

# Assessing The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Real Estate Agencies in Shandong China

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**Abstract:** This study explores the digital marketing strategies commonly employed by real estate agencies in Shandong, China, in response to the increasing role of digital platforms in shaping market competitiveness. Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered through interviews with ten managers from various real estate agencies in the region. Thematic analysis of the interview responses revealed three dominant strategies: the use of social media platforms and live streaming for customer engagement, investment in paid digital advertising and real estate listing platforms for lead generation, and the application of content-driven marketing combined with customer relationship management practices. These strategies reflect a multi-channel approach aimed at maximizing client outreach, enhancing brand visibility, and fostering customer loyalty. The findings highlight the agencies' strategic alignment with digital trends and underscore the importance of integrating direct engagement, performance-based advertising, and relationship management in contemporary real estate marketing.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing Strategies; Real Estate Agencies; Social Media Marketing; Customer Relationship Management.

## 1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed marketing practices across diverse industries, and the real estate sector is no exception. Increasingly, real estate agencies are adopting digital marketing as a strategic instrument for sustaining business growth and improving profitability in a competitive environment. This shift is especially pronounced in dynamic regional markets such as Shandong, China, where intense competition and evolving consumer expectations demand innovative marketing approaches. In such contexts, real estate agencies are leveraging digital platforms to reach prospective clients more efficiently, enhance market visibility, and differentiate their services from those of competitors. Digital marketing has been shown to exert a profound influence on consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in high-value sectors like real estate, where decisions are financially significant and shaped by multiple informational inputs and trust-based interactions (Kyei et al., 2025) [1].

Strategies such as search engine optimization (SEO), paid digital advertisements, algorithm-driven targeting, content marketing, and social media engagement are now central to customer acquisition and retention in the real estate industry. These strategies not only expand the customer base but also help in strengthening brand positioning and credibility in the market. More importantly, digital marketing efforts contribute directly to a firm's return on investment (ROI) by optimizing marketing spend and generating measurable outcomes in terms of lead generation, conversion rates, and client retention (Almestarihi et al., 2024) [2]. The integration of digital marketing strategies with financial performance metrics has further demonstrated a positive correlation with increased profitability, confirming the role of digital marketing not merely as a promotional tool but as a strategic enabler of business success (Nwabekee et al., 2021) [3]. Within the real estate industry, profitability is particularly contingent upon sound investment decisions that effectively balance risk with potential return, and here, strategic marketing becomes essential in ensuring that these investments achieve optimal

market exposure and customer alignment (Daudova, 2024) [4].

Innovative marketing practices—such as the use of data analytics for audience segmentation, personalized content delivery, and virtual property tours—are becoming standard in modern real estate operations. These innovations have proven instrumental in improving the profitability of commercial and residential real estate ventures by aligning marketing messages with buyer preferences and behavior patterns (Bochkov, 2025) [5]. Notably, during periods of economic instability, agencies that embrace flexible, data-driven digital marketing strategies are better positioned to maintain profitability. They do so by staying relevant to shifting market demands, retaining customer interest, and identifying new opportunities amid adversity. Adaptability in marketing has emerged as a critical factor for resilience and business continuity, as evidenced in studies exploring strategic responses to financial downturns (Ahamed & Pande, 2025) [6].

In addition to enhancing promotional reach, digital marketing also contributes significantly to internal performance metrics such as sales volume, deal velocity, and customer lifetime value. The increasing prevalence of digital tools in the real estate industry—ranging from customer relationship management (CRM) systems to digital advertising dashboards—has streamlined operations and improved decision-making efficiency. These tools allow real estate firms to analyze customer behavior, optimize marketing budgets, and forecast sales performance with greater accuracy, reinforcing their role in driving both short-term revenues and long-term profitability (Yusoff & Ying, 2020) [7]. Moreover, recent findings confirm the substantial influence of digital marketing on real estate sales, indicating its expanding impact on transactional outcomes and market competitiveness (Siddiqui, 2024) [8].

Despite this growing body of literature, a significant research gap remains regarding the specific effects of digital marketing on the profitability of real estate agencies within regional markets, particularly in Shandong. While numerous studies have addressed consumer behavior in response to

digital marketing (Kyei et al., 2025) [1], methods for evaluating ROI (Almestarihi et al., 2024) [2], and broader linkages between marketing initiatives and financial performance (Nwabekee et al., 2021) [3], most of this research is situated within national or international frameworks. There is a relative scarcity of empirical work that focuses on localized, agency-level practices within defined regional contexts like Shandong. Similarly, while literature has addressed investment strategies in real estate (Daudova, 2024) [4] and profitability dynamics of large-scale commercial developments (Bochkov, 2025) [5], few studies investigate how real estate agencies at the local level integrate digital marketing into their operational strategies to enhance financial outcomes.

Additionally, although studies recognize the importance of adaptive marketing approaches during challenging economic times (Ahamed & Pande, 2025) [6], as well as the increasing application of digital tools in real estate (Yusoff & Ying, 2020) [7], there is limited empirical evidence that explores how such strategies specifically influence profitability at the agency level within Shandong’s real estate landscape. While some findings suggest a positive relationship between digital marketing and sales performance (Siddiqui, 2024) [8], comprehensive, localized assessments that quantify and qualify its direct impact on profitability are largely absent from the current literature.

This research gap underscores the urgent need for contextualized studies that explore the operational realities of digital marketing within Shandong’s real estate agencies. A deeper understanding of how these agencies adopt, implement, and evaluate digital marketing strategies can inform both academic inquiry and managerial practice. Addressing this void will generate valuable insights for practitioners seeking to optimize marketing investments and sustain competitive advantage and will contribute meaningfully to the scholarly discourse on digital transformation and strategic marketing within region-specific real estate markets.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the digital marketing strategies commonly employed by real estate agencies in Shandong, China. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of managerial perspectives, strategic practices, and contextual factors influencing digital marketing decisions in the real estate sector.

Data collection is carried out through semi-structured interviews, which provide flexibility for respondents to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key areas of inquiry are consistently addressed. The interview guide contains open-ended questions focusing on the types of digital marketing strategies used, the rationale behind their adoption, perceived effectiveness, challenges encountered, and observed market trends.

The participants of this study consist of ten (10) managers currently working in real estate agencies in Shandong. These respondents are selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals directly involved in the formulation and implementation of marketing strategies within their respective agencies. This sampling method ensures that the data collected reflect informed managerial perspectives relevant to the study’s objective.

Interviews are conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on the availability and preference of the

respondents. With participants’ consent, interviews are recorded and transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights from the interview data, allowing for a systematic interpretation of the strategies utilized by real estate agencies in the region.

Ethical considerations are strictly observed throughout the study. Participants are informed of the study’s purpose, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and reminded of their right to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

## 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1.** Thematic Summary of Interview Findings

Theme	Frequency	Sample Responses
Social Media Marketing and Live Streaming	6	M2: We mainly use WeChat and Douyin live streaming for promotions.
Paid Advertising and Digital Listing Platforms	5	M5: We invest in paid ads on Baidu
Content-Driven Marketing and CRM Practices	4	M9: We publish market insights and use WeChat CRM for client follow-ups.

The findings of this study are summarized in Table 1, which presents the dominant themes identified through in-depth interviews with ten managers of real estate agencies in Shandong, China. The table categorizes the key digital marketing strategies these agencies commonly employ, highlighting both the frequency of each theme and representative quotes that illustrate their practical application. From the qualitative analysis, three major themes emerged: (1) Social Media Marketing and Live Streaming, (2) Paid Advertising and Digital Listing Platforms, and (3) Content-Driven Marketing and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Practices.

The most frequently cited and prominently emphasized strategy is Social Media Marketing and Live Streaming, mentioned by six of the ten participants. These managers reported that platforms such as WeChat and Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok) are indispensable tools for promoting real estate offerings. The appeal of social media lies in its immediacy, wide user base, and visual engagement potential. Live streaming, in particular, was viewed as a transformative tool that allows agents to provide virtual property tours in real time, respond to viewer inquiries, and simulate face-to-face interactions. This strategy is not only cost-effective but also highly compatible with the preferences of younger, tech-savvy buyers who prefer interactive and visually immersive experiences over static advertisements. Some respondents also noted that frequent livestream sessions have become a routine marketing practice, often conducted during peak engagement hours or tied to promotional campaigns. By building familiarity and trust through repeated exposure, live streaming has effectively reduced buyer hesitancy and shortened the sales cycle.

The second key theme, Paid Advertising and Digital Listing Platforms, was referenced in five interviews. Managers described how platforms such as Anjuke, Fang.com, and 58.com are essential for achieving baseline visibility in the competitive real estate market. In addition to organic listings, agencies also invest in paid advertisements on Baidu search results and social media platforms to amplify reach.

This form of outbound marketing is increasingly supported by data analytics, as managers track campaign performance through click-through rates, inquiry volumes, and actual conversion metrics. Several agencies indicated that their digital marketing decisions are now guided by real-time data dashboards, which help optimize ad placements, refine target audiences, and manage budget allocations. This performance-oriented approach reflects a shift from traditional static advertising to a more agile, results-driven digital marketing strategy. Moreover, the combination of listing platform presence with paid search ads ensures that agencies maintain top-of-mind awareness among potential buyers conducting online property research.

The third and equally significant theme is Content-Driven Marketing and CRM Practices, which was identified in four interviews. Managers shared that in addition to promotional efforts, they invest in the creation of informative, value-added content tailored to the needs of prospective buyers. Examples include detailed neighborhood reports, updates on housing policies, comparative pricing analyses, and tips for first-time homebuyers. This type of content not only draws in more qualified leads but also enhances the agency's credibility as a trusted advisor rather than just a transactional intermediary. Some agencies even maintain regularly updated blogs or push curated content via WeChat official accounts to keep clients informed and engaged. Complementing this content strategy is the use of customer relationship management (CRM) software to automate follow-ups, personalize communication, and maintain long-term engagement with clients. These systems help agencies manage growing client databases and ensure that no potential lead is lost due to neglect. The CRM tools also enable segmentation of clients by interest, budget, and buying stage, allowing for tailored communication strategies that foster loyalty and repeat business.

Overall, the findings show that real estate agencies in Shandong are adopting a multi-faceted digital marketing approach, blending direct customer engagement through social media, strategic use of paid advertisements, and content-driven relationship management. These strategies not only help agencies attract new clients but also strengthen ongoing customer relationships, thereby enhancing their market competitiveness in an increasingly digital landscape.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Real estate agencies in Shandong, China, actively employ a range of digital marketing strategies to engage potential clients and enhance their market presence. Social media marketing, particularly through platforms like WeChat and Douyin, emerges as the most common and impactful strategy, allowing agencies to directly connect with customers and build trust through interactive content such as live streaming. Paid advertising on digital listing platforms and search engines also plays a critical role in increasing property visibility, with some agencies adopting performance tracking to optimize their marketing investments. Additionally, content-driven marketing combined with customer relationship management practices reflects a growing

recognition of the importance of providing value and maintaining long-term client relationships in a competitive market environment.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that real estate agencies in Shandong continue to strengthen their social media marketing efforts by leveraging interactive platforms like Douyin and WeChat, focusing on personalized content and live engagement to foster customer trust and interest. Agencies should also invest in performance-based digital advertising, ensuring that their marketing budgets are allocated according to measurable outcomes such as inquiries and conversions. Moreover, expanding content marketing initiatives can enhance agency credibility and attract a more informed clientele. Finally, adopting systematic CRM tools will help agencies manage client relationships more effectively, promoting sustained engagement and repeat business. These strategies, when integrated thoughtfully, can significantly improve the competitive positioning and profitability of real estate agencies operating in Shandong's dynamic market landscape.

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