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RESEARCH ARTICLE

How Digital Marketing Tools Influence Brand Awareness: Evidence from Digitally Engaged Youth in the Lifestyle Products Market

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to examine the relationship between digital marketing tools and brand awareness among digitally engaged or aware youth in the lifestyle product market. Grounded in Keller's and Aaker's brand equity frameworks, the study investigates the influence of content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing on brand awareness.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employs a survey research design and collects 128 responses from urban youth in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Data were analysed using SPSS 23.v.

Findings: Findings revealed that content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing significantly influence brand awareness among the urban youth.

Implications: The findings imply that marketers should use an integrated digital strategy (i.e., prioritising social media, leveraging informative content, applying retargeting selectively, and emphasising brand reputation and product uniqueness) to effectively build brand awareness.

Originality/value: This study extends the literature on digital branding by providing empirical evidence from an emerging market context, offering context-specific insights into the factors that strengthen brand visibility among digitally engaged young consumers and informing more effective marketing strategies.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of internet technologies and the widespread adoption of smartphones and social media platforms have fundamentally transformed consumer behaviour and firm–customer relationships (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). In this evolving landscape, digital marketing tools have emerged as critical instruments for influencing consumer perceptions, particularly among digitally engaged (or aware) youth who are deeply embedded in online ecosystems. As lifestyle-oriented consumption continues to expand in urban markets, understanding how these tools shape brand-related outcomes has become increasingly important. In recent years, digital transformation is increasingly recognised as a strategic capability that reconfigures organisational resources and management functions, including marketing and human resource management, to enhance business performance, develop sustainable competitive advantage, and improve organisational agility in dynamic business environments (Bhattarai et al, 2026; Sthapit, 2026). Digital platforms enable real-time interaction, personalisation, and user-generated content, shifting consumers from passive recipients of information to active participants in brand communication (Çizmeci & Ercan, 2015). Social media marketing helps enhance brand visibility, foster customer interactions, and drive customer value creation (Sthapit & Vaidya, 2024). These developments have given rise to digital marketing, defined as a technology-enabled process through which firms create and deliver value collaboratively with customers and partners (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Digital marketing has evolved beyond basic online promotion to incorporate tools such as content marketing, social media marketing, and retargeting. These tools allow firms to engage customers more interactively and strategically (Makrides et al., 2020). In increasingly competitive markets, building strong brand awareness has become a strategic priority. Brand awareness, as a core dimension of brand equity, plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer decision-making and long-term brand success. The theoretical underpinning of Kevin Lane Keller (Keller, 1993) and David A. Aaker (Aaker, 1991), brand awareness

reflects the strength of a brand's presence in consumers' minds and serves as a prerequisite for building deeper brand associations and loyalty. It highlights consumers' ability to recognise and recall a brand within a specific product category and represents the foundational stage of brand equity development. Without awareness, brand preference and purchase decisions cannot occur.

Lifestyle products, such as apparel, cosmetics, and personal accessories, are highly sensitive to branding efforts because they carry symbolic and social meanings. Digitally active youth, particularly in urban centres, are exposed to extensive online marketing communications that may influence their brand perceptions. Unlike utilitarian product categories, lifestyle products are inherently symbolic and consumption-driven, where brand visibility and perception play a critical role. However, empirical evidence on how specific digital marketing tools relate to brand awareness in emerging market contexts remains limited. Sthapit and Khadka (2016) examined the influence of social media marketing on customers' buying decisions and their responses to the social media sites (SMSs) of travel intermediaries in Nepal; however, the study did not address the effect of digital marketing tools on brand awareness.

Although prior studies have examined digital marketing and branding, limited research isolates the role of specific tools, namely content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing, in shaping brand awareness among youth in emerging markets. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as gender and age may influence patterns of social media usage, which in turn may affect exposure to digital marketing activities.

To bridge these gaps, this study seeks to examine the relationship between digital marketing tools (i.e., content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing) and brand awareness among digitally literate youth in the lifestyle product market of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

This study contributes to brand equity and digital marketing literature by providing empirical evidence from an emerging market context. The study extends established brand equity frameworks into the digital context while providing actionable insights for marketers, advertising agencies, and brands to design more effective digital strategies for enhancing brand awareness among digitally engaged youth in emerging markets. Additionally, the study provides a foundation for future research examining the effectiveness of specific digital marketing strategies in similar socio-economic settings.

Literature Review

The literature review presents the theoretical foundations, synthesizes relevant empirical evidence, and develops the conceptual framework and research hypotheses.

Theoretical Foundations

Brand awareness constitutes the foundational dimension of brand equity. Both Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model and Aaker's Brand Equity model emphasise awareness as the first and essential step in building strong brands.

Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model: Keller's CBBE model conceptualises brand equity from the consumer's perspective, emphasising how brand knowledge influences consumer response (Keller et al., 2011). The model is structured as a pyramid comprising four levels: brand identity (salience), brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance. Brand awareness (salience) forms the foundation, reflecting a consumer's ability to recognise and recall a brand.

The model suggests that strong brand equity develops when brands create favourable, strong, and unique associations. In digital contexts, repeated exposure, engaging content, and interactive communication enhance brand salience, making the CBBE framework particularly relevant for analysing digital marketing tools and brand awareness.

Aaker's Brand Equity Model: Aaker (2009) defines brand equity as a multidimensional construct consisting of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty, and proprietary assets. Brand awareness is a core component that influences familiarity, credibility, and subsequent brand evaluations.

Unlike Keller's hierarchical structure, Aaker presents brand equity as an interconnected system of assets that generate competitive advantage. Both models position brand awareness as a foundational element of brand equity, thereby providing theoretical support for examining how digital marketing tools contribute to building brand awareness.

Both models, therefore, position brand awareness as a prerequisite for brand preference and long-term competitive advantage.

Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between digital marketing activities and brand-related outcomes.

Yasmin et al. (2015) examined various digital marketing tools, including online advertising, email marketing, social media, and SEO, and found strong positive correlations between digital marketing activities and sales growth. Social media and online advertising exhibited particularly high correlation coefficients. Iftikhar and Khan (2017) explored the influence of email marketing, mobile marketing, and retargeting on consumer buying behaviour. Their findings revealed that retargeting and mobile marketing positively affected buying behaviour, highlighting the importance of targeted digital strategies.

Beig and Khan (2018) investigated content sharing and engagement on social media and found significant positive effects on brand experience dimensions. Their structural equation modelling results confirmed that content interaction enhances consumer perception

and emotional connection with brands. ElAydi (2018) examined Facebook marketing practices and reported that interaction, content sharing, accessibility, and credibility significantly influenced brand awareness. Social media marketing variables showed moderate to strong positive associations with awareness.

Similarly, Yuvaraj and Indumathi (2018) found a significant positive relationship between digital marketing strategies and brand building through regression analysis. Similarly, Dash and Sharma (2019) reported that digital media expenditure generated stronger marketing responses compared to traditional advertising.

Dumitriu et al. (2019) highlighted that SMEs using social media and SEO demonstrated stronger brand equity development, emphasising integration of digital tools. Dastane (2020) confirmed a significant positive impact of digital marketing on online purchase intention. Kedra (2021) further demonstrated that digital content marketing positively influences brand awareness, with social media acting as an important mediating factor.

Among the younger generations, new platforms and formats used (e.g., TikTok, short-form video) have more significant awareness effects due to their interactive and peer-sharing opportunities, whereas, in older generations, traditional digital formats such as email or search advertising may have more effects. In spite of the fact that there is still a lack of direct empirical data on ageing populations, systematic reviews indicate that young digital users are characterised by a divergent range of behavioural factors in regard to older consumer groups, which has indicated that generational differences moderate the effects of digital tools on brand outcomes.

Several studies show that the use of digital marketing tools, including social media, content marketing, SEO, and advertising, has a beneficial effect on brand awareness all the time. As an illustration, digital marketing tools implemented in the Bangladeshi setting, such as search engine optimisation (SEO), viral marketing, social media, email, and content, were all observed to have a significant positive impact on brand awareness, with SEO having the greatest impact on appearance (Rana et al., 2024). There is also evidence that the positive effect of social media interactions on customer brand awareness is significant and positive, which indicates the potential of this channel in developing markets that are not well studied.

These results are consistent with the theoretical propositions regarding brand equity frameworks proposed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), which posit that repeated brand exposure and consistent marketing communications strengthen brand awareness and brand salience. Although these models predate social media, social media interactions can be viewed as a contemporary mechanism for delivering frequent brand exposure and reinforcing brand-related memory associations.

Similarly, studies on SMEs have shown that social media and influencer marketing enhance brand awareness and competitiveness, especially where traditional advertisement avenues are less strong. In the developing context, micro and small enterprises are using social media as a cost-effective channel to overcome resource constraints and increase brand visibility.

Collectively, prior studies indicate that digital marketing tools, particularly social media marketing and content marketing, play a significant role in enhancing brand awareness and related brand outcomes. However, limited empirical evidence exists within the Nepalese context, especially focusing on digitally engaged youth in lifestyle product markets. The present study addresses this contextual gap by examining the relative influence of content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing on brand awareness in Kathmandu Valley.

Conceptual Framework and Model Specification

Grounded in Keller's and Aaker's brand equity models, this study conceptualises brand awareness as the dependent variable and content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing as independent variables. Demographic characteristics (gender and age group) are examined in relation to social media usage patterns.

The framework assumes that digital marketing tools enhance brand salience by increasing exposure, strengthening brand-related associations, and facilitating interactive engagement. Through repeated and meaningful digital interactions, consumers are more likely to recognise and recall brands within the lifestyle product category.

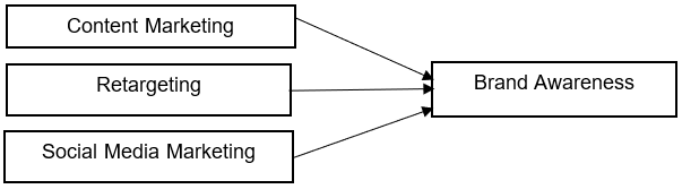


Figure 2: Structural Model

Digital Marketing Tools and Brand Awareness

In the digital era, marketing communication increasingly occurs through interactive and technology-enabled channels. Digital marketing tools, such as content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing, serve as mechanisms through which firms enhance brand salience and strengthen brand-related associations. Grounded in Keller's and Aaker's frameworks, the present study conceptualises these tools as strategic drivers of brand awareness.

The conceptual relationship between digital marketing tools and brand awareness is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Content Marketing: Content marketing involves the creation and distribution of valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and engage target audiences. Empirical studies suggest that informative and engaging content enhances brand recall and recognition by repeatedly exposing consumers to brand-related

messages (Beig & Khan, 2018; Kedra, 2021). Digital content marketing has been positively associated with brand awareness, particularly when integrated with social media platforms and customer engagement strategies (Ashley, & Tuten, 2015; Holliman & Rowley, 2014, Sthapit & Khadka, 2016). As argued by Keller (1993), consistent exposure to branded content strengthens cognitive associations, thereby reinforcing brand salience.

H1: Content marketing is positively associated with brand awareness.

Retargeting: Retargeting refers to the practice of delivering targeted advertisements to users who have previously interacted with a brand's website or digital content. By repeatedly exposing consumers to tailored advertisements, retargeting increases brand recall and reinforces brand-related cues (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2013; Sthapit, 2017). Studies examining digital advertising and retargeting strategies indicate that targeted digital interventions enhance consumer attention and behavioural responses (Iftikhar & Khan, 2017). Repeated exposure through retargeted ads may increase the likelihood that consumers recognise and remember a brand within a product category.

H2: Retargeting is positively associated with brand awareness.

Social Media Marketing: Social media marketing (SMM) encompasses promotional campaigns, influencer collaborations, brand communities, and interactive engagement across social networking platforms. Prior research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between social media marketing practices and brand awareness (ElAydi, 2018; Yasmin et al., 2015). Social media facilitates user interaction, content sharing, and peer influence, all of which amplify brand visibility and recognition. Moreover, engagement-driven communication strengthens cognitive and affective brand associations, thereby enhancing brand salience.

H3: Social media marketing is positively associated with brand awareness.

Research Methods

This study adopts a survey design to examine the impact of digital marketing tools on brand awareness among lifestyle product consumers in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. The target population comprised digitally active consumers in Kathmandu Metropolitan City, representing various age groups, income levels, and preferences. Due to the large population, convenience sampling was employed, focusing on digitally engaged or aware youth who are frequent mobile and social media users. Following VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) and a 95% confidence level with a 9% margin of error, the required sample size was calculated as 118, and a total of 128 respondents were surveyed.

Primary data were collected from July to September 2025 in Kathmandu via a structured online questionnaire, divided into two sections: demographic classification (age, gender) and research-specific questions. The questionnaire included five-point Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and ranking questions, developed from validated scales in prior studies (Kedra, 2021; Iftikhar & Khan, 2017; Yuvaraj & Indumathi, 2018). A pilot test ensured clarity and reliability, after which minor revisions were made.

Data were analysed using SPSS version 23. Descriptive statistics summarised respondent profiles and social media usage. Pearson correlation tested the association between independent variables and brand awareness. Multiple regression analysis examined the effect of content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing on brand awareness.

Model Specification

Based on the above study framework, the following model (regression equation) has been formulated:

$y = \alpha + \beta 1 \times 1 + \beta 2 \times 2 + \beta 3 \times 3 + ei$

Where,

y= brand awareness

α=intercept

x1=content marketing

x2=re-targeting

x3=social media marketing

β1= coefficient of content marketing

β2= coefficient of retargeting

β3= coefficient of social media marketing

ei= error terms

Significance was assessed at $p < .05$, and assumptions of regression (normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity) were verified.

Variables

Content Marketing (x1): Delivery of informative, engaging content (posts, blogs, videos, podcasts) to attract and retain consumers (Khan, 2019).

Retargeting (x2): Targeted digital advertisements for consumers who previously engaged with the brand, enhancing recognition and conversion (Hurley, 2016; Iftikhar & Khan, 2017).

Social Media Marketing (x3): Promotion, influencer campaigns, and community engagement on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn (Scott, 2010; Yasmin et al., 2015).

Brand Awareness (y): Consumers' ability to recognise, recall, and associate a brand with its features and values, contributing to trust and loyalty (ElAydi, 2018; Kedra, 2021).

Results

This section presents the data analysis and corresponding results in alignment with the study objectives.

Profile of Respondents

A total of 128 respondents from Kathmandu participated in the study. Of these, 52.3% were female and 47.7% were male. Regarding age, 65.6% were 25 years or younger, while 34.4% were above 25 years. In terms of ethnicity, 51.6% belonged to indigenous groups and 48.4% to caste groups. Social media activity revealed that Facebook and Instagram were most frequently used (106 respondents), followed by YouTube (96) and TikTok (37).

Most respondents (78.9%) reported familiarity with a brand after repeated social media advertising. Additionally, 81.3% indicated that easily accessible information strongly influenced their purchase decisions, and the same percentage valued offers and promotions in developing a connection with a brand's website.

Regarding brand value, brand reputation was ranked most important (58.6%), followed by product uniqueness (35.9%), product reliability (29.7%), customer interaction (28.9%), and customisation (lowest at 3.32 mean weight). For product recognition and recall, respondents indicated social media posts (83), offers and discounts (64), reviews (21), influencer content (10.1%), and campaigns/recurring ads (34–36) as effective strategies.

Social Media Usage Patterns

The analysis of respondents' social media engagement (see Table 1) indicates that Facebook and Instagram are the dominant platforms among the youth in Kathmandu Valley, with most of the respondents (82.2%) active on each platform. YouTube is used by 74.4% of respondents, whereas TikTok accounts for 28.7%. This distribution highlights the importance of Facebook and Instagram as primary channels for digital marketing campaigns targeting young consumers.

Table 1. Social Media Usage Patterns of Respondents

Social media platforms	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Facebook	106	30.70%	82.20%
Instagram	106	30.70%	82.20%
YouTube	96	27.80%	74.40%
Tiktok	37	10.70%	28.70%
Total	**345**	**100.00%**	**267.40%**

Note (s). A dichotomous group tabulated at value 1; Respondents could select multiple platforms; percentage exceeds 100%

Note. Calculations based on the data from author's survey, 2025

Brand Familiarity through Digital Advertising

Repeated exposure to advertisements on social media significantly enhances brand familiarity (see Table 2). Among 128 respondents, 101 (78.9%) reported that they became familiar with a brand after repeated online advertisements, whereas only 27 (21.1%) remained unfamiliar. This confirms that frequency of exposure is a key determinant of brand recognition, consistent with the principles of Keller's CBBE model, which emphasises brand salience as foundational to consumer engagement.

Table 2. Brand Familiarity through Social Media/Digital Advertising

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	101	78.9
No	27	21.1
Total	**128**	**100**

Note. Calculations based on the data from author's survey, 2025

Influence of Accessible Information on Purchase Decisions

The availability of relevant and easy-to-access information plays a critical role in consumer decision-making. As shown in Table 3, altogether 116 respondents (90.6%) reported that accessible information would significantly influence their purchasing decisions, while only 12 respondents (9.4%) were unaffected. The result highlights the importance of digital content and product transparency, aligning with Aaker's model, which links brand credibility and perceived value to consumer trust.

Table 3. Influence of Accessible Information on Buying Decisions

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	116	90.6
No	12	9.4
Total	**128**	**100**

Note. Calculations based on the data from author's survey, 2025

Role of Offers and Promotions in Brand Engagement

Promotional strategies on websites enhance consumer engagement and perceived connection to the brand. Table 4 shows that 104 respondents (81.3%) felt a connection to websites offering promotions and special offers, while 24 respondents (18.8%) did not. These findings highlight the effectiveness of incentives in strengthening brand-consumer relationships in online environments.

Table 4. Influence of Offers and Promotions on Connection to Website

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	104	81.3
No	24	18.8
Total	**128**	**100**

Note. Calculations based on the data from author's survey, 2025

Perceived Elements of Brand Value

Respondents were asked to rank elements contributing to brand value. As presented in Table 5, brand reputation emerged as the most critical factor (mean weighted score = 2.672), followed by unique products (2.734) and product reliability, serviceability, and durability (2.992). Interaction with customers (3.281) and customisation (3.320) were ranked lower. This suggests that while functional attributes and brand credibility are prioritised, personalised services are considered secondary in establishing brand value.

Table 5. Viewpoint on Most Important Elements Contributing to Brand Value

Features	Rank 1		Rank 2		Rank 3		Rank 4		Rank 5		Total responses	Weighted value	Weighted mean	Rank
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%				
Reputation of the brand	28	21.90	11	8.60	75	58.60	3	2.30	11	8.60	128	342	2.672	1
Unique product	21	16.40	46	35.90	26	20.30	16	12.50	19	14.80	128	350	2.734	2
Product reliability, serviceability and durability	19	14.80	38	29.70	18	14.10	31	24.20	22	17.20	128	383	2.992	3
Customisation	28	21.90	16	12.50	7	5.50	41	32.00	36	28.10	128	425	3.320	5
Interaction with customers	32	25.00	17	13.30	2	1.60	37	28.90	40	31.30	128	420	3.281	4
Total	**128**		**128**		**128**		**128**		**128**			**1920**		

Note. Calculations based on the data from author's survey, 2025

Factors Enhancing Brand Recall

Table 6. Factors Enhancing Consumers' Brand Recall

Features	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Posts on social media	83	20.50%	64.80%
Influencer	41	10.10%	32.00%
Reviews of the product	85	21.00%	66.40%
Offers and discounts	64	15.80%	50.00%
Recurring ads from frequently visited websites/apps	34	8.40%	26.60%
Campaigns with social messages	36	8.90%	28.10%
Total	**404**	**100.00%**	**315.60%**

Note. Calculations based on the data from the author's survey, 2025

Table 6 demonstrates that social media posts (64.8%) and product reviews (66.4%) are the most influential factors in helping consumers recognise and remember a product. Offers and discounts (50%), influencer content (32%), social campaigns (28.1%), and recurring advertisements (26.6%) also contribute, but to a lesser extent. These findings indicate that credibility and visibility, rather than repetitive exposure alone, are key to brand recall.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics of the variables under study. The perceived impact of content marketing on brand awareness was highest among independent variables, with a grand weighted mean of 4.12, followed by brand awareness (3.61), social media marketing (3.55), and retargeting (3.03). Retargeting showed the highest variability (SD = .75), reflecting differing consumer attitudes towards repeated advertisements. Standard deviations ranged from .62 (content marketing) to .75 (retargeting), indicating moderate variability in responses.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics

Statistics	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Variance
Content marketing	128	4.12	4.20	4.60	.62	.38
Retargeting	128	3.03	3.20	3.20	.75	.57
Social media marketing	128	3.55	3.60	3.60	.69	.47
Brand awareness	128	3.61	3.60	3.60	.70	.49

Note. Calculations based on the data from the author's survey (2025)

Correlation Analysis

To examine the association between the independent variables: content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing, and the dependent variable, brand awareness, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted for the entire sample. Table 8 presents the correlation coefficients and significance levels.

Table 8. Correlation among Variables for All Samples

Variables	Content marketing	Retargeting	Social media	Brand awareness
Content marketing	1			
Retargeting	.412**	1		
	(.001)			
Social media	.641**	.600**	1	
	(.001)	(.001)		
Brand awareness	.569**	.552**	.746**	1
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	

Note(s). Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed); calculations are based on the data from the author's survey (2025)

The results indicate significant positive relationships between all independent variables and brand awareness. Specifically, content marketing shows a moderate positive correlation with brand awareness ($r = .569$, $p < .01$), retargeting demonstrates a slightly lower but still significant correlation ($r = .552$, $p < .01$), and social media marketing exhibits the strongest association ($r = .746$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that while all three digital marketing tools contribute to brand awareness, social media marketing has the strongest influence, supporting prior literature that emphasises the centrality of social media in enhancing brand visibility and consumer recognition.

Regression Analysis

Table 9. Regression Analysis of Digital Marketing Factors on Brand Awareness

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.453	.28		1.619	.108
Content marketing	.166	.085	.147	1.949	.054
Retargeting	.147	.067	.158	2.181	.031
Social media marketing	.57	.088	.557	6.494	.001
Model Summary				F = 58.518	p = 0001
Adjusted R^2				.576	
a Dependent Variable: Brand awareness					

** Regression is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Note. Calculations are based on data collected from the author's survey (2025)

To determine the impact of content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing on brand awareness, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. Table 9 presents the regression coefficients, t-values, significance levels, and overall model fit.

The regression results indicate that all three independent variables positively and significantly influence brand awareness. Content marketing exhibits a positive effect ($\beta = .166$, $p < .05$), suggesting that providing informative, accurate, and engaging content increases consumers' familiarity and understanding of the brand. Retargeting also has a significant positive impact ($\beta = .147$, $p < .05$), indicating that personalised and targeted advertisements enhance brand recognition and recall.

Social media marketing demonstrates the strongest influence on brand awareness ($\beta = .570$, $p < .001$), confirming its critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and engagement. The model's adjusted R^2 of .576 indicates that 57.6% of the variance in brand awareness is explained by the combined effects of content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing. This finding aligns with previous studies, which consistently identify social media marketing as the most impactful strategy for generating brand awareness among digitally active youth.

The correlation and regression analyses collectively reinforce the notion that digital marketing tools significantly shape brand awareness. While content marketing and retargeting contribute positively, social media marketing exerts the highest effect, highlighting the importance of strategically leveraging social platforms for brand-building campaigns. The results provide empirical support for the proposed model, positioning social media marketing as the primary driver of brand awareness among youth consumers in Kathmandu, with complementary contributions from content-driven and retargeted advertising strategies.

Discussion

This study's results reveal that content marketing has a positive and significant relationship with brand awareness and exerts a significant impact. This indicates that informative, engaging, and reliable content facilitates consumer understanding and recognition of brands. These findings align with Beig and Khan (2018) and Kedra (2021), suggesting that strategic content creation strengthens brand associations and fosters favourable brand experiences.

Similarly, retargeting demonstrates a significant positive correlation with brand awareness and a measurable impact. This highlights the effectiveness of personalised, repeated advertising in enhancing brand recall and consumer engagement, consistent with prior evidence by Iftikhar and Khan (2017). Retargeting appears particularly effective in sustaining consumer attention and reinforcing brand familiarity.

Social media marketing exhibits the strongest association with brand awareness and exerts the highest impact, confirming its central role in contemporary digital branding strategies. These results corroborate studies by ElAydi (2018), Kedra (2021), and Yasmin et al. (2015), highlighting that social media not only increases brand reach and visibility but also encourages engagement through likes, shares, and interactions, thereby enhancing brand recall and loyalty. For small businesses and lifestyle brands, social media marketing offers a cost-effective and scalable approach to build brand awareness among target consumers.

Collectively, the findings emphasise that while all three digital marketing tools positively contribute to brand awareness, social media marketing emerges as the most influential, followed by content marketing and retargeting. This reinforces the theoretical premise that integrated digital strategies, combining informative content, personalised retargeting, and active social media engagement, are critical for enhancing brand visibility and consumer recognition in contemporary markets.

The findings critically demonstrate that digital marketing strategies are integral in shaping brand awareness, with social media marketing serving as the dominant driver, complemented by content marketing and retargeting. This evidence supports the proposed model and provides actionable insights for marketers targeting digitally active youth.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the relationship and impact of digital marketing tools (i.e., content marketing, retargeting, and social media marketing) on brand awareness among digitally active youth in Kathmandu Valley. The results confirm that all three digital marketing tools exhibit positive and statistically significant relationships with brand awareness, highlighting their effectiveness in contemporary marketing strategies.

Among the factors studied, social media marketing emerged as the most influential driver of brand awareness, followed by content marketing and retargeting. This suggests that engaging, interactive, and widely visible digital campaigns are critical for capturing consumer attention and fostering brand recognition.

Regarding brand value, reputation was identified as the most important feature, followed by uniqueness, product reliability, serviceability, and durability. Interaction with customers and customisation, while still relevant, were ranked lower, indicating that foundational brand characteristics outweigh supplementary features in shaping perceived value.

The regression model confirms the overall significance of the proposed framework, demonstrating that integrated digital marketing strategies can meaningfully enhance brand awareness. It confirms that effective use of digital marketing strategies significantly enhances brand awareness among digitally active youth. The findings imply that an integrated marketing strategy emphasising social media engagement alongside valuable content and personalized retargeting is essential for developing strong brand awareness among digitally active consumers. Theoretically, this study contributes to consumer behaviour and digital marketing theory by empirically demonstrating that brand awareness is influenced by combined factors like content-drive communication, personalized advertising, and interactive social media engagement. Similarly, these findings enrich integrated marketing communication theory by emphasizing that digital channels differ in strategic importance rather than merely functioning as complementary communication tools.

These findings highlight the importance for marketers, particularly in lifestyle and consumer-focused sectors, to prioritise social media marketing complemented by content and retargeting strategies to maximise brand visibility and consumer engagement.

The results offer practical guidance for marketing professionals, advertisers, and business owners:

- Prioritising social media marketing to maximise brand visibility, engagement, and recall, as it exerts the strongest influence on brand awareness.
- Leveraging content marketing to provide accurate, reliable, and relevant information that educates and informs consumers, supporting brand recognition and loyalty.
- Using retargeting strategically, ensuring that repeated advertisements are relevant and non-intrusive to avoid consumer fatigue.
- Focusing on brand reputation and product uniqueness when designing marketing campaigns, as these elements are most valued by consumers in forming brand perception.
- The study highlights the importance of digital marketing integration, suggesting that small businesses and start-ups in Kathmandu can achieve effective brand building through a combination of social media engagement, informative content, and targeted promotions. Thus, these insights can help organisations design efficient, consumer-oriented marketing strategies that enhance brand awareness and strengthen customer relationships in the digital era.

Future research may extend this study by examining additional dimensions of digital marketing, such as

influencer marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, artificial intelligence-driven marketing, and mobile marketing, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their influence on brand awareness. Since this study focused on digitally active youth in Kathmandu, future studies could include respondents from diverse age groups, geographical regions, and cultural contexts to enhance the generalisability of the findings. Comparative studies across different industries or product categories may also provide deeper insights into the varying effectiveness of digital marketing tools.

Furthermore, future research could incorporate mediating or moderating variables, such as customer engagement, brand trust, consumer attitudes, or purchase intention, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method research designs to examine the long-term effects and underlying mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies influence brand awareness and other consumer behavioural outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

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