



# How has marketing evolved in the age of technology and big data and how are companies like Spotify applying this?

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## Abstract

From only seeing generalised commercials on newspapers, billboards and television, we are now living in a world where we can't even text our friends about wanting something without seeing it pop up as an advertisement later. Marketing has evolved significantly and is continuing to do so. Going from the plain old traditional marketing to a more interactive one, its importance is nowhere left to be wondered. It has, however, certainly gone through its fair share of up and downs with a sudden decrease in the marketing budgets of brands in recent years, and now with COVID, a gradual increase. With the rise of big data, the prevalence of personalised marketing has started to grow notably, with a lot of future implications for it. One company that uses personalised marketing to its advantage is Spotify, the success of which will be analysed in this paper using the AIDA model. Furthermore, there is also an evaluation of personalised marketing and a look into the potential advantages and drawbacks that it might bring with it.

**Keywords:** AIDA, Personalised Marketing, Spotify

## Introduction

Talking about something with our friends and casually seeing it pop up while we scroll through our social media the next day might just seem like a mere coincidence, but is it really? Our devices have been curated to show us things that we would be interested in, something known as marketing. While marketing can be simply defined as “the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising”, it has been highly misunderstood. Marketing is more than just advertising, it is not only about what happens once an innovation is ready to launch but about understanding the customer’s needs, wants, values and lives, therefore, building relationships with your audience while meeting your promise as a brand (Yohn, 2019).

Marketing has become a key factor in the development of any brand or product. It creates a sense of comfort, relating the audience to the product. As amusing as it sounds, marketing isn't cheap. Think of it yourself, do you really think

newspaper commercials would be a suitable option for a start-up company on a low budget? While high budgets are encouraged and will give more room for encouragement when it comes to traditional forms of marketing, digital marketing has evolved the landscape and ideology significantly. For example, platforms like Google and Facebook have no minimum barrier for entry; you could run a \$5 campaign on there if you wanted to. Furthermore, digital marketing has additional benefits like more targeted audience reach, a platform to stay connected with your customers and increased customer engagement, promoting its wide use in today's times (Patoli, 2021). Digital marketing can however be taken to the next level with a bit of spice. Personalising things to a customer's needs and wants can instantly make a product look more attractive and that is what companies are picking up on today making them deliver their goods and services through what is known as personalised marketing.

Personalised marketing is becoming increasingly popular, being applied by millions of companies around the world. Spotify, a widely used audio streaming service provider is a great example of one of the many using personalisation strategies. This audio streaming service provider keeps their audience engaged and feeling special with their wrapped campaigns; a feature that shows users their top artists, songs and podcasts of the year. Users are curious to know their own listening habits and there is a fun reveal component (Forbes, 2021). Even something as small as this can make someone feel distinctive, just like having your name written on your birthday cake.

Therefore, we can analyse that even though the need for marketing remains the same, the form in which it is taking place is changing over the years. In light of the above, the research question for this paper is "**How has marketing evolved in the age of technology and big data and how are companies like Spotify applying this?**" This paper aims to argue the importance of marketing and its evolution of it over the years while further discovering personalised marketing and its future potential through the example of Spotify.

### Why is marketing important for a business?

Peter Drucker once said, "Because its purpose is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two -- and only these two basic functions: marketing and innovation." It is no doubt that innovating new products can help progress a company but what's the point if no one knows about those products other than you? It is essential to understand that even though the world is awash in innovative products predominantly as a result of technological advancements - this is not enough for businesses to sustain; it is necessary to be paired with marketing.

Marketing gives a chance for the company to be heard, to be seen by the world. Without marketing, the company wouldn't have a voice (Fingerprintmarketing, 2018). It is nearly impossible for start-up companies to keep innovating new products without any forms of marketing, how would people even come to know of their existence in the first place? Marketing is a necessity for these innovative products as it is only when prospective customers will be made aware of the products in an attractive manner that the business will develop. Seeing a product advertised in an

appealing manner can undoubtedly be an eye-catcher, drawing us to the product. It's what makes us buy it, after all. And we don't always get what we expected, anyway. You'd be lying if you were to say that you've never ordered something from the internet out of complete excitement and when you received it, it wasn't totally a marketing gimmick. This is one of those strategies that big, or even small companies use to attract attention by making their products look more attractive on the internet than they actually are, tempting us to buy them. As a matter of fact, most of the start-up companies these days have started to invest in marketing and sales compared to engineering, innovation and servers where they used to before, proving its importance in today's time.

Regardless of the importance of marketing, in some recent years, there has been a decline in the importance of brands associated with marketing. For example, a 2018-2019 Gartner's CMO Spend Survey shows that marketing budgets have levelled off to an average of 11% of company revenue and companies such as Warner Bros. to retailers like Walmart and Starbucks have been cutting off on marketing staff. In association with the above, this is in fact, is very surprising but there are many reasons as to why this might be happening. In my opinion, Artificial Intelligence could be the foremost cause. Artificial intelligence (AI) is the ability of a computer or a robot controlled by a computer to do tasks that are usually done by humans (Copeland, 2021). This phenomenon is certainly starting to see a development in recent years and even more potential in the future. Think of it as a machine powered version of mankind's skills that can do pretty much humans can but, faster and on a larger scale (Business Insider, n.d.). The information AI can provide has no bounds- assistants are expected to use algorithms and predictive analytics to offer up information, goods, and services to customers. For instance, Instagram, a commonly used app amongst almost every teenager in today's world, utilises the power of Facebook's AI algorithm (Yohn, 2019). By helping marketers collect data, identify new customer segments, and create a more unified marketing and analytics system, it is no surprise that AI as we've seen is affecting marketing which has lost its powers in recent years and will likely continue to decline (Business Insider, n.d.).

The past year, however, has made marketing take a turn. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every aspect of our lives including the business world. Being stuck at home and having nothing to do, many people are moving to forms of online shopping resulting in a sore of internet sales. Moreover, this past year, companies and brands are starting to realise what their customers really want, shifting to a consumer-centric structure. What this means is that companies are finally starting to understand what marketing really is- that is creating value by building up a community, thereby, making the audience feel comfortable and being able to relate to what they might be buying.

### **An introduction to digital marketing and personalized marketing**

From going to a public bathroom and seeing a big poster advertised by some random hygiene company to repeatedly changing channels while watching television to avoid the tedious commercials break, almost every part of our lives is filled with some form of marketing, and what is funny is that we don't even realise it. While marketing can be

found in many forms, digital marketing can be seen to be gaining more prevalence day by day compared to other common forms of traditional marketing. Now the question arises- what even are these two? Well, it's simpler than you probably think. Digital marketing, also known as "online marketing" can be simply defined as advertising a brand or a product by reaching potential customers using the internet and other forms of digital communication (Mailchimp, 2021). Traditional marketing, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. Anything advertised using offline forms of communication such as print, broadcast, direct mail, phone, or outdoor advertising like billboards are all forms of traditional marketing (Carmicheal, 2019). Given the above, it's now easy to conclude that, an advertisement we would see somewhere like a public bathroom would come under forms of traditional marketing, while the television commercials we try to escape from are digital.

Almost everything is online now and adapting with time, so is marketing. Digital marketing is being preferred by companies all around the world and it's no surprise why as it does have many advantages. Take the most common problem faced by companies, money. No matter what you say, it's true, everyone does want to save up on the money where they can, and digital marketing provides just the solution. Not only is it a more cost-effective option but companies can actually track which of their marketing methods are the most effective, allowing them to refine and improve their strategy (Ballantine, 2018). Besides, digital marketing allows the companies to actually engage with their customers, something you can't do using traditional strategies. Digital marketing gives companies a chance to interact with their prospective customers through various digital means such as website comments, messages, reviews, and social media posts. There's no way you could be doing this using banners or billboards!

Another major issue faced with traditional marketing is you can't really choose the audience you want to attract. Hypothetically, if you were a footwear brand and you just released some cool trendy sneakers, what type of audience would you be looking for? Chances are, you'd probably be on the lookout for teenagers and young adults. While you can't actually choose the audience you want using billboards, broadcasts or newspapers, you certainly can use modern-day technology. Without any additional cost, digital marketing allows you to target individuals based on age, gender, income level, location, job title, interests and more (Patoli, 2021). While this form of marketing has been gaining more and more popularity each day, some companies still prefer traditional marketing over it. If you were the owner of a new start-up, what would you prefer, digital or traditional marketing?

Quick question- what is it that usually makes you buy a product? For me, personalisation is a deal maker. I get intrigued when I see something customised to my liking, it makes me feel like my interests and preferences are actually being taken into account. And I know for a fact that this isn't just me, people crave personalised experiences. Take something as simple as a pen stand or maybe, a pillowcase. That might sound like a silly gift to give someone but what if you got their initials carved on it? Or maybe got a picture of their favourite tv show or movie printed on it? It certainly does make it sound more interesting because now, the gift can only be theirs. Fortunately, modern-day technology allows us to make use of personalisation to make our products stand out, to attract attention.

Many times, companies deliver individualised content to recipients through data collection, analysis, and the use of automation technology. This is known as personalised marketing. The goal of personalised marketing is to communicate with each customer on a deeper level by engaging with them as an individual (Murray, 2017). This type of marketing does, however, require the collection of data from their customers in order to enhance their experience. While this might create privacy concerns, the majority according to a survey by Epsilon and GBH Insights does not seem to mind it. The survey found that the vast majority of respondents (80 percent) want personalization from retailers, providing an explanation for its growing practice.

### **Personalized marketing in action - SPOTIFY WRAPPED**

Music can often speak things that words themselves can't. From kids to senior citizens, everyone loves listening to music. Whether you're studying, cooking or simply taking a shower, music can make your experience 10x times more enjoyable. So, it's no surprise that this exquisite form of art is loved by people from all around the world, making it one of the most common universal cultural aspects of all human societies. In fact, the latest study from Nielsen Music shows that 90 percent of the population listens to music (Christman, 2017). Spotify, with nearly 365 million users each month is the world's biggest music streaming platform, from which 165 million are subscribers. This Sweden-based streaming music service was founded in the year 2006 in Stockholm, Sweden, by the great Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon. (Iqbal, 2021) Spotify continued to grow in popularity and in 2017 reached 140 million users, defeating its rival (i.e., Apple) which only gained 27 million users (Tricahyono et al., 2019). The reason for this is, Spotify offers a service that most music streaming providers don't, that is; operation on a freemium model (Iqbal, 2021). What this means is that Spotify leaves it up to its users to decide whether they want to opt for the free version or upgrade to be a premium subscriber. While the free subscription requires an internet connection and offers ad-supported access to millions of songs, those who pay for Spotify Premium can listen uninterrupted to high-quality recordings and are able to download songs for offline listening (Iqbal, 2021).

This music streaming provider with a collection of over 70 million tracks is definitely loved for more than just its music, it's admired for its unique manner of delivering music suggestions to its customers. Spotify is a great example of one of the many big companies to fall on personalization strategies. They use personalisation in their services through daily playlists, song recommendations, monthly playlists, etc. Each user sees a customised view and recommendations delivered to them based on their unique profile. Their recently launched #onlyyou campaign is genius. This campaign reinforces a one-to-one mindset by creating the impression of a more intimate and personalised touchpoint (Chantelle, 2021). Described as "Wrapped-esque" by the company, this feature not only creates personalised mixes according to set themes but also allows you to share your customised playlists on social media, (Gagliano, 2021) turning people into unpaid influencers (Shah, 2019). Furthermore, Spotify is also attracting the young crowd by giving them what they love. Millennials and Gen-Z really love astrology and Spotify cleverly incorporated this trend into their campaign content by presenting it in the form of an "Audio Birth Chart", clearly

aiming to better connect with a key target demographic for their company (Chantelle, 2021).

Spotify went viral for their “Wrapped” campaign, a feature every Spotify user knows and loves. This end of year campaign provides its users with their listening activity throughout the year, differentiating itself from its competitors like Apple music and other audio streamers. Users are interested to know about their own listening activity and Spotify delivers just the same by providing them with things like their top artists, songs to which they have listened to most and their favourite music genres. Spotify Wrapped is shared widely on social media and has led millions of people to promote Spotify on their social media accounts (Swant, 2019). Spotify is an app very good with its marketing strategies, benefiting from it whenever provided the opportunity. When the year 2019 was ending, Spotify took their traditional “wrapped” campaign up a notch by introducing something very new and fascinating to its users, “the decade wrapped”. This campaign showcased each user’s music habits dating back an entire decade and contained a link to a playlist where the users could re-listen their old favourites, perhaps bringing back a bunch of memories (Shah, 2019).

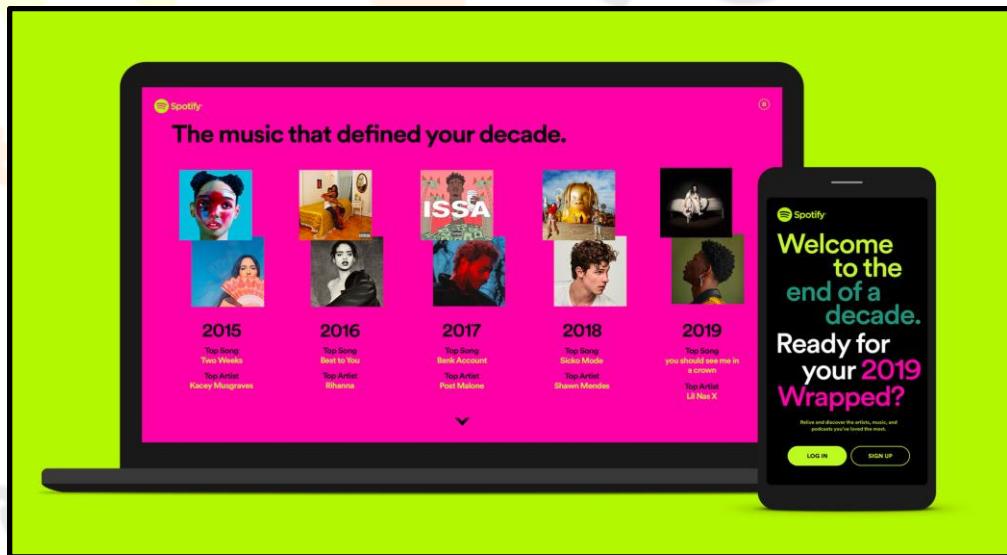


Figure 1: (Perez, 2019)

In order to evaluate the success of Spotify wrapped and the company’s ability to use data to provide a personalised experience, we can evaluate it within the AIDA model. The AIDA model is popularly used in the world of marketing and advertising and it stands for Awareness- Interest- Desire- Action.

Stage 1: Awareness: The first step for any company is always to make people aware of it. Spotify does this using mainly social media as its source, through running hashtag campaigns and social media trends like the #onlyyou campaign as discussed above. Spotify wrapped has been widely shared by millions of people on all social media platforms, giving the company an undue advantage. It also capitalises on the current affairs of the world through using billboards, hence attracting more attention.

Stage 2: Interest: Desire won't be created if there is no interest. It is important for every company to make the audience first interested in its products and Spotify implies this very smartly through understanding the wants and needs of its audience. Spotify's user base is made up of mainly millennials and Gen X. In fact, only a very small percent of people who use music streaming services are over 55 (Hannough, 2016). And so, they have come up with marketing strategies more to their interest using meme campaigns and podcasts. The above-mentioned astrology birth chart is also one such example.

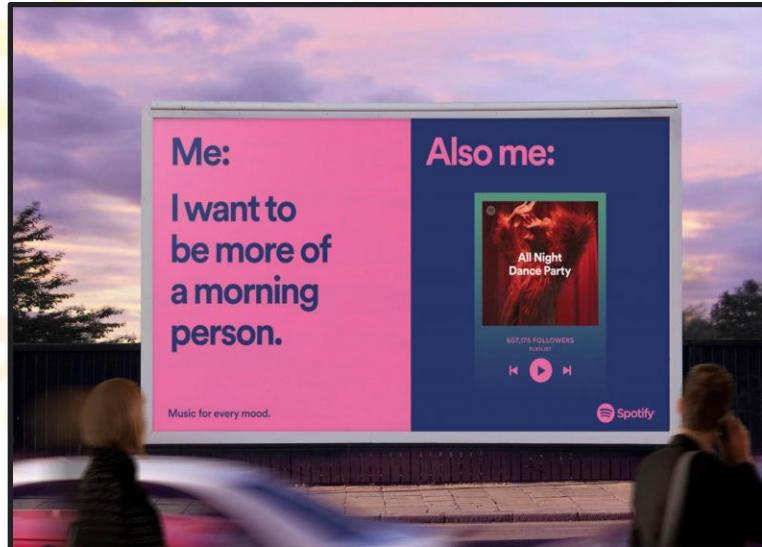


Figure 2: (Nudd, 2019)

Stage 3: Desire: The next step would be for the company to create that sense of desire amongst its users give them a reason as to why they should be paying for the premium subscription. While Spotify users can enjoy the Spotify wrapped feature with a standard account, premium users get to experience some additional content and more personalised information, hence generating a more enhanced experience to the app and the Spotify wrapped. Even the ability to save the playlists and listen uninterrupted, ad-free to music are things very important to the premium user.

## Research Through Innovation

Stage 4: Action: The desire is what eventually leads to action. The customers might have that desire in them to buy the premium subscription, but the company won't be benefiting from it until turned into action. Spotify makes this step of action easier for many users by offering the subscription at a very good price, thereby, giving them a slight push. The consumer might be hesitant but when you offer such a good price, the desire on its own converts into action.

### An evaluation of personalised marketing

Through the above example of Spotify, we can see that adding just a bit of personalisation to any innovation can make it stand out. Not only does it result in an increased number of sales, but also happier customers. Especially, if you show them the right thing at the right time. If I had somewhere to go, and I was looking up outfits for it on the internet, wouldn't it just be easier if some options came up on my feed while I was scrolling through my social media the next day? Yes, indeed it would. Relevancy is very important, seeing exactly what we need can raise up a

company's sales in possibly the most oblivious way. This, however, is not enough. Building relationships with your consumers can result in a more loyal customer base, which can be seen through the example of Netflix.

Netflix is a subscription-based streaming service, applying the art of personalisation in a way very similar to the above-mentioned Spotify. Netflix asks you to rate movies and tv shows, and based on your interests, suggests content relevant to you. This provides an enjoyable, personalised experience that gets built over time, giving the company a chance to show its customers that it understands them from the interaction taking place. Personalisation can also help better a company by receiving feedback from its customers, by asking them to fill out certain survey's, provided they get something in return- such as a coupon or a discount on their next purchase. Through this direct customer feedback, companies gain customers' personal data and preferences, which can help them in personalising their user experience further (Edwards, 2021). According to Experian, personalised marketing emails received 29% higher open rates and 41% higher click-through rates than those without personalization and companies that use personalised marketing typically increase their total sales by approximately 19% (Galetto, 2017).

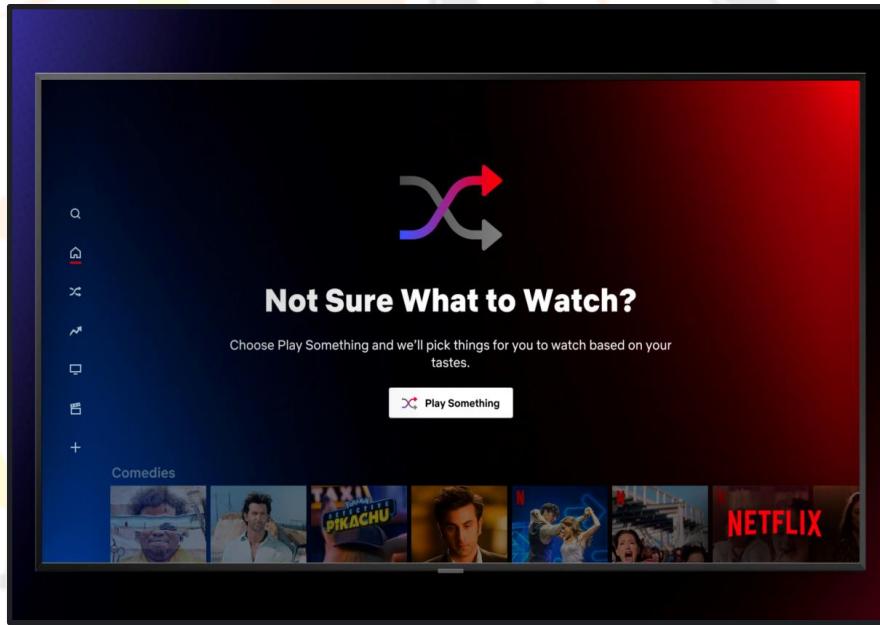


Figure 3: (Singh, 2021)

Personalised marketing can sometimes get a bit annoying. Retargeting, which means constantly showing the same ads is a major problem many companies face without even realising, especially when their audience is not even interested. Say, I'm looking at a company's website and I come across a pair of shoes that I like, but later I find another pair of shoes from a different website that is more affordable and more to my liking, and I proceed to buy them. I would probably still receive emails and random pop ups from the first company, approaching me to buy the pair of shoes I had initially liked. Not only would this annoy me, but it would also make me feel like the company is 'stalking' me, making my experience feel creepy and provoking. This would never happen in real life. Imagine going to a store and having the salesperson running after you, chasing you to purchase the first product you touched. If not in real life, why make it happen online? It's just as annoying. This has also led to the start of a very popular trend on Twitter known as #CREEPYMARKETING where people share similar experiences (Smith, 2019).

**tori basham** (@tori\_basham)

To the companies that spy on me always: I will never buy your products despite the targeted ads. My thoughts are if you are going to disrespect my privacy and spy, I'm not supporting you **#TargetedAds** **#CreepyMarketing**

**Bel** (@MBCosenza)

I just bought a pair of shoes don't know you that much I just see you as a friend tbh.

**#creepymarketing**

**Timberland.com** 10:10 AM >  
We miss you.  
Come back & see what's new. View as a web page.<http://trk.b.timberland.com/mpss/c/JQE...

**Andy Reese** (@theandyreese)

Hey Marketers, Please stop sending, "so I see you were on our website today" emails. **#CreepyMarketing**

**MN Mom** (@sarcasticmnmom)

I'm super creeped out how my facebook page knows what I've "recently viewed" on Amazon.

**#creepymarketing**

Have you ever ordered a coffee from Starbucks and had them miss-spell your names on their cups? Think about those with comparatively more unique names, what they must be going through! This is an example of a situation where personalised marketing can go wrong and honestly speaking, poor personalisation is just as bad as no personalisation, if not worse (Smith, 2019). Not to mention how costly it can get. A survey by Accenture finds that a lack of trust and poor personalization could be costing U.S. businesses as much as \$756 billion in lost revenue every year (Scully, 2020).

As discussed above, personalised marketing also requires the collection of data from its customers which can create a sense of invasion of privacy. Personalised advertising is based on advanced software tracking programs that enable third-party ad platforms to get to know you, which may make the consumers feel uneasy, considering the abilities of software to track their personal traits and online behaviour (Kokemuller, n.d.). The California Consumer Privacy Act and the General Data Protection Regulation in the EU, as well as other laws in various countries, regulate customer data collection (Edwards, 2021). It is, therefore, important for companies to keep their consumers' privacy top of mind, and always get consent to use their personal data. That way, they can strengthen their trust with the consumer instead of jeopardising it (Lakshman, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Marketing is the lifeblood of a company. It is a necessity for all industries and developing over the years, has drastically changed from a more traditional form to modern-day, digital marketing. Digital marketing by itself has seen a development into personalised marketing, being applied by companies from all around the world. While this has many advantages and many companies have been able to apply it correctly as in the case of Spotify, there are unquestionably some important drawbacks as well.

The business enterprise has two basic functions- marketing and innovation. Innovations are the basis of a company; they are what keep the business world moving but they by themselves are certainly not enough. A company can spend a great amount of time coming up with new innovations but ultimately it will result in no fruit unless paired with marketing. Marketing is the convincing factor of a company, it's what eventually makes us purchase a product. But despite its importance, there has been a great downfall in the budgets secured for it. Even though over the past few years marketing has dwindled down a substantial amount, the COVID-19 pandemic has made people realise the importance of consumer-centric marketing and leverage even further, the newer forms of marketing.

Digital marketing is a fairly newer concept that aims to fulfil just the same goals as traditional marketing but of course, in a digital arena. Its relevance in today's times is making it a more preferred form of marketing, especially for recent start-up's. There has undoubtedly been a lot of data integration gone into marketing which has over the past few years, enabled a pathway into personalised marketing. Personalised marketing is becoming increasingly popular, being applied by all sorts of companies, which can also be seen in the examples analysed in this paper.

Taking this all into consideration, it is now permitted to assume that marketing will continue to grow and adapt with time. Marketing in today's times is not a want, but a need for any growing company. It can be seen in all different forms and will likely continue to evolve with technology and big data. There is also a mere possibility that artificial intelligence may be paired with digital marketing in the near future. But this is just my opinion, the real question is- Where do you see marketing in the next 10 years?

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