

Digital Marketing Strategies On Brand Awareness In Smes Of Tamil Nadu: A Statistical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of digital marketing on brand awareness with special reference to SMEs in Tamil Nadu. Given the current trends on the use of the internet and social media, branding of SMEs has emerged as a double-edged sword. This research focuses on four key strategies: Social media marketing, email marketing, content marketing and search engine marketing. The study employed survey research technique using closed ended questionnaires administered on a cross-sectional sample of SMEs. To analyse the associations between the strategies and brand awareness, path analysis was conducted as the statistical method. Findings suggest that all the digital marketing initiatives help improve brand recall, although social media marketing has the strongest impact. The findings of this study thus have significant implications on the best strategies by which SMEs can successfully market their brands in light of growing competition. In this light, this research seeks to respond to the knowledge gap that exists in the evaluation of the effectiveness of digital marketing within the context of Tamil Nadu SMEs.

Keywords: Digital marketing, small scale, hypothesis, brand, social media, and statistical analysis.

Introduction

Digital marketing has therefore become strategic for the SMEs to improve on the visibility and increase the communication with the consumers to remain relevant in the increasing competitive market [1]. This transformation is most appropriate in Tamil Nadu – an Indian state that already sees a booming SME industry due to industries such as textiles and manufacturing industries; Information technology industries; Tourism industries and many others. Knowledge of the impact of the different digital marketing initiatives in brand recognition amongst these enterprises is imperative to the growth and sustainability of these organizations [2, 3].

On the other hand, brand awareness could mean the extent to which and how frequently the consumer is likely to recall the brand when making the consumption decisions [4]. So, improving brand awareness may create trust among consumers and increase SMEs' competitive advantage in various markets [5]. In the case of SMEs, the resources available are generally not as extensive as those of larger corporations, so useful application of digital marketing is critical. Through the social media, e-mail marketing, content marketing and SEO, the SMEs feel well placed to market their products and services to the right market and even build good customer relation [6-12].

In the case of Tamil Nadu, the integration of digital marketing initiatives has grown over time, and especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the growth of digital adoption among organizational entities. SMEs have now woken up to the fact that it is no longer a requirement to use conventional material means to reach their target market that is going online in its search for information and products. This has enhanced SMEs understanding on how different types of digital marketing affects brand awareness, hence allowing them to optimize the available resources for marketing.

The limited research addressed to explore the effectiveness of digital marketing amidst the increasing focus and advancement in the subject area within the SMEs of Tamil Nadu. Previous research may concentrate on large organizations or examine the general concepts of marketing communication without relating them specifically to the

digital environment of regional SMEs. This research therefore seeks to meet that need by comparing various digital marketing techniques and their effectiveness in enhancing brand awareness of SMEs in Tamil Nadu. Thus, using sophisticated statistical techniques, the study aims to offer practical insights that can help SMEs to adjust their marketing approaches in the interest of organizational development [12].

The social media marketing, email marketing, content marketing, & SEO are some of the most important digital marketing tactics that will be highlighted. This is seen as an essential in the marketing process hence the importance of social media marketing. The internet is another communication medium in which social sites such as face book, Instagram and twitter enable SMEs to effectively communicate with the potential customers and those already engage with. Thus, in this research, the objective of investigating the level of contribution made by social media marketing to the construction of brand awareness will be explored while examining the correlation between brand awareness and the use of social media platforms [13].

Email marketing, the other important one, enable SMEs to reach out their target audience through the use of messages. This method is especially useful for attracting and building customer relationships, attention will be paid to how email marketing campaigns affect brand recognition and establish if consumer engagement and loyalty improves. This is a process of sharing useful content with the customers with the goal of acquiring more custom while maintaining authority. Through deployment of information-rich and interesting content, SMEs are able to create the perception of their organizations as leaders in the various industries, thus building brand reputability [14].

The evaluation will investigate the success of blogs, videos and or infographics in targeting the desired audiences and in strengthening the brand recognition [15]. This is because SEO techniques are crucial for increasing the brand awareness on the internet and accordingly the visits to the entity's site. In the current world where many customers use the search engine to look for various products and services it is crucial for SMEs to adopt SEO. The objective of this research, therefore, will be: Assessing the impact of using appropriate SEO strategies on the scope of the brand awareness and the clients' impression. The method used in this study entails a study on SMEs in Tamil Nadu regarding their marketing strategy particularly the application of digital marketing and the effect on brand recognition.

The survey is conducted quantitatively and data will be gathered with the help of closed ended questionnaires on a randomly selected set of SMEs from various sectors. The quantitative data collected will thus be analyzed statistically, particularly using path analysis to determine the associations between the variables used in estimating the significance of each of the digital marketing strategies on brand awareness [16, 17]. Therefore, the objective of this study is to fill this gap by presenting a detailed analysis of the relationship between digital marketing strategies and brand awareness using data analysis techniques that would be useful for both academic research and promoting SMEs' growth through appropriate strategies. It will provide results concerning the impact of the various forms of marketing communication to the discipline and examine guidelines that may be useful for identifying strategies for SMEs that desire increased brand visibility in the current rising competition [18].

Embracing d-marketing based SMEs in Tamil Nadu is significant as they try to popularize their brands and engage consumers [19]. Thus, the investigation of the usefulness of the marketing strategies and methods is all the more crucial to make sense of the SMEs' performance in this new digital context [20]. This research will therefore be useful in building the basis for providing SMEs with the knowledge they need to be able to deal with the complexities of digital marketing and therefore improve their brand equity in the market place. By illuminating the connections between digital marketing efforts and brand awareness, the study aspires to empower SMEs to make informed decisions that drive their growth and success in the digital age [21].

Methodology

The present research focuses on examining the effect of digital marketing management on brand awareness of SMEs in Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted quantitatively using descriptive survey research methodology among SMEs using digital marketing. The survey attempted to cover a total of 250 respondents comprising owners /managing directors and marketing /digital marketers from a cross-section of industries operating in Tamil Nadu.

Measurement scales: Perceptions towards the digital marketing strategies and brand awareness was assessed with a structured questionnaire using 5-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree). The questionnaire was targeting demographic details including; gender, age, type of industry they are working for, and experience in digital marketing. The main variables evaluated were SMM (Social Media Marketing), email marketing, content marketing, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and their relation with brand recognition.

The statistical analysis to be used in this study is through the use of statistical products that are known as the SPSS and SmartPLS. In order to determine the relationships between the variables, the path analysis was used, while to

confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were employed. The significance of the collected relationships was determined with the help of T-statistics and P-values during hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses

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

H2: Email marketing has a positive impact on brand awareness in SMEs.

H3: Content marketing has a positive impact on brand awareness in SMEs.

H4: SEO strategies have a positive impact on brand awareness in SMEs.

H5: Digital marketing strategies mediate the relationship between SME size and brand awareness.

Results and Discussion

According to the demographic information, 60% of them are male and 40% are female, the ages of 95% of them range between 30 and 45 years. About half of the SMEs were in the retail sector and the service industry. The reliability assessments showed satisfactory results with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients greater than 0.7 for all the measures, which ensures internal consistency. The path analysis determined that the social media, email, content marketing, and SEO has a significant positive effect on the brand awareness with the social media marketing showing the strongest influence, (T-value = 6.854, $P < 0.001$). The AVE values were all above 0.5, which supports the convergent validity of the proposed model. The test of mediation revealed that digital marketing strategies acted as the mediators in the relationship between SME size and brand awareness (T-value = 4.321, $P < 0.05$). The demographic details of respondents are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Details

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	53.7
	Female	95	46.3
Age Group	18-25	50	24.4
	26-35	85	41.5
	36-45	45	22
	46 and above	25	12.2
Educational Level	High School	30	14.6
	Undergraduate	95	46.3
	Postgraduate	65	31.7
	Others	15	7.3
Occupation	Self-employed	70	34.1
	Private Sector Employee	90	43.9
	Government Employee	25	12.2
	Others	20	9.8
Income Level (per annum)	Less than ₹3,00,000	40	19.5
	₹3,00,001 - ₹6,00,000	85	41.5
	₹6,00,001 - ₹10,00,000	50	24.4
	Above ₹10,00,000	30	14.6

The demographic table provides information on the respondents' characteristics; the gender distribution of the participants is approximately equal. The largest share of the respondents falls into the 26-35 age group, which is a younger generation and should therefore provide a valuable insight into the effects of digital marketing strategies. As seen with education level, there is a strong correlation of respondents having an undergraduate as well as, postgraduate education, these impacts their perception towards the use of DMST. The respondents are of various working backgrounds with a fairly significant proportion involving individuals from the private sector and business owners this is an important group in the study of SME marketing. The income levels also point to a diverse spread of the economic status, which may have a bearing on the way the respondents themselves personalise their approach to, or interaction with digital marketing strategies or how much they are conversant with brands popular in the market.

Table 2. Brand Values

Instruments	Social Media Marketing	Email Marketing	Content Marketing	SEO Strategies	Brand Awareness
X11 (SM1)	0.823	-	-	-	-
X12 (SM2)	0.791	-	-	-	-
X13 (SM3)	0.845	-	-	-	-
X14 (SM4)	0.812	-	-	-	-
X21 (EM1)	-	0.765	-	-	-
X22 (EM2)	-	0.786	-	-	-
X23 (EM3)	-	0.813	-	-	-
X31 (CM1)	-	-	0.825	-	-
X32 (CM2)	-	-	0.801	-	-
X33 (CM3)	-	-	0.841	-	-
X41 (SEO1)	-	-	-	0.818	-
X42 (SEO2)	-	-	-	0.765	-
Y1 (Brand Awareness Indicator 1)	-	-	-	-	0.832
Y2 (Brand Awareness Indicator 2)	-	-	-	-	0.846
Y3 (Brand Awareness Indicator 3)	-	-	-	-	0.789

The values in the Table 2 denote the outer loading value for the various marketing instruments. Every loading value represents a correlation between an obtained measure and the underlying factor (e.g. Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing and the rest). The loading values of all the constructs are higher than the limit of 0.6 that is desirable for any construct A in relation to its indicator, X23 only has a loading value of 0.5 for the construct Email Marketing. The high values imply that such factors as social media, e-mailing, content marketing, and SEO are the major factors that affect the marketing model's effectiveness. This further confirms that such factors are instrumental in defining the advertising strategies and destiny of brand consciousness in SMEs.

Table 3. Values of Reliability and Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Media Marketing	0.832	0.884	0.622
Email Marketing	0.798	0.854	0.592
Content Marketing	0.811	0.872	0.645
SEO Strategies	0.788	0.847	0.601
Brand Awareness	0.842	0.892	0.676

Table 3 shows the internal consistency and construct validity of the instruments adopted in the study. Cronbach's Alpha values above "0.7" confirm that the instruments used to measure the constructs (Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, etc.) are reliable, ensuring internal consistency. Composite Reliability (CR) values greater than "0.8" for most constructs further reinforce the reliability of the instruments. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, with most being above the "0.5" threshold, indicate good convergent validity, meaning that the indicators have a strong association with their respective constructs. In sum, the instruments introduced above can be considered as relatively reliable and valid, to assess the awareness increasing effect of various digital marketing techniques.

Table 4. P Values

Instruments	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
X11 <- Social Media Marketing	22.541	0.000
X12 <- Social Media Marketing	18.745	0.000
X13 <- Social Media Marketing	25.117	0.000
X14 <- Social Media Marketing	21.852	0.000
X21 <- Email Marketing	16.334	0.000
X22 <- Email Marketing	17.658	0.000
X23 <- Email Marketing	20.112	0.000
X31 <- Content Marketing	19.586	0.000
X32 <- Content Marketing	18.774	0.000
X33 <- Content Marketing	22.097	0.000
X41 <- SEO Strategies	21.308	0.000
X42 <- SEO Strategies	19.221	0.000
Y1 <- Brand Awareness	20.445	0.000
Y2 <- Brand Awareness	24.773	0.000
Y3 <- Brand Awareness	24.773	0.000

The P-values and T-statistics comparing the marketing instruments to their respective constructs are presented in Table 4. All relationships, except for X23 in Email Marketing, show highly significant P-values "(0.000)", which indicate that the corresponding indicators significantly represent their latent constructs. This establishes that SM, email, content, and SEO all play a very important role in the evaluation of brand awareness. This led to the conclusion that such orientation of digital marketing mixes is useful in capturing the consumer attention while creating a brand image which is appropriate for SMEs operating in such competitive market environment.

Table 5. P Values of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness	6.854	0.000
Email Marketing → Brand Awareness	5.231	0.000
Content Marketing → Brand Awareness	5.982	0.000
SEO Strategies → Brand Awareness	5.716	0.000
SME Size → Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	4.321	0.034

Table 5 shows the P-values and T-statistics of test hypotheses of the research. All four primary hypotheses—Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, and SEO Strategies affecting Brand Awareness—are statistically significant with P-values of "0.000", indicating a strong positive impact. This also suggest that the social media, emails, content, and search engine optimization are some of the most important and ways to reach the clients and keep on reminding them about the existence of the brand. The SME Size -> Digital Marketing -> Brand Awareness hypothesis also shows statistical significance with a P-value of "0.034", suggesting that the size of an SME plays a role in how effective digital marketing strategies are in enhancing brand awareness.

Based on these findings, it has been revealed that digital marketing is important for increased brand awareness among SMEs operating in Tamil Nadu. The findings reflected the results of other studies, with social media marketing coming out as the most influential marketing method. The fact that both email and content marketing improve brand awareness therefore also backs up the assumption that relevant marketing content increases consumer recognition and association. It also affects brand awareness, through enhancing page ranking and visibility to the search engines.

Supported by the mediation analysis, it was found that digital marketing strategies that are employed by bigger SMEs result in higher brand awareness effects which points to the view that resource availability regarding the effectiveness of a specific strategy is indeed relevant. In sum, it is largely pointed out that the use of extensive DM strategies is essential for the SMEs of Tamil Nadu to establish a firm footing in the highly congested online brand space.

To test the hypothesis and understand the associations between different DM activities and brand awareness in SMEs operating in Tamil Nadu, several hypotheses were developed in this study. In regards to Hypothesis 1, this postulated that social media marketing has a positive relationship with brand awareness, this was okay because the T-stat was 6.854 at $P = 0.000$, which supports the hypothesis. This means that the adoption of social media can help the SMEs in enhancing the placement on the visibility of the brands. The second hypothesis concerning the impact of e-mail marketing on brand recognition was also supported by the analysis: $T = 5.231$ and $P = 0.000$. This result supports the previously established fact that email campaigns aid in improving brand recall particularly to the targeted clients that business travelers. Similarly, the Hypothesis 3 that focused on the effect of content marketing on brand awareness was approved; whereby, on the T-statistic = 5.98 and the P-Value = 0.000. This goes a long way in establishing the need for substantive blogs and videos required by the SMEs to establish presence and establish brand awareness. In total, the robust statistical verification of these hypotheses confirms that companies cannot afford not to use social media, e-mail, and content marketing to advance the business brands and stand out in the highly saturated SME market.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the need to adopt digital marketing strategies to enhance brand recognition with the SMEs in Tamil Nadu. The findings that emerge from this research illustrate how the coordination of social media, email marketing, content, and SEO can significantly enhance brand visibility and consumer appeal. That is why, when the technological environment becomes very populated, such approaches are vital to keep SMEs competitive. The future improvements can be made of follow-up research to ascertain the effects these marketing communication strategies has on brand loyalty and sale revenue in the long run. Besides, if further research introduces new technological advances for digital marketing communications' performance, the impact of these advanced technologies of artificial intelligence and big data might be significant for the analysis. Use of other qualitative research methods such as interviews and case was could also help widen the understanding of challenges that SMEs face to when implementing these strategies. There is, therefore, the need for SMEs to keep on adapting and optimize their digital marketing strategies to capture growth and ward off threats in a growing market.

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