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The Effect of Digital Marketing on Purchase Intention Considering the Mediating Role of Consumer Engagement and Brand Image and the Moderating Role of Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

The internet and digital technologies have grown exponentially and have become part of the daily lives of billions of people around the world. Film and series streaming platforms are delivered directly through the internet and provide customers with access to films and television series. In Iran, there has been a substantial increase in the use of these platforms. The significant growth in the application of digital marketing in online businesses and its ability to interact with customers have increased its importance. The emergence of the internet and digital technologies has provided a modern context for business organizations to reach millions of customers at a low cost through effective and customized promotional content. The present study was conducted with the aim of examining the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention, considering the mediating role of consumer engagement and brand image and the moderating role of brand equity. In this study, the required data for testing the hypotheses were collected using the convenience sampling method. Cochran's formula was used to determine the research sample size. This investigation was conducted on 384 individuals from the target population who were active in various WhatsApp and Telegram groups. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 24 and SmartPLS version 3.

Keywords: digital marketing, brand equity, brand image, consumer engagement, purchase intention, film and series streaming platforms.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed the logic of marketing from one-way promotional communication into interactive, data-driven, and relationship-oriented engagement with consumers. In contemporary digital markets, consumers no longer function merely as passive recipients of advertising messages; rather, they actively search for information, evaluate brand-related content, share experiences, interact with firms and other users, and participate in shaping brand meanings through digital platforms. This transformation is especially important in online service markets such as film and series streaming platforms, where purchase intention is shaped not only by functional factors such as access, price, and content variety, but also by the quality of digital communication, perceived brand image, emotional attachment, peer influence, and the accumulated value of the brand in the consumer's mind. In this context, digital marketing has become a central strategic mechanism through

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which brands attract attention, stimulate engagement, construct favorable associations, and influence behavioral intentions. Recent research on digital brands emphasizes that consumer-based brand equity in digital environments is becoming increasingly complex because brand value is created through platform experience, digital interaction, perceived credibility, and continuous consumer participation rather than through traditional advertising alone (1). Therefore, examining how digital marketing affects purchase intention requires attention to mediating and moderating mechanisms that explain how digital communication is converted into consumer decision-making.

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels, online platforms, social media tools, mobile networks, content strategies, and interactive technologies to communicate value to consumers and influence their attitudes and behaviors. Unlike conventional marketing, digital marketing allows firms to personalize communication, measure consumer responses, create immediate interaction, and maintain continuous contact with target audiences. Social media marketing activities, in particular, have been shown to strengthen brand-related outcomes by increasing consumer exposure, participation, and affective connection with brands (2). In markets characterized by high competition and low switching costs, such as streaming services, digital marketing can function as a differentiating capability because consumers are continuously exposed to alternative platforms and competing content offers. Digital promotions, online advertising, influencer communication, user-generated content, electronic word of mouth, and content marketing can all influence how consumers interpret a brand and whether they intend to purchase or subscribe to its services. Studies on purchase intention in digital and online contexts show that consumer decision-making is increasingly affected by digital stimuli, perceived value, online brand communication, and platform-based consumer experiences (3). Accordingly, purchase intention in digital markets should be understood as a behavioral tendency emerging from a combination of cognitive evaluation, emotional engagement, and brand-related trust.

One of the most important pathways through which digital marketing influences purchase intention is consumer engagement. Consumer engagement refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement of consumers with a brand, platform, product, or service. In digital environments, engagement may appear in the form of liking, commenting, sharing, watching promotional content, participating in online discussions, responding to campaigns, following brand pages, or interacting with other users. Research on digital customer engagement shows that engagement is a multidimensional construct that links digital experiences to brand outcomes, loyalty, and behavioral intention (4). The role of engagement is particularly critical because digital marketing does not automatically produce purchase intention; rather, consumers must first become attentive, involved, and psychologically connected to the brand. When digital marketing content is relevant, entertaining, credible, and interactive, it can increase consumer engagement and make consumers more likely to evaluate the brand positively and consider purchasing its services. Empirical evidence also indicates that consumer engagement mediates the relationship between social network marketing and purchase intention, suggesting that social media marketing affects purchasing behavior partly by activating consumer involvement with the brand (5).

The importance of consumer engagement is also reinforced by studies on mobile social networks and social media attachment. Advertising effectiveness through mobile social networks has been linked to consumer engagement and behavioral intentions, indicating that digital advertising becomes more influential when it creates interaction and psychological involvement rather than merely providing information (6). Similarly, consumer attachment to social media and usage frequency can shape digital behavior through mediated and moderated psychological mechanisms, highlighting that repeated exposure and emotional connection to social media environments affect how consumers respond to brand communication (7). For film and series streaming platforms, this logic is highly relevant because consumers often encounter platform-related marketing through social networks, peer recommendations, short videos, trailers, reviews, online communities, and mobile advertisements. The more consumers engage with such digital content, the more likely they are to develop familiarity, preference, and willingness to purchase or subscribe. Therefore, consumer engagement can be conceptualized as a key mediating mechanism that explains why digital marketing may lead to stronger purchase intention.

Brand image is another central mediator in the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. Brand image refers to the set of perceptions, associations, beliefs, and impressions that consumers hold about a brand. In digital environments, brand image is constructed through multiple sources, including firm-generated content, user-generated content, influencer messages, online reviews, visual identity, service experience, and electronic word of mouth. Research has shown that user-generated content can affect online purchase intention through the mediating role of brand image, demonstrating that online information influences consumer behavior by shaping how the brand is perceived (8). In the streaming platform market, brand image may include perceptions of entertainment quality, innovation, reliability, cultural relevance, exclusivity of content, user experience, and social prestige. Digital marketing can enhance brand image by communicating the platform's value proposition, emphasizing original content, creating emotional narratives, and reinforcing distinctive associations in the consumer's mind. When consumers perceive a streaming brand as modern, trustworthy, high-quality, and aligned with their preferences, they are more likely to form purchase intention.

The significance of brand image is also evident in research on green branding, masstige branding, and luxury brand communication. For example, studies on social sustainability claims in fast fashion show that brand communication can shape consumer behavior by influencing brand perception (9). Research on masstige further indicates that the image of the typical user can affect brand preference through symbolic and perceptual mechanisms (10). Although streaming platforms differ from fashion and luxury markets, they similarly depend on symbolic positioning and perceived identity. Consumers may choose a platform not only because of content availability, but also because of what the platform represents in terms of lifestyle, taste, cultural affiliation, technological sophistication, and social conversation. In this regard, digital marketing plays a dual role: it provides information about services and simultaneously constructs symbolic brand meanings. Consequently, brand image can mediate the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention by translating digital communication into favorable consumer perceptions.

Brand equity, as a broader brand-level construct, is also essential in understanding the effectiveness of digital marketing. Brand equity generally refers to the value added to a product or service by the brand name, including awareness, associations, perceived quality, loyalty, and overall consumer preference. In digital markets, brand equity may strengthen or weaken the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention because consumers with stronger perceptions of brand equity may respond more favorably to digital communication. Research on social media marketing and brand equity has demonstrated that digital marketing activities can enhance brand equity and purchase intention, indicating that brand value is deeply connected to digital consumer interaction (11). Similarly, studies on eWOM show that electronic word of mouth affects purchase intention, with brand equity playing a mediating role in the relationship (12). These findings suggest that brand equity is not only an outcome of digital marketing but also a strategic condition that can shape the strength of consumer responses to digital campaigns.

The moderating role of brand equity is especially important in competitive online markets. When brand equity is high, consumers may interpret digital marketing messages more positively because they already associate the brand with quality, credibility, and value. Conversely, when brand equity is weak, even intensive digital marketing may have limited influence because consumers may lack trust, familiarity, or emotional attachment. Research on luxury brands indicates that status consumption and brand equity play important roles in comparing traditional and social media marketing outcomes, showing that strong brand value can intensify consumer responses to marketing communication (13). Furthermore, studies on augmented reality, experiential marketing, and brand equity suggest that technology-based experiences can contribute to brand value when they create memorable and interactive consumer experiences (14). For streaming platforms, brand equity may moderate the influence of digital marketing because platforms with stronger reputations, recognizable identities, and perceived content quality are more likely to convert digital exposure into purchase intention.

Digital marketing is also closely related to brand awareness and loyalty, which are important components of brand equity. Advertising exposure and word of mouth have been found to influence consumer loyalty in online marketplaces through the mediating influence of brand awareness (15). Social media marketing activities can also support customer satisfaction and co-creation, suggesting that online interactions allow consumers to participate in the development and reinforcement of brand value (16). Likewise, emotional sensitivity in social media has been linked to brand equity enhancement, indicating that consumers' emotional reactions to digital content can strengthen brand-related value (17). These studies collectively suggest that digital marketing should not be evaluated merely as a promotional tool; rather, it should be understood as part of a broader brand-building system in which awareness, engagement, image, loyalty, and equity interact to shape consumer intentions.

The film and series streaming sector provides a particularly relevant context for examining these relationships. Streaming platforms are digital-native services that rely heavily on online communication, digital content presentation, subscription models, algorithmic recommendation, and continuous user engagement. Viewer behavior in film markets is influenced by marketing mix, brand equity, electronic word of mouth, and perceived value, indicating that media consumption decisions are affected by both rational and relational factors (18). In such markets, consumers often make purchase or subscription decisions based on perceived entertainment value, platform reputation, peer recommendations, social media visibility, and the emotional appeal of promoted content. The rise of short-form video platforms and hedonic product promotion has further intensified the role of digital media in stimulating consumer interest and desire, particularly in markets where entertainment products are promoted through visually engaging and emotionally appealing formats (19). Therefore, for streaming platforms, digital marketing is directly connected to the consumer journey from awareness and interest to engagement and purchase intention.

The literature also shows that online marketing effectiveness depends on the interaction of multiple psychological and brand-related mechanisms. Research on social media marketing for luxury brands highlights the role of parasocial interactions and empowerment in enhancing loyalty and willingness to pay a premium (20). Similarly, social media marketing activities can contribute to sustainable customer retention when examined through hybrid structural equation modeling and neural network approaches (21). In higher education markets, social media marketing activities have been found to create behavioral engagement among prospective students through brand equity, confirming that digital communication can influence behavior through brand-related mechanisms across service sectors (22). These findings are relevant to streaming platforms because they also operate in a service environment where consumer retention, subscription intention, brand loyalty, and perceived value are central to competitiveness. Digital marketing must therefore be analyzed not as a direct stimulus alone, but as part of a structural process involving engagement, image, and equity.

Content marketing is another relevant dimension of digital marketing in streaming platforms. Since these platforms are fundamentally content-based services, promotional content, trailers, previews, behind-the-scenes materials, recommendations, influencer reviews, and social media storytelling can directly shape consumer interest. Research on content marketing shows that content can drive sales and brand engagement by connecting commercial messages with consumer value and relevance (23). This is consistent with the logic of streaming services, where consumers often evaluate platforms based on the attractiveness, originality, and relevance of content before forming purchase intention. In addition, studies on Instagram and luxury fashion brands show that social media platforms can influence customer relationships, customer equity, and purchase intention, reinforcing the argument that platform-based digital communication affects consumer-brand relationships (24). Thus, digital marketing in streaming services must be designed to generate not only visibility, but also sustained engagement and favorable brand perceptions.

The growing complexity of digital consumer behavior has also encouraged researchers to examine sequential and integrated models. For high-tech products, social media marketing has been shown to influence repurchase intention through sequential mediation involving brand equity, loyalty, image, and awareness (25). This finding is important because streaming platforms share characteristics with high-tech services: they are accessed digitally, depend on continuous usage, and require consumers to trust both the technological interface and the brand promise. Similarly, studies on brand equity implementation in innovation marketing programs emphasize that brand equity frameworks remain useful for understanding how innovation-related communication affects consumer response (26). In digital service markets, therefore, purchase intention emerges from a network of influences in which marketing activities build engagement, engagement strengthens consumer-brand bonds, brand image shapes evaluations, and brand equity conditions the intensity of consumer response.

Despite the growing body of research on digital marketing, brand equity, engagement, brand image, and purchase intention, there remains a need for integrated empirical models that examine these constructs simultaneously in the context of streaming platforms. Much of the existing literature has focused on apparel, luxury brands, higher education, restaurants, marketplaces, fast fashion, high-tech products, or general social media environments, while film and series streaming platforms represent a distinctive digital service category characterized by hedonic consumption, subscription behavior, content-based differentiation, and continuous online interaction. Moreover, prior studies have frequently examined either mediation or moderation separately, whereas a more comprehensive model is needed to explain how digital marketing influences purchase intention through consumer engagement and brand image while also considering the moderating role of brand equity. Such an approach can provide a more precise understanding of consumer behavior in digital entertainment markets and can help platform managers design more effective marketing strategies that strengthen engagement, improve brand image, and leverage brand equity.

Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to examine the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention among customers of Iranian film and series streaming platforms, considering the mediating roles of consumer engagement and brand image and the moderating role of brand equity.

Methods and Materials

This study is quantitative and survey-based. Quantitative research is also referred to as positivist research. A positivist researcher produces knowledge by collecting numerical data, observing samples, and then subjecting these data to numerical analysis. In contrast, post-positivist research is rooted in the assumption that manifestations of the social environment are constructed by individuals as interpretations. These interpretations are transient and context-dependent. Post-positivist researchers primarily generate knowledge by collecting verbal data through the careful and in-depth study of cases and subjecting these data to analytical induction.

This study is descriptive because the researcher seeks to examine the nature of the subject and determine how the phenomenon, variable, object, or issue exists. In other words, this research investigates the current situation, provides a systematic and organized description of its present status, studies its characteristics and attributes, and, where necessary, examines the relationships among variables.

The statistical population of the present study consists of customers of Iranian film and series streaming platforms.

In this study, convenience sampling was used to select the sample from various WhatsApp and Telegram groups.

In designing a sample survey, deciding on the sample size is particularly important in terms of ensuring the accuracy of sampling results and saving time and costs. It is evident that an excessively large sample size leads to high costs and considerable time expenditure, whereas an excessively small sample size results in insufficient accuracy of the estimators.

In this study, because the complete list of the population members was not available, Cochran's formula for an unlimited population size was used at a 5% error level. Given the unlimited size of the population, the sample size was determined to be 384 individuals based on Cochran's formula.

The independent variable, digital marketing, and the moderating variable, brand equity, were adopted from the study by Habib et al. (2022), while the mediating variables, consumer engagement and brand image, were adopted from the study by Elwan and Alshurideh (2022).

Findings and Results

To examine the correlations among the research indicators, Pearson's correlation test was used because the data distribution was normal. This test was applied to investigate the relationships among the main variables.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix Among the Research Model Variables

Variables	Digital Marketing	Consumer Engagement	Brand Image	Brand Equity	Purchase Intention
Digital Marketing	1	.721**	.762**	.724**	.733**
Consumer Engagement	.721**	1	.675**	.657**	.754**
Brand Image	.762**	.675**	1	.680**	.701**
Brand Equity	.724**	.657**	.680**	1	.711**
Purchase Intention	.733**	.754**	.701**	.711**	1

** indicates significance at the 10% level.

The results of Pearson's correlation analysis among the main research variables are presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, all coefficients are between zero and one, and the significance levels of the correlation coefficients are less than 5%. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is confirmed, indicating that there are significant correlations among all research variables. Consequently, it is possible to test the hypotheses using structural equation modeling.

Bartlett's test examines the hypothesis that "the correlation matrix of the observed variables is an identity matrix." This test confirms whether the variables are unrelated, which is determined through the significance of the chi-square statistic. If the significance level in Bartlett's test is less than 5%, the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, meaning that relationships exist among the variables and the statistical null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

KMO Index	Bartlett's Test	Value
0.977	Chi-square Statistic	6488.358
	Degrees of Freedom	378
	Significance Level	0.000

According to Table 2, the significance level of the test is 0.000, indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected and that significant relationships exist among the variables.

Based on the fitted model, the standardized regression coefficients for the effect of digital marketing on consumer engagement, brand image, and purchase intention are 0.722, 0.764, and 0.272, respectively. The standardized regression coefficients for the effects of consumer engagement and brand image on purchase intention are 0.416 and 0.213, respectively. The adjusted coefficient of determination (R^2) for the purchase intention variable is 0.66. This means that the variables digital marketing, consumer engagement, and brand image explain 66% of the variance in purchase intention.

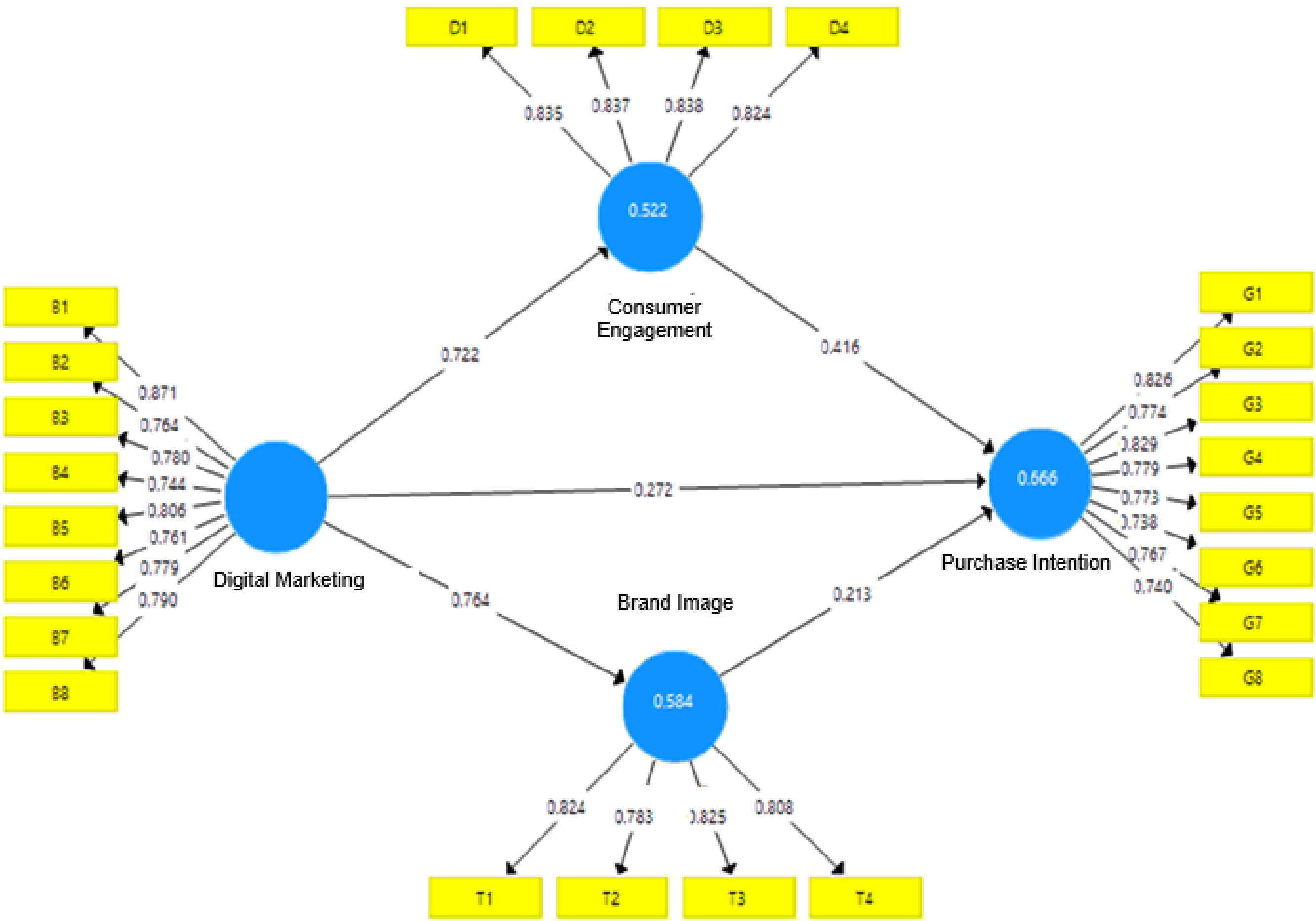

Figure 1. Standardized Regression Coefficients of the Research Model

Since SmartPLS software uses the t-statistic to assess the significance of relationships, and the critical value for a 5% error level is 1.96, the significance of relationships was examined by comparing the t-statistic values with 1.96. If the t-statistic exceeds this value, the relationship is considered significant. According to Figure 2, all t-statistic values are greater than 1.96; therefore, all relationships in the model are significant.

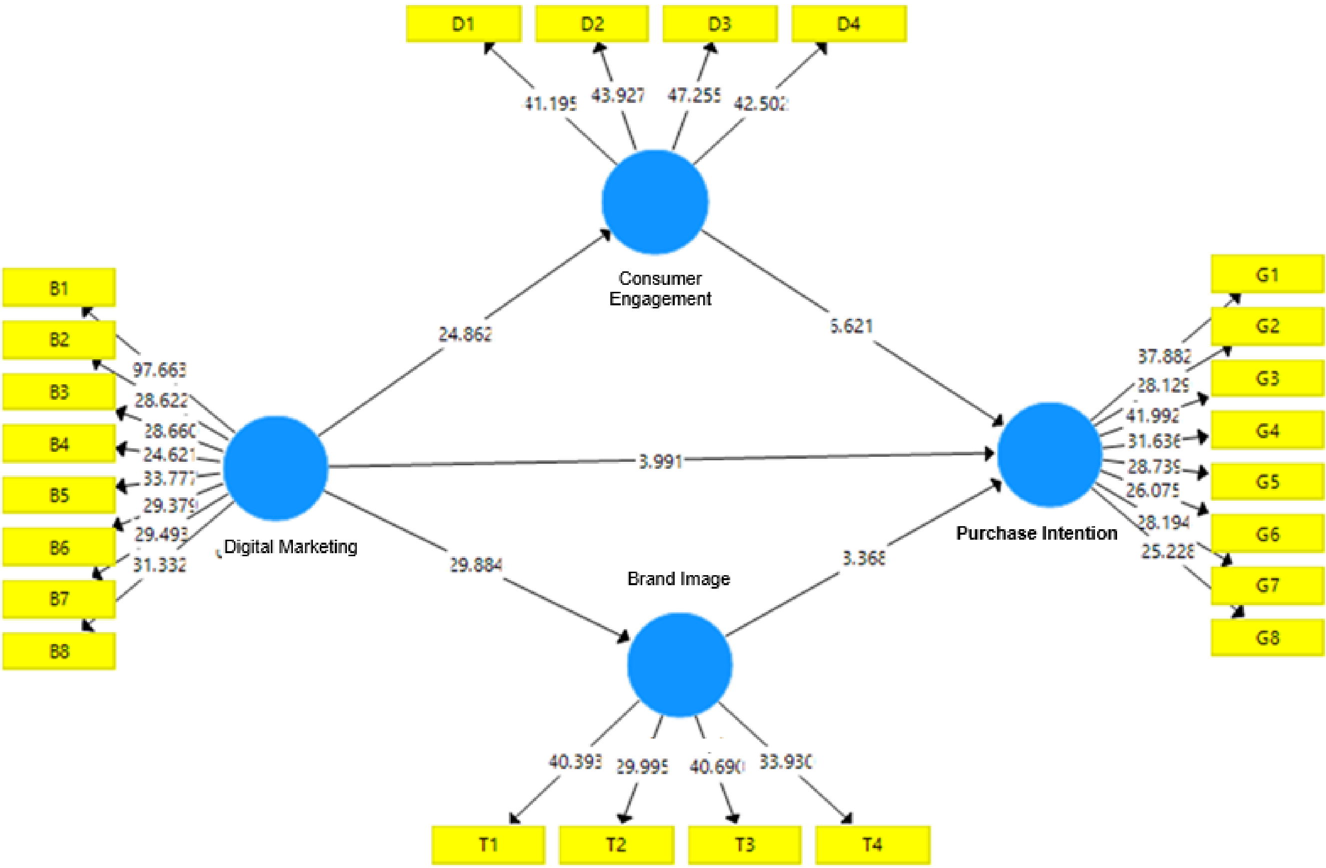

Figure 2. T-Values of the Research Model

Table 3. Regression Coefficients of the Model Variables

Path	Coefficient	t-Statistic
Digital Marketing → Purchase Intention	0.272	3.991
Consumer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0.416	6.621
Brand Image → Purchase Intention	0.213	3.368
Digital Marketing → Consumer Engagement	0.722	24.862
Digital Marketing → Brand Image	0.764	29.884

Table 4. Results of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (Alpha > 0.7)	Composite Reliability (CR > 0.7)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.5)
Digital Marketing	0.912	0.929	0.620
Consumer Engagement	0.854	0.901	0.695
Brand Image	0.825	0.884	0.656
Purchase Intention	0.907	0.925	0.607

Because the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (internal consistency), and AVE are all within the acceptable ranges, the reliability and convergent validity of the research model can be confirmed.

Table 5. Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Research Model

Variables	Acceptable Range	Observed Value	Result
SRMR	Less than 0.08	0.045	Good fit
d-ULS	Less than 0.95	0.607	Good fit
d-G	Less than 0.95	0.214	Good fit
Chi-square	Greater than 1.96	447.114	Good fit
NFI	Greater than 0.25	0.921	Good fit

Table 5 presents the fit indices of the research model. Based on the obtained values, the collected data demonstrate adequate sufficiency and fit for measuring the latent variables. Therefore, the results obtained from estimating the research model are reliable and trustworthy.

The Stone–Geisser statistic determines the predictive power of the model for endogenous constructs. Models with acceptable structural fit should be capable of predicting the endogenous variables of the model. This means that if the relationships among constructs are correctly specified, the constructs will exert sufficient influence on one another, leading to proper confirmation of the hypotheses. Henseler et al. (2009) identified the values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as indicators of weak, moderate, and strong predictive power, respectively. The values obtained were 0.488 for digital marketing, 0.414 for brand image, 0.467 for consumer engagement, and 0.476 for purchase intention. The strength of these values indicates satisfactory predictive relevance for these constructs.

Table 6. Stone–Geisser Statistics for the Research Variables

Variables	Stone–Geisser Criterion	Status
Digital Marketing	0.488	Strong
Brand Image	0.414	Strong
Consumer Engagement	0.467	Strong
Purchase Intention	0.476	Strong

Hypothesis 1: Social media digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention.

According to the model figures, the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention is 0.272. The corresponding t-statistic is 3.991, which is greater than 1.96, indicating that the coefficient is significant at the 5% error level. Overall, the model estimation results indicate that the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1), namely the first research hypothesis, is confirmed. In other words, social media digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 2: Digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention through the mediating role of consumer engagement.

According to the model figures, the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of digital marketing on consumer engagement is 0.722, and the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of consumer engagement on purchase intention is 0.416. The t-statistics for these coefficients are greater than 1.96, indicating significance at the 5% error level. Overall, the model estimation results indicate that the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1), namely the second sub-hypothesis of the study, is confirmed. Therefore, digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention through the mediating role of consumer engagement. A second method used to examine the mediating effect was the Sobel test. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Sobel Test for the Second Hypothesis

Standardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance Level	Sobel Statistic
0.722	0.031	0.000	6.854
0.416	0.058		

As shown by the Sobel test results, the significance level is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is significant.

Hypothesis 3: Digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention through the mediating role of brand image.

According to the model figures, the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of digital marketing on brand image is 0.764, and the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of brand image on purchase intention is 0.213. The t-statistics for these coefficients are greater than 1.96, indicating significance at the 5% error level. Overall, the model estimation results indicate that the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1), namely the third sub-hypothesis of the study, is confirmed. Therefore, digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention through the mediating role of brand image. A second method used to examine the mediating effect was the Sobel test. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Sobel Test for the Third Hypothesis

Standardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance Level	Sobel Statistic
0.764	0.025	0.000	3.308
0.213	0.064		

As indicated by the Sobel test results, the significance level is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is significant.

Hypothesis 4: Digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention considering the moderating role of brand equity.

To examine the moderating hypothesis, the split-half method was used. The data were divided into two groups based on the brand equity variable. One group included data with a median lower than 3.5, and the other included data with a median greater than 3.5. Subsequently, the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention was examined using multi-group analysis.

The analysis results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Moderating Hypothesis Test

Group	Effect	t-Statistic	Coefficient	Significance Level
Brand Equity < 3.5	Digital marketing on purchase intention with the moderating role of brand equity	1.678	0.235	0.094
Brand Equity > 3.5	Digital marketing on purchase intention with the moderating role of brand equity	2.077	0.182	0.038

As shown in Table 9, in the first group, the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention is 0.235. The corresponding t-statistic is 1.678, which is lower than 1.96, indicating that the coefficient is not significant at the 5% error level. In the second group, the standardized regression coefficient for the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention is 0.182. The corresponding t-statistic is 2.077, which is greater than 1.96, indicating significance at the 5% error level. Therefore, considering the changes in relationship significance across the two groups, it can be concluded that digital marketing has a significant effect on purchase intention through the moderating role of brand equity.

Table 10. Summary of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statistics	Result
Marketing → Purchase Intention	t = 3.991	Confirmed
Marketing → Purchase Intention through Consumer Engagement Mediation	Sobel = 6.854	Confirmed
Marketing → Purchase Intention through Brand Image Mediation	Sobel = 3.308	Confirmed
Marketing → Purchase Intention through Brand Equity Moderation	t1 = 1.678; t2 = 2.077	Confirmed

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that digital marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase intention among customers of Iranian film and series streaming platforms. The results indicated that digital marketing directly influences purchase intention and also exerts indirect effects through the mediating roles of consumer engagement and brand image. In addition, brand equity was found to moderate the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. These findings collectively confirm that digital marketing in contemporary digital entertainment markets is not merely a communication mechanism, but rather a strategic process that shapes consumer cognition, emotional connection, brand perception, and behavioral intention simultaneously. The significant direct effect of digital marketing on purchase intention suggests that consumers who are exposed to effective digital marketing activities—including online advertising, social media communication, digital content promotion, and interactive platform campaigns—are more likely to develop positive behavioral intentions toward subscribing to or purchasing streaming services. This finding is consistent with the argument that digital communication enhances consumer accessibility, awareness, and persuasion in online markets. Previous studies similarly found that social media marketing activities significantly influence consumer purchase behavior and repurchase intention in digital and high-technology markets (11, 25). The findings also align with research demonstrating that digital marketing activities increase customer attraction and strengthen brand-related outcomes in online service environments (2). In the context of streaming platforms, digital marketing likely influences purchase intention because consumers continuously interact with trailers, promotional clips, influencer recommendations, and social media conversations related to entertainment content. These interactions reduce uncertainty and increase consumers' confidence in the platform and its services.

Another important finding of the study was the significant mediating role of consumer engagement in the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. The results showed that digital marketing significantly increases consumer engagement, which subsequently enhances purchase intention. This finding highlights the importance of interactive consumer-brand relationships in digital environments. Theoretically, digital marketing becomes effective when it moves consumers beyond passive exposure toward active participation and psychological involvement. Consumer engagement reflects cognitive attention, emotional attachment, and behavioral interaction with the brand, all of which strengthen consumers' connection with digital platforms. The findings are strongly aligned with previous studies showing that social network marketing positively affects consumer purchase intention through consumer engagement (5). Similarly, research on digital customer engagement emphasized that engagement functions as a central mechanism linking digital interaction with favorable consumer outcomes, including loyalty, satisfaction, and behavioral intention (4). The present findings also correspond with studies demonstrating that advertising effectiveness through mobile social networks significantly enhances consumer engagement and online behavioral intentions (6). This relationship may be particularly strong in streaming services because entertainment consumption is inherently experiential and emotionally driven. Consumers who interact with digital promotional content, discuss programs online, share reviews, or engage with platform communities may develop stronger emotional involvement with the platform, thereby increasing their willingness to purchase subscriptions or consume content.

The findings related to consumer engagement can also be interpreted through the characteristics of social media environments and contemporary digital consumer psychology. Social media platforms encourage repeated exposure, interactive participation, emotional stimulation, and peer influence, all of which intensify engagement. Research on consumers' psychological attachment to social media showed that social media usage frequency and emotional attachment significantly affect consumer behavior through mediated and moderated relationships (7). This perspective supports the current findings because streaming platforms are highly dependent on social media visibility and interaction. Consumers often encounter platform-related content within social media ecosystems rather than through traditional advertising channels. Therefore, engagement created through digital interaction may become more influential than direct advertising exposure alone. Moreover, studies on customer co-creation and social media marketing activities revealed that interactive digital communication enhances consumer participation and satisfaction (16). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that consumer engagement not only enhances relational outcomes but also directly contributes to purchase intention within streaming platform markets.

The study also confirmed the significant mediating role of brand image in the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. The results demonstrated that digital marketing significantly improves brand image, which subsequently increases consumers' intention to purchase streaming services. This finding indicates that digital marketing contributes to purchase behavior partly because it shapes consumers' perceptions and evaluations of the brand. Brand image represents consumers' overall impressions, associations, and symbolic interpretations regarding a brand, and digital marketing provides continuous opportunities to influence these perceptions through visual communication, storytelling, influencer promotion, online reviews, and content marketing. The findings are consistent with research indicating that user-generated content significantly influences online purchase intention through brand image (8). Likewise, studies on social sustainability claims and green branding demonstrated that marketing communication shapes consumer behavior by influencing brand perception and brand-related associations (9). In streaming platform markets, digital marketing may improve brand image by portraying the platform as innovative, entertaining, culturally relevant, technologically advanced, or socially desirable. Such positive associations increase consumers' confidence in the platform and make purchasing behavior more likely.

The mediating role of brand image may also be interpreted through symbolic consumption theory and identity-related consumer behavior. Streaming services increasingly function as lifestyle-oriented digital brands rather than simple entertainment providers. Consumers may associate particular platforms with prestige, creativity, cultural sophistication, or social belonging. Research on masstige branding found that consumer preference is strongly influenced by the image of the brand and the symbolic characteristics associated with its users (10). Similarly, studies on luxury brand marketing revealed that parasocial interaction and empowerment strengthen loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices through enhanced brand perception (20). Although streaming platforms are not traditional luxury products, they similarly rely on symbolic positioning and emotional attachment. Digital marketing can therefore strengthen purchase intention by constructing aspirational and emotionally appealing brand identities. Furthermore, research on emotional sensitivity in social media demonstrated that emotional responses generated through digital communication can significantly strengthen brand equity and related perceptions (17). This supports the current findings because streaming platform marketing often depends heavily on emotional storytelling and immersive promotional content.

Another major finding of the study was the moderating role of brand equity in the relationship between digital marketing and purchase intention. The results indicated that the influence of digital marketing on purchase intention becomes stronger when consumers perceive higher brand equity. This finding suggests that digital marketing is more effective when consumers already hold favorable perceptions regarding the value, credibility, awareness, and reputation of the brand. In other words, brand equity enhances consumers' responsiveness to digital marketing communication. This finding is highly consistent with previous research demonstrating that social media marketing activities significantly improve purchase intention through brand equity mechanisms (11). Similarly, studies on electronic word of mouth confirmed that brand equity mediates and strengthens the effect of online communication on consumer purchase intention (12). The findings are also aligned with research indicating that social media marketing contributes to customer retention and behavioral engagement partly because of enhanced brand equity (21, 22). In the context of streaming platforms, consumers may respond more positively to digital advertisements, social media campaigns, and promotional messages when they already perceive the platform as trustworthy, reputable, and high-quality. Conversely, when brand equity is weak, consumers may remain skeptical toward digital communication regardless of the intensity of promotional efforts.

The moderating role of brand equity can also be interpreted from a psychological trust and risk-reduction perspective. Purchasing digital services often involves uncertainty because consumers cannot physically evaluate the service before subscription. Strong brand equity reduces this uncertainty by signaling reliability and expected quality. Studies on luxury brands found that status consumption and brand equity significantly shape consumer responses to traditional and social media marketing activities (13). Likewise, research on augmented reality and experiential marketing demonstrated that technology-based experiences enhance brand equity and strengthen consumer-brand relationships (14). Streaming platforms operate in similarly technology-intensive environments where consumers evaluate not only content but also user experience, platform quality, accessibility, and digital trustworthiness. Therefore, consumers with stronger perceptions of brand equity may be more willing to convert digital exposure into actual purchasing intention. The present findings therefore suggest that brand equity acts as a strategic amplifier of digital marketing effectiveness.

The results of the study further support the broader literature emphasizing the growing importance of content-based and social-media-driven marketing strategies. Research on content marketing demonstrated that digital content can effectively stimulate sales and enhance brand engagement (23). Likewise, studies examining TikTok as a promotional platform found that hedonic digital products can be effectively promoted through visually engaging and emotionally stimulating digital content (19). Streaming platforms are highly dependent on such content-oriented strategies because their products are fundamentally experiential and entertainment-based. Consumers frequently evaluate streaming services based on trailers, previews, short promotional clips, and online recommendations before forming purchase intentions. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital marketing in this industry is closely connected to the platform's ability to create emotionally engaging and visually appealing digital experiences.

The findings also support the idea that digital marketing outcomes emerge through integrated psychological and relational processes rather than isolated promotional effects. Studies on online marketplaces found that advertising exposure and word of mouth significantly influence loyalty through brand awareness (15). Research on customer relationship development through Instagram similarly emphasized the importance of social media interaction in strengthening customer equity and purchase intention (24). The present study contributes to this literature by integrating digital marketing, consumer engagement, brand image, brand equity, and purchase intention within a single conceptual framework. Unlike many previous studies that focused on isolated variables or product categories, the current research demonstrates how these constructs operate together in the digital entertainment context. The findings therefore provide a more comprehensive understanding of how streaming platform consumers respond to digital marketing activities.

Another important contribution of the study is its contextual relevance to Iranian streaming platforms. Although previous research has extensively examined digital marketing in luxury brands, education, retailing, restaurants, and online marketplaces, fewer studies have focused specifically on film and series streaming platforms in emerging digital markets. The Iranian digital entertainment market has experienced rapid expansion in recent years, accompanied by increasing social media penetration and changing patterns of online consumption. In such an environment, digital marketing becomes essential for attracting and retaining subscribers. The findings suggest that streaming platforms should not rely solely on technical service quality or content availability; instead, they should invest strategically in digital interaction, consumer engagement initiatives, brand image development, and long-term brand equity enhancement. Research on viewer behavior in film markets similarly demonstrated that marketing mix, eWOM, brand equity, and perceived value significantly influence consumer decisions in entertainment industries (18). The present findings reinforce this perspective and extend it to streaming services within the Iranian context.

Overall, the study demonstrates that digital marketing significantly influences purchase intention directly and indirectly through consumer engagement and brand image, while brand equity strengthens the effectiveness of these relationships. The findings highlight the multidimensional nature of consumer behavior in digital entertainment markets and emphasize that successful digital marketing strategies must simultaneously address emotional engagement, symbolic brand perception, and long-term brand value. The integration of these mechanisms provides a more comprehensive explanation of consumer purchase intention in streaming platform markets and contributes to the broader literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior.

One limitation of the present study is that the sample was limited to users active in WhatsApp and Telegram groups, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to all users of streaming platforms. Another limitation is the use of self-report questionnaires, which may be affected by response bias and subjective interpretation. In addition, the study adopted a cross-sectional design, making it difficult to establish causal relationships among the variables over time. The research also focused exclusively on Iranian streaming platform consumers, and cultural or regional differences may influence the applicability of the findings to other countries and digital markets.

Future studies are recommended to examine the proposed model using longitudinal designs in order to better understand changes in consumer engagement, brand image, and purchase intention over time. Researchers may also investigate additional mediating variables such as trust, perceived value, customer satisfaction, or emotional attachment. Comparative studies across different countries, age groups, or digital service sectors could provide broader insight into the role of digital marketing in shaping consumer behavior. Furthermore, future research may employ experimental or mixed-method approaches to obtain deeper understanding of how consumers respond to specific digital marketing strategies and online content formats.

Managers of streaming platforms should invest in interactive and content-oriented digital marketing strategies that encourage consumer participation and engagement rather than relying solely on direct promotional advertising. Developing emotionally appealing campaigns, strengthening online brand communities, and encouraging user-generated content can improve both consumer engagement and brand image. Streaming platforms should also focus on long-term brand equity development by maintaining service quality, consistent brand communication, and positive customer experiences across digital channels. In addition, marketing managers should design differentiated strategies for consumer groups with varying levels of brand equity in order to maximize the effectiveness of digital marketing activities and strengthen consumers' purchase intentions.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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