

From Brand Awareness to Digital Engagement: A Systematic Review of Customer-Based Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) is an essential framework in brand management that explains how consumers develop awareness, associations, perceptions, and loyalty toward a brand. This model has become one of the most widely used approaches to evaluate brand equity from the consumer perspective. However, the rapid digital transformation has significantly reshaped the interaction patterns between consumers and brands, requiring a re-examination of CBBE in the digital context. This study aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on CBBE in the digital age, guided by the PRISMA protocol. A total of twenty-eight peer-reviewed articles collected from international databases such as Scopus focusing on publications from recent years. The review finds that digital engagement, across cognitive, emotional and behavioral forms primarily strengthens brand awareness and brand loyalty within the CBBE framework. Evidence also shows that brand image often mediates this relationship, supported by enhanced perceived quality through personalized and interactive digital experiences. This study contributes by clarifying the mechanism linking digital engagement to CBBE and by identifying research gaps, particularly the lack of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies.

Keywords: Brand Equity; Customer-Based Brand Equity; Digital Engagement; Digital Era.

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1. | INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the way consumers interact with brands in the modern era (Park, 2025). Social media has become the primary space where consumers not only receive messages but also create and disseminate brand-related content (Khan et al., 2019). This phenomenon demonstrates a behavioral shift from passive consumption toward active participation in shaping brand image (Enhances et al., 2017). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable users to directly engage with brands through comments, reviews, and collaborative content. Consequently, the boundary between marketers and consumers has become increasingly blurred, as both parties participate in the process of co-creating brand value.

This behavioral transformation reflects a fundamental change in the consumer decision-making process (Cheung, 2020). Studies have shown that digital experiences are becoming a dominant factor in shaping consumer perception and brand preference. Most consumers today rely on social media as their main source of information before making purchase decisions. As a result, organizations must adapt their communication strategies to build more authentic and sustainable digital relationships with customers. This shift marks the emergence of a new phase in the dynamics of brand–customer relationships within the digital environment (Samosir et al., 2023).

The concept of brand equity was originally introduced by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) as the additional value a brand provides to a product. However, the advent of digital technology has expanded this definition toward digital brand equity, in which brand value is constructed through online interactions (France et al., 2025). In this context, dimensions such as awareness, association, perceived quality, and loyalty must be adapted to align with the behavior of digital consumers (Cheung, 2020). Brand value today depends not only on corporate communication but also on digital experiences co-created with consumers (Qi et al., 2024). Therefore, building brand equity in the digital era requires active engagement between companies and audiences across multiple digital channels (Shandy et al., 2023).

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model has been reinterpreted in the digital context (Sadyk & Islam, 2022). This approach integrates elements such as social media engagement, digital trust, and online brand experience into the four core dimensions of CBBE (Haudi et al., 2022). Research shows that message consistency across digital platforms strengthens brand awareness and image. Moreover, perceived quality is now heavily influenced by online reviews and virtual customer experiences (Qi et al., 2024). Consequently, the concept of CBBE is no longer static but continues to evolve in response to the dynamics of digital interaction (France et al., 2025).

Digital engagement is defined as the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement of consumers with brands in digital spaces (Cantone et al., 2022). Through activities such as likes, comments, and shares, consumers actively contribute to brand exposure and reputation (Khan et al., 2019). Research indicates that a high level of digital engagement can strengthen brand awareness and image (Park, 2025). Furthermore, two-way interactions on social media enhance emotional closeness between brands and customers (Prasetio et al., 2022). Such engagement transforms consumers from mere marketing targets into partners in value co-creation (Aji et al., 2020).

Several studies have found that digital engagement has a direct relationship with brand loyalty (Samosir et al., 2023). Positive digital interactions reinforce brand trust and enhance customer retention. Xi and Hamari (2020) found that gamification can stimulate engagement, leading to increased brand equity. In addition, participatory behaviors such as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) play an essential role in strengthening brand trust and association (Lin et al., 2023). Therefore, digital engagement serves as a primary driver in the process of brand equity formation in the digital era (France et al., 2025).

Based on these conceptual gaps, this study aims to develop a systematic synthesis of the relationship between digital engagement and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in the digital era (France et al., 2025). Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the study explores conceptual developments, dominant dimensions, and research trends over the past two decades (Qi et al., 2024). Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

How has digital engagement been conceptualized and examined in relation to Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in the digital era? Which dimensions of CBBE are most influenced by digital engagement based on previous studies? What research trends and gaps have been identified in the study of digital engagement and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)?

Through these findings, the study is expected to provide theoretical contributions by clarifying the position of digital engagement as a key element in shaping CBBE, while also offering new directions for future digital marketing research (Cantone et al., 2022).

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Equity

The concept of brand equity is one of the core pillars of modern marketing studies, emphasizing the additional value that a brand provides to a product or service (Aaker, 1991). This value arises from consumers' perceptions, experiences, and emotional connections with a brand (Keller, 1993). Traditionally, brand equity has been viewed as a combination of awareness, association, perceived quality, and loyalty that reflects a brand's strength in consumers' minds (Cheung, 2020). A strong brand enables companies to charge premium prices, attract new customers, and maintain long-term competitive advantage (Qi et al., 2024).

As the digital business landscape evolves, the definition of brand equity has expanded to include elements of consumer interaction and digital experience (France et al., 2025). Recent studies highlight that brand value is now shaped not only by corporate communication but also by consumer engagement on digital platforms such as social media and online communities (Sadyk & Islam, 2022). Therefore, brand equity in the digital era is not solely measured by brand loyalty or association but also by the intensity of consumer engagement in digital activities that co-create value with the brand (Lin et al., 2023).

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model was developed by Keller (1993) as a conceptual framework for understanding how consumer perceptions build brand value. CBBE emphasizes that brand strength resides in consumers' minds, developed through four hierarchical stages: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (France et al., 2025). This model serves as the foundation for numerous studies that seek to measure brand equity from the psychological perspective of consumers (Cheung, 2020).

In the digital context, the dimensions of CBBE have been adjusted to reflect changes in consumer behavior and brand interaction patterns online (Qi et al., 2024). Elements such as digital trust, online experience, and social media engagement are increasingly incorporated into modern CBBE measurement (Haudi et al., 2022). Research indicates that consistent digital experiences strengthen brand awareness and associations among social media users. Moreover, digital trust has become crucial as consumers increasingly assess brand credibility through online interactions and user reviews (Sadyk & Islam, 2022).

The CBBE model also remains relevant in explaining the link between brand engagement and loyalty in the digital era. Studies have shown that higher consumer interaction levels on digital platforms positively affect brand image and loyalty (Prasetio & Azmi, 2024). Thus, understanding CBBE today involves not only passive consumer perceptions but also active participation in a dynamic digital ecosystem (Lin et al., 2023).

Digital Engagement

The concept of digital engagement refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand through digital platforms (Cantone et al., 2022). Engagement goes beyond passive activities such as viewing content; it includes active participation through commenting, sharing information, or co-creating value with brands (Khan et al., 2019). In contemporary marketing research, digital engagement is viewed as a key indicator of long-term brand–customer relationships (Park, 2025).

Studies indicate that digital engagement significantly contributes to building positive brand perceptions, enhancing trust, and increasing loyalty (Samosir et al., 2023). Such engagement can be fostered through social media marketing activities (SMMAs) involving interaction, entertainment, and content personalization (Aji et al., 2020). Additionally, digital interactions such as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) play a critical role in improving brand image and credibility (Lin et al., 2023). In the context of gamification, interactive elements have also been proven to enhance emotional attachment and positive brand perception (Xi & Hamari, 2020).

In the digital era, customer engagement not only strengthens individual relationships but also creates network effects that expand brand value within online communities (France et al., 2025). Therefore, digital engagement is a key factor bridging digital marketing activities and the formation of Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) (Cantone et al., 2022).

The Relationship between Digital Engagement and CBBE

Digital engagement plays a vital role in reinforcing all dimensions of CBBE, from awareness and associations to loyalty (Qi et al., 2024). Interactive activities on social media, such as likes and comments, significantly enhance brand awareness and expand brand reach (Park, 2025). Emotional interactions generated through personalized content strengthen brand associations and create positive brand images in consumers' minds (Haudi et al., 2022). Thus, digital engagement serves as a catalyst for building meaningful relationships between consumers and brands (Haudi et al., 2022).

Moreover, several studies have found that the effect of digital engagement on brand loyalty is mediated by variables such as brand trust and brand attachment (Cáceres et al., 2025). Consistent interactions on social media enhance brand reliability and credibility, which ultimately foster customer loyalty (Samosir et al., 2023). On the other hand, community-based digital engagement fosters co-creation, where consumers actively contribute to value creation

and strengthen brand equity (Sadyk & Islam, 2022). Consequently, the relationship between digital engagement and CBBE is mutually reinforcing and sustainable (France et al., 2025).

Conceptual Model of the Study

Based on the literature synthesis, digital engagement can be identified as a key variable that strengthens Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in the digital era (France et al., 2025). Digital engagement activities influence the dimensions of awareness, association, perceived quality, and loyalty simultaneously (Qi et al., 2024). The proposed conceptual model suggests that higher levels of digital engagement led to stronger brand equity (Cantone et al., 2022). Furthermore, variables such as brand trust, brand experience, and e-WOM may serve as reinforcing elements in this relationship (Haudi et al., 2022).

The proposed conceptual model focuses on the bidirectional relationship between digital engagement and the formation of customer-based brand equity. Within the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) framework, this model will be employed to review, classify, and synthesize findings from previous studies systematically. Thus, the analysis aims to enrich digital marketing theory and clarify the conceptual mechanisms connecting digital engagement and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) (Sadyk & Islam, 2022).

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to identify, analyze, and interpret research findings relevant to the topic of digital interaction in shaping customer-based brand equity (CBBE) in the digital age. The SLR approach is chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding of concept development and variable relationships through a systematic and transparent review of the literature (Kitchenham, 2004).

The literature search is conducted using Scopus, a reputable academic database. Keyword combinations are applied using Boolean operators to identify relevant articles (Snyder, 2019). The following keywords are used “brand equity” OR “digital engagement” OR “customer-based brand equity” OR “digital era”.

The search process produced a total number of scholarly articles published between 2010 and 2025. The review is conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology (Page, 2021), which involves several systematic stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Many articles were excluded primarily due to their misalignment with the research topic, as identified during the initial screening of titles and abstracts. Subsequently, a full-text review was conducted to further evaluate the focus, relevance, and quality of the remaining publications. The final selection resulted in 28 articles that met the following inclusion criteria: (1) empirical or conceptual studies examining the relationship between digital engagement and customer-based brand equity; (2) published between 2010 and 2025; (3) published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals; and (4) available in full text and in English.

Therefore, 28 articles were included in the descriptive and thematic synthesis (Braun, 2006), to understand the theoretical contributions and conceptual relationships between dimensions of digital engagement (such as interaction, participation, and emotional involvement) and the key components of CBBE (brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty).

This study provides a deeper understanding of how digital engagement strengthens customer-based brand equity in the digital era, in which sustained digital experiences,

interactions, and participation increasingly influence the relationship between customers and brands. The review holds strong academic rigor and practical relevance for the development of digital marketing strategies and brand management, given that the selected articles originate from reputable scholarly journals.

This study employs the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology to ensure transparency and clarity in the article selection process. The following PRISMA diagram illustrates the stages of identification, screening, and eligibility assessment leading to the final set of articles included in the systematic analysis.

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and registers only

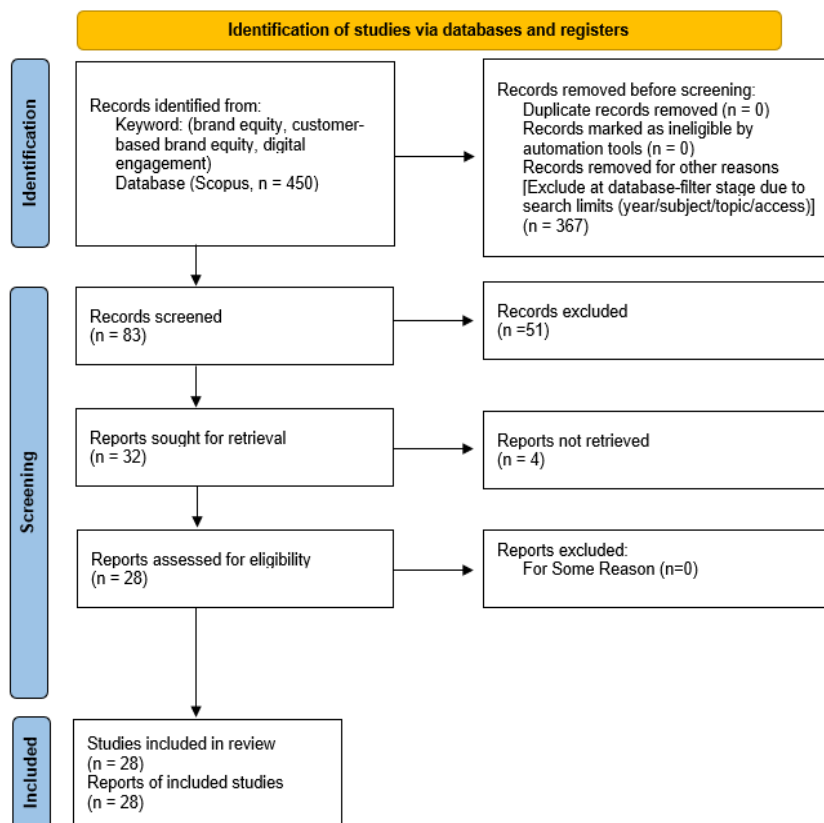


Figure 1. Prism Analysis Report

4. | RESULTS

Following a systematic review of 28 selected scholarly articles examining the correlation between digital interaction and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), it is evident that digital participation has significant implications for building and strengthening customer-centered brand value in the digital era. Digital interaction is fundamentally understood as consumers' active engagement with a brand through various activities conducted via digital media, such as social media participation, online reviews, user-generated content, and brand-designed virtual experiences (Brodie, 2011).

Most studies conceptualize digital interaction through three core dimensions cognitive, affective, and behavioral which reflect how consumers think, feel, and act toward a brand within a digital environment (Hollebeek, 2014) The theoretical foundations frequently employed in these studies draw upon Keller's (1993), Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, as well as the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian, 1974),

which positions digital interaction as a stimulus capable of influencing consumers' emotional responses and behavioral outcomes toward a brand. Several studies also adopt Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Uses and Gratification framework (Katz, 1973), to explain how reciprocity and the value gained from digital participation can strengthen the relationship between consumers and brands.

The results indicate that brand awareness and brand loyalty are the CBBE dimensions most strongly influenced by digital engagement. Interactive digital activities such as social media campaigns, influencer-generated content, and two- recognition and foster customer loyalty (Islam, 2019). In several studies, brand image appears as a mediating variable that shapes the pathway toward digital loyalty. Authentic, consistent, and engaging digital content helps cultivate positive perceptions of the brand, ultimately strengthening consumer trust and commitment. Meanwhile, perceived quality also improves when a brand is able to deliver digital experiences that are enjoyable, responsive, and personalized. This enhancement is often facilitated through strategies such as personalized marketing, the use of interactive chatbots, or live-streaming activities that enable real-time interaction between consumers and the brand.

These factors indicate that as consumers' digital consumption increases, so does their influence on the development of personal value from both emotional and relational perspectives. Digital engagement not only enhances brand exposure in dynamic or uncertain environments but also strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and the brand through interactive and engaging content.

From a research trend perspective, scholarly attention to the phenomenon of digital engagement has increased substantially during 2020–2025, particularly in relation to social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and live e-commerce environments. The findings reflect a paradigm shift from traditional marketing communication toward engagement-driven marketing. In more advanced forms of digital engagement such as AI-driven interactions and brand integration within the metaverse consumers are no longer positioned as passive recipients of brand messages (Leung, 2023).

However, several research gaps remain to be addressed. Most studies focus on specific industry contexts, such as cosmetics, hospitality, and higher education, which limits the generalizability of the findings across broader sectors. Furthermore, longitudinal research examining the long-term effects of digital engagement on brand loyalty remains limited (Leckie, 2016). Cultural and psychographic factors have also not been extensively incorporated into conceptual models exploring the relationship between digital engagement and CBBE, even though these aspects significantly influence how consumers interact with brands in the digital environment.

Overall, the findings of this review highlight that engaging with customers through digital platforms has become a crucial component in building strong, customer-centered brands in today's digital landscape. Brands that are able to manage digital interactions in an authentic, engaging, and meaningful way aligned with consumers' emotional needs are more likely to foster enduring loyalty and enhance customer perceptions of the brand.

5. | DISCUSSION

This research emphasizes the critical role of digital engagement in building Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in today's digital environment, where consumer–brand interactions have shifted from one-way communication to dynamic and participatory

exchanges. Digital engagement generates meaningful experiences that reinforce essential components of CBBE, particularly brand recognition and customer loyalty. These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that active consumer participation on digital platforms accelerates the development of brand awareness and strengthens loyalty through sustained emotional connections (Islam, 2019).

Within the CBBE theoretical framework (Keller, 1993), digital engagement serves as a bridge linking consumer perceptions to the brand value constructed in their minds (Hollebeek, 2014). Digital activities such as social media marketing, user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and engaging brand storytelling encourage consumers not only to recognize a brand but also to participate in shaping its meaning and relevance (Lou, 2019). When consumers are emotionally and cognitively engaged through digital experiences, they reinforce brand associations and deepen trust, ultimately contributing to higher levels of brand loyalty.

The synthesis further reveals that the brand image dimension serves as a critical link between digital engagement and brand loyalty (Bilgihan, 2016). Positive brand perceptions emerge from digital experiences that are enjoyable, reliable, and aligned with consumer values. This finding reinforces the importance of content marketing strategies that are not only informative but also emotionally resonant and authentic, as emphasized in Hollebeek's (2014) research. In the current digital era, consumers are not merely seeking information they increasingly value deep, personalized connections with a brand's narrative and core identity. Consequently, engagement-driven branding has evolved from a promotional tactic into a strategic approach for building enduring relationships grounded in shared values and mutual trust.

However, while digital engagement has demonstrated substantial benefits for strengthening CBBE, this study also identifies several conceptual and practical challenges. A key concern involves ensuring that digital interactions remain authentic and free from manipulation. Overly aggressive tactics such as clickbait or artificially engineered engagement campaigns risk undermining consumer trust and potentially diminishing brand equity, as noted by Sternberg (2020). Therefore, maintaining an appropriate balance between interactivity and ethical responsibility is essential for sustaining long-term digital relationships between consumers and brands.

Furthermore, digital engagement is still predominantly examined within a quantitative framework using structural models. While this approach is effective for measuring relationships among variables, it is insufficient for capturing qualitative elements such as customers' emotional experiences, the cultural context of digital environments, or the symbolic meanings embedded in online interactions (Brodie R. J., 2013). Therefore, future research opportunities lie in the integration of mixed method approaches to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social dynamics underlying digital engagement.

These findings yield meaningful and significant implications. For practitioners, this study demonstrates that effective management of digital interactions should prioritize creating experiences that are relevant, accessible, and personalized. Brands need to optimize strategies centered on community building, co-creation, and social storytelling so that customers feel integrated into the brand's identity (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). For scholars, the results offer an opportunity to expand the CBBE model by more explicitly incorporating digital

participation as a key determinant of brand value in an increasingly interactive technological environment.

Overall, this discussion reinforces that a brand's success in building customer-based brand equity in the digital era depends not only on product quality or visual appeal, but also on the brand's ability to cultivate continuous and meaningful digital relationships. Digital interaction is not merely a mode of communication; it constitutes a form of social relationship that shapes customers' perceptions, beliefs, and loyalty toward the brand. Therefore, understanding and strategically managing digital participation becomes essential for establishing competitive brand advantages in the future.

6. | CONCLUSION

This study presents a comprehensive synthesis of the relationship between digital engagement and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in the digital era, with results that clearly address the three research questions. First, the literature shows that digital engagement is conceptualized as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of consumers through social media, user-generated content, e-WOM, gamification, and interactive digital experiences that shape consumer perceptions and responses to brands (France et al., 2025). Second, the synthesis of 28 articles reveals that the two CBBE dimensions most strongly influenced by digital engagement are brand awareness and brand loyalty, where awareness increases through digital exposure, interaction, and participation, while loyalty is strengthened through emotional closeness, trust, and consistent digital experiences (Park, 2025). Third, the literature review reveals a trend of social media research dominance, limited sectoral focus, and the use of cross-sectional quantitative designs. While research gaps arise from the lack of longitudinal studies, the lack of cross-cultural studies, and the limited exploration of new forms of engagement such as AI-driven interaction and metaverse engagement (Sadyk & Islam, 2022). Overall, these findings confirm that digital engagement plays a crucial role in shaping CBBE, particularly through strengthening brand awareness and brand loyalty, while also opening opportunities for future research to expand the conceptual model and methodological approach in the evolving context of digital marketing.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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