclusions echo the assumptions of Grewal et al. (2019) who suggest that mobile initiatives are responsible for an omnichannel approach that increases brand attachment.

Surprisingly, the study also fails to find any evidence of a significant positive correlation between content marketing and customer loyalty since H0 could not be rejected. This finding contradicts Holliman and Rowley (2014) idea of high-quality content in influencing customer interest and loyalty. Thirdly, as pointed out by Pulizzi (2012), the essence of content marketing is fulfilling the need to deliver value over time and was probably not fully understood by the surveyed supermarkets.

Accordingly, the findings provide a statistically significant positive correlation between emarketing and customers' loyalty that endorsed H1. Mohammadi et al. (2013) also concluded that similarly customer loyalty is affected by email communications emphasizing that such communications must be personalized and, also informative to ultimately impact perceived value. Moreover, Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2012) established that email marketing is an effective method for developing customer relationships in the long run, especially in the retail industry. The findings are in tandem with Kumar et al. (2019) who assert that first time and timely personalized email communications are good enough to remind customers about brands offerings to encourage repeat patronage and word of mouth.

Thus, it can be concluded that the supermarkets operating in Ireland have the best potential for the improvement of the customer loyalty by increasing the efficiency of social media, mobile, and email marketing. Applying personalization, engagement, and different forms of value delivery in these platforms could provide superior customer outcomes Lubik & Marian, 2020; based on research such as Lemon and Verhoef (2016) supplying benefits for customers-centric digital marketing.

Chapter 06- Discussion

Objective 01

This research met the first aim when it analyzed the impact of social media marketing on customer loyalty. The results supported a statistically significant positive relationship and show the successful application of sites such as Facebook or Instagram, for the development of customer loyalty. The supermarkets in Ireland use social media as the main tool in reaching out to their clients by use of promotions, polls, and feedback forms. Other studies such as the ability to produce unique experience through social media have been shown to create the possibility to increase consumer engagement emotional experience hence increasing loyalty and propensity to recommend others to patronize the business. This, probably explains the reason why, constant and active promotion on social media is necessary particularly when is comes to the business's ability to establish enduring relationships with its customers.

Objective 02

The second objective was achieved through a comprehensive look at the effects of the mobile marketing on customer loyalty. An analysis of the results yielded positive statistics with significant correlation revealing supermarket's stakeholder engagement through mobile platforms. The advancements like push notification, mobile application and location specific offers have improved customer accessibility and interactions. These have not only increase customer satisfaction but have also increase likelihood of repeat purchase occasion through timely/personalized occasion. To extend this convenience and boost their loyalty even further, supermarkets should continue to push this sector additionally via loyalty card schemes as well as seamless mobile payments.

Objective 03

The third hypothesis offered no conclusive proof of a positive correlation between content marketing and customers' loyalty to the supermarkets and may indicate that the supermarkets do not completely implement what the target audience would want in content marketing. This may be caused by some mismatch between the kind of material input and the requirements of clientele or consumers. To this end, there is a

need to begin generating more content and of much higher value to the customer, for example, recipes, nutrition plans, or tips for sustainable living.

Objective 04

The fourth goal was also achieved because, according to the analysis, email marketing positively affects customer loyalty. Targeted promotional emails with promotional offers, company notifications on membership program changes and new incentives, and other offers are also helpful in customers' continuation of business with retailers. Email marketing should also remain a key on how best to strengthen the supermarket customers base. To be most effective, they should follow the customer analysis insights and tailor the messages to the customer segment and shopping behavior.

Objective 05

The following recommendations can therefore be made from the conclusion of this research in order to achieve the final objective outlined in this research. First, supermarkets should optimize the digital marketing mix reaching the customers through the synergy of social media, mobile and e-mail marketing platforms sharing an integrated approach and focusing on the specifics of the supermarket. Second, program evaluation method should be done quarterly or every time a year to review the performance of the campaigns and refine strategies as advised by the client or changes in the market. Third, with better data analysis, supermarkets will be better placed to study markets for strong and effective marketing with positive impacts. Furthermore, communication processes should be revised holistically as part of the content marketing concept in order to produce materials that create value to the customers, including information about locally-sourced products or environmental friendly products. Last of all, more attention should be paid to customer interaction on the app level through the creation of additional incentives for users' active participation, including point-reward systems, playful interactions, and community building. In this context, increasing the value co-creation thinking and meaningful customer interactions in all contact points can help supermarkets to develop long-term customer relationships in the competitive supermarkets' environment.

The results of this study reveal that digital marketing practices have a strong positive relationship with customer loyalty in the supermarket industry in Ireland. It should, however, be also pointed out that despite the primary focus of the analysis was placed

on Irish supermarkets and the behavior of customers within the age range of 18 to 40, it might be worth discussing the general conclusions that might be drawn from the results presented (Mohammad, 2022). Specifically, the results revealed that social media marketing and email marketing has had the greatest positive correlation with customer loyalty at $p<0.05$. This is in line with the global practice of tailored and interesting content in social sites such as Instagram, and Facebook and meaningful emails to customers.

To support these findings, secondary data and case studies from around the world should be considered. For instance, Tesco and Carrefour, major global supermarket chain retailers have effectively adopted integrating loyalty drive digital marketing techniques including use of pocket applications with incentives for first-ever, buy online offers, and social site promotions targeted at generating community (Reinartz, 2006). These cases confirm that Irish supermarkets might have even more rooms for innovation. However, looking at the other cases of retail digital marketing like fashion or electronics retail, similar notions—like influencer marketing and gamification— become transferable. Similar comparison could help Irish supermarket to work out how to use ideas with appeal to different demographic groups (Albors-Garrigos, 2020).

In the future, digital marketing is expected to change considerably, and this can lead to improved propositions for customers. Technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning may help supermarkets tailor shopping experiences for individual consumers based on forecasts. Also, marriages with mobile service providers may make consummate shopping experiences like unified payment mechanisms or geo-targeting promotions. Newer social media application, especially TikTok, and other relatively newer applications trending among the younger generation can be a gold mine when it comes to increasing brand loyalty through engaging and real content. While the growth of digital marketing advances in complexity, Irish supermarkets have to be ready for making new important shifts that not only ensure customer loyalty but also attract new consumers within the highly competitive Irish chain.

Chapter 07- Conclusion

7.1 Summary

The main research question and five sub-questions for this research included: This research intended to determine the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty within the supermarket industry of Ireland. The findings were quite informative as to the effects of social media marketing, mobile marketing, email marketing, and content marketing on customer loyalty. The relationship between social media marketing and other factors was also positive, showing how it could help in achieving lively and customer involving contact. There was also evidence of the effectiveness of mobile marketing to customer loyalty and convenience through personalization, which strengthens the user experiences (Cheung, Pires and Rosenberger, 2020). Email marketing was identified as a potent medium in cultivating loyalty generated by periodic and pointed message delivery while in content marketing there is merely no statistically large difference to precious to indicate that its present usage in the supermarket sector is appropriate for the consumers.

All the sub-questions asked were enhanced fully and responded to through the use of statistical data. These real-time interactions and emotionally engagement were proven to enhance the benefits of brand affinity and customers' repeat purchase through the use of social media marketing. Within the communication aspect, it became easy for the clients to be reached through mobile marketing and this goes well with the customers' demands for readily accessible services. According to this study, email marketing significantly helps in customer retention, while for content marketing, a kind of readjustment is presumably needed in long-term strategic planning (Tarnanidis, 2024). Together, these results provide the affirmative answer to the main research question, which states that digital marketing tactics have a quantifiable influence in terms of customer loyalty, with differences by channel in effectiveness.

The work also extends the knowledge of the adoption of digital marketing strategies and its implications in the [supermarket] industry while underscoring the central function of deploying multi-faceted digital tools to perform effectively. As with any study, there are elements that can be fine-tuned further, which this research has also explicitly indicated with respects to improving content marketing strategies. The recommendation restates the emphasis on the need to have strategies that are much closer to the needs of customers, as well the proper use and extension of technological

breakthroughs that take place in the extended digital environment within which the firm operates (Kose and Sert, 2017).

The research outcomes of the present study underpin the extent to which different digital marketing approaches are relevant to customer loyalty in the Irish supermarket industry, with special attention to social media, mobile, and email promotion. Although there was modest statistical evidence of content marketing on loyalty, its contribution should not be completely negated since it is part of a bigger picture (Khoa and Huynh, 2023). The research with one hundred respondents on a big scale proved that digital tools should be applied in relation to building and maintaining customer relationships, especially among the younger population of 18 to 40 years. Based on the concepts provided in academic literature review section it is evident that issues such as personalization, timely engagement and integration of multiple platforms can significantly improve customer experience (Rijitha , 2021). Such examples as Tesco Clubcard and Aldi's successful social media campaigns serve as proof about how targeted solutions can result in realistic rewards. The study supplements the emerging body of knowledge of digital marketing strategies with guidance useful for Irish supermarkets to fine-tune their marketing strategies (Shastri, 2023). Subsequently, practitioners should encourage creative campaigns, reach out to unconventional media approaches and implement techniques with lasting potential in order to sustain competitive advantage in a continuously evolving retail market.

7.2 Limitations

However, this research has the following limitation that ought to be acknowledged. First, the study conducted on supermarket sector in Ireland which means that wide generalization of the finding are not possible in other sector or region of Ireland. Thus, although the research results can explain the connection between the digital marketing strategies implementation and customer loyalty at least in this context, the results cannot guarantee the same tendencies in other markets with the different consumption patterns and competition levels.

Second, this study employed a convenient sampling technique, although it was reasonable and convenient, this technique may have led to selection prejudice. There

is a limit to the number of respondents which is 100, though statistically accepted but it may not be large enough to encompass the cross section of all the customers in the supermarket chains all over Ireland. This limitation can potentially make validity of the findings questionable when taken at the whole population level.

Third, the study is based on the data obtained using the method of self-questions which were posted in the electronic form. It might be due to: the tendency of respondent to give answers that are perceived as acceptable by society, respondents might have inaccurate perception of their perceptions, or respondents have not fully understood some questions in the survey. In this way, the collected data may not represent real behavior or attitudes of consumers accurately.

Finally, the study targeted only four kinds of digital marketing; social media marketing, mobile marketing, content marketing and email marketing while there could be other strategies, for instance SEO or influencer marketing that could have significant influence. This makes it possible to ignore other parameters that are contributing to customer loyalty in the supermarket segment. This research could be improved in future by covering a wider area and involved using different research methods in order to come up with an overall conclusion concerning the subject.

7.3 Future directions

It is recommended, therefore, that the effects of more recent innovations like AI, AR, and big data analytics on digital marketing and customer retention should be the subject of future study. These technologies have the capability to expand the level of customer engagement and the level of personalization. The scanning of other retail sectors or countries would help in the comparison and the consequent generalization of the research outcomes. Furthermore, it might be possible to identify numerous factors in this connection, including the influence of economical situations and cultural impacts on the results that are received after launching the digital marketing campaigns to increase the customer loyalty.

Thus, more long-term studies could be helpful in determining how the customer loyalty constant utilization of digital marketing approaches influences and changes. However, another method, like interview of professionals in marketing department and the focus group with customers, can bring deeper understanding of the attitudes

and difficulties linked with the digital marketing. Another significant avenue for future research is the combined effect of sustainable activities and digital marketing for developing customer loyalty as the role of sustainability increases in organizations.

7.4 Recommendations

Accordingly, the following marketing recommendations are given for supermarket players in Ireland: There is a need to implement an Omni-channel approach to digital marketing with a focus on consumer insights and the potential synergies between the various marketing communication channels. Supermarkets should also consciously work on making its general social media marketing more engaging by designing fun campaigns that built around customer values of social responsibility and other socially relevant topics such as the environment and community work. There is a need to identity different avenues other than promotions through social media platforms hence the need to build emotional connection.

For mobile marketing, supermarkets should extend the application of place-based services and customized messages to increase usability and utility. The design of new generation mobile apps that would have such features as easy payment options such as digital wallet, loyalty programs and easy navigation can go a long way in enhancing customer experiences. Email marketing must be made even more granular with a view toward running highly personalized campaigns based on choice and past purchases to be relevant and sustaining over the long term.

Marketing content delivery approaches have to be overhauled to fit within the expectations of customers. The content that super market should deploy in engaging the customers should be value driven for instance educational blogs, videos, and super market's success stories in the community. In addition, the use of measures that include comprehensive tools like analytics will assist supermarkets to explore customer behavior deeply and come up with better digital marketing strategies. Through systemic analysis of the configuration of supermarket players, therefore, it is possible not only to boost customer retention but also to foster a more sustainable growth path in a landscape where a range of new and digital players are emerging.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

This data will be gathered for the research, the topic "*To analyze the effect of digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty in supermarkets in the supermarkets sector in Ireland*". The data provided by you are considered as strictly confidential.

Section one

<u>Demographic analysis</u>

1. Gender

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

2. Age (years)

Between 18-25

Between 26-30

Between 31-35

Between 36-40

3. Educational level

Primary education

Secondary education

Diploma

Degree

Other

4. What is your marital status?

Married

Unmarried

Divorced

5. What is your average monthly income range? (in €)

Below 2500

Between 2500- 3000

Between 3000-3500

Between 3500-4000

Above 4000

Section 02

State your agreement upon these statements.

Strongly agree- SA

Agree- A

Neutral- N

Disagree- D

Strongly disagree- SD

Independent variables	SA	A	N	D	SD
Social media marketing					
6. I use social media to follow the retail sector regarding grocery products (Laksamana, 2018)					
7. What I see on social media makes me interest to buy new products (Laksamana, 2018)					
8. I often interact with my favourite retail brands on Instagram, Facebook, etc. (Laksamana, 2018)					
9. Promotions and discounts on social media influence my purchases. (Laksamana, 2018)					
Mobile Marketing					
10. I receive direct messages from retailers about new products and deals.					
11. A user-friendly smartphone app from my favorite retailers adds convenience.					
12. I receive SMS reminders from some retailers about their sales and promotions.					
13. I buy more from a company's mobile site because of these discounts and offers.					
Content marketing					
14. Retail brand blogs and articles teach me about their products.					
15. Retail companies that deliver high-quality, relevant information are more trustworthy via contents					
16. Retail brands with educational or entertaining content interest me.					
17. The information in the blogs and articles that retail brands post helps me learn more about their products.					

Email marketing					
18. I often interact with marketing emails from retail brands.					
19. Personalized emails make me feel valued customer.					
20. Discounts and exclusive offers via emails encourage me to purchase those retail brands.					
21. I find valuable contents from email marketing contents					
Dependent variable					
Customer loyalty					
22. I enjoy shopping with them again at the companies that impressed me.					
23. I am most likely to promote my favorite retail brands to friends and family					
24. I like retail brands with largely favorable experiences.					
25. I would buy a brand again despite competing companies selling the same things.					