

Research Article

Digital Marketing Strategies to Increase Brand Awareness in the E-Sports Industry

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of digital marketing strategies, including Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Community Marketing, on Brand Awareness within the e-sports industry. Alongside the rapid growth of the e-sports sector both globally and in Indonesia, effective digital marketing has become essential for brands to enhance visibility and audience engagement. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 200 respondents and analyzed using SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2. The analysis results show that the research model achieved an Adjusted R-Square value of 0.752, indicating that the independent variables were able to explain 75.2% of the variance in Brand Awareness. The findings further reveal that Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Community Marketing all have a significant positive effect on Brand Awareness, underscoring their critical role in shaping consumer perception and engagement. These results highlight the importance of integrated digital marketing strategies in building strong brand recognition, fostering community interaction, and enhancing consumer loyalty in the highly competitive e-sports landscape. By leveraging these strategies, companies can not only strengthen their market position but also create deeper relationships with e-sports fans. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing within the creative economy and offers practical insights for marketers seeking to develop targeted and effective promotional strategies in the dynamic e-sports environment.

Keywords: Brand Awareness; Community Marketing; Content Marketing; Digital Marketing; Influencer Marketing

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of the e-sports industry, both globally and in Indonesia, has positioned it as one of the fastest-growing segments of the creative economy. Globally, e-sports revenues are projected to surpass USD 12 billion by 2030, supported by the increasing popularity of livestreaming platforms, rising sponsorships, and the rapid development of professional leagues (PwC, 2023). Indonesia also demonstrates remarkable potential, with its e-sports market expected to exceed USD 2.3 billion by 2025. This development is driven by widespread internet penetration, government recognition of e-sports as an official sport, and the rising number of active players and communities that form the backbone of the industry. These dynamics show that e-sports is no longer merely a form of entertainment but has become a social and economic phenomenon with significant implications for business and culture.

The expansion of e-sports has inevitably attracted marketers and major corporations who recognize its vast potential as a platform for brand engagement. Unlike traditional marketing methods, digital marketing in e-sports allows brands to reach highly segmented audiences, build stronger emotional connections, and measure engagement more effectively. With the dominance of digital platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, and social media, e-sports provides unique opportunities for interactive communication between brands and fans. Previous studies have shown that well executed digital marketing strategies can shape

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consumer perceptions, increase brand recognition, and foster long term loyalty (Jang et al., 2021; Siuda et al., 2024).

Among the many approaches available, three strategies have been identified as particularly crucial; content marketing, influencer marketing, and community marketing. Content marketing emphasizes the creation of engaging and valuable materials such as tutorials, livestreams, or highlights that help build consumer trust and awareness. Influencer marketing leverages the popularity and credibility of professional gamers, streamers, and online personalities who have direct influence over their audiences' attitudes and purchasing behavior. Meanwhile, community marketing capitalizes on the collective engagement of e-sports fans through online groups, forums, and events, where positive interactions and word-of-mouth can significantly enhance brand awareness. Several studies have highlighted the effectiveness of these approaches individually (Lefebvre et al., 2023; Ock & Hwang, 2023; Razak et al., 2024). However, there is still limited empirical research examining how these three strategies work simultaneously, especially in the context of the Indonesian e-sports industry.

This gap is important to address because Indonesia's e-sports ecosystem possesses unique characteristics compared to Western markets. With its strong community orientation, high youth engagement, and localized cultural dynamics, digital marketing strategies may demonstrate different levels of effectiveness depending on how they are implemented. Furthermore, most prior studies have examined e-sports from a global perspective or focused primarily on one variable, leaving a research gap in understanding the integrated role of content, influencers, and communities in shaping brand awareness at a regional level.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of content marketing, influencer marketing, and community marketing on brand awareness within the Indonesian e-sports industry. Specifically, the research focuses on audiences in Central Java, offering a more contextualized understanding of consumer behavior in a rapidly developing local e-sports market. By doing so, the study contributes to the literature by filling an important gap and highlighting the interplay among different digital marketing strategies. In addition, the findings are expected to provide practical implications for marketers and practitioners, particularly in designing targeted and effective campaigns that resonate with e-sports communities in Indonesia. Ultimately, this research seeks to demonstrate how integrated digital marketing can serve as a strategic tool for building brand visibility, strengthening fan engagement, and sustaining competitive advantage in the dynamic e-sports environment.

2. Literature Review

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand, and it is considered the first stage in building brand equity (Ock & Hwang, 2023). In the e-sports industry, brand awareness is critical because of the highly competitive environment where multiple sponsors, teams, and platforms compete for audience attention. The indicators of brand awareness include top of mind, which represents the brand most readily recalled by consumers, brand recognition, the ability to identify a brand when presented with visual or verbal cues and brand reminder, which reflects the ability to recall a brand even without prompts (Anindya & Indriastuti, 2023). In the e-sports context, these indicators are not only shaped by traditional exposure but also by digital touchpoints such as livestreams, in game sponsorships, and online fan interactions, making awareness more dynamic and closely tied to digital engagement.

Content Marketing

Content marketing emphasizes the creation and distribution of relevant and engaging materials that attract and retain consumer attention. In e-sports, this strategy includes livestreaming events, highlight reels, behind-the-scenes videos, and tutorials that resonate with fans. Research shows that effective content increases consumer recall and strengthens the relationship between brands and their audiences (Lefebvre et al., 2023). The indicators of content marketing include Advertising Intensity, which reflects how frequently and strongly content is delivered to audiences, Creativity of Content, which determines how unique and attractive the materials are, and Perceived Value for Consumers, which relates to the usefulness, informativeness, and relevance of content (Raji et al., 2019). While prior studies confirm the positive role of content marketing, few have examined its impact on e-sports audiences in Indonesia, where consumer behavior may differ due to localized cultural dynamics.

H1: Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness in the e-sports industry.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves leveraging individuals with strong credibility and large followings to endorse brands. In e-sports, influencers such as professional players, streamers, and casters play an important role in shaping fan perceptions. They function not only as opinion leaders but also as cultural figures within the community. The effectiveness of influencer marketing can be assessed through Visibility, the influencer's popularity and recognition, Credibility, the extent of expertise and product knowledge, Attraction, the influencer's appeal and ability to capture interest, and Power, the ability to persuade and shape followers' decisions (Setiawan & Asiyah, 2023). Although research generally supports its effectiveness (Ramdani & Fietroh, 2025; Razak et al., 2024), some studies highlight inconsistencies, particularly when influencer brand fit is weak. This underscores the importance of further testing influencer marketing in the Indonesian e-sports industry.

H2: Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness in the e-sports industry.

Community Marketing

Community marketing capitalizes on the collective power of e-sports fan groups, online forums, and digital platforms such as Discord or Twitch chats. These communities facilitate electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which strengthens brand visibility and loyalty (Ock & Hwang, 2023). The indicators of community marketing include Membership, where individuals feel invested in belonging to the group, Influence, the mutual ability of members and the community to affect each other, Integration and Fulfillment of Needs, where members feel valued through participation, and Shared Emotional Connections, which reflect trust and shared experiences among fans (Nurani et al., 2024). Studies show that active e-sports communities foster stronger brand associations and more sustainable engagement (Wang et al., 2024). However, little research has examined how localized Indonesian communities contribute to brand awareness, leaving a gap this study aims to fill.

H3: Community Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Brand Awareness in the e-sports industry.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature, this study proposes a model where Content Marketing (X1), Influencer Marketing (X2), and Community Marketing (X3) are hypothesized to positively influence Brand Awareness (Y). These three strategies may reinforce one another: engaging content can be amplified through influencers, while communities provide a platform for sustaining discussions and spreading messages. By integrating these variables into a single framework, this study not only addresses a gap in prior literature but also provides a comprehensive view of how digital marketing strategies can be optimized to build strong e-sports brands in Indonesia.

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms. The sampling method applied was purposive sampling, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021).

The criteria established in this study were as follows: (1) respondents aged 16 years and above, on the basis that individuals at this age are assumed to have sufficient cognitive ability and awareness to evaluate digital marketing activities in e-sports; (2) respondents residing in Semarang, Central Java, which was chosen as the focal area because it is one of the most active urban centers for e-sports development in Indonesia. Semarang hosts numerous e-sports communities, frequent local tournaments, and has a growing ecosystem of gaming cafés and digital platforms, making it a representative site for capturing audience perceptions in the regional e-sports market; and (3) respondents who follow or have previously followed the Indonesian e-sports scene, either as players, viewers, or community members, as such experience is directly relevant to assessing brand awareness shaped through digital marketing strategies.

Based on these criteria, data were collected from 200 respondents. This sample size was considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, particularly using Partial Least Squares (PLS). According to methodological guidelines, PLS-SEM is suitable for sample sizes ranging from 100 to 200 or more, provided that the model's complexity and the

minimum R^2 values are satisfied (Hair et al., 2021). Moreover, the widely used “10 times rule” suggests that the required sample size should be at least ten times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any latent construct in the model. In this study, the largest number of paths directed at a construct was three (towards Brand Awareness), meaning that the minimum sample requirement was 30. Therefore, the chosen sample size of 200 not only exceeds this threshold but also ensures sufficient statistical power to detect significant effects.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.1.1.2. The choice of PLS-SEM was motivated by several considerations. First, PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for exploratory research and for models that include multiple latent constructs with complex relationships, as in this study, which examines the effects of content marketing, influencer marketing, and community marketing on brand awareness. Second, PLS-SEM is robust in handling relatively small to medium sample sizes, making it appropriate for this research context. Third, unlike covariance based SEM, PLS-SEM focuses on maximizing explained variance, which aligns well with the objective of this study to assess how much of brand awareness can be explained by the selected digital marketing strategies. Thus, the use of SmartPLS not only enhances methodological rigor but also ensures alignment between the analytical tool and the research objectives.

4. Results and Discussion

Theoretical Framework

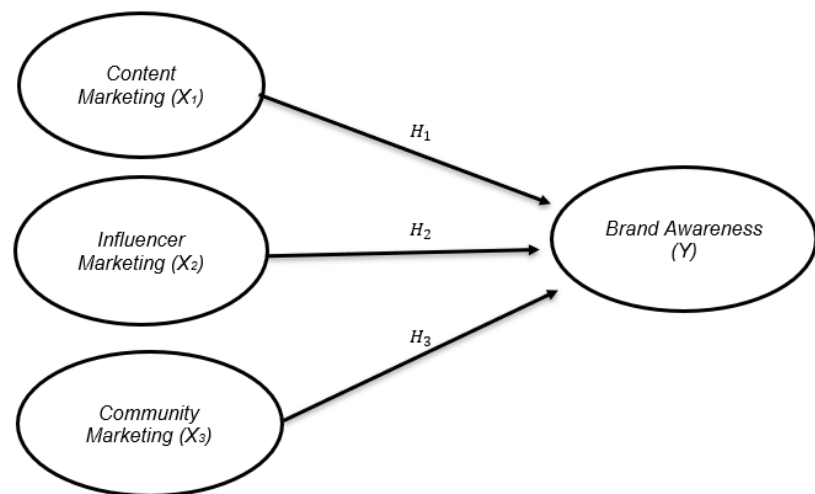


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework
Source : Writer

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Convergent Validity Test

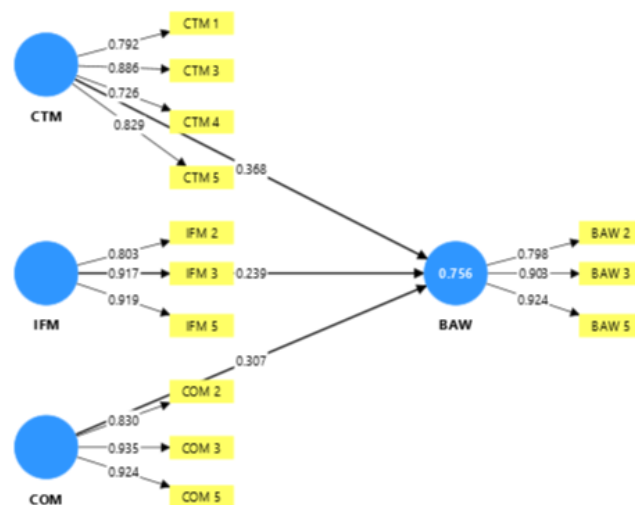


Figure 2. Graphical Output
Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

Table 1. Loading Factor

	BAW	COM	CTM	IFM
BAW 2	0.798			
BAW 3	0.903			
BAW 5	0.924			
COM 2		0.830		
COM 3		0.935		
COM 5		0.924		
CTM 1			0.792	
CTM 3			0.886	
CTM 4			0.726	
CTM 5			0.829	
IFM 2				0.803
IFM 3				0.917
IFM 5				0.919

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
COM	0.806
IFM	0.777
BAW	0.768
CTM	0.656

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

Discriminant Validity Test

Table 3. Cross Loading

	BAW	COM	CTM	IFM
BAW 2	0.798	0.611	0.609	0.598
BAW 3	0.903	0.773	0.783	0.753
BAW 5	0.924	0.784	0.799	0.742
COM 2	0.674	0.830	0.694	0.662
COM 3	0.807	0.935	0.862	0.808
COM 5	0.749	0.924	0.818	0.747
CTM 1	0.576	0.628	0.792	0.608
CTM 3	0.743	0.808	0.886	0.786
CTM 4	0.610	0.684	0.726	0.552
CTM 5	0.765	0.733	0.829	0.733
IFM 2	0.629	0.659	0.673	0.803
IFM 3	0.770	0.770	0.826	0.917
IFM 5	0.709	0.750	0.702	0.919

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

Reliability Test

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
BAW	0.848	0.867	0.908
COM	0.878	0.888	0.925
CTM	0.825	0.838	0.884
IFM	0.855	0.867	0.912

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

The measurement model was first assessed through convergent and discriminant validity tests. All indicators exceeded the recommended loading factor of 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50, confirming convergent validity. Similarly, discriminant validity was established, with each indicator loading highest on its respective construct. Reliability tests also showed Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.80, indicating that all constructs were internally consistent. These results are important because they demonstrate that the indicators of content marketing, influencer marketing, community marketing, and brand awareness are conceptually reliable when applied in the e-sports context, where consumer perceptions often change rapidly due to dynamic trends and media exposure.

Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

Multicollinearity Test

Table 5. Collinearity Statistic (VIF)

	VIF
BAW 2	1.658
BAW 3	2.594
BAW 5	2.907
COM 2	1.787
COM 3	3.813
COM 5	3.662
CTM 1	1.928
CTM 3	2.761
CTM 4	1.606
CTM 5	2.253
IFM 2	1.614
IFM 3	3.070
IFM 5	3.206

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

R-Square (R^2) Test

Table 6. R-Square (R^2)

	R-square	R-square adjusted
BAW	0.756	0.752

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

The structural model achieved an Adjusted R^2 value of 0.752, which means that content marketing, influencer marketing, and community marketing collectively explain 75.2% of the variance in brand awareness. This high explanatory power suggests that digital marketing strategies play a central role in shaping brand recognition and recall among e-sports audiences. Furthermore, the Q^2 value of 0.757 confirmed strong predictive relevance, supporting the robustness of the model in explaining brand awareness within this industry.

Hypothesis Testing

Path Analysis Model

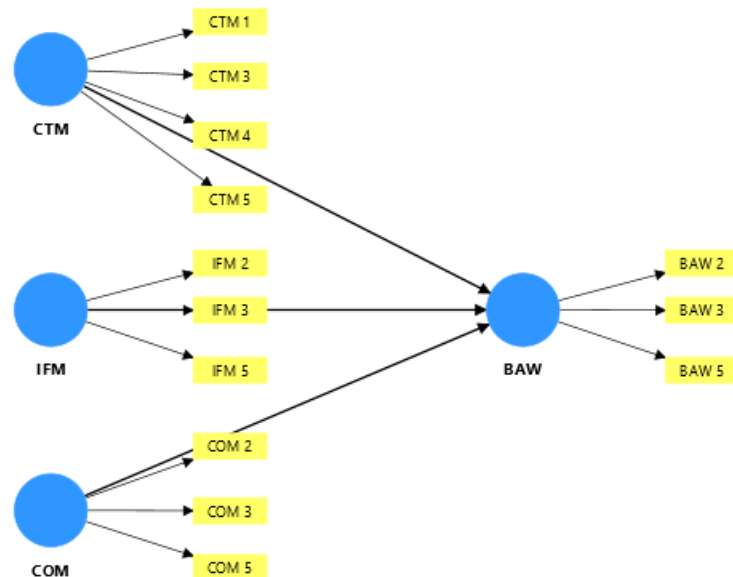


Figure 3. Initial Structural Modeling

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

The Initial Structural Modeling presents information on path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values generated through the bootstrapping procedure using SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

Q-Square (Q^2) Test

Table 7. Q-Square (Q^2)

	Q^2 predict	RMSE	MAE
BAW	0.757	0.517	0.388

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

In the following table, the Q^2 value is 0.757, indicating that the research model possesses a very strong predictive capability in explaining the dependent variable. This implies that the

model is sufficiently robust in predicting new data, thereby rendering the analysis results valid and reliable to be used as a basis for decision-making.

T Test

Table 8. Path Coefficients between Variables for Hypothesis Testing

		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
COM BAW	->	0.307	0.299	0.114	2.697	0.007
CTM BAW	->	0.368	0.369	0.114	3.239	0.001
IFM BAW	->	0.239	0.241	0.078	3.056	0.002

Source : Output SmartPLS 4.1.1.2

The table above presents the magnitude of the path analysis values, where all variables show positive coefficients, indicating a direct correlation with brand awareness. In other words, higher levels of content marketing, influencer marketing, and community marketing lead to higher brand awareness. The following section provides an explanation of the research findings and a discussion on the influence of exogenous variables on the endogenous variable.

The results indicate that Content Marketing (X1) has a path coefficient of 0.307 with a p-value of 0.007, which is less than 0.05. This means that Brand Awareness (Y) is positively and significantly influenced by the Content Marketing (X1) variable. Additionally, the results show that Influencer Marketing (X2) has a path coefficient of 0.368 with a p-value of 0.001, also less than 0.05. This indicates that Brand Awareness (Y) is positively and significantly influenced by the Influencer Marketing (X2) variable. Finally, the results reveal that Community Marketing (X3) has a path coefficient of 0.239 with a p-value of 0.002, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This suggests that Brand Awareness (Y) is positively and significantly influenced by the Community Marketing (X3) variable.

The Effect of Content Marketing on Brand Awareness in the E-sports Industry

The analysis shows that Content Marketing (X1) has a path coefficient of 0.307 with a p-value of 0.007 (<0.05), meaning that it significantly influences Brand Awareness. This suggests that the creation and distribution of engaging, relevant, and consistent content such as livestreams, highlight clips, or behind the scenes features are crucial in shaping consumer perceptions in e-sports. Prior research also supports this, indicating that quality and creativity in digital content enhance brand visibility and consumer recall (Izza et al., 2024; Lefebvre et al., 2023). The unique contribution of this finding lies in showing how e-sports audiences in Central Java respond strongly to content that not only entertains but also deepens their connection with the brand, making Content Marketing an essential strategy for sustaining fan engagement in a competitive digital space.

The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Awareness in the E-sports Industry

Influencer Marketing (X2) recorded the strongest path coefficient of 0.368 with a p-value of 0.001 (<0.05), demonstrating a significant and positive influence on Brand Awareness. This confirms that collaborations with trusted figures such as streamers, gamers, and e-sports personalities are highly effective in amplifying brand messages. Unlike traditional advertising, influencers bring credibility and emotional resonance, which are critical in e-sports communities where authenticity is highly valued. Although previous studies highlight the role of influencers in enhancing consumer trust (Ramdani & Fietroh, 2025; Razak et al., 2024), this research strengthens the argument by showing their decisive impact in an Indonesian regional context. Strategically, this suggests that brands should prioritize influencer partnerships as a leading driver of visibility and awareness while ensuring alignment between influencer identity and brand values.

The Effect of Community Marketing on Brand Awareness in the E-sports Industry

Community Marketing (X3) yielded a path coefficient of 0.239 with a p-value of 0.002 (<0.05), showing a significant but comparatively smaller effect on Brand Awareness. This indicates that while communities may not be the strongest driver, they still play an essential role in sustaining long term brand engagement. E-sports communities on platforms such as Discord or local fan groups act as spaces for sharing experiences, spreading e-WOM, and reinforcing loyalty. Prior research also highlights the importance of community participation in fostering brand associations (Ock & Hwang, 2023; Wang et al., 2024). The contribution of this study is in contextualizing that, within Central Java e-sports ecosystem, communities

serve as supportive channels that strengthen the effects of content and influencer strategies, ensuring continuity and deeper relational bonds between fans and brands.

Comparative Analysis and Strategic Implications

Comparing the three strategies, Influencer Marketing emerges as the most influential driver of brand awareness, followed by Content Marketing and Community Marketing. This hierarchy indicates that while influencers are key to creating immediate visibility and trust, content is critical in maintaining audience attention, and communities serve to sustain engagement over time. For practitioners, this implies that a balanced, integrated strategy anchored on influencers, supported by creative content, and reinforced by active communities offers the most effective approach to building brand awareness in the Indonesian e-sports industry.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that digital marketing strategies namely Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Community Marketing significantly and positively affect Brand Awareness in the e-sports industry. Collectively, these three strategies explain 75.2% of the variance in Brand Awareness, underscoring their central role in shaping consumer perceptions. However, beyond statistical significance, the findings reveal why these approaches are particularly effective in e-sports compared to other industries. Unlike traditional sectors, e-sports is inherently digital, community driven, and content oriented. This unique environment amplifies the impact of engaging content, trusted influencers, and active communities, making them more critical in building visibility and emotional connection with fans.

From a theoretical perspective, this research addresses a clear gap in the literature. Previous studies often examined digital marketing strategies in isolation or within Western markets, while this study integrates three key strategies in a single framework and applies them to the Indonesian e-sports context, specifically Central Java on Semarang. By doing so, it advances knowledge by demonstrating how localized cultural dynamics and community structures influence the effectiveness of digital marketing in e-sports, thereby expanding the scope of existing research.

For practitioners, the study offers several concrete implications. First, marketers should prioritize influencer partnerships, as influencers showed the strongest impact on brand awareness. Selecting influencers whose values and audiences align with the brand is crucial to maximize credibility and reach. Second, content marketing should focus on creativity and interactivity, such as producing livestreams, highlight reels, or behind the scenes videos that capture fan interest and extend engagement beyond tournaments. Third, community initiatives should not be overlooked; organizing fan events, fostering online discussions, and encouraging user generated content can sustain long term loyalty even if their immediate impact is smaller than influencer or content strategies. An integrated approach combining these three elements is likely to yield the most effective outcomes.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The sample was restricted to e-sports audiences in Semarang, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions in Indonesia or internationally. In addition, the study relied on self reported data, which may not fully capture actual consumer behavior. Future research could expand the geographic scope, employ longitudinal designs to examine changes over time, or integrate behavioral data to complement survey findings. Furthermore, examining additional variables such as sponsorship strategies, brand personality, or cross platform integration could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing shapes brand awareness in e-sports.

In conclusion, this study not only confirms the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in enhancing brand awareness but also highlights their unique relevance in the e-sports ecosystem. By integrating content, influencer, and community marketing, brands can develop holistic strategies that strengthen recognition, foster loyalty, and secure a competitive edge in Indonesia's fast growing e-sports industry.

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