

ESSENTIAL DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS ACROSS THE RACE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

ОСНОВНІ ІНСТРУМЕНТИ ЦИФРОВОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ В РАМКАХ СИСТЕМИ ПЛАНУВАННЯ RACE

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The approach of planning using the Smart Insights RACE Planning Framework is described in the article, the five main stages as Plan, Reach, Act, Convert, Engage are analysed. The characteristics of digital marketing tools' groups in each step of RACE and the role of them for digital marketers are given. Essential digital marketing tools across the RACE Planning Framework are systemized.

Key words: digital marketing tools, SEO optimization, social media marketing, ecommerce management, Smart Insights RACE Planning Framework.

У статті описано підхід планування з використанням концепції RACE, проаналізовані п'ять головних етапів: планування, охоплення, дія, перетворення, залучення. Надані характеристики груп цифрового маркетингу на кожному етапі RACE та їх роль для цифрових маркетологів. Систематизовано основні інструменти цифрового маркетингу в рамках планування RACE.

Ключові слова: інструменти цифрового маркетингу, SEO оптимізація, маркетинг в соціальних мережах, управління електронною торгівлею, система планування RACE.

В статье описан подход планирования с использованием концепции RACE, проанализированы пять главных этапов: планирование, охват, действие, преобразование, вовлечение. Даны характеристики групп цифрового маркетинга на каждом этапе RACE и их роль для цифровых маркетологов. Систематизированы основные инструменты цифрового маркетинга в рамках планирования RACE.

Ключевые слова: инструменты цифрового маркетинга, SEO оптимизация, маркетинг в социальных сетях, управление электронной торговлей, система планирования RACE.

Problem statement. Marketers today are fortunate to have a huge number of free and low-cost tools to give them insight about customers, competitors, and market. These online services also help to compete by enabling their businesses to communicate with the audiences with automated, relevant real-time communications integrated across desktop and mobile and digital plus traditional marketing channels.

Success in acquiring new customers through digital marketing goes to the businesses that are most successful in exploiting the main inbound marketing channels to get visibility and leads. These channels include search, social media, and email marketing, all fuelled by content marketing. Although using these channels is really competitive, many free and paid tools are available to improve targeting and review and improve the effectiveness of online campaigns. Nevertheless, the challenge is that there are SO many tools in different categories that it can be difficult to know, which are available and which offer the best features.

However, there is a challenge with the sheer number of tools, which vary enormously in cost and

quality and new challenger tools can sometimes do a better job than the established tools. Larger businesses and brands will require 'enterprise' services with a full-feature set which can be used across teams and smaller businesses will be looking for simpler, lower-cost or free services.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Conceptual principles of RACE digital marketing planning framework set out in the scientific works of Chaffey D., Bosomworth D. [1], Lokteva D. [2], Pinho, S. [3], Qian Li [4], and others. In the scientific articles, concept and main steps of content marketing model has been used, in particular, using the social media marketing radar, the content marketing matrix, the content marketing hub for inbound marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to study the issues of choosing the effective digital marketing tools across the RACE Planning framework.

The purpose of the article. The main purpose of this research is to find out the best types of digital marketing planning tools and the most popular alternatives in each category across the Smart Insights RACE Planning framework.

Presentation of the main research material.

There is no question that having the right digital marketing strategy is critical to winning over customers. But many brands are still not getting it right. There is one certainty: Any successful marketing strategy, digital or otherwise, requires a solid rationale. Without benchmarks, established goals, and a clear vision of how to define success, marketers will miss the opportunity to fully leverage the ability to measure and track customer engagements in a holistic way.

The RACE planning framework consists of five distinct stages: Plan, Reach, Act, Convert, Engage. The acronym “RACE” is taken from the latter four of these. These give an excellent overview for anyone who would like to get to grips with this powerful approach to forming a digital marketing strategy [1].

RACE consists of these four steps or online marketing activities designed to help brands engage their customers throughout the customer lifecycle (Fig. 1).

The first stage of the framework is the Planning stage. This is divided into three steps: situational analysis, setting objectives, and strategy formulation. The first of these involves identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your company, and the external competitors and macroeconomic forces that could affect how you operate.

Once the plan is set, the next step is Reach. This involves using social media, search engines, publishers and blogs to get your content to your prospective customers. If successful, this should drive traffic to your main web presences.

After Reach comes Act, which is short for “inter-act”. This stage involves persuading your audience to research further into the company, sign up to your mailing list, or share the content that you’ve been disseminating. Given the importance of this persuasive activity, it is given its own stage, separate from Reach.

Following on naturally from the Act stage is the Convert stage. This turns your audience members from interested browsers into paying customers. This must take into account all the opportunities that prospective customers have to make a purchase, including both ecommerce and offline channels.

Finally, the Engage stage involves consideration of how you will build a long-term relationship with customers. This activity is crucial if you are to achieve repeat sales, something that is key to building a profitable business [5].

Rather than simply categorizing tools, it is possible to group them across the Smart Insights RACE Planning framework for managing digital marketing so it can be possible to review where the marketers could make better use of the tools across the customer lifecycle. Let us consider all these digital marketing tools across the RACE Planning framework.

1. REACH. Reach involves building awareness of a brand, its products, and services on other websites and in offline media in order to build traffic by driving visits to different web presences like your main site, microsites or social media pages. It involves maximizing reach over time to create multiple interactions using different paid, owned and earned media touchpoints.

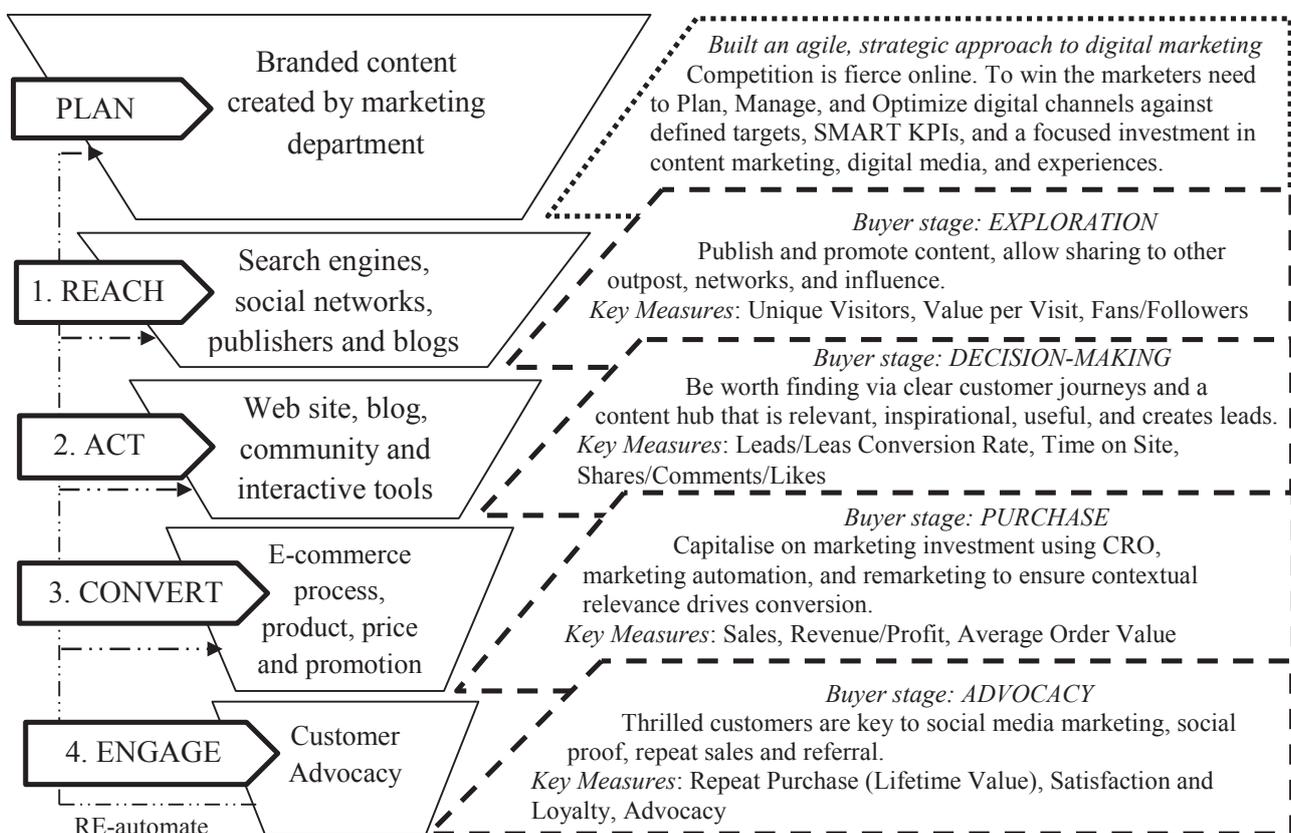


Figure 1. The Smart Insights RACE Planning framework for managing digital marketing

Table 1

Characteristics of digital marketing tools in the step of REACH

Tools	Characteristics of tools	Role for digital marketers
1. Site Audience Comparison Tools	They provide marketers with industry and competitor intelligence to help inform decisions (e.g. new markets, new content strategies). Some of these tools also provide powerful segmentation capabilities. Typically, they do this either by aggregating Internet Service Provider data, panel data or a mixture of the two.	Competitor benchmarking, search and content strategies, audience segmentation, market size and geo and demographic data; whether you're launching a new product, entering a new market or wishing to understand what's driving competitor growth, these tools can provide the relevant information to help inform key decisions. They're often used to support business cases, helping to identify opportunities and threats in the competitor landscape. See the Smart Insight's post for more on the capabilities of competitor intelligence.
2. Digital Analytics Tools	Traditionally, these services were known as 'web analytics' tools since they focused on measuring and reporting on visitors to websites including the source of the visits and the sequence of interactions on a site. Today they have a broader scope including recording mobile interactions and linking to customer databases and other services, so are known as 'Digital Analytics'.	The website is still at the heart of most online interactions with a business, so understanding which media sources have driven visits and the outcomes of these visits is still important. Today, digital analytics systems are an important part of business reporting either in their own right or through the integration with other systems.
3. SEO Keyword Analysis Tools	Keyword research is an important, on-going requirement of SEO and content strategy. A good keyword list will help ensure your website's pages are found in Google for relevant user searches that match your site's content.	There are lots of factors which contribute to a strong keyword strategy. The most basic is finding a balance between high searched for keywords and the levels of competition for visibility on those keywords. Other important factors include: seasonal opportunities, new keywords, your competition's keyword strategy, and how paid search strategies (for both you and your competition) support your SEO efforts. It's also important to understand the context of a keyword; whether it's informational or transactional.
4. SEO Ranking	A category of tools dedicated to tracking the rankings of your keyword list(s) for all the major search engines. They show the position in the search results pages (SERPs) between 1 and 100. Many provide rank tracking for international markets and have, more recently, diversified to provide additional functionality too.	The argument for a specialist web ranking tool is rooted in the accuracy, flexibility, and breadth of keywords that these tools can track. A specialist web ranking tool should provide greater precision and quality of web ranking results, at a lower cost than tools offering a broader suite of functionality. Free trials of all the leading tools will allow you to test this before purchase.
5. SEO Crawling	They are essential for maintaining good technical and structural health of your website. They crawl your site looking at every link, image, and piece of CSS to provide a detailed report of technical SEO recommendations. These include: identifying dead links, heavy re-direct use, missing metadata, and creating XML sitemaps.	They are often a conversation starter between the digital marketing and web development or technical teams. A healthy website structure is important not just to the user experience but also to the search engine crawlers. These tools are an inexpensive way of helping to identify the target areas for maintaining or improving your website structure's health. Especially useful for larger site's where it's unrealistic for this to be done manually.
6. SEO Backlink Analysis	They use crawlers to find all the backlinks (a link from one website to another) to a given domain. Backlink profile history, anchor text, and the quality of each link are some of the information provided. These tools compete principally over the size of their backlink database, as well as on price and the provision of extra features.	There are two key reasons to use these tools. More obviously, backlink acquisition and management remain one of the essential ranking factors of SEO. These tools help to identify backlink opportunities from your own domain, as well as providing backlink details of your competitors. The second is for the pro-active avoidance of and recovery from link penalties, which can significantly impact the SEO traffic into a website.

(End of Table 1)

Tools	Characteristics of tools	Role for digital marketers
7. AdWords Paid search analysis	These services provide competitor intelligence specifically for paid search; helping to identify your opportunities and uncover the strategies used by your competitors. The more extensive, enterprise-level tools also provide sophisticated bid and campaign management across search, social and display channels.	Understanding the competitor search landscape is a key element to driving successful paid search activity. In Google AdWords, each user search triggers an auction between advertisers. Therefore, understanding the relevant keywords to bid on is important as is the keyword and bid strategies of your competition. The trend, gap, and successful ad copy analysis are other useful features to help advertisers maximise an increasingly expensive, yet high intent driven marketing channel.
8. Influencer outreach and management	These tools are especially useful for content marketers who are regularly producing content and need a structured and scalable way of managing their outreach efforts. They help to identify the types of site and key people within your niche that may link to or share your content in order to help amplify your message or content. Tools such as Kred, Klout and Followerwonk (Twitter specific tool) focus on assigning scores to online users, surfacing those who are likely to be most influential for your given content, search or topic.	They help digital marketers to identify, analyse, and contact relevant PR, blogger, and other key influencer contacts, usually with the aim of creating backlinks or sharing content.
9. Data management platforms and audience profiling systems	A DMP is a place to store, sort, and act upon multiple sources of online and offline data. This includes first-party data, which the marketer collects on their site or through other customer interactions and on third-party data pre-integrated into the platform, or data purchased from branded providers or lists. Users of a DMP can import known (i.e. an email address) or unknown (e.g. a cookie) data and use this to define audiences or segments. The DMP will then find new customers (i.e. similar audiences) for you to target and buy ads for. The final role they play is to then instruct ad networks and websites who to target, with what (message) and where.	Because of the access they have to data vendors, DMPs can open up highly targeted (pre-defined and custom) audiences that would otherwise be hard to reach at scale, estimating the price and reach of marketing to those users up front. They can also aggregate call, web analytics, CRM and cookie data helping to hyper target your media spend.

2. ACT. Act is short for Interact. It's a separate stage since encouraging interactions on websites and in social media to generate leads is a big challenge for online marketers. It's about persuading site visitors or prospects take the next step, the next Action on their journey when they initially reach your site or social network presence. For many types of businesses, especially, Business-to-Business, this means generating leads, but it may mean finding out more about a company or its products, searching to find a product or reading a blog post. You should define these actions as top-level goals of the funnel in analytics. Google Analytics Goals can include "Viewed product", "Added to Basket", "Registered as a member" or "Signed up for a newsletter". Act is also about encouraging participation. This can be the sharing of content via social media or customer reviews (strictly, part of Engage).

The specific goals and dashboards need to be defined for each business as explained in our Delivering results from digital marketing guide. It's about engaging the audience through relevant, compelling content and clear navigation pathways so that

they don't hit the back button. The bounce rates on many sites are greater than 50%, so getting the audience to act or participate is a major challenge, which is why we have identified it separately.

3. CONVERT. This is conversion to sale. It involves getting your audience to take that vital next step, which turns them into paying customers whether the payment is taken through online Ecommerce transactions or offline channels.

4. ENGAGE in RACE is a long-term engagement that is, developing a long-term relationship with first-time buyers to build customer loyalty as repeat purchases using communications on your site, social presence, email and direct interactions to boost customer lifetime value. It can be measured by repeat actions such as repeat sale and sharing content through social media. We also need to measure the percentage of active customers (or email subscribers) and customer satisfaction and recommendation using other systems [6].

Considering all these essential digital marketing tools groups across the RACE Planning framework, we can define the main modern tools for each group (Fig. 2).

Characteristics of digital marketing tools in the step of ACT

Tools	Characteristics of tools	Role for digital marketers
10. Page engagement tools	These tools help assess and improve the effectiveness of website design including different page template types such as home page, landing, and campaign pages.	These tools can help digital marketers improve conversion and goal completion rates while reducing the need for IT support and ensuring brand stakeholders are kept happy with the consistent design (look and feel) of the pages built. They may also help reduce the amount of design input required once a template is agreed.
11. Content Management Systems (CMS)	These tools form the building blocks of your website. They're the platform, upon which your website's pages are designed and built. You have a choice between proprietary or open source platforms (we cover these in the next category of blogging tools, many of which can be used as CMS), both of which can be developed upon or enhanced by using libraries of code – often known as widgets or plugins	Simply put, most websites are now built using a CMS. They're widespread thanks to how they enable non-technical members of digital teams to publish and manage content. Processes for publishing are easy to set up, as are user permissions and versioning. A CMS provides a framework for a website, often with site infrastructure and SEO features built in. This helps a CMS deliver a brand consistent experience.
12. Blogging Tools	The clue is in the category name; they're used to write and publish blog articles! In fact, this category name has become misleading since many services like Wordpress and Drupal can now be used to create entire sites.	Blogs are common on many commercial sites now from retailers (customer magazines) to B2B services. The quality of the free, open source options like Wordpress means potentially large savings compared to CMS. Some offer the option of open source plus service and account management.
13. Content curation and authoring tools	This category should be considered a toolbox for content marketers in its own right; many of these tools offer specific functionality to curate and publish content from different sources and due to their low or free cost models will be widely used by content and social media teams.	Content marketing continues to grow in importance with brands investing more in both content generation and distribution. These tools help with a wide variety of tasks for content generation from ideas for headlines and blog articles to easy-to-use image and video tools and grammar checking.
14. Landing page creation and testing tools	These tools will help you design and test pages, which improve the conversion rate to lead.	Lead generation is a key goal of digital marketing in many sectors. By testing landing page layout, headlines and copy you can increase lead volume and so potentially sales using cost-effective techniques. By hosting test pages on the servers of suppliers you should be able to bypass the need for an agency or IT department involvement to get test up-and-running rapidly.
15. Digital Asset Management	They act as a storage solution of your image, audio and video files with sophisticated features for managing and searching your digital assets at scale.	They provide a single storage solution for digital assets that everyone within your business or team can access, providing essential features such as role-based permissions and bulk import/export, as well as more sophisticated functionality such as image or video expiry management and auto-tagging templates for more effective and speedy file management.
16. On-site push notification	Enables desktop custom messages (e.g. light boxes or banners) or push notifications (e.g. for apps on mobile) targeted to user segments defined by various selection criteria. Many tools also offer a/b and personalisation functionality too.	These tools can be powerful aids to conversion rate optimisation. Delivery of customised content and notifications for different types of site user goes beyond a/b testing, which traditionally seeks to optimize a single page (the belief being that the best page you can present a user will vary depending on the type of user they are). There is a wide range of use cases from pop-ups on your blog to help generate more opt in leads to support or incentive messaging on your checkout pages to drive conversions and sales.

Table 3

Characteristics of digital marketing tools in the step of CONVERT

Tools	Characteristics of tools	Role for digital marketers
17. Personalization for Ecommerce	Attempt to deliver the right message at the right time to the right person by understanding your visitor by applying (potentially a number of) data sets to form segments of users.	The intended benefit is to provide a shortcut for each website visitor, surfacing products and content that best meets their goals or that they are most likely to be interested in (what message do we serve, when, how and to whom). If successful, this should mean you have a better chance of each user finding what they are looking for; improving their experience. This, in turn, potentially leads to a greater number of conversions.
18. Ecommerce re-targeted messaging	They use email and site notifications to drive users back into a site (usually the checkout pages) with the aim of driving incremental transactions by reminding customers of the products or services they abandoned.	With initial customer acquisition becoming increasingly expensive, brands have focused their efforts in trying to re-engage and convert those users they've already spent money acquiring and/or who have already expressed some level of interest in a product or service. Cart abandonment is the use of remarketing at the closest point to conversion i.e. once a user has added something to their cart but fails to check out.
19. AB and Multivariate tools for structured experiments	A/B tests allow you to run one or more different versions of a call to action, a hero banner or other page element against each other compared to a control version. Multivariate testing enables you to test multiple elements at the same time, however requiring more traffic and more time spent on set up.	Improving leads or sales through driving more users down the conversion funnel is the primary goal of these tools. They simplify the process of running these tests, allowing control over the test variables (e.g. how much traffic is sent to the various test versions), provides statistical analysis of the outcomes and provides comprehensive reporting.
20. Ecommerce management	They provide a platform for online retailers to sell their products and services online; they create a 'digital store front' to enable products in different categories to be searched, browsed, and purchased.	To maximise conversion, an online shopping experience needs to be simple and easy for the user, secure at the point of payment, and robust so as to deal with both high volumes of product and traffic. E-commerce management tools were designed for this specific purpose and have a number of features that other platforms (i.e. a generic content management system) do not.
21. Customer reviews and ratings tools	They enable marketers to collect and request product and customer service reviews. Some tools also curate conversations happening on social media for brands to use as social proof on their websites.	Reviews have become essential to buying and selling online with customers trusting customer reviews over 10 times more than descriptions or claims made by the brand itself (eMarketer, 2010). Reviews can also benefit brands' search marketing efforts.
22. Call tracking (AdWords and other paid media)	Call tracking can dynamically change the phone number a customer sees based on the campaign or channel they've engaged with. For example, some tools enable calls prompted by AdWords campaigns to be shown within Google AdWords. This can help to bridge the gap between how your digital activity is driving offline leads.	With the competition for online media placements inflating cost-per-click in Google AdWords, Display and Programmatic marketing, it's important to be able to prove the returns from investment in digital media.
23. Live chat	This category has a range of tools that deliver a better experience to customers or enables better support as customers work through the consideration stages before a purchase.	IP geolocation can help brands and marketers deliver a more relevant experience through surfacing localised content based on the users' location (i.e. store location). Call tracking can dynamically change the phone number a customer sees based on the campaign or channel they've engaged with. This can help to bridge the gap between how your digital activity is driving offline leads.

Characteristics of digital marketing tools in the step of ENGAGE

Tools	Characteristics of tools	Role for digital marketers
24. Social media – publishing focus	They enable easy management of publishing content and responding to the conversation over various social media platforms through column based dashboards with search/filter functionality. Freemium tools such as Hootsuite and Tweetdeck are two popular examples.	These tools bring all the social media conversation from platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Instagram in one place. This saves huge amounts of time as it reduces the need for social media teams to visit each brand profile on each platform. It's also quick and easy to follow trending topics, competitors or search for specific keywords (e.g. campaign hashtags).
25. Social media – listening focus	Offer comprehensive search or "listening" functionality for keyword(s) and phrases with the advanced query set up. Most of the tools specialising in this category have subscription-based services with a tiered structure based on the volumes of searches or results required or the amount of historical data you need access to.	These tools go beyond basic brand mention alerts and are powerful research tools offering deep insight into a conversation about your brand, your competitors or your industry. Deeper and wider indexing of results, sentiment analysis, crisis management and customisable dashboards and reporting differentiate these tools from those offered for free.
26. Social media – campaign tools	Offer flexible campaign and advertising tools for running campaigns on all the major social media platforms.	They provide a quick and easy method for setting up customer engagement campaigns, from templates for quizzes, surveys, and sweepstakes to white label options with full CSS editing and iFrame functionality. These tools can focus on a number of campaigns goals (e.g. driving engagement or collecting leads) and have powerful social sharing features out the box but with custom options ensuring each campaign can be tailored accordingly.
27. Online customer service tools	They speed up, collate, structure, and simplify in and out bound customer service communication. They provide an easy to use interface but also permit responses direct to and from a users' email address.	Customer questions and service team responses can be used to build FAQs, they integrate with social media and can categorise complaints by topic, by platform, and by a number of other filters, providing brands with a better understanding of their customer service issues. They also improve workflow among team members. Overall they are aimed at improving the quality of customer service.
28. Marketing cloud, Digital Marketing Hubs for CRM and campaign management	The aim of a Marketing Cloud or Digital Marketing Hub service is to help brands to manage all points of contact between themselves and the customer through the customer lifecycle; from lead to customer communications to develop loyalty and repeat purchase.	One of the key promises of a CRM tool is the ability to provide a single '360-degree' customer view. This requires the integration of all a brand's platforms, which hold some sort of customer data. This single view allows an accurate understanding of the customer and tight controls over how the brand manages its relationship and communication with that customer.
29. Email marketing service providers (ESPs)	They facilitate the design, build and send of transactional and marketing based email. There are hundreds of tools in this category, so it's the most difficult category to choose just 5! We have selected those which are simple and most popular and focus on email sending.	These tools can send hundreds of thousands of emails within a short space of time, customising the content based on the segments defined by marketers in the wider email database. Permissions, dynamic content, subject line and content testing, integration with other tools (e.g. a CMS or digital asset management tool) and audience segmentation are all features of good ESPs.
30. Voice of customer (VoC): Feedback and Surveys	They go beyond the quantitative insight of analytics tools and provide a deeper layer of site visitor feedback. Tools in this category are growing in popularity and include general website feedback, crowdsourced product opinions and exit survey functionality.	Web analytics can provide the what, the when and the how, but struggle to deliver the why and the rationale which explains the numbers from your analytics tool. VoC tools can run continuously in the background, be focused on specific pages or be time-based, gathering detailed feedback on barriers to conversion, design issues, user confusion – all useful and actionable insight for marketers.

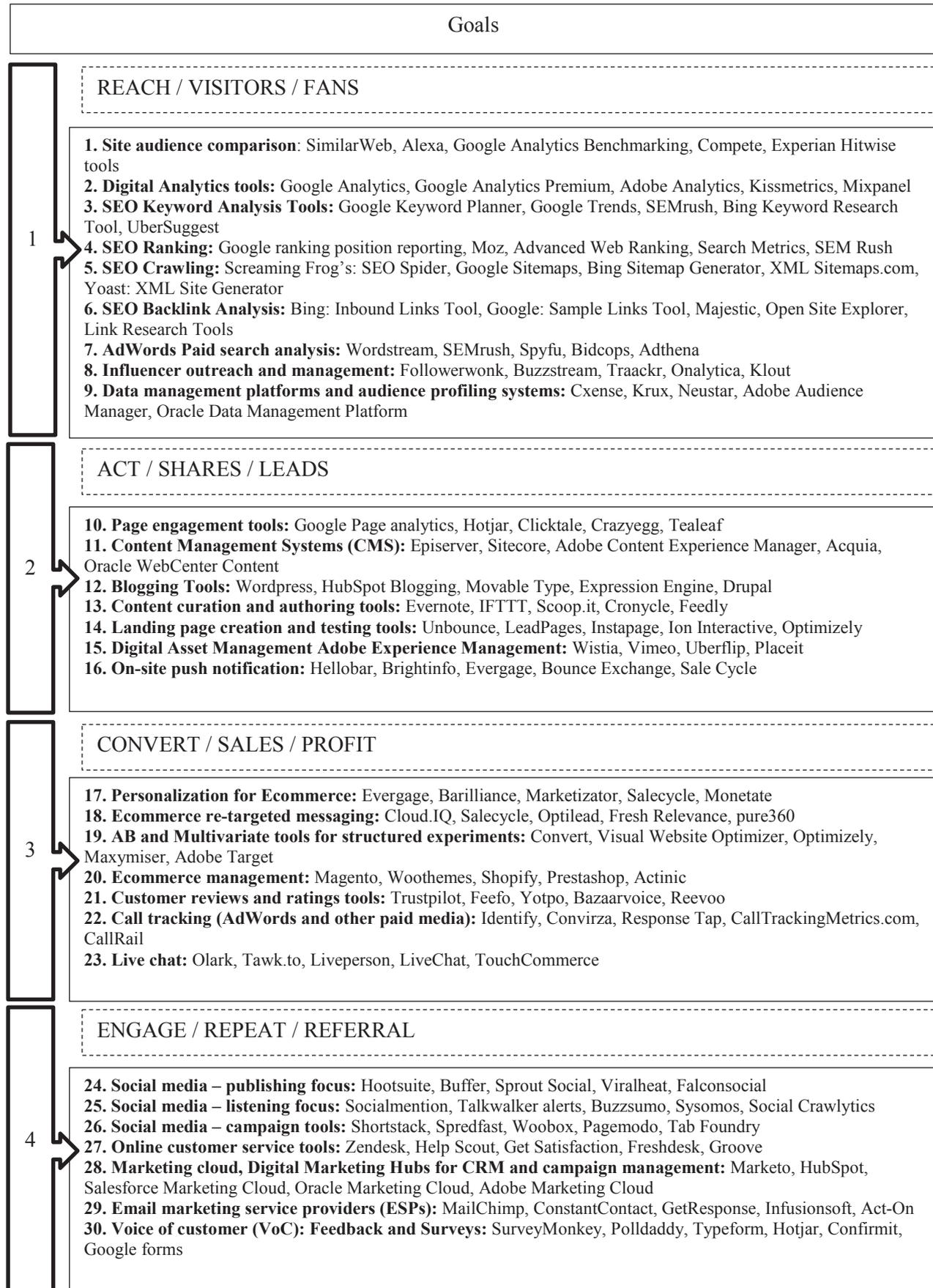


Figure 2. Essential digital marketing tools across the RACE Planning framework

Conclusions. RACE is a practical framework to help manage and improve results from digital marketing. Ultimately, it is about using the best practice web analytics techniques to get more commercial

value from investments in digital marketing. It will help simplify marketers approach to reviewing the performance of their online marketing and taking actions to improve its effectiveness.

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