

STRATEGIC MARKETING IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic is due to large-scale changes in the automotive industry, in particular, active digitalization, transformation of communication channels and the formation of new consumer demands. The modern buyer expects not only a high-quality product, but also fast, personalized and interactive interaction with the brand in the digital environment. Promotion strategies that take into account the behavioral patterns of the online audience, the growing role of social networks, content marketing platforms and the possibilities of targeted advertising are of particular importance. The problem lies in the insufficient adaptation of strategic marketing to the modern conditions of the Ukrainian market, where traditional approaches dominate, not always effective in the digital age. *The purpose* of the study is to identify effective approaches to promoting the Volkswagen Caddy and Multivan models in the context of digital transformations and a competitive environment. The object is marketing in the automotive industry, the subject is promotion tools adapted to digital channels and local features of the Ukrainian market. To achieve the goal, a set of *methods* was used: statistical and comparative analysis of official sales data, content analysis of advertising presentations and campaigns, as well as expert surveys of automotive business specialists and marketers. *Value / originality.* The study covers the period 2019-2024, which allows us to trace the impact of the implemented strategies on sales dynamics and the level of recognition of models among consumers. The author analyzed the brand's marketing strategies, determined the effectiveness of various presentation formats and the role of visual content in the purchase decision-making process. The most effective promotion channels were also identified, including integrated communication platforms, video marketing, personalized email newsletters and SMM campaigns. *The results* of the study showed that an effective content strategy should be implemented as a flexible system that involves defining business goals, in-depth analysis of the target audience, building a content architecture, selecting relevant formats and channels, planning and regular analytical testing. It is shown that the choice of content formats should be subordinated to the dominant campaign metric: to increase traffic – use viral videos, to maintain attention – long reads and narrative series, to increase conversion – interactive content and online test drives. The conclusions provide practical recommendations for adapting marketing approaches to local conditions, digital trends and the specifics of Ukrainian consumer behavior in the automotive market segment.

Keywords: strategic marketing, automotive industry, Volkswagen, brand promotion, marketing strategy, digital tools, sales analysis, consumer behavior, Ukrainian market, brand communications.

JEL Classification: M31, L62, M10

1. Introduction

The modern automotive industry is undergoing a period of profound transformation driven by technological innovation, changing consumer preferences, and global challenges. The transition to electromobility, the introduction of digital technologies in production and sales, and growing competition require automakers to rethink traditional approaches to marketing.

These changes are particularly noticeable in Ukraine. According to the Ukravtoprom

Association, Ukrainians purchased more than 69,600 new passenger cars in 2024, which is 14% more than in 2023. This not only indicates increased consumer interest in new technologies and models, but also points to the need for thoughtful, strategically sound approaches to product promotion.

In this context, the problem arises of the compatibility of traditional marketing tools with modern market requirements, which necessitates their adaptation to new economic

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conditions. In practice, many companies face difficulties in adapting to the digital reality, which negatively affects their position in the competitive environment. According to the results of the study, almost half of the companies actively involved in digital marketing carry out relevant activities on an ongoing basis, but do not have a clearly formulated strategic concept, which complicates the achievement of long-term goals. At the same time, consumer expectations are growing, with consumers increasingly demanding a personalized approach, prompt feedback, and openness in communication processes. In these conditions, companies are forced to implement innovative marketing tools, including artificial intelligence-based solutions, big data processing technologies, and comprehensive omnichannel models of interaction with the target audience.

2. Analysis of Recent Studies and Publications

Issues of strategic marketing in the context of digital transformation and global change are actively researched in domestic and foreign scientific discourse. Dobryanska V.V. and Galayda T.O. (Dobryanska & Galayda, 2021) in their textbook focus on the specifics of marketing in the manufacturing sector, emphasizing the need to adapt strategic approaches to modern conditions. Mnykh O. and Dovgun O. (Mnykh & Dovgun, 2023) consider innovative vectors for the development of marketing research by global companies, emphasizing the importance of strategic specialization. Litvinenko P. and Litvinenko N. (Litvinenko & Litvinenko, 2024) explore the possibilities of strategic alliances as a tool for strengthening international presence, which is also relevant for the automotive industry. Kushnirenko O.M. (Kushnirenko, 2023) analyzes decentralization processes and their impact on the modernization of economically important sectors. P. Pererva, O. Maslak, T. Kobeleva, V. Kuchinsky, and S. Ilyashenko (Pererva et al., 2021) focus on effective management tools, particularly in the areas of intellectual property and logistics.

Special attention should be paid to works that highlight the digital aspects of strategic marketing. Petrukha N., Mazur A., Kushneruk O., Stakhova K., and Tarasenko M. (Petrukha et al., 2021) consider marketing steps in the context of a circular economy, while Zhyvko Z. and

Petrukha N. (Zhyvko & Petrukha, 2023) focus on the development of digital competencies – a critical component of marketing strategies in the digital environment. Ugadnikova O.I., Vinogradov V.V., and Pygida D.A. (Ugodnikova, Vinogradov & Pygida, 2024) substantiate the growing role of marketing in social transformations, which is also reflected in consumer behavior. Among international studies, the publication by Cataltepe V., Kamasak R., Bulutlar F., and Palalar Alkan D. (Cataltepe, 2023) deserves attention, as it reveals a close connection between marketing capabilities and the performance of companies in the automotive industry. Hu L. and Basiglio A. (Hu & Basiglio, 2024) demonstrate the effectiveness of CRM and big data analytics in enhancing customer focus, while Zainudin R., Mahdzan N.S. and Mohamad N.N. (Zainudin, Mahdzan & Mohamad, 2021) analyze the relationship between internationalization and the financial performance of automotive companies. Lutz C.J. and Bodendorf F. (Lutz & Bodendorf, 2020) propose a methodology for analyzing the competitive environment of the industry based on open sources, which can be applied in strategic marketing planning.

3. Identification of Previously Unresolved Parts of the General Problem

Despite a significant number of studies, insufficient attention has been paid to the adaptation of strategic marketing to the conditions of the domestic automotive market, in particular using specific brands as examples. There is a lack of work that integrates digital tools, consumer behavior, and sales statistics into a single strategic planning model. The issue of effective positioning of automotive brands in the context of growing competition, economic instability, and dynamic changes in the structure of demand remains particularly relevant.

4. Formulation of the Article's Objectives (Setting the Task)

The purpose of the article is to identify effective strategic approaches to promoting automotive products in Ukraine in the context of digital transformation, using the Volkswagen brand as an example, taking into account market dynamics, consumer changes, and current marketing trends.

The objectives of the article are:

1. To analyze the current state and trends in the development of strategic marketing in the automotive industry.
2. To study Volkswagen's marketing strategies in the Ukrainian market in 2019–2024.
3. To assess the impact of new model presentations on sales using statistical data.
4. Identify key tools and promotion channels in the digital economy.
5. To formulate recommendations for improving strategic marketing in the automotive industry of Ukraine.

5. Results

In the 21st century, strategic marketing in the automotive industry has undergone significant changes under the influence of globalization processes, technological breakthroughs, and changes in consumer behavior. The traditional promotion model, based mainly on product characteristics and linear communication, has gradually given way to comprehensive approaches focused on digital interaction, individualization of offerings, and sustainable development (Mnykh & Dovgun, 2023). Car manufacturers are forced to take into account not only the competitive environment, but also socio-economic factors

that directly affect demand, in particular the growth of consumer environmental awareness, income dynamics, the introduction of government incentives for electric vehicles, etc. (Kushnirenko, 2023).

One of the defining trends is the transition to digital marketing transformation. The use of big data, artificial intelligence (AI), automated CRM systems, and personalized communications enables companies to better understand customer needs and respond quickly to market changes (Cataltepe, Kamasak, Bulutlar & Palalar Alkan, 2023). The omnichannel approach is becoming increasingly important, where interaction with the customer takes place simultaneously through several synchronized channels – online platforms, mobile applications, social networks, physical car dealerships, etc. An analysis of passenger car sales in Ukraine for 2022–2024 showed an increase in demand for Toyota, Renault, Skoda, and BMW brands. In contrast, Volkswagen recorded a decline in sales in 2024 compared to the previous year, which may signal the need to review its approach to promotion in the local market.

The focus on sustainable development and corporate social responsibility is becoming a hot topic. Manufacturers, including Volkswagen, are increasingly incorporating environmental and socially significant principles into their

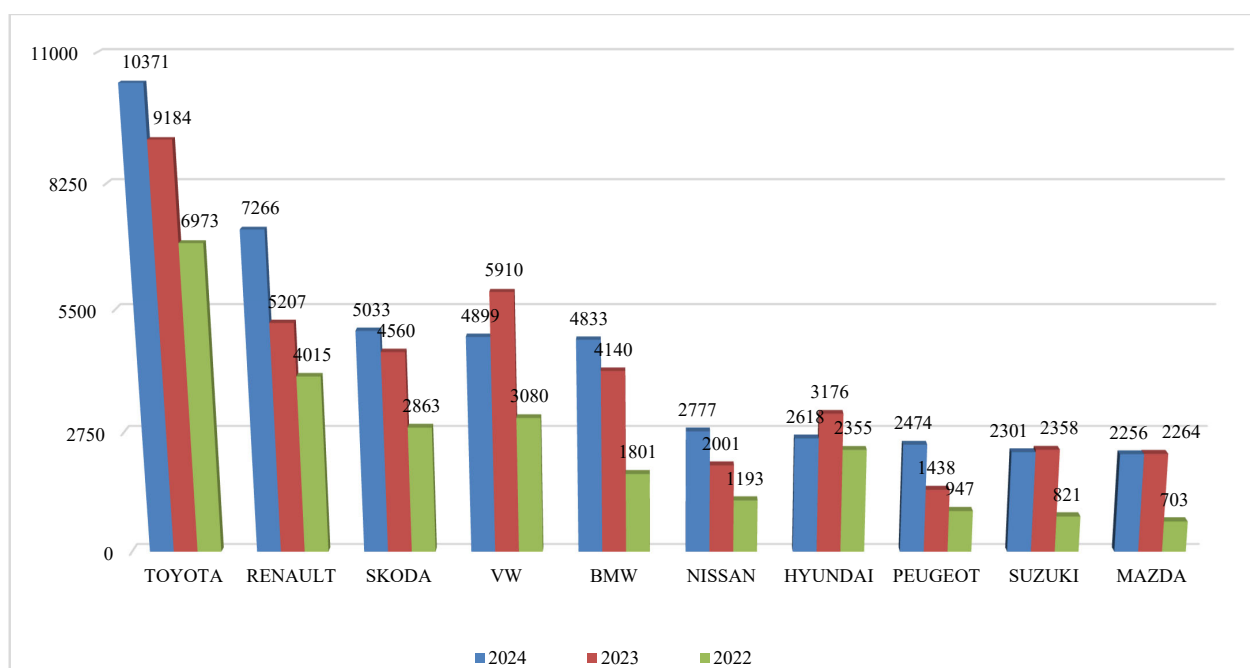


Figure 1. Sales dynamics of leading car brands in Ukraine in 2022–2024 (based on the TOP 10 results for 2024)

Source: summarized by the author based on Association of Ukrainian Automobile Manufacturers "Ukravtoprom", (n.d.)

marketing policies (Ugodnikova, Vinogradov & Pygida, 2024). The use of materials with minimal environmental impact, the promotion of electric vehicle solutions, and adherence to ethical standards in communication with customers shape a positive brand perception and contribute to strengthening consumer confidence. ESG components are now seen not only as a response to external requirements, but as an internal resource for strategic advantage.

Personalization as a new standard of marketing interaction deserves special attention. Today's consumer expects not just a product, but a solution tailored to their lifestyle, financial capabilities, and values. This encourages companies to implement individual model configurations, targeted advertising, and interactive content. In response to these challenges, strategic marketing is becoming increasingly analytically oriented and flexible, allowing companies to build long-term competitive advantages even in a highly saturated market.

Thus, modern strategic marketing in the automotive industry is a complex, multi-component process that includes digital innovation, environmental responsibility, customer focus, and adaptation to global challenges. Its effectiveness directly affects the competitiveness of the brand, making this area extremely relevant for both researchers and industry practitioners.

Between 2019 and 2024, Volkswagen's approach to promoting its products on the Ukrainian market changed significantly, reflecting its response to economic challenges, shifting consumer attitudes, and changes in the information space. In 2019, marketing activities focused primarily on traditional channels – participation in specialized exhibitions, local advertising projects, and support for dealer networks.

However, since 2020, amid the pandemic and restrictions on offline communications, the company has begun to actively implement digital solutions. This has manifested itself in an increased presence in the online space and the use of new formats for presentations and communications, particularly through social networks and video platforms.

In 2021 and 2022, the presentations of the Multivan and Caddy models played an important role, respectively. They were accompanied by informational support in the form of video reviews,

live broadcasts, test drives with bloggers, and an emphasis on family values and functionality, which allowed the brand to expand its audience.

During 2023-2024, Volkswagen became more active in the digital space, striving to make its service as convenient and personalized as possible. The brand launched a CRM solution, simplified online configuration and car ordering, and closely monitored user behavior to tailor advertising more accurately. This tactic is fully in line with the global trend toward digitization, personalized communications, a socially responsible image, and the use of various promotion channels. However, sales volumes declined in 2024, hinting at the need to adapt more subtly to Ukrainian realities, given regional demand characteristics and increased competition.

The presentation of new models is an important element of strategic marketing in the automotive industry, as it creates an informational reason for communication with the market, shapes consumer expectations, and stimulates purchasing activity. An analysis of Volkswagen's sales statistics in Ukraine in 2021-2024 allows us to trace the connection between the brand's activity in promoting new models and sales dynamics.

In June 2021, the updated Volkswagen Multivan was unveiled (Guest from the Future, n.d.). According to statistics from UkrAvtoprom, the second half of the year saw an increase in the brand's overall sales, which can be partly attributed to growing interest in the updated model. In March 2022, Volkswagen unveiled the new Caddy, emphasizing its versatility for family and commercial use. Despite the overall decline in the automotive market due to geopolitical factors, sales figures for this model showed positive dynamics compared to the previous period.

Between 2022 and 2024, Ukraine saw a gradual increase in sales of Volkswagen brand cars: from 3,080 units in 2022 to 4,899 in 2024. The highest figures were recorded in 2023, when sales reached 5,910 units. This temporary positive trend was most likely due to marketing activities carried out as part of the launch of new models, as well as the active use of digital tools and favorable sales conditions for consumers.

Thus, the statistics confirm that the launch of the updated Caddy and Multivan models had a positive impact on Volkswagen's sales dynamics in the

Ukrainian market, although the effect was limited in time.

This highlights the importance of planning marketing activities not only at the time of presentation, but also at subsequent stages of the product life cycle, ensuring that the target audience's interest is maintained.

In the digital age, marketing strategies are largely based on tools that allow to personalize the user experience, ensure flexible communication, and increase the effectiveness of customer interaction. Below are the main tools and channels used in strategic promotion (Fig. 2).

The use of these digital tools enables companies in the automotive industry not only to increase

brand visibility but also to effectively manage customer relationships. The comprehensive application of these channels facilitates adaptation to market changes and the building of sustainable competitive advantages.

Given the transformational processes in the global economy and the specifics of the Ukrainian market, strategic marketing in the automotive industry needs a systematic update. First of all, it is recommended to fully integrate digital technologies into all stages of marketing activities. This involves the active implementation of big data analytics systems, artificial intelligence for forecasting consumer demand, personalized CRM platforms, and communication automation

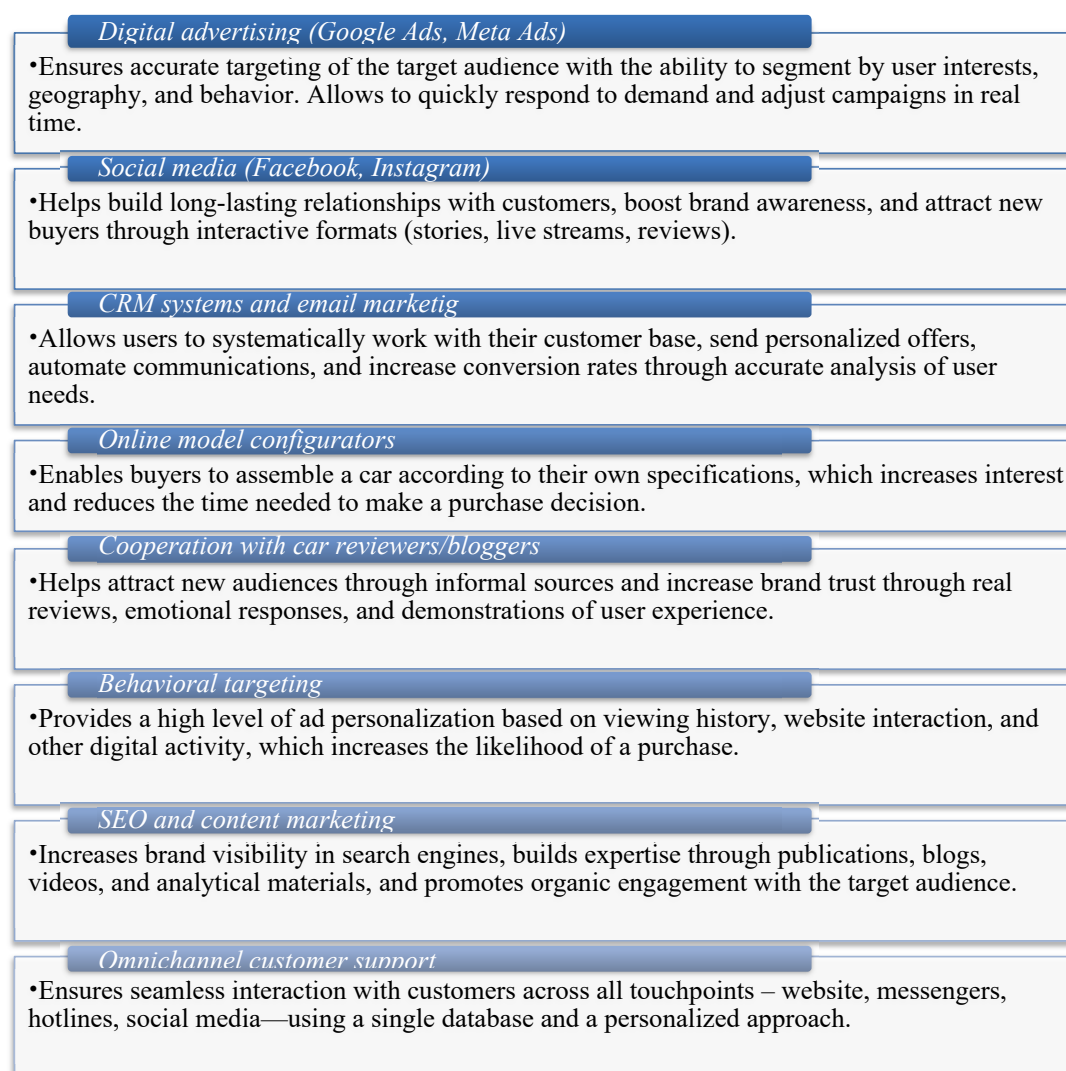


Figure 2. Key promotion tools and channels in the digital economy

Source: summarized by the author based on (Dobryanska & Galayda, 2021; Litvinenko & Litvinenko, 2024; Pererva et al, 2021)

programs, which not only allow for a quick response to changes in customer behavior but also reduce promotion costs (Hu & Basiglio, 2024).

The next strategic step should be the development of an omnichannel model of customer interaction. Ukrainian car manufacturers and importers must ensure continuous communication with buyers at all points of contact – from the official website to physical car dealerships, mobile applications, and social networks. This approach increases customer satisfaction and promotes long-term loyalty, especially in the premium and commercial transport segments (Zhyvko & Petrukha, 2023).

At the same time, an important component of improvement is an emphasis on the environmental friendliness and social responsibility of brands. The growing importance of ESG factors requires companies not only to create a "green" image, but also to actually implement sustainable technologies in production and promotion. Informing consumers about carbon footprints, the availability of environmentally friendly materials, or the use of renewable energy sources should become an integral part of the marketing strategy (Petrukha, Mazur, Kushneruk, Stakhova & Tarasenko, 2021).

Special attention should be paid to the localization of marketing strategies. Adapting global concepts to Ukrainian realities – taking into account cultural codes, regional characteristics, and the economic situation – increases the effectiveness of promotion and allows brands to better communicate with their target audience. It is also worth cooperating more actively with local influencers, auto experts, and industry communities: this strengthens trust in the brand and allows to create authentic content. In general, an effective marketing strategy for the Ukrainian automotive industry should be based on a combination of digital innovation, customer centricity, environmental principles, and the ability to quickly adapt to market changes. This

approach will not only boost sales but also secure a strong competitive position for global brands in the long term.

6. Conclusions

In the course of researching strategic marketing in the automotive industry using the example of the Volkswagen brand in Ukraine, it was found that modern market conditions require companies to be flexible, digitally adaptable, and consumer-oriented. Digitalization, the emergence of new communication channels, and the growing importance of environmental standards and social responsibility necessitate an update of classic approaches to promoting automotive products. Analysis of the Volkswagen Caddy and Multivan marketing campaigns confirmed the effectiveness of combining online tools, personalized strategies, and targeted interaction with the audience.

The study showed how sales changed before and after the launch of new models and how much consumers are influenced by digital channels and communication content. The analysis showed that omnichannel, deep analytics, and ESG agenda are integral factors of a successful marketing strategy. At the same time, it turned out that it is critically important to take into account local economic, social, and cultural characteristics for effective brand positioning in Ukraine.

Based on the research, recommendations were formulated for representatives of the automotive business on improving strategic marketing. In particular, this involves expanding the use of big data, CRM-s, digital content, and partner platforms that increase target audience engagement. It is also advisable to intensify research into changes in consumer behavior in the context of post-war recovery, which will allow marketers to respond more accurately to new demands of the Ukrainian market.

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Received on: 23th of October, 2025

Accepted on: 29th of November, 2025

Published on: 22th of December, 2025