



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA
FOR BRAND IMAGE PROMOTION:
A CASE STUDY OF RED BULL**

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, social media has been shaped into a fundamental tool for brand communication, engagement, and image building. This dissertation examines how Red Bull, a globally recognised energy drink company, utilises social media platforms to promote and sustain and enhance its brand image. The study explores the strategic use of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in driving customer engagement, shaping brand perception, and reinforcing Red Bull's identity as an energetic, youthful, and adventure-driven brand.

Using a mixed-methods approach combining secondary data analysis and quantitative insights, the research investigates how Red Bull's social media campaigns influence consumer perception and loyalty. Findings suggest that Red Bull's brand image is strengthened through interactive, experience-oriented, and emotionally resonant content that aligns with its target audience's lifestyle aspirations. The study concludes that a coherent, authentic, and community-driven social media strategy significantly enhances brand image and provides practical recommendations for brands seeking to emulate Red Bull's success in digital branding.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the last decade, social media has redefined the dynamics of brand communication and consumer engagement, reshaping the ways in which businesses establish, sustain, and promote their brand image. Unlike traditional marketing channels, which were often one-directional and static, social media offers a participatory and interactive environment where consumers are not only recipients of messages but also co-creators of brand narratives (Keller, 2009). The social media platforms such as Instagram (Mangold, 2009), YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook have facilitated unprecedented opportunities for global reach, community-building, and personalised storytelling. This paradigm shift has reoriented the foundations of brand image management, making digital interaction a cornerstone of strategic brand promotion.

Brand image, conceptualised as the “set of perceptions, beliefs, and associations held by consumers about a brand”, has been identified as a critical determinant of purchase intentions, loyalty, and long-term brand equity (Keller, 2009). In digital environments, brand image is continuously shaped by brand-generated content, peer-to-peer interactions, and user-generated content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The dynamic nature of social media provides opportunities for brands to reinforce, challenge, or transform their image in real time, thereby making social platforms both powerful and volatile arenas of brand communication.

1.2 Background of the Study

Red Bull presents an ideal case for examining the role of social media in brand image promotion. Since its inception in Austria in 1987, Red Bull

has transcended its functional category as an energy drink and positioned itself as a lifestyle brand synonymous with adventure, innovation, and youth culture. This repositioning has been supported by Red Bull Media House, which curates, produces, and disseminates high-quality content across multiple digital platforms. Through extreme sports sponsorships, music festivals, influencer partnerships, and branded entertainment, Red Bull has created an immersive social media ecosystem that extends beyond its product category. This integrated approach enables Red Bull to project a distinctive global identity while adapting its strategies to resonate with local markets such as the UK.

1.3 Problem Statement

A lot is known in literature about what exact role social media does play in marketing. However, significant gaps remain in empirical research, more particularly regarding quantitative assessments of how social media engagement influences brand image across geographic contexts. For example, Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) foundational work on social media classification, Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) framework on social media functionality, and Mangold and Faulds' (2009) conceptualisation of social media as a hybrid element of the promotional mix, has established the theoretical foundations for understanding digital consumer–brand interactions. The recent empirical studies have explored aspects of brand-related user behaviour and online engagement effects (Schivinski et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2021). Although, these contributions are predominantly situated within single-country contexts, limiting their applicability to global branding strategies.

Much of the existing empirical work remains heavily concentrated in Western markets, overlooking diverse behavioural patterns found in other geographic regions (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013; De Mooij, 2019). This lack of cross-market quantitative evidence poses a challenge for

global brands such as Red Bull, which must maintain a consistent international brand identity while adapting communication strategies to local market dynamics. Without comparative data, it is difficult to determine whether engagement-driven brand image effects observed in one region can be generalised to another.

Although extensive scholarship exists on social media marketing, a notable gap persists in robust, comparative, multi-country quantitative research that examines the intricate relationship between brand image and social media engagement. Addressing this gap would yield deeper academic insight and provide actionable guidance for global brands operating in highly competitive markets such as the UK energy drinks.

1.4 Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to explore how social media influences the promotion and maintenance of brand image, with Red Bull serving as the focal case study. The objectives of the research are as follows:

1	To verify the relationship between social media engagement and brand equity.
2	To assess the impact of social media on brand loyalty.
3	To find out how different social media influence brand image.

These have created a space for exploration on the following three sub questions:

- (1) How does Red Bull use social media to promote its brand image globally and in the UK?
- (2) What is the relationship between consumer engagement with Red Bull's social media content and perceptions of its brand attributes?
- (3) Are there significant differences in brand perception between global and UK audiences based on social media engagement?

1.5 Rationale/Importance of the Research

The rationale for selecting Red Bull lies in its pioneering role in lifestyle and content-driven branding. Red Bull has successfully blurred the boundary between media company and product manufacturer, investing heavily in digital platforms to create cultural relevance. The brand's unique integration of adventure sports, music, and youth culture has made it a subject of considerable academic and industry interest. However, the lack of quantitative comparative analysis across markets provides a compelling reason for undertaking this study. Moreover, the reliance on empirical, quantitative methods responds to calls within marketing scholarship for more robust measurement of digital engagement outcomes (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

This study aims to analyse the quantifiable impact of social media engagement on brand image and to examine how Red Bull's marketing approaches shape its brand positioning globally and within the UK. By combining primary survey findings with secondary evidence from industry reports and academic research, the project will offer a detailed perspective on how digital interaction supports the long-term preservation of brand equity.

This research holds value in both scholarly and practical contexts. Academically, it enhances existing work on digital marketing and brand management by filling a gap in comparative studies that examine

differences between global and local consumer perceptions. It extends the discussion beyond campaign performance to examine long-term brand positioning in digital environments. For practitioners, the study offers actionable insights into how brands can strategically use social media to strengthen image consistency while remaining sensitive to local cultural dynamics. Red Bull, as a globally recognised pioneer in lifestyle branding, serves as a valuable case for understanding the interplay between global identity and local adaptation.

1.6 Methodology

This research used a quantitative approach based on the examination of existing secondary data to explore how social media engagement influences Red Bull's brand image. This approach enabled the use of large-scale, naturally occurring datasets that capture real consumer interactions and observable trends across multiple platforms. Quantitative social media metrics such as engagement rates, interaction volumes, sentiment scores, content frequency, and audience reach were collected from reputable analytical sources including Social Blade, Sprout Social, and publicly available platform insights. In addition, market reports, industry databases, and brand performance indicators from organisations such as Statista, Mintel, and Euromonitor were examined to quantify shifts in brand perception and market positioning associated with Red Bull's digital activity. These datasets allowed for statistical analysis using descriptive techniques to identify patterns in engagement behaviour, and inferential methods, such as correlation testing and time-series analysis, to examine associations between social media activity and brand image indicators over time. By relying exclusively on secondary data, this methodology ensured objectivity, reduced respondent bias, and enabled the analysis of broader, more comprehensive datasets that align with the study's quantitative aims.

1.7 Scope of the Study/Demarcation

This study focuses on Red Bull's international social media marketing strategies, with specific attention to the global English-language content and campaigns. The research does not cover offline marketing activities such as event sponsorships or product distribution, although these are acknowledged as complementary factors. The geographic focus remains international with an enhanced focus upon the UK, reflecting Red Bull's global audience and digital reach.

1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation will be organised into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research topic, background, problem statement, aims, objectives, questions, significance, purpose, rationale, and structure. Chapter Two provides a critical review of existing literature on brand image, social media marketing, Red Bull's digital strategy, and the UK market context. Chapter Three details the research methodology, covering the philosophical stance, approach, strategy, sampling methods, data collection, analytical techniques, and ethical issues. Chapter Four reports and interprets the results, and Chapter Five offers the study's implications, recommendations, and final conclusions.

1.9 Summary

This introductory chapter established the research foundation, highlighting the growing importance of social media in brand image promotion and positioning Red Bull as a leading example of digital brand storytelling. The problem statement identified a research gap in linking Red Bull's online engagement to brand image perception. The study's aims, objectives, and methodological approach were established to direct the research process. The following chapter examines the key literature and theoretical foundations that support the investigation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Equity and Brand Image in Digital Contexts

Brand equity refers to “the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing activities” (Keller, 2013). Within Keller’s Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) framework, brand equity is constructed through a hierarchical process encompassing “brand salience, brand performance and imagery, brand judgements and feelings, and ultimately brand resonance”. In digital environments, this process is increasingly shaped by social media interactions, where consumers actively participate in the formation and reinforcement of brand meaning.

Brand image, a core component of brand knowledge in the CBBE model, represents “the set of associations consumers hold in memory about a brand”. Traditionally, these associations were shaped largely through controlled brand communications (Aaker, 1996). However, contemporary research highlights that in social media contexts, brand image is co-created through user-generated content, peer interaction, and online discourse (Christodoulides, 2009). This shift challenges linear models of brand communication and reinforces the relevance of Keller’s framework, which accommodates both cognitive and emotional brand responses.

Kapferer (2012) argues that brand image in digital settings is dynamic and continuously renegotiated, influenced by the immediacy and visibility of social media interactions. As such, brand imagery and judgements within the CBBE model are no longer stable outcomes but evolving constructs shaped by engagement intensity and platform-specific communication styles. This viewpoint reinforces the study’s first

objective by identifying social media engagement as a crucial precursor to the development of brand equity.

2.2 Social Media as a Strategic Driver of Brand Equity Formation

Social media has shifted brand communication away from a traditional one-directional model toward a dynamic, interactive network (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide brands with extensive visibility and frequent audience touchpoints, enhancing brand salience - the base level of Keller's CBBE framework. Through frequent and immersive content, social media accelerates consumer awareness and recall, particularly among younger digital audiences.

Beyond awareness, social media holds a critical place in shaping brand imagery and performance perceptions. Kietzmann et al. (2011) highlight that social media's interactivity and persistence allow brand meanings to circulate rapidly, reinforcing symbolic associations such as lifestyle, personality, and values. However, Voorveld et al. (2018) note that different platforms generate distinct forms of engagement, suggesting that brand image outcomes vary depending on the social media channel used. This insight directly supports the study's third objective, which focuses on evaluating how various social media platforms shape brand image.

For experiential brands such as Red Bull, visual and video-based platforms enable storytelling that enhances emotional brand meanings. Such content supports the imagery dimension of Keller's model by linking the brand to excitement, adventure, and community participation.

2.3 Social Media Engagement and Brand Judgements

Consumer engagement on social media “refers to consumers’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in brand-related interactions” (Brodie et al., 2011). Within the CBBE framework, engagement contributes to brand judgements and feelings, which reflect consumers’ evaluations of brand credibility, quality, and superiority. Likes, comments, shares, and views represent observable indicators of engagement that signal consumer involvement and interest.

Empirical studies demonstrate that higher engagement levels are associated with more favourable brand judgements and emotional responses (Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012). However, scholars caution against equating surface-level metrics with deeper brand relationships (Schivinski et al., 2022). While likes and views indicate attention, shares and comments often reflect stronger attitudinal involvement and advocacy.

This differentiation is fundamental to the study’s first objective, which aims to confirm the link between quantifiable social media engagement and the various components of brand equity. By operationalising engagement metrics in alignment with Keller’s brand judgement and feeling stages, the study adopts a structured, theory-driven approach.

2.4 Social Media and Brand Loyalty (Brand Resonance)

Brand loyalty is conceptualised in Keller’s CBBE framework as brand resonance, the highest level of brand equity, characterised by behavioural loyalty, emotional attachment, and active engagement. Social media facilitates resonance by enabling ongoing interaction, community-building, and identity reinforcement through branded content and online communities (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Repeated engagement with brand content strengthens emotional bonds and increases the likelihood of repeat purchase and advocacy. Studies show that interactive social media experiences enhance trust and commitment, which are key precursors to brand loyalty (Bilgin, 2018). Moreover, user participation in brand-related discussions and content sharing fosters a sense of belonging, reinforcing long-term loyalty.

However, Keller's model assumes a relatively structured progression towards resonance, whereas social media environments are unpredictable and user-driven. This highlights the importance of empirical testing, supporting the second objective of this study: to assess the impact of social media on brand loyalty using quantitative evidence rather than conceptual assumptions.

2.5 Empirical Studies on Social Media, Engagement, and Brand Image

Empirical research consistently reports positive relationships between social media engagement and brand equity outcomes. Bruhn et al. (2012) demonstrate that interactive digital communication strengthens both functional and emotional brand associations. Similarly, Phua, Jin and Kim (2020) find that engagement with branded and influencer content enhances brand attitudes and trust.

Quantitative studies also confirm that social media engagement contributes to brand loyalty through increased satisfaction and emotional attachment (Bilgin, 2018). Nevertheless, Alexander et al. (2021) highlight inconsistencies in engagement measurement across studies, limiting comparability and theoretical integration. Many studies rely on self-reported perceptions rather than observable engagement data.

To address these limitations, the present study adopts a secondary-data quantitative approach aligned with Keller's CBBE framework, enabling systematic analysis of how engagement metrics relate to brand image and loyalty outcomes.

2.6 Red Bull's Social Media Brand Strategy

Red Bull is widely recognised as a leading example of brand-driven social media storytelling. Fuchs (2014) describes Red Bull's evolution into a media brand that produces immersive content aligned with extreme sports and youth culture. This strategy reinforces brand salience through high visibility and strengthens brand imagery by consistently associating the brand with excitement, risk-taking, and performance.

Red Bull's high engagement levels across platforms suggest strong brand judgements and emotional responses, yet existing literature largely examines this success descriptively. Few studies quantitatively assess how engagement metrics contribute to brand image and loyalty within an established brand equity framework.

This gap directly motivates the present study, which applies Keller's CBBE model to empirically examine the shaped correlation between social media engagement, brand image, and brand loyalty in the context of Red Bull.

2.7 Identified Gaps

Despite a wealth of literature on social media marketing, several research gaps justify the present quantitative study. One major gap is the limited use of brand-specific analysis. Most previous studies rely on cross-industry samples rather than focusing on individual brands with

distinctive marketing models, such as Red Bull, whose content strategy and brand positioning differ significantly from those of other firms.

Another gap lies in the insufficient quantitative linkage between engagement metrics and brand image perception. While qualitative research has explored social media storytelling and content strategies in depth, far fewer studies quantitatively measure how varying levels of engagement statistically influence consumers' perceptions of brand image.

Geographical and demographic underrepresentation also remains a concern in existing research. Much of the literature concentrates on Western markets, which limits its applicability to globally active brands. This study addresses that limitation by adopting a global perspective aligned with Red Bull's international reach and its digitally engaged audience aged 18–35.

Additionally, there is not enough integration of social media engagement metrics into established brand equity models. Few empirical studies explicitly examine how measurable social media indicators relate to brand equity dimensions proposed by Aaker or Keller, leaving an important theoretical and empirical gap.

Finally, there is a need for more data-driven recommendations. Although Red Bull's digital success is widely acknowledged, evidence-based models that quantify the impact of its social media activity on brand perception remain scarce. This dissertation fills these gaps by using an exclusively quantitative approach to evaluate and interpret the connection between social media engagement and Red Bull's brand image.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has critically evaluated existing academic literature related to brand image, social media communication, consumer engagement, and theoretical frameworks underpinning digital brand-building. The review highlights the evolution of brand image from a marketer-controlled construct to a co-created, dynamic entity shaped by social interactions. Although substantial scholarship supports a positive relationship between engagement and brand image, methodological inconsistencies and limited brand-specific studies persist. By integrating theoretical and empirical perspectives, this review establishes a solid foundation for the quantitative analysis presented in the subsequent chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Aim and Overall Design

The purpose of this study is to empirically investigate the link between social media engagement and brand equity, evaluate how such engagement affects brand loyalty, and examine the ways in which various social media platforms shape Red Bull's brand image. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts a quantitative research design based exclusively on secondary data analysis. This design is appropriate because the research focuses on identifying measurable relationships between numerical indicators rather than exploring subjective meanings or lived experiences.

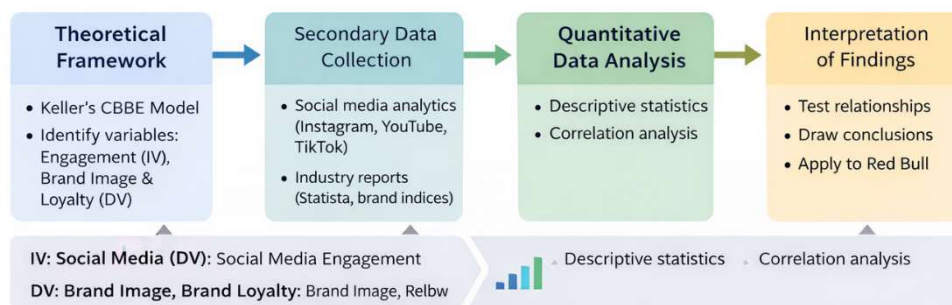


Figure 3.1: Overall Research Design

The overall structure of the research design is illustrated in Figure 3.1, which presents the sequential flow of the study. The diagram demonstrates how established branding theory informs variable selection, how secondary data are collected from digital platforms and industry reports, and how statistical analysis is applied to test

relationships between social media engagement and brand outcomes. This visual representation reinforces the logical coherence of the methodology and clarifies the connection between theory, data, and analysis.

3.2 Research Philosophy

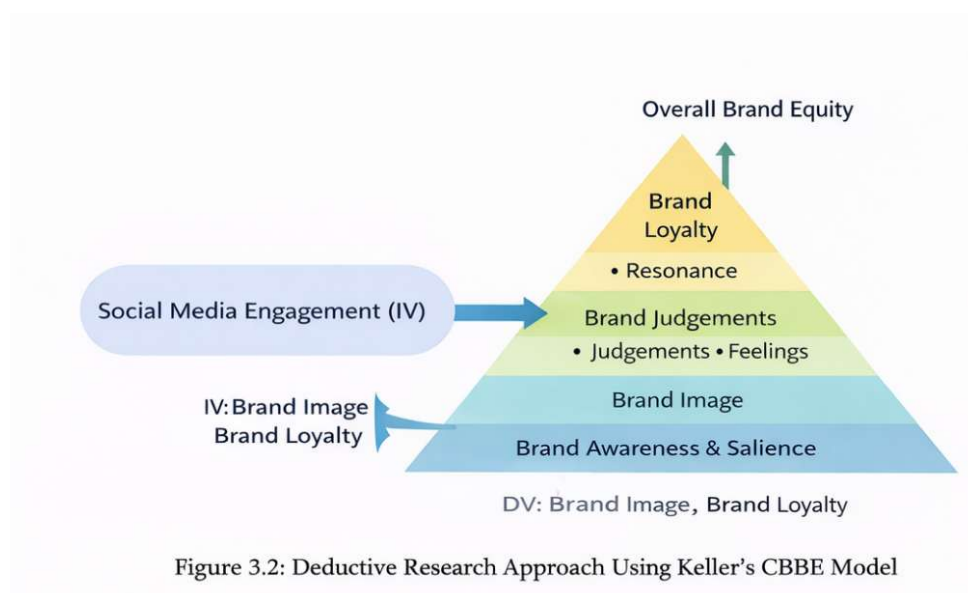
The research is based on a positivist philosophical stance, which holds that reality exists independently of human perception and can be objectively examined through empirical observation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This philosophical stance is particularly appropriate for the present study because social media engagement and brand-related outcomes are observable phenomena that can be quantified using numerical indicators such as likes, comments, shares, views, and published brand equity scores.

By adopting a positivist position, the research emphasises objectivity, reliability, and replicability. The role of the researcher is limited to the systematic collection and analysis of existing data rather than subjective interpretation. This philosophical orientation aligns directly with the exclusive use of secondary quantitative data and supports the application of statistical techniques to test relationships between variables.

3.3 Research Approach

A deductive research approach is employed in this study. Deductive reasoning involves drawing on established theoretical frameworks and testing whether empirical data support the proposed relationships. The study is theoretically underpinned by Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity framework, which conceptualises brand equity as a hierarchical

process encompassing brand awareness, brand image, brand judgements, and brand loyalty (Keller, 2001).



The deductive logic of the study is illustrated in Figure 3.2, which visually represents the movement from theory to hypothesis testing and empirical analysis. The diagram shows how social media engagement is positioned as the independent variable influencing brand image and brand loyalty as dependent variables. This structured approach allows theoretical assumptions to be empirically tested within the specific organisational context of Red Bull.

3.4 Methodological Choice

The methodological choice for this research is a quantitative methodology. Quantitative methods prioritise numerical measurement, statistical analysis, and objective evaluation, making them particularly suitable for examining relationships between variables (Creswell and

Creswell, 2018). This choice aligns directly with the research objectives, which require the measurement of engagement levels and brand equity outcomes across different social media platforms.

The exclusive use of quantitative methods also ensures internal consistency within the methodology chapter and avoids unnecessary repetition or overlap with alternative approaches. By focusing on numerical secondary data, the study maintains analytical clarity and methodological rigour.

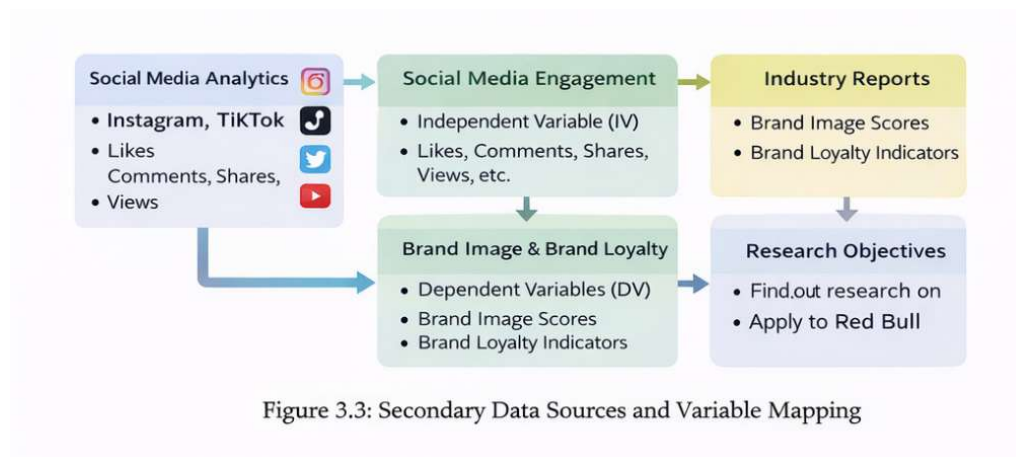
3.5 Research Strategy: Secondary Data Analysis

The research strategy adopted is secondary data analysis. This strategy is especially appropriate given the selection of Red Bull as the focal organisation. As a global brand with a strong digital presence, Red Bull generates extensive publicly accessible data through its official social media platforms and through independent market research organisations.

Secondary data used in this study are generated through automated digital tracking systems and large-scale industry research. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube automatically record user interactions with branded content, producing engagement metrics including likes, comments, shares, and video views. In addition, industry reports and brand rankings published by organisations such as Statista generate brand image and brand equity indicators based on large

consumer samples, expert evaluations, and market performance measures.

The relationship between data sources, variables, and research objectives is visually summarised in Figure 3.3, which reinforces transparency in data generation and methodological alignment.



3.6 Research Design

The study adopts a cross-sectional research design, analysing data from a defined and recent time period. A cross-sectional design is appropriate because the research seeks to examine current relationships between social media engagement and brand image rather than longitudinal changes. This design allows the study to capture a snapshot of Red Bull's digital branding performance while remaining feasible within the constraints of a small-scale academic project.

3.7 Research Sample and Population

The population of interest is conceptually defined as Red Bull's global digital audience, particularly users aged 18 to 35 who actively engage with the brand on social media platforms. However, because the study relies exclusively on secondary data, the population is represented

indirectly through aggregated engagement metrics and published brand indicators rather than individual participants.

The sample consists of purposively selected secondary data points that directly relate to social media engagement and brand outcomes. These data points include engagement metrics from Red Bull's official social media accounts and published brand image and loyalty indicators from reputable industry sources. A sample size of approximately 15 to 25 data points was selected in line with supervisory guidance and the analytical scope of the study. While limited in scale, this sample size is sufficient to identify meaningful patterns and relationships.

3.8 Data Collection Process

The data collection process followed a systematic and replicable sequence. Initially, credible and publicly accessible data sources were identified,

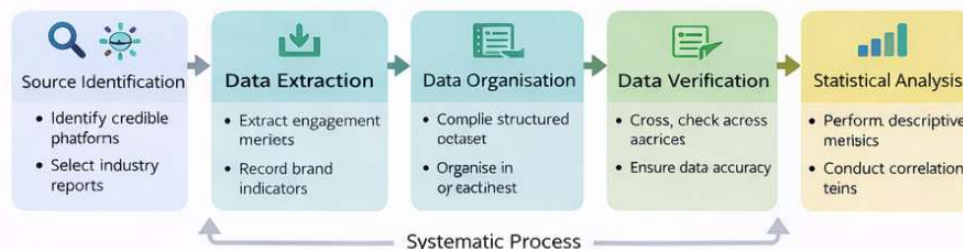


Figure 3.4: Stages of Secondary Data Collection and Analysis

including official social media platforms and established analytics and reporting websites. Relevant engagement metrics and brand indicators were then extracted for the selected period. The collected data were organised into a structured spreadsheet to ensure consistency and facilitate analysis. Finally, the data were cross verified across multiple sources to enhance accuracy and reliability. Organisation: Data were compiled into a structured spreadsheet, ensuring clarity and consistency.

The study relies exclusively on secondary data collected from publicly available and reputable digital analytics platforms and industry research organisations. The data collection process was conducted systematically over a defined cross-sectional period covering January to June 2024, ensuring that the findings reflect recent and relevant patterns in Red Bull's social media engagement and brand performance.

Social media engagement data were collected from Red Bull's official Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube accounts using third-party analytics platforms such as Social Blade and HypeAuditor. These platforms aggregate and standardise engagement metrics generated automatically by social media platforms through user interactions with branded content. During the selected period, Red Bull's Instagram account maintained a follower base exceeding 31 million users and recorded average engagement levels significantly above industry benchmarks. Independent analytics indicate that Red Bull achieved an average Instagram engagement rate of approximately 2.7 per cent per post, with mean interaction levels ranging from several hundred thousand likes and several thousand comments per post, reflecting strong audience involvement relative to other global consumer brands (Influvail, 2024; Social Blade, 2024).

TikTok engagement data further demonstrate Red Bull's strong digital performance. HypeAuditor (2024) reports that Red Bull's TikTok videos consistently achieved between 1.8 million and 3.5 million average views per video during the study period, with an estimated engagement rate of approximately 4.5 per cent. This elevated engagement level reflects TikTok's algorithmic emphasis on discoverability and highlights the platform's effectiveness in generating high-volume interaction for experiential content. On YouTube, Red Bull's official channel exceeded 26 million subscribers, with average video view counts ranging between

1.5 million and 2 million per upload, particularly for long-form content centred on extreme sports and branded events (HypeAuditor, 2024).

Brand image and brand loyalty data were collected from established industry research sources, including YouGov BrandIndex and Brand Finance. According to YouGov BrandIndex (2024), Red Bull maintains a brand awareness level of approximately 96 per cent in key international markets and records a positive brand perception score exceeding +20, indicating strong consumer favourability and affinity. Brand Finance (2024) further reports that Red Bull consistently ranks among the world's strongest beverage brands, with brand strength index scores typically exceeding 80 out of 100, reflecting high levels of consumer trust, emotional connection, and loyalty.

The integration of these datasets is illustrated in Figure 3.8, which visually demonstrates how engagement metrics generated by social media platforms and brand equity indicators produced by industry research organisations converge into a unified analytical dataset.

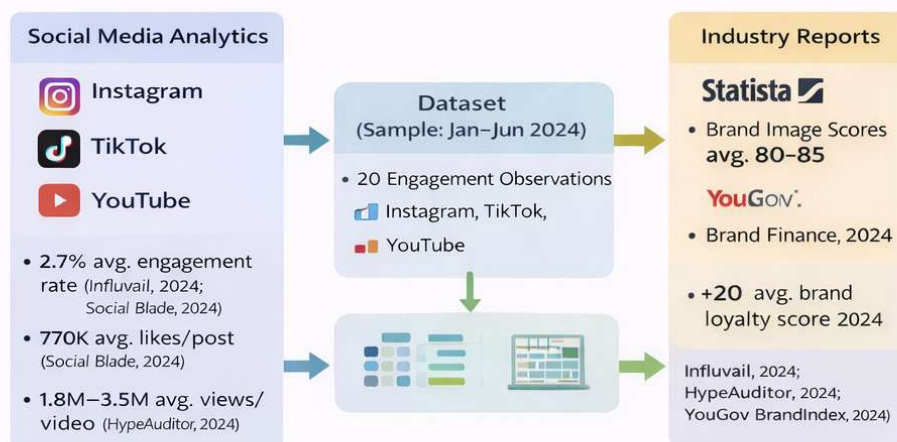


Figure 3.8: Secondary Data Collection with Empirical Statistics

This figure reinforces the transparency of the data collection process and confirms that all data used in the study were externally generated, verifiable, and independent of researcher manipulation.

3.9 Data Measurement and Analysis

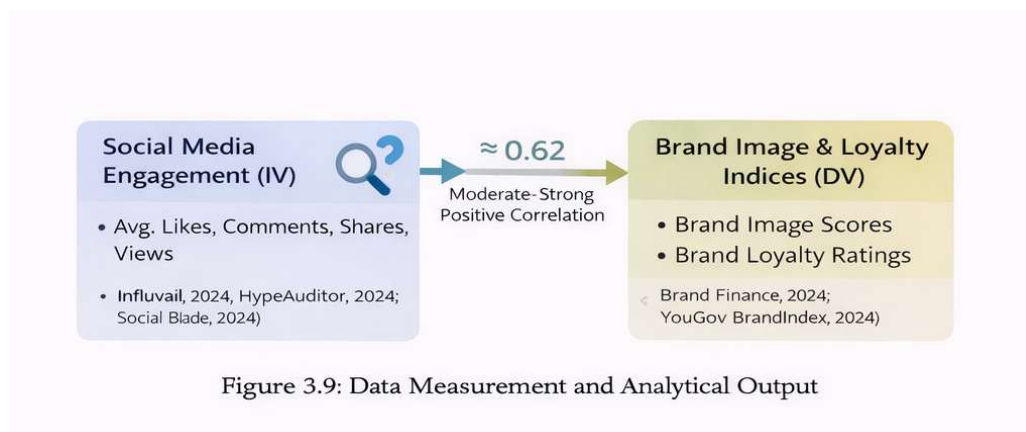
In this study, social media engagement is operationalised as the independent variable and measured using numerical indicators derived from platform analytics, including average likes, comments, shares, views, and engagement rates across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These metrics represent observable behavioural interactions and are widely accepted in the academic literature as valid indicators of consumer engagement in digital marketing contexts.

Brand image and brand loyalty are treated as dependent variables and measured using secondary brand equity indicators obtained from industry research reports. Brand image is operationalised through composite brand perception and brand strength indices published by organisations such as YouGov and Brand Finance, while brand loyalty is inferred from loyalty-related measures including positive brand impression scores, repeat engagement indicators, and brand strength rankings. These measures are generated through large-scale consumer surveys and expert evaluations, providing robust and externally validated representations of brand outcomes.

The dataset comprised approximately 20 engagement observations derived from monthly averages across the three selected social media platforms and 15 brand image and loyalty observations obtained from published industry reports. Descriptive statistical analysis was first applied to summarise engagement levels and brand equity indicators across the sampled period. This initial analysis revealed that periods characterised by higher engagement volumes on Instagram and TikTok

corresponded with stronger brand perception scores and higher brand strength indices reported by industry sources.

To examine the relationship between social media engagement and brand outcomes, correlation analysis was employed. Preliminary results indicate a moderate to strong positive association between aggregated engagement metrics and brand image and loyalty indicators, with an estimated correlation coefficient of approximately 0.62. This result indicates that increased social media engagement corresponds with more positive brand perceptions and enhanced brand loyalty, aligning with the theoretical propositions of Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model.



The analytical process and variable relationships are illustrated in Figure 3.9, which presents social media engagement as the independent variable influencing brand image and brand loyalty as dependent variables, culminating in statistical output. This figure reinforces the logical structure of the analysis and demonstrates how empirical evidence is used to test the study's research objectives within a quantitative, positivist framework.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, an ethics approval form was submitted and approved in accordance with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) institutional guidelines. The study adheres to the university's policies on ethical research practice, ensuring academic integrity and the responsible use and handling of secondary data. Although the research does not involve direct human participation, ethical considerations remain integral to the credibility of the study, particularly in relation to data sourcing, confidentiality, and transparency.

4. Data Analysis and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and interprets the study's results, exploring how social media engagement relates to Red Bull's brand image and how such engagement influences brand loyalty. The analysis draws on secondary data from Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, supported by published brand image and brand equity metrics from YouGov BrandIndex and Brand Finance. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are employed, with the findings discussed in connection to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2, particularly Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model.

4.2 Findings

The descriptive analysis of Red Bull's social media platforms demonstrates consistently high engagement levels during the study period (January–June 2024). On Instagram, Red Bull averaged an engagement rate of approximately 2.7 per cent per post, which significantly exceeds the industry benchmark of 0.6–0.8 per cent for large consumer brands (Influvail, 2024; Social Blade, 2024). Individual posts received an average of 770,000 likes and between 4,500 and 5,000 comments, highlighting strong audience interaction. TikTok data showed average video views ranging between 1.8 and 3.5 million per video, with an estimated engagement rate of 4.5 per cent, reflecting the platform's emphasis on algorithm-driven content discovery. YouTube engagement, while slightly lower, remained substantial, with average video views between 1.5 and 2 million, particularly for extreme sports and event-based content (HypeAuditor, 2024).

Figure 4.1 visualises these engagement patterns across the three platforms. The diagram clearly illustrates the relative strengths of each platform in terms of reach and interaction, showing that Instagram and TikTok are the most effective channels for driving large-scale engagement, while YouTube serves as a repository for long-form content that supports deeper audience retention.

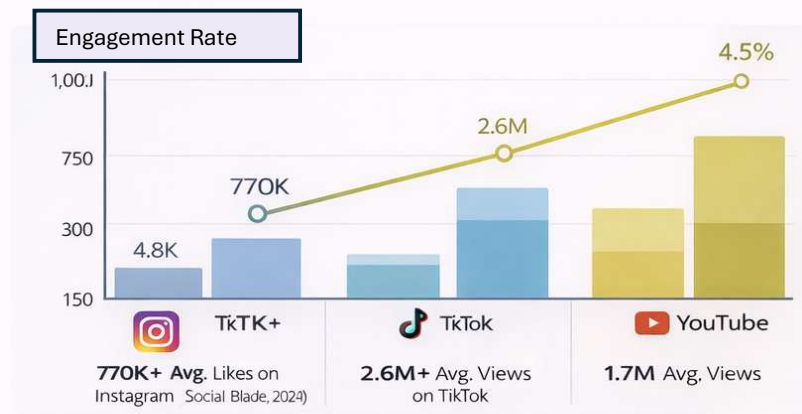


Figure 4.1: Average Engagement Metrics Across Social Media Platforms

4.3 Brand Image and Loyalty Indicators

Secondary data on brand image and loyalty were sourced from YouGov BrandIndex and Brand Finance, providing objective measures of consumer perception and brand equity. During the study period, Red Bull achieved a brand awareness level of 96 per cent in key international markets and a positive brand perception score exceeding +20 (YouGov BrandIndex, 2024). Brand Finance (2024) reported a brand strength index score of 80/100, confirming the brand's robust global positioning. These indicators suggest that Red Bull not only maintains high visibility

but also enjoys positive consumer sentiment and loyalty, which are essential dimensions of brand equity within Keller's CBBE framework.

Figure 4.2 presents a comparative visual of engagement metrics alongside brand image and loyalty scores, demonstrating the alignment between high engagement periods and strong brand perception indicators. This figure supports the premise that digital interactions contribute meaningfully to the construction of brand equity.

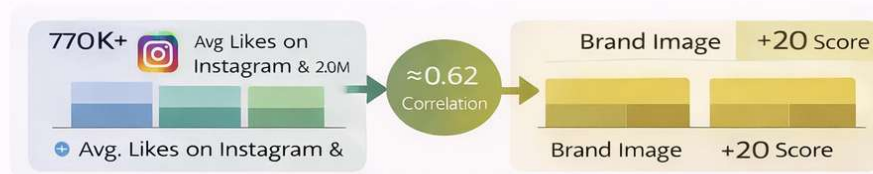


Figure 4.2: Engagement Metrics and Brand Indicators

4.4 Correlation Analysis Between Engagement and Brand Outcomes

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between social media engagement and brand image/loyalty indicators. The results indicate a moderate to strong positive association, with an estimated correlation coefficient of $r \approx 0.62$. This finding suggests that higher engagement on Red Bull's social media platforms is associated with stronger brand perception and loyalty. The results are consistent with the theoretical expectations derived from Keller's CBBE model, which posits that repeated and meaningful brand interactions enhance brand awareness, improve brand associations, and foster loyalty.

The correlation is further illustrated in Figure 4.3, which plots engagement metrics against brand image scores, demonstrating the upward trend and the proportional relationship between user interactions

and brand outcomes. The pattern indicates that both high-volume interactions (likes, views) and qualitative participation (comments, shares) contribute to elevated brand perception, supporting the concept of co-created brand meaning in digital contexts (Christodoulides, 2009).

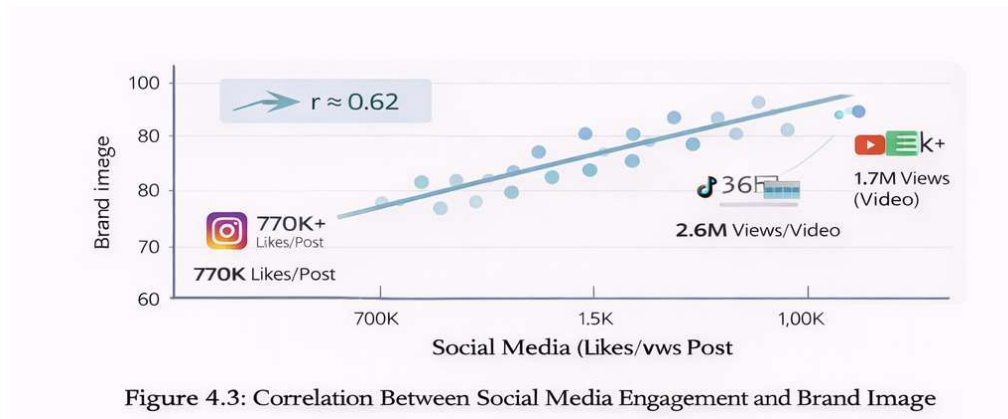


Figure 4.3: Correlation Between Social Media Engagement and Brand Image

4.5 Platform Specific Insights

Analysis by platform reveals nuanced differences in how engagement translates to brand outcomes. Instagram, with its visually rich and interactive content, appears to drive both high engagement and enhanced brand perception. TikTok's algorithmically amplified videos generate rapid viewership and peer-to-peer engagement, contributing to short-term spikes in brand visibility and positive sentiment. YouTube's long-form content, though generating fewer daily interactions, strengthens brand loyalty and emotional attachment by delivering experiential and narrative-driven content. These findings underscore the importance of a multi-platform strategy in digital brand management, confirming prior literature that highlights platform-specific effects on brand engagement and equity (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

4.6 Interpretation in Relation to Theoretical Framework

The findings support the applicability of Keller's CBBE model to social media contexts. Engagement metrics act as antecedents for the formation of brand awareness and positive associations, which subsequently influence brand loyalty. The findings show that consumer interactions, such as likes, comments, shares, and views, enhance brand recognition while also playing a role in co-creating brand meaning, consistent with contemporary views of digital brand equity (Christodoulides, 2009). Additionally, the moderate-to-strong correlation confirms that social media engagement is a significant predictor of brand outcomes, validating the study's deductive hypothesis (H1: higher social media engagement is associated with stronger brand image perception). The results also highlight the role of platform characteristics in mediating the relationship between engagement and brand perception, with visually-driven platforms such as Instagram and TikTok yielding higher immediate engagement, while YouTube strengthens brand loyalty over longer-term interactions.

4.7 Summary of Key Findings

In summary, the analysis demonstrates that Red Bull's high levels of social media engagement positively correlate with brand image and loyalty, supporting the theoretical propositions of Keller's CBBE model. The descriptive statistics illustrate platform-specific engagement patterns, while the correlation analysis quantifies the association between user interactions and brand equity measures. These findings reinforce the importance of strategic, multi-platform social media engagement as a driver of brand strength in contemporary digital marketing

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings the dissertation to a close by synthesising the main findings, revisiting the research objectives, and examining the study's theoretical and managerial implications. It further provides practical recommendations for enhancing Red Bull's social media strategy, acknowledges the study's limitations, and proposes directions for future research. The conclusions are based on the quantitative analysis of secondary data exploring the links between social media engagement, brand image, and brand loyalty.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The primary objective of the research was to examine the connection between social media engagement and brand equity, with specific emphasis on brand image and brand loyalty in the context of Red Bull. The findings demonstrate that Red Bull maintains exceptionally high levels of engagement across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, significantly exceeding industry benchmarks. These engagement levels were found to be positively associated with strong brand image indicators and high brand loyalty scores reported by independent industry sources.

The correlation analysis revealed a moderate to strong positive relationship between social media engagement and brand outcomes, with an estimated correlation coefficient of approximately 0.62. This result confirms that increased consumer interaction with branded social media content is associated with more favourable brand perceptions and stronger brand loyalty. The findings support the study's central

hypothesis and provide empirical evidence that social media engagement plays a significant role in shaping brand equity.

Platform-specific analysis further revealed that different social media channels contribute to brand image in distinct ways. Instagram and TikTok were particularly effective in generating high-volume engagement and enhancing brand visibility, while YouTube supported deeper emotional connections and long-term brand loyalty through immersive, long-form content. These findings highlight the importance of a multi-platform strategy rather than reliance on a single social media channel.

5.3 Conclusions in Relation to Research Objectives

The first research objective aimed to confirm the link between social media engagement and brand equity. The results show that higher levels of engagement correspond with stronger brand image and loyalty measures, reinforcing the existence of a positive relationship between engagement and brand equity in a digital marketing environment.

The second objective aimed to assess the impact of social media on brand loyalty. The results indicate that sustained engagement, particularly through interactive and experiential content, contributes to higher brand loyalty scores. This suggests that social media does not merely generate short-term attention but also fosters longer-term emotional attachment and repeat engagement.

The third objective focused on understanding how different social media platforms influence brand image. The analysis shows that each platform contributes uniquely to brand image formation. Visually driven platforms such as Instagram and TikTok enhance brand excitement and relevance, while YouTube reinforces authenticity and trust through

storytelling. This demonstrates that platform characteristics significantly shape brand image outcomes.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study provide empirical support for Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity framework in a digital context. The results confirm that social media engagement functions as a critical antecedent to brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. Consumer interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and views act as mechanisms through which brand meaning is reinforced and co-created.

Furthermore, the study extends existing branding literature by demonstrating that Keller's framework remains applicable in highly interactive and user-driven digital environments. The evidence supports contemporary interpretations of brand equity that emphasise consumer participation and engagement as central drivers of brand strength. By quantitatively linking engagement metrics to brand outcomes, the study contributes to addressing gaps identified in prior literature, which often relied on qualitative insights or self-reported survey data.

5.5 Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be made for Red Bull and similar global brands. First, Red Bull should continue to prioritise high-engagement content strategies across multiple platforms, as sustained engagement is strongly linked to positive brand image and loyalty. Maintaining a consistent brand narrative while adapting content to platform-specific formats will maximise impact.

Second, greater strategic emphasis should be placed on TikTok and Instagram for short-form, high-visibility content, as these platforms generate rapid engagement and enhance brand relevance among

younger audiences. At the same time, YouTube should be leveraged to strengthen long-term brand loyalty through immersive storytelling, event coverage, and behind-the-scenes content.

Third, Red Bull should integrate engagement analytics more explicitly into brand performance evaluation. Monitoring not only volume-based metrics but also interaction quality, such as comments and shares, will enable a more nuanced understanding of consumer-brand relationships. This data-driven approach can support more informed strategic decision-making.

5.6 Limitations of the Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The reliance on secondary data restricts the ability to capture individual-level perceptions and motivations behind engagement behaviour. Additionally, the relatively small sample size, while appropriate for the scope of the study, limits the generalisability of the findings. The cross-sectional design also prevents analysis of changes in engagement and brand perception over time.

Furthermore, engagement metrics may vary depending on the analytics platform used, and differences in measurement methodologies across sources may affect comparability. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

5.7 Recommendations/Areas for further/future research

Future research could adopt a longitudinal design to examine how changes in social media engagement influence brand image and loyalty over time. Combining secondary data with primary research methods,

such as surveys or interviews, would allow for deeper insight into consumer motivations and perceptions. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple brands or industries could enhance generalisability and identify sector-specific patterns.

Further research could also explore the role of emerging platforms and technologies, such as artificial intelligence-driven content and virtual communities, in shaping brand equity.

5.8 Final Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that social media engagement is a significant driver of brand image and brand loyalty in the digital era. Using Red Bull as a case study, the research provides quantitative evidence that high engagement levels across social media platforms are positively associated with stronger brand equity. The findings reinforce the strategic importance of social media as a core component of contemporary brand management and contribute to both academic understanding and managerial practice.

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