

The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Brand Awareness and Customer Purchase Intention

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Abstract: *The use of digital marketing is often described as a one-dimensional tool of promotion, but empirical research shows that the outcomes of this process are related to the quality, relevance, interactivity, credibility, and the integration of particular digital strategies. The present systematic literature review is a synthesis of 15 peer-reviewed empirical studies originally published in 2012-2024 in order to consider the effects digital marketing strategies have on brand awareness and customer purchase intention. They were searched and screened through a PRISMA 2020-informed search and screening process, with systematic extraction and narrative thematic synthesis. Three themes emerged. First, informative, entertaining, and interactive (to personalize and target), as well as trend-sensitive online content boosts brand salience and brand-related knowledge continuously, though the influence of each particular dimension depends on the platform and industry. Second, exposure does not usually explain purchase intention: more likely, it is brought into existence by some intervening (or moderating) effects, including brand awareness, brand image, advertising value, trust, engagement, brand experience, and customer equity. Third, cross-sectional convenience samples, self-reported intentions, and structural equation models are highly susceptible to methodological concentration, making the positive results of most studies seem consistent, thus restricting causal inference and increasing their susceptibility to common-method bias. More substantial evidence is found in multi-country samples and designs of behavior and decisions that dissociate exposure and outcome, but such studies are less common. The review finds that purchase intention is optimally instigated when initially brought about by means of cognitively accessible and affectively credible brand meaning via digital marketing. In the case of scholarship, the most important thing is to shift the models that are heavy in the associations to longitudinal, experimental, and field-based models that are tested to know what people do and do not actually buy. To put it into practice, coordinated digital portfolios with reach and awareness-building purposefully linked to relevancy, credibility, engagement, and conversion processes would be supported by the evidence, as opposed to being optimized simply as channel measurements.*

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing, Online Advertising, Influencer Marketing, Systematic Literature Review

Introduction

Digital marketing has become one of the key elements of modern brand strategy as it integrates reach, targeting, interactivity, measurability, and the ability to bridge communication and transaction. The digital environment means that, unlike in traditional one-way promotion, consumers have the ability to search, compare, comment, share, customize, and buy within the same broad ecosystem. The managerial appeal is thus simplistic: the digital medium can produce awareness at a rather cheap marginal cost, besides decreasing the distance between brand exposure and a purchase. The hypothetical issue is less clear-cut. Brand awareness is a memory-based product, whereas purchase intention is a conative decision that is influenced by value, risk, attitude, social influence, and previous experience, and is limited by situational factors. The danger of letting both consequences be automatic products of exposure to digital risks subsuming different stages of consumer response in a single impact.

Brand awareness is the degree to which one can recall or remember a brand. Awareness plays a central role in customer-based brand equity theory since the consumer is not in a position to prefer, rate, or choose a brand that is not cognitively available (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). But it does not take awareness to buy. The Theory of Planned Behavior has placed behavioral intention as a function of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991), so it means that communication needs to go beyond making a brand known. It has to change evaluative beliefs, or minimize uncertainty too. Digital marketing has a possible impact on both phases: repeated, unique exposure can lead to salience, and interactive information, social demonstrations, authority of the influencer, additional advertising, and frictionless customer experiences can impact assessment and intention.

Another complication is that the digital marketing strategy is not a one-size-fits-all remedy. The source, format, control by the consumer, and perceived intrusiveness in social media marketing, content marketing, search and display advertising, mobile advertising, influencer communication, electronic word-of-mouth, and firm-generated social content vary. Luxury, travel, e-commerce, automotive, telecommunications, and youth markets are other markets where the same tactic will not perform the same. As a result, it is not merely that digital marketing works, but which digital properties generate awareness, how they can be converted into purchase intention, and to what extent the researchers can be sure that observed relationships are due to causality and not the outcome of self-selection and same-source measurement.

This review will deal with that issue, as it will combine empirical evidence on two associated outcomes: brand awareness and purchase intention. It poses three questions: (1) What attributes of digital marketing strategies most effectively relate to stronger brand awareness? (2) How does digital marketing mediate purchase intention? and (3) What are the methodological characteristics of the available evidence that enhance or undermine causal interpretation and generalization? Its contribution is a critical synthesis, and not a tally of noteworthy coefficients. Positive results are juxtaposed with incongruent trajectories, differences in sectors, and design constraints in such a way that the conclusions drawn are indicative of the strength of the evidence as opposed to the prevalence of statistical significance.

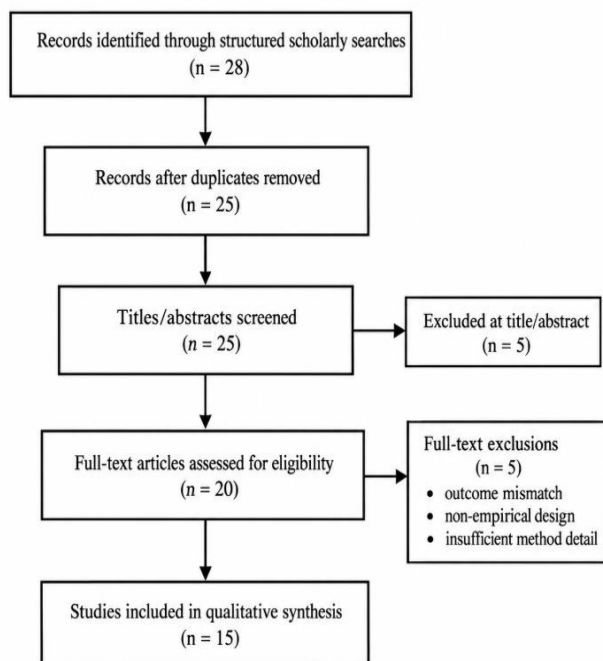
Methods

The chosen literature review design was the systematic literature review (SLR), which was reported via a PRISMA-based structure (Page et al., 2021). The review had no prospective registration. Structured scholarly web searches and publisher-indexed academic databases, such as ScienceDirect/Elsevier, Emerald Insight, Taylor and Francis Online, Wiley/SAGE journal pages where available, and broad scholarly search indexing, were used to conduct the search in September 2026. Combined search terms included the intervention/exposure (digital marketing or social media marketing or online advertising or mobile advertising or influencer marketing) plus the outcomes (brand awareness or brand equity) and the purchasing intention (purchase intention or purchase decision or behavioral intention). Seminal or directly connected empirical articles were found by backward and forward citation cues that were displayed on the publisher pages.

To be eligible, studies needed to: (a) be empirical, peer-reviewed, journal articles; (b) test a digital marketing exposure, an activity, a communication feature, or a feature of advertisements; (c) include adequate sample and analysis information to facilitate critical appraisal; and (d) be in English. Abstract papers, pure descriptions of the industry, dissertations, and those studies that used only organizational adoption but did not look at the consumer outcomes were not included. The disparate sectors and nations were deliberately left in the review, as explanatory synthesis between and within digital contexts was its aim instead of estimating one pooled effect.

The structured searches were first catalogued with 28 records. Three duplicates were deleted, resulting in 25 titles and abstracts to be screened. The five records were not included due to the inability to capture a consumer outcome or a marketing exposure. A total of 20 complete texts or adequately described publisher records were screened, and five of those were discarded due to their non-empirical nature, absence of an outcome of awareness/intention, or insufficiently described methods. Qualitative synthesis of the studies was performed on 15 studies. The PRISMA-style flow is presented in Figure 1. The last set of evidence covers 2012-2024 and encompasses luxury fashion, automotive, e-commerce, airlines, telecommunications, mobile/smartphone advertising, influencer marketing, and multi-brand social media settings.

Data extraction was recorded in country/context, sample, method of analysis, digital marketing construct, outcome variables, main findings, and methodological shortcomings. Constructs and operationalizations were quite different; thus, statistical meta-analysis was inappropriate. In its place, an interpretive synthesis in terms of the themes was performed, which presupposes a collection of convergent mechanisms, inconsistent findings, and putting at the forefront of interpretation the designs that have stronger temporal or behavioral rationality. The methodological appraisal took into account the adequacy and representativeness of sampling, the temporal sequencing, the application of measures that are valid, the risk of common methods, its correspondence between analysis and design, and the nature of the outcomes in terms of attitudinal intentions or observed behavior.



PRISMA-style flow of study identification and selection

Figure 1. PRISMA-style flow diagram

Table 1. Characteristics and critical appraisal of the 15 included studies.

Study	Context / sample	Design & analysis	Digital/social strategy	Main outcomes	Critical appraisal
Kim & Ko (2012)	Luxury fashion; 362 consumers, South Korea	Cross-sectional survey; SEM	Entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, WOM	SMM activities strengthened equity drivers; purchase intention linked to customer-equity pathways.	Strong construct development; single luxury-brand context and cross-sectional self-report limit causality.
Hutter et al. (2013)	MINI Facebook fan-page users	Online survey; path/SEM logic	Brand-page engagement and user interaction	Engagement increased brand awareness and purchase intention; irritation could	Directly links engagement-awareness-intention, but self-selection into a fan page creates

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				weaken effects.	endogeneity risk.
Balakrishnan et al. (2014)	Generation Y university consumers, Malaysia	Survey; regression	Social media marketing, eWOM, online communities	Positive associations with purchase intention and brand loyalty.	Youth/student sample and modest sample size constrain generalization; intention not behavior.
Dehghani & Tumer (2015)	Undergraduate consumers, Cyprus	Descriptive survey; t/Friedman tests	Facebook advertising	Facebook advertising improved brand image/equity, which related to purchase intention.	Simple design and researcher-made scale; useful platform evidence but weak causal identification.
Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016)	504 Facebook users; 60 brands, Poland	Online survey; SEM	Firm-created vs user-generated social communication	User-generated communication more strongly supported brand equity/attitude; brand responses related to purchase intention.	Multi-brand design improves breadth; same-source cross-sectional measures remain vulnerable to common-method bias.
Godey et al. (2016)	845 luxury consumers ; China, France, India, Italy	Cross-national survey; SEM	Entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, WOM	SMM efforts increased brand awareness/image and downstream consumer responses.	Large multi-country sample is a major strength; luxury context and follower sampling limit broader inference.
Duffett (2017)	13-18-year-olds, South Africa; very large	Survey; generalized linear models	Interactive social media marketing communications	Positive cognitive, affective and behavioral attitudes,	Large sample and subgroup analysis; social media aggregated

	school-based survey			declining across funnel stages.	across platforms and behavioral attitude is not observed purchase.
Yadav & Rahman (2017)	E-commerce users; five-study scale-development program	Mixed scale-development studies; SEM validation	Interactivity, informativeness, WOM, personalization, trendiness	Perceived SMMA positively influenced brand equity and purchase intention.	Rigorous scale development; nomological validation still relies on self-report and e-commerce-specific setting.
Seo & Park (2018)	302 airline passengers using airline social media	Survey; CFA/SEM	Airline SMM activities	SMMAs increased brand awareness and image; awareness increased commitment.	Industry-specific sampling supports ecological relevance; cross-sectional temporal ambiguity persists.
Bilgin (2018)	547 followers of leading brands, Turkey	Online convenience survey; SEM	Social media marketing activities	Strongest direct effect was on brand awareness; image and loyalty also improved.	Large sample; convenience follower sample may over-represent already engaged consumers.
Alalwan (2018)	437 social media users	Survey; SEM based on UTAUT2	Interactivity, informativeness, relevance, hedonic/performance value	Most advertising features significantly predicted purchase intention.	Theory-driven multidimensional model; purchase intention measured contemporaneously with perceptions.
Lou & Yuan (2019)	263 followers of social	Online survey;	Influencer content value	Trust in branded posts predicted	Mechanism-rich model; follower self-

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	media influencers	PLS path modeling	and source credibility	brand awareness and purchase intention.	selection and cross-sectional mediation weaken causal mediation claims.
Martins et al. (2019)	303 Portuguese smartphone users	Survey; PLS-SEM	Smartphone advertising value, flow, web design	Advertising value, flow, design quality and brand awareness explained purchase intention.	Integrates mobile experience and awareness; single-country self-report design.
Dabbous & Barakat (2020)	392 Millennial Facebook users	Online survey; SEM	Content quality and brand interactivity	Quality/interactivity increased hedonic motivation, engagement and awareness; engagement + awareness increased offline purchase intention.	Clear mediated chain and validated scales; cross-sectional design cannot establish the proposed sequence.
Khan (2022)	413 adults following brands on social media	Survey; SEM; moderation	Social media marketing activities and brand experience	SMMA increased brand experience, attitude and purchase intention; effects varied by generation and engagement level.	Explicit moderators improve contingency analysis; snowball sampling and single-wave data limit population inference.

Findings

Digital Content Quality, Relevance, and Credibility as Drivers of Brand Awareness

Digital content create awareness through factors like salience, relevance, and participation. In the entire body of evidence, the perceived quality of the experience and uniqueness enhance brand awareness, not through digital presence in the abstract. A 4-national market (5 luxury

brands) study by Godey et al. (2016) established that a multidimensional bundle of entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth enhanced both awareness and image. Seo and Park (2018) came to the same conclusion in the case of airlines; however, they proposed trendiness as the most critical aspect. The penetration of brand awareness was also the highest-ranked impact of the social media marketing activities, according to Bilgin (2018). The mechanism of convergence between luxury, aviation, and multi-brand environments favors a general salience process: current content, interactive content, and content that is relevant to the consumer make a brand more likely to be encoded and retraced.

The studies are, however, not in favor of a common ranking between content dimensions. In Dabbous and Barakat (2020), the quality of content and brand interaction did not have a strong effect on brand-correlation due to hedonic motivation and online interaction and, only later, through the enhancement of awareness. In their study, Lou and Yuan (2019) changed the platform features to source credibility: informative content posted by influencers, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity made the branded posts more trusted, in turn, enhancing awareness. This contrast matters. According to it, brands are capable of establishing awareness via at least two paths: a firm-controlled experience route (the quality of content, personalization, interactivity) and a socially approved credibility route (trusted influencers and user-generated communication). This difference is supported by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), who demonstrate that the communication developed by firms and that produced by consumers assume different connotations; consumer-generated communication may imply more significant brand perceptions since it is not so firmly explained by the intent to convince. Methodically, the impact of the consistency of the effect of awareness should be taken at face value. The majority of awareness measures are self-reported and gathered on the same questionnaire with marketing activity perceptions. That raises two issues: common-method covariance may overstate relationships, and familiarity with a brand in the past can lead to reverse causation, with already knowingly brand-familiar consumers rating a brand as doing a better job in its digital marketing. Godey et al. (2016) is designed in a multi-country setting, which enhances the external breadth, but the sample used is still that of the followers of leading luxury brands. Hutter et al. (2013) and Bilgin (2018) also sample brand followers, and it is difficult to differentiate between awareness generated by social media and awareness that existed before social-media following. The literature thus is a strong contributor to association with valued digital content and awareness, and is less definitive in establishing the incremental awareness brought about by exposure.

Brand, Trust, and Engagement Mechanisms Linking Digital Marketing to Purchase Intention

Brand and relational mechanisms tend to mediate purchase intention, but not exposure alone create purchase intention. The biggest cross-study pattern is that purchase intention occupies a lower position in the hierarchy with the presence of intermediate cognitive and affective states. Kim and Ko (2012) linked social media activities with value, relationship, and brand equity, which consequently organized purchase intention and customer equity. The same case was reported by Dehghani and Tumer (2015), who found that the image of the brand and brand equity that were positively associated with purchase intention were influenced by Facebook

advertising. In the study carried out by Martins et al. (2019), the value of advertising as well as the flow experience, the quality of design, and brand awareness together elucidated smartphone-advertising purchase intention. These analyses vary regarding the channel and theory; however, all would suggest that communication must generate valued meaning before intention alters.

The best integrative evidence is given by those that explicitly model sequential mediators. Dabbous and Barakat (2020) have associated hedonic motivation with content quality and interactivity, consumer engagement, and brand awareness, which supported offline purchase intention. The intermediary between message/source characteristics and awareness and purchase intention is trust in influencer-branded content, as identified by Lou and Yuan (2019). Alalwan (2018) demonstrated that purchase intention is predicted by advertising attributes like interactivity, informativeness, and relevance, although they are accommodated within a broader motivational framework that involves performance expectancy and hedonic motivation. All these results invalidate a naive principle of more digital exposure correlated with more purchase intention. When the consumer finds the communication useful, enjoyable, credible, personally relevant, or identity-consistent, it seems that the digital marketing is successful.

This process is further explained in the comparison between Yadav and Rahman (2017) and Duffett (2017). A five-dimensional SMMA scale was confirmed as having a positive relationship with brand equity and purchase intention by Yadav and Rahman, but Duffett found a decreasing strength of relationship between cognitive and affective attitude and behavioral attitude stages among adolescents. The latter pattern is theoretically significant due to the evidence of funnel leakage: the cognitions of awareness and favorability are easier to produce as compared to the purchase-proximate responses. So, an important coefficient of awareness cannot be interpreted as the same conversion capability. Awareness is a required, but incomplete process, and subsequent evaluation and intention depend more on value and credibility.

Contextual and Methodological Conditions Shaping Digital Marketing Effectiveness

The seeming success of digital marketing is determined by context, consumer segment, and design quality. The heterogeneity of digital effects is by industry and audience. Luxury-brand studies focus more on symbolic value, the interaction based on entertainment and prestige (Godey et al., 2016; Kim & Ko, 2012), but in contrast, airline and e-commerce research is more preoccupied with trendiness, informativeness as well as service-related brand equity (Seo & Park, 2018; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Smartphone advertising brings on the quality of interface and flow (Martins et al., 2019), whereas influencer marketing brings on the quality of source credibility and parasocial relevance (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Khan (2022) renders this contingency clear when he demonstrates that generation and degree of engagement mediate the SMMA-brand-experience relationship. Digital marketing can then be interpreted as a family of mechanisms that may have varying sizes of impact, based on the platform affordances, involvement of category, consumer expertise, and relationship stage.

The pattern of methodology is more consistent than substantive. A total of 15 studies were included, largely based on one-wave self-report surveys; SEM or PLS-SEM is the most

common form of analysis. This fits order 2 test-latent-variable models appropriately but fails to fix weak order. Cross-sectional mediation is able to estimate that a pattern of covariance may or may not be due to mediation, but it does not indicate that the mediator has indeed occurred between purchase intention and exposure. Snowball and follower-based sampling and convenience sampling are also prevalent. Such designs enhance effectiveness and build relevance; however, they do not represent non-followers and consumers who did not pay attention to or like the digital information. Consequently, the published impacts can be biased upwards for the entire addressable market.

Another drawback is that it leans heavily on purchase intention as opposed to substantiated purchase. Intentions are practical since they are proximate to the behavior in theory, yet the gap between intentions and behavior is actual. It would be much more convincing had there been links between survey models and clickstream data, CRM transactions, experimental manipulation of exposure, or panel designs. The existing body of evidence thus confirms a strong relational hypothesis - quality digital marketing is related to awareness and purchase intention - but only an advanced causal hypothesis: digital marketing is likely to have an impact on that, but the extent of incremental causal effect is unclear.

Discussion

The review gives a logical yet contingent elucidation of the role of digital marketing in generating consumer response. Brand awareness, which is the main theoretical implication, is a result and a process. Interactive, informative, entertaining, personalized, current, and credible digital strategies enable cognitively available brands; this availability in turn adds purchase intention when positive meaning, trust, engagement, value, or experience are added. This understanding incorporates brand-equity logic, which is based on memory- and intention-based consumer behavior logic. It also describes why a statistically significant but commercially weak awareness can occur: awareness that has not been favorably evaluated may increase recall without a corresponding reduction in perceived risk or price issue/competitive preference.

The second implication is that the meaning of the message is as important as the source and context. Control and consistency are also provided by firm-created communication, whereas user-created and influencer communication may have credibility that is nearly impossible to recreate through firm communication. Simultaneously, the effects of influencers rely on the interaction and perceived fit, whereas interactive brand-page strategies may lead to irritation when there are too many, or they are too intrusive. Channel maximalism is thus downfavored in the literature instead of orchestration. Content and reasons to prefer and remember should be a combination of reach-oriented formats and content and sources that offer believable reasons to attend.

To managers, there is an indication of a chain of measurement. Incremental reach and aided/unaided awareness should be measured with the top-of-funnel metrics, and not with impressions only. The middle funnel measures should involve engagement, message worth, trust, brand image, and experience. Purchase-intent lift should solely be a mid-funnel measure of bottom-of-funnel evaluation and, where feasible, should be linked to actual conversion,

repeat purchase, and customer value. This order is congruent with the empirical data of progressive decays of cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses across the funnel. It also does not allow social engagement measures to be considered on par with business outcomes.

In the case of research, the field requires designs that are capable of discriminating selection against influence. More credible estimates of incremental impact would be achieved with randomized ad exposure, matched observational cohorts, and difference-in-differences analyses of campaign launches, and longitudinal panels. Research must also explore whether familiar (unfamiliar) brands have comparable effects mediated by awareness and whether repeated personalization has weakening returns or privacy-reactance effects. Replications across cultures are also of great interest due to the concentration of some of the most impactful studies in individual countries or high-involvement levels. Lastly, the difference between platform and brand engagement in future work should also be drawn: consumers might have a platform experience without developing their relationship with the advertised brand.

Conclusion

This SLR draws substantial evidence that marketing strategies in digital form are linked with better brand awareness and customer purchase intention, yet the correlation is not automatic and consistent. High-quality and relevant content, interactivity, personalization, social credibility, advertising value, brand experience, and engagement are the most coherent and relevant mechanisms. Brand awareness is often an indicator of the impact of digital exposure on purchasing intention, but it is merely a component of a larger conversion process that must involve positive evaluation and trust.

The strongest evidence base is in support of the patterned relationships within industries and across countries and weak in the determination of the magnitude of the effects of causality. Since the single most common research designs (as noted in the literature) are cross-sectional self-report SEM designs, purchase intention should not be claimed as caused by digital marketing. An even more powerful future generation of research must incorporate tests, longitudinal panels, and behavioral transaction data. In practice, organizations must treat digital marketing as a combined system of awareness-to-conversation, but not to do its separate measurement.

Limitations

There are four limitations to this review. To begin with, it is a structured SLR that utilized scholarly web and publisher-indexed materials instead of a database-export review of only subscription bibliographic systems (e.g., Scopus and Web of Science); despite capturing major peer-reviewed studies, some records might have been overlooked. Second, the synthesis is narrative since the studies included have heterogeneous constructs, contexts, and outcome measures, meaning that they cannot defensibly pool effect sizes. Third, the analysis is confined to English-language journal articles and, thus, might not accurately reflect the studies of non-English markets. Fourth, the presence of publication bias might occur since statistically

significant digital-marketing effects will have more chances to be published compared to null effects.

Further down the chain of study, at the primary-study level, there are more grave constraints: convenience and follower sample, cross-sectional designs, same-source measures, absence of prior brand familiarity control, and reliance on purchase intention. These shortcomings imply that the thematic conclusions are to be understood as solid evidence of recurring mechanisms and associations, but not precise estimates of causal effects. Subsequent reviews would benefit by pre-registering the protocol, datos API searches or librarian searches, performing structured risk-of-bias scoring, and performing meta-analysis of similar subsets when enough compatible effect sizes are reported.

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