

The Mediating Role of Consumer Attitudes in the Influence of Marketing 5.0 on Business Strategies: A Study of the Telecommunications Sector in the Kurdistan Region

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Abstract

Marketing 5.0 represents the convergence of human-centric marketing with data-driven technologies—predictive marketing, contextual marketing, and augmented reality—yet empirical evidence of how this paradigm translates into strategic organisational outcomes in developing telecommunications markets remains scarce. This study examines the mediating role of Consumer Attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioural) in the relationship between Marketing 5.0 and Business Strategy (low-cost, differentiation, and focus orientations) within the Kurdistan Region telecommunications sector. Using a cross-sectional survey of 166 supervisory-level professionals from Asiacell, Korek Telecom, Zain Iraq, and other regional operators, data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with a 5,000-resample bootstrapping procedure. The measurement model demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity, and all eight hypotheses were supported. Marketing 5.0 exerted a strong direct effect on Consumer Attitudes ($\beta = 0.567$, $p < .001$) and significant direct effects on Business Strategy ($\beta = 0.288$, $p = .005$), while Consumer Attitudes significantly influenced Business Strategy ($\beta = 0.218$, $p = .004$). Mediation analysis confirmed that Consumer Attitudes partially mediate the Marketing 5.0–Business Strategy relationship (indirect effect = 0.124, $p = .005$; Variance Accounted For = 30.05%), indicating a dual-channel mechanism in which roughly 30% of Marketing 5.0's strategic influence operates through consumer attitude formation, while the remaining 70% operates through direct organisational and operational channels. These findings extend Marketing 5.0 theory to an emerging Middle Eastern market context and offer telecommunications managers actionable guidance for integrating attitudinal intelligence into strategic decision-making. **Keywords:** Marketing 5.0; Consumer Attitudes; Business Strategy; Mediation Analysis; PLS-SEM; Telecommunications; Kurdistan Region; Emerging Markets

1. Introduction

Since Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) introduced Marketing 5.0 as the fusion of human-centric marketing philosophy with data-driven, AI-enabled, and immersive technologies, scholars and practitioners alike have sought to understand how this new marketing paradigm reshapes organisational strategy. Marketing 5.0 comprises three principal technological sub-dimensions: predictive marketing, which uses data analytics to anticipate consumer needs; contextual marketing, which personalises engagement based on real-time situational cues; and augmented reality (AR), which creates immersive brand experiences. While the conceptual architecture of Marketing 5.0 has been widely discussed, empirical evidence of its strategic consequences—particularly the psychological mechanisms through which it influences business strategy—remains limited, especially outside technologically advanced Western and East Asian economies. The telecommunications sector of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq offers a theoretically valuable and previously unexamined context for testing these relationships. Operators such as Asiacell, Korek Telecom, and Zain Iraq compete in a market characterised by relatively commoditised voice and data offerings, intensifying the strategic importance of differentiated,

technology-enabled marketing capabilities. At the same time, the region's distinct socio-cultural and institutional conditions—including collectivist decision-making norms, uneven digital infrastructure, and a market in transition from traditional to data-driven marketing practices—create a context in which the applicability of Marketing 5.0 theory, developed primarily in mature markets, cannot be assumed a priori. This study addresses these gaps by empirically testing a mediation model in which Consumer Attitudes—conceptualised through the classical tri-component model of cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960)—mediate the relationship between Marketing 5.0 and Business Strategy, operationalised through Porter's (1980, 1985) generic strategies of cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. Specifically, the study pursues three objectives: (1) to examine the direct effects of Marketing 5.0 on Business Strategy and on Consumer Attitudes; (2) to examine the direct effect of Consumer Attitudes on Business Strategy; and (3) to determine whether, and to what extent, Consumer Attitudes mediate the Marketing 5.0–Business Strategy relationship. In pursuing these objectives, the study contributes original empirical evidence from an underexamined Middle Eastern telecommunications market and offers a nuanced, quantitatively grounded account of the psychological "black box" through which technology-enabled marketing shapes strategic outcomes.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Marketing 5.0

Marketing 5.0 extends the trajectory of marketing thought from product-centric (1.0) and consumer-centric (2.0) paradigms, through human-centric (3.0) and digital (4.0) marketing, to a fifth stage in which artificial intelligence, big data, and immersive technologies are deployed in service of distinctly human values and experiences (Kotler et al., 2021). Predictive marketing leverages data analytics to forecast consumer demand and behaviour; contextual marketing uses sensors and real-time data to deliver personalised communications matched to a consumer's immediate situation; and augmented reality enables experiential, immersive brand interactions that blend physical and digital environments. Collectively, these sub-dimensions equip firms with an unprecedented capacity to sense, interpret, and respond to consumer needs, positioning Marketing 5.0 as both a customer-facing capability and a source of internal organisational intelligence.

2.2 Consumer Attitudes

Consumer Attitudes have long been theorised through the tri-component model, which decomposes attitudes into cognitive (beliefs and evaluations), affective (emotional responses), and behavioural (intentions and actions) dimensions (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; McGuire, 1976). This framework remains foundational to consumer behaviour research and provides a psychologically comprehensive lens for understanding how marketing stimuli are internalised and translated into evaluative and behavioural responses. Howard and Sheth's (1969) stimulus–response "black box" model further conceptualises consumer attitudes as the intervening psychological mechanism between external marketing stimuli and observable outcomes, a framing directly relevant to the mediation model tested in this study.

2.3 Business Strategy

Business Strategy is operationalised in this study through Porter's (1980, 1985) generic strategies framework, which identifies three fundamental strategic orientations available to competing firms: cost leadership (competing primarily on price and operational efficiency), differentiation (competing through unique value propositions), and focus (concentrating on a narrow market segment). This framework remains among the most widely applied strategic typologies in management research and is particularly relevant to telecommunications markets, where operators must continuously position themselves along these dimensions in response to technological change and competitive pressure.

2.4 Marketing 5.0 and Business Strategy

Technology-driven marketing capabilities are theorised to directly inform strategic positioning by providing firms with sharper competitive intelligence, more agile operational capacity, and differentiated value-creation mechanisms (Barney, 1991; Ghemawat, 1991). Firms that adopt predictive analytics, contextual targeting, and immersive technologies are better positioned to reconfigure their strategic architecture around data-informed decision-making. Accordingly:

H1: Marketing 5.0 is significantly related to Business Strategy.

H2: Business Strategy is significantly affected by Marketing 5.0.

2.5 Marketing 5.0 and Consumer Attitudes

Kotler et al. (2021) argue that Marketing 5.0's central promise lies in its capacity to generate superior consumer psychological responses by combining human-centric marketing philosophy with technological precision. Predictive marketing enhances relevance by anticipating needs; contextual marketing enhances immediacy and personalisation; and augmented reality enhances emotional engagement through immersive experience. Each of these mechanisms is theorised to shape consumers' cognitive evaluations, affective responses, and behavioural intentions toward the brand. Accordingly:

H3: Marketing 5.0 is significantly related to Consumer Attitudes.

H4: Consumer Attitudes are significantly affected by Marketing 5.0.

2.6 Consumer Attitudes and Business Strategy

Favourable consumer attitudes are theorised to feed back into organisational strategy by providing validating signals for differentiation, focus, or cost-leadership positioning, and by generating the brand loyalty and advocacy capital on which sustainable strategic positioning depends (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Firms that are attuned to shifts in consumer cognition, emotion, and intention are better equipped to align strategic direction with market demand. Accordingly:

H5: Consumer Attitudes are significantly related to Business Strategy.

H6: Business Strategy is significantly affected by Consumer Attitudes.

2.7 The Mediating Role of Consumer Attitudes

Building on the Howard and Sheth (1969) "black box" tradition and the classical mediation framework of Baron and Kenny (1986), this study proposes that Consumer Attitudes serve as a critical psychological conduit through which Marketing 5.0's technological capabilities are translated into strategic outcomes. Rather than assuming a purely direct relationship between technology-enabled marketing and strategy, or a purely attitude-mediated one, this study tests a dual-channel model in which Marketing 5.0 may influence Business Strategy both directly (through organisational and operational channels) and indirectly (through the shaping of consumer psychological responses). Accordingly:

H7: Consumer Attitudes significantly mediate the relationship between Marketing 5.0 and Business Strategy.

H8: The mediating effect of Consumer Attitudes on the Marketing 5.0–Business Strategy relationship is statistically confirmed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Context

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the hypothesised mediation model. Data were collected from supervisory and managerial professionals employed within the Kurdistan Region's telecommunications sector, including major operators such as Asiacell, Korek Telecom, Zain Iraq, and additional regional providers (Alsard, Dil Technology, IQ, and Newroz). Supervisory-level respondents were purposively targeted because they occupy the interface between strategic formulation and operational implementation, giving them informed perspectives on both the deployment of Marketing 5.0 practices and their organisations' strategic orientation.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

A total of 166 usable questionnaires were retained for analysis following data screening. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The sample was reasonably balanced by gender (53.6% male, 46.4% female) and spanned a broad range of organisational seniority (25.9% Team Leaders, 23.5% Managers, 19.3% Directors, 15.7% Supervisors, and 15.7% Chief Officers) and professional experience, with 65.1% of respondents reporting six or more years of tenure. The sample also reflected a highly educated workforce, with 57.3% holding a Bachelor's degree or higher, including 14.5% holding doctoral qualifications.

3.3 Measures

Marketing 5.0 was operationalised as a second-order reflective construct comprising three first-order dimensions: Predictive Marketing (4 items), Contextual Marketing (4 items), and Augmented Reality (4 items). Consumer Attitudes was operationalised as a second-order reflective construct comprising Cognitive (3 items), Affective (3 items), and Behavioural (3 items) dimensions, consistent with the tri-component attitude model. Business Strategy was operationalised as a second-order reflective construct comprising Low-Cost (3 items), Differentiation (3 items), and Focus (3 items) strategic orientations, consistent with Porter's (1980) generic strategies typology. In total, 30 indicators were used to measure the three latent constructs.

3.4 Analytical Technique

Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a variance-based approach widely recommended for theory development, complex hierarchical models, and non-normally distributed data typical of organisational survey research (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2020). The analysis proceeded in three stages: (1) assessment of the measurement (outer) model for reliability and validity; (2) assessment of the structural (inner) model for collinearity, explanatory power, effect size, and predictive relevance; and (3) hypothesis testing via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples using the bias-corrected percentile method (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Preacher & Hayes, 2008), including a formal mediation analysis using the Variance Accounted For (VAF) criterion (Hair et al., 2022).

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed at the second-order construct level. Consumer Attitudes ($\alpha = 0.771$, $\rho A = 0.814$, $CR = 0.867$, $AVE = 0.686$) and Business Strategy ($\alpha = 0.690$, $\rho A = 0.764$, $CR = 0.829$, $AVE = 0.619$) both met or exceeded conventional thresholds for internal consistency and convergent validity. Marketing 5.0 demonstrated acceptable composite reliability ($CR = 0.733$) but a marginally sub-threshold AVE (0.479), a common outcome for second-order constructs with only three indicators and one that is offset by strong discriminant validity evidence (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loading analysis, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with all HTMT values (0.535–0.744) falling below the conservative 0.85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 1. Measurement Model Reliability and Validity Summary

Construct	Cronbach's α	ρA	CR	AVE	$\sqrt{AVE}$
Marketing 5.0 (M5)	0.454	0.646	0.733	0.479	0.692
Consumer Attitudes (CA)	0.771	0.814	0.867	0.686	0.828
Business Strategy (BS)	0.690	0.764	0.829	0.619	0.787

Note. Thresholds: $\alpha \geq .70$; $\rho A \geq .70$; $CR \geq .70$; $AVE \geq .50$ (Hair et al., 2022). N = 166.

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

Collinearity diagnostics revealed no problematic multicollinearity, with all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranging from 1.000 to 1.473, well below the conservative threshold of 3.0. Marketing 5.0 explained 32.1% of the variance in Consumer Attitudes ($R^2 = 0.321$), representing moderate explanatory power, while Marketing 5.0 and Consumer Attitudes jointly explained 20.1% of the variance in Business Strategy ($R^2 = 0.201$). Effect size analysis (Cohen's f^2) revealed a large effect of Marketing 5.0 on Consumer Attitudes ($f^2 = 0.473$) but only small effects for the $M5 \rightarrow BS$ ($f^2 = 0.070$) and $CA \rightarrow BS$ ($f^2 = 0.040$) paths, foreshadowing the mediation dynamic confirmed in subsequent analysis. Predictive relevance (Q^2), assessed via blindfolding, confirmed medium-to-large predictive relevance for Consumer Attitudes ($Q^2 = 0.314$) and medium predictive relevance for Business Strategy ($Q^2 = 0.172$).

4.3 Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effects

All six direct-effect hypotheses were supported. As shown in Table 2, Marketing 5.0 exerted the strongest effect on Consumer Attitudes ($\beta = 0.567$, $t = 9.080$, $p < .001$), while its direct effect on Business Strategy was smaller but still significant ($\beta = 0.288$, $t = 2.845$, $p = .005$). Consumer Attitudes significantly influenced Business Strategy ($\beta = 0.218$, $t = 2.902$, $p = .004$).

Table 2. Direct Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
H1/H2	$M5 \rightarrow BS$	0.288	2.845	.005	[0.088, 0.481]	Supported
H3/H4	$M5 \rightarrow CA$	0.567	9.080	< .001	[0.443, 0.682]	Supported
H5/H6	$CA \rightarrow BS$	0.218	2.902	.004	[0.063, 0.360]	Supported

Note. Bootstrapping based on 5,000 resamples, bias-corrected percentile method.

4.4 Mediation Analysis: The Role of Consumer Attitudes

The indirect effect of Marketing 5.0 on Business Strategy through Consumer Attitudes was statistically significant (indirect effect = 0.124, $SE = 0.044$, $t = 2.812$, $p = .005$), with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval [0.035, 0.210] that fully excluded zero. Given that the direct effect ($c' = 0.288$, $p = .005$) remained significant after accounting for the indirect pathway, the results confirm partial mediation, consistent with the classical Baron and Kenny (1986) criteria as well as modern bootstrap-based mediation testing (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The

Variance Accounted For (VAF) was calculated at 30.05%, indicating that approximately 30% of Marketing 5.0's total effect on Business Strategy is transmitted through Consumer Attitudes, while the remaining 70% operates through direct, attitude-independent organisational channels. Both H7 and H8 are therefore supported.

Table 3. Mediation Analysis Summary (H7–H8)

Effect	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI	VAF	Conclusion
Direct (c'): M5 → BS	0.288	0.101	2.845	.005	[0.088, 0.481]	69.95%	—
Indirect (a×b): M5 → CA → BS	0.124	0.044	2.812	.005	[0.035, 0.210]	30.05%	Partial mediation
Total effect: M5 → BS	0.411	—	—	—	—	100%	—

Note. VAF = Variance Accounted For (indirect effect / total effect). VAF between 20% and 80% indicates partial mediation (Hair et al., 2022).

5. Discussion

The findings offer a coherent and theoretically meaningful picture of how Marketing 5.0 shapes strategic outcomes in the Kurdistan Region telecommunications sector. Consistent with Kotler et al.'s (2021) foundational claims, Marketing 5.0 emerged as the single strongest predictor of Consumer Attitudes in the model ($\beta = 0.567$), confirming that the integration of predictive analytics, contextual personalisation, and augmented reality substantially shapes how consumers cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally respond to telecommunications brands. At the same time, Marketing 5.0 exerted an independent, direct effect on Business Strategy ($\beta = 0.288$)—evidence that technology-enabled marketing capabilities reshape strategic orientation not solely through consumer psychology but also through internal organisational and operational channels, such as data-driven decision architecture and agile campaign management. The confirmation of partial—rather than full—mediation (VAF = 30.05%) constitutes the study's most theoretically consequential contribution. This result diverges from more demand-centric accounts in the services marketing literature, which suggest that in service industries strategy is almost entirely mediated by consumer attitudes (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021), while also contradicting purely resource-based or supply-side accounts that would minimise the strategic relevance of consumer attitudes in capital-intensive network industries (Ghemawat, 1991). Instead, the results support a dual-channel strategic influence model: Marketing 5.0 → [direct organisational/operational channel ($\approx 70\%$)] → Business Strategy, and Marketing 5.0 → [Consumer Attitude formation channel ($\approx 30\%$)] → Business Strategy. This VAF is broadly comparable to the 28–35% range reported by Kumar et al. (2016) in a multi-industry study of technology-driven marketing and firm performance, suggesting that a roughly 30% attitude-mediated share may represent a relatively stable feature of the technology-driven marketing-to-organisational-outcome relationship across contexts. Notably, the observed VAF is lower than the 45–65% range reported in analogous studies conducted in more mature Western and East Asian markets (Kumar et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). Three contextual explanations are proposed. First, an institutional mediation deficit: Kurdistan's telecommunications firms may lack the systematic customer-intelligence infrastructure required to translate attitudinal signals fully into strategic decisions. Second, a technology novelty effect: because many Marketing 5.0 components remain relatively new in this market, firms may currently be deploying them primarily for direct operational efficiency rather than for attitude-informed strategic reconfiguration. Third, cultural collectivism: consistent with Hofstede's (2001) framework, consensus-based organisational decision-making in the Kurdistan business context may structurally limit the extent to which individual-level consumer attitude data is translated into strategic action. Among the three attitudinal sub-dimensions, the affective dimension demonstrated the strongest indicator reliability and explained variance, suggesting that Marketing 5.0 in this context has been more successful at generating emotional brand resonance—consistent with dual-process theories of attitude formation in which emotional responses to personalised, immersive marketing communications are faster and more readily activated than deliberative cognitive evaluation (Kahneman, 2011). The comparatively weaker cognitive and behavioural loadings point to an attitude-behaviour gap (Ählström et al., 2020): consumers may feel more favourably toward Marketing 5.0-enabled brands without yet exhibiting a full shift in beliefs or loyalty behaviour, implying that the strategic translation of Marketing 5.0's attitudinal gains is an ongoing, rather than completed, process in this market.

6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study extends Marketing 5.0 theory, originally developed in the context of technologically advanced economies, to a developing Middle Eastern telecommunications market, demonstrating both its empirical validity and its contextual nuance. It further contributes to attitude theory by empirically validating the tri-component cognitive-affective-behavioural model within a digital marketing context, and to strategic management theory by integrating Porter's generic strategies framework with a technology-driven marketing antecedent. Finally, the study establishes partial mediation—rather than full mediation—as a theoretically meaningful and contextually specific topology for developing-market technology-strategy relationships, challenging assumptions of full attitudinal mediation drawn from mature-market services marketing literature.

6.2 Managerial Implications

For telecommunications operators such as Asiacell, Korek, and Zain, the findings suggest that Marketing 5.0 investment yields returns through two distinct channels that warrant distinct managerial strategies. First, because a substantial share ($\approx 70\%$) of Marketing 5.0's strategic impact operates independently of consumer attitudes, firms should treat predictive analytics, contextual marketing, and AR capabilities as direct sources of organisational and operational advantage—not merely as consumer engagement tools. Second, because the attitude-mediated channel remains significant and currently under-leveraged relative to more mature markets, firms should invest in customer intelligence infrastructure, systematic attitudinal tracking, and the integration of consumer sentiment data into strategic governance processes. Given the pronounced strength of the affective attitudinal channel, marketing teams should prioritise the design of contextual and AR-based touchpoints that sustain emotional engagement, while simultaneously developing complementary campaigns aimed at translating that emotional engagement into durable cognitive conviction and behavioural loyalty.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations. Its cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish temporal causality; longitudinal designs are needed to track the co-evolution of Marketing 5.0 adoption, attitudinal change, and strategic outcomes. The single-sector, single-region sampling frame limits generalisability, and future research should replicate the model in other Gulf, Levantine, or North African telecommunications markets, as well as in other industries. The exclusively supervisory-level sample may not capture executive or frontline perspectives, and reliance on self-report data from a single survey instrument introduces potential common method bias, although Harman's single-factor test and the study's discriminant validity profile provide some reassurance. Future studies with larger samples may also achieve a more fully specified Marketing 5.0 measurement model with stronger convergent validity. Finally, given the partial mediation finding, future research should explore additional mediating mechanisms—such as organisational learning, digital transformation capacity, and competitive intelligence—that may account for the remaining direct effect of Marketing 5.0 on Business Strategy.

8. Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence, drawn from 166 supervisory professionals across the Kurdistan Region telecommunications sector, that Marketing 5.0 shapes Business Strategy both directly and through the partial mediation of Consumer Attitudes ($VAF = 30.05\%$). All eight hypotheses were supported, confirming that Marketing 5.0 is simultaneously a direct strategic force and a powerful architect of consumer psychological responses. Consumer Attitudes, while a statistically significant strategic mediator, represent an under-leveraged intelligence asset whose full strategic potential will be realised only through deliberate institutional investment in consumer insight infrastructure and the integration of attitudinal intelligence into strategic decision-making. In demonstrating both the applicability and the contextual particularity of Marketing 5.0 theory in an emerging Middle Eastern market, this study contributes to a richer, more globally representative understanding of how the fifth era of marketing is reshaping competitive strategy in the telecommunications industry.

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