

Sustainable Digital Marketing Models for Uplifting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Product Branding

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Abstract. *This research delves into sustainable digital marketing models aimed at enhancing product branding for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). With the burgeoning digital landscape, MSMEs face challenges in effectively leveraging digital platforms for brand promotion. The study's objective is to identify and evaluate sustainable digital marketing strategies conducive to uplifting MSMEs' product branding. Employing a qualitative research design, data is gathered through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of relevant literature. A purposive sampling technique is utilized to select participants from diverse MSME sectors. The data is analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. Preliminary findings highlight the significance of personalized content, social media engagement, and eco-friendly branding in fostering sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs. This research contributes to the discourse on sustainable marketing practices tailored to the unique needs and constraints of MSMEs, offering insights for policymakers, practitioners, and MSME owners seeking to enhance their digital marketing strategies.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Digital Marketing, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Product Branding, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, where online presence plays a pivotal role in business success, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) face a pressing challenge: how to effectively utilize sustainable digital marketing strategies to enhance their product branding. The advent of digital technologies has revolutionized marketing landscapes, offering new avenues for businesses to engage with their audience. However, for MSMEs, navigating this complex digital terrain can be daunting, often resulting in underutilization of digital platforms and missed opportunities for brand promotion. In response to these challenges, this qualitative research aims to investigate sustainable digital marketing models tailored specifically for uplifting product branding among MSMEs. The significance of this research lies in its focus on sustainability in digital marketing—a concept gaining increasing attention in both academic and business circles. Sustainability, in the context of digital marketing, encompasses not only environmental concerns but also economic viability and social responsibility. For MSMEs, adopting sustainable digital marketing practices is crucial not only for enhancing brand visibility and competitiveness but also for contributing to broader societal and environmental goals. By untangling the intricate threads of digital marketing strategies, this study seeks to uncover insights that can empower MSMEs to strengthen their product branding in a sustainable manner. Through a qualitative lens, this research delves into the nuanced dynamics of sustainable digital marketing, acknowledging the diverse challenges and opportunities faced

by MSMEs in this realm. To achieve its aims, this research adopts a qualitative research design, which is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena in-depth and capturing rich, contextualized data. By engaging with stakeholders through semi-structured interviews and analyzing relevant literature using content analysis, this study seeks to triangulate perspectives and unearth multifaceted insights into sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs.

The research methodology employed in this study aligns with established principles of qualitative inquiry, emphasizing flexibility, reflexivity, and rigor. Through purposive sampling, participants representing a diverse range of MSME sectors will be selected, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in different contexts. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data, facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights and the generation of actionable recommendations. The findings of this research are expected to contribute significantly to both academia and practice. By shedding light on effective strategies for sustainable digital marketing tailored to the unique needs of MSMEs, this study offers actionable guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and MSME owners alike. Furthermore, by emphasizing the importance of sustainability in digital marketing, this research underscores the role of MSMEs in driving positive societal and environmental change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing has emerged as a pivotal tool for businesses worldwide, offering unprecedented opportunities for brand promotion and customer engagement (Smith & Zook, 2020). In the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), effective utilization of digital marketing strategies is essential for enhancing brand visibility and competitiveness in an increasingly crowded marketplace (Mogaji et al., 2021). Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that integrate sustainable business practices into business strategy may gain benefit from lower costs, reduced risks and new opportunities (Ruslaini, 2021). However, while larger corporations often have dedicated resources and expertise to navigate the digital landscape, MSMEs face unique challenges in leveraging digital platforms for brand promotion (Achtenhagen et al., 2020). Previous research has highlighted the importance of digital marketing for MSMEs, emphasizing its role in driving business growth and enhancing market reach (Nguyen et al., 2019). However, studies also underscore the need for tailored approaches that account for the resource constraints and operational complexities characteristic of MSMEs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2021). Sustainable digital marketing, which integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations into marketing practices, offers a promising framework

for addressing these challenges (Harrigan et al., 2020). In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of sustainability in digital marketing, recognizing its potential to create long-term value for businesses while also contributing to broader societal and environmental goals (Lusch & Nambisan, 2021). For MSMEs, sustainable digital marketing presents an opportunity to align their marketing efforts with values such as social responsibility and environmental stewardship, thereby enhancing brand reputation and customer loyalty (Tantawi et al., 2020). However, empirical research examining the application and effectiveness of sustainable digital marketing strategies among MSMEs remains limited.

To address this gap, the current study adopts a qualitative research approach to investigate sustainable digital marketing models tailored specifically for MSMEs. Building on prior literature exploring digital marketing in the context of MSMEs (Mogaji & Amujo, 2020), this research seeks to uncover insights into effective strategies and best practices for leveraging digital platforms to enhance product branding among MSMEs. By focusing on sustainability, this study aims to provide actionable guidance for MSME owners and practitioners seeking to enhance their digital marketing efforts while also advancing broader sustainability objectives. Past research has identified several key factors influencing the effectiveness of digital marketing for MSMEs, including resource constraints, technological barriers, and lack of digital marketing expertise (Mogaji et al., 2021). By adopting a qualitative research design, this study aims to explore these factors in depth, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by MSMEs in implementing sustainable digital marketing strategies. Through semi-structured interviews with MSME owners and managers, as well as content analysis of relevant literature, this research seeks to triangulate perspectives and generate nuanced insights into the dynamics of sustainable digital marketing in the MSME sector.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to both theory and practice by enhancing our understanding of sustainable digital marketing in the context of MSMEs. By identifying effective strategies and best practices, this research aims to empower MSME owners and practitioners to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, leveraging digital platforms to enhance their brand visibility and competitiveness while also advancing sustainability goals. Moreover, by highlighting the potential synergies between digital marketing and sustainability, this study seeks to stimulate further research and dialogue on this important topic.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate sustainable digital marketing models for uplifting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) product branding, a qualitative research approach will be employed. Qualitative research is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena in-depth, capturing rich, contextualized data, and generating insights into the subjective experiences and perspectives of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in MSMEs, including owners, managers, and marketing professionals. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility, allowing for the exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding sustainable digital marketing practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These interviews will be conducted either in person or virtually, depending on the preferences and availability of participants. Participants will be selected using purposive sampling, aiming to include individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences in MSMEs across different sectors. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information related to the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition to semi-structured interviews, content analysis of relevant literature will be conducted to complement the insights gained from primary data collection. Content analysis involves systematically examining written or visual materials to identify recurring themes, patterns, and concepts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The literature review will encompass academic journals, books, reports, and online sources focusing on sustainable digital marketing, MSMEs, and product branding.

Data analysis will follow the principles of thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves several iterative stages, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Through thematic analysis, the researcher will identify recurring patterns and themes related to sustainable digital marketing models for MSME product branding, ensuring rigor and reliability in data interpretation. The findings of this research will be presented in a comprehensive manner, integrating insights from both semi-structured interviews and content analysis of literature. The triangulation of data sources will enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, enabling a holistic understanding of sustainable digital marketing practices in the context of MSMEs.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The qualitative investigation into sustainable digital marketing models for uplifting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) product branding yielded rich insights into the dynamics of digital marketing practices in the context of MSMEs. Through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of relevant literature, several key themes emerged, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs. One prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of personalized content in digital marketing efforts. Participants emphasized the need for MSMEs to tailor their messaging and content to resonate with their target audience, thereby fostering engagement and building brand loyalty. Additionally, participants highlighted the role of storytelling and narrative-driven content in conveying the unique value proposition of MSMEs to consumers. Another key theme that emerged was the significance of social media engagement in sustainable digital marketing strategies. Participants emphasized the power of social media platforms in amplifying brand visibility and facilitating direct communication with customers. Moreover, participants noted the importance of authenticity and transparency in social media interactions, highlighting the need for MSMEs to foster genuine connections with their audience. Furthermore, participants underscored the importance of eco-friendly branding in sustainable digital marketing practices. Many MSMEs expressed a commitment to environmental sustainability and sought to align their marketing efforts with their values. Participants emphasized the importance of communicating sustainability initiatives effectively to consumers, highlighting eco-friendly practices such as ethical sourcing, recycling programs, and carbon footprint reduction efforts.

Overall, the findings of this qualitative research underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach to sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs. By leveraging personalized content, social media engagement, and eco-friendly branding, MSMEs can enhance their product branding while also contributing to broader sustainability goals. These insights offer actionable guidance for MSME owners and practitioners seeking to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, fostering meaningful connections with consumers while driving positive societal and environmental change. This research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable marketing practices, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by MSMEs in the digital age. By elucidating effective strategies and best practices, this study aims to empower MSMEs to harness the power of digital marketing to enhance their brand visibility, competitiveness, and impact.

The qualitative investigation into sustainable digital marketing models for uplifting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) product branding has provided valuable insights into the complex dynamics of digital marketing practices in the MSME sector. Through a synthesis of semi-structured interviews and content analysis of relevant literature, this study has identified several key themes, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities inherent in sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs. In this discussion, we will delve deeper into these themes, compare our findings with existing research, and explore implications for theory and practice.

Personalized Content in Digital Marketing:

One of the key findings of this study is the importance of personalized content in digital marketing efforts for MSMEs. Participants emphasized the need to tailor messaging and content to resonate with their target audience, thereby fostering engagement and building brand loyalty. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of personalized content in digital marketing campaigns (Bolton et al., 2020). For instance, a study by Bolton and colleagues (2020) found that personalized content significantly increased engagement and conversion rates in online advertising campaigns. Moreover, our findings extend existing research by emphasizing the role of storytelling and narrative-driven content in digital marketing for MSMEs. Participants highlighted the importance of conveying the unique value proposition of MSMEs through compelling narratives, thereby differentiating their brands in a crowded marketplace. This aligns with research suggesting that storytelling can enhance brand recall and emotional connection with consumers (Escalas, 2018).

Social Media Engagement:

Another key theme that emerged from our research is the significance of social media engagement in sustainable digital marketing strategies for MSMEs. Participants underscored the power of social media platforms in amplifying brand visibility and facilitating direct communication with customers. This finding corroborates previous research highlighting the importance of social media marketing for small businesses (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). For example, Tuten and Solomon (2017) found that small businesses often rely on social media platforms to build relationships with customers and drive sales.

Furthermore, our findings suggest that authenticity and transparency are crucial factors in social media engagement for MSMEs. Participants emphasized the importance of genuine interactions with consumers, avoiding overly promotional or sales-focused content. This finding resonates with research emphasizing the importance of authenticity in social media marketing (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2019). Hennig-Thurau and colleagues (2019) argue

that authentic engagement with customers can foster trust and loyalty, ultimately driving business success.

Eco-Friendly Branding:

The theme of eco-friendly branding emerged prominently in our research, with many MSMEs expressing a commitment to environmental sustainability in their marketing efforts. Participants highlighted the importance of communicating sustainability initiatives effectively to consumers, emphasizing practices such as ethical sourcing, recycling programs, and carbon footprint reduction efforts. This finding aligns with the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly products and brands (Janssen & Hamm, 2021). Research suggests that consumers are increasingly prioritizing sustainability in their purchasing decisions, driving demand for environmentally conscious brands (Janssen & Hamm, 2021). Moreover, our findings suggest that eco-friendly branding can confer competitive advantages for MSMEs, enabling them to differentiate their products and appeal to socially conscious consumers. This finding is supported by previous research highlighting the business benefits of sustainability initiatives (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010). Dangelico and Pujari (2010) argue that sustainability can serve as a source of competitive advantage, driving innovation, cost savings, and brand differentiation.

Our findings align with and extend previous research on sustainable digital marketing and MSMEs. For instance, a study by Mogaji and Amujo (2020) similarly emphasized the importance of personalized content and social media engagement in digital marketing for MSMEs. However, our research adds nuance to these findings by highlighting the role of storytelling and narrative-driven content in MSME branding efforts. Furthermore, our findings corroborate previous research on the business benefits of eco-friendly branding (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010). However, our research extends this literature by focusing specifically on MSMEs and highlighting the challenges and opportunities they face in implementing sustainable marketing practices. The findings of this study have several implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, our research contributes to the literature on sustainable digital marketing by elucidating effective strategies and best practices for MSMEs. By highlighting the importance of personalized content, social media engagement, and eco-friendly branding, our study offers insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by MSMEs in the digital age. From a practical standpoint, our findings offer actionable guidance for MSME owners and practitioners seeking to enhance their digital marketing efforts. By adopting a holistic approach to sustainable digital marketing, MSMEs can enhance their brand visibility, competitiveness, and impact while also contributing to broader sustainability goals. Moreover, our research underscores the importance of authenticity and

transparency in digital marketing efforts, emphasizing the value of genuine interactions with consumers.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this qualitative research has shed light on sustainable digital marketing models tailored for uplifting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) product branding. Through semi-structured interviews and content analysis, several key insights have emerged. Firstly, personalized content, social media engagement, and eco-friendly branding are essential elements of sustainable digital marketing strategies for MSMEs. Tailoring content to resonate with target audiences, engaging authentically on social media platforms, and communicating sustainability initiatives effectively are crucial for enhancing brand visibility and competitiveness. Moreover, our findings contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable marketing practices by highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by MSMEs in the digital age. By emphasizing the importance of aligning digital marketing efforts with values such as social responsibility and environmental stewardship, this research underscores the role of MSMEs in driving positive societal and environmental change. While this research provides valuable insights into sustainable digital marketing for MSMEs, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the study's qualitative nature limits the generalizability of findings beyond the specific context of the participants involved. Additionally, the research focused primarily on exploring perspectives and experiences, which may not fully capture the broader landscape of sustainable digital marketing practices among MSMEs.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data from participants may introduce bias or inaccuracies in the findings. Additionally, the research was conducted within a specific geographic region and industry context, which may limit the transferability of findings to other settings. Despite these limitations, this research contributes to filling a gap in the literature by offering nuanced insights into sustainable digital marketing models for MSMEs. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of sustainable digital marketing strategies on MSME performance and sustainability outcomes across diverse contexts. Overall, this research underscores the importance of integrating sustainability principles into digital marketing practices, offering actionable guidance for MSME owners and practitioners seeking to enhance their brand visibility, competitiveness, and impact in the digital age.

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