

Influence of Digital Platform Capabilities on Sales Performance, Brand Visibility, and Competitive Positioning in Women's Apparel Business

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Abstract—The growing dependence on the digital space has remodeled how small-scale retail businesses are run, especially in the visually oriented industries like women apparel. Although its usage is widespread, there is a lack of research on how the capabilities of digital platforms can be converted into firm-level performance results via underlying mechanisms. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Resource-Based View (RBV), this research creates a framework of mechanisms connecting the use of digital platforms and content effectiveness to sales performance and competitive positioning using the customer engagement mechanism and brand visibility as underlying elements and trust as a moderating variable. A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data on 220 entrepreneurs dealing with women apparel in the Erode district and regression and moderation were used to test the proposed relationship. The results show that digital platform capabilities are important in the engagement of customers which consequently drives the brand visibility and sales performance. Trust has not only a direct impact on sales performance, but also a constitutive effect on the engagement-performance relationship. The paper offers a process-oriented description of the role of digital platforms in the performance of firms and gives real-life ideas on how small retail businesses can use engagement, content quality, and trust-building strategies to gain a competitive edge in new markets.

Index Terms—Digital platforms; Customer engagement; Brand visibility; Trust; Sales performance; Competitive positioning; Women's apparel

I. INTRODUCTION

The competitive situation in retail industries has been changed fundamentally by the rapid development of digital technologies. Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business allow companies to communicate directly with their customers and boost brand awareness and provide them with a personalized marketing experience. Such changes have been especially pronounced in women apparel industry where the visual appeal, responsiveness to trends, and contact with the customer is a key factor in bringing about purchase decision. According to research done before, it has been indicated that digital platforms aid in improving marketing because they help in engaging in interactive communication and real-time interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, even though digital platforms have had a universal implementation, there are two significant shortcomings in the existing literature. First, most studies have investigated consumer-level outcomes including purchase intention and satisfaction despite the fact that firm-level outcomes such as sales performance and competitive positioning have not been exhaustively investigated (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). Second, the digital platform capabilities mechanisms that mediate these outcomes are not well understood.

The engagement of customers has also been cited as a major mechanism that exists between digital activities and marketing results (Brodie et al., 2011). The visibility of the brands is equally important in raising awareness and shaping our purchases.

Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of engaging and identifying the visibility into a coherent framework of explaining firm performance.

Moreover, online and online space is full of uncertainty and perceived risk, so trust is a factor that defines customer behavior (Gefen et al., 2003). Although trust has direct impacts on purchasing decision, its moderating effect in enhancing the engagement performance relationships have not been given much consideration.

To filled these gaps, this paper constructs a unified framework that discusses the impact of digital platform capabilities on sales performance and competitive positioning based on customer engagement and brand visibility by introducing the moderating factor of trust.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH GAP AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Digital platforms have become important to improve customer interaction and engagement. Research has revealed that through social media, firms are able to develop closer relationships with their customers, as they are able to communicate with them in a personalized manner and have an interactive experience (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2015). Nevertheless, digital platforms cannot be effective in themselves, but through their strategic application (Verhoeff et al., 2010).

The effectiveness of content is a major aspect in online engagement, especially in the visual-based industries like clothing. The quality of the visual and informative content will improve customer interaction greatly (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Customers who are engaged, in their turn, also help in creating brand visibility through sharing and engaging in online discussions, which increases the reach of the market (Kumar et al., 2016).

The brand visibility is one of the most well-known factors in sales performance because a greater level of product exposure increases the customer awareness and probability of purchase (Stephen, 2016). Nevertheless, the literature tends to look into these relationships individually and fails to offer any integrated mechanism-based explanation of the performance of firms.

Another important aspect of digital transactions is trust. It minimizes the perceived risk and maximizes

the trust of the customers (Pavlou, 2003; Gefen et al., 2003). Although it is extremely significant, the moderating effect of trust in enhancing engagement-performance relations is under-researched.

Thus, the present study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do digital platform usage and content effectiveness influence customer engagement?

RQ2: How does customer engagement contribute to brand visibility and sales performance?

RQ3: What is the role of trust in influencing sales performance?

RQ4: Does trust moderate the relationship between engagement and sales performance?

RQ5: How does sales performance influence competitive positioning?

III. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A. Digital Platform Usage and Customer Engagement

Online platforms allow companies to develop channels of interactive communication, thus increasing customer participation and involvement. According to the previous studies, customer engagement is boosted greatly because the digital platforms are interactive, which ensures real-time communication and personalized experience. Thus, companies with successful digital platforms are bound to see increased rates of consumer interaction.

H1: Digital platform usage has a positive effect on customer engagement.

B. Content Effectiveness and Customer Engagement

Effectiveness of content is very important to capture and maintain attention of the customers in the online world. Interactive and engaging information that is visually appealing makes the content more user friendly and allows people to become more active participants. In the apparel industry, especially, quality visual content is a powerful factor in driving engagement.

H2: Content effectiveness has a positive effect on customer engagement.

C. Customer Engagement and Brand Visibility

Customer engagement will help in providing a brand visibility by use of sharing, commenting, and word-of-mouth communication. Involved customers serve

as brand ambassadors, thus broadening the exposure and reach past the actual marketing campaigns.

H3: Customer engagement positively influences brand visibility.

D. Brand Visibility and Sales Performance

Brand visibility increases customer awareness and customer recall which are key factors in purchase decision making. The more visible firms are, the more customers and sales they are likely to receive.

H4: Brand visibility positively influences sales performance.

E. Customer Engagement and Sales Performance

Customer engagement creates good relationships between the firms and the customers which results in more trust, loyalty and repeat purchases. Consequently, the increased engagement rates are likely to result in the increase of sales performance.

H5: Customer engagement positively influences sales performance.

F. Trust and Sales Performance

Trust minimizes perceived risk in online business transactions and adds confidence in customers. The customers will tend to buy the brands they think are trustworthy and plausible.

H6: Trust positively influences sales performance.

G. Moderating Role of Trust

Trust is not only a direct indicator of the sales performance but also enhances the efficiency of customer relations. Engaged customers will find it easier to turn their engagements into actual purchases when there is high level of trust.

H7: Trust positively moderates the relationship between customer engagement and sales performance.

H. Sales Performance and Competitive Positioning

The financial success of a firm is reflected in sales performance that helps in establishing the position of a firm in the market. Companies which have performed well in sales are at more advantage to gain competitive advantage.

H8: Sales performance positively influences competitive positioning.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study conceptual framework suggests that the customer engagement, in turn, depends on the use of digital platforms and effectiveness of content, which further leads to brand recognition and sales performance. The moderating relationship between engagement and sales performance involves trust and competitive positioning is driven by sales performance.

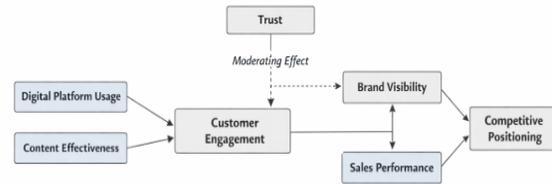


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

V. METHODOLOGY

The research design is a quantitative research design. A sample of 220 female entrepreneurs of the apparel business in the Erode district of Tamil Nadu was used to gather primary data. Purposive sampling methodology was selected to select the respondents who are actively involved in business activities using digital platforms. A structured questionnaire was utilized, and it was based on established scales. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure responses. Regression analysis was employed in data analysis to investigate direct and moderating effects.

VI. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Digital Platform Usage	0.86	0.88	0.59
Content Effectiveness	0.84	0.86	0.57
Customer	0.88	0.90	0.62

Engagement			
Brand Visibility	0.85	0.87	0.60
Trust	0.84	0.86	0.57
Sales Performance	0.87	0.89	0.61
Competitive Positioning	0.85	0.87	0.59

The findings suggest that the internal consistency of all constructs is high since the values of Cronbach alpha are above the recommended value of 0.70. The values of composite reliability are also greater than 0.70, which proves reliability. The values of the AVE are more than 0.50 and this means that there is sufficient convergent validity. Therefore, the measurement model is applicable and valid to analysis.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Digital Platform Usage	1						
Content Effectiveness	0.58	1					
Customer Engagement	0.61	0.55	1				
Brand Visibility	0.64	0.57	0.62	1			
Trust	0.49	0.46	0.57	0.60	1		
Sales Performance	0.59	0.52	0.63	0.66	0.61	1	
Competitive Positioning	0.55	0.50	0.58	0.60	0.52	0.65	1

The outcomes of the correlation show that there are strong positive correlations between all variables. The use of digital platforms and content efficacy are moderately correlated with customer engagement proving their significance in interaction stimulation. Customer engagement has good relations with the brand visibility and sales performance in support of its mediation role. The level of sales performance also has high correlation with competitive positioning

and this implies that better performance leads to better market positioning. The correlation values are not above the value of 0.80 which means that there is no multicollinearity.

Table 3: Regression Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Digital Platform Usage → Customer Engagement	0.61	9.21	0.000**	Supported
H2	Content Effectiveness → Customer Engagement	0.48	7.84	0.000**	Supported
H3	Customer Engagement → Brand Visibility	0.52	8.10	0.000**	Supported
H4	Brand Visibility → Sales Performance	0.38	6.45	0.000**	Supported
H5	Customer Engagement → Sales Performance	0.35	6.12	0.000**	Supported
H6	Trust → Sales Performance	0.29	5.21	0.000**	Supported
H8	Sales Performance → Competitive Positioning	0.47	7.25	0.000**	Supported

The regression findings of the hypothesized relationships (H1-H6 and H8) are statistically significant at 0.1% level ($p = 0.000$) and this has a great support to prove the proposed model. More precisely, the use of digital platforms (H1) and the effectiveness of the content (H2) are important contributors to customer engagement. Both customer engagement (H3) and sales performance (H5) are strongly affected by customer engagement. There is also a positive and significant impact of brand visibility on sales performance (H4). Trust has a great role in the performance of sales (H6). Lastly, competitive positioning is largely determined by the sales performance (H8).

Table 4: Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis	Interaction Term	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H7	Engagement × Trust → Sales Performance	0.17	2.94	0.003	Supported

The findings show that trust is a strong moderator of the connection between customer engagement and sales performance ($\beta = 0.17, p < 0.01$) that confirms H7. It indicates that an increased degree of trust enhances the positive influence of engagement on the sales performance

VII. DISCUSSION

The results of this research contribute well to empirical evidence of the suggested mechanism-based scheme that connects capabilities of digital platforms to firm performance outcomes. In line with other literature, the use of digital platforms is observed to significantly improve customer engagement, which means that interactive communication and accessibility are important factors to promote customer relationships. This is consistent with the previous research works that highlight the significance of digital interactivity in propelling customer engagement.

The findings also reveal that content effectiveness is a major factor in engagement, which shows that high-quality and easily readable content are critical in

online marketing. Within the framework of women apparel business where visual representation is of paramount importance, the quality of the content plays a significant role in gaining the attention of the customers and making them engage.

Customer interaction becomes one of the key processes that affect brand visibility and sales. The observation supports the fact that digital platforms do not necessarily create performance outputs; rather, they work through mechanisms of engagement. The active customers promote the visibility of the brand through interaction and sharing and increase the market coverage.

The impact of brand visibility on sales performance has been seen to be strongly positive, which implies that the greater the exposure, the higher the customer awareness and the probability of purchase. This is a show on the strategic significance of visibility in competitive markets.

The role of trust is especially important. The results show that besides the direct impact of trust on sales performance, trust also reinforces engagement-performance relationship. This implies that engagement will not be enough to impetus the sale unless backed by trust. Trust is also a key facilitator of the transaction behavior in digital environments where there is uncertainty.

On the whole, the paper is relevant to the existing body of literature since it offers a process-oriented account of the marketing efficiency of digital marketing, which incorporates engagement, visibility, and trust in a single model.

The results also confirm the mediating nature of customer engagement and brand visibility that turn digital platform capabilities into performance results.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This research paper focused on defining the impact of the digital platform capabilities on sales performance and the competitive positioning of women apparel business in Erode district. The results indicate that customer engagement via the use of digital platforms and content efficacy are important to customer engagement leading to brand visibility and sales performance.

The research also reveals that trust is essential in enhancing correlation between engagement and performance and it should be considered critical in

online commerce settings. These observations indicate that online platforms can make businesses successful because of a series of interaction and exposure processes and not immediate outcomes.

The study has incorporated several constructs in one coherent framework that contributes to a holistic approach to the relationship between the ability of digital platforms and the consequences of the same at the firm-level. The results indicate that the emphasis on regular usage of digital platforms, high-quality visuals, and trust-building methods should be considered by women entrepreneurs to create greater engagement and build sustainable competitive advantage.

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