



Digital Navigator #2 Marketing Transformation in Automotive

Looking Ahead Together. Guiding Principles for
Modern, Customer-Centric Companies.

*With 6 expert
contributions*

Publisher

Bitkom e.V.
Albrechtstraße 10
10117 Berlin
T 030 27576-0
bitkom@bitkom.org
www.bitkom.org

Contact

Dr. Florian Bayer | Head of Digital Marketing & Sales
T 030 27576-162 | f.bayer@bitkom.org

Paul Hannappel | Head of Automotive
T 030 27576-130 | p.hannappel@bitkom.org

Responsible Bitkom Committees

AK Digital Marketing
AK Automotive

Authors

Thorsten Gramlich | Diconium, Carolin Ruopp | TÜV SÜD, Henryk Börngen |
Schaeffler VLS, Tina Rauschenbach | CARUSO, Pierre Donath |
3SS (3 Screen Solutions GmbH), Jens Nullmeyer | Infosys Ltd.

Cover

© Alexey Savchenko - unsplash.com

Copyright

Bitkom 2026

This publication provides general, non-binding information. The content reflects the views of Bitkom at the time of publication. While the information has been compiled with the greatest possible care, no claims can be made regarding its factual accuracy, completeness or timeliness; this publication cannot account for the specific circumstances of individual cases. Therefore, its use is the reader's responsibility. Any liability is excluded. All rights, including partial reproduction, are reserved by Bitkom.

1	Digital Navigator #1 Automation & Analytics	4
2	Guiding Principles and Future Perspectives	6
	2.1 Five Theses on the Future of Digital B2B Marketing	7
	2.2 Stopping Churn: From Reaction to Prevention with AI	9
	2.3 Data, AI, and Connected Teams Create Precision and Ensure Consistent Strategic Management	11
	2.4 Data Communication Between Platforms	12
	2.5 Recognizing Individual Customer Needs Early with the Use of Predictive Analytics and AI	13
	2.6 AI-Driven Customer Journeys Through Real-Time Agents	14
3	Future Together	15
4	Data-Driven Inspiration	16
	Study » Marketing in Digital Transformation 2026«	16
	Study »Digital Marketing in Germany 2025«	16
	Studie »Digital Mobility – so smart wird der Verkehr 2025«	17
	Digital Office Index 2024	17
	Supplementary Data & Press Information	17
5	Team Bitkom	18

1 Digital Navigator #2

Marketing Transformation in Automotive

Objective of the »Digital Navigator« Series

Digitalisation is a collaborative project involving business, society, and politics. To bring our digital future to life, visionaries, practitioners, and decision-makers develop ideas for the future and think boldly about what lies ahead. Their collaboration creates progress that enables new technologies to deliver real impact.

Continuous exchange among all stakeholders builds knowledge, fosters understanding, and opens up new pathways. Bitkom provides the central platform for this purpose: a theme-driven space for dialogue, knowledge transfer, and best practices where all relevant stakeholders work together to shape our digital world.

With the »Digital Navigator« publication series, we support this shared learning journey. We consolidate insights, assessments, and future perspectives and make them accessible to decision-makers – as guidance through change and as a stimulus for the digital advancement of organisations.

Guiding Question: How can we shape our digital future together?

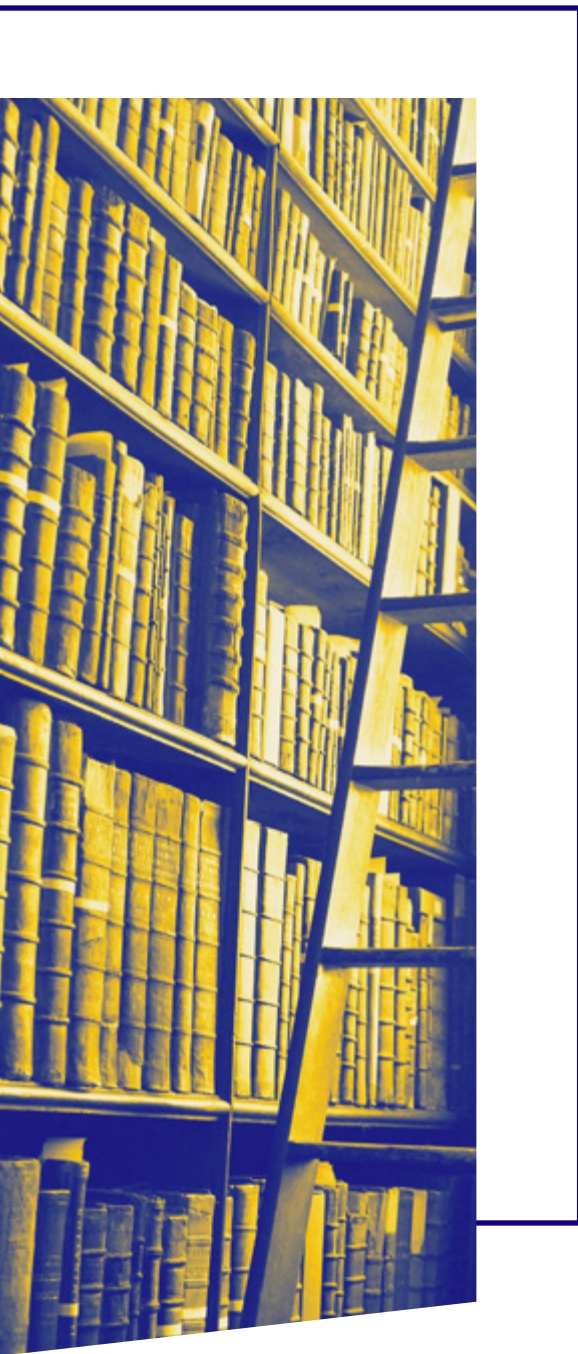
Click here to visit the »Digital Navigator« website.



Embarking on the Digitalisation Learning Journey Together as a Think Tank

The starting point of the first edition of the »Digital Navigator« is based on insights gained from a joint event of the Bitkom Working Groups Digital Marketing and Automotive. The event took place on November 13, 2025, at Diconium. The main theme of the event, which featured extensive discussions, was »Digital Marketing Meets #Automotive – Customer Perspective in Focus.«

The automotive industry is changing rapidly: customers expect digital services, flexible offers and direct communication across all channels—from the online configurator to the connected vehicle. Artificial intelligence is opening up new opportunities for personalised communication, while data is becoming the key resource for customer access, trust and after-sales services. Platforms, subscription models and service offerings are creating new markets where it is no longer just about the vehicle itself. At the same time, one thing remains true: only those who provide a trustworthy, secure and positive customer experience can remain successful in the long term.



We welcomed guests who contributed valuable insights, experiences and perspectives to the discussions.

- »Experience. Data. AI. – The New Formula for Automotive Marketing and Sales«, Thorsen Gramlich, Partner, Diconium
- »From Posts to Positioning – How Brands Create Visibility and Build Trust in the Digital Space«, Carolin Ruopp, Head of Business Partner Mobility, Marketing Mobility, TÜV SÜD, TÜV SÜD
- »Trustworthy Customer Relationships in the Digital Age – Contradiction or Success Factor« (Panel)
 - **Thorsten Gramlich, Partner, Diconium (Moderator)**
 - **Tina Rauschenbach, Head of Customer Experience, Caruso**
 - **Henryk Börngen, Head of Platform Sales and Opportunity Management Vehicle Lifetime Solutions, Schaeffler Technologies**
 - **Pierre Donath, CMO, 3S – 3 Screen Solutions**

To extend knowledge transfer beyond the event, we asked the participating experts to share their key insights, learnings and future perspectives in the »Digital Navigator«. We wish you an insightful and inspiring read.

At a glance

[For Bitkom members](#)

[More about the working group](#)

[More about the working group](#)

2

Guiding Principles and Future Perspectives

Here's how digital experts view the future of marketing in the automotive ecosystem



Exciting Contributions

- »Mobility in Transition: From Vehicle World to Connected Ecosystem« Thorsten Gramlich, Diconium
- »Search Engine Optimization in the AI Era – GEO as an Extension of SEO« Carolin Ruopp, TÜV SÜD
- »Multi-stage B2B Partial Distribution to a Multichannel and Service Ecosystem – Including Drivers« Henryk Börngen, Schaeffler VLS
- »From Car to Digital Companion: Rethinking Customer Experience« Tina Rauschenbach, Caruso
- »Automotive Marketing Becomes Continuous In-Car Relationship Management« Pierre Donath, 3SS (3 Screen Solutions GmbH)
- »Automotive Revolution: Customer Contact Becomes Less Frequent, Expectations Rise Rapidly« Jens Nullmeyer, Infosys Ltd.

2.1 Mobility in Transition: From the Vehicle-Centric World to a Connected Ecosystem

Key Insights

- **Mobility is shifting from hardware to data- and AI-driven ecosystems.**

Value creation is increasingly moving away from the vehicle towards the broader customer ecosystem. It arises primarily from the interaction of data, software, AI and connected services. Mobility is becoming a digital network in which vehicles are just one node, no longer the sole focus. This development affects all market participants: OEMs, tech platforms, infrastructure operators, energy providers and digital service ecosystems compete for the same customer interaction. Traditional market players are seeking their role in this new setup and must learn to transform and cooperate far more closely than before.

- **The car becomes part of a larger digital habitat – a personal, learning companion.**

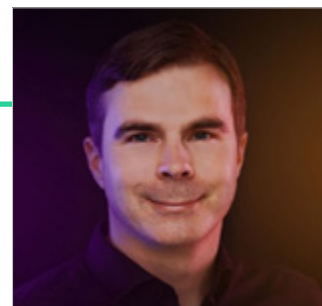
Vehicles will no longer stand alone but will be embedded in connected customer journeys that continue at home, on smartphones, in apps, in stores and across services. The car recognises situations, understands preferences and delivers personalised content and functions. Users experience mobility not as a product, but as a dynamic experience.

- **Brand loyalty increasingly stems from digital added value and community-driven ecosystems.**

Loyalty is shifting away from classic vehicle features towards digital capabilities, including continuous software updates, high-quality user experiences, in-car services, digital membership models and active user communities. Market players that create attractive ecosystems—whether OEMs, tech companies, navigation providers or entertainment platforms—will build strong, long-term emotional connections with users.

- **All players must create platforms that link data, integrate feedback and enable scalable services.**

Future competitiveness will depend on how effectively companies connect data, such as driving behaviour, usage scenarios and customer preferences. A new form of competition is emerging between platforms and interaction spaces: OEMs, energy companies, mobility apps, mapping providers, payment providers, workshops and insurers must open interfaces, form partnerships and offer relevant services within connected ecosystems. Those who stick to the old, linear model will lose visibility and customer proximity.



Thorsten Gramlich
Partner, Automotive, Diconium

- **AI transforms the entire customer journey—and changes the market for everyone involved.**

From purchase initiation through digital touchpoints in daily life to service, AI determines how customers find, evaluate and experience products. Brands that integrate AI-supported interactions, personalised content and predictive services throughout the journey will shape the market. Those that do not—whether OEMs or third-party providers—will increasingly lose visibility.

AI is not an end in itself—it always depends on improving the experience. Hence, the new success formula is to think of data, AI and experience as an integrated whole.

Outlook on the Future

Mobility is evolving into an intelligent network of vehicles, data spaces and services, where AI anticipates every interaction. Customers will move within fully connected, personalised usage scenarios in which mobility, energy, commerce and entertainment are seamlessly integrated. For markets and brands to remain relevant, companies need to rethink the customer journey from scratch: moving away from linear touchpoints towards dynamic, context-dependent experiences. Success will belong to those who build open ecosystems, use data collaboratively and continuously develop services—not as providers of a product, but as an integral part of a connected mobility experience in everyday life.

2.2 Search Engine Optimisation in the AI Era – GEO as an Extension of SEO

Key Insights

- Traditional Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is undergoing a paradigm shift: with the rise of AI-driven search systems such as Google’s AI Overview and AI Mode, the visibility of brands in the digital realm is fundamentally changing.
- GEO (Generative Engine Optimisation) extends SEO specifically to address AI-based search queries. The goal is not only to rank in traditional search results but also to be cited and mentioned in AI-generated responses.
- The quality and authority of content are becoming increasingly important. Only well-structured, fact-based and quotable content has a chance of being selected by AI systems.



Carolin Ruopp
Head of Marketing Business
Partner Mobility (Interim)

Outlook for the Future

The AI-first era has begun. Traditional SEO practices such as keyword optimisation and link building remain foundational but are now strategically complemented by GEO strategies. Visibility no longer means just strong rankings in search results, but also appearing in AI responses – mentions and quotes are becoming the new currency. Conversational queries and prompts are replacing traditional keywords. Optimising for AI Overviews and AI Mode requires content that answers user questions directly, clearly and comprehensively.

Strategies for SEO and GEO:

For a successful combination of SEO and GEO, both technical performance and content quality are crucial. Fast, mobile-optimised and accessible websites with a clear structure and user-centred language form the foundation.

Additionally, content must be specifically prepared for AI systems: concise, self-contained sections allow information to be used directly in AI-generated responses. Equally important is the systematic development of brand authority, for example by tracking external mentions and citations to refine prompts and ensure long-term visibility. Despite all changes, local content remains relevant, as it continues to frequently lead to website clicks.

Practical Tips

- Poorly performing pages are well suited as pilot projects for GEO optimisation.
- Transactional pages should be enriched with informative sections to increase their chances of appearing in AI Overview and AI Mode.
- Continuous adaptation of the strategy to new AI technologies and search systems is necessary to remain competitive.

Conclusion

Search engine optimisation (SEO) remains the foundation for digital visibility, while Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO) expands it with AI-capable content. Hybrid approaches ensure presence in both traditional search results and AI responses. Visibility goes beyond rankings – prompts, mentions and quotes are crucial for success in the AI age.

2.3 From Multi-Stage B2B Distribution to a Multichannel and Service Ecosystem – Including Drivers

Key Insights

- Traditional multi-level distribution is no longer sufficient in automotive B2B: impact is achieved when sales, marketing and service address the same customer segments, use cases and journeys with shared goals.
- Parts marketplaces primarily consolidate price logic, content quality, media performance and parts availability – they reveal which setups truly drive reach, conversion and market share.
- Service platforms are becoming profit centres: they link diagnostics, maintenance, support and data services, generate recurring revenue, strengthen loyalty and increase the value of each parts sale.



Henryk Börngen
Vice President, Opportunity
Management, Schaeffler VLS

Outlook for the Future

The automotive B2B market is evolving into interconnected platform and service ecosystems. Customers gather information digitally, compare continuously and expect simple, seamless processes. Drivers are gaining influence, even though they rarely order parts themselves: they shape decisions in fleets, car pools and subscription models and are directed to specific workshops via OEMs, routing and service portals.

Successful companies clearly define their role in the ecosystem, build a robust first-party data foundation and develop services that generate loyalty and drive additional value – across all channels, from portal to workshop floor.

2.4 From Car to Digital Companion: Rethinking the Customer Experience

Key Insights

- Connected vehicles are radically changing expectations: customers view the car as a digital companion and expect seamless experiences across apps, vehicles and services.
- Personalisation only works when transparency, consent and clear added value are considered together. Trust and data sovereignty are the central currency of digital customer relationships.
- In many cases, there is still a lack of awareness that true customer experience can only succeed if data from isolated silos is consolidated and made available in real time along the user journey.



Tina Rauschenbach
Head of Customer Experience,
Caruso

Future Outlook

In the future, artificial intelligence and emotional intelligence will merge to transform the vehicle from a mode of transport into an empathetic life companion. While AI-powered systems proactively recognise needs, the experience remains authentic only if the human and their data sovereignty remain at the centre. Companies must break down data silos to scale empathy through real-time insights. AI should not only be used as an efficiency tool but as a bridge to create a seamless, personal connection between technology and the user across all digital touchpoints.

2.5 Automotive Marketing Becomes Continuous In-Car Relationship Management

Key Insights

- Central question: how must sales and marketing models change when the vehicle itself becomes an experience?
- Personalisation is meaningful only when supported by clear and transparent privacy settings.
- From funnel to lifecycle: marketing becomes continuous in-car relationship management. Content, services and upgrades are discovered and activated contextually within the vehicle.



Pierre Donath
Chief Product & Marketing
Officer at 3SS (3 Screen Solu-
tions GmbH)

Outlook for the Future

What will change:

- Always-on models instead of a one-time vehicle handover.
- Bundles and partnerships (e.g. music, podcasts, connectivity) as key differentiators.
- Direct in-car sales for digital services, with trial phases and easy cancellation.

The Challenges:

- Data transparency: what data is collected, for what purpose and where it is stored – supported by granular opt-ins and easily understandable user interfaces.
- Safety and Reliability: Automotive-grade performance, offline fallbacks, clear roles between drivers and passengers.
- Fairness: No »dark pattern« commerce. Clear prices, easy return and cancellation processes, child-safe experiences.

2.6 Automotive Revolution: Customer Contact Becomes Less Frequent, While Expectations Rise Rapidly

Key Insights

- AI is changing the rules of visibility: success increasingly depends on optimisation for LLMs rather than traditional SEO.
- Customer expectations for digital vehicle experiences are often contradictory – the key lies in the ability to develop flexible solutions across OEM domains and external platforms.
- Early adaptation to AI-driven visibility is proving to be a critical factor for sustainable competitive advantage.



Jens Nullmeyer
Sales Head Manufacturing/
Automotive Germany, Austria,
Switzerland, Sweden, Infosys
Ltd.

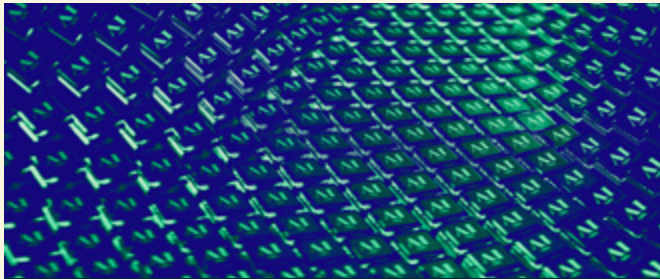
Outlook for the Future

Today's customers rarely encounter a dealership – often only once or twice throughout the entire purchase process. The real relationship develops digitally: through configurators, comparison portals, social media and personalised offers. Marketing thus becomes the central steering mechanism that builds trust and prepares purchasing decisions. At the same time, electrification and software-based vehicle architectures are changing expectations: transparency, customisation and digital services are now essential. For European OEMs and suppliers, the situation is increasingly challenging – it remains unclear who will succeed in the long term. Only those who make intelligent use of customer data and consistently design compelling customer experiences will remain competitive.

3 Shaping the Future Together

You are cordially invited to take part in upcoming activities within the Bitkom network.

Exciting activities lie ahead



#1 ↗April 21, 2026 | AK Digital Marketing & AI & Retail in Hamburg | Bitkom Agentic AI Tour – Theme: Commerce



#2 ↗May 19 | AK Automated, Connected & Autonomous Driving & AK Intelligence Mobility | Topic »Is the PBefG fit for the autonomous mobility of the future? Perspectives for a sustainable legal framework«

Bitkom members can register directly via the event page. Non-members are welcome to contact **Dr Florian Bayer** (Bitkom contact) for assistance.



Bitkom Flagship Event:

Digital Mobility Conference

July 07, 2026 in Berlin | What will digital mobility look like in 2026?

What will digital mobility look like in 2026? What role do AI and data play in creating more efficient, connected, and sustainable transportation on roads, rails, and in the air? How will the advancement of autonomous driving succeed, and what will tomorrow's digital travel experience look like?

Look forward to the Digital Mobility Conference 2026 for insights into innovative mobility solutions, technological trends and discussions about the most urgent policy decisions needed one year after the federal elections.

4 Data-Driven Inspiration

What Digitalisation Experts Should Know

Bitkom regularly publishes studies on key issues of digital transformation. They provide data-driven, well-founded insights into current developments in the digital world. This allows topics to be understood and assessed holistically. The data, figures and analyses are transparent and freely available in the Bitkom Dataverse. Below, you will find a selection of relevant publications related to the topic of this »Digital Navigator«.



Study »Marketing in Digital Transformation 2026«

Marketing is facing increasing pressure: greater impact and efficiency are required, while budgets remain largely stable. This study report examines how companies are adapting their strategies, priorities, and measures, focusing on budget allocation, organizational structures, and the role of automation and regulation. It is based on a Bitkom Research survey of 180 digital companies and highlights key trends and developments in marketing.

[↗ Marketing in Digital Transformation 2026](#)



Study »Digital Marketing in Germany 2025«

The study demonstrates the contribution of digital marketing to the German economy – from value creation and employment to tax effects and changing job profiles. It highlights the role of personalisation in growth and competitiveness, how companies and consumers perceive it, and the developments shaping the market. A compact overview for anyone seeking to better understand the dynamics and significance of digital advertising.

[↗ Digital Marketing in Germany 2025](#)

Study »Digital Mobility – How Smart Traffic Will Be in 2025«

Bitkom's Mobility Study shows how digital technologies are shaping the future of mobility in Germany. It highlights public attitudes, technological advances and economic perspectives – and assesses the role of autonomous driving for Germany as a business location, for society and for companies.

[↗ Bitkom Digital Mobility – How Smart Traffic Will Be in 2025 \(German version\)](#)



Digital Office Index 2024

The present study examines the current status and future prospects of artificial intelligence in Germany from the perspectives of businesses and the general public. It provides comprehensive insight into the relevance, use, and potential of AI, its advantages and obstacles, impacts on the labor market, and views on AI regulation and promotion.

[↗ Study Artificial Intelligence in Germany: Perspectives from the General Public & Businesses \(2024\) \(German version\)](#)

Supplementary Data & Press Information:

- Position Paper:
[↗ Bitkom's Mobility Policy Proposals for the Legislative Period 2025 – 2029,](#)
as of November 14, 2024
- Press Information:
[↗ Faster to the Destination, Less Driving Pleasure: How Germans Think About Autonomous Driving,](#)
as of December 2, 2025
- Publication:
[↗ The Future of the Mobility Data Ecosystem,](#)
as of December 2, 2015

[Click here for the latest press releases](#)

[Click here for the latest publications](#)

5 Team Bitkom

We appreciate your interest in Bitkom's work

More about Bitkom

Bitkom's overarching goal is to make Germany a leading digital location, to drive the digital transformation of the German economy and administration, to strengthen digital sovereignty, and to achieve broad societal participation in digital developments.

Are you interested in Bitkom's diverse network? Feel free to contact us directly!



Dr. Florian Bayer
Head of Digital Marketing &
Sales
f.bayer@bitkom.org
[↗LinkedIn](#)



Paul Hanappel
Head of Automotive &
Logistics
p.hannappel@bitkom.org
[↗LinkedIn](#)

Not a Bitkom member but interested in the AK Digital Marketing, AK Automotive or Bitkom's diverse network? Feel free to get in touch with the Bitkom team directly. We look forward to connecting with you.

Already a Bitkom member but don't have access yet? Request access here [↗ Link](#)

Bitkom represents more than 2,300 member companies from the digital economy. In Germany, they generate over 200 billion euros in revenue with digital technologies and solutions, employing more than 2 million people. The members include more than 1,000 small and medium-sized enterprises, over 700 start-ups and nearly all global players. They offer software, IT services, telecommunications and internet services, manufacture devices and components, operate in the digital media sector, create content, provide platforms or are otherwise part of the digital economy.

82 percent of the companies engaged with Bitkom have their headquarters in Germany, a further 8 percent are based in the rest of Europe and 7 percent in the USA. The remaining 3 percent come from other regions of the world. Bitkom promotes and drives the digital transformation of the German economy and advocates for broad societal participation in digital developments. The goal is to make Germany a strong and sovereign digital economy.

Bitkom e.V.

Albrechtstraße 10

10117 Berlin

T 030 27576-0

bitkom@bitkom.org

bitkom.org

bitkom