



Digital Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchase Behavior: Examining the Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

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The blistering development of digital platforms has radically redefined the way brands reach consumers and it becomes crucial to comprehend which marketing tactics actually influence buying behavior. The present study examines how social media marketing, online advertising, and influencer marketing can impact consumer purchase behavior with brand awareness as a mediating variable. Based on a survey of 300 participants and evaluated with the help of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), all three digital marketing strategies showed considerable positive impact on brand awareness and consumer purchase behavior. Each relationship was entirely mediated by the brand awareness; it bears out the significance of the brand awareness as the mechanism which digital marketing is transformed into purchase action. Its results provide a useful application to marketing practitioners planning the integrated digital campaigns and offer theoretical contribution to the accumulating body of knowledge relating digital strategy to consumer decision-making.

1. Introduction

Not many changes in the history of business have changed as quickly as the trend of marketing in a print and broadcast environment to digital mediums (Alzubi, 2023). Social media that scarcely existed twenty years ago are now the main arenas through which brands compete to capture the interest of consumers (Pugno, 2025). The new storefronts on which millions of buying decisions are influenced daily are social media feeds, programmatic ads, and influencer endorsements (Alzubi, 2023). However, in spite of the massive amounts of digital marketing budgets that are spent worldwide, there is still a tendency of brands to fail in explaining exactly why certain campaigns drive sales and some result in minimal impact other than impressions. This study proposes the gap that lies in brand awareness, the cognitive footing that digital marketing establishes prior to a consumer clicking a checkout page.

This connection between digital advertising and everyone is more vital to understand than ever since by the early 2020s, digital advertising expenditure reached the two trillion dollar mark, and marketers are under pressure to demonstrate value on every rupee and dollar they spend (Prihatiningsih et al., 2024). Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube are some of the social media that have become influential promotional platforms where consumers do not only discover brands but also discuss, share, and review them. At the same time, influencer marketing is no longer a niche strategy, as macro- and micro-influencers are driving the purchase intention in a variety of categories such as fashion and fast-moving consumer goods (Sarwar et al., 2025). The programmatic and retargeting form of online advertising keeps the brand visible as a customer goes about his or her online journey.

The mechanism by which these strategies translate digital exposure into real buying behavior is what has not been explored in the existing literature. Brand awareness provides a good theoretical link: once consumers are aware and recall a brand, they trust and prefer it, which results in reduced psychological barriers to purchase (Edwin, 2023). This paper hypothesizes that bridge empirically with a structural model that defines brand awareness as a complete mediator between three digital marketing inputs and consumer purchase behavior.

The research will be on adult customers who are frequent users of online platforms and have at least one online purchase within the last six months. Surveys were conducted in the form of structured data gathering, which was spread in the city environment, and 300 participants were questioned. The study is dedicated to the Pakistani digital consumer market, which is a situation where social media use is rather fast, and e-commerce penetration is increasing.

1.1 Research Objectives

The present study is aimed at achieving three interrelated goals:

- To analyze how social media marketing, online advertising, and influencer marketing directly impact consumer purchase behavior.
- To determine the impact of each digital marketing strategy on the brand awareness.



- To determine whether the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase behavior is mediated by brand awareness.

1.2 Research Questions

- **RQ1:** Are social media marketing, online advertising, and influencer marketing important in consumer purchase behavior?
- **RQ2:** Do these online marketing methods have significant influences on brand awareness?
- **RQ3:** Does digital marketing strategies have an intermediary role between brand awareness and consumer purchase behavior?

2. Literature Review

The connection between online marketing and consumer behavior is a topic that has received a long-standing academic interest throughout the last decade, and scientists are consistently discovering that online touchpoints influence the purchase decisions in quantifiable manners. The broad concept of social media marketing as the utilization of social media to market products and interact with communities was proved to have an effect on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and finally purchase intention (Dzreke & Dzreke, 2025). Later scholarship has passed beyond mere correlation, and has begun to investigate the cognitive and emotional mechanisms by which exposure to social content is transformed into a transaction. (Cheung et al., 2021) discovered that the use of social media leads to an increase in brand equity, which subsequently increases sales, a relationship that is dynamic according to the mediating logic sought in this paper.

Online advertising, including display advertising, search advertising and programmatic placements, has also shown strong impacts on consumer behavior. The article by (Giombi et al., 2022) defined that repeated exposure to ads enhances brand recall and the likelihood of making a future purchase, especially in the case of personalized ads. This effect is further amplified by the retargeting phenomenon serving advertisements to users who have already visited the site of a brand, ensuring salience in a disjointed online experience. The academic interest on influencer marketing has grown the most in the recent years possibly because of the commercial prominence of such an activity. (Hudders et al., 2021) provided an in-depth review and concluded that the purchase influence is mainly driven by the credibility of influencers and the audience trust, whereas (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) showed that the parasocial relationships with influencers can be converted into shopping behavior, especially among younger populations.

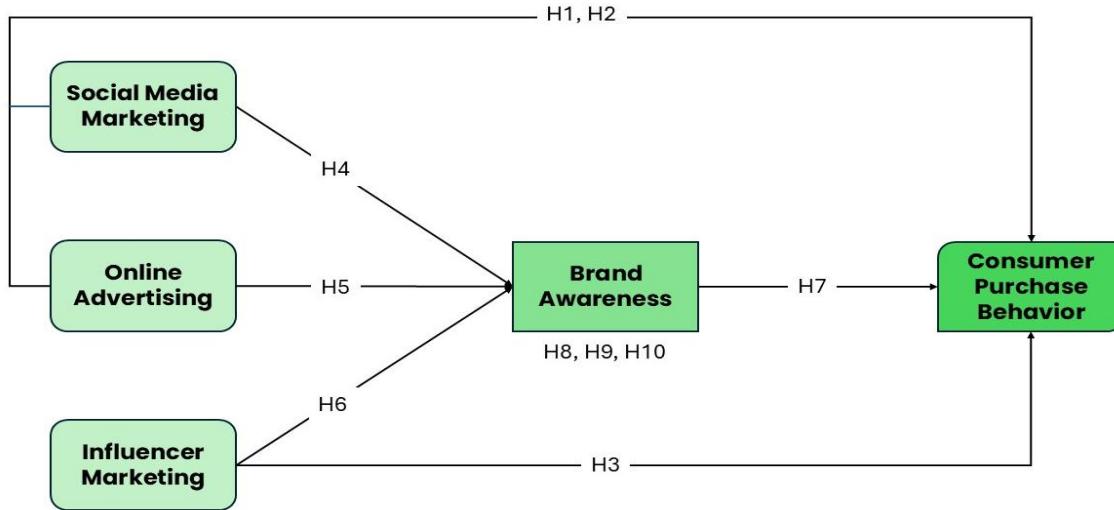
The classical definition of brand awareness as recognition or recall of a brand by the consumer under a purchase scenario has long been considered as a core aspect of brand equity. With the digital environments, avenues through which awareness is created have increased. All sponsored posts, display banners, and influencer references are instances of awareness building touchpoints, and the sum total of these exposures dictates the degree of salience a brand has in the mind of a consumer (Edwin, 2023). The current hypothesis in terms of marketing is directly supported by a number of recent studies that brand awareness mediates the relationship between

marketing communication and purchase behavior (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020), which can be directly translated into the central hypothesis of the present study.

2.1 Research Framework and Hypotheses.

This study has ten hypotheses that are summarized by the conceptual framework below. The framework places brand awareness as a pivotal mediator among three independent digital marketing constructs and consumer purchase behavior.

Figure No 1: Hypothesized Research Framework



2.2 Research Framework: Hypotheses Summary

H	Relationship	Statement
H1	SMM → CPB	Social media marketing has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.
H2	OA → CPB	Online advertising has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.
H3	IM → CPB	Influencer marketing has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.
H4	SMM → BA	Social media marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness.
H5	OA → BA	Online advertising has a significant positive effect on brand awareness.
H6	IM → BA	Influencer marketing has a significant positive effect on brand awareness.
H7	BA → CPB	Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase behavior.
H8	SMM → BA → CPB	Brand awareness mediates the relationship between SMM and consumer purchase behavior.
H9	OA → BA → CPB	Brand awareness mediates the relationship between OA and consumer purchase behavior.
H10	IM → BA → CPB	Brand awareness mediates the relationship between IM and consumer purchase behavior.

3. Methodology

This research design was positivist and quantitative based on the survey technique, which is highly suitable in the measurement of latent constructs, and in testing the structural relationship using a large sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data were collected on 300 adult respondents living in urban Pakistan and satisfying two screening factors, that is, active usage of at least one digital social networking site and having made at least one online purchase in the last six months before the survey. A close-ended, structured questionnaire (5 constructs: social media marketing (SMM, five items), online advertising (OA, four items), influencer marketing (IM, four items), brand awareness (BA, five items), and consumer purchase behavior (CPB, five items)) was used in order to provide demographic diversity by distributing the questionnaire online and conducting in-person intercept interviews. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) and existing validated scales, which were based on the previous literature were utilized to guarantee construct validity.

Data were processed in the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) run in SmartPLS 4, which is commonly suggested as an exploratory theory testing with reflective constructs in a social science setting (Hair et al., 2021). The evaluation of the measurement model showed that it has acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach alpha and composite reliability greater than .70) and convergent validity (average variance extracted greater than .50) and acceptable indicator loadings (greater than the .65 level). Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to evaluate the structural model to obtain path coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics and p-values, and to evaluate mediation by examining particular indirect effects. Procedural remedies addressed common method bias such as assuring anonymity and separation of scales.

4. Analysis

Table No 1: Correlation Matrix (N = 300)

	SMM	OA	IM	BA	CPB
SMM	1.000				
OA	.051	1.000			
IM	.018	-.087	1.000		
BA	.483**	.399**	.305**	1.000	
CPB	.486**	.426**	.380**	.737**	1.000

Note: SMM: Social Media Marketing; OA: Online Advertising; IM: Influencer Marketing; BA: Brand Awareness; CPB: Consumer Purchase Behavior. **p < .01 (two-tailed).

Analysis is performed in steps, starting with descriptive statistics, followed by measurement model testing, path analysis, and lastly, mediation testing. Findings are provided in nine tables based on the PLS-SEM output.

The correlation table shows significant positive relations among the constructs. Brand awareness and consumer purchase behavior are the most closely related ($r = .737$), which predetermines the strong mediating effect later in the structural analysis. The three marketing predictors are correlated with both BA and CPB, as well as the inter-predictor correlations are rather low, which indicates that multicollinearity is not a threat to the structural model (Sarwar et al., 2025).

Table No 2: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Items	N	M	Min	Max	SD
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	SMM1–SMM5	300	3.396	1.00	5.00	0.866
Online Advertising (OA)	OA1–OA4	300	3.367	1.25	5.00	0.892
Influencer Marketing (IM)	IM1–IM4	300	3.430	1.25	5.00	0.876
Brand Awareness (BA)	BA1–BA5	300	3.363	1.00	5.00	0.891
Consumer Purchase Behavior (CPB)	CPB1–CPB5	300	3.331	1.20	5.00	0.850

Note: Each of the items was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Table No 3: Outer Loadings (Measurement Model)

Indicator	Construct	Loading (λ)	SD	t	p
SMM1	Social Media Marketing	.743	.032	23.135	.000
SMM2	Social Media Marketing	.660	.044	14.935	.000
SMM3	Social Media Marketing	.698	.037	18.790	.000
SMM4	Social Media Marketing	.750	.030	24.884	.000
SMM5	Social Media Marketing	.682	.042	16.273	.000
OA1	Online Advertising	.788	.028	27.687	.000
OA2	Online Advertising	.792	.032	24.450	.000
OA3	Online Advertising	.676	.047	14.387	.000
OA4	Online Advertising	.759	.037	20.351	.000
IM1	Influencer Marketing	.760	.044	17.109	.000
IM2	Influencer Marketing	.822	.034	24.345	.000
IM3	Influencer Marketing	.739	.046	15.965	.000
IM4	Influencer Marketing	.691	.053	13.040	.000
BA1	Brand Awareness	.682	.040	16.962	.000
BA2	Brand Awareness	.777	.028	28.032	.000
BA3	Brand Awareness	.701	.036	19.732	.000
BA4	Brand Awareness	.710	.032	22.388	.000
BA5	Brand Awareness	.660	.041	15.907	.000
CPB1	Consumer Purchase Behavior	.702	.034	20.514	.000
CPB2	Consumer Purchase Behavior	.690	.036	19.290	.000
CPB3	Consumer Purchase Behavior	.715	.032	22.073	.000
CPB4	Consumer Purchase Behavior	.690	.034	20.413	.000
CPB5	Consumer Purchase Behavior	.738	.030	24.470	.000

Note: All outer loadings are above the advised minimum figure, which is .650 (Hair et al., 2022). The bootstrapping was performed with 5,000 subsamples.

In Table no 2, mean scores on all constructs are close to the middle of the scale (3.33-3.43), which indicates that there are moderate-to-positive perceptions about the digital marketing activities and purchase behavior in the sample. The standard deviations (.850-892) are sufficient, indicating that there is sufficient variability to avoid the range restriction biasing the consequent correlational and structural analysis (Naeem et al., 2026).

In Table no 3, Each indicator loading is above the .650 mark suggested by Hair et al. (2022), which proves that each item plays a significant role in its corresponding construct. OA2 (.792) and IM2 (.822) have the highest loadings but the lowest, BA5 (.660) and SMM2 (.660) are well above the cutoff and this is reflective of the overall quality of the instrument in terms of measurement (Mahmood et al., 2026).

Table No 4: Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	.751	.833	.501
Online Advertising (OA)	.749	.841	.570
Influencer Marketing (IM)	.749	.840	.570
Brand Awareness (BA)	.749	.833	.500
Consumer Purchase Behavior (CPB)	.750	.833	.500

Note: CR = Composite Reliability. Cronbachs alpha is above .70 and the CR is above .70 meaning that there is acceptable internal consistency reliability. AVE = or above 0.50 is a sign of sufficient convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Each of the constructs is within the recommended thresholds.

All the constructs address the traditional criteria of reliability and convergent validity. The alpha values of Cronbach lie between .749 and .751, the composite reliability values lie between .833 and .841 and the values of average variance extracted (AVE) are between .500 and .570 all of which are within the acceptable level. These findings affirm that the measurement model offers a formidable basis on structural analysis (Khalid et al., 2026).

Table No 5: R-Square Values (Coefficient of Determination)

Endogenous Variable	R ²	R ² Adjusted	SD	t	p
Brand Awareness (BA)	.485	.480	.039	12.464	.000
Consumer Purchase Behavior (CPB)	.549	.547	.040	13.773	.000

Note: R² of 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75 are viewed as weak, moderate, and substantial, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). There is moderate explanatory power in both endogenous variables.

Table No 6: Structural Model — Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

Path	β	M	SD	t	p	f ²
SMM → BA	.456	.457	.039	11.684	.000	.401
OA → BA	.397	.399	.041	9.612	.000	.304
IM → BA	.333	.336	.040	8.340	.000	.214
BA → CPB	.741	.743	.027	27.721	.000	1.214

Note: β = standardized path coefficient. f² effect sizes of .02, .15 and .35 are small, medium and large effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988). It was bootstrapped using 5,000 subsamples. All paths are significant at p < .001.

In table no 5, the three digital marketing predictors are significant contributors to the brand awareness (R² = .485), and consumer purchase behavior (R² = .549), with a full structural model explaining 54.9% of the variance, which is moderate according to Hair et al. (2022). These values show that the model accounts a high percentage of the values that drive both constructs, which justifies the relevance of the selected predictors (Kamran et al., 2026).

In table no 6, all four direct structural paths are significant at a p-value of <.001. Social media marketing exerts the largest influence on brand awareness (β = .456, t = 11.684), followed by online advertising (β = .397, t = 9.612) and influencer marketing (β = .333, t = 8.340). Brand awareness, its turn, exhibits a high and a very substantial impact on consumer purchase behavior (β = .741, t = 27.721, f² = 1.214) meaning that it is the most influential factor in the model (Fahad et al., 2026).

Table No 7: Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)

Indirect Path	β	M	SD	t	p
SMM → BA → CPB	.337	.339	.032	10.454	.000
OA → BA → CPB	.294	.296	.034	8.576	.000
IM → BA → CPB	.247	.249	.032	7.780	.000

Note: Brand Awareness (BA) is significant in all the three cases at $p < .001$ indicating that all the three independent variables have full Mediating relationships with Consumer Purchase Behavior (CPB) as no direct paths are indicated between SMM, OA, and IM with Consumer Purchase Behavior (CPB) in the structural model.

The mediation analysis confirms that brand awareness fully mediates each digital marketing–CPB relationship. The strongest correlation of social media marketing on consumer purchase behavior in terms of brand awareness is followed by online advertising ($\beta = .294$, $t = 8.576$) and influencer marketing ($\beta = .247$, $t = 7.780$). All indirect impacts are noteworthy, and a single bit of the digital marketing-purchase chain cannot be explained by awareness (Bibi et al., 2026).

Table No 7: Total Effects

Path	β	M	SD	t	p
SMM → BA	.456	.457	.039	11.684	.000
OA → BA	.397	.399	.041	9.612	.000
IM → BA	.333	.336	.040	8.340	.000
BA → CPB	.741	.743	.027	27.721	.000
SMM → CPB	.337	.339	.032	10.454	.000
OA → CPB	.294	.296	.034	8.576	.000
IM → CPB	.247	.249	.032	7.780	.000

Note: The SMM to CPB, OA to CPB and IM to CPB are indirect-only (mediated entirely by BA).

The overall effects table brings together both direct and indirect channels, which ensures that brand awareness is the only channel on which digital marketing has an effect on buying. Social media marketing has the greatest overall impact on consumer purchase behavior ($\beta = .337$) and influencer marketing although important has the least overall impact ($\beta = .247$) indicating that influencer-based awareness takes time to develop into purchase behavior.

Table No 9: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Path / Relationship	β	t	p	Decision
H1	Social Media Marketing → Consumer Purchase Behavior (Total Effect)	.337	10.454	.000	Supported
H2	Online Advertising → Consumer Purchase Behavior (Total Effect)	.294	8.576	.000	Supported
H3	Influencer Marketing → Consumer Purchase Behavior (Total Effect)	.247	7.780	.000	Supported
H4	Social Media Marketing → Brand Awareness	.456	11.684	.000	Supported
H5	Online Advertising → Brand Awareness	.397	9.612	.000	Supported
H6	Influencer Marketing → Brand Awareness	.333	8.340	.000	Supported
H7	Brand Awareness → Consumer Purchase Behavior	.741	27.721	.000	Supported
H8	SMM → BA → CPB (Mediation)	.337	10.454	.000	Supported
H9	OA → BA → CPB (Mediation)	.294	8.576	.000	Supported



H10	IM → BA → CPB (Mediation)	.247	7.780	.000	Supported
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Note: Significance threshold: $p < .05$. All the 10 hypotheses were justified at $p < .001$. Bootstrapping using 5,000 subsamples was used.

The data supports every one of the ten hypotheses that are proposed in this study. The digital marketing strategies show a relatively strong and steady impact on brand awareness and consumer purchase behavior, and brand awareness plays a complete mediating role in all three of the indirect paths. The fact that support has been applied to hypotheses in a consistent manner adds more credence to the theoretical framework.

4.1 Discussion

The results of this research are a consistent and practically significant image of the functioning of digital marketing. Whenever a brand spends money on social media content, buys online placements, or even sponsors an influencer, the direct result is not a sale but recognition. Unaware consumers become aware; loosely familiar consumers become confident. And it is through that platform of awareness that the purchase decision ultimately comes out. This mediating variable, measured with accuracy by PLS-SEM, is consistent with the classical brand equity theory (Edwin, 2023), as well as more recent studies that have recorded awareness as a gateway variable in digital settings (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020).

The most notable discovery in the research is possibly the strength of the impact brand awareness is on consumer purchase behavior ($=.741$). It is not a small mediating factor, but rather a dominant one implying that those brands that manage to develop awareness via digital means have a significant conversion advantage. This has a direct implication to marketing practitioners: campaigns cannot be judged based on immediate click-through or conversion rates. The investment is an awareness-based campaign that will touch a large number of people and put the brand into the memory of the consumer, even though the causal chain may take days or weeks to complete its course.

There are limitations to this study. Cross-sectional design is a one-time trend that it is not possible to trace the dynamics of accumulation of awareness and subsequent purchase. Although the sample is large enough to apply PLS-SEM, it is geographically focused in urban Pakistan which can restrict its generalizability to other markets or other cultural settings. Self-reported scales create a social desirability bias, and the relatively small inter-predictor correlations indicate that future studies could investigate the effect of interaction between the influencers and the awareness raised by paid advertisements.

Further research needs to take into account longitudinal designs that monitor consumers after exposure to the first brand to purchase, and experimental designs that manipulate the combination of marketing channels to provide a more definitive direction of causality. It would be interesting to expand the framework with such variables as consumer trust, perceived authenticity of influencers, and platform-related impacts. Nevertheless, the current study is not in vain: it proves that brand awareness is not an additional factor to focus on when developing a digital marketing strategy but the driving force according to which social media campaigns, online



advertising, and collaboration with influencers eventually lead to sales. The brands that do not consider the role of awareness in the competition to maximize the conversion rates can be compromising the same mechanism that they rely on their digital investments.

5. Conclusion

In this study, social media marketing was the strongest source of brand awareness ($=.456$), which demonstrates the participatory and interactive character of social media, such as Instagram and Tik Tok. In contrast to the old-fashioned advertising, social media enables the brands to join the discussion, reply to the posts, and co-create content with consumers all of which enhance the brand imprint in memory. Online advertisement came next ($=.397$), which is consistent with the results of (Giombi et al., 2022), who found that repeated and targeted exposure strengthens recall. Although the smallest of the three effects ($=.333$), the effect of influencer marketing is nevertheless very strong, which is consistent with the finding of (Hudders et al., 2021) since the author concludes that the credibility of influencers creates the type of trusted awareness that passive advertising does not always provide.

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