Natural Resources for Human Health
eISSN: 2583-1194

Original Research

Received 11 July 2026
Revised 12 Aug 2026
Accepted 26 Aug 2026

Natural Resources for Human Health 2026, Vol. 6 (19s): 688–698

KEYWORDS:
digital marketing effectiveness; customer acquisition; customer trust; customer engagement; customer satisfaction; banking; Nepalgunj; Nepal

Beyond Customer Acquisition: Digital Marketing Effectiveness, Trust, Engagement, and Satisfaction in Nepalese Banking

Sanjeev Babu Pangeni[1], Hari Prasad Awasthi[2], Shankar Datt Bhatt[2]*, Ranjeeta Adhikari[3]

[1]Kohalpur Model College, Tribhuvan University, Kolhapur, Banke, Nepal.
Email: kmckohalpur117@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0115-5493
[2]Department of Management, Far Western University, Nepal.
Email: hariawasthi15@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9961-52316
[3]Keystone Management College, Far Western University, Kohalpur, Banke, Nepal. Email: bhatts.1977@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7024-038X
Email: adhikariranzeeta@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0112-0480
Corresponding Author * Shankar Datt Bhatt

ABSTRACT: Purpose: This study examines the associations of digital marketing effectiveness with customer acquisition, trust, engagement, and satisfaction in Nepalgunj, Nepal. Design/methodology: The article synthesizes previously reported cross-sectional survey findings from 450 respondents (400 bank customers and 50 bank officials) linked to 15 commercial banks and 20 financial institutions. Descriptive statistics, correlations, regression coefficients, and group comparisons are reported from the source study; respondent-level data were not re-estimated. Findings: Social media had the strongest reported relationship with acquisition ($r = .68$; $\beta = .42$, $p < .001$; acquisition-model $R^2 = .56$). Perceived digital marketing effectiveness was associated with trust ($r = .75$; $\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) and engagement ($r = .65$; $\beta = .40$, $p < .001$), while engagement was associated with satisfaction ($r = .70$; $\beta = .50$, $p < .001$). Cybersecurity concerns (75%), infrastructure limitations (50%), and limited digital literacy (25%) were frequently reported barriers. Originality/value: The study brings acquisition and post-acquisition customer relationships into one interpretive framework in a regional Nepalese banking setting. Its cross-sectional, source-reported evidence supports associations, not causal pathways or statistically demonstrated mediation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of retail banking has changed how customers discover, assess and interact with financial institutions. Banks now communicate through social networking platforms, websites, search engines, e-mail, mobile applications and digital support channels. These interactions occur across a customer journey that may begin with information search but subsequently involve account opening, transactions, problem resolution and continued service use. Digital marketing therefore encompasses more than generating advertising exposure: it can influence perceptions of the institution and the quality of its relationship with customers (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015).

The distinction between promotional outcomes and relational outcomes is especially consequential in banking. Because financial transactions involve personal information, financial risk and expectations of institutional reliability, customers may hesitate to

respond to persuasive messages when they do not trust the provider or its digital infrastructure. Relationship marketing theory identifies trust and commitment as central elements of continuing exchange (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), while research on electronic banking emphasizes perceived security and privacy as antecedents of confidence (Yousafzai et al., 2003).

Digital expansion can also make banking more accessible while reproducing inequalities in connectivity, device access, literacy and confidence. In Nepal, the central bank has identified resilient payment infrastructure, digital financial literacy and secure digital payment systems as policy priorities (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2025). Regional banking centres provide a useful setting for examining whether the benefits of digital outreach extend beyond already-connected, highly educated or urban consumers.

Nepalgunj, an important commercial centre in western Nepal, offers a useful setting for investigating whether digital promotion is linked only to initial customer attraction or also to the quality of subsequent banking relationships. This study considers three connected questions: (1) Which reported digital channels are most strongly associated with acquisition-related outcomes? (2) How are perceived digital marketing effectiveness, trust, engagement and satisfaction related? (3) Which cybersecurity, infrastructure and literacy barriers complicate effective participation? The central objective is to integrate these outcomes without overstating the cross-sectional evidence.

The study contributes a contextual account of banking digital marketing in a regional market where digital and branch-based contact coexist. Rather than claiming that trust or engagement mediates any relationship, the analysis distinguishes empirically reported associations from theoretically plausible explanations and identifies what additional data would be required to test a causal model.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital marketing effectiveness in financial services

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital technologies and communication platforms to create, communicate and deliver value and manage relationships with customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In banking, effectiveness should not be equated with the volume of posts, impressions or clicks. A useful distinction is between communication reach (who encounters the message), response or conversion (who takes an action) and relationship quality (whether the interaction strengthens confidence and continuing participation). Social media can support both targeted communication and public interaction, making it a hybrid promotional and conversational channel (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

The omnichannel literature shows that customers move between digital and physical touchpoints rather than experiencing channels independently (Verhoef et al., 2015). A social-media advertisement may lead to a website, a mobile-app download, a branch visit or an assisted account-opening interaction. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) therefore argue that customer experience is formed across interconnected touchpoints over time. In financial services, effective digital strategy depends on consistency between the promise presented in promotional messages and the service subsequently experienced.

For measurement, banks should distinguish awareness, click-through and enquiry rates from verified acquisition, active usage, service satisfaction and customer retention. This conceptual separation is important because self-reported acquisition attitudes are not equivalent to administrative records of newly opened accounts. The current study uses survey-based acquisition indicators; consequently, its findings should be interpreted as perceived or reported acquisition-related outcomes unless transaction-level validation is available.

2.2 Technology acceptance, perceived value and digital banking

Technology Acceptance Model research identifies perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as important influences on technology acceptance (Davis, 1989). The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology broaden the explanation by emphasizing performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These frameworks are relevant to marketing because the persuasive value of a digital message is limited when a customer anticipates difficulty in adopting the advertised banking channel.

Digital marketing can reduce uncertainty through demonstrations, clear fee information, accessible product explanations and educational content. Yet communication cannot compensate indefinitely for a poorly functioning app or network. The technology-adoption literature therefore supports examining marketing and operational capability together rather than assuming promotion alone produces customer satisfaction. Furthermore, demographic characteristics and facilitating conditions may influence whether digital messages are actionable for different consumer groups.

2.3 Customer acquisition and channel responsiveness

Digital channels enable relatively targeted and measurable customer communication. Search visibility can connect banks to consumers actively looking for financial information; e-mail can support personalized follow-up, while social media can stimulate discovery, peer discussion and rapid dissemination. Mangold and Faulds (2009) emphasize the dual promotional and interpersonal characteristics of social media. Research on customer journeys, however, cautions against attributing a final customer decision to a single touchpoint (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Banks therefore need a cautious interpretation of channel-specific correlations. A high association between social-media exposure and acquisition does not prove that campaigns independently caused new customer accounts: digitally active customers may be more likely both to notice campaigns and to adopt banking services. Even so, channel comparisons help identify where customers report meaningful contact and which media merit subsequent experimental or administrative verification.

2.4 Customer trust, security and perceived institutional credibility

Trust reduces uncertainty in relationships where one party cannot fully observe or monitor the other. Morgan and Hunt (1994) position trust as central to successful relationship marketing. In electronic financial services, Yousafzai et al. (2003) specifically identify perceived security and privacy as foundations of electronic trust. Gefen et al. (2003) further demonstrate why confidence in a digital provider should be considered alongside perceived usefulness and ease of use. For banks, this means customers evaluate both the communication interface and the institution behind it.

Trustworthy digital communication should provide consistent information on costs, eligibility and risks; use legitimate, authenticated accounts; protect customer privacy; and offer reliable support when difficulties occur. Communication about safe practices can itself contribute to trust, but the relationship is likely to be reciprocal: customers who already trust a bank may regard its digital marketing more favourably. Consequently, a cross-sectional effectiveness–trust correlation cannot establish the direction of influence.

Recent banking scholarship additionally links system and service quality to digital banking confidence and satisfaction (Chang et al., 2025). Taken together, theory suggests that a credible marketing message is necessary but not sufficient; effective service and safeguards are needed to sustain confidence after initial contact.

2.5 Customer engagement as an interactive and multidimensional construct

Customer engagement encompasses more than transaction frequency or promotional exposure. Brodie et al. (2011) conceptualize engagement as emerging from interactive, value-creating experiences, while Hollenbeck et al. (2014) distinguish cognitive processing, affection and behavioral activation. Pansari and Kumar (2017) discuss the antecedents and consequences of customer engagement and emphasize its relevance to durable customer–firm relationships.

In banking, cognitive engagement may involve reading an explanation of digital payment security or comparing deposit products; affective engagement may involve a sense of reassurance and confidence; behavioral engagement may include responding to messages, using a banking app and engaging with educational content. These dimensions can overlap, but they should not automatically be treated as interchangeable. For instance, frequent app use may reflect necessity rather than emotional attachment.

Service-dominant logic emphasizes the active role of users in value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Banks therefore create value not only by delivering a message but also by enabling customers to learn, transact and resolve problems across digital interfaces. Gomes et al. (2024) provide banking-related evidence connecting multichannel service, trust, commitment and engagement. The literature supports considering engagement a central relational outcome, while leaving the direction and magnitude of specific paths to empirical estimation.

2.6 Customer satisfaction and the post-acquisition experience

Customer satisfaction involves an overall evaluation of consumption or service experiences. In digital banking, users may evaluate timeliness, convenience, usability, transparency, transaction success, responsiveness and security. The customer-journey approach suggests that impressions formed during promotion can be revised by subsequent service encounters (Lemon

& Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, favorable marketing perceptions may coexist with dissatisfaction if promised digital features fail during transactions.

Engagement and satisfaction are conceptually related but distinct. Engagement concerns the intensity or character of customer involvement; satisfaction is an evaluative judgement about experienced performance. Customers may become engaged because they are satisfied, but engaged users may also report satisfaction because they receive more information and practical support. Without temporal observations, this reciprocal possibility cannot be ruled out. Banking studies of retention and relationship development provide a useful basis for interpreting the two constructs together (Zhengmeng et al., 2024).

2.7 Digital inclusion, cybersecurity and structural constraints

Digital communication presumes that prospective customers can access and interpret digital information and act on it safely. Limited connectivity, low digital literacy, cost of devices, accessibility barriers and fear of fraud can reduce the effectiveness of even well-designed campaigns. Technology-acceptance theory recognizes the importance of facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Electronic banking scholarship likewise associates privacy and security perceptions with confidence (Yousafzai et al., 2003).

Nepal Rastra Bank (2025) identifies secure and inclusive payments as important institutional objectives. This perspective is particularly relevant beyond major metropolitan markets: the benefits of targeted advertising may be uneven if customers do not have reliable networks, confidence in fraud prevention or access to timely assistance. Inclusion is thus not only a downstream policy consideration but also a practical condition shaping what digital marketing can achieve.

2.8 Synthesis and research gap

The literature provides strong theoretical explanations for technology adoption, trust, engagement and satisfaction, yet these strands are frequently analyzed separately. Studies of marketing channels may emphasize reach and conversion, while digital banking research concentrates on usability and security; relationship marketing research, in turn, emphasizes trust and ongoing exchange. A combined assessment is useful because acquiring customer attention is not the same as establishing a dependable banking relationship.

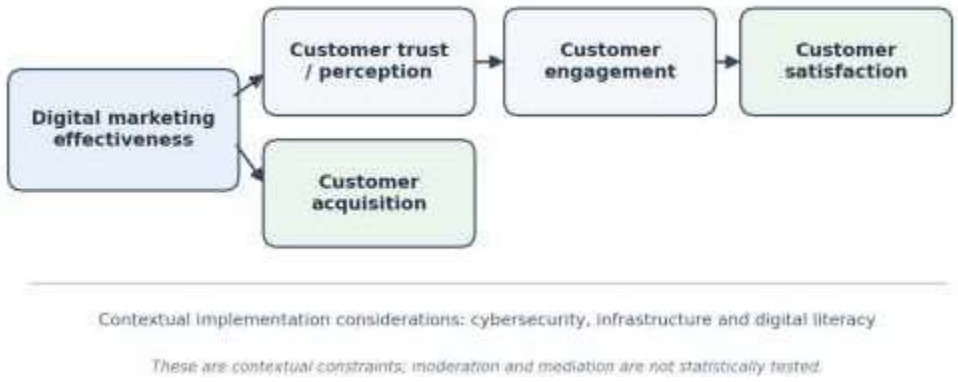
A second gap concerns context. Evidence generated in digitally mature markets or national capitals may not describe secondary-city conditions where branch interaction, connectivity constraints and uneven digital confidence coexist. A third concerns methodology: reports of statistical association are sometimes presented as proof of mediation or causality even when data are cross-sectional. This article addresses the first two gaps through Nepalgunj evidence and recognizes the third by limiting its claims to the relationships actually reported. The analytical framework interprets digital marketing effectiveness alongside acquisition, trust, engagement and satisfaction, with security, infrastructure and literacy as contextual constraints; it does not claim to estimate a sequential mediation model.

2.9 Conceptual framework of the study

Drawing on relationship marketing, technology acceptance, customer engagement and service-dominant perspectives, the conceptual framework organizes the study around digital marketing effectiveness and four banking customer outcomes. Digital marketing effectiveness represents the perceived usefulness, relevance, accessibility and responsiveness of digitally delivered marketing communications. Customer acquisition represents customers' attraction to and selection of banking services. Trust/perception refers to confidence in the credibility, reliability, privacy and security of digitally communicated banking offers. Engagement captures customers' continuing interaction with banking information and digital service touchpoints, while satisfaction represents their overall evaluation of those experiences.

+

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Digital Marketing Effectiveness and Banking Customer Outcomes



The evidence points to a conceptual research gap at the intersection of channel performance and relationship quality. Promotional reach or acquisition-related responses alone do not describe whether a banking relationship remains trustworthy and satisfactory. A further contextual gap concerns regional centres such as Nepalgunj, where disparities in connectivity and digital knowledge may condition exposure and service use. The empirical gap is more specific: the available statistical summaries do not establish temporal order, validated mediation, or objective conversion. This article addresses conceptual integration and contextual interpretation, while leaving causal hypotheses for subsequent research.

The framework allows customer acquisition and satisfaction to be considered alongside relational indicators rather than treating acquisition as the sole measure of digital marketing performance. Although the diagram depicts a theoretically plausible progression from trust to engagement and satisfaction, the article interprets the reported bivariate and multivariable statistics as associations only. A future study with validated measures and respondent-level data could test mediation, alternative direct effects and differences across customer groups.

2.10 Research objectives and analytical expectations

The study aims to (a) compare reported relationships between major digital marketing channels and acquisition-related outcomes; (b) examine reported associations of marketing effectiveness with trust and engagement, and of engagement with satisfaction; and (c) identify operational and inclusion constraints relevant to interpreting these relationships. The conceptual framework organizes expected positive associations but does not specify tested mediation hypotheses. The available summary statistics do not permit new hypothesis tests or model re-estimation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research setting and design

The article presents a secondary analysis of statistical results reported from a doctoral primary-data survey conducted in Nepalgunj. The original design was quantitative, descriptive and analytical, with cross-sectional questionnaires for banking customers and institutional officials. This manuscript reorganizes the reported results and contextualizes them through literature; it does not conduct new estimations or reconstruct missing respondent-level data.

3.2 Sample and respondents

The source study reports 450 participants: 400 bank customers and 50 officials from 15 commercial banks and 20 financial institutions. The thesis describes random sampling and references Cochran's large-population formula. For a simple random sample under the conventional assumptions of 95% confidence, a 50% proportion and a 5% margin of error, the benchmark is approximately 384 participants. This calculation does not independently verify the actual sampling frame, response process, probability selection or representativeness of the collected sample.

Table 1. Reported study participants

Group	n	Primary information
Bank customers	400	Reported acquisition, trust, engagement and satisfaction
Bank officials	50	Implementation challenges and institutional practices
Total	450	Survey participants across participating institutions

Note. All figures reproduce statistics supplied in the source manuscript; the underlying respondent-level dataset was not re-analyzed.

3.3 Instrument and variables

The questionnaires included respondent profiles, channel exposure, perceived marketing effectiveness, acquisition-related responses, trust, customer engagement, satisfaction and barriers to digital adoption. Several constructs used five-point response scales, while channel use and challenge indicators were categorical. Because item wording, reliability coefficients, factor analyses and exact scale scoring are not provided in the supplied article, no claim of demonstrated construct validity is added here. Authors should supply the questionnaire and psychometric documentation for journal review.

3.4 Statistical treatment and interpretation

The original analysis reports percentages, means and standard deviations, Pearson correlations, multiple regression coefficients, ANOVA, chi-square statistics and t-tests. The present results reproduce these summaries and avoid new inferential calculations. Standardized regression coefficients are reported as supplied. Because statistical model specifications, subgroup denominators and complete regression tables are unavailable, coefficients cannot be independently verified. The terms "associated with" and "predicted statistically" are preferred to "caused" or "led to."

4. RESULTS

4.1 Respondent characteristics

Among customers, 40% were 31–45 years old and 35% were 18–30 years old; 55% were male, 50% held a bachelor's degree and 40% reported monthly incomes of NPR 20,001–50,000. Forty-five percent reported one to five years of banking experience. Among officials, 55% were aged 31–45, 60% were male and 70% held a master's degree or higher. The profile suggests coverage of economically active and digitally exposed respondents, but does not itself establish representativeness.

Table 2. Selected respondent characteristics

Indicator	Customers	Officials
Aged 31–45	40%	55%
Aged 18–30	35%	Not reported
Male	55%	60%
Bachelor's degree	50%	Not reported
Master's degree or higher	Not reported	70%
Income NPR 20,001–50,000	40%	Not reported
Banking experience 1–5 years	45%	Not reported

Note. All figures reproduce statistics supplied in the source manuscript; the underlying respondent-level dataset was not re-analysed.

4.2 Digital marketing channels and acquisition

The reported channel-use distribution included 45% daily, 30% weekly and 15% monthly social-media exposure in an acquisition-related context. Social media had the highest reported correlation with acquisition ($r = .68$), followed by e-mail ($r = .60$) and search-engine optimization ($r = .55$). The reported regression coefficient for social media was $\beta = .42$ ($p < .001$), and the acquisition model R^2 was .56. A reported mean score comparison was 2.9 before and 4.1 after implementation ($t = 6.2$, $p < .001$). Without longitudinal documentation or a controlled design, that mean contrast should not be interpreted as a causal intervention effect.

4.3 Perceived marketing effectiveness and trust

Half of surveyed respondents were classified as having high trust, and the mean perception score was 4.05 (SD = .88). Digital marketing effectiveness was strongly associated with trust ($r = .75$); the reported standardized regression coefficient was $\beta = .45$ ($t = 11.25$, $p < .001$). Urban respondents had a higher reported average trust score than rural respondents (4.2 versus 3.4; $t = 7.1$, $p < .001$). Among those holding a master's degree or above, 70% reportedly fell into the high-trust category. These descriptive differences suggest heterogeneity in perceived confidence but require clarification of subgroup bases and potential confounders.

4.4 Digital marketing and engagement

Behavioural engagement represented 55% of reported engagement types; the mean engagement score was 4.0 (SD = .85). Marketing and engagement were positively correlated ($r = .65$), and the reported regression coefficient was $\beta = .40$ ($t = 8.0$, $p < .001$). The source also gives an ANOVA result of $F = 9.0$ ($p < .01$) and a mean comparison of 3.1 versus 4.2 ($t = 5.5$, $p < .001$). The source extract does not establish the exact group definitions or temporal basis of the comparison.

4.5 Engagement and satisfaction

Sixty percent of respondents were reported in the high-satisfaction group. Mean satisfaction was 4.1 (SD = .82). Engagement showed a strong positive association with satisfaction ($r = .70$), with reported $\beta = .50$ ($t = 12.5$, $p < .001$). Respondents categorized as highly engaged had mean satisfaction of 4.3 compared with 3.2 for the lower-engagement comparison group ($t = 8.0$, $p < .001$). The findings are consistent with a close relationship between customer interaction and evaluation of banking service, but do not determine causal ordering.

4.6 Implementation barriers and contextual differences

Cybersecurity was cited by 75% of respondents, infrastructure limitations by 50% and limited digital literacy by 25%; these categories appear non-exclusive and should not be summed to 100%. The source reports a negative association between challenges and growth opportunities with an absolute correlation magnitude of .55, but the sign and coding direction should be documented explicitly. The reported coefficient for addressing challenges was $\beta = .40$ ($p < .001$); respondents in better-addressed settings had mean opportunity scores of 4.0 versus 3.0 ($t = 6.5$, $p < .001$). A rural challenge comparison was also reported ($\chi^2 = 13.0$, $p < .01$).

4.7 Consolidated relationships

A reported integrated regression explained 67% of variance in an outcome described as "customer acquisition and overall satisfaction," with standardized coefficients approximately between .25 and .35 ($p < .001$). The thesis extract does not show whether the outcome is a validated composite index or a separate model specification. Accordingly, this R^2 is reproduced as a source-reported summary, not evidence that a formally specified or validated structural model has been estimated.

Table 3. Summary of key reported statistical associations

Relationship or result	Reported statistic	Interpretation
Social media–acquisition	$r = .68$; $\beta = .42$; acquisition $R^2 = .56$	Strong positive association
Effectiveness–trust	$r = .75$; $\beta = .45$	Strong positive association
Marketing–engagement	$r = .65$; $\beta = .40$	Positive association

Engagement–satisfaction	r = .70; β = .50	Strong positive association
Security / infrastructure / literacy	75% / 50% / 25%	Frequently reported barriers
Reported combined outcome	R^2 = .67	Composite/model definition requires verification

Note. All figures reproduce statistics supplied in the source manuscript; the underlying respondent-level dataset was not re-analysed.

5. DISCUSSION

The first finding is that promotional effectiveness is closely connected with acquisition-related outcomes, especially through social media. The reported strength of social-media association is consistent with the interactive potential of the channel (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Yet the customer-journey literature suggests that an observed channel association need not represent a stand-alone causal contribution: customers may encounter several bank touchpoints before account-related action (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The managerial implication is to measure the quality and downstream results of digital contact, not channel activity alone.

The second finding concerns trust. The high effectiveness–trust correlation suggests that customers may interpret digital communication as a reflection of competence, security and responsiveness. The trust literature offers a plausible explanation: confidence matters when customers encounter uncertainty and risk (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Yousafzai et al., 2003). Importantly, the analysis does not show whether trustworthy communication creates confidence or confident customers judge bank communication more favourably. Future studies should estimate these processes with longitudinal measures or experiments.

Third, digital marketing and engagement are positively associated, and engagement is strongly related to satisfaction. Brodie et al. (2011) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) help explain why interactive digital contact could support cognitive, emotional and behavioral involvement. The banking setting gives such involvement a practical dimension: customers need information, reliable transactions and channels for support. Stronger engagement and satisfaction might reinforce one another over time. The current study identifies their association rather than resolving this reciprocal relationship.

Fourth, implementation barriers reveal the limits of digital reach. The prominent security, infrastructure and literacy responses imply that communication performance should be evaluated within the conditions under which customers actually use services. The urban–rural trust difference further suggests that a uniform digital marketing strategy may be less effective than a segmented, assisted approach. This observation is consistent with the role of facilitating conditions in technology acceptance (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and with central-bank attention to secure, inclusive payment development (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2025).

Finally, the combined-model statistic indicates that relational variables may be informative when analyzed together, but without a precise outcome definition and original model tables it would be inappropriate to portray R^2 = .67 as a verified mediation model. The most defensible interpretation is that reported acquisition and relational outcomes belong in a shared assessment framework rather than in separate managerial silos.

6. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The article contributes a customer-outcomes interpretation of banking digital marketing by joining acquisition indicators with trust, engagement and satisfaction. This framing draws a distinction between immediate marketing response and continuing service relationships. It also brings together the transaction-enabling emphasis of technology acceptance, the risk-reducing role of trust and the interactive emphasis of engagement and service-dominant logic. The contribution should be characterized as contextual integration and preliminary empirical consistency rather than a newly validated causal theory.

The regional perspective adds a second contribution. Nepalgunj combines digital banking expansion with uneven customer capabilities and physical infrastructure. Such conditions help explain why effective digital strategies need not have identical associations for all groups. The findings invite comparative and multigroup investigation, but do not in themselves establish statistically tested moderation.

7. MANAGERIAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Bank managers should connect social-media and search strategies to measurable customer journeys, recording enquiries, assisted onboarding, verified new accounts, active digital service adoption and post-onboarding satisfaction separately. Campaigns

should present accurate product terms and direct customers to authenticated banking channels. Such coordination can reduce the risk that promotional promises exceed the experience actually delivered.

Trust needs explicit attention within digital communication. Security alerts, clear privacy notices, transparent fees, accessible complaint handling and responsive service recovery can form part of both marketing and service operations. Because cyber-risk concerns are prominent, fraud-awareness content should be integrated with customer support rather than treated as a periodic public-relations exercise.

Customer engagement assessment should include educational-content interaction, repeat usage, response quality and resolution outcomes, without assuming that high click volume signals meaningful involvement. Rural customers and people with low digital literacy may benefit from assisted enrolment, multilingual guidance, simplified instructions and combined branch-digital pathways. Policymakers and banks should coordinate on dependable connectivity, consumer protection and financial literacy so that digital growth does not depend exclusively on already-advantaged customer segments.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The evidence is limited to a single regional market and self-reported cross-sectional responses. The customer and official samples address different analytical questions and should not be pooled indiscriminately. The supplied record does not include the original questionnaire, full model specifications, variance inflation diagnostics, construct reliability coefficients, sampling frame, subgroup counts or dataset. The published article must therefore avoid implying independent replication of thesis statistics.

Future research should separate objective acquisition records from attitudinal measures; validate trust, engagement, perceived effectiveness and satisfaction through factor analysis; and estimate explicitly defined regression or structural equation models. A longitudinal design could establish temporal ordering, while field experiments could test campaign effects. Multigroup comparisons by age, income, literacy and residence may clarify inequality in digital outcomes. Data collection should also distinguish bank-level implementation measures from individual-level customer perceptions.

9. CONCLUSION

This article examined how digital marketing effectiveness relates to customer acquisition, trust, engagement, and satisfaction in Nepalese banking, using the reported survey evidence from Nepalgunj. The source study covered 450 respondents 400 banking customers and 50 officials associated with 15 commercial banks and 20 financial institutions. Considered together, the findings indicate that digital marketing performance in banking is better understood through both acquisition-related responses and the quality of continuing customer relationships. At the same time, the results are associations drawn from reported cross-sectional analyses, rather than evidence of causal effects or an independently estimated mediation model.

With respect to the first research objective, social media emerged as the digital channel most strongly associated with acquisition-related outcomes ($r = .68$), followed by e-mail ($r = .60$) and search-engine optimization ($r = .55$). The reported social-media coefficient ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) and acquisition-model explanatory power ($R^2 = .56$) reinforce the relevance of digital outreach in this regional market. These results suggest that interactive and searchable communication channels deserve a central place in banks' marketing strategies. Nevertheless, because acquisition was measured through survey-based indicators, channel responsiveness should not be equated with verified new account openings. The findings justify better monitoring of the customer journey, not the conclusion that any single digital channel independently generated new customers.

The second objective concerned the relational outcomes of digital marketing. Perceived digital marketing effectiveness showed a strong positive association with trust ($r = .75$; $\beta = .45$, $p < .001$), a result particularly pertinent to financial services, where customers must evaluate security, institutional credibility, and the reliability of information. Effective communication may be one feature of a trustworthy banking experience; conversely, customers who already have confidence in an institution may rate its communications more favourably. The article therefore supports the practical importance of transparent messages, authenticated channels, privacy safeguards, and responsive assistance without claiming that marketing effectiveness necessarily produces trust. The urban–rural difference in reported trust scores (4.2 versus 3.4) also suggests that banks should not assume identical levels of digital confidence across customer groups.

The evidence on engagement extends this interpretation beyond the initial marketing contact. Digital marketing effectiveness was positively associated with engagement ($r = .65$; $\beta = .40$, $p < .001$), while engagement itself was strongly associated with

satisfaction ($r = .70$; $\beta = .50$, $p < .001$). The mean satisfaction score was 4.3 among respondents described as highly engaged, compared with 3.2 in the lower-engagement group. These figures are consistent with the view that information quality, useful interactions, and ongoing service contact belong in an integrated assessment of banking relationships. They do not, however, establish that engagement precedes satisfaction or mediates an effect of digital marketing. Engagement and satisfaction may reinforce one another, and both may reflect unmeasured aspects of the underlying service experience.

The article's third objective was to identify constraints that affect digital participation. Cybersecurity concerns were reported by 75% of respondents, infrastructure limitations by 50%, and limited digital literacy by 25%. These non-exclusive responses indicate why communication reach alone is an inadequate measure of success. A customer may encounter a bank's online message and still hesitate to act because of fraud concerns, unreliable connectivity, or difficulty using the advertised service. The reported rural challenge comparison further underscores the importance of assessing conditions of access. Banks seeking inclusive growth should therefore combine digital campaigns with fraud-awareness communication, clear product explanations, accessible complaint-handling channels, assisted onboarding, and continued branch-based support where necessary.

The article makes a conceptual contribution by placing acquisition and relationship quality in the same interpretive framework. Its findings are compatible with relationship marketing, technology acceptance, and customer engagement perspectives: credible communication and usable service interfaces can be considered alongside customer involvement and satisfaction rather than studied as unrelated outcomes. The reported integrated-model R^2 of .67 is suggestive of the usefulness of a combined assessment, but the source material does not establish the exact construction of its acquisition-and-satisfaction outcome. This statistic cannot be treated as validation of the conceptual sequence or of mediation through trust and engagement. The contribution is consequently best described as contextual integration supported by reported empirical associations.

For managers, the main implication is to align digital promotion with the actual quality of banking service. Social-media activity, e-mail communication, and search visibility should be assessed using distinct measures of reach, enquiry, verified acquisition, active service use, engagement, and post-service satisfaction. Banks should avoid viewing interaction counts as substitutes for meaningful customer value. Accurate product information, secure transactions, reliable applications, and timely issue resolution are essential parts of the experience customers evaluate after exposure to a marketing message. Communication teams and service operations should therefore work from common customer-experience indicators rather than separate promotional targets.

For policymakers and financial institutions, the findings highlight the importance of enabling conditions for digital financial inclusion. Improved network reliability, consumer protection, accessible cybersecurity guidance, and digital financial literacy initiatives can help reduce practical barriers faced by customers outside the most digitally confident segments. The reported rural–urban variation should motivate more precise assessment of customer needs rather than an assumption that all customers will benefit equally from a digital-first approach. Such priorities align with the article's emphasis on secure and inclusive payment systems within Nepal's financial-sector development agenda.

These conclusions remain bounded by the study's evidence. The article synthesizes statistics previously reported in a doctoral primary-data study; respondent-level records were not re-analysed. The available materials do not include complete model specifications, measurement-validation results, or the information needed to verify sampling representativeness and subgroup comparisons independently. The single-city, cross-sectional, and self-reported design also limits generalizability and prevents causal interpretation. Future research should link customer perceptions with verified bank records, document construct reliability, specify models transparently, and use longitudinal or experimental designs where feasible. Comparative studies across regions and customer groups could then test whether trust, engagement, and satisfaction operate differently under varying infrastructure and literacy conditions.

Overall, the Nepalgunj evidence suggests that digital marketing in banking should be judged by more than its ability to attract attention. The strongest reported patterns connect acquisition-related responses with social-media communication, perceived marketing effectiveness with trust and engagement, and engagement with satisfaction. These relationships occur in a setting where security concerns, infrastructure constraints, and uneven digital literacy remain consequential. A sustainable approach to digital banking must therefore connect credible outreach with secure delivery, helpful customer interaction, and inclusive support. The study's enduring conclusion is not that a single causal pathway has been proved, but that customer acquisition and post-acquisition relationship quality should be evaluated together when banks design and assess digital marketing strategies.

REFERENCES

[1] Brodie, R. J, Hollenbeck, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. Journal of Service Research, 14(3), 252–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511411703

[2] Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice (7th ed.). Pearson.

[3] Chang, W. L., Chan, C. L., & Hsieh, Y. H. (2025). Antecedents of user satisfaction and trust in digital banking: An examination of the ISSM factors. International Journal of Bank Marketing, 43(8), 1756–1778. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-04-2024-0232

[4] Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. MIS Quarterly, 13(3), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.2307/249008

[5] Gefen, D., Karahanna, E., & Straub, D. W. (2003). Trust and TAM in online shopping: An integrated model. MIS Quarterly, 27(1), 51–90. https://doi.org/10.2307/30036519

[6] Gomes, L., Schmidt, S., & Eberle, L. (2024). Multichannel service, trust, commitment and engagement: A study in a credit union. International Journal of Bank Marketing, 42(7), 1492–1512. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-12-2023-0640

[7] Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28(2), 149–165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002

[8] Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. Journal of Marketing, 80(6), 69–96. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420

[9] Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. Business Horizons, 52(4), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002

[10] Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. Journal of Marketing, 58(3), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302

[11] Nepal Rastra Bank. (2025). Payment systems oversight report, 2023/24. https://www.nrb.org.np/contents/uploads/2025/01/Payment-Oversight-Report-2023-24.pdf

[12] Pansari, A., & Kumar, V. (2017). Customer engagement: The construct, antecedents, and consequences. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 45, 294–311. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0485-6

[13] Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0069-6

[14] Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. MIS Quarterly, 27(3), 425–478. https://doi.org/10.2307/30036540

[15] Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J. (2015). From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing: Introduction to the special issue on multi-channel retailing. Journal of Retailing, 91(2), 174–181. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2015.02.005

[16] Yousafzai, S. Y., Pallister, J. G., & Foxall, G. R. (2003). A proposed model of e-trust for electronic banking.

[17] Tech novation, 23(11), 847–860. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0166-4972(03)00130-5

[18] Zhengmeng, C., Malik, M., Hussain, M., & Hussain, S. (2024). Exploring customer retention dynamics: A comparative investigation of factors affecting customer retention in the banking sector using mediation-moderation approach.

[19] Heliyon, 10(19), e36919. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36919