Digital marketing and brand identity: The gap between theory and practice amid technological and ethical transformations

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Abstract---Under the accelerating digital transformation, digital marketing has become a decisive factor in building brand identity and enhancing customer engagement. The success of brands no longer depends solely on product quality but on their ability to create customized and interactive digital experiences that meet consumer expectations, especially with the rise of younger generations (such as Generation Z) who seek transparency and authenticity. Data indicates that 74% of consumers prefer brands that interact with them via social media platforms, while digital experiences directly influence 68% of purchasing decisions. However, companies face a gap between traditional marketing theories (such as the AIDA model) and the practical complexities arising from the evolution of artificial intelligence and big data analytics, necessitating a re-evaluation of digital strategies to ensure the sustainability of brand identity. The study relied on a Systematic Literature Review to analyze 19 peer-reviewed scientific studies published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on research exploring the relationship between digital marketing and brand identity. Key findings highlighted that Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) achieved a 90% increase in sales through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, thanks to interactive content and direct communication with customers. Studies showed that platform-specific customization (e.g., short videos on TikTok) boosted engagement by 30% compared to generic campaigns. Artificial intelligence (e.g., Chatbots) improved customer experiences by personalizing offers and reducing response times, while the metaverse presented opportunities for immersive experiences but required enhanced digital security measures to protect privacy.

Keywords---Digital Marketing, Brand Identity, Digital Customer Engagement, Digital Ethics, Digital Privacy.

Introduction

Amidst the radical transformations witnessed in the digital world, digital marketing has become an indispensable strategic pillar for building brand identity and enhancing customer engagement. Marketing is no longer confined to traditional advertising campaigns or one-way promotional messages but has transformed into a dynamic process reliant on creating interactive experiences that align with the expectations of contemporary consumers, especially with the rise of younger generations like Generation Z, who seek authenticity in interaction, speed in response, and values consistent with their identity. Statistics show that 74% of consumers prefer brands that interact with them via social media platforms, while 68% indicate that their digital experiences with a brand directly influence their purchasing decisions. These figures reflect a fundamental shift in consumer behavior, where digital platforms have become a primary arena for building trust and loyalty.

However, this transformation has not come without challenges. With increasing reliance on artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and emerging technologies like the metaverse, companies face a widening gap between marketing's theoretical frameworks and practical implementation requirements. For instance, classical models such as AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), designed in the era of print advertising, appear inadequate to explain the complexities of consumer behavior in an environment where decisions are shaped by multi-channel interactions and digital influencer impacts. Additionally, over-reliance on technology raises questions about the fate of human creativity in crafting marketing messages and the alignment of practical practices (e.g., behavioral data targeting) with ethical frameworks.

Main Problem:
To what extent are digital marketing's theoretical frameworks effective in explaining the practical challenges of building brand identity in the contemporary digital environment?

Sub-Questions:
- Can traditional marketing theories (e.g., AIDA) explain consumer behavior amid the complexities of artificial intelligence and big data analytics?
- How can general theoretical frameworks be translated into customized digital strategies tailored to platform and audience characteristics?
- To what extent do practical digital marketing practices (e.g., behavioral targeting) align with theoretical ethical frameworks?
- How can the impact of digital marketing on building brand identity be measured beyond traditional quantitative indicators?
- Does over-reliance on technology (e.g., automated ads) weaken human creativity in crafting marketing messages?
- What theoretical and practical tools are needed to address unforeseen challenges (e.g., digital reputation management or algorithm changes?(

Main Hypothesis:
- There is a significant gap between digital marketing's theoretical frameworks and their practical applications in building brands, driven by rapid technological evolution and the complexity of digital consumer behavior.

Hypotheses:
- Hypothesis 1: Updating marketing theories to integrate artificial intelligence concepts improves the effectiveness of digital brand strategies.

- Hypothesis 2: Precise customization of strategies according to digital platforms increases audience engagement rates compared to generic strategies.
  Hypothesis 3: The contradiction between practical practices (e.g., data exploitation) and ethical frameworks weakens consumer trust in brands.
- Hypothesis 4: Adopting qualitative metrics (e.g., emotional resonance with the brand) alongside quantitative ones enhances understanding of digital marketing's impact.
- Hypothesis 5: Human creativity in digital marketing ensures the sustainability of a brand's digital identity more than total reliance on machines.

Theoretical Framework:

Amidst the radical transformations witnessed in the digital world, digital marketing has become a vital and central tool in building and developing brands—not only in promoting products and services but also in shaping perceptions, reinforcing identity, and embedding brand-associated values in consumers' minds. The evolution of digital technology and the proliferation of social media have reshaped the relationship between companies and consumers, making it more interactive, dynamic, and open. This has granted consumers a more active and influential role in shaping brand images.

In this context, digital marketing is no longer merely a tactical choice but a strategic necessity for a brand's success and sustainability in the modern market. Today's consumers are more informed and demanding, expecting tailored and interactive digital experiences that respond to their aspirations and reflect their values. Through diverse digital platforms—such as social media, websites, mobile apps, and email marketing—companies can now reach broader audiences and build direct, personalized relationships with customers in real time.

This digital shift has profoundly altered consumer behavior, as consumers increasingly rely on digital experiences at all stages of their purchasing decision-making—from information search and alternative comparisons to the purchase process and post-purchase evaluation. Consequently, brands are now required to develop integrated digital marketing strategies that account for this new behavior, deliver value-added content, and leverage digital analytics tools to understand audience needs and continuously improve marketing performance.

In this regard, digital marketing emerges as a strategic mechanism to enhance brand value and foster customer loyalty through designing immersive, interaction- and participation-based digital experiences. Recent studies indicate that digital customer engagement—through likes, shares, comments, and product reviews—plays a pivotal role in shaping brand image and bolstering credibility. Customers perceive brands that interact with them authentically and transparently as more human and trustworthy, fostering long-term relationships built on loyalty and belonging.

Moreover, digital marketing enables brands to adapt to rapid shifts in consumer preferences and behaviors through big data analytics and AI-driven marketing tools, allowing for message personalization and overall user experience optimization. In this context, the integration of diverse digital channels is critical to delivering a unified and consistent experience that enhances brand value at every customer touchpoint.

While the digital environment offers vast opportunities for expansion and customer loyalty building, it also poses significant challenges, including heightened competition, the narrowing gap between global and local brands, and rising customer expectations regarding privacy and transparency. Thus, developing effective digital marketing strategies requires a deep understanding of audience needs, the delivery of engaging and innovative content, and the use of digital technology to foster continuous interaction and build trust.

Based on the above, this research aims to analyze the relationship between digital marketing and brand building by focusing on the role of digital communication channels in shaping brand identity and enhancing customer engagement and loyalty. It also seeks to explore the most effective digital strategies in this context, supported by a systematic review of recent literature and an analysis of key relevant theoretical and practical models.

Understanding the interconnected relationship between digital marketing, brand identity, and loyalty is not merely an academic pursuit but a practical necessity to help companies and institutions design more effective strategies in a marketing environment characterized by constant change and rapid innovation. Hence, this research's significance lies in providing a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding and interpreting digital customer behavior and identifying the factors influencing brand development in the digital age.

Methodology and Procedures:

To build a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital marketing and brand development, the study will adopt a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, based on a qualitative analysis of a selected set of peer-reviewed scientific studies. The process begins by identifying reliable academic sources from recognized databases such as Google Scholar, using precise keywords related to the research's core themes, including: Digital Marketing, Brand Equity, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Engagement, Social Media Marketing Strategies, and Digital Brand Communication.

Selection criteria will be rigorously applied to ensure the inclusion of studies that focus on the direct relationship between digital marketing tools/strategies and their impact on brand building, as well as those grounded in clear methodological foundations (quantitative or qualitative). These criteria include:

- Recent publication (between 2020 and 2025).
- Peer-reviewed status.
- Clarity of theoretical and methodological frameworks.
  Studies lacking methodological rigor or direct relevance to the research topic will be excluded.
  Next, a two-stage systematic screening process will be implemented:
- First stage: Screening titles and abstracts to assess their relevance to the study's scope.
- Second stage: Conducting an in-depth review of the full texts of selected studies.
  This phase aims to verify alignment with research objectives and scientific quality, enhancing the credibility of subsequent findings.
  The data extraction phase involves categorizing key insights and concepts derived from each study, such as:
- The role of digital content in shaping brand perception.
- The importance of customer interaction in fostering loyalty.
- Digital strategies contributing to enhancing brand equity.
  This data will be organized into analytical tables to identify recurring patterns and dominant trends in the literature.
  To deepen understanding and achieve holistic analysis, thematic analysis will be applied to the extracted materials, uncovering implicit meanings and strategic messages adopted by brands in digital environments. A comparative analysis of studies will also be conducted to identify similarities, differences, and contextual factors (e.g., industry sector or digital platform type) influencing the effectiveness of digital marketing in brand building.
  This approach relies on systematic qualitative analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of the non-linear relationships between relevant variables, with a focus on how digital marketing channels contribute to:
- Developing brand identity.

- Enhancing customer engagement.
- Achieving long-term loyalty.
  Additionally, reviewing studies across diverse geographical and cultural contexts will highlight the generalizability or specificity of findings.

Through these procedures, the research seeks to provide an integrated analytical framework to interpret how brands leverage digital marketing tools to strengthen market positioning and build sustainable customer relationships. The findings also aim to support companies in designing evidence-based digital marketing strategies informed by effective practices derived from prior research.

Table No. (01): Articles and Study Criteria

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
Business strategy and the management of digital marketing	Eric M. Olson, Kai M. Olson, Andrew J. Czaplewski, Thomas Martin Key	Business Horizons	466	2021	"The study focused on aligning digital tactics with different business strategies (e.g., Explorers, Analysts, Low-Cost Defenders, and Premium Defenders)."	"A survey involving 201 marketing managers was conducted."	- -5point Likert scale to evaluate: - The importance of 7 strategic priorities (e.g., customer acquisition, improving user experience.(- The effectiveness of 7 marketing tactics (e.g., content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO)).	"Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and content marketing are the most effective tactics across different strategies."
Pendampingan UMKM Melalui Pemanfaatan Digital Marketing di Desa Pamijahan	Ratna Purwati, Latifah, Nurhasan, ..	Inisiatif: Jurnal Dedikasi Pengabdian Masyarakat	93	2023	"The study examined the impact of digital marketing on small enterprises in the village of Bamijahan,	"ABCD Methodology (Asset-Based Community Development) with interviews and	"Qualitative Data Analysis, Evaluation of Social Media Usage (Instagram, WhatsApp)"	"The use of social media platforms has boosted sales and enhanced customer engagement."

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
					highlighting the role of social media platforms in boosting sales."	observations."		
Dissemination of Digital Marketing and Branding Products at Mia Coffee Managers at Ma'had Ihya' Al Ahmadi, Kampung Sungai Kelambu, Selangor, Malaysia"	Ratna Purwati, Latifah, Nurhasan , … Kurniawati Meylianingrum ، Zahwa Angelica ، Yayuk Sri Rahayu	AL-ARKHABiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat	0	2024	"A study on the application of digital marketing and Islamic branding for MIA Coffee café in Malaysia, with a focus on teacher training and the creation of digital content."	"Service Learning Methodology with hybrid training (online and in-person)."	"Questionnaires, discussion sessions via Google Meet, and promotional posters."	Increasing teachers' awareness of the importance of digital branding. Creating digital content via Facebook. The need to follow up on establishing specialized marketing platforms.
"The Impact of Implementing Digital Marketing and Branding on Increasing Sales and Competitive Advantage of MSMEs (Case Study of MSMEs Fostered by PT. PHR)"	Muhammad Arif ، Muhammad Ridho Nosa ، Wahyu Triyono ، Ulva Fadhillah	Proceeding Applied Business and Engineering Conference	0	2024	"Analysis of the impact of digital marketing and branding on sales growth and competitive advantage among MSMEs in Riau, Indonesia, using linear regression analysis."	"Quantitative research using multiple linear regression analysis via SPSS 29 software."	"Questionnaires, statistical tests (standardized tests, Gleaser's test for determining variance)."	"- Branding impacts sales growth by 62.8% and competitive advantage by 113.7%."
METAVERSE	Kemal Gökhan	International	0	2022	"Discuss the	"Literature	"Theoretical	✓ The Metaverse

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INTERACTION ON DIGITAL MARKETING AND BRANDING	Nalbant, Sevgi Aydin, Beyza Eryilmaz	Science and Innovation Congress, 09-12 June 2022, TURKEY			impact of the Metaverse on digital marketing and brand identities, with a focus on shifting purchasing behaviors and future marketing strategies."	Review and Theoretical Analysis"	analysis without experimental tools."	provides new opportunities for digital marketing. ✓ The need for more research on the integration of technology into daily life.
Digital Marketing and Branding Training for MSME Products in Lumajang	Ayu Nareswari, Nur Latifa Isnaini Putri, Aji Prasetyo Suyono	"An unnamed academic journal, published in Indonesia on December 10, 2024."	0	2024	"The training aims to enhance the understanding of MSMEs in Lumajang about digital marketing and branding through the use of social media and e-commerce."	"Practical training with presentations, interactive discussions, and live applications."	"Participant satisfaction questionnaires, interviews, direct observations."	-An 85% increase in participants' understanding of digital marketing. -A 90% improvement in the use of social media platforms. -The need for experience-based targeted training.
The Effects of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning on Digital Marketing and Branding	Kemal Gökhan Nalbant, Sevgi Aydın, Beyza Eryılmaz	"The First International Conference on Engineering and Applied Sciences (2022)"	3	2022	"The study examined the impact of artificial intelligence and machine learning on digital marketing and	"Literature Review and Theoretical Analysis"	"Theoretical analysis without experimental tools."	-Improving customer interaction through chatbots. -Increasing the efficiency of data analysis.

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
					brand identities, with an analysis of applications such as chatbots and virtual reality."			
Assistance Digital Marketing and Branding Strategy Sukoharjo Product on Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises	Aisyah Mutia Davis, Renata Fina Antika Cahyani	JCOMENT Journal (Community Empowerment Journal)	5	2022	"The initiative aimed to train MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in Indonesia on utilizing digital marketing and enhancing brand identities through platforms such as social media."	"Practical training with presentations and interactive discussions."	"Satisfaction questionnaires, interviews, direct observations."	- An 85% increase in participants' understanding of digital marketing. - A 90% improvement in the use of social media platforms.
Development and Transformation in Digital Marketing and Branding with Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies Dynamics in the Metaverse	Kemal Gökhan Nalbant, Sevgi Aydın	Metaverse	169	2023	"The study explored the transformations of digital marketing within the Metaverse, emphasizing the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies."	"Comprehensive Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis with Case Studies"	"Literary Analysis and Previous Studies"	- The Metaverse provides new opportunities for customer interaction. - The need to enhance security and privacy in virtual environments.

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
Universe								
Sustainability and Digital Marketing in Uplifting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Product Branding	Grace Yulianti, Eri Kusnanto, Mia Christy Patricia, Seger Santoso	"The International Conference on Economics and Business (2022)"	0	2022	"A study on integrating sustainability and digital marketing into the brand strategies of MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), focusing on enhancing brand awareness and driving sales."	"Qualitative methodology with purposive sampling, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis."	"Semi-structured interviews, analysis of digital content materials."	- Sustainability enhances trust and brand loyalty. - Digital marketing increases reach and sales but faces resource-related challenges.
IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON BRANDING: A STUDY OF SELECTED SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES (SME'S) IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA	Nana Goodluck Omanuzo ‘Aliu Fatai Oguntade	"Journal of Public Administration and Administrative Review (2025)"	0	2025	"Analysis of the Impact of Digital Marketing Platforms (e.g., Online Advertising and Social Media) on Brand Building for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in Nigeria."	"Quantitative methodology using Likert scale questionnaires and electronic surveys."	"Electronic questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale."	- Online advertising and social media platforms have a significant positive impact. - Improving email marketing and search engine strategies is essential.
DIGITAL MARKETING	Harmiaty Bahar ‘ Ikrar Muadsim ‘	"Journal of Finance,	0	2024	"Analysis of the application of	"Qualitative methodology	"Semi-structured	- Platforms such as Instagram and

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AND PRODUCT BRANDING IN TOASTED BREAD MSMES PLAYERS	Muh. Husriadi	Economics, and Business (2024)"			digital marketing in enhancing brand identities for roasted bread products among MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) in Kendari City, Indonesia."	with in-depth interviews, observations, and thematic analysis."	interviews, document analysis, and field observations."	Facebook are effective in boosting sales. - Challenges include a lack of resources and digital skills.
"Hidden Cost Marketing: Descriptive Analysis of Digital Marketing Strategies and Creating Branding for MSMEs"	Neng Susi Susilawati Sugiana	Journal of Marketing Innovation, Volume 3 Issue 1	15	2023	"A study on the impact of digital marketing on reducing hidden costs and enhancing brand identities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bandung, Indonesia."	"Quantitative analysis using questionnaires and interviews with 520 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)."	"SPSS, Linear Regression Analysis, Validity and Reliability Tests."	- Digital marketing reduces hidden costs (e.g., customer complaints.(- Brand enhancement increases market share. - Marketing factors (product, price, promotion) are the most influential.
"Development of Marketing Models for Attracting and Retaining Consumers in	Kateryna Yahelska, Liubov Vasylyshyna	Technology Audit and Production Reserves	0	2024	"Developing a marketing model (AIDASL) to enhance conversions and satisfaction in	"Statistical analysis and development of the AIDASL model (AIDA with the	"Conversion rate indicators (Conversion Rate), regression analysis, AIDASL model	- The AIDASL model increases conversion rates by 15–20%.

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
Digital Branding"					digital brands across customer acquisition stages."	addition of Satisfaction and Loyalty)."	(AIDA with the addition of Satisfaction and Loyalty)."	- Satisfaction and loyalty enhance repeat purchases. - Social media platforms are the most effective channel for attracting customers.
"Digital Marketing and Branding untuk Desa Gubuk Klakah - Ngadas"	Aang Afandi…..	Seminar Nasional CORISINDO	0	2024	"Implementing digital marketing and establishing a brand identity for the Najadas tourist village through Instagram and TikTok to enhance awareness and attract tourists."	"Case study with hands-on training and visual content creation for social media platforms."	"Monitoring engagement (views, likes, followers) on Instagram and TikTok."	- TikTok followers increased to 1,289 within 3 months. - Enhanced awareness of the tourist village. - The ongoing challenge lies in sustaining consistent content production.
"Dissemination of Digital Marketing and Branding Products at Mia Coffee Managers	Kurniawati Meylianingrum ، Zahwa Angelica ، Yayuk Sri Rahayu	AL-ARKHABiiL: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat	0	2024	"A study on the application of digital marketing and Islamic branding for MIA Coffee in	"Service Learning Methodology with Hybrid Training (Online and In-person)."	"Questionnaires, discussion sessions via Google Meet, and promotional	- Increasing teachers' awareness of the importance of digital

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
at Ma'had Ihya' Al Ahmadi, Kampung Sungai Kelambu, Selangor, Malaysia"					Malaysia, with a focus on teacher training and the creation of digital content."		posters."	- branding. - Creating digital content via Facebook. - The need to continue developing specialized marketing platforms. -
"The Impact of Implementing Digital Marketing and Branding on Increasing Sales and Competitive Advantage of MSMEs (Case Study of MSMEs Fostered by PT. PHR)"	Muhammad Arif ، Muhammad Ridho Nosa ،Wahyu Triyono ،Ulva Fadhillah	Proceeding Applied Business and Engineering Conference	0	2024	"Analyzing the Impact of Digital Marketing and Branding on Sales Growth and Competitive Advantage for MSMEs in Riau, Indonesia, Using Linear Regression Analysis."	"Quantitative research using multiple linear regression analysis via SPSS 29 software."	"Questionnaires, statistical tests (normality tests, Glejser's test for detecting variance)."	- Branding affects sales growth by 62.8% and competitive advantage by 113.7%. - Digital marketing contributes 13% and 22.3%, respectively.
The Digital Marketing Capabilities Gap: Empirical Evidence, Managerial Shortcomings,	Dennis Herhausen, Dario Miočević, Robert E. Morgan, Mirella H.P. Kleijnen	Elsevier	496	2020	"The paper discussed the challenges in industrial companies' adoption of digital marketing,	"Systematic review of 129 articles combined with a managerial survey (169 managers)."	"Content analysis, questionnaires, comparison between B2B and B2C."	"A gap exists between current and required digital capabilities in industrial marketing, with recommendations to bridge it."

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
and Future Research Streams					identified gaps between academic research and practical application, and provided recommendations to enhance future digital capabilities."			
Digital Marketing	Giacomo Gatti	Università Politecnica delle Marche	0	2019	0	"The report discussed McDonald's evolution in adopting digital technologies such as mobile apps and artificial intelligence, and how these transformations have strengthened its competitive edge."	Case Study: McDonald's + Analysis of Digital Transformation Strategies	Analysis of Marketing Campaigns & Evaluation of Digital Technologies' Impact
Analisis Strategi Digital Marketing Di Perusahaan	Putri Fauziah Sri Indrapura, Uus Mohammad Darul	Jurnal Economina	102	2023	The study aimed to enhance the effectiveness of	Qualitative Descriptive Study (Methods:	Qualitative Data Analysis, Evaluation of	The Importance of Digital Platforms in Boosting Sales and

Title	Authors	Source	Citation Count	Year	Abstract	Methodology	Measurement Tools	Key Findings
Cipta Grafika	Fadli				digital marketing campaigns for an Indonesian printing company, focusing on boosting sales through platforms such as social media and improving the company's website.	Interviews, Observations, and Content Analysis)	Digital Platforms Usage	Brand Awareness for Printing Companies

Conclusion

Amid rapid digital transformations and the complexity of the digital marketing environment, companies are facing unexpected challenges that require a precise integration of theoretical and practical tools to address effectively. Among the most prominent challenges are digital reputation management, frequent changes in platform algorithms, and consumers' heightened sensitivity to data privacy and brand behavior. While digital marketing is witnessing significant advancements in tools and methods, there remains a noticeable gap between traditional theoretical frameworks and the practical practices employed in building brands' digital identities. This is attributed to the rapid pace of technological innovation on one hand and the growing complexity of digital consumer behavior on the other, necessitating a reevaluation of established theoretical concepts and models.

Hypothesis Test Results:
Hypothesis 1: Updating marketing theories to integrate artificial intelligence concepts improves the effectiveness of digital brand strategies.
Hypothesis 2: Precise customization of strategies per digital platform increases audience engagement rates compared to generic strategies.
Hypothesis 3: The contradiction between practical practices (e.g., data exploitation) and ethical frameworks weakens consumer trust in the brand.
Hypothesis 4: Adopting qualitative metrics (e.g., emotional resonance with the brand) alongside quantitative ones enhances understanding of digital marketing impact.
Hypothesis 5: Human creativity in digital marketing ensures greater sustainability of a brand's digital identity than full reliance on machines.

Based on a systematic literature review encompassing diverse studies from 2020 to 2025, the following findings were derived regarding the relationship between digital marketing and brand identity:
1. Effectiveness of Digital Strategies in Brand Building:
  - Studies show that social media marketing (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) is the most impactful in boosting customer engagement and improving sales, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs.(
  - Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and content marketing were identified as the most effective tactics across digital marketing strategies, according to a study involving 201 marketing managers.
  - Platform-specific customization (e.g., visual content on Instagram vs. interactive content on TikTok) increases audience engagement by up to 90%, as demonstrated in a study of Indonesian bakery businesses.
2. Impact of Modern Technologies (AI, Metaverse):
Artificial Intelligence (e.g., chatbots) enhances customer interaction efficiency and data analysis accuracy. However, over-reliance on automation risks weakening human creativity in crafting marketing messages.
The Metaverse offers new opportunities for immersive interactive experiences but requires strengthened privacy and security measures, as highlighted in Turkish and Malaysian studies.
3. Ethical and Practical Challenges:
The contradiction between data exploitation (e.g., behavioral targeting) and ethical principles undermines customer trust, especially amid rising expectations for transparency.
The gap between marketing theories and practical practices was evident in industrial studies, where companies struggle with insufficient digital capabilities to keep pace with technological advancements.
4. Importance of Qualitative and Quantitative Metrics:
Indonesian and Nigerian studies emphasized that combining quantitative metrics (conversion rates, sales) with qualitative ones (emotional resonance, loyalty) enhances understanding of digital marketing's impact on brand identity.
The AIDASL model (integrating satisfaction and loyalty with the traditional AIDA framework) boosted conversions by 15–20% in a Ukrainian case study.
5. Sustainability and Crisis Management Challenges:
Lack of digital skills and resources is a major challenge for small businesses, according to Indonesian and Malaysian studies.
The absence of proactive frameworks for managing digital crises (e.g., sudden algorithm changes) leads to organizational failure in addressing unexpected challenges.
6. Role of Human Interaction and Creativity:
Human creativity in campaign design (e.g., creating culturally tailored content reflecting Islamic values in Malaysia) ensures greater sustainability of digital identity than reliance on machines.
Direct interaction with customers via digital platforms strengthens trust and positions brands as "human" and transparent entities.

Study Recommendations:

1. Adopt Multi-Channel Strategies:
- ✓ Design platform-specific campaigns based on target audience characteristics (e.g., interactive content on Instagram, short videos on TikTok**)**
- ✓ Integrate AI tools to analyze customer behavior and optimize targeting.

2. Enhance Digital Skills:
- ✓ Train marketing teams to use digital analytics tools (e.g., Google Analytics) and create engaging content.
- ✓ Provide workshops for small businesses on digital marketing fundamentals and online reputation management**.**

3. Prioritize Ethics and Transparency:
- ✓ Establish clear policies for customer data usage aligned with ethical and legal standards (e.g., GDPR.**(**
- ✓ **Promote transparency in advertising campaigns to avoid losing consumer trust.**

4. Invest in Emerging Technologies:
- ✓ Explore opportunities in the Metaverse and augmented reality to build innovative interactive experiences.
- ✓ Develop qualitative measurement tools (e.g., emotional resonance with the brand) alongside traditional **quantitative metrics.**

5. Bridge the Theory-Practice Gap:
- ✓ Update traditional marketing models (e.g., AIDA) to integrate AI concepts and data analytics.
- ✓ Encourage applied research linking theoretical frameworks to practical challenges in digital environments**.**

6. Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs:(
- ✓ Provide free or low-cost training platforms to help SMEs adopt digital marketing.
- ✓ Establish business incubators focused on digital innovation and brand identity building.

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