

A Review of Brand Evangelism in the Digital Era: A Structured Review of Social Media-Driven Advocacy



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Abstract

The objective of the article is to provide a systematic examination of brand evangelism in the digital phase, emphasizing the part of social media in building customer advocacy. The study incorporated online databases such as Elsevier, Emerald, EBSCO, Taylor & Francis, Springer, and Google Scholar. A total of 165 articles were utilized for the study. This article explores the fundamental concepts, drivers, and effects of brand evangelism in the digital age, highlighting consumer advocacy driven by social media. The review notes that consumer brand connections, emotional engagement, brand love, trust, affective commitment, online brand communities, influencer marketing, immersive technologies, and user-generated content are some of the key contributors to brand evangelism. The data also show that relationship quality, brand trust, and affective commitment increase evangelical behaviors with positive word-of-mouth, brand defence, and loyalty. The review concludes that interactive, emotionally engaging, and communal brand experiences can build brand loyalty and digital competitive advantage.

Keywords: *Brand Evangelism, Digital Era, Social Media, Advocacy, Systematic Review.*

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Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of digital technologies has revolutionized brand-consumer interactions, leading to novel methods of involvement and advocacy. Brand evangelism is now recognized as an influential effect when highly satisfied and emotionally engaged customers actively advocate for brands without anticipating direct rewards. The expansion of social media platforms has greatly enhanced this tendency, allowing individuals to share thoughts, experiences, and recommendations to a worldwide audience instantaneously. Therefore, customers have transitioned from passive beneficiaries of marketing communications to active consumers in brand communication.

Brand evangelism in the digital age is tightly linked to the dynamics of social media advocacy, wherein content produced by consumers, online communities, and peer influence greatly shape brand perceptions. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have emerged as crucial venues for the creation, distribution, and validation of brand identities. These platforms not only enhance visibility but also develop trust and authenticity, since consumers are more likely to depend on peer recommendations than on traditional advertising methods. As a result, firms are increasingly prioritizing the development of powerful emotional connections and significant experiences in order to promote voluntary brand advocacy.

Despite the growing importance of brand evangelism, the present research is fragmented, with studies investigating multiple factors such as consumer involvement, loyalty to brands, word-of-mouth communication, and online communities in independence. A comprehensive and systematic review is necessary to incorporate different views, so explaining how social media promotes and sustains brand evangelism. A review of this kind may clarify principal elements, theoretical basis, and emerging trends within such a field.

This study attempts to provide a systematic evaluation of brand evangelism in the digital world, highlighting advocacy driven by social media. The present article generates previous research to identify key elements influencing brand evangelism, analyze its effects for marketers, and provide paths for future research in an increasingly digital and interconnected economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing and data analytics cooperate to promote consumer advocacy and brand evangelism in today's digital age. According to published research, data-driven procedures make it possible for influencer campaigns to be personalised and targeted, greatly increasing customer engagement, trust, and brand loyalty. Moreover, analytics technologies increase consumer-brand interactions by enhancing influencer identification and content relevancy (Rabby et al., 2025).

In Sri Lanka's competitive lubricants business, brand evangelism is understudied compared to global studies. Previous research shows that brand evangelism happens when customers actively support and advocate for a brand. Studies also note that changing consumer tastes and dynamic product settings make brand evangelism difficult. Since extensive access to digital platforms allows and encourages consumers, digital marketing and content development are increasingly important in brand evangelism. In Sri Lanka, content marketing and online customer involvement are lacking (W.D.D.S et al., 2025).

Social media has undergone shifts traditional marketing by providing firms opportunities and difficulties. Social media message impacts brand justice and evangelism, affecting consumer

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attitudes positively and negatively. Effective social media initiatives promote brand awareness, image, and consumer loyalty, fostering positive word-of-mouth and promotion. However, poor social media communication and negative customer interactions can damage brand equity and evangelism (Reddy M N, 2019).

Mediating variables include brand loyalty and brand evangelism, where digital social responsibility (DSR) builds an emotional attachment and drives brand advocacy. Competent digital social responsibility (DSR) programs build consumer–brand relationships and increase commitment to environmentally friendly products, providing marketers with key data for sustainable consumption (Hung, 2025).

AI promotes personalization, reactivity, and user engagement, promoting brand loyalty. AI-driven techniques promote operational efficiency and enable adaptive service delivery, ensuring competitive advantage. In digital education, AI must be integrated into customer-centric efforts to improve customer interactions, user enjoyment, and loyalty (Hidayat et al., 2025).

Brand consumer connection is more dynamic and data-driven, especially among Indian millennials who use social media. AI, specifically processing of language and machine learning, promotes consumer behavior and engagement prediction, according to studies. AI-driven created marketing methods promote brand loyalty and consumer engagement, while real-time sentiment research helps firms adjust campaigns (Sharma & Jha, 2025).

Social media marketing (SMM) as a key digital brand loyalty driver. Research shows that content advertising, influencer collaborative development, user-generated satisfied, and public development promote customer engagement, trust, and brand advocacy. However, evolving social media algorithms, data privacy concerns, and ROI measurement issues are highlighted. Effective SMM initiatives strengthen brand–consumer interactions, while transparency, customisation, and interactive involvement build loyalty. AI-based analytics and adaptive marketing are also essential for SMM success and profitability (Samal et al., 2025).

Search machine advertising, social media, content advertising, email advertising, and live flowing have replaced traditional methods in marketing due to growing digitization. Building brand–consumer relationships involves precise targeting, interaction, and efficient communication through these channels. Digital marketing channels increase advertising, emotional connections, buying convenience, and data-driven customisation, promoting brand loyalty. Optimizing channel integration, content quality, and data analytics are crucial to digital consumer engagement and brand loyalty (Feng & Ou, 2025).

Through individualized and emotive digital encounters, brand anthropomorphism increases customer empathy and engagement. According to Social Exchange Theory, empathic and engaging brand experiences build consumer connections and brand advocacy. Research also shows that perceived technical empowerment boosts customer engagement and advocacy. Thus, digital technologies are changing hospitality interactions from transactional to trust-based and socially anchored. Few studies have studied these links in the hospitality sector, especially in growing economies like Egypt (Khairy & Salama, 2026).

Researchers use Signaling Theory to propose that consumers use positive and negative digital indicators to assess green brand authenticity and believability. Positive indications, like influencer credibility, boost green brand authenticity, whereas negative signals, like greenwashing, lower it. Further research suggests that green brand authenticity builds brand trust, which improves consumers' sustainable buying intentions. Brand trust also mediates authenticity-purchase

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intention. Digital sustainability communication affects customer behavior through authenticity and trust, according to these studies (Poulis et al., 2026).

Digital marketing is crucial for brand awareness and consumer involvement. SEO, content, social media, influencer, and data analytics are efficient digital marketing methods in the Industrial Era 4.0, according to literature. These techniques expand audiences, establish engaging communication, and boost brand visibility in competitive markets. Further study reveals that content quality, consistency, and audience targeting are crucial to digital marketing strategy success. Therefore, firms increasingly use integrated digital marketing to create brand awareness and sustain competitive advantage in the changing digital environment (Aman et al., 2024). Chatbots can improve customer engagement and personalize experiences as people increasingly use online platforms for information and shopping. Studies using Affordance Theory imply that chatbots improve user experiences with interactive intelligence, flexibility in time and place, and individualized interactions. Research shows that chatbot elements like emotional support and gender depictions might affect customer views depending on demands and purchasing settings. These findings show that chatbot effectiveness is context-specific and shapes consumer–company identification and digital customer relationships (Yao, 2024).

Brand congruity the matching between customers' self-image and brand image significantly affects consumer engagement and advocacy. Brand congruity boosts brand evangelism directly and indirectly through psychological characteristics like brand trust and commitment in Generation Z digital commerce users. These findings show that trust and commitment mediate identity congruence and advocacy oriented activities. The literature also shows that brands that represent consumers' beliefs, personalities, and identities build emotional attachment and inspire loyal customers to advocate the brand. This shows the expanding relevance of identity-based branding tactics in digital customer advocacy and brand evangelism (Hadi & Sabardini, 2025).

Recent research shows that digital technologies have transformed marketing practices, leading to Marketing 5.0, which integrates advanced technologies with human centered strategies to improve customer experience, engagement, and trust. Studies suggest that Marketing 5.0 techniques boost brand evangelism by strengthening emotional connections between consumers and brands. Marketing 5.0 combines innovative technologies with human centered methods to improve client engagement, trust, and experience. Marketing 5.0 improves brand evangelism by increasing consumer-brand emotional bonds, according to research. As technologically advanced and customer-focused marketing methods boost consumer confidence and loyalty, brand trust mediates this relationship (Vijayan & Thomas, 2025).

Recently, consumer–brand connection research has focused on brand evangelism, especially in digital and relationship marketing. However, brand evangelism studies are fragmented, requiring a more systematic knowledge of its antecedents, mechanisms, and results. Systematic literature reviews have divided brand evangelism research into four thematic areas: brand-centric relational, green, social media, and emotional. These studies show that emotional attachment, trust, social influence, and digital involvement increase evangelism. Social media and digital platforms are being used to promote brand awareness and customer advocacy (Cavadas & Moreira, 2025).

Social media elements including argument quality, post beauty, and post popularity favorably promote brand evangelism, according to research. Further research suggests that value resonance mediates how social media information influences brand evangelism. When brand content matches personal beliefs, customers are more likely to engage emotionally and promoter for the brand.

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Studies show that personal relevance improves the association between social media content and value resonance, especially for hedonic products vs utilitarian products (Wang et al., 2026).

Brand success in competitive markets is increasingly driven by brand evangelism, according to recent research. Studies show that corporate brand image, sales management, and salesperson brand alignment strongly influence consumer brand evangelism. Further research shows that brand associations mediate customer perceptions, emotional connection, and advocacy intentions. Positive brand associations make customers more likely to recommend and promote brands. Existing studies show that consumer adoption of digital technologies moderates the association between brand associations and product evangelism, suggesting that digitally engaged consumers are more susceptible to online brand advocacy initiatives. These findings emphasize the need of merging strong branding tactics with digital marketing to engage consumers and promote brand evangelism (Jam et al., 2025).

Digitally aware millennials engage with CSR-related content on Instagram, according to research. Consumer trust, engagement, and loyalty increase with transparent and effective digital CSR communication, which drives positive purchasing behavior. Further research shows that millennials who view CSR programs as legitimate and socially useful are more likely to support, endorse, and promote brands. Additionally, studies show that integrating CSR efforts with corporate values and disseminating them through digital platforms can improve emotional connections with consumers and promote ethical consumerism and social advancement (Santoso & Negoro, 2025).

Recent hospitality and service marketing literature emphasizes frontline personnel' strategic role in digital client brand evangelism. According to research, frontline personnel' digital competency, proactive assistance, and relationship-building skills strongly influence customers' opinions and advocacy. Further research shows that employee-related variables improve corporate or brand image, encouraging customers to become brand advocates. Customers' trust and emotional loyalty to the company are strengthened by perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Thus, hospitality sector research shows that digitally skilled and relationship-oriented frontline employees are essential to great client experiences, brand image, and long-term consumer advocacy (Mansoor et al., 2025).

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A Vietnamese banking study evaluated how online brand experience (OBE) affects product evangelism (BEM) through association quality factors like trust, contentment, and promise. The study demonstrated that OBE directly and indirectly promotes brand evangelism through relationship quality using data from 486 online banking customers and structural equation modeling. The results also showed that brand reputation improves OBE and relationship quality.

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The study emphasizes the relevance of pleasant online brand experiences for long-term client relationships and brand evangelism in financial services (Safeer & Le, 2023).

A longitudinal survey examined hospitality and tourism adoption of immersive technologies like virtual realism, augmented realism, and mixed reality. Immersive technology adoption improves subjective well-being and brand evangelism by increasing utilitarian, hedonic, and eudaimonic values. The study also indicated that promotion-focused consumers are more evangelical. The research uses Service-Dominant Logic, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Regulatory Focus Theory to show how emotionally engaging technological experiences boost tourist and hospitality customer loyalty and brand evangelism (Mansoor et al., 2026).

OBC engagement dramatically boosts product evangelism, including viva-voce referrals, brand defense, and future purchase intentions. Age, gender, and membership number were also moderating factors, demonstrating that female, younger, and low-OBC supporter consumers are more evangelical than male, older, and high-OBC follower consumers. Research shows that OBC involvement drives brand evangelism (Bhandari et al., 2024).

Brand identity and significance substantially affect BCE, which boosts brand evangelism and defense. The study also originates that brand evangelism mediates BCE and brand defense and resilience. The research underlines the importance of genuine SMBC involvement in strengthening consumer–brand connections and boosting brand evangelism (Sharma et al., 2022).

METHODS

1. Search Strategy

Study selection was made from the year 2022 to 2026. In order to investigate the idea of brand evangelism in the digital age, especially in relation to social media-driven advocacy, this study uses a methodical literature review approach. To guarantee openness, rigor, and reproducibility, the review procedure follows to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework.

2. Data Sources and Search Strategy

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To find relevant papers, the search technique used a mix of Boolean operators (AND, OR). The following were the main search terms: ("Brand Evangelism" AND "Digital Era" AND "Social Media" AND "Brand Advocacy") ("Brand Evangelism" OR "Digital Era" OR "Social Media"). Additional keywords and alternative concepts, such as consumer brand promotion, brand loyalty advocacy, social networking platforms, influencer marketing, buy intention, and consumer–brand relationship, were included to expand the search's reach.

RESULTS

Study Selection and Eligibility Criteria

- The systematic approach used to find, categorize, and choose research papers for the study is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram.
- During the identification phase, a database search revealed 300 records in total. Five documents were also found through secondary databases and other sources, including websites. These documents made up the first set of studies that were reviewed.
- Duplicate records ($n = 5$) were eliminated during the screening phase, and an additional 10 records were eliminated for other reasons, providing 290 records for additional assessment.
- These 290 records were evaluated during the eligibility phase using their abstracts and titles. Following this stage, 32 records were eliminated because they did not fit the requirements for admission. As a result, 258 records were maintained for in-depth examination.
- The remaining studies received full-text evaluation after the abstract screening. Only 38 studies satisfied the final eligibility requirements and have been incorporated in the review after the full-text articles were carefully examined.
- Lastly, in the final stage, the 38 chosen papers were divided into two groups according to their study methodology: 22 were quantitative and 16 were qualitative.
- All things considered, the figure shows a clear and structured filtering procedure that made sure that only pertinent and excellent studies were incorporated in the final analysis.

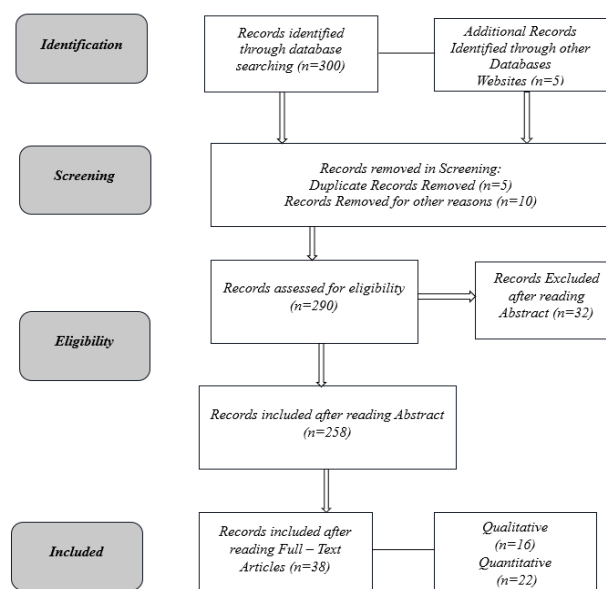


Fig 1: PRISMA Flow diagram showing the process of detecting the article

DISCUSSION

Summary of Evidence

This study confirms previous studies in social network-based product communities showing consumer–brand interactions increase brand evangelism finished brand trust. The study on Samsung mobile phone users found that online brand communities with strong product, brand, corporate, and customer interactions favorably affect supportive and evangelistic behavior. These results emphasize the importance of trust-driven social media consumer relationships for brand advocacy and long-term customer engagement (Sanjari Nader et al., 2020).

Previous research on self-congruity and social individuality theories stressed the role of value congruity and community identification in brand evangelism in virtual brand communities. Stronger brand and community identification positively affects brand evangelism, including brand referrals and purchase intentions, according to the study. These findings imply that meaningful community experiences and brand values that match consumers' self-concepts and social identities can boost consumer advocacy (Hsu, 2019).

Social brand value study has also stressed the importance of social interactions and public participation in social media. The study found that social brand value from brand community interactions boosts brand evangelism and customers' readiness to pay a premium. These findings show that social media communities are increasingly enhancing consumer–brand interactions and driving brand advocacy (Fueller et al., 2012).

This study confirms earlier sports research on brand identification, loyalty, and evangelism among football team followers on social media. The study indicated that self-brand joining, brand organizational identity, and brand community documentation increase brand loyalty, which promotes positive advertising and inhibits negative behaviors like spreading rumors. These findings complement the social identity concept by showing that brand community identification increases loyalty and social media evangelism (Gholipour et al., 2020).

This study confirms previous investigate on social media micro-influencer marketing among Millennials, which found that authenticity, meaningful content, specific communication, and secret sharing boost brand engagement and love. The study found that brand engagement and love mediate micro-influencer qualities and brand evangelism. These findings show that emotionally engaging influencer methods can improve consumer–brand ties and evangelize digital-native consumers (Pornsrimate & Khamwon, 2021).

This study supports past research on online brand communities that found brand congruity increases brand community commitment and evangelism. The study also found that good brand referrals drive brand evangelism, whereas brand community commitment partially mediates the relationship between brand congruity and evangelism. These findings emphasize the need of connecting brand values with consumers' self-concepts and building community commitment to promote positive advocacy in digital contexts (Shaari & Ahmad, 2016).

The present study confirms prior studies on social media-based tourist communities (SMTCs) that destination distinctiveness and information-seeking involvement promote destination evangelism. The study found that information-seeking activity boosts trip commitment and mediates

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destination distinctiveness and evangelism. These findings show that online communities can boost consumer advocacy and destination-related evangelism by sharing unique tourism experiences (Sharma, 2022).

Prior research on brand transgression and consumer–brand interactions showed that brand forgiveness and brand evangelizing mediate brand relationship quality after a brand transgression. The study found that brand-loyal consumers are more ready to forgive and continue evangelizing despite unfavorable occurrences. These findings show that brand evangelism and forgiveness protect long-term consumer–brand connections, especially in social media (Nobi et al., 2022).

The present study's findings are backed by systematic literature on brand evangelism, which emphasizes promoting and protecting companies. Evangelistic consumers reduce marketing efforts through positive advocacy and customer recruitment, according to the review. It also found brand evangelism's antecedents, moderators, and effects, highlighting its importance in consumer–brand connections and brand success (Sharma & Khandeparkar, 2025).

The present study confirms previous research on influencer marketing and brand evangelism, which found that homophily, trust, popularity, warmth, prestige, and engaging content significantly increase brand evangelism among social media followers. The study also found that warmth and content directly promote evangelism, while trust and status indirectly do so through emotional relationships. These findings emphasize the necessity of choosing relatable and trustworthy influencers to improve consumer–brand interactions and promote brand advocacy on social media (Sharma & Khandeparkar, 2024).

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The present study supports prior research on online brand fan pages, which showed that social capital promotes brand love and evangelism on social media. Brand love and customer evangelism were positively influenced by structural, cognitive, and relational social capital, according to the study. Relational capital was the largest driver of brand love, highlighting the value of strong social relationships and interactions in online brand communities for brand endorsement (Lee, C. T., & Hsieh, S., 2016).

This study supports previous social media marketing research on brand anthropomorphism, which showed that human-like brand traits boost brand evangelizing. The study indicated that social attendance and consumer–brand ID mediate brand anthropomorphism and evangelism. It also found that prevention-focused consumers are less evangelical. These findings highlight the necessity of humanizing and emotionally engaging brand interactions for social media brand promotion and customer identification (Zhang & Choi, 2023).

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Previous research using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) paradigm showed that Firm-Created Content (FCC) and User-Generated Content (UGC) positively promote brand evangelism and consumer fidelity through affective commitment. An Instagram study of a coffee-shop chain found that engaging social media communication improves emotional attachment to the business, which fosters evangelical and loyal consumer behavior. Interactive and emotionally engaging social media content builds strong consumer–brand ties, according to these results (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The examined literature shows that consumer–brand relationships, emotional engagement, trust, brand love, affective commitment, and online community interactions greatly influence brand evangelism. Social media engagement, influencer marketing, immersive technologies, brand anthropomorphism, and user-generated content boost brand support, loyalty, good word-of-mouth, and brand defence, according to studies across sectors. The results also show that brand trust, relationship quality, and affective commitment mediate evangelism. Digital brand experiences that are relevant, dynamic, and emotionally engaging can help firms promote brand evangelism.

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