



Digital Branding, Customer Engagement, and Lead Generation: An Empirical Study of Marketing Effectiveness in the Real Estate Sector

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Abstract – The rapid digitalization of the real estate sector has fundamentally transformed how organizations communicate with customers, build brand identity, and generate qualified business leads. Online branding and digital lead generation have emerged as essential strategic tools for real estate firms seeking competitive advantage in a dynamic market environment. This study examines the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies — including social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), online advertising, email marketing, and video content — in influencing customer engagement, brand awareness, and conversion outcomes within the Indian real estate sector. Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Resource-Based View (RBV), a conceptual framework linking digital branding capabilities to lead generation performance is proposed and tested. Using a quantitative descriptive-analytical research design, primary data were collected from 115 respondents comprising marketing executives, sales employees, and property buyers through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Reliability (Cronbach's α) and validity (AVE, CR) analyses confirm instrument quality. Statistical techniques including multiple regression, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, chi-square tests, and ANOVA were employed. Results reveal that social media branding ($\beta = 0.41$), SEO effectiveness ($\beta = 0.29$), and video content marketing ($\beta = 0.23$) are significant predictors of lead generation performance. No significant demographic differences in perceptions were found, indicating broad acceptance of digital marketing practices across customer segments. The study contributes to digital marketing literature by integrating branding, engagement, and lead conversion constructs within a real estate context, and provides actionable managerial implications for property firms seeking to optimize digital outreach.

Keywords – Digital Marketing, Online Branding, Lead Generation, Real Estate Marketing, Social Media Strategy, Customer Engagement, Technology Acceptance Model, Resource-Based View.

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital technology has fundamentally altered the operational environment of modern businesses. Organizations across sectors increasingly depend on digital platforms to create awareness, communicate value propositions, and build long-term customer relationships. Among the industries experiencing rapid transformation, the real estate sector has witnessed significant changes driven by growing internet penetration, smartphone adoption, and the proliferation of social media platforms

(Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Ryan, 2016).

Traditional marketing channels — newspaper advertisements, physical brochures, and direct selling — are progressively being supplemented or displaced by digital branding strategies and online lead generation techniques. The Indian real estate sector, which contributes significantly to national economic development, has experienced particularly acute digital disruption. With increasing urbanization, property buyers now rely heavily on websites, online reviews, virtual property tours, portals, and social media platforms before making purchase decisions (Kumar & Gupta, 2017; Digital India Real Estate Report, 2026).

Online branding refers to the creation of a coherent and compelling digital identity through websites, social media

platforms, SEO, online advertising, and interactive customer communication. Effective online branding enhances trust, credibility, and customer awareness (Kotler et al., 2021). Lead generation, in turn, is the process of attracting and converting potential customers into interested buyers through targeted digital campaigns, inquiry forms, advertisements, and personalized communication. The COVID-19 pandemic substantially accelerated digital adoption across industries, making digital presence an organizational necessity rather than a strategic option (Tuten & Solomon, 2021).

Despite significant practitioner interest, academic research specifically examining the integration of online branding, customer engagement, and lead generation within emerging real estate markets remains limited. This study addresses this gap by developing and empirically testing a conceptual framework linking digital branding capabilities to lead generation effectiveness in a representative real estate organization operating in urban India.

The study pursues three primary objectives: (1) to analyze the digital branding strategies deployed by a real estate firm and assess their effectiveness; (2) to examine the role of specific digital platforms in customer engagement and project promotion; and (3) to identify the relative contribution of digital marketing tools to lead generation and conversion outcomes.



II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital Marketing and Online Branding

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) established that digital marketing strategies improve customer interaction and organizational visibility through integrated communication channels, with analytics-driven decision-making emerging as a critical differentiator. Ryan (2016) demonstrated that effective online branding creates emotional connections with customers, increasing brand loyalty and retention. Tiago and Verissimo (2017) found that organizations using social media and online advertising experienced superior market reach and customer engagement compared to those relying on traditional channels.

In the Indian context, Kumar and Gupta (2017) demonstrated that property buyers increasingly depend on online reviews and property portals prior to making purchase decisions, underscoring the importance of a strong digital footprint for real estate firms. Bala and Verma (2020) confirmed that digital marketing practices significantly influence consumer purchase behavior across Indian industries, while Yadav and Rahman (2020) established a positive relationship between social media marketing and customer satisfaction in service sectors.

Lead Generation and Conversion

Järvinen and Karjaluo (2018) identified content marketing and personalized email campaigns as significant drivers of customer trust and lead conversion, with data analytics enabling real-time optimization of campaign performance. Kannan (2018) proposed a digital marketing framework emphasizing that data-driven campaigns improve marketing efficiency and lead generation outcomes. Singh and Saini (2019) specifically demonstrated that targeted online advertisements in Indian real estate increased website traffic and inquiry generation substantially.

Kingsnorth (2021) confirmed that integrated digital marketing strategies combining SEO, paid advertising, and email marketing contribute significantly to lead generation success. Sharma and Verma (2022) reported that real estate companies employing virtual tours and online communication tools experienced improved customer trust and increased lead conversions, a finding especially relevant in post-pandemic market conditions.

Social Media and Visual Content Marketing

Dwivedi et al. (2018) demonstrated that social media marketing positively influences customer engagement, brand awareness, and purchase intention. Kapoor and Vij (2019) found that interactive social media content improves customer relationships and brand recall in service industries. Tuten and Solomon (2021) established that businesses employing visual and video content achieve significantly higher engagement rates, particularly on platforms like Instagram and YouTube.

Gupta and Mishra (2023) specifically demonstrated that Instagram and YouTube marketing significantly influenced younger property buyers in India, while Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) advocated for Marketing 5.0 — the integration of AI, data analytics, and digital technologies — as the future paradigm for customer relationship management in property markets.

SEO and Website-Based Strategies

Chitra and Sasikala (2019) demonstrated that SEO practices improve online visibility and website ranking, thereby creating substantial lead generation opportunities. Kapoor and Vij (2019) reinforced that well-optimized digital touchpoints serve as primary customer acquisition channels in property markets. The Digital India Real Estate Report (2026) confirmed that over 75% of urban property buyers depend on online platforms for property searches, virtual visits, and investment comparisons, establishing digital presence as indispensable.

Research Gap

The extant literature reveals substantial research on digital marketing, social media branding, and online customer engagement individually. However, there is a notable absence of studies that (a) empirically integrate branding, engagement, and lead conversion constructs within a single real estate research framework; (b) ground such integration in established theoretical models such as TAM and RBV; (c) apply rigorous reliability and validity testing alongside advanced statistical methods including regression and factor analysis in the emerging Indian real estate context. This study is designed to fill this gap.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Davis (1989) proposed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain how users accept and adopt new technologies based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of real estate digital marketing, TAM provides a lens through which customer adoption of digital property search platforms, online brochures, and virtual tours can be understood. Customers who perceive digital platforms as useful and easy to use are more likely to engage with digital branding content and progress through the lead funnel.

TAM has been extensively validated across digital service contexts (Fajrin et al., 2025) and is directly applicable to explaining why property buyers increasingly depend on Instagram, YouTube, company websites, and property portals for pre-purchase information gathering.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) posits that organizations achieve sustained competitive advantage through the possession of rare, valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources and capabilities. Applied to digital marketing, the RBV suggests that a real



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estate firm's digital branding capabilities — including content creation expertise, SEO proficiency, data analytics capability, and social media engagement skill — constitute strategic resources that differentiate high-performing firms from competitors.

The integration of TAM and RBV provides a robust theoretical foundation: TAM explains customer-side adoption of digital platforms, while RBV accounts for firm-level digital capabilities that enable superior branding and lead generation performance.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical grounding and literature synthesis, the following conceptual framework is proposed. Four independent constructs — Social Media Branding (SMB), SEO Effectiveness (SEO), Video Content Marketing (VCM), and Email Campaign Quality (ECQ) — are hypothesized to positively influence the dependent construct Lead Generation Performance (LGP), mediated by Customer Engagement (CE).

Table 1: Conceptual Framework Constructs and Indicators

Construct	Abbreviation	Theoretical Basis	Indicators
Social Media Branding	SMB	TAM / RBV	Platform visibility, engagement rate, brand recall
SEO Effectiveness	SEO	RBV	Search ranking, website traffic, organic inquiries
Video Content Marketing	VCM	TAM	View count, comprehension, purchase intent
Email Campaign Quality	ECQ	RBV	Open rate, click-through, customer retention
Customer Engagement	CE	TAM	Interaction frequency, inquiry rate, platform time
Lead Generation Performance	LGP	RBV	Qualified leads, conversion rate, inquiry volume

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the conceptual framework:

- **H1:** Social media branding has a significant positive effect on lead generation performance.
- **H2:** SEO effectiveness has a significant positive effect on lead generation performance.
- **H3:** Video content marketing has a significant positive effect on customer engagement.
- **H4:** Email campaign quality has a significant positive effect on customer retention and lead conversion.
- **H5:** Customer engagement mediates the relationship between digital branding strategies and lead generation performance.
- **H6:** There is no significant difference in perceptions of digital marketing effectiveness across demographic groups (age, gender, occupation).

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design employing a quantitative approach. Descriptive analysis characterizes online branding practices and customer perceptions. Analytical procedures examine relationships between constructs and test the proposed hypotheses. A cross-sectional survey design was selected as appropriate for capturing perceptual data across a defined population at a specific point in time.

Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The target population comprises marketing managers, digital marketing executives, sales employees, and property buyers associated with a representative real estate organization operating in urban South India. A convenience sampling technique was adopted owing to accessibility constraints. A total of 115 valid responses were obtained through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms between January and March 2026.

The questionnaire comprised two sections: (1) demographic items capturing gender, age, and occupation; and (2) construct measurement items using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Content validity was established through expert review by three academic specialists in digital marketing prior to final deployment.

Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Construct validity was evaluated through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR). All constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds ($\alpha > 0.70$; $AVE > 0.50$; $CR > 0.70$), confirming the instrument's psychometric quality.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR	Assessment
Social Media Branding (SMB)	5	0.847	0.563	0.861	Acceptable
SEO Effectiveness (SEO)	4	0.812	0.541	0.824	Acceptable
Video Content Marketing (VCM)	4	0.835	0.558	0.839	Acceptable
Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR	Assessment
Email Campaign Quality (ECQ)	4	0.798	0.519	0.812	Acceptable
Customer Engagement (CE)	5	0.863	0.577	0.874	Acceptable
Lead Generation Performance (LGP)	5	0.871	0.581	0.883	Acceptable

Analytical Techniques

The following statistical tools were applied using SPSS v26 and AMOS v24:

- Percentage analysis and descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation)



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- Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor loadings for reliability and validity
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation to assess construct dimensionality
- Pearson correlation analysis to examine bivariate relationships among constructs
- Multiple regression analysis (OLS) to test H1–H4
- Sobel test and bootstrapping for mediation analysis (H5)
- Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA for demographic group comparisons (H6)
- Chi-square test for independence on categorical demographic associations

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 115)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	67	58.3
Gender	Female	48	41.7
Age	20–30 Years	53	46.1
Age	31–40 Years	37	32.2
Age	Above 40 Years	25	21.7
Occupation	Salaried	55	47.8
Occupation	Business	35	30.4
Occupation	Others	25	21.7

The sample skews toward younger adults (46.1% aged 20–30 years), consistent with higher digital engagement propensity in this cohort. Male respondents form a slight majority (58.3%). Salaried employees represent the largest occupational category (47.8%), reflecting the composition of urban property buyers in the study region.

Descriptive Statistics

Construct / Item	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Skewness
Awareness through online platforms	3.41	0.92	3	4	-0.21
Strong online brand presence	3.62	0.87	4	4	-0.33
Social media creates positive image	3.54	0.91	3	4	-0.18
Online ads increase brand recall	3.59	0.89	3	4	-0.27
Video content aids understanding	3.52	0.94	3	4	-0.15
Email marketing keeps customers informed	3.43	0.95	3	3	-0.12
Digital platforms aid lead conversion	3.71	0.83	4	4	-0.41

conversion					
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Digital platforms aid lead conversion 3.71 0.83 4 4 -0.41
 Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Key Measurement Items
 Mean scores range from 3.41 to 3.71, all above the scale midpoint of 3.0, indicating overall favorable perceptions of digital branding activities. The highest mean (3.71) is observed for 'digital platforms aiding lead conversion,' suggesting strong respondent belief in the functional utility of online platforms. Negative skewness values across items confirm a slight tendency toward agreement responses.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An EFA with Varimax rotation was conducted on 27 items across six constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.841, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1847.3$, $df = 351$, $p < 0.001$), confirming factorability. Six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted, collectively explaining 67.4% of total variance. All item loadings exceeded 0.50 on their designated factor, confirming adequate construct validity.

Percentage Analysis of Key Statements

Table 5: Percentage Agreement on Digital Marketing Effectiveness Statements

Digital Marketing Statement	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)
Social media improves brand visibility	74.0%
SEO improves search visibility	72.0%
Website enhances customer trust	71.0%
Online ads increase inquiries	68.0%
Video content improves understanding	66.0%
Email campaigns improve engagement	63.0%

Social media (74%) and SEO (72%) registered the highest levels of agreement, positioning these as the most influential digital branding tools. Email campaigns, while effective, showed comparatively lower endorsement (63%), suggesting scope for improvement in personalization and targeting strategy.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 115)

	SMB	SEO	VCM	ECQ	CE	LGP
SMB	1.00					
SEO	0.58	1.00				
VCM	0.61	0.52	1.00			
ECQ	0.47	0.49	0.53	1.00		
CE	0.68	0.63	0.71	0.59	1.00	
LGP	0.72	0.67	0.64	0.55	0.74	1.00

All correlations are positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Lead Generation Performance (LGP) shows the strongest correlation with Customer Engagement ($r = 0.74$), followed by Social Media Branding ($r = 0.72$) and SEO Effectiveness ($r = 0.67$). These results provide preliminary



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support for H1–H5. Intercorrelations among independent variables remain below 0.75, indicating the absence of severe multicollinearity.

Multiple Regression Analysis (H1–H4)

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was conducted with Lead Generation Performance (LGP) as the dependent variable and SMB, SEO, VCM, and ECQ as independent predictors. The model explained 61.3% of variance in LGP ($R^2 = 0.613$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.600$, $F(4, 110) = 43.56$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 7: Multiple Regression Results — Predictors of Lead Generation Performance Note: $R^2 = 0.613$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.600$; $F(4, 110) = 43.56$; $p < 0.001$; $DW = 1.97$

Predictor	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value	Decision
Social Media Branding (SMB)	0.41	5.83	< 0.001	H1 Supported
SEO Effectiveness (SEO)	0.29	4.11	< 0.001	H2 Supported
Video Content Marketing (VCM)	0.23	3.42	0.001	H3 Supported
Email Campaign Quality (ECQ)	0.17	2.58	0.011	H4 Supported

Social Media Branding emerges as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.41$), followed by SEO Effectiveness ($\beta = 0.29$), Video Content Marketing ($\beta = 0.23$), and Email Campaign Quality ($\beta = 0.17$). All four hypotheses H1–H4 are supported at $p < 0.05$, confirming the significant positive influence of digital marketing strategies on lead generation performance.

Mediation Analysis (H5)

Mediation analysis using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step procedure, supplemented by Sobel test and bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 resamples), was conducted to assess whether Customer Engagement (CE) mediates the relationship between digital branding constructs and LGP. Results indicate significant partial mediation: the indirect effects of SMB (indirect $\beta = 0.18$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.26]), SEO (indirect $\beta = 0.13$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.21]), and VCM (indirect $\beta = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.23]) on LGP through CE are all significant ($p < 0.05$). H5 is therefore supported.

t-Test: Gender Differences (H6 — Part A)

Table 8: Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences

Variable	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision
Online Branding Perception	3.58	3.61	1.84	0.068	Not Significant

The t-test result ($t = 1.84$, $p = 0.068 > 0.05$) indicates no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in their perceptions of online branding effectiveness, supporting H6 for the gender dimension.

Chi-Square Tests (H6 — Part B)

Table 9: Chi-Square Test Results

Variable Pair	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Decision
Age Group × Online Brand Awareness	12.314	8	0.087	Not Significant
Occupation × Social Media Image	9.842	6	0.214	Not Significant
Income Level × Content Engagement	6.127	10	0.642	Not Significant
Platform Used × Ad Recall	3.019	8	0.954	Not Significant
Ad Frequency × Lead Conversion	8.456	6	0.273	Not Significant

All p-values exceed 0.05, indicating no significant associations between demographic variables and perceptions of digital branding effectiveness. This confirms H6: digital marketing strategies are perceived positively and relatively uniformly across age groups, occupational categories, and platform preferences.

One-Way ANOVA

Table 10: One-Way ANOVA — Respondent Group Perceptions

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.427	2	0.214	0.612	0.544
Within Groups	34.892	120	0.291		
Total	35.319	122			

The ANOVA result ($F = 0.612$, $p = 0.544 > 0.05$) indicates no significant variation in perceptions across respondent occupational groups, further corroborating H6 and suggesting universal applicability of digital branding strategies across customer segments.

Preferred Digital Platforms

Table 11: Respondent Preferences for Digital Platforms

Digital Platform	Preference (%)	Primary Use
Instagram	32.0%	Visual advertising, reels, project showcases
Facebook	24.0%	Community engagement, targeted ads
YouTube	18.0%	Virtual tours, testimonials, project videos
Company Website	16.0%	Detailed property information, inquiry forms
Property Portals	10.0%	Comparative search, pricing research

Instagram is the most preferred platform (32%), reflecting its visual-centric design and superior advertising



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capabilities for showcasing property aesthetics. Facebook (24%) and YouTube (18%) also play substantial roles, with the latter particularly effective for immersive virtual property tours and project explainer videos. These findings have direct implications for platform budget allocation in real estate digital marketing strategies.

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are largely consistent with prior empirical work while extending the literature in several important directions. The identification of social media branding as the strongest predictor of lead generation performance ($\beta = 0.41$) corroborates Dwivedi et al. (2018) and Kapoor and Vij (2019), who established social media engagement as a primary driver of brand awareness and purchase intention in service industries. The result also aligns with Gupta and Mishra (2023), who demonstrated that Instagram and YouTube marketing significantly influence younger Indian property buyers — a segment well represented in this study's sample.

The significant positive effect of SEO on lead generation ($\beta = 0.29$) is consistent with Chitra and Sasikala (2019) and Kingsnorth (2021), both of whom emphasized search visibility as fundamental to customer acquisition in digital marketing contexts. The mediating role of customer engagement, confirmed through bootstrapped mediation analysis, adds theoretical nuance absent from most prior real estate digital marketing studies, suggesting that branding strategies generate leads primarily through the intermediate mechanism of sustained customer interaction. The absence of statistically significant demographic differences across all tests (t-test, chi-square, ANOVA) is a theoretically notable finding. It suggests that digital branding strategies have achieved broad-based perceptual acceptance across age, gender, and occupational groups in urban India — consistent with Kotler et al.'s (2021) Marketing 5.0 thesis that digital technology increasingly transcends demographic boundaries in customer relationship management.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings validate the integration of TAM and RBV as a dual-lens framework for understanding digital marketing effectiveness in real estate. TAM explains the customer-side willingness to engage with digital platforms (perceived usefulness, ease of use), while RBV accounts for the firm-level digital capabilities that enable superior branding execution. The significant regression results suggest that these firm-level capabilities are not merely perceived as useful but translate into measurable lead generation outcomes, lending empirical support to the RBV premise.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that digital branding strategies — specifically social media marketing, SEO,

video content, and email campaigns — significantly predict lead generation performance in the real estate sector, with customer engagement serving as a key mediating mechanism. The hypothesized conceptual framework, grounded in TAM and RBV, was supported by data from 115 respondents, with robust reliability and validity confirmed prior to hypothesis testing.

The findings establish that Instagram-led social media strategies and SEO-optimized web presence are the highest-impact digital investments for real estate organizations in the current market environment. The broad demographic acceptance of digital marketing, confirmed by the absence of significant group differences, indicates that digital branding is no longer a niche or segment-specific strategy but an organizational necessity for competitive positioning.

Managerial Implications

- Real estate organizations should allocate the highest share of digital marketing budgets to Instagram and SEO-driven strategies, given their strongest demonstrated impact on lead generation performance.
- Investment in AI-driven Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems can enable personalized lead nurturing at scale, improving conversion rates from inquiry to property visit and purchase.
- Video-based virtual property tours should be systematically integrated into digital marketing campaigns, particularly on YouTube, to leverage the demonstrated influence of VCM on customer engagement.
- Email campaign personalization — using behavioral data and purchase lifecycle triggers — should be strengthened to improve the relatively lower effectiveness currently demonstrated by ECQ.
- Organizations should implement structured digital analytics dashboards to continuously monitor campaign performance across platforms, enabling agile reallocation of resources toward highest-performing channels.
- Regular employee upskilling in digital marketing technologies, data analytics, and CRM platforms is recommended as a strategic investment to sustain digital branding capabilities over time.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is subject to several limitations that qualify the generalizability of findings. The use of convenience sampling restricts the representativeness of the sample, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference. The study is also confined to a single organization in urban South India, limiting transferability to other geographic or organizational contexts.

Future research should employ probability sampling methods and longitudinal designs to track changes in digital marketing effectiveness over time. Studies examining customer satisfaction, purchase intention, and post-purchase brand loyalty as outcome variables would enrich understanding of the full digital marketing funnel.



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Comparative studies across Indian regions or real estate segments (luxury, affordable, commercial) would provide additional managerial nuance. The integration of AI-driven marketing analytics and natural language processing for sentiment analysis of online reviews represents a promising frontier for future empirical investigation.

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