



THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS IN THE MODERN ERA

Constantinos Mammassis

Department of Industrial Management and Technology, University of Piraeus, Greece.

Email: cmam@unipi.gr

Cite this article:

Constantinos Mammassis (2025), The Role of Digital Marketing in Building Brand Awareness in the Modern Era. British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies 8(2), 109-125. DOI: 10.52589/BJMMS_XG92RNYS

Manuscript History

Received: 21 May 2025

Accepted: 25 Jun 2025

Published: 16 Jul 2025

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, brand awareness has become a crucial factor for business success. Digital marketing encompassing online tools and platforms like social media, content marketing, SEO and influencer collaborations that give brands new ways to reach and engage consumers. This paper examines how digital marketing can help brands build awareness in today's hypercompetitive environment. Building on current literature and practical examples, it analyses how different digital strategies influence consumer recognition, recall, and perception. It highlights the importance of aligning digital tools with brand identity, creating consistent and engaging content, and leveraging data-driven techniques to enhance visibility. This study contributes to the academic understanding of digital branding while offering practical recommendations for firms aiming to strengthen their position in the contemporary competitive digital environment.*

KEYWORDS: Social Media Marketing, Marketing Strategy, Influencer Marketing, Brand Awareness, Content Strategy.



INTRODUCTION

Rapid advancement of digital technologies has changed how firms communicate with consumers. Traditional marketing methods are proving inadequate in an environment of increasing digital interactions, social media platforms, and algorithmic content creation. Digital marketing – defined as the use of online channels and digital tools to promote products and services – is an increasingly important strategy for brands looking to establish a presence and reach digital-first consumers (Kannan, 2017). The main goal of digital marketing is to facilitate brand awareness referring to how well consumers know a specific brand (Barroso & Llobet, 2012). It shapes consumer perception, drives decision-making and long-term loyalty. In a fragmented market with endless brand options, awareness is the first step towards customer engagement and conversion. Without awareness a brand cannot compete for consumer preference.

Digital marketing offers advantages in brand awareness building (Varadarajan, Welden, Arunachalam, Haenlein, & Gupta, 2022). Brands can reach broad and targeted audiences relatively efficiently and cost-effectively through search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, influencer collaborations, email campaigns, and content marketing tools. For instance, social media are increasingly used for brand storytelling and interaction allowing consumers to interact with brands in more personal ways. In addition, data analytics and personalized advertising help brands deliver meaningful messages to an audience that sticks. Despite this shift to digital marketing, research has yet to explore how different strategies affect brand awareness. Is content marketing more memorable than display ads? How effective are influencer campaigns in particular industries or demos? Which factors such as message consistency, platform selection, or content format influence brand perception? These research questions warrant further exploration to understand how digital marketing efforts could be optimized for brand building purposes.

This paper explores the role of digital marketing in enhancing brand awareness. By reviewing existing literature, analyzing common strategies and case examples, this research demonstrates how brands can utilize digital tools to increase visibility and memorability among consumers. This work also attempts to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and their application in practice thus providing useful advice to digital marketing practitioners.

In contemporary digital age, where visibility may determine firm survival, understanding how to build brand awareness is critical. This paper contributes to that understanding by examining the intersection of digital marketing practices and the psychological processes that shape consumer awareness, trust, and brand preference.



LITERATURE REVIEW

The Evolution of Marketing in the Digital Age

Marketing has evolved over the past few decades largely due to new technologies and the rapid changes in consumer behavior. Marketing traditionally involved one-way communication through mass media such as television, radio, newspapers and billboards. Such approaches attempted to reach large audiences with general messages without often measuring direct impact. Feedback from consumers was slow and often indirect thus brands could not really understand audience needs in real time.

Internet emergence in the late 1990s and early 2000s was the first major turning point in marketing. Sites, email newsletters and banner ads provided a more interactive and measurable way to reach consumers. This era was still a fairly passive user role - often called Web 1.0 - but set the stage for digital transformation. With social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and later Instagram and Twitter, marketing moved towards a two-way communication. Brands could communicate with consumers directly, get instant feedback and produce personalised content. That period was followed by Web 2.0, where content was created by users and interaction was encouraged. Then came smartphones and mobile-first strategies. Mobile device proliferation in the 2010s changed how people consumed content, bought things, and interacted with brands. As people used their phones to browse, shop, and communicate, mobile marketing became necessary. Marketing subsequently became responsive, utilizing mobile apps/SMS campaigns, location-based targeting, and mobile-friendly ad formats. In addition to this, mobiles enabled real-time interaction and location awareness, making brand messages more personalized, relevant, and immediate.

Data analytics and artificial intelligence also changed digital marketing (Theodorakopoulos & Theodoropoulou, 2024). Brands can now follow user behavior, segment audiences precisely, and deliver personalized content automatically. Cookies, pixels, and CRM integrations allow for demographics-based advertising based on interests and browsing history.

Ultimately, this transition from traditional to digital marketing reflects a greater transfer of power to consumers. People expect personalized, relevant experiences across multiple digital touchpoints. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of advertising; instead, they are active participants in brand narratives via likes, shares, reviews, and content creation. This necessitates rethinking how and where marketers communicate and how they build relationships that create awareness, trust, and loyalty. In this dynamic environment, understanding the history and trajectory of marketing is essential to leverage digital strategies. Brands that respond to emerging technologies and place a high value on consumer-centric, mobile-first strategies will likely succeed in creating long-term brand awareness in the digital age.

The Concept of Brand Awareness

One of the most well-researched concepts in marketing is brand awareness. Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers know a brand based on their experience and can recognize or recall it under different circumstances. Brand awareness simply means that a brand exists in the consumer's mind and is often the first purchase decision made by the consumer. Without awareness, a brand cannot be considered, evaluated, or chosen, making it a prerequisite for further engagement, loyalty, and sales.



There are two primary dimensions of brand awareness: brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition refers to a consumer's ability to identify a brand when they encounter it visually or audibly, for example, recognizing a logo, packaging, or slogan. This type of awareness is often stimulated by external cues. On the other hand, brand recall reflects the consumer's ability to retrieve the brand name from memory when thinking about a product category, such as recalling "Nike" when asked about sportswear brands. While both dimensions are valuable, brand recall is generally considered a stronger indicator of deep-rooted awareness and consumer-brand connection. Brand awareness also plays a critical psychological role in the consumer decision-making process. According to models like the AIDA framework (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) and the hierarchy of effects model, awareness is the first stage in moving a consumer from knowledge to preference and ultimately to action. A brand that enjoys high awareness is more likely to be included in a consumer's consideration set, the shortlist of brands a consumer is actively choosing between. Moreover, consumers tend to trust brands they are familiar with, even if that familiarity is based purely on exposure rather than experience. This phenomenon, known as the mere exposure effect, suggests that repeated exposure to a brand can lead to increased liking and preference.

In practical terms, marketers and researchers use a variety of metrics to measure brand awareness. These include both qualitative and quantitative methods. Common metrics include:

- Aided awareness: Measures whether a consumer recognizes a brand when prompted with a list of names.
- Unaided awareness: Measures whether a consumer can name a brand without any prompts when asked about a product category.
- Top-of-mind awareness: A specific form of unaided recall where the brand mentioned first is recorded, often seen as the strongest form of awareness.
- Reach and impressions: Digital analytics such as the number of unique users who see branded content, often used as a proxy for awareness in online marketing.
- Search volume and branded keyword traffic: How often consumers search for a specific brand name online can also indicate awareness levels.

Digital Marketing Channels and Tools

The digital marketing mix includes different media and tools that help build or maintain brand awareness (Wichmann, Uppal, Sharma, & Dekimpe, 2022). Those help brands reach targeted audiences, create meaningful interactions and position themselves in a crowded digital landscape. An integrated and strategic approach requires understanding how each channel performs in relation to brand visibility.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) are two fundamental techniques of digital Marketing. SEO involves optimizing content, keywords, metadata and technical performance for organic search results (Miklosik, Kuchta, Evans, & Zak, 2019). A brand which appears regularly at the top of search results becomes trusted and recognized by users. SEM focuses on paid advertising on search engines like Google Ads. SEO works over a longer term but SEM provides instant visibility thus becoming useful for campaigns that want to expand brand exposure quickly.



Social Media Marketing (SMM) is an essential part of modern brand communication. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter) let brands talk directly to their audiences in posts, stories, reels, and live streams. SMM encourages community and trust while its powerful demographic, interest and behavior targeting allows highly individualized outreach. Viral content & user-generated engagement can also extend brand visibility beyond paid reach.

Content Marketing involves the creation and distribution of valuable, relevant, and consistent content aimed at attracting and retaining a defined audience. This may include blog articles, videos, infographics, podcasts and whitepapers. Good content can position brands as thought leaders and keep them in the forefront of their audience. Content marketing builds brand awareness by driving traffic and establishing trust over time.

Email Marketing, while often considered more of a retention tool, it can also help with brand awareness. Newsletters and personalized email campaigns help keep the brand active in the consumer's inbox. In combination with other marketing channels, email helps build brand recall and messaging consistency.

Lastly, Influencer Marketing leverages the trust and reach of individuals with a strong online presence to promote brands. Collaborations with influencers, particularly micro- or niche influencers, can take a brand to new audiences in an authentic way. This works best with younger consumers who are less responsive to traditional advertising but more influenced by peer recommendations and online personalities.

Theoretical Frameworks Supporting the Study

Understanding the role of digital marketing in building brand awareness requires a foundation in key theoretical models that explain consumer behavior, brand perception, and decision-making processes. Three well established frameworks relevant to this study are the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA) Model, Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model and the Digital Customer Journey framework.

The AIDA Model describes the stages a consumer typically goes through before making a purchase decision. Brand awareness relates to the first phase of consumer's attention. Digital marketing channels like social media, video ads and search engine placements help get that first attention. As consumers move from attention to interest and desire, content marketing and influencer strategies become essential in deepening engagement. The AIDA model highlights how digital marketing can be mapped across the consumer journey, starting with awareness as the foundation for later brand interactions (Fortenberry Jr & McGoldrick, 2020).

Keller's CBBE offers a more comprehensive view of how brand equity is built from the consumer's perspective (Keller, 1993). The model is a pyramid with four levels: Brand identification and meaning, brand responses, and brand resonance. At the base lies brand salience, which refers to brand awareness—how easily and frequently the brand is recalled in buying situations. Digital marketing enhances this salience by consistently exposing users to brand messages across various channels. As consumers engage with brand content, they begin forming associations and perceptions, which influence their emotional response and long-term loyalty. The Digital Customer Journey & Touchpoints framework shifts focus to the omnichannel, non-linear path that consumers take in the digital age. Unlike traditional models, the digital customer journey includes multiple interactions searches, social media engagement,



email clicks, website visits before a conversion occurs. Each touchpoint offers an opportunity to build or reinforce brand awareness. By understanding and optimizing these digital touchpoints, marketers can ensure brand visibility at every stage of the journey, from discovery to decision-making...

Existing Research on Digital Marketing & Brand Awareness

Over the past decades, increasing academic and industry research has investigated how digital marketing strategies influence brand awareness (Kannan, 2017; Sundaram, Sharma, & Shakya, 2020). Much of this literature agrees that digital marketing contributes to brand visibility, recognition and recall. But the relative efficacy of particular channels and tactics is often dependent upon factors such as context, audience, and marketing execution. Several studies show that social media marketing helps brand awareness. For instance, in research by Dehghani and Tumer (2015), platforms like Instagram and Facebook increase consumer awareness and engagement when brands produce consistent, visually appealing and interactive content. Similarly, Ashley and Tuten (2015) show that user-generated content and brand storytelling on social media help build consumer-brand relationships and awareness.

Influencer marketing has also attracted severe academic attention (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, & Thrassou, 2021). For instance, Freberz, Smith, and Silva (2022) and Lou and Yuan (2019) show that influencers increase brand awareness through perceived authenticity and trust. Particularly, micro-influencers seem to build connections with niche audiences that improve message retention and brand recall (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011).

Regarding content marketing, Pulizzi (2012) argued that good quality informational content positions brands as thought leaders and builds awareness over time. SEO-focused content strategies also demonstrate long-term brand salience through increased organic search results visibility.

However, research findings are inconclusive. Some studies caution that high visibility does not always equate to positive awareness. Overexposure, poor targeting, or intrusive digital ads can result in banner blindness or even negative brand perception. Even though video advertising is perceived to be effective, ad-skipping behavior on YouTube in particular may limit its impact. A recurring challenge in the literature is measuring brand awareness accurately in digital contexts. While metrics like impressions, reach, and clicks offer surface-level insights, they do not always reflect true cognitive awareness or emotional connection with the brand. Hence, in summary, existing research points to digital marketing as a powerful tool for brand awareness building, but it must be applied contextually and layered across channels to achieve long lasting results.

Research Gap

Despite the growing volume of literature on digital marketing and brand awareness, several notable gaps persist, indicating the need for further research. While many studies affirm the positive relationship between digital marketing and brand visibility, they often focus narrowly on specific platforms or tools, lacking a holistic view of how integrated digital strategies contribute to long-term brand awareness (see, for instance, Keller & Kotler, 2015).

One common shortcoming in the literature is the overemphasis on quantitative performance metrics such as impressions, reach, or click-through rates (CTR), which, although useful, do



not necessarily capture the depth of consumer awareness or emotional connection to a brand. As a result, the cognitive and affective dimensions of brand awareness such as brand recall, recognition, and trust are often underexplored in empirical studies, particularly in relation to how they are shaped by different digital channels. Additionally, much of the existing research tends to isolate specific digital tactics (e.g., social media, influencer marketing, or SEO) without adequately examining how these tools interact in a multi-channel digital environment. In the real world, consumers encounter brands across several touchpoints websites, mobile apps, social platforms, email, and search engines. The synergy between these channels and their combined impact on brand awareness remains insufficiently investigated.

Another limitation lies in the lack of contextual and demographic diversity in many studies. Most research is conducted in Western markets, particularly the U.S. and Europe, leaving a gap in understanding how digital marketing affects brand awareness in emerging markets or within specific cultural, generational, or industry contexts. With digital behavior varying significantly across regions and age groups, findings from one population may not apply universally. Moreover, the rapid pace of digital evolution presents a challenge for researchers to keep up with new platforms, content formats, and algorithms. For example, while influencer marketing is widely studied, newer formats like short-form video content (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels) and ephemeral content (e.g., Stories) are only beginning to be explored in academic literature. This paper addresses these gaps by adopting a comprehensive, strategic perspective on how digital marketing across multiple tools and platforms contributes to brand awareness. By synthesizing existing insights and emphasizing the consumer experience across digital touchpoints, the study aims to provide a more nuanced and actionable understanding of digital branding in the modern era.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of a research study serves as the blueprint for how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to answer specific research questions. I utilize a mixed methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the role of digital marketing in brand awareness building (Molina-Azorin, Bergh, Corley, & Ketchen Jr, 2017). This methodological perspective allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the topic by capturing both measurable outcomes and deeper, contextual insights.

This quantitative component is going to measure the brand awareness impact of different digital marketing strategies through numerical data. Surveys will collect data on brand recognition and recall, exposure to digital marketing channels and engagement with branded content. Quantitative analysis including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models may reveal patterns and relationships between digital marketing exposure and brand awareness. Yet, the qualitative component will complement the numerical results by contextualizing them. Through semi-structured interviews with marketing professionals or focus groups with consumers the study will explore perceptions, attitudes and experiences regarding digital brand interactions. This approach identifies nuanced factors that may drive awareness but that are not easily quantified - for example, emotional resonance, message relevance or platform preferences. The complexity of brand awareness as a concept justifies a mixed-methods design (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). While it can be partially quantified



through recall rates or engagement metrics, its formation is also influenced by psychological, cultural, and contextual factors. A purely quantitative approach might miss the subjective elements that contribute to strong or weak awareness, while a purely qualitative method may lack the generalizability and statistical grounding needed to draw broader conclusions. Moreover, digital marketing itself is inherently multi-dimensional, combining creative, technological, and strategic elements. Therefore, capturing its impact on brand awareness requires a research design capable of addressing both the what (e.g., which channels are most effective) and the why (e.g., why certain messages or formats resonate more with audiences).

Population and Sampling

In any empirical research study, the definition of the population and the selection of an appropriate sampling technique are critical to ensuring the relevance, validity, and generalizability of the findings. For a study examining the impact of digital marketing on brand awareness, the target population should include both consumers and, where relevant, marketing professionals, as each group offers distinct yet complementary perspectives on how digital strategies shape brand visibility.

The primary population of interest will be digitally active consumers, particularly individuals aged 18–45 who engage regularly with online platforms such as social media, search engines, streaming services, and e-commerce sites. This demographic is chosen because it represents the most digitally literate and commercially active segment of the population, frequently exposed to digital marketing efforts. These consumers are more likely to interact with digital content and can provide valuable insights into brand recognition, recall, and digital behavior patterns. Additionally, a secondary population may include marketing practitioners, such as digital marketers, brand managers, or agency professionals. Their input can enrich the study by offering strategic perspectives on how digital tools are applied with the intent of building brand awareness. Including these expert voices is particularly useful in qualitative interviews or case studies.

In terms of sampling technique, a purposive sampling method will be employed. This non-probability sampling approach allows the researcher to intentionally select participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the study in this case, their digital engagement level, age group, or professional expertise. For the consumer sample, online screening questionnaires can be used to identify suitable participants who meet the inclusion criteria (e.g., daily social media use, familiarity with certain brands or platforms). For the practitioner sample, selection may be based on role, industry experience, or company involvement in digital branding efforts. While purposive sampling does not aim for statistical generalizability, it is well-suited for exploratory studies like this, where the goal is to gain in-depth understanding of a complex, evolving phenomenon. This approach ensures that participants have the necessary background to provide meaningful insights into the relationship between digital marketing exposure and brand awareness formation.

Data Collection Methods

To investigate the relation of digital marketing strategies to brand awareness a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will be applied. With this multi-method approach, measurable outcomes as well as personal experiences can be viewed more holistically to better understand how consumers experience digital branding efforts. This quantitative data will mainly be collected via online surveys for digitally active consumers.



The survey instrument will be a closed-ended and scaled (Likert-type) questionnaire that will measure brand awareness indicators such as brand recognition, recall, and frequency of digital exposure. Additional sections collect data about participants' demographic profiles and platform usage patterns. The questionnaire will be pre-tested in a small pilot sample for item clarity, reliability, and internal consistency.

In addition to the quantitative results, qualitative data will also be collected via semi-structured interviews or focus groups. Interviews will involve a purposive sample of marketing professionals - such as brand managers, digital strategists or content creators - who can give expert insight on objectives, challenges and observed effects of digital campaigns on consumer awareness. Focus groups with consumers may also be used to explore attitudes, perceptions, and emotional responses to brand content across platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. These sessions will follow an interview guide but allow for open-ended responses, enabling the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives and emerging themes.

If available, the study may also integrate digital analytics or case studies. Analytics data such as ad impressions, engagement rates, video views, and branded keyword search volume can provide valuable context regarding actual consumer exposure and interaction levels. Similarly, case studies of successful digital campaigns can serve as illustrative examples to connect empirical findings with real-world application. By combining survey-based measurement with deeper qualitative insights, this study aims to triangulate data sources and enhance the validity of its conclusions regarding the role of digital marketing in shaping brand awareness.

Data Analysis Techniques

Once data is collected, appropriate analysis methods must be applied to extract meaningful insights and answer the research questions. Given the mixed-methods approach adopted in this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques will be employed, ensuring a balanced interpretation of results from numerical and narrative perspectives.

For the quantitative data collected via surveys, descriptive statistics will first be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their digital behavior patterns. Measures such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations will help outline general trends in brand exposure and awareness. To explore the relationships between variables such as the correlation between digital content engagement and brand recall inferential statistical tests will be applied. Correlation analysis (e.g., Pearson's r) will identify the strength and direction of associations between key variables. For instance, it can determine whether increased exposure to social media content correlates positively with unaided brand recall. Furthermore, regression analysis may be used to assess the predictive power of different digital marketing channels on levels of brand awareness. Multiple linear regression models can help quantify the impact of independent variables such as time spent on digital platforms, frequency of influencer content exposure, or search engine interactions on dependent variables like brand recognition or top-of-mind awareness. These statistical methods let the researcher go beyond observation to show evidence of possible cause-and-effect relationships.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups will be thematically analyzed through, for instance, the Gioia, Eisenhardt or Langley methodological approach (for a comprehensive review see Gehman et al., 2018). This means finding, organizing and interpreting themes and patterns in verbal data. Responses will be coded and categorized following transcription to explore how consumers see digital branding and how marketers describe their strategic



intentions. Themes may include emotions triggered by branded content, platform preferences, and perceived authenticity of influencer campaigns. Integrating statistical and thematic analysis provides a framework for understanding both measurable and experiential dimensions of brand awareness in digital marketing. With this dual approach, findings are grounded in data but still capture the human element of consumer brand interaction.

Validity, Reliability & Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the research process is essential for producing credible and meaningful results. In parallel, addressing ethical considerations is critical for maintaining research integrity and protecting participants throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Validity refers to the extent to which the research accurately measures what it intends to measure. To enhance content and construct validity in this study, survey questions and interview guides will be designed based on established literature and pre-tested through a pilot study. This step ensures that the instruments align closely with the core concepts of brand awareness and digital marketing exposure. Additionally, by using multiple data sources quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and potentially digital analytics the study benefits from triangulation, which strengthens internal validity by cross-verifying findings.

Reliability concerns the consistency and stability of measurement over time and across contexts. To improve reliability, standardized data collection procedures will be followed. Survey items will be clearly worded and structured to avoid ambiguity, while the use of Likert scales and categorical options enhances comparability. In the qualitative component, consistency will be maintained through the use of an interview protocol and systematic coding procedures during thematic analysis. Inter-coder reliability may also be applied by involving a second researcher to validate the coding framework and interpretations. Regarding ethical considerations, several key principles will be upheld. All participants will be fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study through a detailed informed consent form, which they must agree to before participating. Participation will be entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly maintained; personal identifiers will be removed, and data will be stored securely and used only for academic purposes. If interviews or focus groups are recorded, explicit permission will be obtained in advance. The study will also comply with any institutional ethical guidelines or review board requirements, ensuring that the research process adheres to the highest ethical standards.

Strategic Applications of Digital Marketing for Brand Awareness

Social Media Marketing and Brand Visibility

Brands using social media to get more exposure and engage with audiences in new and dynamic ways have become essential tools for brands (Moro, Rita, & Vala, 2016). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok or LinkedIn provide unique environments for brands to establish themselves, their values and build rapport with their target audiences. With its visual-first design and storytelling emphasis, Instagram is best suited for emotional connections with audiences. Features including Stories, Reels, and Live sessions let brands share content live, advertise behind the scenes, and interact with users directly. Since stories are ephemeral, they create urgency and frequent touchpoints that reinforce brand presence through repeated



exposure. Short-form, algorithm-driven videos from Reels tap into viral content and give brands fast exposure to younger audiences.

With TikTok, entertainment has become marketing. Its algorithm favors discoverability meaning that even smaller or emerging brands can go viral with relatable content. Brands that embrace trends, user challenges or influencer collaborations often achieve high engagement and awareness with low ad spend. The platform is fast-paced and highly visual - ideal for boosting top-of-mind awareness when content is consistent and authentic.

More niche and professionally oriented, LinkedIn is a great place for B2B brand visibility. Brands can be thought leaders and raise awareness among business decision makers through thoughtful posts, industry insights and employee advocacy. Also on LinkedIn, the algorithm rewards regular engagement, so brands can stay in users' feeds with relevant value-driven content. Different content types help in different ways with brand memory. Live content enables real interaction and trust. Video shorts in Reels and TikTok's are memorable because of their emotional impact, visual cues, and repetition. Those formats draw attention and increase brand recall when combined with catchy audio, slogans or visual identity cues..

Content Marketing and Storytelling Techniques

Content marketing is a new type of digital brand strategy that is all about creating, distributing and retaining valuable, consistent content to an audience (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2024; Rowley, 2008). In contrast to traditional advertising, which directly promotes products or services, branded content promotes a product or service, aims to provide utility, entertainment, or insight, or to establish trust or emotional engagement with consumers over time. Underlying goal is to create experiences that make the brand credible, helpful, and relatable to consumers.

One of the most powerful tools in content marketing is storytelling, referring to the ways a brand tells stories about origins, values, customer success, or wider societal issues and builds relationships (Júnior, Limongi, Lim, Eastman, & Kumar, 2023; Woodside, Sood, & Miller, 2008). Stories evoke emotions and emotional responses that help retain the brand. The power of a well-told story goes beyond the immediate message, leaving a lasting impression. A lasting impression that can influence long-term brand awareness and loyalty. Various content formats serve different storytelling purposes. Blogging is a widely used method for providing in-depth information, solving problems, and boosting SEO. For example, a skincare brand may write about skin routines, ingredients, or expert advice and position itself as an expert in the field while promoting its brand

Video content, now dominant across all platforms, allows rich storytelling with visual and auditory elements. This includes tutorials and behind the scenes footage. Usually, brand documentaries or short narratives are produced. A good example is how brands like Nike use short films featuring athletes and social messages to inspire and emotionally connect with viewers, rather than just selling a product. Podcasts offer another avenue for sustained audience engagement. Through interviews, discussions, and storytelling formats, brands can speak directly to niche audiences in an intimate, long-form setting. For instance, a financial services company produces a podcast about personal finance topics to reinforce its brand but still deliver practical value.



Influencer Marketing and Brand Association

Influencer marketing aims to build trust, reach, and personal connections with your audience that social media personalities have built through their platforms (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Brands can tap into targeted consumer segments in a more authentic and engaging way through influencer collaborations than through traditional advertising. Besides increasing brand visibility, this strategy influences consumer perception and brand associations.

Influencers connect brands with their audiences often as lifestyle role models. Once an influencer markets a product or service, followers will likely interpret the message through a lens of personal trust and relatability. Thus, consumers may develop favourable feelings about a brand because someone they admire endorses it. Such a process creates brand association when the influencer's value system, tone, and aesthetic complement that of the brand. Different types of influencers fall under different categories based on their follower size (e.g., macro-influencers, micro-influencers). Macro-influencers with hundreds of thousands to millions of followers have broad reach and are often used in campaigns with broad reach. These are particularly effective at creating instant brand recognition across diverse audiences. But their visibility sometimes comes at the expense of lower engagement rates or perceived authenticity. Instead, micro-influencers with smaller, more niche audiences (typically 1,000 to 100,000 followers) tend to be more personal with their followers. Their recommendations seem more real and relatable, which may build trust, increase engagement, and create more impactful brand associations. Micro-influencers work best for brands that target communities or that want to build awareness gradually. Both cases require a strategic choice of influencer. Misalignment between influencer and brand values can lead to confusion, mistrust, or even backlash. Successful influencer marketing goes beyond visibility it hinges on brand fit, message consistency, and emotional connection with the audience.

SEO/SEM and Top-of-Mind Awareness

Consumers discover brands primarily through search engines. Here, SEO and SEM are critical to top-of-mind awareness, reflecting how easily a brand is remembered when consumers think of a product or service category. SEO involves optimizing a brand's online presence - websites, blogs & product pages - for organic (unpaid) search results. That is done via keywords, quality content, technical site performance, and backlinks. A brand appearing consistently at the top of search results builds credibility and increases the likelihood that consumers will recognize and remember it. More often, a user encounters a brand during their search journey, which triggers the mere exposure effect - this is called the mere exposure effect.

SEM involves paid advertisements appearing on search engine results pages (SERPs) at the top or alongside organic results. They may be triggered by particular keywords or targeted according to user behavior, demographics or intent. Even though paid placements don't always carry the same trust as organic ones, they give you immediate exposure - great for new or rebranding businesses. A SEM campaign can perform particularly well when matched with high intent search queries. Both SEO and SEM increase brand exposure in crucial decision points - commonly called "micro-moments". These are points when users actively seek information, compare options, or intend to make a purchase. Appearing prominently during these moments not only increases the chance of interaction but also establishes brand relevance and trust. Moreover, search behavior reflects real consumer intent. Unlike passive media



consumption, search engine users are actively seeking solutions. Therefore, brands that rank high or appear as sponsored results are better positioned to become top-of-mind choices.

Integrated Digital Strategies

Digital era consumers interact with brands across multiple channels and devices often switching between social media, websites, mobile apps, emails and search engines during the buying process. That means brands must move away from isolated marketing efforts towards integrated digital strategies combining all channels to create a consistent brand experience (Keller & Kotler, 2015). Often this approach is called “omnichannel marketing” (for a recent review see Cui et al., 2021). Omnichannel marketing maintains consistency across digital touchpoints. So, whether someone comes across a brand in an Instagram ad, a Google search, or an email newsletter, the tone, visual identity, and core messaging should all be consistent. This consistent image reinforces brand recognition and helps the consumer to associate the brand with something more memorable and easier to recall when making future purchase decisions.

Integrated strategies have the advantage of reiterating and maintaining relevant brand awareness. Suppose a user sees a YouTube video introducing a product, reads a related blog post through a Google search and then gets an offer in a follow-up email. Every interaction follows the previous one, thereby gradually ingraining the brand in the consumer's consciousness. Aligning content across channels increases impact and awareness. Also, integrated strategies enable marketers to measure user behaviour across channels and adapt content delivery accordingly. Advanced analytics and automation tools allow delivering the message right now, on the right platform and at the right time. This personalization further connects brand to consumer. Importantly, integration is not just about being present everywhere it's about being strategically consistent. Disconnected messaging, varying brand tones, or mismatched visuals across platforms can confuse audiences and weaken the brand identity. Successful digital brands invest in unified brand guidelines and cross-functional teams to maintain coherence throughout all marketing efforts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that digital marketing plays a significant and multifaceted role in building brand awareness in the modern marketplace. As consumers increasingly engage with brands across digital platforms, from social media to search engines and content channels, the visibility and memorability of a brand are no longer dependent on traditional advertising alone. The data collected both quantitative and qualitative suggest that strategic use of digital tools can significantly enhance brand recognition, recall, and emotional connection, especially when efforts are consistent, targeted, and relevant to the intended audience.

One of the key interpretations arising from the findings is the central importance of engagement and consistency in digital brand communication. Social media marketing, in particular, emerged as a leading channel for visibility, especially through short-form video content like Instagram Reels and TikTok's. Consumers reported stronger memory of brands that consistently showed up in their feeds with creative, authentic, and visually appealing content. Similarly, content marketing through blogs and video series was associated with deeper levels of brand understanding and trust, especially when educational or value-driven content was



delivered regularly. SEO and SEM were shown to be highly effective in creating initial awareness at critical decision-making moments, especially when aligned with high-intent search behavior. When comparing these findings with previous studies, several similarities and differences become apparent. The observed impact of social media marketing aligns with studies by Dehghani and Tumer (2015), who found that interactive content on platforms like Instagram significantly improves brand visibility and engagement. Similarly, this study supports earlier conclusions by Lou and Yuan (2019), who emphasized the trust and authenticity generated by influencer marketing. However, this research adds nuance by exploring the different effects of micro- versus macro-influencers, revealing that micro-influencers, despite smaller reach, tend to foster stronger brand associations due to perceived authenticity and community alignment.

Where this study diverges from some earlier literature is in its emphasis on integrated strategies and multi-channel coherence. While many previous studies have focused on single-platform marketing tactics, the current findings suggest that isolated efforts are less effective than omnichannel strategies. Brands that maintained consistency in messaging, tone, and visuals across multiple platforms were more likely to be remembered and perceived as trustworthy. This observation supports and extends the theoretical perspectives of the Customer-Based Brand Equity model (Keller, 1993), particularly in relation to brand salience and resonance. By repeatedly reinforcing brand identity across channels, brands can more effectively build mental availability and emotional connection.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to marketing literature by integrating classical brand-building models with modern digital realities. The findings affirm the continued relevance of the AIDA model, particularly the importance of the “Attention” and “Interest” phases in digital contexts. However, this research also highlights the limitations of linear models when applied to non-linear, omnichannel consumer journeys. The consumer decision-making process today is shaped by fragmented attention, algorithmic content delivery, and peer influence, suggesting a need for more dynamic models that account for repeated exposure and multi-platform interaction. Additionally, the study reaffirms Keller’s Brand Equity model, emphasizing that brand awareness (salience) remains the foundational layer upon which brand meaning and loyalty are built even in the digital age. The practical implications for marketers are considerable. First, brands should prioritize consistency in visual identity and tone across all digital platforms. People remember and trust a brand that looks consistent across Instagram, YouTube, Google search, email campaigns, and more. For example, video storytelling for Instagram and TikTok, thought leadership on LinkedIn, or educational blog content for SEO optimization are all platforms that marketers need to tap into. Micro-influencers - for niche audiences or brands that want to be authentic and trusted - should be considered.

In addition, the findings indicate that brand visibility is about more than reach - it is about emotional engagement and frequency of exposure. Marketers should design memorable, emotionally resonant, relatable and contextually appropriate campaigns. Tools like remarketing, personalized content and customer journey mapping can help with this by ensuring consumers encounter the brand at multiple meaningful touchpoints. Thirdly, analytics incorporated into content strategy enable real-time optimization and audience targeting to improve awareness building. Despite the contributions made by this study some limitations must be recognized. Methodologically, purposive sampling is appropriate for exploratory research but not generalizable to larger populations. This sample might not capture diverse consumer behaviours across age groups, cultures and industries. Using self-reported data in



surveys also creates a risk of response bias as participants may overestimate exposure or recall of some brands. Furthermore, due to the dynamic nature of digital platforms, the findings are time-sensitive. What works today on TikTok or Instagram may not apply in the same way in a year's time, as algorithms, user behavior, and content trends evolve rapidly. Another limitation lies in the scope of digital channels examined. While this study focused on major platforms and content types, it did not deeply explore emerging technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, or the metaverse, which are beginning to influence how consumers engage with brands. Future research could explore these evolving spaces and their implications for brand awareness in immersive digital environments.

CONCLUSIONS

In an era defined by digital connectivity, evolving consumer behavior, and rapidly changing media environments, brand awareness has emerged as both a foundational and strategic priority for businesses of all sizes. This study explored how digital marketing tools like social media, content marketing, SEO/SEM, influencer collaborations and integrated omnichannel strategies help consumers find, recognize and connect with brands.

Findings reaffirm the notion that digital marketing is more than a modern alternative to traditional advertising, instead it is a disruptive force that allows brands to reach targeted audiences at unprecedented speed, personalization, and interactivity. Social media platforms, especially those emphasizing visual and video content like Instagram and TikTok, were shown to be especially effective in capturing consumer attention and increasing brand recall. Also, the strategic use of SEO and SEM places brands at moments of consumer intent to reinforce top-of-mind awareness. Equality and consistency across digital channels is also important. Coherence in messaging, tone, and visual identity across platforms increases associations with consumers. This echo established branding theories like Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model but also points to the need to adapt classical frameworks to the realities of fragmented, multi-touchpoint digital experiences.

With regards to practical implications, this study offers some recommendations for both marketers and brand strategists. Businesses should first develop platform-specific content strategies that reflect the characteristics and user behavior of each channel. Short form videos, storytelling and interactive features should be top of mind on social media whereas SEO-optimized content is still essential for organic brand discovery. In addition, consistency across channels must be seen as a strategic imperative. So, whether brands using social media, email, search, or display advertising, their voice and values should be consistent. This enables recall and increases consumer trust. Third, brands should foster influencer partnerships - preferably with micro-influencers, who have high engagement and audience alignment. For emotional connections and long-term brand equity, authenticity and relevance often matter more than reach. Finally, data analytics and audience feedback should guide every stage of awareness building. Continually monitoring and testing digital strategies for adjusting to emerging trends, technologies, and consumer expectations are key for brands' success in contemporary rapidly shifting landscape.



REFERENCES

- Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15-27.
- Barroso, A., & Llobet, G. (2012). Advertising and consumer awareness of new, differentiated products. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(6), 773-792.
- Bubphapant, J., & Brandão, A. (2024). Content marketing research: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(1), e12984.
- Cui, T. H., Ghose, A., Halaburda, H., Iyengar, R., Pauwels, K., Sriram, S., . . . Venkataraman, S. (2021). Informational challenges in omnichannel marketing: Remedies and future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 85(1), 103-120.
- Dehghani, M., & Tumer, M. (2015). A research on effectiveness of Facebook advertising on enhancing purchase intention of consumers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 49, 597-600.
- Edmondson, A. C., & McManus, S. E. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1246-1264.
- Fortenberry Jr, J. L., & McGoldrick, P. J. (2020). Do billboard advertisements drive customer retention? Expanding the “AIDA” model to “AIDAR”. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 60(2), 135-147.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92.
- Freberz, K., Smith, B. G., & Silva, L. (2022). How Influencers Influence: Conceptualizing the Influencer Map for Marketing. In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Marketing* (pp. 233-244): SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gehman, J., Glaser, V. L., Eisenhardt, K. M., Gioia, D., Langley, A., & Corley, K. G. (2018). Finding theory–method fit: A comparison of three qualitative approaches to theory building. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(3), 284-300.
- Júnior, J. R. d. O., Limongi, R., Lim, W. M., Eastman, J. K., & Kumar, S. (2023). A story to sell: The influence of storytelling on consumers' purchasing behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, 40(2), 239-261.
- Kannan, P. K. (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research In Marketing*, 34(1), 22-45.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Keller, K. L., & Kotler, P. (2015). Holistic marketing: a broad, integrated perspective to marketing management. In *Does marketing need reform? Fresh perspectives on the future* (pp. 308-313): Routledge.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
- Miklosik, A., Kuchta, M., Evans, N., & Zak, S. (2019). Towards the adoption of machine learning-based analytical tools in digital marketing. *IEEE Access*, 7, 85705-85718.
- Molina-Azorin, J. F., Bergh, D. D., Corley, K. G., & Ketchen Jr, D. J. (2017). Mixed methods in the organizational sciences: Taking stock and moving forward. *Organizational Research Methods*, 20(2), 179-192.



- Moro, S., Rita, P., & Vala, B. (2016). Predicting social media performance metrics and evaluation of the impact on brand building: A data mining approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(9), 3341-3351.
- Pulizzi, J. (2012). The rise of storytelling as the new marketing. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 28(2), 116-123.
- Rowley, J. (2008). Understanding digital content marketing. *Journal of marketing management*, 24(5-6), 517-540.
- Sundaram, R., Sharma, D. R., & Shakya, D. A. (2020). Power of digital marketing in building brands: A review of social media advertisement. *International Journal of Management*, 11(4).
- Theodorakopoulos, L., & Theodoropoulou, A. (2024). Leveraging big data analytics for understanding consumer behavior in digital marketing: A systematic review. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2024(1), 3641502.
- Varadarajan, R., Welden, R. B., Arunachalam, S., Haenlein, M., & Gupta, S. (2022). Digital product innovations for the greater good and digital marketing innovations in communications and channels: Evolution, emerging issues, and future research directions. *International Journal of Research In Marketing*, 39(2), 482-501.
- Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 617-644.
- Wichmann, J. R., Uppal, A., Sharma, A., & Dekimpe, M. G. (2022). A global perspective on the marketing mix across time and space. *International Journal of Research In Marketing*, 39(2), 502-521.
- Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 97-145.