

B2B BUSINESS MODEL: STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Business to Business (B2B) business models are undergoing significant transformation in the digital era, driven by technological advances and changes in business behavior. Technologies such as e-commerce, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and SaaS (Software as a Service) subscription models are enabling companies to expand markets, improve operational efficiency, and build stronger customer relationships. This approach provides a variety of benefits, including business process automation, real-time data analytics, and service personalization, which increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, B2B companies also face challenges such as complex system integration, dependence on technology infrastructure, and increasing competition. With the right digital strategy, companies can create sustainable value, strengthen their market position, and achieve long-term growth.

KEYWORDS : B2B; Business Model; Digital Era; Marketing Strategy; SaaS; Technology.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has changed various aspects of life, including the way companies do business. One business model that has undergone significant transformation is Business to Business. (B2B), which is a transaction that occurs between two business entities. In this model, a company sells products or services to another company, not directly to the end consumer. B2B transactions usually involve large volumes and long-term contracts, and focus on building strong relationships between suppliers and customers for mutual benefit (DOKU, 2024).

In the digital era, B2B marketing strategies have also changed. Companies are now leveraging various digital tools and platforms to reach and engage their business clients. B2B marketing strategies include the use of company websites, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, social media marketing, and pay-per-

clip (PPC) advertising. The ultimate goal is to build strong relationships and drive business growth through digital channels (Demo & Trial, n.d.)

Digital transformation in B2B marketing marks a dynamic, innovative, and increasingly customer-focused era. Companies need to develop a strong and sustainable digital strategy to stay competitive in the ever-evolving market (Chaudhri, 2023).

This article will discuss in depth the B2B business model, strategies that can be applied in B2B digital marketing, and the opportunities and challenges faced by companies in the digital era. By understanding the right concepts and strategies, companies can optimize the potential of B2B for sustainable growth.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that focuses on literature studies or library research. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the main objective of the study, which is to describe comprehensively and systematically the Business to Business (B2B) business model in the digital era, including the strategies, opportunities, and challenges that accompany it. In other words, this article aims to present theoretical and empirical understanding based on secondary data from various relevant trusted sources.

1. Research Approach and Design

Qualitative descriptive research design provides flexibility in exploring complex and dynamic phenomena such as digital transformation in B2B businesses. Researchers do not conduct experiments or collect primary data through interviews or surveys, but instead rely on in-depth reviews of various scientific literature and related publications. This includes journal articles, textbooks, industry reports, technology company publications, and credible online sources.

2. Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected using documentation techniques, namely by collecting secondary references from the following sources:

- National and international scientific journals (examples: Journal of Economics, Journal of Business Research, Calitatea)
- Business and IT management textbooks (such as works by Kotler, Chaffey, Laudon)
- Institutional websites and digital platforms (eg: Ivosights, Online Pajak, Indotrading, Wiley Online Library)

- Latest articles from business and technology portals discussing B2B implementation, CRM, SaaS, and digital strategies.

All references were selected based on the following criteria: relevance to the B2B topic, freshness of the information (mostly from 2020–2024), and the level of trust and authority of the source.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

After the data is collected, a content analysis process is carried out with the following steps:

- Identify key themes: such as B2B concepts, differences with B2C, digital marketing strategies, CRM, AI, and global opportunities.
- Information categorization: data is classified into subtopics such as strategies, opportunities, challenges, business characteristics, and B2B case examples.
- Literature synthesis: various references are compared and combined to form a coherent and in-depth narrative, while highlighting knowledge gaps (if any).
- Data interpretation: each section is presented with a logical explanation, supported by direct quotations and relevant references, and arranged in a systematic framework.

4. Validity and Credibility of Data

Although triangulation was not carried out through interviews or observations, the validity of the research was maintained through:

- Selection of reliable sources, such as indexed journals, official reports, and academic books.
- Use of multiple sources to strengthen findings and avoid bias.
- Consistency between theory and data: all findings are compared with theoretical concepts such as those from Kotler (Marketing 5.0), Laudon (Management Information Systems), and others.

Researchers also strive to maintain objectivity by not only listing the advantages of the B2B model, but also including the real challenges faced by companies in implementing it, such as difficulties in integrating digital systems, infrastructure dependence, and low personalization in services.

5. Scope and Limitations

This research limits the scope to conceptual studies and operational strategies in B2B business models integrated with digital technology. The main focus is on:

- Digital marketing strategies for B2B

- Utilization of technology (CRM, AI, Big Data, SaaS)
- Common case studies such as Alibaba, Indotrading, and other digital services
- Digital transformation challenges in a B2B context

However, this article does not include empirical studies or direct testing in specific companies, so the results are general and theoretical.

6. Objectives of the Methodology

The goal of this methodology is to produce a comprehensive and applicable study of how companies can design, develop, and optimize B2B business models in the ever-changing digital era. By bringing together theory and practice from various sources, it is hoped that this article will provide a significant contribution to both academics and business practitioners.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Basic Concepts of B2B Business Models

Business to Business Definition

Business-to-Business (B2B) business models are transactions that occur between companies, rather than between companies and individual consumers (DOKU, 2024) . In B2B, companies sell products or services to other companies for use in production, operations, or resale. Examples include raw material manufacturers selling to manufacturing plants, or technology companies providing ERP systems to large companies .

Difference between B2B and B2C

The difference between B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) businesses lies in the target market, how it works, and transaction characteristics (Maulina, 2022) . Here are some of the main differences between the two:

1. Target Market

B2B: The primary target market of B2B businesses are other companies or organizations. They sell products or services to business entities for use in their operations or for resale to end customers.

B2C: The target market of B2C businesses is the end consumer or individual. They sell products or services directly to consumers for personal or family use.

2. How it works

B2B: The way B2B businesses work often involves complex contract negotiations and is oriented towards large-volume transactions. Purchases are usually made by buyers representing companies, and the purchasing process can involve more than one stage and involve multiple stakeholders within the company.

B2C: B2C businesses tend to be more direct and simple. Transactions are usually done online or in a physical store, and the purchasing process is carried out by individual consumers without involving complicated contract negotiations.

3. Transaction Characteristics

B2B: Transactions in B2B businesses often involve large purchases and long-term contracts. Payments can be made in several stages, and after-sales service is often more focused on the needs of the business.

B2C: Transactions in B2C businesses typically involve small or individual purchases. Payment is usually immediate and in a single transaction. After-sales service may focus more on individual customer satisfaction.

4. Customer Relations

B2B: Relationships between B2B companies tend to be more formal and long-term oriented.

B2C: The relationship between B2C businesses and consumers is often more transactional and less sustainable.

How B2B Companies Work

B2B companies operate by selling products or services to other companies, rather than directly to end consumers (Author, 2024) . The working process in the B2B business model involves several stages:

1. Identify Target Market

The first step is to clearly identify who the company's ideal customer is. This includes:

- Market Segmentation: Companies group targets based on industry (e.g.: healthcare, automotive, education), company size, geographic location, or specific needs.

- Needs Analysis: Understanding the operational challenges and needs of the target company to tailor product or service offerings.

2. Marketing and Offers

Marketing in B2B is more direct and informative, as buyers are usually professionals who need technical or specific information.

- Marketing Strategy: Using methods such as educational content, trade show participation, B2B digital marketing (email marketing, SEO, LinkedIn Ads), and personal relationships.

- Offer Presentation: Preparation of a business proposal or presentation that includes the added value of the product, efficiency, and solutions offered to the client's needs.

3. Contract Negotiation

Once a potential client shows interest, the company will begin the negotiation process.

- Price and Volume Discussion: Determine pricing based on purchase quantity, contract duration, or exclusivity.

- Product or Service Customization: Sometimes companies need to customize to suit the specific needs of clients.

- Contract Drafting: Includes payment terms, contract duration, responsibilities of each party, and return or guarantee policies.

4. Acceptance of Orders

If the contract is agreed, the company will accept and process the order.

- ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) System: Generally used to manage orders, inventory, production, and shipping in an integrated manner.

- Order Confirmation: Sending invoice, shipping details, and production or service implementation schedule.

5. Delivery and After-Sales Service

Successful delivery and after-sales service play a major role in maintaining long-term relationships.

- Product Distribution / Service Implementation: Delivery of goods or implementation of services is carried out according to the SLA (Service Level Agreement).

- After Sales Service: Includes product usage training, maintenance, technical support, and responsive customer service.

- Evaluation and Follow-up: Conducted to ensure customer satisfaction, identify repeat order opportunities, and maintain client loyalty.

The B2B model emphasizes long-term relationships, business trust, and the value of the solutions offered. Therefore, a professional, structured, and responsive approach is essential for the operational success and long-term growth of the company.

Characteristics of B2B companies

According to (Business, 2023) , B2B companies have unique characteristics that differentiate them from other business models such as B2C (Business-to-Consumer). These characteristics shape how companies operate, interact with customers, and manage marketing and sales strategies. Here is a detailed description of these characteristics:

1. Complex Business Transactions

Transactions in the B2B model involve various administrative and technical stages that must be passed systematically. Some factors that influence this complexity include:

- The customer's internal procurement process must go through approval from various parties (for example: finance, operations, and procurement divisions).
- Evaluate suppliers through tenders or requests for proposals (RFP), so that supplier companies must compete on quality and price.
- Long-term contracts, legal clauses, and stricter terms of service than B2C transactions.

Therefore, B2B companies need to have a solid organizational structure and internal processes to handle these complexities.

2. High Quality Products or Services

B2B products and services not only have to meet high standards, but they also often have to:

- Tailored to customer technical needs (e.g.: ERP systems, industrial equipment, special raw materials).
- Comes with technical documentation, certification, and implementation support.

Failures in quality can have a major impact on customer operations, making quality assurance and quality control crucial.

3. Long Term Business Relationship

Relationships in B2B are more than just transactions; they are strategic partnerships. Factors that strengthen long-term relationships in B2B include:

- Trust and consistency of service.
- In-depth understanding of customer businesses, including their operational challenges and growth strategies.
- Ability to adapt to changing customer needs over time.

Successful B2B companies typically have a dedicated client accounting team (key account management) to foster these relationships.

4. Flexible Price

Pricing in B2B is dynamic and negotiable, depending on:

- Order volume
- Contract duration
- Level of product or service customization
- Market conditions and bargaining power of both parties

This price adjustment allows companies to create mutually beneficial agreements, but also requires transparency and good communication in the negotiation process.

Examples of B2B Companies

According to (Rani, 2022) here are some examples of B2B companies:

1. Advertising Services

You must have often seen companies with big names or brands on television, newspapers, or even social media. Companies that have a large target market certainly need commercial advertising service providers to reach their consumers. This gap between producers is what advertising service providers will fill.

2. Web Developer Services

Nowadays, a company website is one of the components that is no less crucial. Especially if the company does use the website as a sales medium. Rather than providing brochures, consumers are now more comfortable accessing the company's website to see what the company has to offer. Therefore, web developer services will be very useful for today's entrepreneurs.

3. Raw Material Suppliers

As a company that provides ready-to-use products to the public, you certainly also need raw materials first, right? Other companies that provide raw materials for your company will be very useful in supporting your supply needs.

Key Strategies in B2B Business

1. Competitor Analysis

Conducting competitor analysis helps businesses understand their position in the market and identify opportunities for differentiation (Editorial, 2025) .

2. Content Marketing

Creating and distributing relevant and valuable content can attract the attention of potential clients and build trust (Bilowo & Anda, 2024) .

3. Using a CRM System

Using a CRM system helps in managing customer relationships and increasing sales efficiency (Motta, 2023) .

4. Build a Professional Website

Having an informative and easy-to-navigate website helps potential clients understand the products or services offered (Editorial, 2025) .

5. Determine Specific Customer Targets

Defining a target market or creating specific customer personas helps in developing an effective marketing strategy (You, 2025) .

6. Adapting Products to Customer Needs

Tailoring products or services to specific customer needs can increase satisfaction and loyalty (You, 2025) .

7. Using Data for Strategic Decisions

Leveraging data and reporting to make strategic decisions can improve sales effectiveness (Motta, 2023) .

B2B Business Opportunities in the Digital Era

1. Growth of B2B E-Commerce Platforms

B2B e-commerce platforms such as Alibaba and Indotrading have become important pillars in business-to-business trade. Alibaba, as a global leader, connects millions of buyers and sellers across industries, enabling cross-border transactions with high efficiency. Meanwhile, Indotrading acts as the largest B2B marketplace in Indonesia, providing a business directory that makes it easy for local companies to find trusted trading partners (Blogs, n.d.) .

2. Automation of Ordering and Logistics Process

Digitalization in B2B enables automation of ordering and logistics processes. The use of technologies such as warehouse management systems (WMS), barcoding, and RFID speeds up order processing and improves delivery accuracy. This not only reduces human error but also improves overall operational efficiency (Isi, n.d.) .

3. Use of Data and AI for Corporate Client Behavior Analysis

Artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics enable B2B companies to deeply understand client behavior and preferences. By analyzing big data, AI can predict customer needs, identify sales opportunities, and improve service personalization, ultimately increasing client satisfaction and loyalty (Ivosights, 2023) .

4. Global Expansion Opportunities through Internet and Digital Marketing

The Internet and digital marketing strategies open up opportunities for B2B companies to penetrate global markets without having to have a physical presence in the target country. Through websites, SEO, and other digital campaigns, businesses can reach international audiences, increase brand visibility, and significantly expand their customer base (Demo & Trial, n.d.) .

5. SaaS (Software as a Service) Subscription Model in B2B

The subscription-based SaaS business model is gaining popularity in the B2B sector. Companies can access software over the internet for a recurring fee, which offers flexibility and scalability as the business needs. Other benefits include automatic updates, easy integration with other systems, and reduced IT infrastructure costs (Repeat, 2025) .

Challenges in Digital B2B Models

1. System Complexity and Digital Integration

Digital transformation in B2B businesses often faces challenges in integrating various complex systems and processes. This integration requires a deep understanding of technology and coordination between departments to ensure smooth operations (Wibowo et al., 2023) .

2. Dependence on Technology Infrastructure

Digital B2B businesses rely heavily on stable and secure technology infrastructure. Disruptions to IT systems, such as server outages or cyberattacks, can disrupt operations and damage a company's reputation (Article et al., 2024) .

3. Increasingly Tight Competition

As more B2B companies enter the digital marketplace, competition is becoming fiercer, demanding innovation and careful marketing strategies (Google & Network, nd) .

4. Lack of Personalization of Customer Experience

Many B2B platforms are not yet delivering the personalized experiences customers expect, such as relevant product recommendations and tailored communications (*The Biggest B2B ECommerce Challenges (And How to Address Them)* , nd) .

Subscription-Based B2B Business Model

Subscription-based business models are gaining popularity in the Business to Business sector (Yankulov, 2024) . In this model, service providers offer technology-based products or systems with a recurring payment scheme, rather than a one-time purchase.

This approach is widely used in Software as a Service (SaaS) services, such as Salesforce, HubSpot, and Microsoft 365. Instead of purchasing software permanently, companies simply pay a subscription fee to access cloud-based systems. This allows for cost efficiency, automatic updates, and high scalability that are much needed in a dynamic business environment.

Subscription Model Advantages:

- Recurring and stable income: This model creates sustainable cash flow and facilitates long-term financial planning.
- Long-term relationships: Ongoing customer interactions enable companies to build closer relationships and understand customer needs more deeply (Links, nd) .
- Continuous innovation: Through user data, SaaS providers can improve and adapt services periodically.

However, B2B companies also face challenges such as reducing churn rates, ensuring responsive customer support, and system integration that is compatible with client needs (Yankulov, 2024) .

Strategic Collaboration and Digital Integration in B2B Model

In an increasingly connected digital era, strategic collaboration is one of the main pillars in the development of Business to Business (B2B) business models. Companies no longer operate in isolation, but in a value network that is

interconnected through technology. Collaboration occurs not only between companies in the supply chain, but also between companies and technology providers, e-commerce platforms, and digital financial institutions (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023) .

One form of collaboration that is growing rapidly is the partnership between B2B companies and digital platform providers, whether in the form of marketplaces, digital logistics, or API-based payment systems (Digital et al., 2024) . For example, many manufacturing companies are now working with digital platforms to expand distribution, manage inventory in real time, and facilitate cross-border transactions efficiently.

Digital Transformation and the Role of AI in Improving B2B Effectiveness

The development of digital technology has created new opportunities for B2B players to develop more measurable, efficient, and personalized marketing and customer relationship management strategies. One of the main drivers of this transformation is the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation systems that are increasingly used in customer relationship management (CRM) and sales processes (Nenonen et al., 2020) .

AI enables B2B companies to collect and analyze big data from various customer interaction points, from emails, social media, to website activity. Through predictive analytics, companies can recognize client behavior patterns, personalize offers, and design more targeted marketing strategies (Article et al., 2024) . AI-based chatbots, for example, have proven effective in providing 24/7 customer service, answering frequently asked questions, and processing initial requests automatically, reducing the workload of marketing and sales teams.

shows that companies that integrate automation into their B2B marketing strategies tend to be more adaptive to digital market changes. They are able to respond to customer needs faster, minimize sales cycle time, and increase internal efficiency (Dastras, 2025) .

B2B Adaptive Strategy in the Era of Digital Disruption

In the era of digital disruption, B2B companies are not only required to carry out technological transformation, but also to design strategies that are adaptive to market changes and customer behavior. One prominent approach is the use of an omnichannel approach in the process of interacting with customers. Omnichannel allows customers to move between channels (website, email, social media, even face-to-face) with a consistent and integrated experience. According to (Cao &

Weerawardena, 2023) , B2B companies that implement an omnichannel approach experience increased customer loyalty and marketing effectiveness, because they are able to respond to client needs flexibly. On the other hand, transparency in the supply chain is also a major demand, especially after the pandemic, where corporate clients demand real-time visibility into the production and distribution process (Ma et al., 2022) .

Furthermore, Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is starting to be widely used in the B2B context because it provides a more personalized and focused approach. Through the integration of analytical data, ABM allows marketing teams to customize messages and solutions based on the unique needs of each target company (Mui et al., 2022) .

Integration of ESG and Sustainability in B2B Digital

Amidst global demands for sustainability, B2B companies can no longer rely on efficiency and price as their sole selling points. Instead, the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) values has become a strategic element in establishing long-term business partnerships. Client companies are now starting to assess their business partners based on their sustainability track record, social responsibility, and compliance with good corporate governance principles.

According to (Ma et al., 2022) , companies with strong ESG practices tend to have higher client retention and stronger competitiveness in the global B2B ecosystem. This is due to the increasing pressure from investors and end consumers for transparent and environmentally friendly supply chains.

Some common ESG initiatives in B2B include:

- Digitalization of carbon emissions reports and supply chain audits
- Selection of local vendors to reduce logistics footprint
- Use of renewable energy in production operations
- Inclusive and ethical employment practices

Digital technology strengthens ESG practices through automated reporting systems, integration with blockchain for supply chain tracking, and the use of AI in sustainability risk management. These strategies make ESG not only a moral responsibility, but also a competitive advantage.

B2B Digitalization Case Study: Indotrading and HubSpot

Indotrading is one of the successful examples of B2B e-commerce implementation in Indonesia. This platform allows thousands of local companies to market their products to various industrial sectors without having to build their own digital infrastructure. By providing product catalog features, price quote requests, and a simple CRM system, Indotrading has helped industrial MSMEs enter the national market effectively.

On the other hand, HubSpot represents B2B digital transformation in a global context. This platform provides cloud-based CRM solutions, marketing automation, lead tracking, and AI-based analytics tools. According to (Nenonen et al., 2020) , using HubSpot helps companies improve lead quality by up to 60% and significantly accelerates the sales cycle.

This case study proves that digital technology in the B2B model not only strengthens customer relationships, but also expands market reach and overall operational efficiency.

The Evolution of B2B Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age

Marketing strategies in Business to Business (B2B) businesses have undergone a major transformation in the last decade, especially since the acceleration of digitalization due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While previously the B2B marketing approach focused on direct relationships, trade shows, and network-based sales, there has now been a shift towards a faster, more measurable, and data-oriented digital approach.

According to a study by (Bazi et al., 2020) , B2B companies are now using digital content marketing as a primary tool to create value for customers. Content such as white papers, webinars, blog articles, and case studies serve as a means of education and building trust. Their research shows that digital content marketing in B2B contributes significantly to customer acquisition and retention.

Another emerging trend is omnichannel marketing, where companies provide a consistent and integrated customer experience across multiple channels, both online and offline. (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023) states that B2B companies that implement an omnichannel strategy experience an increase in the effectiveness of customer interactions by up to 30%, as well as speeding up the purchasing process.

Not only that, B2B marketing now relies on data-driven personalization, which is the use of customer data to create customized messages and offers. Technologies such as AI and machine learning allow companies to analyze customer preferences

and purchasing behavior to provide product or content recommendations automatically (Tarver, 2024).

Digitalization and Adaptation of the B2B Global Market

B2B companies are also starting to actively respond to changes in the global market that are more open and competitive. Cross-border e-commerce is becoming an increasingly common expansion strategy. (Wang et al., 2020) noted that Chinese companies during the pandemic managed to maintain their export markets by adopting digital strategies such as live streaming for B2B clients, using international e-commerce platforms, and automating logistics.

Meanwhile, in Europe and North America, B2B companies are leveraging platforms like LinkedIn to reach industry prospects globally, supported by CRM and marketing automation systems. Digitalization allows B2B companies to not only expand their markets, but also reduce reliance on physical interactions and speed up negotiation and payment processes.

CONCLUSION

Business to Business (B2B) business models have undergone a major transformation in the digital era, driven by technological advancements and changes in business behavior. Digitalization enables B2B companies to expand market networks, improve operational efficiency, and build stronger customer relationships. Technology-based approaches such as e-commerce, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), big data analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI) have become key pillars in increasing the effectiveness of B2B businesses. These technologies enable business process automation, service personalization, and real-time data analysis, so companies can respond to market needs more quickly and accurately.

The implementation of digital strategies such as content marketing, the use of CRM for service personalization, and SaaS (Software as a Service) subscription models have proven effective in increasing customer loyalty and expanding market reach. In addition, automation of the ordering process and analysis of client behavior using AI also contribute to increasing efficiency and quality of service. This approach allows B2B companies to not only sell products, but also create sustainable added value for customers.

However, B2B companies still face various challenges in digital transformation, including the complexity of system integration, dependence on technology infrastructure, and increasing global competition. In addition, companies must be

able to face the challenges of providing a more personalized and responsive customer experience, managing data security, and ensuring the sustainability of long-term business relationships.

By understanding these opportunities and challenges, B2B companies can design more appropriate strategies in facing the digital era, strengthening long-term relationships with customers, and achieving sustainable growth. In the future, subscription-based business models and digital collaboration are predicted to be increasingly important in creating shared value and increasing competitiveness in the global market. With the right approach, B2B models can be the key to success in the ever-growing digital economy.

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