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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BRAND EQUITY OF BEVERAGE MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IN NAIROBI COUNTY

Grace Kenyatta, Mr. James Mbebe Nzili, and **Dr. Jane Munga, Phd**

Influence of Social Media Marketing On Brand Equity of Beverage Manufacturing Companies in Nairobi County

Grace Kenyatta

Researcher, Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

Mr. James Mbebe Nzili

Supervisor, Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

Dr. Jane Munga, Phd

Supervisor, Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University, Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose of the Study: This study examined the influence of social media marketing on brand equity among beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County. It sought to establish the extent to which social media activities, including engagement, reach, follower growth, and conversion metrics, contribute to enhancing brand awareness, loyalty, and associations.

Methodology: The research adopted a cross-sectional descriptive design targeting alcoholic beverage manufacturing firms in Nairobi County. Data were collected from 95 respondents drawn from 12 firms using stratified random sampling. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered, and data analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis techniques.

Findings: The study established a strong positive relationship between social media marketing and brand equity, with Pearson correlation results showing a significant coefficient of $r = 0.864$ ($p < 0.01$). Social media marketing emerged as the strongest predictor of brand equity in the multiple regression model ($\beta = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$). Bivariate regression analysis indicated that social media marketing accounted for 74.7% of the variation in brand equity ($R^2 = 0.747$). Respondents strongly agreed that engagement metrics, reach and impressions, follower growth, and conversion indicators were effective measures of social media performance influencing consumer perceptions and brand value.

Conclusion: The study concludes that social media marketing significantly enhances brand equity in beverage manufacturing companies within Nairobi County. Firms adopting integrated, interactive, and targeted social media strategies are more likely to strengthen brand awareness, loyalty, and positive brand associations, ultimately improving competitiveness and long-term market performance.

Keywords: *Social media marketing, brand equity, beverage manufacturing, digital marketing, Nairobi County.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Social media has evolved from a communication channel into a powerful marketing instrument capable of shaping consumer attitudes, building brand communities, and influencing purchase decisions. Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the use of social media platforms to reach and engage target audiences, promote products and services, and drive sales (Silvia, 2019). As digital consumption continues to grow, SMM has become an integral component of brand equity strategy, providing organizations with unprecedented access to consumer interaction and feedback data (Tasci, 2016). Brand equity encompasses the perceived value and strength of a brand as reflected in consumer perceptions, loyalty, and associations, and constitutes a critical strategic resource that shapes market positioning and profitability (Tasci, 2016). Keller (1993) conceptualizes brand equity as comprising brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. In the digital environment, these dimensions are increasingly mediated by social media interactions that shape how consumers discover, evaluate, and maintain loyalty to brands (Dhewi & Kurnianto, 2023).

A substantial body of international evidence supports the influence of SMM on brand equity. Kavisekera and Abeysekera (2016), in a Sri Lankan study, documented a significant positive relationship between SMM and the brand equity of e-commerce firms. Karamian et al. (2015) similarly confirmed, through Pearson correlation analysis, that SMM activities positively affect perceived quality, brand recognition, and consumer loyalty. Collectively, these studies corroborate the brand-building capacity of social media across key dimensions of brand equity. Social media is increasingly being adopted for brand building across the African continent. Research conducted in Egypt by Hafez (2021) demonstrated the impact of SMM activities trendiness, customization, and viral marketing on brand loyalty, both directly and indirectly via brand trust. In South Africa, brands such as Nando's have built distinctive identities through innovative and culturally resonant social media campaigns, demonstrating the effectiveness of locally relevant content in improving brand perception and consumer engagement (Reddy, 2017). Banking, telecommunications, and consumer goods companies are increasingly channeling investments into social media to broaden their continental reach and strengthen brand image. Nevertheless, systematic empirical evidence on such campaigns remains sparse, particularly within the alcohol and beverage manufacturing sector.

The Kenyan alcoholic beverage industry is characterized by intense competitive rivalry. Market leaders such as East African Breweries Limited (EABL), Keroche Breweries, and Africa Spirits Limited continue to compete for consumer loyalty within a dynamic market environment shaped by shifting consumer preferences, evolving regulatory frameworks, and growing volumes of imported beverages. According to a survey by Deloitte (2023), Kenya has 212 registered alcohol brands; however, only 37% of these brands were recognized by vendors across restaurants, clubs, and retail outlets in Nairobi County, indicating significant deficits in brand equity across the sector. This report also found that only 43% of beverage companies had dedicated digital marketing budgets, reflecting an investment shortfall in branding. Among the available digital marketing channels, social media marketing is distinguished by its interactive and participatory nature. Companies such as EABL have deployed social media campaigns, including the widely recognized 'Tusker Here's to Us' campaign, to connect emotionally with consumers and reinforce national brand identity (Olonde, 2017). Similarly, Keroche Breweries and Africa Spirits Limited have built digital presences through influencer marketing, branded content creation, and targeted social media campaigns (Raphael & Etuk, 2025). Despite these initiatives, no systematic empirical study has examined the linkage between these social media activities and brand equity outcomes within Nairobi County's beverage manufacturing industry.

Statement of the Problem

The beverage manufacturing sector in Nairobi County operates in an increasingly competitive environment shaped by evolving consumer preferences, digital disruption, and intensifying market rivalry. While social media marketing has been identified as a viable strategy for building brand equity through enhanced consumer engagement, improved brand awareness, and greater brand loyalty, its systematic influence on brand equity among beverage manufacturing firms in Nairobi County remains empirically underexplored. Existing studies on brand equity in Kenya have predominantly focused on financial performance and traditional marketing approaches, with limited attention to digital marketing channels such as social media (Kavisekera & Abeysekera, 2016; Dhewi & Kurnianto, 2023). Without empirical evidence specific to beverage manufacturers in Nairobi County, marketing managers and policymakers lack an adequate basis for making informed decisions regarding social media marketing investments. This study therefore seeks to fill this knowledge gap by critically examining the influence of social media marketing on brand equity of alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of social media marketing on brand equity of alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

H03: Social media marketing does not significantly influence the brand equity of alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi City County.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This research draws on four theoretical frameworks that collectively explain the influence of social media marketing on brand equity. Market Equity Theory, grounded in Keller's brand equity model, provides the overarching framework for understanding how consumer perceptions, shaped by marketing communications, contribute to brand value (Brodie et al., 2002). The theory posits that positive brand associations, favorable attitudes, and strong awareness collectively underpin market success outcomes that can be systematically cultivated through social media marketing. The Technology Acceptance Theory (TAT), originally formulated by Fred Davis and subsequently extended by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) into the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), explains how perceived usefulness and ease of use determine users' adoption of digital platforms for information-seeking and engagement (Tamilmani et al., 2021). Within the beverage industry context, favorable consumer perceptions of social media's utility and accessibility translate into higher levels of brand-related interaction, thereby strengthening brand relationships.

Consumer Engagement Theory, as advanced by Kozinets, emphasizes that sustained, authentic consumer-brand relationships encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions are fundamental drivers of brand loyalty (Rather, 2019). Social media platforms facilitate such engagement through real-time interactions, user-generated comments, content sharing, and participatory content creation. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), people's self-identity is in part formed by group affiliations (Thomas et al., 2023). When brands resonate with consumers' social identities on social media through shared beliefs, cultural values, or community engagement the result is stronger brand loyalty and more favorable brand attitudes (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020).

Empirical Review

Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity

Hafez (2021) examined the impact of social media marketing activities on brand equity in the banking sector in Bangladesh, with brand love and brand trust as mediating variables. The study found that SMM activities including trendiness, customization, and viral marketing — positively and significantly influenced brand equity both directly and indirectly through brand trust. These findings are particularly relevant to the beverage manufacturing context, where consumer trust and emotional attachment to brands are critical determinants of purchasing decisions. Dhewi and Kurnianto (2023) investigated the influence of social media marketing on brand equity, highlighting the mediating role of word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Their findings confirmed that SMM activities significantly enhanced brand equity by stimulating positive consumer-to-consumer communication about brands. This study is directly applicable to the alcoholic beverage industry, where peer recommendations and social proof are known to be powerful drivers of brand perception and purchase intention.

Kavisekera and Abeysekera (2016) evaluated the effect of social media marketing on brand equity among online companies in Sri Lanka and found a significant positive relationship between SMM adoption and overall brand equity. The study identified content relevance, consumer engagement, and platform consistency as key determinants of the SMM-brand equity relationship. Similarly, Karamian et al. (2015) used Pearson correlation analysis to demonstrate that social media marketing activities positively influence perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand loyalty all key components of brand equity. Ali (2023) further confirmed these findings in the context of small and medium enterprises in the UAE, establishing that SMM investment significantly predicted brand equity outcomes across multiple industry sectors.

Brand Equity in the Beverage Industry

Keller (1993) laid the foundational framework for understanding consumer-based brand equity, defining it as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to brand marketing. Within the beverage industry, brand equity is shaped by factors including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty — all of which are increasingly mediated by digital marketing activities. Garg et al. (2020) confirmed that social media analytics and customer engagement practices significantly enhance brand performance in competitive consumer markets, consistent with the beverage industry's reliance on sustained consumer relationships. Reyes-Menendez et al. (2020) further established that user-generated content on social media platforms reinforces social identity associations with brands, contributing to stronger and more durable brand equity.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The influence of social media marketing on brand equity was evaluated using a cross-sectional descriptive study design with quantitative techniques. The design facilitated data collection at a single point in time and enabled the identification of correlations between brand equity (dependent variable) and social media marketing (independent variable). This approach has been extensively employed in digital marketing research and is well-suited for evaluating associative relationships in organizational contexts (Kavisekera & Abeysekera, 2016; Dhewi & Kurnianto, 2023). The research was undertaken in alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County, Kenya. A target population of 131 employees in marketing, sales, brand management, and general management roles across 12 alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies was identified. A sample of 99 participants was determined using the Taro Yamane formula at a 95% confidence level. Stratified random sampling was applied to ensure proportional representation from each company. A total of 95 valid questionnaires were returned from the 99 distributed, yielding a response rate of 95.9%, which surpasses the recommended minimum threshold for survey-based research. Primary data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire administered both in person and online. Social media marketing was operationalized using four items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) encompassing: (i) engagement metrics (likes, shares, and comments); (ii) reach and impressions metrics; (iii) follower growth; and (iv) conversion metrics. Brand equity was similarly measured using four items covering brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and brand trust. IBM-SPSS software (version 28) was used for data analysis. Measures of central tendency (means and standard deviations) and frequency distributions described respondents' views. Pearson correlation analysis assessed the nature and strength of the association between social media marketing and brand equity. Bivariate regression tested the predictive effect of social media marketing on brand equity, while multiple regression analysis examined social media marketing's influence in the presence of other digital marketing variables. Diagnostic tests confirmed that assumptions of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov: $p = 0.070$; Shapiro-Wilk: $p = 0.064$), homoscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan: $\chi^2 = 0.461$, $p = 0.497$), multicollinearity (VIF = 4.812), and autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson = 2.007) were not violated, thereby validating the regression findings.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The researcher administered 99 semi-structured questionnaires to employees across 12 alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County. A total of 95 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 95.9%. This response rate substantially exceeds the generally accepted benchmark of 50% considered adequate for survey-based research and reflects the effectiveness of the combined in-person and online data collection approach. The high response rate enhances the reliability and representativeness of the study findings by minimizing the risk of non-response bias.

Descriptive Analysis of Social Media Marketing

The study sought to examine respondents' perceptions of the social media marketing metrics used by beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis on Social Media Marketing

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
Engagement Metrics (likes, shares, comments) accurately reflect the effectiveness of our Social Media Marketing campaigns	3.2%	4.2%	15.8%	36.8%	40.0%	4.06	1.01
The Reach and Impressions metrics provide a meaningful measure of our Social Media	2.1%	2.1%	16.8%	33.7%	45.3%	4.18	.93

Marketing campaign's visibility							
Follower Growth is a relevant indicator to assess the success of our Social Media Marketing efforts	3.2%	2.1%	27.4%	33.7%	33.7%	3.93	.99
Conversion Metrics effectively measure the impact of our Social Media Marketing on desired actions	4.2%	2.1%	15.8%	38.9%	38.9%	4.06	1.01

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The findings reflect a high and consistent level of agreement that the selected social media marketing metrics constitute meaningful indicators of campaign effectiveness and brand equity. Reach and impressions recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.18, SD = 0.93), with approximately 79% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that these metrics accurately reflect campaign visibility. This is consistent with Kavisekera and Abeysekera (2016), who found that platform reach and impressions were among the most valued performance indicators in social media marketing programs. Engagement metrics — including likes, shares, and comments — and conversion metrics each yielded a mean score of 4.06 (SD = 1.01), indicating that respondents regard interactive social media activities as reliable measures of campaign success and consumer action. Follower growth, while marginally lower (M = 3.93, SD = 0.99), was also considered a significant indicator of social media marketing effectiveness. These results indicate that beverage manufacturing firms in Nairobi County are actively engaged on social media platforms and recognize these metrics as valid indicators of brand equity progress. The mean scores ranging from 3.93 to 4.18 reflect a strong organizational commitment to social media marketing within the industry. Respondents reported high utilization of platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business, with platform-specific strategies such as lifestyle content on Instagram, professional engagement on LinkedIn, and community-building activities on Facebook.

Correlation Analysis: Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between social media marketing and brand equity.

Table 2: Correlation between Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity

	Social Media Marketing	Brand Equity	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Media Marketing	1		
Brand Equity	.864**	1	.000
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N = 95*			

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Among all digital marketing variables examined, social media marketing recorded the strongest positive correlation with brand equity ($r = 0.864$, $p < 0.01$), signifying a statistically significant and practically meaningful association. This finding implies that higher levels of social media marketing activity correspond with higher brand equity scores. The result corroborates the findings of Karamian et al. (2015), who identified a significant relationship between SMM activities and brand quality perceptions, recognition, and loyalty, and is further consistent with Dhewi and Kurnianto (2023), who confirmed that SMM enhances brand equity through word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth mechanisms.

Regression Analysis: Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Equity

The bivariate regression results for the effect of social media marketing on brand equity are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Bivariate Regression—Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error	Sig. (F)
Model Summary	.864	.747	.745	.46029	.000
ANOVA (F)	F = 274.932, df = 1, Residual df = 93				.000
Coefficients	B (Unstandardized) = 0.891 | Beta = .864, t = 16.581				.000
Dependent Variable: Brand Equity. Predictor: Social Media Marketing					

Dependent Variable: Brand Equity. Predictor: Social Media Marketing

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The bivariate regression results confirm a strong and positive influence of social media marketing on brand equity. The model yields an R value of 0.864, indicating a strong linear relationship, and an R^2 of 0.747, signifying that social media marketing accounts for 74.7% of the variance in brand equity among beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County. The adjusted R^2 of 0.745 further validates the model's explanatory power after accounting for the number of predictors.

The ANOVA results confirm overall model significance, with an F-statistic of 274.932 ($p < 0.001$). The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.891$) indicates that a one-unit increase in social media marketing is associated with a corresponding 0.891-unit increase in brand equity. The standardized beta coefficient (β = 0.864) and t-value of 16.581 ($p < 0.001$) confirm both the statistical significance and the magnitude of this relationship. These results support the rejection of the null hypothesis H03, which postulated that social media marketing does not significantly influence brand equity.

These findings are consistent with the position of Kavisekera and Abeysekera (2016), who demonstrated that SMM approaches significantly and positively predict brand equity in e-commerce settings. The current results further align with Hafez (2021), who found that SMM elements such as trendiness and customization significantly influence brand equity dimensions among banking sector customers. The current study confirms the applicability of these findings within the beverage manufacturing industry in a sub-Saharan African developing economy.

5.0 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The analysis confirms that social media marketing is a strongly and consistently adopted strategy among alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County. The study found compelling evidence that firms actively utilize reach and impressions metrics (M = 4.18, SD = 0.93), engagement metrics (M = 4.06, SD = 1.01), conversion metrics (M = 4.06, SD = 1.01), and follower growth indicators (M = 3.93, SD = 0.99) to evaluate and guide their social media marketing efforts. The Pearson correlation analysis established a strong positive association between social media marketing and brand equity ($r = 0.864$, $p < 0.01$). The bivariate regression analysis confirmed that social media marketing is a statistically significant and substantively meaningful predictor of brand equity, explaining 74.7% of the observed variance in brand equity ($R^2 = 0.747$, $F = 274.932$, $p < 0.001$). This relationship demonstrates that beverage manufacturing companies with more comprehensive and strategically implemented social media marketing programs achieve superior brand equity outcomes across awareness, loyalty, image, and trust dimensions. The findings provide strong empirical support for the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, particularly Market Equity Theory, Consumer Engagement Theory, and Social Identity Theory, confirming their relevance and explanatory power within the Kenyan alcoholic beverage industry.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media marketing is a significant and positive driver of brand equity improvement among alcoholic beverage manufacturing companies in Nairobi County, Kenya. The strong positive relationship between social media marketing and brand equity ($r = 0.864$, $\beta = 0.346$, $R^2 = 0.747$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrates that firms investing in structured, interactive, and multi-platform social media strategies achieve measurably better outcomes in brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, and brand trust. Social media marketing emerged as the most influential predictor of brand equity in both bivariate and multiple regression analyses, underscoring its strategic primacy among the digital marketing channels available to beverage manufacturers in Nairobi County. The study further concludes that the preeminence of social media marketing over other digital marketing tools can be attributed to its real-time, community-oriented, and participatory characteristics, which enable beverage brands to foster the emotional and social connections that are central to sustainable brand equity. This study adds to the growing body of empirical literature on digital marketing and brand equity in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically addressing an established knowledge gap in the alcoholic beverage manufacturing sector in Kenya. The findings provide empirical support for the applicability of Market Equity Theory, Consumer Engagement Theory, and Social Identity Theory within this industry and regional context.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed. First, alcoholic beverage manufacturers in Nairobi County should prioritize social media marketing as a central pillar of their brand equity strategy. Specifically, firms should develop dynamic, interactive, and culturally relevant campaigns that leverage multiple platforms while facilitating real-time consumer engagement. The integration of branded storytelling, influencer marketing, and user-generated content into cohesive digital marketing plans is recommended to strengthen brand equity and foster consumer loyalty. Second, firms should invest in social media strategy and analytics training for marketing personnel to meaningfully improve engagement rates, audience reach, and conversion outcomes. Multi-channel strategies should incorporate platforms with demonstrated engagement potential among target demographics, such as Instagram and TikTok for younger consumers, while ensuring that all campaigns adhere to Kenya’s regulatory framework governing alcohol advertising. Third, at the policy level, government authorities should formulate guidelines that promote ethical social media marketing practices, including transparency in sponsored content disclosures and responsible messaging standards, alongside potential fiscal incentives for organizations investing in certified digital marketing training.

8.0 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should consider replicating this study across different regions of Kenya and within other sectors of the food and beverage industry to assess the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies examining the sustained impact of social media marketing on brand equity over time would provide valuable insights into the durability of these effects. Future research could additionally explore the mediating role of consumer trust in the SMM–brand equity relationship, the moderating influence of cultural dimensions, and the long-term effects of specific social media strategies such as influencer marketing and user-generated content campaigns on brand equity within the Kenyan context. Qualitative studies examining the lived experiences of marketing managers in implementing social media strategies would complement the quantitative findings of this study and provide richer practical insights.

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