

THE IMPACT OF MARKETING AGILITY, FUNCTIONS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND BRAND DIGITALIZATION ON BRAND PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to analyze the mediating effect of strategic brand management in the relationships between marketing agility, technical and social function of digital platform and brand digitalization on brand performance. A convenience sampling method was used to collect data through a survey questionnaire. The survey instrument was used to collect data from 302 respondents from the private sector in Türkiye. The research was conducted with at least expert-level participants, who were responsible for managing the brand's digital and/or traditional channels. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze and interpret the data. Strategic brand management (SBM) plays a key mediating role in the relationships between variables such as marketing agility, technical and social functions of digital platforms, and brand digitalization with brand performance. The results of hypothesis testing show that in several cases the direct effect on brand performance was insignificant until SBM was introduced as a mediator. This underlines the importance of SBM. This study makes a contribution to the existing literature by examining the reflections of a developing country like Türkiye, which also has a young population, on its interest in digital technologies in the private sector. In addition, it provides a detailed account of the effects of strategic brand management on brand performance.

Keywords: Strategic Brand Management, Brand Performance, Digitalization, Agility, Digital Platforms

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies requires that strategies developed today be planned within a framework that includes digital transformation. It is becoming clear that many companies are operating in different groups and marketing different categories of products or services within the same company. This is why we are bringing together different business units from different sectors and integrating strategy. Increasing diversity, especially with digital transformation, makes it necessary for brands to integrate new strategies for themselves as well as for the competition. The process of digitalization serves to facilitate the advancement of marketing activities directed towards the promotion of products, commodities and services offered for sale by both well-established and newly emerging companies, thus assuming a central role in the dynamics of digital communication processes (Morokhova et al., 2023, p. 1242). In this case, it is not enough for these brands operating in different lines of business to define a single strategy.

According to Keller (2013, p. 311), brand awareness is a measurement based on consumers' ability to distinguish the brand or brand elements in different situations. Although awareness is one of the basic elements of being a brand, simply being known is not enough to be a strong brand. The reason for this is primarily related to the intense competitive environment, but also to the variety of channels through which the brand can express itself. Aaker stated that from a strategic management perspective, the brand should be overseen by individuals occupying senior positions within the organisational hierarchy, typically the most senior marketing professional and their executive colleagues. It is also important to

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recognise the intrinsic link between the brand and the organisational culture, values and business strategy (Aaker, 2014: 9-10).

Brands need different strategies for each industry and even for the business processes of different categories within the same industry. It is anticipated that brands will maintain a consistent identity; however, they must adapt to shifts in competition and customer preferences (Iyer et al., 2018, p. 213). Keller argues that branding will not lose its importance in the coming years, stating that well-managed brands that create new meanings for their consumers in a complex world will continue to be valued by consumers (Keller, 2005, p. 101). From this perspective, it can be argued that in order to guarantee the valuation of brands and to facilitate their continued development, it is essential to examine the theories that have been previously emphasised and to adopt new forms that align with the dynamic structure of the future. A deeper understanding of how digitalization affects organizational development, learning, and changes in the social and work environment is possible thanks to the growing prominence of digital phenomena and the variety of methods and tools they have made available to support individual and group learning experiences (Ben Arfi & Hikkerova, 2021, p. 1195).

The field of brand management has historically been characterized by a distinctive approach that is both agile and equipped with the latest technological innovations and business solutions. This approach has consistently been integrated with the strategic perspective that it emphasizes. The objective of this research, which has been developed based on the outputs, is to initially investigate brand performance through the lens of marketing agility, the technical and social functions of digital platforms, brand digitalization and the mediating effect of strategic brand management. Then, to examine the effects of strategic brand management on brand performance in a developing country like Türkiye. Although brand performance and strategic brand management have been investigated with different variables in previous studies, this study expands its scope by adding marketing agility, technical and social functions of digital platforms, and brand digitalization variables to the study.

THEORATICAL BACKGROUND

Brand Performance and Strategic Brand Management

A brand is described as a name, word, sign, symbol, or distinctive design, or a mix of these characteristics, used to identify the goods or services of a seller or group of sellers by the American Marketing Association (Chunawalla, 2008, p. 4). According to Aaker, the notion that brands are assets of strategic value has the potential to transform the way organisations perceive and approach brand management. Nevertheless, for this to succeed, it is essential to communicate this idea in a compelling manner, motivating organisations to invest in brand building and the protection of their brand assets (2014, p. 22).

As distinct, enterprise-wide intangible assets, brands offer a major point of differentiation and a long-term competitive advantage (Pyper et al., 2022, p. 472). The corporation can create a strategy plan for creating, preserving, and managing the brand image by using a brand concept that is derived from external and internal environmental concerns and managed via many concept managements phases (Park et al., 1986, p. 139). To achieve greater economic benefits for firms, it is crucial to develop timely and comprehensive measures for the gradual digitalization of technical processes, advertising, and brands when incorporating digitalization into an overall company development strategy (Komarova et al., 2021, p. 859). In light of the fact that market and financial orientation constitutes the foundation of brand performance (Li et al., 2023, p. 400), it follows that all elements contributing to this change and development of the brand, from the perspective of change management demanded by the dynamic nature of the market, assume greater significance in terms of strategic management.

The formulation of effective strategies is indicative of an organization's explicit strategic intent and a comprehensive grasp of its fundamental competencies and resources. In this context, strategies that are not sufficiently robust are unlikely to enable an organization to attain a leadership position (De Kluyver, Cornelis, Pearce, 2015: 1). Four basic components make up a brand management strategy: (a) developing marketing and branding strategies that complement a brand's image; (b) planning brand management strategies for medium- to long-term periods; (c) continuously assessing a brand's value and image in the market; and (d) allocating enough resources to manage a brand (Santos-Vijande et al. 2013, p. 150). It can thus be stated that strategic management is a field of study that considers the optimal timing for

decision-making, while also analyzing the environmental conditions and the mission of the organization in depth.

The resource-based view theory says that firms' performance differs because of their resources (Lockett et al., 2009, p. 10). The resource-based theory developed by Barney in 1991, as it has been subsequently refined, presents a relatively basic model of the relationship between resources and the strategic choices made by a firm. However, Barney also discussed the attitude that a firm should adopt when its resources are consistent with different strategies, all of which are capable of creating the same level of competitive advantage (Barney, 2001, p. 53). According to Arend & Lévesque (2010, p. 915), the resource-based view allows managers to identify strategic assets and ascertain the optimal means of modifying specific characteristic levels to achieve the most favourable performance outcome. In order to answer the fundamental question in the field of strategic management about how firms achieve and sustain competitive advantage, Teece and colleagues (1997) put forth the argument that a resource-based strategy is often insufficient to support a significant competitive advantage. They developed the 'dynamic capabilities' approach, in which the term 'dynamic' refers to the capacity to renew competences to adapt to the changing business environment. Both approaches allow for the examination of strategic management in different contexts; however, the necessity of adapting to changing conditions is a clear and inherent aspect of this process.

According to Lipiäinen & Karjaluoto, the corporation should apply a position strategy across a variety of venues and define its position with the help of key messaging strategies in each arena to strengthen its market position (2015, p. 735). It is incumbent upon companies to study the market environment to choose the appropriate resources for their strategy formulation (Mijan et al., 2022, p. 179). The alignment of a company's global marketing plan with the intended brand image represents a pivotal aspect of strategic brand management. In order to facilitate the strategic marketing planning process, it is necessary to adopt an extensive planning approach that takes into account the brand's short- and long-term goals (Erdil, 2013, p. 127). The mediating role of strategic brand management was found to be significant in the relationship between brand performance in the face of market trend changes. (Iyer et al., 2021, p. 202). It is possible to address strategic brand management in new contexts and test it with different variables to ascertain its effects on brand performance in the context of changing market trends and new tactics and techniques brought about by digitalisation. This approach allows for the identification of the impact that emerging trends will have on the market and the brand.

Marketing Agility

Agile learning is a necessary skill for businesses to have in order to assess data and interpret changing circumstances as they arise, both domestically and globally (Gomes et al., 2020, p. 264). In addition to being applied as a relatively recent occurrence in other fields including manufacturing, supply chains, and marketing, the idea of agility that resulted from the research has been included into company plans and operations (Abd Al Rassol et al., 2023). Marketing agility encompasses a range of dynamic capabilities that are still largely unexplored, such as proactive market sensing - the ability to identify, sense and anticipate market needs; responsiveness - the ability to adapt quickly to changing needs; speed - the ability to respond quickly to those needs; and flexibility - the ability to effectively create different combinations of offers (Khan, 2020, p. 2).

In order for the strategy to be successful in the market, it is necessary to consider not only external factors but also the advantages that can be obtained by consciously evaluating internal resources. In the study by Nemkova (2017, p. 262), human capital is considered an element of gaining success in the context of agility. It is stated that having more complex skills greatly increases the benefits of agility. The degree to which an organization moves quickly between understanding the market and making marketing decisions to adapt to the market is referred to as marketing agility (Kalaiganam et al., 2021, p. 36). Businesses need to adopt new digital solutions, such as market intelligence software that uses artificial intelligence (AI) technology to identify what is trending among their target customers, in order to digitise their product, service or business function so that organizations can adjust their product offerings accordingly (Khin & Ho, 2019, pp. 177-178).

Technical Functions of Digital Platform

The term "digital platform" encompasses a multitude of organizational and technological elements, including information systems, storage, processing, analysis, presentation, and information visualization (Zatsarinnyy & Shabanov, 2019, p. 553). The advent of digital platforms at the core of innovation represents a pivotal aspect of digital technology and the outcomes of the innovation process (Ben Arfi & Hikkerova, 2021, p. 1195). The capacity to incorporate digital platforms necessitates the formation of robust connections between businesses, enabling the transfer and replacement of data through these conduits, which can enhance collaboration and communication both internally and externally (Liu et al., 2023, p. 1398). As identified by Corsi et al. (2017, p. 132), the following components are typical of digital platforms: a means of sharing content between employees within an organizational context; a tool for the organization, exchange, and dissemination of information and documents, as well as the facilitation of communication between individuals and groups; a search tool for locating people and information; and a program for the visualization and evaluation of data from multiple sources.

Digital platforms offer businesses a plethora of conveniences, largely due to their technical features, and provide uninterrupted support in the enhancement of processes. Digital platforms can function as a preconfigured software solution, or "third-party" development. However, they should also be able to adapt to the tasks and projects specific to a particular cluster, and thus require qualities of flexibility and adaptability. (Babkin et al., 2020). In accordance with the resource-based view approach, a digital platform can enable a company to leverage information technology for the acquisition of data resources and technical capabilities (Tse et al., 2023).

Social Functions of Digital Platform

A digital platform mediates social action and automates market exchanges; however, as relationships are transformed into tangible infrastructure, they acquire a degree of immutability and traceability, transforming what were once informal exchanges into much more structured rules of participation (Andersson Schwarz, 2017, p. 377). Digital platforms are socio-technical phenomena that extend beyond the technical domain and are regarded as a pivotal element within their business ecosystems (Blaschke et al., 2018, p. 3). Given that they encompass both a technical core and commercial networks mediated by a technical core, digital platforms are viewed as socio-technical phenomena rather than merely technical artefacts (Blaschke et al., 2019, p. 574). It can accordingly be asserted that the role of social elements in the formation of digital platforms is significant, and that these social elements are highly efficacious in the changes and developments pertaining to digital platforms.

A multitude of institutional, economic, organisational, and spatial variables exert an influence on the existence, utilisation, and evolution of the digital platform, which in turn gives rise to developmental consequences (Bonina et al., 2021, p. 878). The strategic utilisation of changes created by digital platforms in light of their social functions will become increasingly important when these effects are taken into account.

Brand Digitalization

In order to select efficacious branding techniques and strategies, it is essential to gain an understanding of the distinctive dynamics and characteristics of branding in a digital context (Lipiäinen & Karjaluoto, 2015, p. 734). The digitalization of brands plays a more significant role in consumers' brand decision-making processes for unknown brands, given that such brands are less familiar to consumers and therefore more inclined to base their decisions on signals connected to the brand (Li et al., 2023, p. 402). The incorporation of consumer feedback into brand strategy and tactics is facilitated by the integration of direct digital channels, which also afford the opportunity for digital customer interaction (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2019, p. 376).

One of the most efficacious methods of enhancing brand awareness is the accelerated advancement of technology and the proliferation of digital applications within this field. Digital marketing can be defined as a form of promotional activity that employs digital platforms, such as computers, smartphones, or other digital devices, with the objective of enhancing brand recognition, effectively communicating brand messages, and driving sales through product promotion (Erkollar & Oberer, 2016, p. 507). It can thus be

argued that digital marketing activities are instrumental in providing the essential elements for brand identity, which is to say that they facilitate the development of a distinctive digital presence for the brand.

HYPOTHESIS

Relationships between Marketing Agility, Strategic Brand Management and Brand Performance

The concepts of speed and iteration encapsulate the manner in which the process is conducted, constituting the hallmark characteristics that define marketing as an "agile" endeavour. (Vesterinen et al., 2024, p. 3). In a context of market turbulence, characterized by the emergence, collision, splitting and evolution of markets, and their subsequent demise, strategic agility emerges as a key determinant of a firm's success. This can be defined as the capacity to remain flexible in the face of new developments, to continuously adjust the company's strategic direction and to develop innovative ways to create value (Weber & Tarba, 2014, p. 5). The objective for organisations is to maintain control of their performance on an ongoing basis, with the goal of increasing market share and achieving growth. This necessitates the assessment of their strategic performance (Al-Ajami & Ayed Al-Qa'eed, 2020, p. 23). In a study examining the impact of a digital strategic plan on performance, it is asserted that a digital-based work culture facilitates enhanced organisational agility (Rozak et al., 2021). A review of the literature reveals that the impact of marketing agility on brand performance is addressed from a variety of perspectives (Asseraf et al., 2019). A deeper comprehension of the elements that facilitate or impede marketing agility can assist international enterprises in establishing the foundations for agile marketing or in enhancing their existing practices to achieve enhanced performance (Harju, 2023, p. 10). Consequently, it is evident that marketing agility is regarded as a pivotal aspect of brand management. Considering this, the following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

H1: Marketing agility positively affects strategic brand management.

H2: Marketing agility positively affects brand performance.

H3: Marketing agility will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.

Relationships between Technical Functions of Digital Platform, Strategic Brand Management and Brand Performance

An analytics-enabled business platform can assist companies in the absorption, organization, identification and analysis of data. This can result in the identification of actionable insights that can enhance decision-making and inform business strategy following the resolution of a crisis (Behera et al., 2022, p. 2031). The integration of digital platforms can facilitate enhanced communication both internally and internationally, as well as the coordination of resources, capabilities, activities, and innovation goals (Liu et al., 2023, p. 1398). Encompassing integrated marketing and technological know-how on one platform, the technology platform is a full-featured cloud-based solution that streamlines digital marketing. This transition encompasses all facets of digital marketing, including the management and creation of digital sites, data management, coordination with numerous partners, and the implementation of campaigns (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2016, p. 104). It can be seen from research findings that there is an appreciable influence exerted using digital platforms on the activities of enterprises (Cenamor et al., 2019; Khattak, 2022). However, there is also a correlation between digital platforms and brand prestige that is beneficial (Tse et al., 2023). From this perspective, it can be argued that digital platforms are an indispensable component of the brand's future planning, and that strategic management is of paramount importance in this regard. Based on the previously provided data, a number of theoretical followings were proposed with the aim of accomplishing the investigation's goal.

H4: The technical functions of the digital platform positively affect strategic brand management.

H5: The technical functions of the digital platform positively affect brand performance.

H6: The technical functions of the digital platform will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.

Relationships between Social Functions of Digital Platform, Strategic Brand Management and Brand Performance

Researchers that follow this approach stress the embeddedness of digital platforms in society with its numerous coordination issues, aiming to fit digital platforms somewhere between or on par with established forms of governance like network, market, and hierarchy (Ametowobla & Kirchner, 2023, p. 144). A new kind of social interaction that is especially intended to enable people to self-manage acts that result in transformative and systemic change throughout society is provided by digital platforms for social purposes and their offline extensions (Caridà et al., 2022, p. 768). Digital platforms co-create value by utilizing an ecosystem of autonomous agents (Hein et al., 2020, p. 87). Based on this argument, the following hypotheses were proposed for the study.

H7: The social functions of digital platforms positively affect strategic brand management.

H8: The social functions of digital platforms positively affect brand performance.

H9: The social functions of digital platforms will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.

Relationships between Brand Digitalization, Strategic Brand Management and Brand Performance

Brand digitalization, the process of incorporating digital technology into brand management and development procedures, could enhance a brand's performance in the marketplace (Li et al., 2023, p. 402). Web-based marketing and the internet have been used extensively in the management and improvement of firms' performance and brand image (Kuzmin et al., 2022, p. 493). Consumer attitudes toward brand competence and warmth are impacted by the process of brand digitalization, which is considered a brand-related attribute. This subsequently affects the performance of the brand in the market. This finding is consistent with the proposition that brand performance is predicated upon a dual orientation towards both the market and the financial aspects of the business. (Li et al., 2023, p. 401).

A review of the literature reveals several significant studies that demonstrate a correlation between brand digitalization and brand performance (Luxton et al., 2015; Li et al., 2023). Nevertheless, considering the studies demonstrating the impact of strategic brand management on both brand digitalization (Li et al., 2018; Chukurna et al., 2023) and brand performance (Berthon et al., 2007; Dunes and Pras, 2017; Munir et al., 2023), the investigation of how brand digitalization influences brand performance through strategic brand management represents a significant research area. Considering the evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated for the purposes of this research project.

H10: Brand digitalization positively affects strategic brand management.

H11: Brand digitalization positively affects brand performance.

H12: Brand digitalization will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.

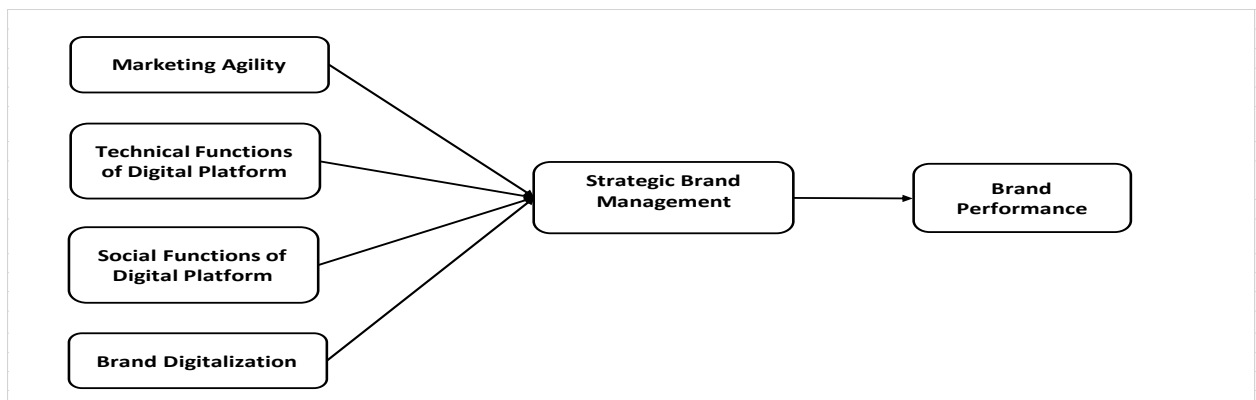


Figure 1. Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Measurement

A five-point Likert-style scale is employed to assess all variables, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A structural equation model consisting of the elements depicted in Figure 1 has been developed. Five items were used by O'Cass & Ngo (2007) to evaluate brand performance (BP). Three items were used by Lu & Ramamurthy (2011) to assess marketing agility (MA). Four items were used to evaluate the digital platform's technological functions (TF), and five items were used to evaluate the platform's social functions by Tse et al.'s (2023). Eller et al. (2020) and Li et al. (2023) offered four items to evaluate brand digitalization. Santos-Vijande et al. (2013) developed a set of five measures to assess strategic brand management.

The Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique utilizing Smart PLS 4.0 was employed in this investigation due to its capacity to evaluate all hypotheses simultaneously for complex models, without the requirement of a normal distribution (Barclay et al., 1995; Gupta et al., 2013).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Validity and Reliability Analyses of the Scales

The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient, composite reliability coefficients (rho a and rho c) and average variance explained (AVE) coefficient were subjected to analysis in order to examine the construct validity and reliability of the scales. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients exhibited a range of 0.845 to 0.937, while the Rho a coefficient demonstrated a range of 0.863 to 0.938, and the Rho c coefficients exhibited a range of 0.907 to 0.955. These values exceed the critical threshold of 0.70 and are deemed to be within an acceptable range (Hair et al., 2022). The explained mean variance values are between 0.734 and 0.841, thus exceeding the critical value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Coefficients

	Cronbach alfa	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BD	0,937	0,938	0,955	0,841
BP	0,912	0,915	0,934	0,738
MA	0,845	0,863	0,907	0,766
SBM	0,92	0,921	0,94	0,758
SF	0,909	0,914	0,932	0,734
TF	0,892	0,896	0,925	0,756

The HTMT values that were determined in order to evaluate discriminant validity are shown in Table 3. All values fall within the acceptable range and are below the critical limit of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Results (HTMT Criterion)

	BD	BP	MA	SBM	SF	TF
BD						
BP	0,712					
MA	0,658	0,674				
SBM	0,766	0,832	0,674			
SF	0,065	0,081	0,066	0,131		
TF	0,822	0,75	0,746	0,741	0,085	

As demonstrated in Table 4, the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion indicate the existence of discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE (average variance explained) value for all sub-dimensions (represented by dark-coloured numbers in the table) is greater than their respective relationships with other sub-dimensions. This provides empirical support for the assertion of discriminant validity, as proposed by Hair et al. (2022).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Results (Fornell and Larcker Criterion)

	BD	BP	MA	SBM	SF	TF
BD	0,917					
BP	0,667	0,859				
MA	0,588	0,6	0,875			
SBM	0,712	0,768	0,598	0,871		
SF	0,042	0,069	0,04	0,119	0,857	
TF	0,752	0,682	0,647	0,672	0,073	0,869

Research Model Direct and Indirect Effect Coefficients

The direct effects of the research model are demonstrated in Table 5. The direct effects of BD, MA and SF on BP are not significant ($\beta=0.09$, $p>0.05$; $\beta=0.116$, $p>0.05$; $\beta=-0.014$, $p>0.05$, respectively). However, SBM and TF positively predict BP ($\beta=0.497$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=0.206$, $p<0.01$, respectively). Nevertheless, the direct effect of BD ($\beta=0.43$, $p<0.001$), MA ($\beta=0.207$, $p<0.01$), SF ($\beta=0.077$, $p<0.05$) and TF ($\beta=0.209$, $p<0.05$) on SBM is positive and significant.

Table 5. Research Model Direct Effect Coefficients

	Beta	SS	t	p
MA -> SBM	0,207	0,076	2,738	0,006
MA -> BP	0,116	0,061	1,902	0,057
TF -> SBM	0,209	0,086	2,438	0,015
TF -> BP	0,206	0,078	2,644	0,008
SF -> SBM	0,077	0,036	2,163	0,031
SF -> BP	-0,014	0,037	0,387	0,699
BD -> SBM	0,43	0,083	5,18	0,000
BD -> BP	0,09	0,066	1,367	0,172
SBM -> BP	0,497	0,069	7,184	0,000

As illustrated in Table 6, the indirect effects of the independent variables on BP are mediated through SBM. The indirect effects of BD ($\beta=0.278$, $p<0.001$), MA ($\beta=0.103$, $p<0.05$), SF ($\beta=0.038$, $p<0.05$) and TF ($\beta=0.104$, $p<0.05$) on BP are statistically significant.

Table 6. Research Model Indirect Effect Coefficients

	Beta	SS	t	p
MA -> SBM -> BP	0,103	0,04	2,584	0,010
TF -> SBM -> BP	0,104	0,048	2,149	0,032
SF -> SBM -> BP	0,038	0,019	2,053	0,040
BD -> SBM -> BP	0,214	0,048	4,471	0,000

Figure 2 presents the beta coefficients derived from the analyses, accompanied by the results of the associated significance levels.

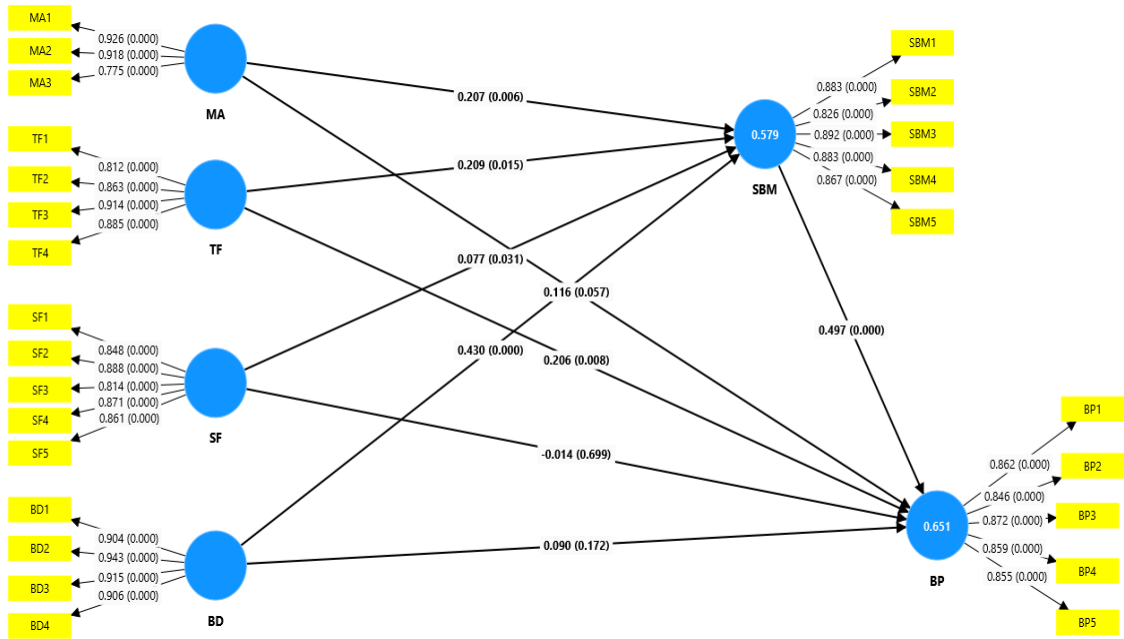


Figure 2. Coefficients of the model

The explanatory power of the model was calculated by analyzing the R² values. This value represents the ratio of independent variables that contribute to the explanation of the dependent variable. A value of 0.25 is considered low, 0.50 is regarded as medium, and 0.75 is classified as high (Hair et al, 2022). As illustrated in Table 7, the independent variables account for 58% of the variability in the mediating variable SBM. Concurrently, the independent and mediating variables collectively account for 65% of the observed variability in the BP variable. It was observed that the variables demonstrated a moderate and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) explanatory power with respect to BP and SBM.

Table 7. Explanatory Power of the Structural Model

	Beta	SS	t	p
BP	0,651	0,041	16,075	0,000
SBM	0,579	0,046	12,612	0,000

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Marketing agility positively affects strategic brand management (SBM).	Accepted
H2: Marketing agility positively affects brand performance (BF).	Rejected
H3: Marketing agility will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.	Accepted
H4: The technical functions of the digital platform positively affect strategic brand management.	Accepted
H5: The technical functions of the digital platform positively affect brand performance.	Accepted
H6: The technical functions of the digital platform will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.	Accepted
H7: The social functions of digital platforms positively affect strategic brand management.	Accepted
H8: The social functions of digital platforms positively affect brand performance.	Rejected
H9: The social functions of digital platforms will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management.	Accepted
H10: Brand digitalization positively affects strategic brand management.	Rejected
H11: Brand digitalization positively affects brand performance.	Accepted

H12: Brand digitalization will positively affect brand performance through the mediation effect of strategic brand management. **Accepted**

The results suggest that there is no direct correlation between agility and performance, as the direct effect on brand performance was not supported (H2). Nevertheless, the study's findings supported the hypothesis that SBM has an impact on strategic brand management (H1) and that it acts as a mediator in the relationship between performance and agility (H3).

Both technical and social functions were observed to have a positive influence on strategic brand management. However, while technical functions were found to have a direct, positive impact on brand performance (H5), social functions did not demonstrate this effect (H8). The technical functions of digital platforms had a direct and positive impact on both SBM and brand performance. However, the positive effect on brand performance is amplified when SBM is introduced as a mediator. This suggests that SBM amplifies the impact of technical digital platform capabilities on brand performance, reinforcing its function as a mediator. Although the social functions of digital platforms did not exert a direct influence on brand performance (H8 was rejected), the mediation effect of SBM rendered the relationship statistically significant. This demonstrates that SBM is a key factor in enabling social functions to influence brand performance, emphasizing the strategic importance of SBM in enhancing the benefits derived from social platform features.

The digitalization of a brand has a direct impact on the performance of that brand (H11). This supports the claim that the use of digital tools and the maintenance of an online presence are essential aspects of business in the modern era. The integration of digital transformation into a company's business strategy has been demonstrated to have a quantifiable impact on the success of their brand. The mediation effect (H12) serves to reinforce the proposition that the impact of digitalization is amplified when coupled with robust SBM processes. This illustrates that the mere adoption of digital tools is inadequate; organizations must adopt a strategic approach to the management of their digital assets to realize their full potential. The rejection of H10 (brand digitalization → SBM) is an unexpected outcome. The findings of the study indicate that there is no direct enhancement of SBM by brand digitalization. This may be indicative of a discrepancy between the utilization of digital tools and the implementation of SBM strategies. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that brand digitalization still has a positive impact on brand performance (H11), suggesting that while digitalization may enhance performance, its alignment with SBM could be lacking.

CONCLUSION

The current study posits that integrating digital platforms, digitalisation and marketing agility with strategic brand management serves to enhance brand performance. While not all elements (such as social functions and marketing agility) directly enhance brand performance, they become significant when considered in the context of effective brand strategies. The absence of a direct correlation between agility and performance does not align with the findings of other studies that investigate the relationship between agility and performance (Asseraf et al., 2019; Khan, 2020; Kalaignanam et al., 2021). The results indicate that for organisations, the effective utilisation of advances in technology, digital shifts and marketing agility is contingent upon the strategic management of the brand.

It has been demonstrated that the technical functions of digital platforms exert a direct and positive influence on brand performance. This finding lends support to the conclusions of earlier studies which identified technical elements, including numerous digital trends, as effective tools for the construction and management of brands on a global scale (Steenkamp, 2020; Wichmann et al., 2022; Chukurna et al., 2023; Tse et al., 2023). The results found no direct impact of the social functions of a digital platform on brand performance. This finding contradicts with previous research that identified several benefits of brand storytelling, including customer engagement, enhanced brand awareness, and overall brand success (Gensler et al. 2013; Vries et al. 2014; Cheung et al. 2020). Furthermore, it endorses research indicating that the incorporation of digital platforms in brand strategies enhances brand management (Hanna et al., 2011; Jeswani, 2023). It is striking that there is a rejection of the notion that there is a direct correlation between strategic brand management and brand digitalisation (H10). This is at contradiction with previous studies that have revealed the importance of strategic brand management in the brand digitalisation process (Chukurna et al., 2023; Zakaryan et al., 2023). This may indicate a discrepancy

between the digital tools that are available and the tactics that are employed in strategic brand management. Nevertheless, the digitalization of brands continues to exert a favourable influence on brand performance (H11), suggesting that although digitalization enhances performance, there may be a discrepancy between its alignment with SBM.

The study of Strategic Brand Management (SBM) has emerged as a mediator in the majority of linkages between marketing agility, digital platforms, brand digitalization, and brand performance. This evidence supports the conclusion that an effective brand management strategy is essential for converting various inputs, including agility, digital tools, and social platforms, into performance gains. Nevertheless, businesses aiming to enhance their performance should resist the temptation to rely excessively on SBM. It would be more prudent for businesses to seek a balance between operational flexibility and strategic control. Moreover, to achieve long-term performance improvements, it is essential to integrate digital and social functions more effectively into the strategic planning process.

The overall results were evaluated in terms of the complexity of brand performance in the context of the digital age. As Kozinets (2022, p. 443) indicates, the process of branding is complex and evolving, with the involvement of a number of stakeholders, including digital platforms, customers, marketers, and other connected parties, with the objective of influencing the value of a brand. While technology, agility, and digital platforms play a significant role in enhancing brand performance, it is strategic brand management that remains the critical driving force behind the transformation of these inputs into success. This study employs a methodology that assesses brand performance by examining the internal elements of the brand. Subsequent studies may wish to undertake a more comprehensive evaluation by addressing the external elements of the brand, including the customer base. Furthermore, the role of rapidly developing artificial intelligence applications in digital marketing and their impact on brand performance can be investigated.

Acknowledgments

This article is based on the Master's dissertation of Zeliha Ilgaz, which was supervised by Prof. Dr. Cemal Zehir at Yildiz Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration.

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