

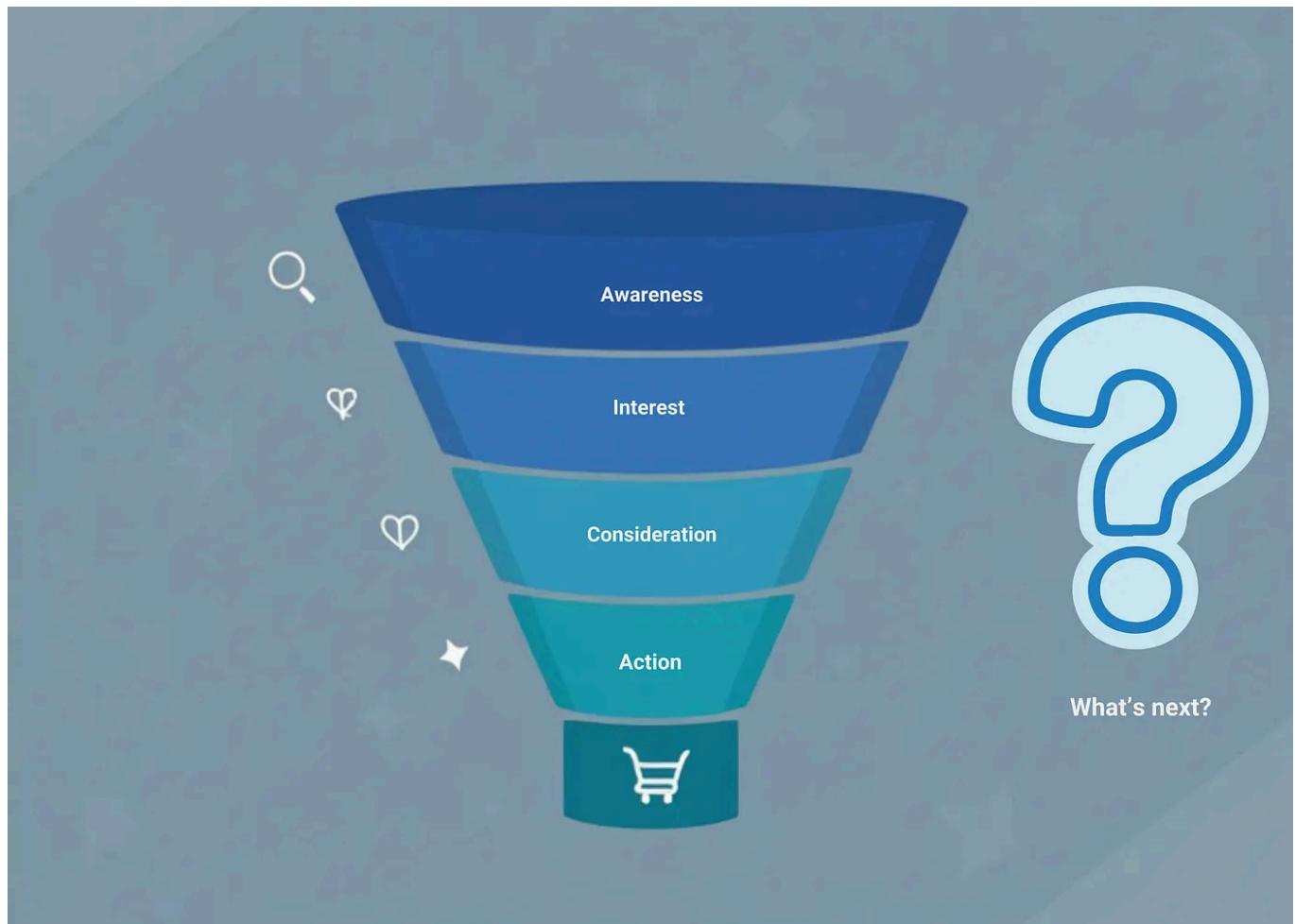
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Is this the end of Inbound Marketing?



Angela Parra 7 min read · Dec 1, 2025



Is AI replacing this traditional way of generating leads?

Let's go back to the last decade, where inbound marketing was a fundamental part of every single digital marketing strategy. This process was essentially the core of attracting the attention of potential customers and taking them through the funnel conversion till they close a deal.

In each article, I like to begin with definitions, and this is no exception. According to the paper: *The application of Inbound Marketing to improve business performance*, this is the definition of inbound marketing:

“This marketing technique is about creating memorable content using a multi-channel approach of content. This technique focuses on blog content that develops online notoriety, e-reputation, and generates qualified prospects, all of which are concerned about the customer experience.”(Jabbouri & Idrissi, 2022, p. 468)

Importance of Funnel Conversion in Inbound Marketing

The paper “*O Impacto do Inbound Marketing na conversão de leads em oportunidades de vendas em um funil B2B ao longo do tempo*” emphasizes why **the conversion funnel is a central mechanism in inbound marketing** and provides empirical evidence showing how different stages of content consumption and media channels affect progression from **qualified lead → sales opportunity**.

The funnel conversion is essential because it measures the lead's progression toward purchase. The study defines the core conversion analyzed as the **change of stage from a qualified lead to a sales opportunity**. This transition is considered the main event inbound marketing seeks to influence:

“The interest or response variable is the probability of changing from the qualified lead stage to a sales opportunity over time.”(Araujo & Christino, 2023)

This confirms that **funnel conversion** is the key performance indicator to evaluate whether inbound marketing efforts are successfully nurturing leads toward sales readiness. Inbound marketing drives funnel conversion by aligning content relevance and channel quality with the lead's purchase readiness, increasing the probability of advancing from a qualified lead to a sales opportunity.

Here is an example of a funnel conversion using inbound marketing as a methodology. I have created this one for a specific educational campaign about deforestation in Latin America. We can apply inbound marketing in all industries, objectives, and projects; that's one of the key advantages of this process.



Funnel Conversion. Source: Own elaboration

However, time and circumstances change; this methodology has been effective for the last 10 years, and it has worked, changing the way of selling through a different approach to persuading consumers. But, not anymore. The contemporary digital landscape, as well as the consumers themselves, have undergone substantial changes. Audiences today are more discerning, less easily persuaded, and less responsive to the traditional inbound formula that once proved effective. As a result, the classical inbound funnel can no longer operate as a standalone structure. **Persuasion now requires a more complex and adaptive strategic framework. In this sense, Inbound Marketing is not necessarily “dead,” but it is undergoing a profound transformation.**

The emerging paradigm demands a genuinely multi-channel approach, one that goes beyond merely distributing content across social platforms. **Current effectiveness requires authenticity, experiential communication, and diversified touchpoints.** This includes, for example, integrating influencers not to drive direct sales, but to provide credible product experiences, as well as adopting **new channels such as AI agents, programmatic media, and broader digital broadcasting ecosystems.** Collectively, these shifts illustrate that Inbound Marketing is evolving: while its foundational principles remain relevant, its traditional execution must be reshaped to meet the expectations and behaviors of today's consumers.

A couple of days ago, I read an article on LinkedIn about a similar topic, and I really liked how he shaped the essence of IM. According to Sheridan (2025), inbound marketing is losing its effectiveness not because content is irrelevant, but because the digital environment that once made inbound powerful has fundamentally changed. **What used to be a competitive advantage — creating helpful content to attract traffic through search — has**

become commoditized, saturated, and diluted by shifts in buyer behavior and technology.

What's next for Inbound Marketing?

Current discussions on the future of inbound marketing suggest **not its decline, but its transformation**, a position supported both by contemporary analyses such as Sheridan's LinkedIn article and by authoritative industry sources like HubSpot. As one of the **original pioneers of inbound marketing**, HubSpot demonstrated the methodology's effectiveness for more than a decade, successfully leveraging it to scale its software business and influence countless organizations — including those in which I have worked. However, the **digital ecosystem and consumer behavior have evolved substantially**, requiring a **reconceptualization of the inbound framework**. HubSpot refers to this evolution as the "**second act**" of inbound marketing, a term that accurately captures its redefinition in the era of **artificial intelligence (AI)**.

According to HubSpot in its article: "*Consejos de inbound marketing en la era de la IA*" (HubSpot, 2025), the company argues that inbound marketing is not ending but **evolving** into a more sophisticated, multi-channel, AI-enabled strategy that responds to rapidly changing consumer expectations. This **second act emphasizes personalization, authenticity, predictive intelligence, and deeper integration across channels**. The following strategies summarize the core elements of this transformation.

Five key Strategies for the new inbound marketing strategy

1. Hyper-Personalized Content Through AI

HubSpot highlights that AI allows content to be tailored dynamically to each user's behavior, interests, and stage in the journey. This shifts inbound from generic messaging to **real-time personalization**, increasing relevance and conversion

2. Authentic, Human-Centered Storytelling

The article emphasizes that modern consumers distrust sales-driven content. The new inbound approach must prioritize authenticity, transparency, and genuine experiences over traditional persuasive copy.



3. Multi-Channel Orchestration

HubSpot notes that inbound marketing can no longer rely solely on blogging or SEO; it must function across diverse, coordinated touchpoints, including video, newsletters, communities, podcasts, and AI-powered channels. Multi-channel engagement becomes essential for visibility and trust.

4. AI-Enhanced Conversational Experiences

AI chatbots, assistants, and conversational interfaces play a central role in the second act. They support lead nurturing, reduce friction, deliver instant information, and personalize the customer journey at scale.

5. Predictive Analytics for Smarter Decision-Making

According to HubSpot, AI empowers marketers to forecast trends, predict customer intent, and optimize campaigns. This transforms inbound from a reactive model (“publish and wait”) into a **predictive, data-driven system** that anticipates user needs.

Conclusion

I also recognize that HubSpot remains a fundamental resource for understanding how inbound marketing is evolving, particularly given my early professional training through their certification program. Today, their insights remain highly relevant and align with my own perspective that inbound marketing must be reshaped. The key ideas include:

- **HubSpot’s foundational role:** More than a decade ago, their educational frameworks shaped how I learned and practiced inbound marketing, and their guidance remains influential today.
- **Inbound’s “second act”:** AI is transforming inbound from a content-first model into a multi-channel, intelligence-driven ecosystem.
- **Return to authenticity:** Effective inbound now requires **human-centered, honest, experience-based content** rather than formulaic or sales-driven messaging.
- **Strategic multi-channel presence:** Being “everywhere” is not the goal; instead, brands must be **wise and intentional** about which channels they use and how they use them.
- **Platform use must be purposeful:** It is not about adopting TikTok or Instagram simply because they are popular, but about understanding **why** a channel matters for persuasion and consumer behavior.
- **The need to reshape inbound:** Today’s consumer environment is radically different from the past, requiring a redesign of the inbound

process to remain relevant and effective.

And here I would like to introduce one of the most relevant news stories from the past week: AI agents' ads. In my next article, I will delve deeper into how ads will evolve and be introduced into the AI era.

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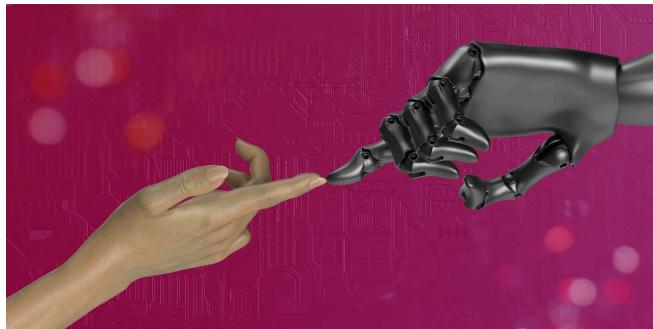
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