


# Chapter 5

## Artificial Intelligence and Online Relationships in Small Businesses

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### ABSTRACT

*The digital transformation of markets has positioned Artificial Intelligence as a key tool in contemporary marketing management. However, small enterprises often face structural constraints that limit their adoption. This chapter analyses the influence of AI on digital marketing strategies in small firms, with a focus on social media. Using quantitative data from Portuguese small enterprises, the results show that the sector of activity significantly influences the adoption of digital marketing strategies. Despite financial and knowledge barriers, most firms recognise AI as increasingly important for improving campaign efficiency, personalising communication and supporting real-time marketing decisions. The study contributes to Marketing 5.0 and 6.0 research by extending the discussion of intelligent marketing to the context of small enterprises and offering practical insights for gradual AI integration.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Marketing has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from a product-oriented approach to a consumer-centred and relationship-driven discipline (Kotler & Keller, 2010). Initially focused on satisfying needs through profitable exchange, marketing progressively incorporated strategic tools designed to understand markets, coordinate organisational resources and create value for customers (Kotler et al., 2010; Kury & Gomes, 2013). As access to information expanded and consumers became more informed and demanding, organisations were required to adapt their strategies to increasingly competitive and dynamic environments. This shift reinforced the importance of customer-oriented thinking and continuous strategic innovation.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has further transformed marketing practices. The emergence of the Internet and digital platforms reshaped communication channels, enabling real-time interaction between organisations and consumers (Peretti et al., 2021). Digital marketing became a fundamental component of business strategy, particularly through social media platforms that facilitate visibility, engagement and direct communication. These platforms allow firms to analyse consumer behaviour, personalise content and strengthen relationships, thereby enhancing brand positioning in highly competitive digital environments.

More recently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative technology in digital marketing. AI enables organisations to collect, process and interpret large volumes of data efficiently, supporting strategic decision-making and campaign optimisation. Through algorithms capable of identifying patterns and predicting behaviours, AI facilitates personalisation, segmentation and automation processes that were previously resource-intensive (Antunes, 2023; Peretti et al., 2021). This technological evolution aligns with the broader Marketing 5.0 paradigm, which integrates advanced technologies to address complex consumer dynamics and deliver personalised experiences.

For small enterprises, integrating Artificial Intelligence presents both opportunities and challenges. While these firms rely on digital marketing and social media as primary communication channels, they often operate under structural constraints, including limited financial resources and restricted access to specialised knowledge (Kotler et al., 2010; Raupp & Janssen, 2023). Despite these limitations, AI holds significant potential to enhance competitiveness, improve customer relationships and reduce operational costs. However, the extent to which small enterprises adopt and integrate AI into their marketing strategies remains uneven.

In this context, the present study aims to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence on digital marketing strategies in small enterprises, particularly in social media environments. The research aims to identify the types of AI tools used, analyse firms' perceptions regarding their effectiveness, explore perceived

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