

Digital Marketing and Brand Awareness in Media Agencies in Rwanda. Case Study: Buy & Sell Company Ltd

Hakizimana Phanuel

Adventist University of Central Africa, P. O. Box 2461, Kigali, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of digital marketing on brand awareness within Rwanda's media agencies, focusing on Buy & Sell Company Ltd. The research specifically explores the effects of email promotion, social media marketing, and search engine promotion on brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Using a descriptive research design and regression analysis, the study analyzes data from 100 customers. The findings reveal that digital marketing significantly contributes to brand awareness, with a 98.3% impact, and positively influences brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, with contributions of 96.6%, 96.9%, and 97.2%, respectively. The study concludes that digital marketing has a strong, positive effect on brand awareness and recommends enhancing digital marketing strategies to further build trust and customer satisfaction.

Key Words: Awareness, Brand, Digital marketing, Customer, Media Agency.

INTRODUCTION

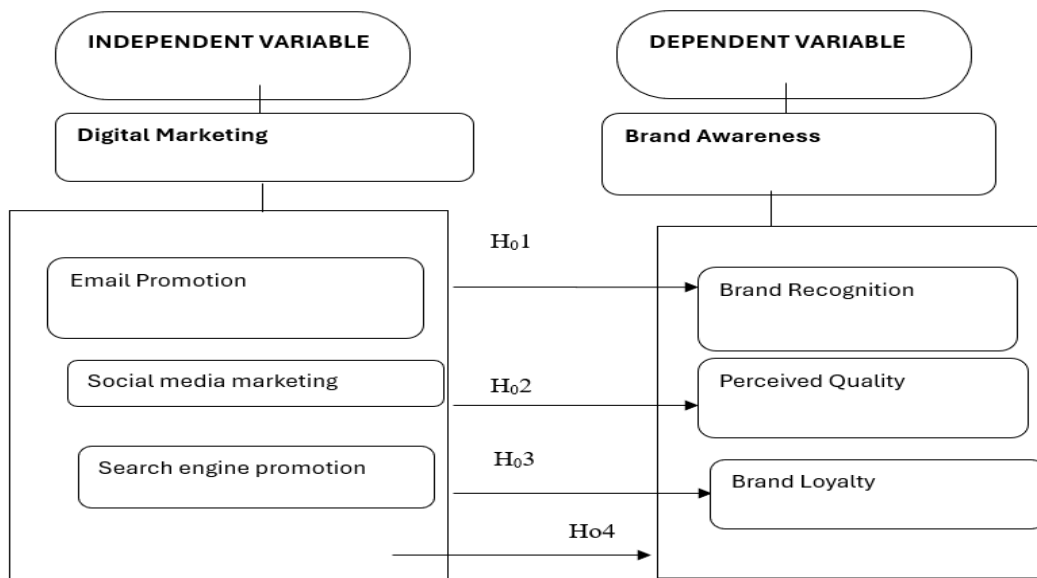
Digital marketing, a contemporary form of marketing, leverages the rapid advancements in information technology to offer businesses the ability to engage in both national and international marketing efforts. By utilizing technology, digital marketing facilitates interactions among companies, clients, and partners, thereby enhancing communication of brand value. Its efficacy is demonstrated not only through its capacity to reach a wide audience but also through its ability to provide measurable insights into campaign success via key performance indicators (KPIs) such as website traffic and social media engagement.

Despite its benefits, digital marketing faces several challenges. These include the necessity for creative strategies in a competitive landscape, the ongoing evolution of social media and search engine algorithms, and the demand for transparency due to privacy concerns and data protection regulations. Across various regions, digital marketing has transformed brand awareness, equipping brands with new tools to connect with consumers. However, achieving success in this domain requires adaptability and a commitment to ethical practices.

In Rwanda, the potential for digital marketing to enhance brand awareness is acknowledged, yet research remains limited, particularly within media agencies. Factors such as underdeveloped infrastructure, the informal economy, and difficulties in measuring brand awareness pose challenges to effective digital marketing. Media companies, which depend heavily on brand awareness to attract and retain audiences, stand to benefit significantly from digital marketing strategies. Given the scarcity of academic expertise in Rwandan digital marketing and brand awareness, there is an urgent need to evaluate its impact within media agencies.

This study aims to address this gap by focusing on Buy & Sell Company Ltd. in Rwanda. The primary objective is to analyze the contribution of digital marketing to brand awareness. Specifically, the study will examine the effects of digital marketing components—such as email promotion, social media marketing, and search engine promotion—on brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty within the company. Despite the growing adoption of digital marketing by Rwandan companies, challenges such as limited infrastructure and the prevalence of the informal economy continue to hinder the development of effective brand awareness. This study seeks to offer insights that may help overcome these challenges and improve the efficacy of digital marketing in Rwanda's media sector.

The following conceptual framework represents the relationship between independent variable and dependent variables. In this, study, the independent variable is “Digital marketing” while the dependent variable is “brand awareness”.



Source: Researcher’ compilations (2024)

Operationalization

The literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of digital marketing as an independent variable and its impact on brand-related metrics such as brand awareness, brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The review synthesizes key concepts and their relevance to the study.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is defined as the use of electronic devices and the internet to promote products or services, encompassing channels such as search engines, social media, email, websites, and mobile apps (Makrides, 2020). The primary goal is to engage potential customers online and drive them towards actions such as purchases or service sign-ups (Ahmed et al., 2019). Digital marketing's importance lies in its extensive reach, precise targeting capabilities, and measurability compared to traditional marketing (Ahmed et al., 2018). As digital technologies become integral to daily life, businesses must establish a robust online presence to stay competitive (Ganesha & Sinnor, 2019).

For media agencies, the rise of digital marketing has required a shift towards digital expertise, including SEO, social media marketing, content marketing, and online advertising (Deepa, 2021; Chitra & Sasikala, 2019). This shift challenges agencies to adapt to new consumer engagement models and data-driven approaches, ensuring they remain current with digital trends and technologies (Jermstipparsert et al., 2019; Moncey & Baskaran, 2020). Effective digital marketing allows media agencies to deliver impactful campaigns by leveraging data insights for continuous optimization (Krishnaprabha & Tarunika, 2020).

Email Promotion

Email promotion involves using email to market products, services, or events, and is considered a cost-effective method for reaching target audiences (Pratiwi et al., 2024; Renwarin, 2021). It enables organizations to communicate offers, updates, and exclusive content directly to recipients (Sahai et al., 2018). Effective email campaigns can enhance brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales by targeting specific segments and personalizing content (Morzhyna et al., 2019; Prashanath & Sendhil Kumar, 2019). Email marketing’s advantages include lower costs compared to traditional channels and the ability to measure performance through metrics such as open rates and click-through rates (Kushwaha et al., 2020). However, success depends on content quality, audience segmentation, and compliance with regulations (Alamsyah et al., 2021; Bala & Verma, 2018).

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing utilizes platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok to build brand awareness, engage users, and achieve marketing goals (Ahidin et al., 2019). It involves creating and sharing content, running ads, and analyzing performance metrics (Byamukama et al., 2021). Metrics such as follower growth, engagement rates, and sentiment analysis are crucial for evaluating social media effectiveness (Anbumani, 2018). Social media marketing also helps brands stay competitive by adapting to evolving trends and user preferences (Cheung et al., 2019; Chitra & Sasikala, 2019). It provides insights into consumer behavior and enhances brand strategies by monitoring real-time interactions (Ganesha & Sinnor, 2019).

Search Engine Promotion

Search engine promotion, or search engine marketing (SEM), involves paid advertisements on search engine result pages to increase visibility and drive traffic (Ganesha & Sinnor, 2019). It typically uses platforms like Google Ads and Bing, targeting specific keywords to reach potential customers (Hien & Nhu, 2022). Advertisers bid on keywords, creating ads that appear in search results based on user queries (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2019). SEM operates on a cost-per-click (CPC) model, allowing for precise targeting and immediate results (Maria et al., 2020). Effective SEM requires keyword research, ad optimization, and performance monitoring to achieve high click-through and conversion rates (Bala & Verma, 2018).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness measures how well consumers recognize and recall a brand, serving as a precursor to purchase decisions (Ganesha & Sinnor, 2019; Kannan & Li, 2018). High brand awareness translates into increased trust, preference, and sales. Digital marketing significantly enhances brand awareness through platforms like social media and search engines, enabling brands to reach wider audiences and engage them in real-time (Parida & Prasanna, 2021). Techniques such as SEO, content marketing, and online advertising are critical for building and maintaining brand visibility (Moncey & Baskaran, 2020).

Brand Recognition

Brand recognition refers to consumers' ability to identify a brand through visual or auditory cues such as logos or slogans (Ghazie & Dolah, 2018). It is a crucial aspect of brand awareness and can lead to increased sales and loyalty by differentiating a brand in competitive markets (Karen & Zai, 2022). Digital marketing strategies, including social media and display advertising, play a vital role in strengthening brand recognition by consistently showcasing brand elements across digital platforms (Mitiku, 2021; Moncey & Baskaran, 2020).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is customers' subjective judgment of a product's overall excellence relative to alternatives (Vasudevan & Senthilkumar, 2019). It influences customer preferences and loyalty, with higher perceived quality often justifying premium pricing and enhancing brand equity (Chitra & Sasikala, 2019). Digital marketing impacts perceived quality by shaping public perception through online reviews and content (Vasudevan & Senthilkumar, 2019). Effective digital marketing can enhance perceived quality by highlighting strengths and creating positive associations (Moncey & Baskaran, 2020).

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is characterized by a customer's consistent preference and emotional connection to a brand, often resulting in repeat purchases and positive advocacy (Sahai et al., 2018). Loyal customers provide stable revenue and act as brand ambassadors. Digital marketing fosters brand loyalty through personalized interactions, loyalty programs, and responsive customer service (Renwarin, 2021). However, negative experiences can undermine loyalty, underscoring the need for a well-executed digital strategy (Vasudevan & Senthilkumar, 2019).

This summary highlights how various digital marketing strategies affect brand metrics and outlines their implications for businesses in the digital age

METHODOLOGY

This chapter detailed the research methodology employed in the study, including research design, population, sampling methods, data collection techniques, and analysis procedures, as well as ethical considerations and study limitations. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design aimed at collecting data on a specific phenomenon and determining the relationships between variables. Data collection was conducted through surveys, with hypotheses tested using regression analysis.

The research focused on customers of Buy & Sell Company Ltd., located in Nyarugenge District. Due to the large population, convenience sampling was used to select 100 respondents, making data collection more practical. Convenience sampling, a non-probability method, involved selecting participants based on their accessibility and willingness to participate.

Primary data was collected using self-structured questionnaires containing closed-ended questions designed to capture respondents' views on the study's variables. The questionnaire was divided into sections addressing demographic data and the variables under investigation. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data was gathered through questionnaires, while secondary data was obtained from books, journals, and other archival sources.

The questionnaire employed a Likert scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," to measure participants' opinions.

Data collection commenced with obtaining a recommendation letter from the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA), followed by approval from Buy & Sell Company Ltd. Questionnaires were then distributed to participants at the company's headquarters to ensure a high response rate. Instrument validity, which assessed whether the research instrument measured what it was intended to measure, was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the data.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.0, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis included measures such as mean, standard deviation, correlation, and multiple regression analysis to identify patterns and relationships among variables. The mean served as a measure of central tendency, providing an average value for the dataset. The Coefficient of Variation was used to assess the relative variability of the data, with lower values indicating greater homogeneity among responses.

Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between the independent variable (digital marketing) and the dependent variables (brand awareness, brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty). Ethical considerations were integral to the research process, ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. Measures were taken to protect participant privacy and ensure that collected data was used solely for research purposes. This chapter outlined the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis while maintaining ethical standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents findings based on a comprehensive analysis of data collected during a field survey, focusing on digital marketing and brand awareness at Buy & Sell Company Ltd., a media agency in Rwanda. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 27.0, with the study divided into three main sections: demographic information, respondents' perceptions of digital marketing, and an analysis of the company's brand awareness.

The demographic analysis revealed a balanced gender distribution among respondents, with 49% male and 51% female participants, indicating an even split in Buy & Sell's customer base. Age distribution showed a significant concentration in the 26-35 years age group (36%), followed by those over 45 years (27%), 36-45 years (21%), and 18-25 years (16%). This suggests that digital marketing strategies should be tailored to a tech-savvy and economically active demographic while also being accessible to older customers.

Educationally, 46% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree, and 36% possess an advanced degree, indicating a

highly educated customer base that values detailed and informative content. Analysis of respondents' tenure with the company showed that 72% have been customers for over 5 years, reflecting strong brand loyalty that can be leveraged in digital marketing campaigns.

The study evaluated respondents' perceptions of three digital marketing strategies: email promotion, social media marketing, and search engine promotion.

1. **Email Promotion:** Respondents generally rated email promotions from Buy & Sell positively, finding them informative and useful (mean = 4.22). The frequency of email promotions was deemed appropriate (mean = 3.98), and special offers were seen as motivating purchases (mean = 3.70). Overall, email promotions were well-received (mean = 3.96).
2. **Social Media Marketing:** Social media marketing received high approval, with respondents finding the company's social media posts engaging and relevant (mean = 4.63). The company's social media presence fostered a stronger connection with the company (mean = 4.24), and advertisements on these platforms effectively captured attention (mean = 4.51). The overall perception of social media marketing was very positive (mean = 4.46).
3. **Search Engine Promotion:** The perception of search engine promotion was moderate. While respondents frequently saw Buy & Sell's advertisements online (mean = 3.45) and found the information useful (mean = 3.54), they were less convinced about the company's trustworthiness based on its search engine presence (mean = 2.91). Overall, the perception of search engine promotion was moderate (mean = 3.30).

The study also examined brand awareness through three indicators: brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

1. **Brand Recognition:** Respondents strongly agreed that they could easily recognize Buy & Sell among competitors (mean = 4.25) and were familiar with the company's visual elements like logos and colors (mean = 4.17). Frequent exposure to the company's advertisements reinforced brand recognition (mean = 4.05). Overall brand recognition was high (mean = 4.15).
2. **Perceived Quality:** The quality of Buy & Sell's products was generally perceived positively, with respondents agreeing that the products were of high quality (mean = 4.19) and met their performance and durability expectations (mean = 3.76). Overall perceived quality was rated as strong (mean = 3.87).
3. **Brand Loyalty:** Respondents demonstrated strong brand loyalty, preferring Buy & Sell over competitors (mean = 4.47) and expressing a high likelihood of recommending the company to others (mean = 4.22). They also frequently chose Buy & Sell despite the availability of cheaper alternatives (mean = 4.14). Overall brand loyalty was strong (mean = 4.27).

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the impact of digital marketing on brand recognition. The results revealed that digital marketing strategies (email promotion, social media marketing, and search engine promotion) have a significant positive effect on brand recognition. The predictors accounted for 96.6% of the variance in brand recognition, indicating that these strategies are essential for enhancing brand awareness at Buy & Sell Company Ltd. The null hypothesis, suggesting no significant effect of digital marketing on brand recognition, was rejected.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of effective digital marketing strategies in enhancing brand recognition, perceived quality, and brand loyalty at Buy & Sell Company Ltd. The company's efforts in email promotion and social media marketing have been particularly successful, while search engine promotion shows potential for improvement. To address the weak agreement ($M=2.91$) on the trustworthiness of the company based on search engine results, it is recommended that Buy & Sell enhance its digital marketing strategy by increasing search engine visibility and focusing on building trust through content that demonstrates value, reliability, and customer satisfaction.

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