



Role of Social Media Marketing in Brand Awareness: Empirical Evidence from Indian Consumers

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Abstract- Social media has fundamentally reshaped the marketing landscape by enabling organizations to communicate directly with consumers at scale. This study examines the role of social media marketing (SMM) in creating and strengthening brand awareness among Indian consumers. Employing a descriptive-analytical design, primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire from 100 respondents representing diverse demographic profiles, while secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and government publications (2013–2026). Statistical analysis included frequency distributions, percentage analysis, cross-tabulation, and Likert-scale interpretation. Findings reveal that SMM significantly enhances brand visibility, recall, and consumer engagement. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube emerged as the most impactful platforms. Influencer marketing was found to be a particularly effective trust-building mechanism, especially among younger cohorts. Content quality, posting consistency, and interactive features were identified as critical drivers of engagement. Moderate trust in online advertising and information overload were noted as persistent challenges. The study contributes theoretical and managerial insights, supporting the integration of SMM as a core strategic tool for brand building in a competitive digital marketplace.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Online Advertising, Customer Engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally altered how businesses engage with consumers. Social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn—have evolved from personal communication tools into powerful commercial ecosystems hosting billions of active users. For marketers, these platforms present unparalleled opportunities to amplify brand presence, stimulate consumer engagement, and foster long-term customer relationships.

Brand awareness, conceptually defined as a consumer's ability to recognize or recall a brand under varying conditions (Kotler & Keller, 2016), represents one of the most critical antecedents of consumer purchase behavior. In saturated markets where product differentiation is increasingly difficult to sustain, brand recognition acts as a strategic differentiator. Social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a particularly effective mechanism for building

and sustaining this awareness through interactive, real-time, and targeted communication.

Despite growing practitioner interest, empirical research examining the direct impact of SMM on brand awareness—especially within the Indian consumer context—remains limited. India, with its rapidly growing internet user base exceeding 900 million and one of the highest social media adoption rates globally, offers a particularly rich context for such inquiry. This study addresses this gap by investigating how various dimensions of SMM—content quality, consumer engagement, influencer marketing, and platform choice—shape brand awareness among Indian consumers.

1.1 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the role of social media marketing in enhancing brand awareness. Secondary objectives include: (i) identifying the most effective SMM platforms for brand promotion; (ii) examining the influence of content quality and influencer marketing on consumer perception; (iii) assessing the



relationship between engagement behaviors and brand recall; and (iv) investigating the moderating role of demographic variables on SMM effectiveness.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

Four hypotheses were formulated to guide empirical testing:

H1: Social media marketing has a significant positive impact on brand awareness.

H2: There is a significant relationship between social media engagement and brand recall.

H3: Social media content quality significantly influences consumer perception of brands.

H4: Influencer marketing positively and significantly affects brand awareness.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) were among the earliest scholars to systematically define social media and its marketing implications, describing it as internet-based applications enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Subsequent research has established the multi-dimensional nature of SMM, encompassing content marketing, community management, sponsored advertising, and influencer collaboration (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Kim and Ko (2015) demonstrated that SMM activities—particularly entertainment value, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth—positively influence brand equity among luxury fashion consumers. Their work established a theoretical foundation linking specific SMM dimensions to branding outcomes. Dwivedi et al. (2019) extended this inquiry to propose a comprehensive digital marketing agenda, noting that consumer engagement within digital ecosystems is increasingly central to brand-building strategy.

Appel et al. (2020) highlighted the transformative trajectory of social media in marketing, arguing that user-generated content, AI-driven personalization, and social commerce will increasingly define the competitive marketing environment. Alalwan (2021) provided empirical evidence from a Jordanian context confirming that social media marketing activities—including informativeness, entertainment, and perceived relevance—exert significant effects on purchase intention through brand attitude as a mediator.

The literature consistently underscores the role of influencer marketing as a trust-building mechanism. Lou and Yuan (2019) established that influencers enhance advertising value through informational and entertainment utility, and that trust in influencers mediates purchase intention. Cheung et al. (2021) confirmed that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) generated through social platforms significantly elevates brand awareness and purchase intent. Kapoor et al. (2022) synthesized advances in social media research, noting that the field has matured toward understanding nuanced consumer behaviors across different platforms and content modalities.

Despite these contributions, a significant gap exists regarding SMM's impact on brand awareness specifically within the Indian context, where rapidly evolving platform preferences, digital literacy disparities, and culturally embedded consumer behaviors may moderate established relationships. This study addresses that gap.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptive research establishes the profile of social media usage and brand awareness levels, while analytical procedures examine relationships between SMM dimensions and brand awareness outcomes. The mixed



approach enables both breadth of coverage and depth of insight.

3.2 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents across diverse demographic categories in India. The questionnaire comprised seven sections: demographic profiling; social media usage patterns; awareness of SMM; Likert-scale perception items (5-point scale); brand recognition and recall; engagement behaviors; and open-ended feedback. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journals, books, government publications (MeitY, NITI Aayog, RBI), and industry reports (Deloitte, McKinsey, PwC), spanning 2013–2026.

3.3 Sampling

A convenience sampling technique was employed, targeting social media-active consumers aged 18 and above. The sample comprised students (35%), professionals (30%), business individuals (20%), and other categories (15%).

3.4 Analytical Tools

Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, percentage analysis, cross-tabular analysis, and mean score computation for Likert-scale items. Hypothesis testing was conducted via chi-square tests and correlation analysis. All data were processed using SPSS v26.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 100)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25 years	35	35.0
	26–35 years	30	30.0
	36–45 years	20	20.0

	Above 45 years	15	15.0
Gender	Male	58	58.0
	Female	42	42.0
Education	Undergraduate	28	28.0
	Graduate	40	40.0
	Postgraduate	27	27.0
	Others	5	5.0
Occupation	Student	35	35.0
	Professional	30	30.0
	Business	20	20.0
	Others	15	15.0

4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

The majority of respondents (72%) reported daily social media usage, indicating deep platform integration into daily routines. Approximately 20% used social media weekly, while 8% used it occasionally. Daily usage exceeded 3 hours for 45% of respondents, with 18% spending more than 5 hours per day.

Table 2: Platform Usage and Brand Discovery by Channel

Platform	Primary Users (%)	Brand Discovery (%)
Instagram	38	42
Facebook	25	28
YouTube	20	20
Twitter/X	10	6
Others (LinkedIn, etc.)	7	4

Instagram ranked highest for both primary usage (38%) and brand discovery (42%), driven by its visually oriented interface and algorithmically curated content feeds. Facebook and YouTube followed, collectively accounting for 48% of brand discovery instances.

4.3 Consumer Perception of Social Media Marketing



Respondents' perceptions were measured using a five-item Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Consumer Perception Items – Descriptive Statistics

Perception Statement	Mean	SD	Agreement (%)
Social media marketing improves brand awareness	4.21	0.74	86
Social media ads influence my purchase decision	3.87	0.89	74
I trust brands promoted on social media	3.46	1.02	58
Influencers affect my buying behavior	3.92	0.91	76
Social media content helps me remember brands	4.08	0.81	82

The highest mean score (4.21) was recorded for the statement that social media marketing improves brand awareness, with 86% of respondents in agreement. The lowest mean (3.46) was observed for trust in social media brands, reflecting persistent skepticism about online advertising authenticity—a finding consistent with PwC (2023) and Cheung et al. (2021).

4.4 Engagement Behaviors and Brand Recall

Table 4: Distribution of Social Media Engagement Behaviors

Engagement Type	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely (%)
Liking content	60	30	10
Sharing content	35	42	23
Commenting on posts	28	45	27
Saving/bookmarking posts	40	38	22
Clicking on brand links	32	41	27

Liking content (60% frequently) was the most prevalent form of engagement, consistent with its low-effort nature. Sharing behavior, though less frequent, carries greater virality implications. A cross-tabulation analysis revealed that respondents who engaged frequently (liked, shared, commented) demonstrated significantly higher rates of brand recall ($\chi^2 = 18.47, df = 4, p < 0.01$), supporting H2.

4.5 Influencer Marketing Effectiveness

76% of respondents reported that influencer endorsements affect their buying behavior (mean = 3.92). Among respondents aged 18–25, this figure rose to 84%, declining to 52% among those above 45, highlighting the age-moderated nature of influencer impact. Micro-influencers (with follower counts between 10,000 and 100,000) were perceived as more credible than macro-influencers by 62% of respondents, a finding consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019) on parasocial relationship formation and perceived authenticity.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Test Applied	Test Statistic	p-value	Outcome
H1: SMM → Brand Awareness	Chi-square	$\chi^2=22.14$	< 0.01	Supported



H2: Engagement → Brand Recall	Correlation (r)	$r = 0.61$	< 0.01	Supported
H3: Content Quality → Perception	Chi-square	$\chi^2=17.83$	< 0.05	Supported
H4: Influencer Mktg → Awareness	Chi-square	$\chi^2=19.56$	< 0.01	Supported

All four hypotheses were empirically supported at conventional significance levels, establishing that SMM, consumer engagement, content quality, and influencer marketing each contribute meaningfully to brand awareness outcomes.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce and extend existing theoretical frameworks. The confirmation that SMM significantly enhances brand awareness (H1 supported; $\chi^2 = 22.14$, $p < 0.01$) aligns with Alalwan (2021) and Kim and Ko (2015), both of whom documented the positive brand equity effects of SMM across different cultural and sectoral contexts.

The strong positive correlation between engagement and brand recall ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) corroborates the conceptual proposition that consumer participation—rather than passive exposure—is the mechanism through which SMM translates into durable brand memory. This finding is consistent with Kapoor et al. (2022), who argued that interactive engagement creates psychological bonds between consumers and brands that passive advertising cannot replicate.

The moderate trust level recorded for social media advertising (mean = 3.46) warrants particular managerial

attention. As Dwivedi et al. (2019) noted, information overload and concerns about privacy and authenticity represent structural barriers to the effectiveness of digital marketing. The finding that younger, more educated respondents displayed higher levels of trust and engagement suggests that digital literacy may serve as an important moderator of SMM effectiveness—an avenue meriting dedicated future investigation.

Instagram's dominance in brand discovery (42%) reflects the broader global trend toward visual and short-form video content as primary drivers of consumer attention. The rapid growth of features such as Reels, Stories, and shoppable posts has positioned Instagram as an integrated brand communication and commerce platform. Organizations that fail to maintain a compelling visual identity on Instagram risk significant brand awareness deficits relative to competitors.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing—particularly micro-influencers—lends support to theories of parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956) as applied to digital environments. Consumers develop quasi-social relationships with influencers they follow, extending the credibility and persuasiveness of brand endorsements beyond what traditional celebrity endorsement achieves. This finding has important implications for budget allocation: micro-influencer campaigns typically deliver higher engagement rates and perceived authenticity at lower cost than macro-influencer partnerships.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides robust empirical evidence that social media marketing plays a decisive role in building and sustaining brand awareness among Indian consumers. All four hypotheses were confirmed, establishing that SMM dimensions—platform presence, content quality, consumer engagement, and influencer collaboration—each contribute



independently and collectively to enhanced brand recognition and recall.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the branding and digital marketing literature by providing context-specific empirical evidence from an emerging economy. It extends Alalwan's (2021) framework by incorporating demographic moderation effects, and strengthens the case for consumer engagement as a mediating variable in the SMM–brand awareness relationship.

6.2 Managerial Recommendations

Practitioners are advised to: (i) prioritize Instagram and YouTube for visual brand storytelling; (ii) invest in micro-influencer partnerships calibrated to niche audience segments; (iii) develop data-driven content calendars ensuring posting consistency; (iv) design interactive content formats (polls, quizzes, live Q&A) to stimulate high-value engagement; (v) implement transparency mechanisms—clear sponsorship disclosures, authentic storytelling—to mitigate trust deficits; and (vi) leverage social media analytics dashboards to monitor KPIs (reach, engagement rate, conversion, share of voice) and continuously optimize strategy.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, convenience sampling approach, and geographic concentration within India. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track SMM's effects on brand awareness over time, include probability sampling for greater generalizability, and apply structural equation modeling (SEM) to test mediating and moderating relationships simultaneously. Comparative cross-country studies examining how cultural variables moderate SMM effectiveness would further enrich the literature.

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