

*Factors that influence the success of social media tactics in brand building in Malawi**Santosh narayan shriyan**Exploits university, Malawi**Dr. Martin sailesi gulule***Abstract**

This paper examines the factors that influence the success of social media tactics in brand building in Malawi, drawing on Objective Two of the broader study on the efficacy of social media tactics in brand building. The study employed a mixed-methods research design. The quantitative target population comprised 135 marketing-related staff across 10 purposively selected companies, from which a required sample of approximately 101 respondents was determined using a finite-population sample-size formula. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, while qualitative evidence was obtained through interviews, peer-reviewed literature and content analysis. The data were analysed using MS Excel and SPSS. The findings show comparatively longer brand presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, websites and WhatsApp. Images and videos were the most frequently used content formats, while difficulty in reaching target audiences emerged as the most urgent challenge, alongside lack of resources, inadequate analytics tools and challenges in content creation. The study concludes that effective social media brand building depends on appropriate platform use, relevant content choices and the ability to address implementation challenges.

Keywords*social media marketing, brand building, content strategy, audience targeting, social media platforms, Malawi***1.0 Introduction**

Social media has transformed brand building by enabling businesses to reach and engage audiences with greater precision and scale. However, simply maintaining a presence on a social media platform does not guarantee effective branding. Businesses need to select appropriate platforms, develop relevant content and align their social media activities with their wider marketing objectives (Adeola et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). This paper focuses specifically on the factors that influence the success of social media tactics in brand building in Malawi. It examines the length of brand presence across social media platforms, the types of content used to promote brands, and the challenges businesses face when implementing social media marketing.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Although social media offers businesses substantial opportunities for brand promotion, companies can still struggle to identify the most effective strategies and to allocate resources efficiently. The rapid pace of change in digital platforms, the risk of inappropriate or poorly targeted communication, and the difficulty of sustaining audience engagement can reduce the effectiveness of brand-building activities (Borges-Tiago et al., 2020; Annamalai et al., 2021). The broader thesis therefore identified a need for research-based evidence on the factors that contribute to successful social media brand building. This paper addresses that need by concentrating on platform presence, content practices and implementation challenges in the Malawi context.

3.0 Objectives**3.1 Main Objective**

The main objective is to assess the factors that influence the success of social media tactics in brand building.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- a) *To determine the period of brand presence on each social media platform.*
- b) *To determine the main types of content used to promote brands on social media.*
- c) *To investigate the main challenges faced in implementing effective social media marketing for brand promotion.*

4.0 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

- a) *How long has your brand been active on each social media platform?*
- b) *What types of content are primarily used to promote the brand on social media?*
- c) *What challenges are faced in implementing effective social media marketing?*

5.0 Literature Review

Recent literature reviewed in the final thesis emphasizes that successful social media brand building depends on the strategic coordination of platform choice, content and audience engagement. Li et al. (2021) describe social media marketing strategy as requiring deliberate decisions about how platforms and communication activities are aligned with organizational objectives. Kamboj (2020) further shows that customer participation in social media brand communities is influenced by the value and gratifications users obtain from platform engagement. These perspectives support the view that the effectiveness of social media tactics depends not only on being present online, but also on how brands use individual platforms to connect with their audiences.

Content quality and relevance are also important. Annamalai et al. (2021) show that social media content strategy can influence engagement, while Zollo et al. (2020) link social media marketing activities with brand equity through consumer benefits and experience. The Objective Two literature review in the thesis also reports that analytics adoption, trained digital teams and platform-specific strategies are important organizational and technological factors in social media performance (Dwivedi et al., 2021). At the organizational level, the strategic use of social media requires businesses to manage capabilities, resources and platform-specific practices (Cartwright et al., 2021). Taken together, the literature indicates that platform experience, content practices, audience targeting, resources and analytical capacity are important considerations when evaluating the success of social media brand-building tactics.

6.0 Methodology

This paper draws on Objective Two of a broader mixed-methods study conducted in Blantyre City, Malawi. The study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. The total quantitative target population comprised 135 marketing-related staff across 10 selected companies. For the quantitative survey component, the required sample size was approximately 101 respondents, calculated using the finite-population formula $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ with $N = 135$ and $e = 0.05$. The companies and participants were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research objectives and experience in branding, marketing and social media. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using MS Excel and SPSS. Qualitative evidence was obtained through interviews, peer-reviewed literature and content analysis, and was used to provide contextual interpretation and triangulation alongside the quantitative findings.

The findings for the second research objective are presented under three areas: the period of brand presence on social media, the types of content used to promote brands, and the challenges faced in implementing effective social media marketing.

7.1 Period That the Brand Has Been on Social Media

Many brands consider their social media presence to be an essential component of their overall business strategy rather than an additional marketing activity. The study therefore examined how long brands had been active on different social media platforms.

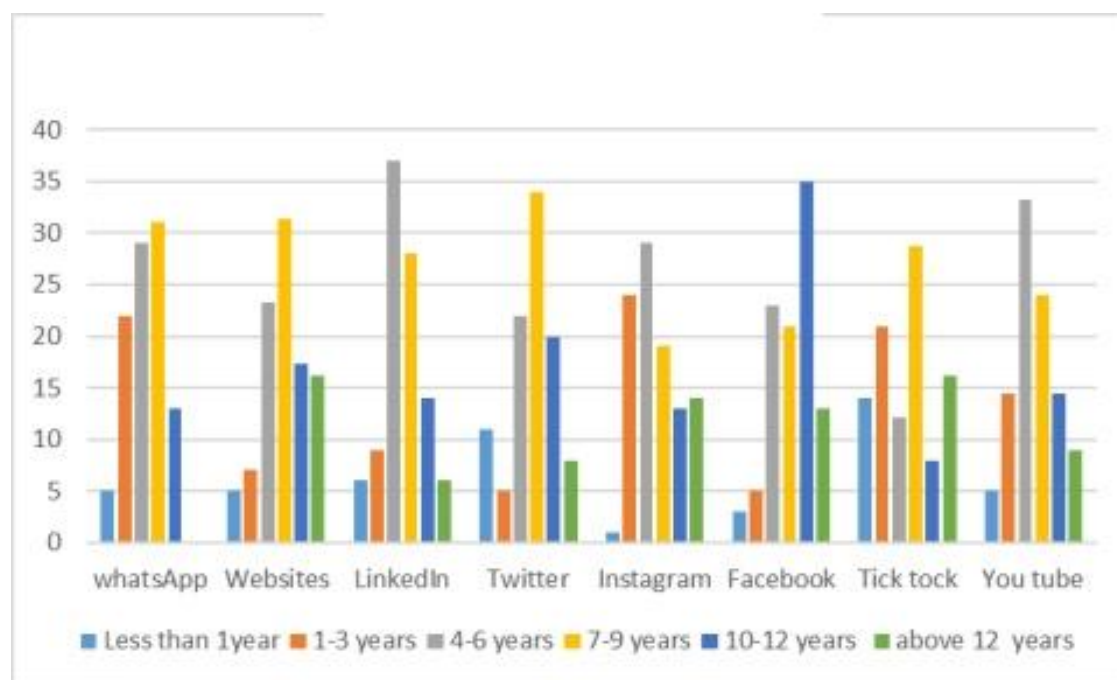


Figure 1. Period that the brand has been on social media

The results in Figure 1 show that 35% of respondents indicated that their brands had been on Facebook for 10-12 years. WhatsApp (31%), websites (31.3%), Twitter (34%) and TikTok (28.7%) were most commonly reported in the 7-9 year category. LinkedIn (37%), Instagram (29%) and YouTube (33.3%) were most commonly reported in the 4-6 year category. A descriptive analysis was carried out and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Period that the brand has been on social media

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
How long has your brand been on Facebook	4.03	1.218	-.114	.498
How long has your brand been on Instagram	3.60	1.398	-.955	.566
How long has your brand been on Twitter	3.38	1.486	-1.028	.586
How long has your brand been on LinkedIn	3.54	1.202	-.053	.574
How long has your brand been on TikTok	3.00	1.220	-.699	.511
How long has your brand had a website page	3.93	1.372	-.428	.481
How long has your brand been on YouTube	3.35	1.433	-.662	.570
How long has your brand been on WhatsApp	3.98	1.252	.026	.483

The findings in Table 1 show that the mean scores for Facebook (4.03), Instagram (3.60), LinkedIn (3.54), websites (3.93) and WhatsApp (3.98) were above 3.50, indicating longer periods of brand presence on these platforms. Twitter (3.38), TikTok (3.00) and YouTube (3.35) had mean scores between 2.5 and 3.49. The standard deviations indicate variability in the responses, while the kurtosis values describe distributional shape; neither statistic by itself establishes statistical significance. The kurtosis values should not be interpreted as measures of financial risk or return.

7.2 Types of Content Primarily Used to Promote Brands on Social Media

Content is central to social media brand promotion. The study examined the frequency with which respondents used different content formats, including images, videos, infographics, blog posts, user-generated content, interactive content, behind-the-scenes content and customer testimonials.

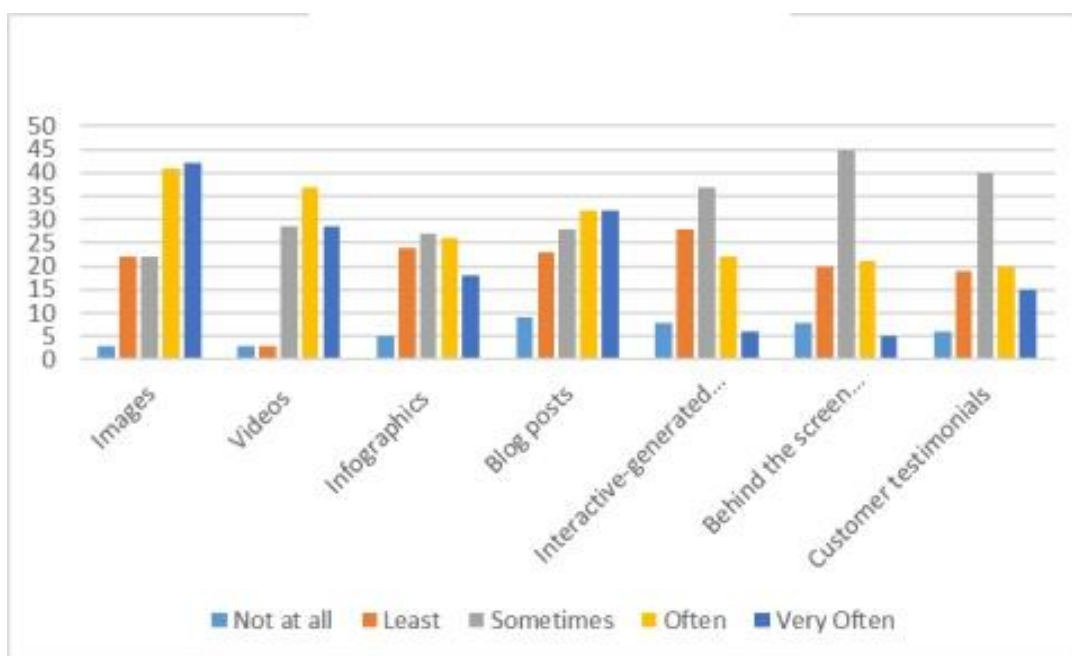


Figure 2. Types of content primarily used to promote brands on social media

Figure 2 shows that images (42%) and blog posts (41%) had high proportions of respondents reporting that they were used very often, while videos (37%) were commonly reported as being used often. Infographics (27%), interactive generated content (37%), behind-the-scenes content (45%) and customer testimonials (40%) were commonly reported as being used sometimes. A descriptive analysis was carried out and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of content primarily used to promote brands on social media

Content type	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
How often do you post images to promote your brand	4.23	.847	1.556	.476
How often do you post videos to promote your brand	3.85	.978	.458	.483
How often do you post infographics to promote your brand	3.26	1.171	-.956	.552
How often do you post blog posts to promote your brand	3.07	1.119	-.773	.548

How often do you post user-generated content to promote your brand	2.94	1.030	-.441	.541
How often do you post interactive generated content to promote your brand	3.09	1.050	-.537	.590
How often do you post behind-the-scenes content to promote your brand	2.87	1.063	-.348	.599
How often do you post customer testimonials to promote your brand	3.17	1.107	-.518	.548

The findings in Table 2 show that most mean scores were between 2.5 and 3.49, while images (mean = 4.23) and videos (mean = 3.85) were used more frequently. The standard deviations show variability in respondents' ratings, and the kurtosis values describe the shape of the response distributions. These descriptive statistics should not be interpreted as tests of statistical significance or financial risk.

Respondents were also asked to identify the challenges they faced in implementing effective social media marketing strategies. These findings are presented in Section 7.3.

7.3 Challenges Faced in Implementing Effective Social Media Marketing

Effective social media marketing requires businesses to develop relevant content, reach the intended audience, allocate adequate resources and use appropriate analytical tools. The challenges reported by respondents are presented in Figure 3.

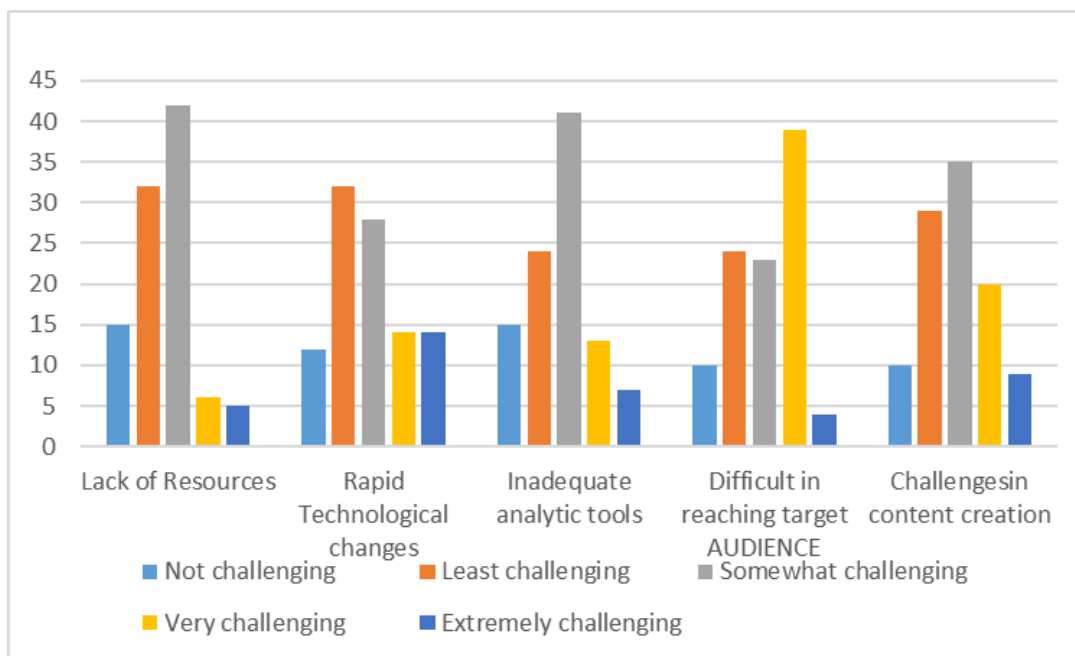


Figure 3. Challenges in social media marketing strategies

The results in Figure 3 show that difficulty in reaching target audiences was rated as very challenging by 39% of respondents. Lack of resources (42%), inadequate analytics tools (40%) and challenges in content creation (35%) were most commonly rated as somewhat challenging. Rapid technological changes were most commonly rated as least challenging (42%).

A further descriptive analysis was conducted and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on challenges in social media marketing strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Lack of resources	2.54	1.003	.283	.500
Rapid technological changes	2.87	1.223	-.798	.517
Inadequate analytics tools	2.70	1.079	-.354	.523
Difficulty in reaching target audience	3.04	1.101	-.893	.503
Challenges in content creation	2.90	1.096	-.548	.526

The findings in Table 3 show that the mean scores were generally between 2.5 and 3.49, indicating neutral to moderate assessments of the challenges. The standard deviations show variability in respondents' ratings, while the kurtosis values describe the shape of the response distributions. These descriptive statistics do not, by themselves, establish statistical significance and should not be interpreted as measures of financial risk or return.

8.0 Discussion

This section discusses the three factors examined under Objective Two and interprets the findings in relation to the broader literature on social media brand building.

8.1 Period That the Brand Has Been on Social Media

The findings indicate that Facebook had the longest reported brand presence, while Instagram, LinkedIn, websites and WhatsApp also recorded comparatively high mean scores for duration. Twitter, TikTok and YouTube recorded lower mean scores. This suggests that the former platforms were more established within respondents' brand-building practices. Longer platform presence may provide firms with greater familiarity and accumulated experience, but duration alone should not be treated as evidence of effectiveness. Li et al. (2021) similarly emphasize that social media performance depends on deliberate platform selection and strategic alignment rather than presence alone.

The standard deviations in Table 1 show that respondents differed in the length of time their brands had been active on the various platforms. These values describe dispersion around the mean and do not establish statistical significance. The kurtosis values provide additional descriptive information about the shape of the response distributions and should not be interpreted as measures of financial risk or return.

8.2 Types of Content Primarily Used to Promote Brands on Social Media

The findings show that visual and regularly updated content played an important role in respondents' social media practices. At the response-category level, images and blog posts had high proportions of respondents reporting very frequent use, while the descriptive mean scores identified images and videos as the most frequently used content formats overall. This pattern is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of content strategy and user engagement in social media marketing (Annamalai et al., 2021; Kamboj, 2020).

Images had the highest mean score (4.23), followed by videos (3.85). The remaining content types had mean scores between 2.5 and 3.49, indicating more moderate use. Zollo et al. (2020) similarly highlight the role of consumer experience in linking social media marketing activities to brand equity. The results therefore suggest that brands should select content formats according to audience preferences and the objectives of the campaign rather than relying on a single format.

The standard deviations in Table 2 show variability in respondents' content-use patterns. They should be interpreted as measures of dispersion rather than as evidence of statistical significance. The kurtosis values describe distributional shape and do not measure financial risk or return.

8.3 Challenges in Social Media Marketing Strategies

Difficulty reaching target audiences emerged as the most urgent reported challenge, with 39% of respondents rating it as very challenging. Lack of resources, inadequate analytics tools and content-creation challenges were also important concerns. These findings reinforce the need for firms to combine audience targeting with adequate organizational resources, relevant content and appropriate measurement tools. Adeola et al. (2020) and Cartwright et al. (2021) similarly emphasize the importance of strategic planning and organizational capability in effective social media marketing.

Although rapid technological change was most commonly rated as least challenging, the overall mean scores in Table 3 remained within the 2.5-3.49 range. This indicates that respondents' assessments of the challenges were generally neutral to moderate, while the response-category results show that particular issues, especially audience targeting, were more pressing for some businesses.

The standard deviations indicate variation in respondents' experiences of these challenges and should not be treated as tests of statistical significance. The kurtosis values provide descriptive information about distributional shape and do not measure financial risk or return. The practical implication is that social media strategies need to be adapted to the specific resources, audience and capabilities of each business.

9.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that the success of social media tactics in brand building is influenced by the duration and continuity of platform presence, the types of content used, and the implementation challenges faced by businesses.

9.1 Period That the Brand Has Been on Social Media

Brands reported comparatively longer use of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, websites and WhatsApp. Twitter, TikTok and YouTube recorded lower mean scores for duration. Consistent with the thesis conclusions under Objective Two, these differences indicate that some platforms are more established within respondents' brand-building activities, while others may be relatively newer or less embedded in current practice.

9.2 Types of Content Primarily Used to Promote Brands on Social Media

Images and videos recorded the highest mean scores and were the most frequently used content formats overall. The findings also show that respondents used a wider mix of content, including blog posts, infographics, interactive content, behind-the-scenes content and customer testimonials. The thesis recommends emphasizing frequently used content such as images and blog posts while also diversifying content according to audience and platform requirements.

The descriptive results show variation in the frequency with which different content types were used. These differences should be interpreted as patterns of usage rather than as evidence of statistical significance.

9.3 Challenges in Social Media Marketing Strategies

Difficulty in reaching target audiences was the most urgent reported challenge. Lack of resources, inadequate analytics tools and difficulties in content creation were also important concerns. The thesis recommends investing in data-driven targeting and analytics tools, prioritizing resources, developing a clear content strategy, strengthening content-creation capacity and continuing to adapt to technological change.

Overall, the findings suggest that businesses should not rely on social media presence alone. Effective brand building requires appropriate platform selection, relevant and engaging content, and the organizational capacity to respond to the practical challenges of social media marketing. Businesses should leverage established platforms while continuing to evaluate newer platforms and adapt their strategies to changing audience and technological conditions.

References

- Adeola, O., Hinson, R. E., and Evans, O. (2020). "Social media in marketing communications: A synthesis of successful strategies for the digital generation." *Digital Transformation in Business and Society: Theory and Cases*, 61-81.
- Annamalai, B., Yoshida, M., Varshney, S., Pathak, A. A., and Venugopal, P. (2021). "Social media content strategy for sport clubs to drive fan engagement." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62, 102648.
- Borges-Tiago, T., Tiago, F., Silva, O., Guaita Martinez, J. M., and Botella-Carrubi, D. (2020). "Online users' attitudes toward fake news: Implications for brand management." *Psychology & Marketing*, 37(9), 1171-1184.
- Cartwright, S., Liu, H., and Raddats, C. (2021). "Strategic use of social media within business-to-business (B2B) marketing: A systematic literature review." *Industrial Marketing Management*, 97, 35-58.
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., et al. (2021). "Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions." *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168.
- Kamboj, S. (2020). "Applying uses and gratifications theory to understand customer participation in social media brand communities: Perspective of media technology." *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 32(1), 205-231.
- Li, F., Larimo, J., and Leonidou, L. C. (2021). "Social media marketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49, 51-70.
- Zollo, L., Filieri, R., Rialti, R., and Yoon, S. (2020). "Unpacking the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity: The mediating role of consumers' benefits and experience." *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 256-267.