

# Promotion Tools in the Promotional Mix: Traditional, Modern and Artificial Intelligence-Based Approaches

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## **Abstract**

*Against the backdrop of Artificial Intelligence development and its application in the marketing policy of companies, a reassessment and update for specialized literature on promotion mix represents an opportune contribution. Therefore, the paper presents a literature review that highlights the transition from traditional promotion techniques to those in the online environment, with additions related to AI functions. The findings suggest that the core purpose of promotional tools remained unchanged, while the environment in which they operate has evolved through the incorporation of AI functionalities. Some of AI-based functionalities on online promotion tools are big data analysis, automatic campaign management, consumer experience personalization, chatbot interactions, content generation and SEO (search engine optimization) which makes them more effective. This information can be used by marketers, managers and organizations that want to improve their competitiveness in a rapidly and continuously evolving digital environment.*

**Keywords:** *promotional mix, online promotion tools, Artificial Intelligence, marketing platforms.*

**JEL classification:** M31; M37.

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## **1. Introduction**

In more and more advertising companies and marketing departments, investments are being made in artificial intelligence. If the traditional marketing mix, such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing, has long played a very important role in influencing consumer behaviour, however, artificial intelligence is leading to a change in the way in which, for example, promotional tools are used and optimised.

The specialised literature mentions both traditional and online promotion methods, without necessarily drawing a parallel between them. In addition, recent studies in the field show the increasing presence of Artificial Intelligence in the implementation of marketing campaigns. For this reason, this paper aims to inform stakeholders about how the marketing mix has evolved and to conduct a

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comparative analysis of its components to determine whether they have been replaced or have become complementary.

## 2. The promotional mix in the context of marketing changes

Starting from the 5 components of the promotional mix within the marketing mix: „*advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, direct and digital marketing*”, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2018: 424-426), a more specific classification will be realised, based on the role and objectives it holds each promotion technique, to find a better correspondence with online promotion tools.

In the past, companies could only promote their products and services through the following techniques and tools:

*Advertising* by using billboards, leaflets, brochures and advertisements in newspapers or magazines (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, pp. 414-416).

*Media promotion* through advertising campaigns broadcast on radio and television stations, reaching a wide audience (Stăncioiu et al., 2013).

*Sales promotion* by applying price discounts, offering coupons and vouchers, free samples, contests and raffles, and promotional packages (Blattberg & Neslin, 1990).

*Public Relations* by doing press conferences, press releases and interviews in order to build and protect the reputation of an organisation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

*Event marketing*, which involves participating in fairs, exhibitions, conferences, and workshops, as well as corporate events, to present products and interact directly with customers (Stăncioiu et al., 2013).

*Personal recommendations*: that is, "word of mouth" communication (Butt, 2026; Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988, cited in Jansen et al., 2009), which ensures an effective form of promotion.

*Telemarketing*: the direct contact of potential customers by telephone to provide information about products (Moraes et al., 2015; Coppett & Voorhees, 1985).

*Personal selling* is carried out through sales agents who interact directly with customers, aiming to convince and stimulate purchase (Habel, Alavi and Linsenmay, 2021; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

These methods have adapted over time according to technology and consumer behaviour and have become:

*Online advertising* (pay-per-click) is implemented through paid campaigns on platforms such as Google Ads, Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, and TikTok Ads, which can target specific audiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

*Web marketing* means the search engine optimisation (SEO) strategies to attract online consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

*Content marketing* refers to the creation of blogs, vlogs, and articles to inform, attract and involve the target audience (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

*Social media promotion* involves promoting products or services through platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, which facilitate closer customer interaction (Tuten & Solomon, 2018, p. 21).

*Online sales promotion* represents the use of digital tools such as discount codes, digital coupons, online cashback, digital bundles and giveaways to quickly stimulate the purchase of products and services (Crespo-Almendros, Del Barrio-García, 2016).

*Digital Public Relations (Digital PR)* is the use of digital platforms to manage public relations, build a brand's online reputation, and communicate with target audiences, including journalists, influencers, and online communities (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

*Online event marketing* consists of organising online events such as virtual fairs, online exhibition platforms, online launches, livestreams (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram), webinars, online conferences (Zoom, Teams, Meets), online workshops, live courses, etc. (Orzan et al., 2021).

*Online recommendations* (Electronic Word-of-Mouth), which means „any positive or negative statements made by potential, current or former consumers about a product or company, available to a multitude of people via the Internet”. Examples of online recommendations (e-WOM) are „reviews, comments, posts, stories and vlogs” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Zhu & Zhang, 2010; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Chiu et. al., 2025).

*Influencer marketing* involves collaborating with influencers to promote products through their social accounts (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017).

*E-mail marketing* means sending newsletters and personal offers via e-mail to maintain contact with customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

*Online personal selling* is carried out through online consultants who interact directly with the customer using digital channels (chat, email, video calls, online platforms) and who aim to convince, advise and close a sale (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019) and is also known, according to Ancillai et al. (2019), as social selling.

These promotional techniques are included, according to Kotler et al. (2017) and Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), in digital marketing as part of the promotional mix.

To better see the correspondence between traditional and online promotion methods, techniques and tools, a table was created. The methods have kept their purpose and objectives, but the promotion tools have changed.

**Correspondence between traditional and online promotion methods, techniques and tools**

**Table 1**

Traditional promotion methods, techniques and tools	Online promotion methods, techniques and tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advertising →</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online advertising, digital marketing, content marketing</li> </ul>

<b>Traditional promotion methods, techniques and tools</b>	<b>Online promotion methods, techniques and tools</b>
Billboards	Online banners (display ads), website ads
Flyers	Social media posts, e-mail newsletters
Brochures	Presentation websites, landing pages
Advertisements in newspapers	Online sponsored articles, Google search ads (pay-per-click)
Advertisements in magazines	Blog ads
Posters	Visual posts on Instagram, Facebook Ads
Printed catalogues	Online stores, interactive digital catalogues
▪ Mass-Media promotion →	▪ Social media promotion, influencer marketing
TV commercials	Video ads on social media
Radio commercials	Podcast ads, Spotify ads
TV sponsorships	Influencer marketing
Teleshopping	Live shopping, livestreams on TikTok
▪ Public relations →	▪ Digital PR
Printed press releases	Online press releases, digital PR
▪ Event marketing (offline) →	▪ Online event marketing
Trade fairs and exhibitions	Virtual fairs, online exhibition platforms
Conferences and seminars	Webinars, online conferences
Workshops	Online workshops, live courses
Corporate events	Virtual events, online team-building
Event sponsorships	Digital sponsorships
Fundraising campaigns	Crowdfunding, e-commerce with a charitable component, "Donate" buttons on the website
Charity events	Charity livestream
▪ Personal recommendations →	▪ Online recommendations (e-WOM), influencer marketing
Recommendations between friends and family	Online reviews
Direct discussions about products	Comments on social networks
Verbal shared experiences	Posts, stories, vlogs
Local reputation	Online reputation (ratings)
Influence of opinion leaders	Influencer marketing
▪ Telemarketing →	▪ E-mail marketing, Messengers, Chat-support
Personalised offers by phone, sales by phone	E-mail marketing, Direct messages (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram DM)
Call-center	Chat-centre/ online support
▪ Sales promotion →	▪ Online sales promotion
Price reductions applied at the shelf	Price reductions are applied on e-commerce platforms.

Traditional promotion methods, techniques and tools	Online promotion methods, techniques and tools
Coupons	Digital vouchers/discount codes
Free samples	Free trials / online demos
Prize contests	Social media prize contests
Raffles	Online Giveaways
Promotional packages	Digital bundles
Loyalty programs	Online loyalty programs (points, customer accounts)
Tastings/demonstrations	Webinars / live demos
▪ Personal selling →	▪ Online personal selling
Face-to-face meeting	Video call, negotiation via email, chat
Sales agent	Consultant online/ live chat

*Source:* Authors contribution

### 3. How Artificial Intelligence was implemented in the promotional mix

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the field of computer science that aims to design and implement systems capable of exhibiting intelligent behaviours similar to those of humans (Russell & Norvig, 2016).

It appeared in the 1950s, when researchers began developing algorithms and models capable of imitating cognitive processes. Over the decades, AI has developed significantly, benefiting from advances in hardware, machine learning algorithms, and the abundance of available data (big data). The AI revolution was driven in particular by the development of deep learning techniques, which enable systems to learn from large datasets using artificial neural networks (Russell & Norvig, 2021).

Nowadays, AI influences many areas, such as health, finance, transportation, education, and marketing. In marketing, AI is transforming how companies interact with customers, especially in promotion policy. It is already known from the previous subtitle that promotion methods, techniques, and tools have moved from offline to online. In this part of the paper, the particularities that online promotion tools will gain with the implementation of AI will be analysed.

The first particularity of AI-assisted platforms concerns user experience personalisation. With the help of artificial intelligence, algorithms can analyse users' previous search and purchase behaviour and provide product or service recommendations based on their needs and preferences (Ricci, Rokach and Shapira, 2015; Wedel & Kannan, 2016). Also, AI can create personalised content to make the promotion more attractive and relevant to consumers (Stoica, Vegheş & Orzan, 2015).

The second characteristic of AI-assisted platforms is process automation. AI can automate repetitive tasks in marketing campaigns, such as email sending and social media management, to save time and resources (Davenport et al., 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

The third characteristic of AI-assisted platforms concerns the ability to obtain large volumes of data and perform predictive analysis. This allows marketers to spot new trends and adjust marketing strategies more effectively (Davenport & Harris, 2007). In addition, artificial intelligence can identify user sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) to learn about brand perception from reviews and comments posted on social media (Liu, 2012). Online advertising platforms, for example, use AI to predict which ads will have the greatest impact.

The fourth particularity of AI-assisted platforms is instant interaction through 24/7 chatbots dedicated to customer service, providing constant assistance to clients by quickly answering frequently asked questions and resolving their issues. This functionality improves customer satisfaction and increases efficiency (Guha et al., 2021).

The fifth attribute of AI-assisted platforms is content creation. AI algorithms can generate automatic content for articles, blog posts and product descriptions, saving marketers time (Davenport et al., 2020). Also, AI can optimise SEO strategies by identifying the most relevant keywords and suggesting ways to increase online visibility (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

The sixth feature of AI-assisted platforms is performance measurement and campaign optimisation. This allows monitoring performance indicators such as conversion rate, cost per acquisition, click-through rate or user engagement. In terms of campaign optimisation, artificial intelligence algorithms can manage A/B tests to determine which campaign variants are most effective, thereby making decision-making data-driven, reducing uncertainty, and maximising return on investment in promotion (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Davenport et al., 2020).

The seventh feature of AI is the improvement of strategic decisions. AI provides data-driven insights that help companies make strategic decisions about products, prices, and brand development. Marketers can use AI to simulate different scenarios and assess the potential impact of different marketing strategies (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The development of artificial intelligence is associated with a new industrial revolution, but this time it is a technological one. It has begun to be implemented in numerous fields, changing the way professional activities are carried out. Marketing, already a volatile and constantly evolving field, is among the first fields to embrace the benefits of artificial intelligence.

The paper focuses exclusively on promotional policy in marketing. It draws a parallel between both traditional techniques and tools and the online ones used by companies to promote their products and services. Then, the characteristics of new online promotion tools that are based on artificial intelligence are analysed.

So, starting from the 5 components of the promotional mix within the marketing mix: „advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling,

direct and digital marketing”, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2018, pp. 424-426), a new classification more specific, based on the role and objectives it holds each promotional technique, in order to find a better correspondence with online promotion tools, was realised. Traditional promotional techniques are: advertising, media promotion, sales promotion, public relations, event marketing, personal recommendations, telemarketing, and personal selling. Then, online promotional techniques include: online advertising, web marketing, content marketing, social media promotion, online sales promotion, digital PR (digital public relations), online event marketing, online recommendations (electronic word-of-mouth), influencer marketing, e-mail marketing, and online personal selling.

For example, in online environment, online banners (display ads) took place to billboards, flyers were transformed in social media posts, brochures became websites and landing pages, advertisements from magazines are now blog ads, posters are visual posts on Instagram, Facebook, telemarketing became e-mail marketing, instant messenger, call-center was replaced to chat-center, prize contests turned into giveaways, mass-media promotion, became social media promotion, where tv commercials are playing as video ads on YouTube, Facebook or Tik Tok and so on.

However, with the implementation of artificial intelligence in promotional policy, online promotion tools have acquired additional functionalities, making them more efficient. These functionalities based on artificial intelligence include: process automation, user experience personalisation, data analysis and forecasting, immediate interaction through chatbots, automatic content creation, campaign automation and optimisation through performance measurement, and improved strategic decision-making. It can be concluded that, comparing traditional and online promotion tools, a shift is observed from one-way, mass communication, specific to traditional promotion, to two-way, interactive, personalised, and measurable communication, characteristic of the digital environment, aspects that are difficult to achieve through traditional channels. However, the two tool categories are not exclusive; they complement each other. Maximum promotion efficiency is achieved through the coherent integration of traditional and online tools within a complex marketing communication strategy, capable of capitalising on both the results obtained with classic promotion tools, reaching different consumer categories, and those in the online environment, which offer flexibility, interactivity, personalisation, and automation for users.

The impact of AI on marketing continues to grow, changing the way brands interact with consumers.

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