

Managing digital marketing communication to build trust and sustainable brand reputation: A systematic review

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Abstract

This study systematically reviews how digital marketing communication (DMC) drives engagement, trust, and sustainable brand reputation in the digital ecosystem. With rising platform convergence and algorithmic personalization, understanding how communication mechanisms influence long-term brand value has become increasingly critical. Prior studies remain fragmented, focusing either on engagement, trust, or reputation without clarifying how these elements operate as an integrated pathway. Limited empirical work also examines message authenticity, ethical transparency, and technological affordances as mediating forces within digital communication. This review synthesizes 50 Scopus-indexed articles (2020–2025) and introduces an integrated model that connects engagement, trust, and reputation through technological, emotional, and ethical determinants. The core novelty lies in highlighting authenticity, interactivity, and value alignment as key drivers of sustainable digital brand reputation. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on PRISMA 2020 was conducted using the WATASE UAKE platform. Articles were screened through four stages; identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, resulting in the final set of 50 studies for thematic synthesis. The review shows that technological affordances (AI/VR interactivity, media richness), emotional drivers (engagement, trust, authenticity), and ethical transparency collectively strengthen digital trust and elevate brand reputation. Asia and Europe dominate the scholarly landscape, reflecting strong digital ecosystems and theoretical development. This study proposes an integrative, value-driven framework for managing DMC, highlighting its strategic role in building long-term, trustworthy, and sustainable digital brand reputation, especially relevant for SMEs and sustainable sectors.

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Keywords

Engagement, Influence, Reputation, Sustainability, Communication

Introduction

The rise of digital marketing communication has transformed how brands and consumers interact in the era of convergent technology. Digitalization reshapes media

consumption and fosters interactive, emotional, and value-based relationships. According to (Tsai et al., 2025) digital media such as podcasts create intimate communication spaces by combining social presence and media richness, strengthening consumer brand attachment. Podcasts thus evolve from entertainment to strategic tools for loyalty and brand reputation. This shift reflects a move from one-way messages to interactive experiences that shape brand perception and require firms to emphasize consumer experience and value interpretation in digital environments.

In today's competitive social media era, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a key factor shaping consumer opinions and purchase decisions. (Osorio-Andrade et al., 2025) found that authentic and engaging content drives emotional engagement and strengthens brand image. Grounded in Service-Dominant Logic and the SOR framework, the study highlights that content attractiveness, message consistency, and celebrity endorsement foster two-way brand–consumer communication. Platform dynamics differ: TikTok promotes conversational interaction, while Instagram enhances visual appreciation. Overall, the study reveals that effective digital communication integrates aesthetic appeal, social participation, and emotional value, positioning eWOM as a strategic link between digital engagement, trust, and long-term loyalty.

Influencers have become key mediators in shaping brand consumer relationships on social media. (Fayyaz et al., 2025) found that an influencer's credibility and perceived influence strongly affect consumer engagement and purchase intention. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study shows that trustworthiness has a greater impact on behavior than social pressure, marking a shift from institutional to individual influence. Thus, trust serves as the main link between engagement and influence. Collaborating with high-integrity influencers enhances authenticity and supports value-based marketing for sustainable brand reputation.

Similarly, narrative communication plays a vital role in building long-term consumer relationships. (Lisboa et al., 2025) highlight that digital storytelling creates narrative transportation, making consumers feel part of the brand's story. Guided by Narrative Transportation Theory, the study reveals that cognitive routes drive purchase intention, while emotional routes strengthen word-of-mouth. Consistent, value-oriented narratives enhance trust, loyalty, and authentic brand reputation in digital environments.

From a strategic view, (Lim et al., 2025) through the DESTINY model (*Digital, Engagement, Storytelling, Time, Innovation, Network, and Yield*) propose a holistic approach to digital communication. The model integrates storytelling, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration to create social value, shifting success metrics from *return on investment (ROI)* to *return on value (ROV)*. It unites Media Richness Theory (MRT), Customer Engagement Theory (CET), and Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR), positioning engagement and storytelling as the core of communication that links brands and consumers cognitively, emotionally, and socially.

Regarding ethics and transparency, (Saternus et al., 2024) emphasize the role of disclosure in influencer marketing. Impartial disclosure enhances public trust without reducing message effectiveness, while lack of transparency harms credibility. Thus, digital reputation depends not only on message content but also on ethical integrity. Transparency becomes essential in sustainable and green marketing, where trust in brand communication relies on honesty and social responsibility.

(Thakur et al., 2025) show that digital marketing communication (DMC) directly influences online customer experience and sustainable purchase intention. In green fashion, a positive digital experience mediates communication and buying behavior, though excessive interactivity can cause digital fatigue. Thus, an effective design must balance functionality and emotional engagement. Drawing on Privacy Calculus Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the study emphasizes that successful communication manages perceived benefits, risks, and social value simultaneously. Consequently, digital experience quality becomes a new metric of brand communication effectiveness beyond exposure or interaction frequency.

Previous studies on digital marketing communication (DMC) show diverse approaches and limited conceptual integration. (Tong & Chan, 2020), (Hapsari et al., 2020), and Gazzola et al. (2020) emphasized interactivity and engagement in brand consumer relationships but focused mainly on short-term outcomes like purchase intention. Later works by (Mathew & Soliman, 2021) and (Nobile et al., 2021) introduced trust and authenticity, yet failed to connect them within a sustainable reputation model. Similarly, (Bandara et al., 2021) discussed privacy responsibility and digital trust using the Power Responsibility Equilibrium (PRE) framework but centered more on data security than holistic brand communication.

Recent studies by (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023), (Thongmak, 2023), and (Thakur et al., 2025) introduce sustainability value, ethical transparency, and digital experience as key factors in brand loyalty and reputation. However, no comprehensive framework yet integrates the *engagement* → *trust* → *reputation* pathway within digital contexts. Most prior research still focuses on short-term metrics like clicks or purchase intention, rather than long-term value creation based on return on value that prioritizes trust and brand ethics (Lim et al., 2025); (Saternus et al., 2024); (Tsai et al., 2025).

From a contextual perspective, most prior studies have been concentrated in East Asian and European regions, with a dominance of research focusing on the ecosystems of China, Hong Kong, and Southern Europe (Zhou et al., 2021); (Raza et al., 2025). Consequently, the generalizability of findings to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the *sustainable fashion* industry in the ASEAN region remains limited. Yet, market characteristics and digital consumer behavior in these emerging regions differ significantly from those in developed economies. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by developing an integrative model that connects *digital engagement*, *message authenticity*, *digital trust*, and *brand reputation* within the context of sustainable business practices in Indonesia.

In conclusion, four main gaps are identified in the existing literature: (1) the absence of a comprehensive conceptual model integrating the *engagement–trust–reputation* relationship in digital communication; (2) the lack of empirical testing of key mediators such as *message authenticity* and *digital trust*; (3) limited research orientation toward long-term value and reputation compared to short-term performance indicators; and (4) the lack of contextual research within the SME sector and *sustainable fashion* industry. Accordingly, this study contributes by proposing a conceptual model that balances emotional function, credibility, and ethical transparency in strengthening sustainable digital brand reputation.

Research question

Based on the identified research gap, this study formulates three main Research Questions that aim to systematically examine how digital communication works in shaping brand consumer relationships through the dimensions of engagement, influence, and reputation management. The research questions are formulated as follows: (1) What are the current research trends and thematic focuses in digital marketing communication from 2020 to 2025; (2) Which countries and regions have contributed most to the development of digital marketing communication research, and what contextual differences are observed; (3) What are the key determinants that drive the effectiveness of digital marketing communication?; (4) What are the main consequences and outcomes resulting from effective digital marketing communication in current literature.

To answer these research questions, this article begins with a conceptual explanation of the evolution of digital marketing communication and the relevant theoretical foundations, including *SOR*, *Media Richness Theory*, *Customer Engagement Theory*, and *value-based approaches* in digital communication. Section 2 explains the methodology and the systematic steps used in conducting the *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)*. The synthesis of the main findings and the development of the conceptual framework are presented in Section 3. This section also includes academic discussions related to the integration of engagement, influence, and reputation management within the digital context. The final section presents the conclusions and the theoretical and practical implications, as well as the agenda for future research.

Method

The systematic review process in this study was carried out through the *Watase UAKE* online platform (watase.web.id), which is specifically designed to support the implementation of systematic literature reviews based on the *PRISMA 2020 guidelines* (Rethlefsen & Page, 2022). This platform is directly connected to the *Scopus* database, thereby facilitating the process of searching and identifying relevant articles efficiently. All search results were managed in an integrated manner within the system to ensure an accurate screening process, starting from duplicate removal to the final selection before analysis. The search strategy was comprehensively constructed by combining

keywords and Boolean operators (AND, OR) to broaden the coverage of relevant literature, as explained in Table 1. The inclusion criteria consisted of empirical research articles written in English, published from January 2020 to December 2025, and indexed in Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 journals. Meanwhile, other types of publications such as conference abstracts and case reports were not included in this analysis.

The method of data selection criteria

To initiate the systematic literature search process, the researcher first entered the primary research keywords into the WATASE UASKE platform (watase.web.id). These keywords were formulated based on the phenomenon, core variables, and theoretical context relevant to the research objectives. All keywords were combined using Boolean operators to broaden the search coverage without losing the specificity of the topic. This stage was carried out to ensure that all studies related to digital marketing communication could be identified comprehensively. The initial search results are presented in Table 1, which shows the number of articles retrieved for each keyword combination used.

Table 1. Total search results obtained using research keywords and Boolean operators

No	Keyword	Result
1	Digital Marketing Communication	70
2	Customer Engagement Strategy	25
3	Social Media Marketing Management	23
4	Content Marketing Strategy	46
5	Digital Consumer Behavior	130
6	Interactive Marketing Communication	6
7	Influencer Marketing Strategy	22
8	Cross-Platform Communication	15
9	Digital Public Relations	53
10	Corporate Digital Reputation	9
Total		399

Method for analysis data

The study selection process in this research followed a systematic approach, which is clearly illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). This PRISMA diagram illustrates a transparent, systematic, and replicable article selection process, in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. From a total of 399 initial records identified, only a small proportion (approximately 12–15%) met the required standards of quality, relevance, and accessibility after undergoing multiple stages of elimination and screening. The use of PRISMA ensures transparency in the selection process and in the reporting of the review results. The diagram outlines each stage from initial identification to the determination of the final set of eligible articles, ensuring methodological transparency. Based on the initial search phase in the Scopus database, Stage 1 (Identification) produced 399 articles that were retrieved using the predefined keyword combinations. A total of 9 duplicate articles were removed. In addition, 87 articles were excluded because they were outside the time range of analysis (2020–2025). Meanwhile, 52 articles were removed because they did not meet the journal classification criteria (Tier Q1–Q4), and 6 articles were eliminated due to the absence of an abstract. After this stage, 245 articles

remained for further screening. Stage 2: Screening, from the 245 articles that remained, titles and abstracts were examined to assess alignment with the research questions. As a result, 95 articles were eliminated because they were not relevant to the research context. Therefore, 150 articles proceeded to the full text retrieval stage. Stage 3: Eligibility At this stage, from the 150 articles that were requested for full text access, 83 articles could not be retrieved due to access limitations or database restrictions. The remaining 67 articles were successfully accessed and assessed for content eligibility. However, 17 articles were excluded because they did not meet the methodological criteria and were not sufficiently aligned with the core topic. Stage 4: Inclusion After going through all these stages from identification, screening, to eligibility 50 articles were finally included as the eligible studies and were used in the final SLR analysis.

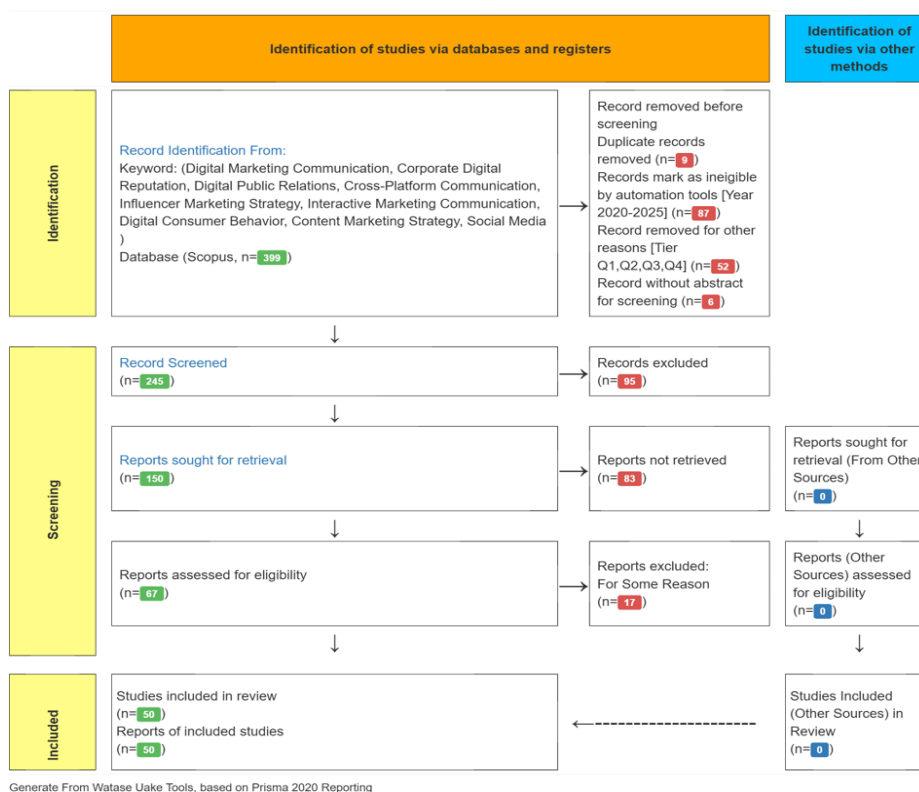


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of study selection process for this systematic review

Results

In this study, the process of descriptive statistical mapping was conducted using the WATASE UAKE platform (watase.web.id), which is directly integrated with the Scopus database. Through this platform, the researcher systematically extracted and categorized metadata from all articles that passed the identification and screening stages. The descriptive statistical analysis in WATASE UAKE generated several data outputs, including: (1) countries and number of performed studies; (2) frequency distribution of key variables; (3) table for year article classification. These outputs supported the comprehensive profiling of the literature landscape and provided a clear overview of the research domain from multiple perspectives.

Current research trends and thematic focuses in digital marketing communication

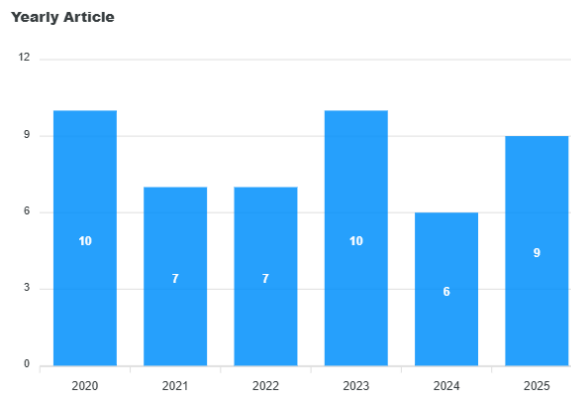


Figure 2. Year article

The bar chart in Figure 2 illustrates the annual publication trend in Digital Marketing Communication research from 2020 to 2025. Overall, the trend indicates a steady research interest with moderate fluctuations, peaking in 2020 and 2023 (10 articles each). The temporary decline in 2021–2022 and 2024 suggests shifting thematic focuses or resource allocation among scholars during and after the pandemic period. This trend supports prior findings that digital communication scholarship tends to accelerate during technological or social disruptions (Zhou et al., 2021; Chen, 2023). The consistent resurgence in 2025 (9 articles) demonstrates that digital marketing communication remains a dynamically evolving research area driven by rapid technological innovation and changing consumer engagement behaviors.

Countries and key variables of performed studies

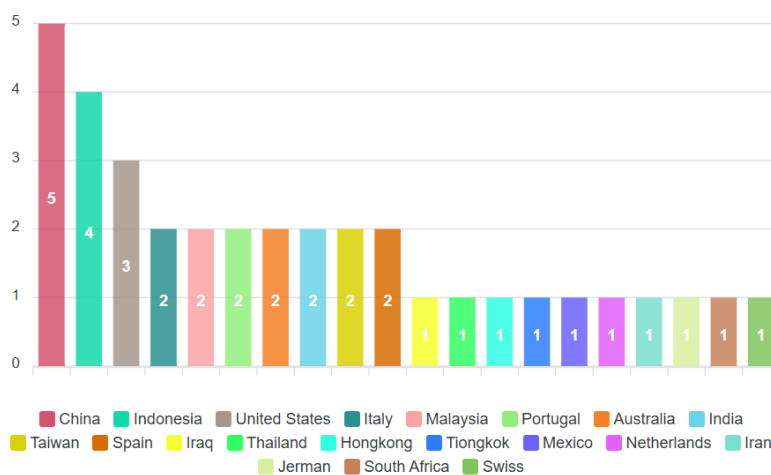


Figure 3. Countries and number of performed studies

Based on the distribution of countries of origin (see Figure 3), China appears as the country with the highest number of publications in the field of digital marketing communication, social media content, and digital consumer behavior. This finding is consistent with (Xiong, 2022), who states that China’s digital economy is the largest

ecosystem with more than 820 million active e-commerce consumers. With such a massive digital market scale, technology companies and global brands in China have strong incentives to explore AI based personalization, behavioral analytics, and more aggressive digital persuasion strategies (Xiong, 2022).

Furthermore, the study by (Chen, 2023) indicates that major digital brands such as Google, Netflix, Disney, and Microsoft also refer to China's digital ecosystem as a benchmark for interaction models and engagement driven algorithmic development. (Zhou et al., 2021) reinforce this argument by showing that influencer marketing in East Asia, particularly in China, carries more complex cultural and narrative dynamics, which makes this region an attractive and dominant focus of academic research.

Table 2. The articles by country/territory

Continent	n	Countries	Authors
Asia	18	China, Malaysia, Iraq, Indonesia, India, Israel, Singapore, Malaysia, Iran	(Tsai et al., 2025), (Fayyaz et al., 2025), (Thakur et al., 2025), (Kok Wah, 2025), (Al-Abdallah & Ababakr, 2025), (Raza et al., 2025), (Sun et al., 2024), (Aditi, 2024), (Agrawal & Mittal, 2022), (Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav, 2022), (Rangaswamy et al., 2022), (Xiong, 2022), (Zhou et al., 2021), (Tong, 2022), (Liu et al., 2021), (Hapsari et al., 2020), (Yaghtin et al., 2020), (Soedarsono et al., 2020).
Europe	16	Spain, Portugal, German, Belanda, Italy, Peru, France.	(Osorio-Andrade et al., 2025), (Lisboa et al., 2025), (Lim et al., 2025), (Saternus et al., 2024), (van Reijmersdal et al., 2024), (Drossos et al., 2024), (Mero et al., 2023), (Sparacino et al., 2024), (Lin et al., 2023), (Klapp, 2023), (Rodrigues et al., 2023), (Uribe-Linares et al., 2023), (Thongmak, 2023), (Bashirzadeh et al., 2022), (Zambrano et al., 2021), (Modgil et al., 2021)
Africa	2	Africa, Mesir	(Duffett & Maraule, 2024), (Mathew & Soliman, 2021),
Other Region	14		(Adwan & Altrjman, 2024), (Chen, 2023), (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023), (Pavelko & Barker, 2022), (Eisenhauer et al., 2022), (Villanova et al., 2021), (Nobile et al., 2021), (Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020), (Nobile et al., 2021), (Bandara et al., 2021), (Tong & Chan, 2020), (Modgil et al., 2021), (Singh et al., 2021), (Yerpude & Singhal, 2021)

Table 2 indicates that most studies in this SLR originate from Asia (n = 18), confirming the region's dominance in digital marketing communication research, particularly in China and Southeast Asia, where digital platforms and influencer ecosystems grow rapidly. Europe (n = 16) follows, led by Spain, Portugal, Italy, and France, emphasizing conceptual and ethics-based models of engagement and persuasion. Africa (n = 2) remains underrepresented, reflecting limited scholarly output in advanced digital communication topics. The "Other Regions" (n = 14) category, including the U.S., Australia, and multi country studies, shows the field's global diffusion. Overall, research is geographically concentrated in Asia and Europe, shaped by Asia's industrial scale and Europe's theoretical depth, reflecting distinct market and communication cultures.

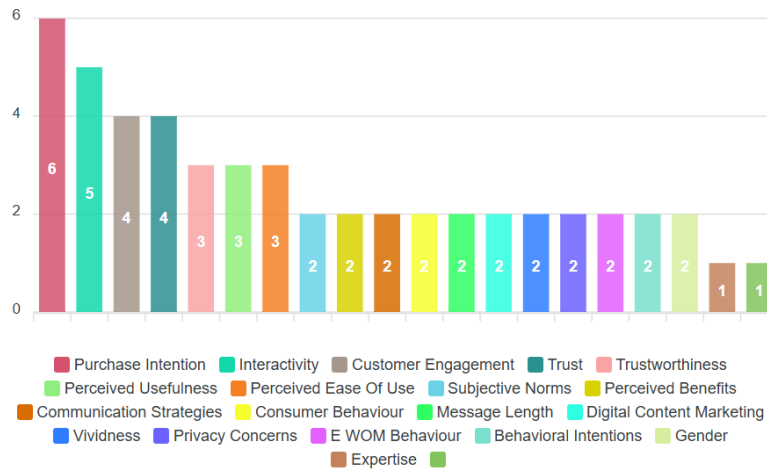


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of key variables in digital marketing communication studies

Figure 4 presents the variable frequency from 50 reviewed articles, showing that purchase intention, interactivity, and customer engagement dominate digital marketing communication research. This reflects how both marketer- and user-generated content drive engagement and influence consumer behavior. The frequent inclusion of trust and trustworthiness underscores digital trust as a key link between engagement, influence, and loyalty (Zhou et al., 2021); (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023); (Tsai et al., 2025). Variables such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, subjective norms, and perceived benefits highlight the relevance of TAM, UTAUT, and TPB in explaining digital behavior. Meanwhile, moderate attention to communication strategy and digital content marketing suggests prior studies emphasize behavioral outcomes over communication tactics.

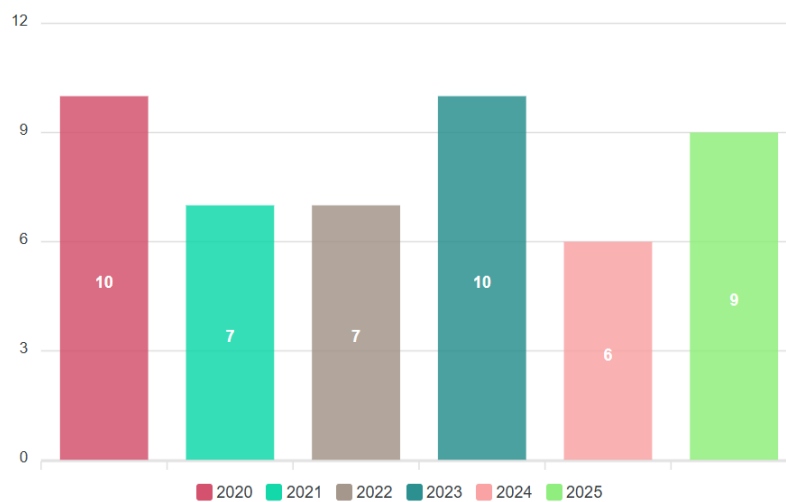


Figure 5. Table for year article classification

Figure 5 shows the yearly distribution of studies (2020–2025), indicating a fluctuating yet progressive trend in digital marketing communication research. 2020 and 2023 had the highest outputs (nine each), focusing on engagement dynamics, influencer credibility, and digital reputation (Tong & Chan, 2020); (Tsai et al., 2025); (Fayyaz et al., 2025). These peaks align with the post-pandemic surge in digital transformation and

interest in consumer brand interaction (Osorio-Andrade et al., 2025) A slight decline occurred in 2021–2024 (six studies each), possibly due to research saturation or shifts toward emerging technologies (Xiong, 2022); (Chen, 2023). The rebound in 2022 and 2025 (seven and eight studies) reflects renewed emphasis on sustainability, ethics, and value driven communication (Adwan & Altrjman, 2024). Overall, the trend shows dynamic, non-linear growth, with 2025 marking stronger focus on AI-driven personalization, authenticity, and responsible digital ethics, signaling the maturation of the field (Lim et al., 2025); (Thakur et al., 2025).

Determinants that drive the effectiveness of digital marketing communication

Tabel 3. Classification of determinants in digital marketing communication research (2020–2025)

Category	Representative Determinants	Key References (Author–Year)
Technological Determinants	Perceived usefulness, ease of use, AI/VR features, media richness, interactivity, online experience, privacy calculus	Tsai et al., 2025; Raza et al., 2025; Agrawal & Mittal, 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020; Thakur et al., 2025; Uribe-Linares et al., 2023; Bandara et al., 2021; Koay et al., 2022; Xiong, 2022
Emotional Determinants	Engagement, trust, authenticity, social presence, eWOM, entertainment, narrative storytelling, brand attachment	Duffett & Maraule, 2024; Fayyaz et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2024; Tsai et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2021; Lisboa et al., 2025; Osorio-Andrade et al., 2025; Müller-Pérez et al., 2023; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020
Ethical Determinants	Sustainability, ethical transparency, privacy responsibility, fairness, disclosure, moral obligation, well-being framing	Thakur et al., 2025; Adwan & Altrjman, 2024; Satemus et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2021; Bandara et al., 2021; Hapsari et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2022; Eisenhauer et al., 2022; Zambrano et al., 2021; Al-Abdallah & Ababakr, 2025

Consequences and outcomes resulting from effective digital marketing communication

The findings of this systematic literature review reveal that effective digital marketing communication produces a broad spectrum of consequences that extend beyond consumer responses to influence brand performance and organizational strategy. Across the 50 included studies, these outcomes consistently highlight how digital communication shapes behavioral intentions, strengthens psychological processes, enhances engagement dynamics, reinforces brand value, and supports strategic decision-making within firms. By synthesizing these multidimensional effects, this section provides a comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing communication functions as a central driver of consumer behavior, perception formation, and long-term brand relevance in the digital ecosystem.

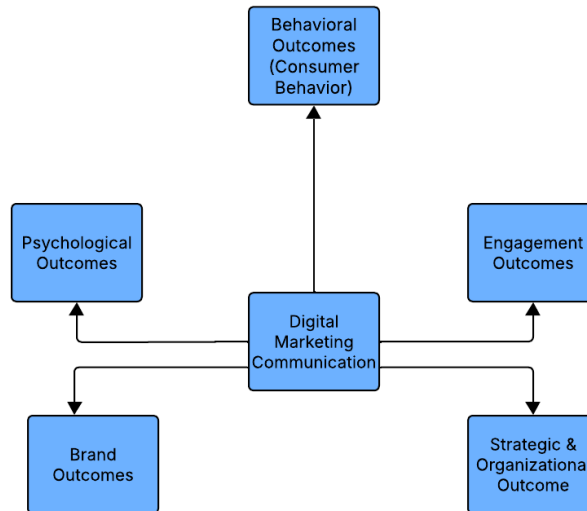


Figure 6. Framework of consequences generated by effective digital marketing communication

Tabel 4. Consequences and outcomes resulting from effective digital marketing communication

Outcome Category	Description
Behavioral Outcomes (Consumer Behavior)	Present the changes in consumer behavior resulting from effective digital communication. Purchase intention increases Agrawal & Mittal (2022), Sun et al. (2024), and Tsai et al. (2025). Repurchase intention increases, Müller-Pérez et al. (2023). Positive eWOM increases, Rodrigues et al. (2023). Customer loyalty increases, Hapsari et al. (2020); Rodrigues et al. (2023).
Psychological Outcomes (Cognition, Emotion, Perception)	Digital communication creates several psychological changes such as: Trust and trustworthiness increase, Zhou et al. (2021); Müller-Pérez et al. (2023). Brand love and brand attachment emerge, Rodrigues et al. (2023). Perceived enjoyment and convenience increase, Mathew & Soliman (2020). Reduction of skepticism through authentic storytelling, Zhou et al. (2021).
Engagement Outcomes (Interactivity and Engagement)	Effective digital marketing communication results in: Higher customer engagement, Tong & Chan (2020); Liu et al. (2021). More interaction on social media (likes, shares, comments), Drossos et al. (2023). Increased participation in UGC, Agrawal & Mittal (2022).
Brand Outcomes (Equity & Reputation)	Effective DMC contributes to stronger brand performance: Higher brand equity, Raza et al. (2025). Positive brand image, Aditi (2024); Nobile et al. (2021). Enhanced digital reputation, Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav (2022). Strengthened sustainability reputation, Adwan & Altrjman (2024).
Strategic & Organizational Outcomes	This shows how DMC influences company strategies: Improved omnichannel experience, Rangaswamy et al. (2022). Higher consistency through a one-voice strategy, Singh et al. (2020). Better customer data utilization, Chen (2023); Xiong (2022). Strengthened stakeholder relationships, Tong (2021); Tong & Chan (2020).

Discussion

Engagement, influence, and reputation integration

The synthesis demonstrates that digital marketing communication strategically links engagement, influence, and reputation across multiple contexts. Engagement is reinforced through socially rich media such as podcasts, which enhance identity and personalization and subsequently increase repurchase intention (Tsai et al., 2025). On social media, eWOM effectiveness depends on content attractiveness, brand

consistency, and humanized presentation, where TikTok fosters conversational interaction and Instagram amplifies visual intimacy (Osorio-Andrade et al., 2025). Influencer persuasion is driven not by popularity but by perceived trust and influence, validating the behavioral mechanisms proposed in TPB (Fayyaz et al., 2025). Narrative transportation strengthens both cognitive and emotional processing, shaping purchase intention and word-of-mouth (Lisboa et al., 2025). Beyond engagement, influence broadens through value-driven digitalization (Lim et al., 2025), optimized customer experience (Thakur et al., 2025), and consumer innovativeness (Kok Wah, 2025). Digital communication also strengthens institutional choice (Al-Abdallah & Ababakr, 2025) and destination trust via AI and VR integration (Raza et al., 2025). Ethical transparency remains central, as impartial disclosure sustains authenticity while non-disclosure harms reputation (Saternus et al., 2024). Overall, engagement built on authenticity and trust evolves into stronger influence and long-term digital brand reputation.

Technological determinants

Digital marketing communication now shapes brand consumer relationships through three interconnected pillars: engagement, influence, and reputation. (Sun et al., 2024) demonstrate that live streaming transforms one-way communication into a participatory process. Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, eight motivational factors purposive value, self-brand congruity, social pricing, interaction control, human message interaction, informativeness, entertainment, and credibility collectively strengthen attitudes toward both live streaming and the brand. (van Reijmersdal et al., 2024) confirm through Self-Presentation Theory and Source Credibility Theory that laypersons and opinion leaders rather than micro celebrities are more effective in building trust and social closeness, thereby enhancing positive brand attitudes. Similarly, (Duffett & Maraule, 2024) applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), found that emoji as nonverbal cues increase perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, which in turn drive customer engagement and purchase intention among Generation Z consumers. (Leclercq-Machado et al., 2022) further demonstrate that social media marketing strengthens perceived benefits and brand experience, leading to sustained brand engagement.

Expanding the role of digital marketing, (Fayyaz et al., 2025) show that content and influencer marketing credibility based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) enhances financial trust and helps mitigate bankruptcy risk among SMEs through bank-guarantee mechanisms. At the level of content strategy, (Drossos et al., 2024) drawing on the Message Appeal Framework, reveal that transformational appeal combined with low interactivity generates higher engagement on Facebook. Factors such as posting time, message length, and type of endorser also affect communication effectiveness. In the B2B context, (Mero et al., 2023) formulate four managerial strategies for influencer marketing based on Social Exchange Theory selection, collaboration coordination, content management, and evaluation all centered on value exchange and long term trust. Using machine learning, (Chen, 2023) identifies three global communication

patterns notification, interaction, and diversion that are integrated to maintain cross platform audience attention. (Sparacino et al., 2024), analyzing Italian beekeeping SMEs, find that sustainability narratives remain homogeneous; claims of quality and authenticity dominate, while innovation, ethics, and social responsibility are underexplored within the Corporate Communication Theory framework. Furthermore, (Lin et al., 2023), grounded in the Innovation Diffusion Theory, demonstrate that digital menus enhance information personalization, service efficiency, two way interaction, and loyalty, thereby contributing to the strengthening of hospitality brand reputation. Across findings, consistent patterns emerge: rich-interaction formats such as live streaming, emoji use, and digital menus foster both emotional and cognitive engagement (Sun et al., 2024); (Duffett & Maraule, 2024);(Lin et al., 2023). Source credibility and self-presentation congruence increase trust and brand attitudes (van Reijmersdal et al., 2024), while strategic content design including transformational appeal, posting rhythm, and endorser type optimizes engagement (Drossos et al., 2024). Value exchange and long-term collaboration mechanisms strengthen reputation building, as observed in B2B settings (Apasrawirote et al., 2022) (Mero et al., 2023) and sustainability-oriented SMEs (Sparacino et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the role of digital marketing extends into economic functions, supporting SME financial credibility through influencer and content marketing (Raza et al., 2025), and into technological orchestration, combining notification–interaction–diversion patterns driven by big data analytics (Chen, 2023).

Collectively, these studies confirm that technological factors act as fundamental determinants of digital marketing communication effectiveness. Technology not only serves as a medium of message delivery, but also as a structural driver that shapes consumer engagement, trust formation, and brand reputation. Interactive features, AI-based personalization, and data-driven orchestration foster richer digital experiences, increasing cognitive and emotional attachment to brands. Therefore, technological determinants provide the core foundation linking engagement, influence, and reputation, forming the technological backbone of sustainable digital communication ecosystems.

Emotional determinants

Digital transformation is reshaping brand consumer relationships through interconnected pathways of engagement, influence, and reputation. (Klapp, 2023), through digital ethnography on Salafi influencers in Germany, demonstrates that cross-platform strategies using TikTok for brief emotional attention and YouTube for extended narratives build sustained engagement loops and authority through authenticity and persuasion. In the context of brand emotions, (Rodrigues et al., 2023) find in Portugal's automotive sector that brand satisfaction and brand attachment foster brand love, which in turn drives brand loyalty and positive electronic word of mouth (eWOM). In the financial services industry, (Uribe-Linares et al., 2023) show that digitalization enhances transparency, trust, and satisfaction through faster responses,

improved security, and easier accessibility. In the post pandemic context, (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023) prove that eWOM exerts a stronger influence than interpersonal interaction in explaining repurchase intention, underscoring the authority of user narratives.

With regard to message design, (Bashirzadeh et al., 2022) reveal that the excessive use of GIFs and emojis increases cognitive load, reduces click-through rates and engagement time, signaling the optimal aesthetic threshold in digital communication. Content based participatory engagement is further explored by (Agrawal & Mittal, 2022), who show that positive emotions in product review video comments on YouTube, along with the number of replies, enhance information clarity and purchase intention; these findings align with the frameworks of Media Richness Theory (MRT), Customer Engagement Theory (CET), and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model. In public relations practices, (Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav, 2022) map a shift in Israel’s PR landscape toward strategic digital communication consultancy, integrated with advertising and content marketing.

Performance is now measured through engagement metrics and social reach. In Singapore’s furniture retail sector, (Rangaswamy et al., 2022) demonstrate that omnichannel experience preferences combining online transactional flexibility with offline personalization serve as differentiating factors of customer loyalty. (Pavelko & Barker, 2022) contribute a gender and ideological perspective, showing that within the MLM industry, narratives of femininity, faith, and entrepreneurship shape digital empowerment while simultaneously functioning as persuasive mechanisms. At the institutional message level, (Thongmak, 2023) identifies six clusters of bank content intentions on Twitter; sentiment- and affect-based intentions yield the highest eWOM (favorites and retweets), confirming the centrality of emotion as an indicator of communication health.

In synthesis, these studies depict a digital communication ecosystem evolving from emotional and participatory engagement (Klapp, 2023); (Agrawal & Mittal, 2022) toward influence grounded in trust and eWOM (Rodrigues et al., 2023); (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023); (Uribe-Linares et al., 2023) and consolidating into reputation through channel integration, message governance, and cross-channel experiences (Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav, 2022); (Rangaswamy et al., 2022). At the same time, message effectiveness requires measured visual design to prevent excessive cognitive load (Bashirzadeh et al., 2022), while value narratives and social identity framing deepen emotional loyalty (Pavelko & Barker, 2022).

Collectively, these studies highlight that emotional factors serve as key determinants in shaping the effectiveness of digital marketing communication. Emotional engagement is not merely a reaction but a *causal mechanism* that drives how consumers interpret, internalize, and respond to brand messages. Elements such as emotional resonance, narrative coherence, and aesthetic balance determine whether communication builds attachment, trust, and long-term loyalty. Thus, emotional determinants function as the

connective tissue that transforms interaction into influence and influence into reputation, emphasizing the human and affective foundation of digital communication.

Ethical determinants

The transformation of digital marketing communication has reshaped the way brands interact with consumers, placing social and emotional values at the center of strategy. (Eisenhauer et al., 2022) report that during the 2021 Australian Open, 89% of Instagram content was engagement oriented, while 80% focused on building brand image. This visual branding strategy blended entertainment and consumption, yet raised ethical concerns when unhealthy food and alcohol products were promoted within a sports context. These findings emphasize that the effectiveness of digital communication must be accompanied by social responsibility to maintain long-term brand reputation.

Within the AI-driven economy, (Xiong, 2022) finds that the integration of artificial intelligence in China's e-commerce enhances convenience, reliability, and consumer trust, strengthening brand loyalty through personalized digital experiences. However, issues of data privacy and algorithmic bias have emerged as new challenges in sustaining the credibility of digital communication. Similarly, (Zhou et al., 2021) highlight that authentic storytelling by influencers enhances *brand intimacy* and *positive eWOM*. In today's environment, credibility is increasingly built through authentic narratives rather than mere social status, underlining the importance of balancing authenticity and promotion.

Conversely, (Villanova et al., 2021) underscore the importance of cross-channel integration and data-driven personalization in digital retail communication, positioning the consumer as the center of experience. (Tong, 2022) confirms that two-way interactivity strengthens public trust and enhances organizational digital reputation. Together, these studies reveal that the success of digital communication depends on active participation and message relevance across channels.

In the digital fashion context, (Nobile et al., 2021) identify three major research clusters: *marketing communication*, *technological innovation*, and *socio-cultural impact*. Digital fashion now functions as a medium for communicating sustainability values and moral identity, reinforcing reputation through visual storytelling. Meanwhile, (Koay et al., 2022) and (Liu et al., 2021) find that digital experiences shape moral perceptions and ethical consumer behavior, suggesting that brand reputation is determined by the integrity of public communication.

Specifically, (Liu et al., 2021) demonstrate that action-oriented content and consistent emotional messages enhance digital customer engagement, reinforcing the theoretical foundation of Social Presence Theory. However, (Zambrano et al., 2021) reveal that 90% of child-targeted advertisements in Spain violate ethical codes, warning that aggressive communication devoid of moral value can harm long-term brand reputation. Finally, (Mathew & Soliman, 2021) confirm that digital content marketing is most effective when

it integrates perceived enjoyment and convenience, linking engagement, influence, and reputation into a single strategic continuum.

Collectively, these studies affirm that ethical values serve as critical determinants of effective and sustainable digital marketing communication. Ethics and social responsibility function not merely as compliance elements but as *core causal forces* that shape consumer trust, credibility, and long-term reputation. Transparency, authenticity, and moral integrity determine whether digital messages are perceived as credible or manipulative. When digital strategies integrate ethical awareness such as privacy protection, responsible content design, and value-driven narratives brands gain sustained legitimacy and emotional loyalty. Conversely, unethical or manipulative communication may generate short-term visibility but erode trust and damage reputation sustainability.

Foundation

Prior research in digital marketing communication reveals a paradigm shift from transactional to interactive, participatory, and value-based approaches. (Tong, 2022) identifies interactivity as a key mediator linking digital media benefits to public relations value. Using SEM in Hong Kong, the study shows that involvement and perceived customization drive loyalty and long-term business value, positioning interactivity as the emotional foundation of brand consumer relationships. Supporting this, (Yaghtin et al., 2020) highlight the role of goal-oriented content in B2B digital marketing. From 720 Instagram posts of 24 corporations, educational content proved more effective in building trust than direct promotion, with engagement measured by conversation quality rather than reactions. Likewise, (Soedarsono et al., 2020) found that authentic visual storytelling enhances brand awareness and emotional attachment among young consumers in Bandung's SME sector.

In telecommunication studies, (Hapsari et al., 2020) emphasize trust and service fairness as drivers of engagement and loyalty. (Bandara et al., 2021) expand this through the Power Responsibility Equilibrium Theory, revealing that imbalanced corporate control and privacy duty provoke defensive consumer behavior, underscoring the need for fairness, transparency, and social responsibility. (Villanova et al., 2021) propose a one-voice strategy ensuring consistent customer experience across channels, extending (Tong & Chan, 2020) by integrating human-machine synergy for cohesive digital reputation. (Yerpude & Singhal, 2021) add the IoT dimension, proving that real-time analytics enhance personalized interaction. Meanwhile, (Modgil et al., 2021) and (Noris et al., 2021) identify a shift toward collaborative and sustainable values in youth digital consumption, where brand messages emphasizing solidarity and social responsibility are more persuasive.

In summary, interactivity, authenticity, social value, and trust form the four pillars of effective digital communication. Interactivity enhances relational value, authenticity deepens emotion, social value builds loyalty, and trust sustains digital reputation. Thus,

success in digital marketing communication arises from integrating emotional, ethical, and technological strategies to create meaningful, lasting brand consumer bonds.

Table 3. The resume of eligible papers included in this study

Year	Authors	Novelty Summary
2025	Tsai et al.	Integration of Social Presence Theory and Media Richness Theory.
2025	Osorio-Andrade et al.	Comparison of Instagram vs TikTok eWOM and multi-element testing in digital marketing content.
2025	Fayyaz et al.	Integration of Digital Influencer Persuasion and Theory of Planned Behavior; consumer involvement as mediator; digital influencer strategy.
2025	Lisboa et al.	Integration of Narrative Transportation and Dual-Processing Theory; comparison between cognitive and emotional processing routes.
2025	Lim et al.	Translation of academic research findings into practical and policy guidelines.
2025	Thakur et al.	Linking Digital Marketing Communication with Sustainable Purchase Intention.
2025	Kok Wah	Emphasizes the importance of benefit-based social media messaging.
2025	Al-Abdallah & Ababakr	Integration of student character moderation and mediation between digital vs traditional marketing communication.
2025	Raza et al.	Integration of AI chatbots and VR into the Destination Brand Equity model.
2024	Saternus et al.	Authentic field experiment testing influencer disclosure effects on followers vs non-followers.
2024	Sun et al.	Dual mediating role of attitudes in the relationship between social media and brand.
2024	van et al.	Mediation of psychological mechanisms between self-presentation strategies and brand attitude.
2024	Duffett & Maraule	Extension of TAM with trust, involvement, engagement, and purchase intention variables.
2024	Adwan & Altrjman	Integration of IBV (Institutional-Based View) with education, engagement, and collaboration for sustainability strategy.
2024	Aditi	Relationship between digital marketing strategies and financial mechanisms for SMEs.
2023	Drossos et al.	External validation of social media emotional effects as measures of engagement.
2023	Mero et al.	Transition of influencer marketing research from B2C to B2B contexts.
2023	Chen	AI-based managerial framework for optimizing social media content.
2023	Sparacino et al.	Mapping of digital communication strategies among beekeeping SMEs.
2023	Lin et al.	Menu Type → Perceived Quality → Behavioral Intention
2023	Klapp	Study on online Salafism and cross-platform influencer marketing strategy.
2023	Rodrigues et al.	Brand attachment & satisfaction → brand love → loyalty & WOM
2023	Uribe-Linares et al.	Framework linking digital transformation, communication, trust, and innovation.
2023	Müller-Pérez et al.	eWOM shown to be stronger than interpersonal influence in predicting repurchase intention.
2023	Thongmak	Integration of NLP and data mining for bank social media content analysis.
2022	Bashirzadeh et al.	Multi-method study (field, lab, online, eye-tracking) on digital aesthetics.
2022	Agrawal & Mittal	Integration of engagement and emotion theories to predict purchase intention from YouTube reviews.
2022	Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav	Concept of PR hybridization integrating PR, advertising, and content marketing.
2022	Rangaswamy et al.	Effects of demographics and digitalization on the omnichannel model.
2022	Pavelko	Exploration of feminism, spirituality, and activism in digital MLM strategies

Year	Authors	Novelty Summary
2022	Eisenhauer et al.	Analysis of sports sponsorship posts on Instagram promoting food and beverages
2022	Xiong	AI-based predictive model for online shopping behavior in Chinese e-commerce
2021	Zhou et al.	Influencer narrative strategies addressing cultural barriers and commercial tension
2021	Villanova et al.	Study of hashtags as digital social identity mechanisms
2021	Tong	Integration of relationship management theory and interactivity effects on trust
2021	Nobile et al.	Mapping of digital fashion research: communication, design, and culture
2021	Koay et al.	Extension of TPB with past experience as a moderator of digital morality
2021	Liu et al.	Multi-dimensional model of social media strategy effects on digital engagement
2021	Elías et al.	Concept of happiness management in ethical advertising for children's food
2020	Mathew & Soliman	Extension of TAM with enjoyment and convenience in digital tourism behavior
2020	Hapsari et al.	Fairness–trust–engagement hierarchical model in telecommunication loyalty
2020	Wang & Chan-Olmsted	Four-dimensional engagement framework for branded YouTube content
2020	Noris et al.	Taxonomy of digital fashion research communication, design, and culture
2020	Bandara et al.	Extension of Power–Responsibility Equilibrium Theory through privacy and trust constructs
2020	Tong & Chan	Integrative market relations model combining interactivity, PR value, and digital media
2020	Gazzola et al.	Analysis of demographic determinants in Italy's sharing economy participation.
2020	Yaghtin et al.	Goal-based B2B digital content marketing model emphasizing engagement
2020	Singh et al.	Confirmation of human machine coordination in the One-Voice strategy
2020	Soedarsono et al.	Message and media strategies for local SMEs on Instagram
2020	Yerpude & Singhal	IoT-based Custolytics framework for personalized customer engagement

Table 4. Factors managing digital marketing communication

Authors	Year	Engagement	Influence / Trust	Reputation
Tsai et al.	2025	•		
Osorio-Andrade et al.	2025	•		
Fayyaz et al.	2025	•	•	
Lisboa et al.	2025	•		
Lim et al.	2025	•	•	
Thakur et al.	2025			•
Kok Wah	2025			•
Al-Abdallah & Ababakr	2025		•	
Raza et al.	2025		•	•
Saternus et al.	2024			•
Sun et al.	2024	•		
Van Reijmersdal et al.	2024		•	•
Duffett & Maraule	2024	•		•
Adwan & Altrjman	2024			•
Drossos et al.	2023	•		
Mero et al.	2023		•	

Authors	Year	Engagement	Influence / Trust	Reputation
Chen	2023	•	•	
Sparacino et al.	2023			•
Lin et al.	2023	•		•
Klapp	2023	•	•	
Rodrigues et al.	2023		•	
Uribe-Linares et al.	2023		•	
Müller-Pérez et al.	2023		•	
Thongmak	2023	•	•	
Bashirzadeh et al.	2022	•		•
Agrawal & Mittal	2022	•	•	
Zimand-Sheiner & Lahav	2022			•
Rangaswamy et al.	2022			•
Pavelko & Barker	2022	•	•	
Eisenhauer et al.	2022	•		•
Xiong	2022		•	•
Zhou et al.	2021		•	•
Villanova et al.	2021	•		•
Tong	2021	•	•	
Nobile et al.	2021	•		•
Koay et al.	2021		•	
Liu et al.	2021	•		
Zambrano et al.	2021			•
Mathew & Soliman	2020	•		•
Hapsari et al.	2020		•	
Wang, Rang et al.	2020		•	•
Tong & Chan	2020	•	•	•
Yaghtin et al.	2020	•		
Soedarsono et al.	2020	•		
Modgil et al.	2021			•
Noris et al.	2021			•
Aditi, Bunga	2024	•	•	
Singh et al.	2021	•		•
Bandara, et al.	2021		•	
Gazzola, et al	2020			•

The synthesis of novelty from 2020–2025 shows a clear shift in digital marketing communication research toward integrated, interdisciplinary, and ethically grounded frameworks. Earlier studies centered on engagement mechanics and platform behavior, but recent work incorporates trust based influence, AI enabled personalization, and value driven reputation building. Theoretical integration such as Social Presence Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Narrative Transportation reflects deeper attention to cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying consumer responses. Emerging themes of sustainability, authenticity, and transparency indicate a movement toward responsible and human centered communication. Overall, the trajectory of research points to a holistic model where technology, emotional resonance, and ethical

governance collectively strengthen long term and brand consumer relationships in the evolving digital ecosystem.

Conclusion and suggestion

Overall, the findings of this study reaffirm that engagement is the starting point that must be strategically designed through interactivity, credibility, and emotion. Trust functions as a mediating mechanism that transforms experience into commitment, while reputation is the final outcome determined by the coherence of values, experience, and ethics. By integrating these three pillars into one comprehensive framework, this study contributes to strengthening both the theoretical foundation and managerial practice of digital marketing communication particularly for SMEs and the sustainable fashion sector and offers practical guidelines that place human values, ethical governance, and sustainability at the core of digital strategies (Tong & Chan, 2020); (Adwan & Altrjman, 2024); (Noris et al., 2021); (Mathew & Soliman, 2021). Ultimately, durable digital reputation is not built through the most aggressive or provocative messages but through the most honest dialogue, meaningful experiences, and consistent values.

This study concludes that digital marketing communication serves as a strategic bridge between brands and consumers through three key dimensions: engagement, influence/trust, and digital brand reputation. Engagement is established through interactivity, message credibility, and authentic emotion, which together enhance consumer participation and emotional connection. Authenticity and digital trust act as key mediators that convert engagement into loyalty and positive advocacy. Finally, a strong digital reputation emerges from the alignment of sustainability values, meaningful user experiences, and ethical transparency. Theoretically, this study integrates these dimensions into a single value and trust oriented sustainable digital communication framework, extending understanding of how brand consumer relationships are formed through credible, emotional, and socially responsible interaction.

Suggestions for future research

Future studies are encouraged to apply longitudinal approaches to trace changes in engagement, trust, and reputation dynamics over time. Experimental studies may test the effects of visual storytelling, authentic narratives, and emotions on digital consumer behavior. Further research should explore emerging platforms such as short video formats and the metaverse, which exhibit unique interaction characteristics. In depth analysis of digital ethics and algorithmic transparency is also needed to assess their influence on brand reputation. Cross cultural research will be essential to understand how social values shape digital trust across contexts. Collectively, these directions can strengthen future models of ethical, adaptive, and sustainable digital communication.

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