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The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies in Enhancing Halal Brand Visibility in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria. Despite the growing global demand for halal products and the increasing acceptance of halal branding as a mainstream phenomenon, halal businesses in Nigeria continue to face challenges in achieving visibility, competitiveness, and recognition in both Muslim and non-Muslim markets. Having adopted a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen halal business owners and managers in the cosmetics and food and beverage sectors. Data were analysed thematically using NVivo software, which revealed four major themes: digital marketing strategies for visibility, perceptions of effectiveness, impacts on visibility, recognition and reputation, and challenges in implementation. The findings show that businesses employ diverse digital tools, particularly Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Google Ads, to engage audiences and strengthen visibility. Business owners rated digital marketing as highly effective, with improvements noted in sales, customer engagement, and brand recognition. Digital marketing also enhanced competitiveness by showcasing halal certification and ethical values, thereby appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. However, challenges such as limited resources, content creation demands, knowledge gaps in SEO and analytics, and the need to balance creativity with Shariah compliance were recurrent across businesses. The study concludes that digital marketing is central to the visibility and competitiveness of halal brands in Nigeria, offering opportunities to expand market reach and build consumer trust. It recommends capacity-building through training, financial support, and tailored digital resources that align with halal principles. By addressing these barriers, halal businesses can optimise digital platforms to consolidate their market presence and strengthen their role in the growing halal economy.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Strategies, Halal Branding, Visibility, Nigeria, Qualitative Study

INTRODUCTION

Within the brand market, social networking sites (SNSs) present both potential and obstacles. In today's business landscape, social media platforms have changed how firms communicate with their clientele (Fetais, Algharabat, Aljafari, & Rana, 2023). Given the benefits that businesses can reap, numerous brands have opted for various social media networks (Kim & Ko, 2012). These benefits encompass engaging with both present and prospective customers (Koivisto & Mattila, 2018) boosting customer engagement (AlFarraj et al., 2021) and fostering more robust brand associations (Fetais et al., 2023). To align with the current realities, several halal MSEs have adopted suitable digital marketing strategies to improve their visibility and competitiveness in the global arena because of the sharp rise in internet users in this era (Alomari, Maqableh, Salah, Alshaketheep, & abu Jay, 2020). Given that today's consumers are accustomed to the virtual environment, these companies have recognised the value of digital platforms as a source of leads and customer conversion (Faruk, Rahman, & Hasan, 2021). Consumers now spend more time on digital platforms for a range of purposes, especially to research brands before making purchase decisions. Although several halal SMEs have developed effective digital marketing strategies, particularly to capitalize on the opportunities presented by digital platforms, the academic literature still lacks insights into how these tactics have impacted halal brand visibility in Nigeria.

While a review of the literature indicates that academic researchers have attempted to understand how digital marketing influences brand visibility, hardly any studies have adopted a qualitative research approach to understand how digital marketing strategies have contributed to halal brand visibility, and no study has examined this issue from the viewpoint of halal SMEs in Nigeria. In an era of extensive online engagement, Ragab and Arisha (2018) reveal a significant association between digital marketing and brand recognition. Having reviewed the literature to look into how digital advertising affects brand awareness (Mahaputra & Saputra, 2021), document the relationship between word of mouth and brand awareness, how advertising is related to brand awareness, and how product quality is related to brand awareness. Compared to the previous studies where quantitative methods were mostly employed, this study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria.

As an emerging halal market with a large Muslim population, Nigeria's business environment presents a great opportunity for halal SMEs, especially those aiming to capitalise on the global halal trend and expand. Despite the giant potential that Nigeria's business landscape offers, halal brands have continuously faced enormous challenges in gaining recognition and establishing visibility in the country's broader market, especially due to the absence of institutional and regulatory frameworks (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020). In addition, as Nigeria's halal market is a segment of the broader consumer market, halal brands currently struggle to gain adequate visibility compared to other mainstream brands catering to a larger audience. As documented by Jaiyeoba et al. (Jaiyeoba et al., 2020), while Nigerian consumers are aware of halal products, many still struggle to fully understand their significance in the context of ethical consumption. Such limited awareness can negatively impact the visibility of halal brands, as consumers may not actively seek out these products. Hence, halal businesses in Nigeria must adopt strategic digital marketing approaches that effectively communicate their halal credentials and connect with increasingly discerning and tech-savvy consumers.

Meanwhile, the term "halal" originates from Islamic principles, signifying permissibility. In the halal industry, the term refers to designated goods and services that comply with Islamic ethical and nutritional regulations. These include, but are not limited to, food and beverages, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, finance, fashion, and tourism. For a product or service to be considered halal, it must adhere to strict guidelines derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, encompassing elements, such as lawful sourcing, humane treatment of animals, cleanliness, and ethical business conduct (Wan Ismail et al., 2024). Beyond its religious connotation, halal has evolved into a global standard for quality, safety, and integrity, attracting not only Muslim consumers but also non-Muslims seeking wholesome and ethically produced goods. As a result, halal certification has become a valuable brand asset, signifying trust and authenticity (Kuka & Jakada, 2015).

Given that the lack government targeted support for the halal industry in Nigeria, it is timely to understand how businesses in this industry use digital marketing strategies to enhance their visibility. Therefore, this research seeks to examine the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria. It aims to identify the specific digital tools and techniques that are most effective in engaging Muslim and non-Muslim consumers, fostering brand awareness, and driving growth within the halal sector. By exploring current practices, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital innovation can bridge the gap between halal producers and consumers in the Nigerian context, thereby supporting both economic development and cultural inclusion.

That said, the rest of this research is structured as follows: Section Two focuses on literature review, focuses on digital marketing strategies, review of literature on halal branding. Section Three discusses the methodology and data. Section presents the analysis performed by the researchers. Section Four discusses the findings. This is followed by the implications of the study. The final section concludes and highlights the limitations of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing strategies are various methods and approaches that are employed by both individuals and companies as part of their digital marketing strategy to advertise their goods and services, establish brand recognition, interact with their target market, and accomplish marketing goals. These methods cover a wide range of topics, including audience engagement, platform selection, content generation, and performance measurement (Van den Eijnden, Lemmens, & Valkenburg, 2016). Social Networking Service (SNS) strategies, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn, are among the key tools used by organisations and individuals to build brand awareness and achieve a wide range of marketing objectives on social media platforms. These strategies involve the creation, management, and optimisation of social media profiles to interact with audiences, share content, and promote products or services (Capitello, Agnoli, Begalli, & Codurri, 2014). In today's digital landscape, where consumers are increasingly reliant on social media for information, engagement, and purchasing decisions, maintaining an effective SNS strategy has become indispensable for businesses seeking to thrive online (Sharma, 2015).

According to Schwarzl and Grabowska (2015), there are countless opportunities for social media marketing because it can help to attract customers, boosts volume, and enhances a company's reputation. To effectively, consistently, and efficiently reach more clients, social media marketing are a requirement (Asia Lockett, 2013). Social media is an effective tool for helping businesses identify and comprehend customer needs. Even though social media methods have aided countless businesses in their development, the fragmented nature of e-markets makes it difficult to meet consumer demands (Asia Lockett, 2013). Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) highlighted that social media content attracts customers, boosts volume, and enhances a company's reputation. Social media advertising offers potential for increased client support, brand improvement, and opportunities (Taherdoost, Sahibuddin, & Jalaliyoon, 2014).

Moreover, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) refers to the process of improving a websites or online content's visibility and ranking in search engine results pages (SERPs). The main objective of SEO is to improve a website's organic (non-paid) traffic by elevating its relevance and authority in search engine rankings (Yalçın & Köse, 2010). A company must take the necessary steps to promote its websites and online advertising to position it as high as possible on a Google search, as (Sparrow, Liu, & Wegner, 2011) research indicates that only a small percentage of internet users would scroll past the first page of a Google search. According to Internet World Statistics, over 2.4 billion people use the Internet daily, and it has long been established that optimising a company's website or advertisement to appear on the first page of a Google search will help raise brand awareness. Therefore, engaging in the practice of SEO has sound business principles.

In addition, online presence is another important digital marketing that can increase the visibility of halal brand. It is the visibility and portrayal of a person, company, group, or other entity on the internet. It includes all the digital platforms, channels, and mediums that an organisation uses to communicate with and market itself to its target market or audience. An online presence is defined as the ability to create and preserve a digital footprint that represents an entity's identity, brand, values, goods, services, and activities. As more and more people rely on the internet for information, communication, and transactions in today's digital age, having a strong online presence is crucial to efficiently reaching and connecting with a wide audience (Cioppi, Curina, Forlani, & Pencarelli, 2019). One of the key aspects of creating a successful freelancing career lies in one's ability to understand and learn how to market oneself, in addition to creating and maintaining an online presence. Prospective clients look for business online, and what they find or do not find can have a significant impact on their decision to do business with one company over another (Serafin & Cormack, 2018).

Similarly, website design plays a significant role in building confidence in new online merchants. Building consumer trust in a brand is essential for sole proprietors who manage their digital marketing campaigns to attract new customers and retain existing ones (Serafin & Cormack, 2018). Skulmowski et al. (2016) discovered that decisions about a website's credibility may be formed nearly instantaneously. This finding underscores the importance of web design when it comes to developing confidence in a business that a potential buyer may not be familiar with (Serafin & Cormack, 2018). Building consumer trust in a new or established brand is crucial to projecting a credible image online, and doing so calls for web design that goes beyond making an aesthetically pleasing website. Bartikowski and Singh (2014) note that a safe method of guaranteeing that both payment information and consumer privacy are maintained is necessary to build consumer trust in order to convert website visitors into online buyers.

Furthermore, Search Engine Marketing, also known as search marketing, refers to promotional actions intended to improve a company's, product's, service's, activity's, or organization's website visibility in search engine results. Pay-per-click (PPC) and SEM are the two most popular search marketing strategies (Terrance, Shrivastava, & Kumari, 2017). These strategies focus on increasing visibility through paid advertising, whereby companies bid for ad placement in sponsored sections of search engine results pages (SERPs) when specific keywords are searched. This ensures that their websites appear in prominent positions, thereby increasing the likelihood of attracting relevant web traffic (Terrance et al., 2017).

One of the key benefits of SEM is its ability to deliver immediate results. Unlike organic search engine optimisation (SEO), which can take time to build traction, SEM campaigns can be launched and begin showing results almost instantly. With the right keyword selection, audience targeting, and ad copy, businesses can reach a highly specific market segment quickly and effectively. This immediacy is particularly valuable for product launches, time-sensitive promotions, or campaigns aimed at generating fast conversions (Stucke & Ezrachi, 2016). While this discussion ends this session, the next section reviews studies on halal branding.

Review of Previous Studies on Halal Branding

Due to the Muslim population and increasing global demand for halal products, halal branding has emerged as a significant area of research in marketing and consumer behaviour. Several dimensions, such as brand loyalty, consumer perceptions, trust, and the overall impact of halal branding on the purchasing behaviour of halal consumers, have been explored in the existing literature (Ali, Xiaoling, Sherwani, & Ali, 2018; Idris, Alias, & Singh, 2020; Quoquab, Mohamed Sadom, & Mohammad, 2020; Utami, 2023; Zainudin, Haji Hasan, & Othman, 2020). Undoubtedly, existing studies have demonstrated the importance of halal branding in influencing Muslims and non-Muslims' choices. The growing interest in this domain of research also suggests that halal branding has found itself in a mainstream phenomenon intersecting with global trends in sustainability, ethical consumerism, and health consciousness. The rest of this section reviews relevant studies conducted in this area of

research to lay a proper theoretical foundation for this study, which intends to qualitatively investigate the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria.

Bukhari and Isa (2020) propose a conceptual model of Islamic branding that can be applied to both local and multinational brands in Muslim-majority and minority markets based on the theory of self-congruity and existing literature. The proposed model incorporated three antecedents: Islamic brand knowledge, religiosity, and corporate social responsibility. They noted that Muslim consumers are attracted to brands that portray congruity with their religious values, and as such, the proposed model could help create an emotional attachment with Islamic brands, thereby making it stronger. Hosain (2021) explains the technique of branding halal as a marketing strategy to capture the interests of Muslim consumers. To capture the Muslims' market segment, he argues that halal product producers should include features that can deeply satisfy the demands of Muslim consumers.

Khan et al. (2022) Collect data from 250 halal consumers in Kota Samarahan and Kuching, Malaysia, using a self-administered questionnaire and a convenience sampling method. They concluded that three antecedents of brand equity are positively correlated, supporting the notion that there is a significant relationship between halal brand equity, satisfaction, and image. The findings also demonstrated a correlation between halal brand trust and image. However, they were unable to establish a link between halal brand trust and equity. Alitakrim et al. (2021) assess Islamic branding, halal awareness, and product quality, while halal awareness and product quality positively impact the decision to buy halal socks under the Soka brand, the Islamic branding variable has no significant effect on the purchase decision.

Polas et al. (2018) reveal a significant positive correlation between corporate image and Islamic brand loyalty, as well as the characteristics of Islamic products. Additionally, the study finds a favourable correlation between Islamic brand loyalty, product attributes, and customer retention. However, contrary to the previous findings, the study did not identify any significant association between corporate image and customer retention. Joshi and Garg (2022) examine how modern consumer brand connections influence the prediction of brand sacredness, brand faithfulness, and Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) tendencies for halal cosmetic brands. Their findings demonstrate that brand experience, self-congruence, brand trust, and brand image have a significant impact on brand love. Additionally, brand love strongly shapes brand faithfulness, WOM, and brand sacredness. While this ends this section, the next section discusses halal branding from Maqasid Shariah perspective.

Theoretical Underpinning: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Theory

Since the proposed marketing mix theory of by Jerome McCarthy in the 1950s, advanced marketing theories have continued to evolve (Tao & Wei, 2023). One of the recent breakthroughs in marketing theory is the proposed integrated marketing, called Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). IMC theory is an integrated and strategic approach to marketing with the purpose of coordinating various wings of marketing communication used across all marketing channels. This theory identifies that unifying digital marketing tools to communicate with consumers will help achieve consistent communication across platforms that businesses, such as those in halal industry, used to reach their target audience (Al-azzam, Alserhan, & Al-assaf, 2024). In this case, this theory will serve as the theory underpinning this study which investigates the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria.

Among the theories that support a deeper understanding of brand visibility and digital marketing are Brand Equity Theory (Tasci, 2021), Digital Marketing Theory (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019), Brand Identity Theory (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020), and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory (Rehman, Gulzar, & Aslam, 2022). Given the purpose of this research, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is considered most suitable for this research, serving as the primary theoretical foundation and offering a comprehensive lens through which the coordinated use of digital tools can elevate brand visibility and engagement. Integrated Marketing

Communications (IMC) is a strategic framework that advocates for a unified, consistent, and synergistic approach to marketing communication (Anabila, 2020).

Rather than relying on isolated marketing tactics, IMC underscores the importance of harmonising various channels, such as advertising, public relations, social media, email marketing, and direct marketing, to deliver a coherent brand message (Keller, 2016). As Rehman et al. (2022) highlight, IMC is not just about message consistency; it is about creating a seamless brand experience across all consumer touchpoints. Smilansky (2017) likens it to a “symphony of messages” that, when orchestrated effectively, enhances brand recall, reinforces trust, and strengthens consumer engagement. In the digital age, the role of IMC becomes even more critical. Traditional one-way communication has evolved into an interactive, consumer-driven dialogue where trust, relevance, and immediacy define success. Digital platforms, such as social media, websites, mobile apps, and online review forums, allow consumers to access, evaluate, and respond to brand messaging in real time (Kerr, Valos, Luxton, & Allen, 2023).

Therefore, aligning messages across platforms enhances credibility and ensures that both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers receive a clear, coherent narrative about the brand’s values, standards, and offerings. Hence, this study adopts Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) as its guiding theoretical framework. IMC not only addresses the complexities of modern digital communication but also provides a strategic foundation for halal businesses seeking to enhance their visibility and resonance in the Nigerian market (Yusran, Masnita, Ali, & Jatunilawati, 2025). By leveraging IMC, the study seeks to explore how coordinated, consistent, and consumer-centric digital marketing strategies can effectively build brand awareness, foster trust, and drive growth within the halal sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to capture the nuanced ways in which digital marketing strategies shape halal brand visibility within the Nigerian context. This research approach prioritised depth over breadth, enabling a rich understanding of practices, meanings, and contextual influences (Lim, 2025). Qualitative methods were selected because brand visibility, and the signalling of halal authenticity online, are socially constructed phenomena best explored through managers’ lived experiences rather than through predetermined variables (Zavattaro, Daspit, & Adams, 2015). The population of interest comprised managers of halal small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Nigeria. Inclusion criteria required participants to hold decision-making responsibility for marketing activities and to represent firms that self-identify as halal-compliant in food and beverage as well as cosmetics sectors.

A purposive, maximum-variation sampling strategy, was employed to capture diversity across sector, gender, level of education, and firm age, and geographical location (Memon, Thurasamy, Ting, & Cheah, 2025). Sixteen halal SME managers were interviewed; this sample size was justified by the concept of information power and the attainment of thematic saturation, whereby additional interviews were no longer generating novel insights relevant to the research questions (Eze, Olatunji, Chinedu-Eze, & Bello, 2018). Data were collected using semi-structured interviews guided by a protocol developed based on the literature and the study’s objectives. The interview guide was structured to address three core areas. Firstly, participants were invited to discuss the digital marketing strategies they employed to enhance halal brand visibility, including their choice of platforms, campaign tactics, and communication styles (Maulana, Siradjuddin, Lutfi, & Galib, 2025). Secondly, interview questions explored managers’ perspectives on the effectiveness of these strategies, allowing respondents to reflect on their experiences and the value derived from digital marketing in promoting halal authenticity (A. A. A. Sharabati et al., 2024).

Thirdly, interview questions examined the impact of digital marketing on brand visibility, recognition, and reputation (Cioppi et al., 2019), with a focus on how these strategies influence consumer trust, brand positioning, and competitive advantage in the Nigerian market. Interestingly, the semi-structured format ensured consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for

participants to elaborate on issues they considered significant (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Open-ended questions and probes allowed participants to elaborate while ensuring consistent coverage of key topics. Interviews were conducted at times convenient to participants, either in person or via secure online platforms, with informed consent obtained beforehand (Naz, Gulab, & Aslam, 2022). With the respondents' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, professionally transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with field notes documenting non-verbal cues and contextual observations (H. B. Jaiyeoba, Jamaludin, Busari, & Amuda, 2024).

Meanwhile, data analysis followed thematic analysis (H. B. Jaiyeoba, Adewale, Haron, & Che Ismail, 2018). Based on the adopted analysis procedure, transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarisation, then coded inductively while remaining sensitised to concepts from digital marketing and halal branding. Codes were iteratively reviewed, collated into candidate themes, and refined through constant comparison within and across cases (Siti Sunaidah, 2024). To enhance trustworthiness, the team maintained an audit trail of analytic decisions, engaged in reflexive memo-writing, and discussed coding interpretations until consensus was reached; brief participant validations of preliminary interpretations were sought where feasible (H. B. Jaiyeoba & Haron, 2016). Nvivo software, which is qualitative analysis software, was used to organise the dataset and support transparent reporting. The final themes are presented with illustrative quotations to demonstrate analytic rigour and credibility (Ahmed et al., 2025).

ANALYSIS

Interviewee Demographic Profiles

The demographic and organisational profile of the sixteen interviewees highlights a diverse, yet thematically consistent, representation of halal SMEs in Nigeria. As presented in Table 1, the sample comprised predominantly female participants, with only three males, reflecting the strong involvement of women in halal enterprise management within the country. The age range spanned from the mid-20s to mid-40s, suggesting that both younger entrepreneurs and more experienced managers actively contribute to the halal business sector. Participants held a range of educational qualifications, from diploma to PhD level, indicating that halal SMEs attract individuals with varying academic backgrounds, though a substantial number possessed bachelor's and master's degrees, underscoring a relatively high level of formal education among managers. The businesses had been established for between two and six years, pointing to the relatively recent emergence and growth of halal SMEs in Nigeria. In terms of sectoral focus, the enterprises were mainly concentrated in beverages/food and cosmetics, sectors where halal authenticity is especially significant for consumer trust and brand credibility. Digital marketing channels varied widely across respondents, with Instagram and Facebook emerging as the most dominant platforms, supplemented by TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, blogs, Google Ads, websites, and email marketing. This spread illustrates a strategic use of both social and search-based tools to enhance brand visibility, reach diverse audiences, and signal halal compliance. Overall, the table reveals that halal SMEs in Nigeria are led by relatively young, educated managers who actively adopt a wide range of digital platforms to strengthen their brand presence and competitiveness in the market.

Table 1
Participants' Profile

Interviewee	Gender	Age Range	Position	Education Level	Year of Establishment	Types of Service/ Products	Digital Channels
1	Female	32	Manager		4years	Cosmetic	Tiktok/ WhatsApp
2	Female	45	Owner/ Manager	Master's Degree	6years	Beverages/ Food	FB, Instagram, WhatsApp
3	Female	28	Manager	Bachelor	4years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Tiktok
4	Female	39	Manager	Bachelor	6years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Google Ads
5	Female	34	Owner/ Manager	Ph.D.	5years	Cosmetic	Instagram, Tik tok, Youtube
6	Female	30	Manager	Masters	3years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, WhatsApp
7	Female	42	Marketing Manager	Masters	5years	Cosmetic	Instagram, FB, Tiktok
8	Male	27	Student	Bachelor	3years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Google Ads
9	Female	36	Owner/ Manager	Diploma	4years	Cosmetic	Instagram, FB, Blog
10	Female	40	Owner/ Manager	Bachelor	3years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, WhatsApp, SEO
11	Female	29	Manager	Master's Degree	2years	Cosmetic	Instagram, FB, Google
12	Male	33	Marketing Manager	Bachelor	4years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Google Ads
13	Female	38	Manager	Bachelor	3years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Google Ads, TikTok
14	Female	26	Manager	Bachelor	5years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, Website SEO
15	Female	31	Owner/ Manager	Bachelor	3years	Cosmetic	Instagram, Tiktok, Email
16	Male	44	Owner/ Manager	Bachelor	4years	Beverages/ Food	Instagram, FB, WhatsApp, Google Ads

Source: Author's own creation

Digital Marketing Strategies for Visibility

The digital marketing channels identified in the interview are Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, email marketing, YouTube, and Google Ads. The word query conducted in NVivo showed that Instagram is the primary digital tool, followed closely by Facebook, as illustrated in the Word Cloud in Figure 1 and Table 1. It was also observed that some of the halal businesses in Nigeria also leverage their websites and search engine optimization (SEO) to promote their activities and products.

Therefore, we market our halal products on these two platforms to specifically target this audience. Below is the verbatim quotation from interviewee 1:

“We focus on where our target audience, mainly women aged 18-35, spends their time online. Instagram and TikTok are particularly popular with this demographic”. (Interviewee 1)

According to interviewee 6, WhatsApp facilitates connections with local customers. The different benefits offered by the channels reinforce why various platforms are used by halal products for marketing. The following are the verbatim quotations from interviewee 6 and interviewee 11.

“We choose platforms based on where our target audience is most active. For example, WhatsApp helps us connect with local customers directly”. (Interviewee 6)

“We focus on platforms where we know our target audience is active. Since beauty and skincare are visual, Instagram has been the most effective. Facebook also helps us engage with older customers, while Google is useful for brand awareness”. (Interviewee 11)

Furthermore, some of the brands indicated that they utilised analytic metrics offered by digital marketing platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok; the number of views, comments, and likes allows businesses to gauge the level of engagement from their audience. Therefore, this informs the selection of platforms and content for marketing purposes. Drivas.(2022) It was also noted that social media analytics enhances user engagement. Below is the verbatim quotation from interviewee 1:

“It is based on where our target audience spends their time. We noticed a strong presence of beauty enthusiasts on Instagram and TikTok, so we prioritize those. We also analyse engagement data to refine our focus”. (Interviewee 1)

Moreover, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have high user volumes (Thelwall & Vis, 2017). This has made the platform attractive for digital marketing. Also, these platforms have been associated with a high presence of people under the age of 30 (Cuevas-Molano, Sánchez-Cid, & Gordo-Molina, 2022). Therefore, using them for digital marketing by halal businesses can allow them to benefit from the high population of youth who are interested in halal businesses. One important aspect to address here is how these brands are also aware of halal digital marketing. halal businesses should adhere to Shariah principles in every segment of their operations, including product development, marketing, sales, administration, and branding. Social media demands a great deal of creativity, some of which may exceed halal requirements. For example, in the case of a beauty and cosmetic brand, using women who display their “awrah” or incorporating hip-hop in food advertisements contradicts the principles of halal marketing. Halal businesses are required to navigate the complexities of digital marketing while remaining true to the tenets of halal.

The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing

The theme provides insights into the halal businesses' perceptions of the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategies they employed. All interviewees rated their digital marketing strategies between 7 to 9 out of 10. Specifically, four interviewees rated their methods as highly effective, scoring them 9 out of 10, while eight interviewees assessed their effectiveness at 8 out of 10. Additionally, four interviewees rated their strategies as 7 out of 10. This data suggests that the overall perception of the effectiveness of digital marketing was notably high among halal business owners.

For the interviewees who rated their digital marketing strategy as 7, a significant observation was the growth in sales, which they attributed to their marketing efforts. They reported steady growth and expressed a willingness to intensify their campaigns to achieve even greater sales outcomes. When asked to rate the effectiveness of their digital marketing, interviewee responses are as follows:

“I would rate it a 7/10. We have seen a growth in followers and enquiries, especially with our Instagram posts, but we are still learning to fully harness the potential of digital marketing”. (interviewee 10)

In contrast, those who rated their effectiveness as 8 out of 10 noted various positive impacts, including increased sales, enhanced website traffic, and higher levels of engagement. For the interviewees who rated their digital marketing strategy 9 out of 10, indicators of effectiveness include heightened brand awareness, substantial follower growth, and the ability to reach new audiences. The 7 rating differs from higher ratings in that it converts followers to sales. Below are their verbatim quotations:

“I would rate it a solid 8 out of 10. We have seen increased traffic to our website, higher sales, and more brand recognition. There is always room for improvement, especially in SEO”. (interviewee 1)

“I would rate it 9/10. We have seen significant growth in followers and engagement, and we have reached a wider audience than we initially expected”. (interviewee 9)

These varying perspectives indicate that halal business owners perceived the benefits of digital marketing channels differently. Nevertheless, the use of digital marketing has significantly enhanced the performance of halal businesses in Nigeria. The findings of this study align Wan (2023), where it was revealed that digital marketing not only boosts customer awareness but also fosters engagement and contributes to sales growth for businesses.

Impacts of Digital Marketing Strategies on Visibility, Recognition, and Reputation

In addition to assessing the effectiveness of the digital marketing approaches employed by halal businesses, the impact of digital marketing on the visibility, recognition, and reputation of businesses that offer halal products and services was also examined. Accordingly, digital marketing greatly boosts the visibility of halal businesses, as shown by the increase in public enquiries. For example, Interviewee 1 claims that individuals making enquiries often indicate that they learnt about the business on TikTok or Instagram. This case study illustrates how the promotion of halal products has generated public awareness, leading to an increased need to contact these businesses for further information. Although non-halal brands using digital marketing may also experience increased customer engagement, the specific focus on directing customers to halal businesses enhances overall awareness of halal brands. The following verbatim quotations from interviewee 7 and subsequently interviewee 11 illustrate this finding:

“We have seen an increase in website traffic and enquiries from both local and international customers.” [Interviewee 7]

Another aspect of visibility and recognition identified in the interviews was that digital marketing enables halal businesses to cultivate repeat customers and reach previously inaccessible markets. These advantages demonstrate how digital marketing provides exposure to millions of users across various digital platforms.

“Consistent engagement with our customers, answering their questions, and sharing detailed information about how our products are made and tested has greatly contributed. We also use influencer marketing with trusted beauty bloggers who advocate for halal products.” [Interviewee11]

Also, the digital marketing of halal businesses has led to influencers reaching out to become brand ambassadors and promote their products, as in Interviewee 3. Additionally, it was learnt that the visibility afforded by digital marketing extends beyond online interactions; it has also contributed to a rise in the number of customers visiting the physical stores of halal businesses. According to Nusran et

al. (2023), implementing digital marketing enhances awareness of halal products by enabling halal businesses to effectively promote awareness of their offerings, thereby enhancing the visibility of their products to a broader audience. Interviewees emphasize social media engagement with the public as a primary driver of their visibility. Through this social content, they interact with the public, thereby building brand awareness. Consistent interaction not only leads to an increased number of followers but also broadens brand recognition significantly. By fostering a dynamic online presence, brands can cultivate a loyal community around their products and encourage deeper connections with their audiences. This engagement also facilitates real-time feedback and dialogue, enabling brands to adjust their marketing strategies in response to consumer preferences and trends. Below are verbatim quotations from interviewee 11 and interviewee 12:

“We have seen a steady increase in followers and sales, and our brand is now more recognised. We have also received positive feedback from customers who feel that they can trust our products because of our transparency on digital platforms.” [Interviewee 11]

” We’ve seen a significant increase in online orders and interactions on social media. More people are now familiar with our brand, and many customers say they first discovered us online.” [Interviewee 12]

More importantly, the data indicated that the message promoted by halal businesses is effectively received when the audience perceives it as relatable and clear. Furthermore, content that highlights the promotion of halal products fosters greater engagement, as customers show a keen interest in understanding the specific ingredients that constitute these products as halal. Halal brands tailor many online engagements and interactions to address the ethical and health concerns associated with the “halal” label. As noted previously, young consumers have the flexibility to conduct thorough research on products before making purchasing decisions. Consequently, they seek to understand how halal brands differentiate themselves from conventional brands offering similar products. Health benefits and ethical processes of product development are the primary attributes that contribute to the distinct reputation and acceptability of halal brands. The following is verbatim quotation from interviewee 10:

“Nigerians are becoming more aware and accepting halal products options. We have noticed that younger generations are especially responsive to brands that promote ethical and health-conscious values online.” [Interviewee 10]

Initially, beauty products were primarily targeted at Muslim women’s communities; however, they have since gained visibility, recognition, and patronage from non-Muslim consumers who are increasingly interested in products free from toxic ingredients. This shift implies that digital marketing helps halal businesses reach a broader market beyond their targeted audience, creating visibility for people to learn about the products and ultimately broadening their appeal and acceptance. Transparency was another key benefit that halal businesses have gained from the visibility they get from digital marketing. The brand can show the process involved in its product development. So, consumers can confirm the brand’s halal status through the brand’s digital content. This aligns with the brand’s rationale for choosing platforms that enable it to display visual content. Here are verbatim quotations from interviewee 11 and interviewee 13:

“Digital marketing has allowed us to specifically target Muslim women seeking halal alternatives in cosmetics. We have created a strong online community and being able to offer something that meets both ethical and beauty standards gives us an edge.” [Interviewee 11]

“By focusing on halal certification and emphasizing natural, cruelty-free ingredients, we have been able to carve out a niche that attracts both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers who care about ethical beauty.” [Interviewee 13]

are able to make informed improvements that align with consumer preferences. This finding implies that digital marketing channels serve a dual purpose for halal businesses: they not only create visibility and raise awareness among the public but also facilitate a continuous learning process regarding how to enhance their offerings based on customer insights.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The overarching aim of this research was to investigate the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed three main themes: digital marketing strategies for visibility, the effectiveness of digital marketing, and the impact of digital marketing on visibility, recognition, and reputation. These themes collectively demonstrate how halal businesses are navigating the digital landscape to expand their reach, engage diverse audiences, and build stronger brand identities.

Specifically, the findings for the first theme show that halal businesses actively employ multiple digital tools, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Google Ads, email marketing, and SEO. Instagram and TikTok are especially popular among beauty and cosmetic brands for their strong visual appeal, while Facebook was used for community building and engaging older demographics. WhatsApp, on the other hand, provided a direct line of communication with customers for orders and service. These practices reflect the arguments of Alserhan (2010) and Wilson and Liu (Wilson & Liu, 2010), where it was observed that halal branding differs from conventional branding in its cultural and ethical context but still draws on mainstream marketing practices to achieve visibility. In Nigeria, halal businesses' adoption of diverse digital tools reflects this duality, adapting global digital trends while embedding the distinct identity of halal.

The findings for the second theme reveal high levels of confidence in digital marketing strategies with most rating them between 7 and 9 out of 10. Those giving a 7 acknowledged increased followers and enquiries but noted difficulties in fully translating engagement into sales. Higher ratings (8–9) were linked to measurable gains in sales, website traffic, and brand recognition. As one participant remarked, digital marketing had allowed them to “reach a wider audience than initially expected.” These varying perspectives suggest that while digital marketing is widely regarded as effective, outcomes depend on the capacity to convert online engagement into tangible results. These findings are consistent with the findings of Ali et al. (2018) and Idris et al. (2020), who highlighted that halal branding significantly shapes consumer trust, loyalty, and purchase intentions. By viewing digital marketing as an effective means of building awareness and customer confidence, halal businesses in Nigeria are reflecting the wider trend where perceived brand quality and trust directly influence consumer purchasing behaviour.

The findings for the third theme demonstrate that digital marketing significantly enhances the visibility of halal brands. Wider audience reach, customer enquiries, and repeat patronage were reported, alongside stronger brand reputation through transparency in halal certification and ethical practices, with both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers increasingly recognising halal products for their ethical and health-related attributes. Influencer collaborations and consistent social engagement were also highlighted as key drivers of recognition. The findings align with Quoquab et al. (2020) and Zainudin et al. (2020), who found that halal brand personality, particularly traits such as righteousness and sophistication, contributes to loyalty and stronger consumer-brand relationships. Similarly, the study of Joshi and Garg (2022) demonstrates that brand trust and consumer-brand connections foster word-of-mouth advocacy. In Nigeria, halal businesses' emphasis on ethical branding and clear communication has thus enhanced both their reputation and consumer confidence, extending their appeal beyond their traditional Muslim audience.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that digital marketing is central to halal branding in Nigeria, amplifying visibility, recognition, and reputation while reinforcing trust among consumers. In line with Utami (2023) and Polas et al. (2018), this study affirms that halal branding intersects not only with religiosity but also with broader global trends in ethical consumerism and health-conscious lifestyles.

Digital marketing therefore plays a critical role in positioning halal brands as competitive, trustworthy, and appealing to both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers alike in Nigeria.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this research contributes to the theoretical discourse on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) by demonstrating how halal SMEs in Nigeria adopt and integrate multiple digital tools to create a unified and coherent brand presence. IMC posits that the strategic coordination of communication channels enhances brand visibility and consumer engagement. The findings of this study extend the theory into the halal branding context, showing how SMEs use platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp, in complementary ways to reinforce brand messages and signal credibility. Furthermore, the study underscores the role of IMC in aligning digital communication with consumer perceptions of trust, authenticity, and value. The results reveal that when halal businesses integrate visual, interactive, and informational content across diverse platforms, they strengthen consumer confidence in both brand identity and product quality.

Practically, the findings emphasise the importance of adopting a deliberate and integrated digital marketing approach. The findings indicate that Halal SMEs can maximise visibility by strategically combining high-traffic platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, for visual storytelling with more personalised channels, like WhatsApp, for customer service and direct engagement. The use of SEO, influencer marketing, and content-driven initiatives further demonstrates how halal SMEs can position themselves competitively while maintaining cost efficiency. Managers should therefore view digital marketing not as isolated tools, but as interconnected elements of a broader IMC strategy, where consistency of messaging and alignment with consumer values drive tangible outcomes, such as increased brand loyalty and repeat patronage.

At a broader industry level, the study highlights practical lessons for policymakers, industry associations, and halal certification bodies. Regulators can leverage these insights to develop guidelines that encourage ethical, transparent, and coordinated use of digital channels by halal firms. Industry stakeholders may also consider training initiatives that build SMEs' capacity to implement integrated digital strategies effectively. By embracing IMC principles, halal businesses in Nigeria, and in other emerging halal markets, can enhance their reputation, expand their customer base beyond Muslim consumers, and position themselves as credible actors within the global halal economy.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study has examined the role of digital marketing strategies in enhancing halal brand visibility in Nigeria, generating insights into how halal SMEs utilise digital platforms to reach broader audiences, strengthen brand identities, and cultivate consumer trust. The thematic analysis revealed three interrelated dimensions: the strategies deployed for visibility, perceptions of effectiveness, and the resulting impact on recognition and reputation. Collectively, these themes show that digital marketing is no longer an optional tool, but a central driver of competitiveness for halal businesses operating in dynamic and crowded markets. Specifically, the findings demonstrate that halal enterprises are strategically adopting diverse digital tools, with Instagram and TikTok emerging as key channels for visually driven engagement, Facebook providing opportunities for community building, and WhatsApp facilitating direct customer communication.

Businesses generally expressed strong confidence in the effectiveness of these tools, though some noted challenges in translating online engagement into sales conversions. Importantly, digital marketing was seen to elevate brand reputation, enabling halal businesses to highlight certification, ethical practices, and product quality, attributes increasingly valued by both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. By combining global digital practices with halal-specific identity markers, Nigerian halal brands are positioning themselves as both culturally authentic and globally relevant. This research contributes significantly to the literature on halal branding and digital marketing by showing how digital tools intersect with consumer perceptions of trust, loyalty, and ethical value. The findings affirm prior

scholarship that halal branding, while rooted in religiosity, resonates with wider movements in ethical consumerism and health-consciousness. Similarly, the study underlines the importance of integrating authenticity, transparency, and interactive engagement into digital campaigns.

Despite these contributions, the study is subject to certain limitations. It was conducted within a qualitative framework and focused on halal SMEs in Nigeria, which constrains the generalisability of its conclusions. Future research could employ mixed or quantitative methods, incorporate larger and more diverse samples, and extend the analysis across regions and industries to build comparative insights. Moreover, the rapid evolution of digital marketing warrants further attention to emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and advanced analytics, which are likely to redefine how halal brands build visibility and consumer trust. Addressing these areas would deepen understanding of the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of halal branding in the digital economy.

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