



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leverage Digital Advertising to Gain a Competitive Advantage for the Beauty Care Centers in Riyadh

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: Oct 24, 2024 | <p>This study decisively analyzes the relationship between the use of digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of specialized beauty centers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Utilizing a quantitative method, it is classified as both descriptive and analytical. The study population comprises all 15 accredited specialized beauty centers in Riyadh that hold the final "CBAHI" accreditation for 2024. Each center employs between 10 and 13 staff members in addition to 15 managers, resulting in a total population of approximately 165 to 180 individuals. The research adopted a rigorous two-stage comprehensive enumeration approach. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the specialized centers, followed by a thorough enumeration of all individuals within the sample, totaling 180 participants. A structured questionnaire, based on a five-point Likert scale, served as the primary data collection tool. The key findings assert that content marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing, and email marketing are widely utilized at a high level, while paid advertising is utilized at a moderate level. The competitive advantage of specialized beauty centers in the Kingdom is also established to be at a moderate level. Furthermore, there is a notable awareness of the factors that hinder the use of digital advertising tools within the specialized beauty industry. Results clearly indicate a positive correlation between the use of digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of specialized beauty centers, with social media marketing (SMM) identified as the foremost driver of this relationship. However, no statistical correlation exists between the other four digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of these centers. Additionally, the findings show no statistically significant differences in perceptions of competitive advantage across variables such as age, education level, experience level, or gender. In conclusion, the study strongly recommends enhancing digital marketing strategies in the beauty sector and emphasizes the necessity of training employees to effectively utilize digital advertising tools to fully capitalize on competitive advantages.</p> |
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INTRODUCTION

Modern communication technology plays a significant role in various daily activities, institutional systems, and work processes. It has contributed to the planning and implementation of these activities, allowing businesses to gain a competitive advantage and carve out a unique presence in the market (Denga et al., 2022). Rapidly expanding networks, evolving information systems, and diverse communication techniques have integrated into marketing, communication, and administrative activities across various industries (Prihatiningsih et al., 2024). This integration has influenced customer behaviors, built trust, and established strong relationships with consumers (Bin Khunin & Al-Nsour, 2024). The widespread adoption of these techniques has transformed the

communication process, making it faster, more affordable, and more effective in planning, organizing, managing feedback, and addressing censorship (Raid et al., 2024). Consequently, businesses must adapt their communication channels with their target audiences (Salmon et al., 2024) and seek new strategies to enhance trust and credibility with customers (Ullrich et al., 2024).

In this context, digital advertising has emerged as a prominent feature of the technological era, becoming a crucial aspect of marketing communication, particularly in e-communication. This includes various media forms, such as the Internet, e-mail, text messaging, social media, video platforms, and websites (Ledro et al., 2022). The literature views digital advertising as part of the broader digital communication process, leveraging website integration within diverse media (Bin Khunin and Alnsour, 2024). Thus, it has become a vital tool in e-marketing strategies (Jalban and Naji, 2022). Statistics indicate that the world's digital population reached 4.66 billion active Internet users in 2021, with approximately 4.32 billion mobile Internet users and around 4.2 billion active social media users in the same year (Global Overview Report, 2021).

Therefore, digital advertising is an effective means of connecting businesses with target markets (Zenith, 2018), representing 40% of the global advertising market, or \$204 billion, in 2017 (Bundeskartellamt.de.com,2018). More than 50% of the world's population regularly engages in online activities, creating significant opportunities for marketers to reach customers, promote brand awareness, enter new markets, and drive purchasing behavior (Nadanyiova et al.,2021). Digital advertising offers numerous benefits, with convenience being the most notable, allowing users to quickly access information and stay updated on promotions (Bin Khunin and Al-Nsour,2023). Market penetration has become a new objective for effectively transmitting information to consumers, retailers, suppliers, and other stakeholders in the communication process (Al-Nsour et al., 2021). Meeting consumer needs and desires now requires less time and effort (Gad Al-Rab, 2016). Understanding consumer behavior involves monitoring their needs, desires, buying patterns, and decision-making processes, both for individuals and businesses (Al. Nsour & Al -Ayyaf, 2024). Digital advertising is reshaping consumer behavior, with its growth significantly influencing decision-making. Today's digital market is transforming consumer practices, facilitated by digitalization and the emergence of new advertising tools and channels (Bin Khunin & Alnsour, 2024).

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), many businesses in the beauty industry have invested millions in ongoing activities rather than limiting them to specific seasons like weekends or special occasions such as weddings and graduations. Reports indicate that Saudi females spent \$5.2 billion on cosmetics in 2020, rising to approximately \$8.5 billion in 2022 (Saudi Makeup Expo, 2020). Social networks have contributed to this growth, with platforms like Snapchat becoming popular venues for promoting makeup products, beauty retailers like Aster, and brands such as Anastasia and Vitamin C Serum. Social media has heightened awareness of appearance among Saudi females, often leading to increased spending on beauty care products. Filters on social media have also altered perceptions, allowing users to enhance their appearance and address insecurities through skin filters, cosmetic enhancements, and more (Saudi Makeup Expo, 2020). In this evolving landscape, technical advancements in the Saudi business environment have become essential for companies, particularly in the beauty care sector (Allahham et al., 2024), to maximize their use of digital channels and enhance communication with customers. Consequently, businesses are increasingly seeking digital advertising channels to achieve marketing and communication objectives, influence consumer behavior, improve their competitive positioning, and access broader markets.

1. Research Significance:

A. The study enforced the knowledge of digital advertising and its tools with recent and specialized studies, so it bridged the scientific gap in this place. It promotes research in digital advertising tools and achieves a competitive advantage in one of

the most promising sectors in the Saudi economy, the beauty care sector, which has a market value reached \$5.5 billion in 2022.

B. Focusing on the stores in the beauty care sector through how digital advertising tools affected excellence in the cyber and physical markets. Accordingly, the study provides a theoretical view of digital advertising and its tools that improve the competitive advantage of beauty care centers.

2. Research Objectives:

A. Showing the digital advertising tools used by beauty care centers in the KSA.

B. Measuring the relationship between digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of beauty care centers in the KSA.

3. Literature Review:

4.1 Digital Advertising Definition:

Digital advertising refers to marketing conducted through online communication channels, including websites and various content formats such as text, images, audio, and videos (Nurhasanah et al., 2023). This approach helps businesses achieve goals like brand awareness, customer interest, product development, and increased sales (Bartholomew, 2018). According to Smith and Chaffy (2005), online advertising encompasses a range of promotional techniques, such as search engine optimization (SEO), pop-up ads, email marketing, links, and websites (Barnes, 2002). Digital advertising is a dynamic and continually evolving concept that has transformed the marketing landscape and involved consumers in new ways (Allahham et al., 2024). Unlike traditional advertising methods, digital advertising leverages the power of the Internet and digital platforms, allowing for global reach and targeted audience engagement. Strategies within digital marketing include visual advertising, search engine marketing, social media advertising, video marketing, and email marketing (Iankovets, 2023). One of the key distinctions of digital advertising is its ability to track and analyze user behavior, enabling companies to tailor their messages to specific segments and monitor campaign success in real time (Gołąb-Andrzejak, 2023).

Research indicates that the effectiveness of digital advertising enables businesses to allocate their budgets more efficiently by targeting the most relevant audiences (Alnsour, 2022). Moreover, digital advertising fosters interaction and engagement (Perloff, 2020). Consumers can engage with ads, share them, provide feedback, and establish a two-way communication channel. This interaction strengthens the relationship between brands and consumers, allowing companies to make real-time adjustments for improved results (Mselle and Belkheri, 2019). Digital advertising encompasses various forms of online promotion across both computers and smart devices. Types of online advertising include visual advertising, which precedes video content (Ahmed et al., 2019), as well as advertisements on search engines and social networks (Aslam & Karjaluo, 2017). According to Wikipedia, digital advertising also includes contextual ads on search engines, web pages, blogs, and email ads. The various types of digital advertising often depend on the networks' servers (Al-Nsour et al., 2024).

4.2 Digital Advertising Importance:

Digital advertising plays a central role in the modern marketing landscape due to several key factors, such as connectivity and accessibility (Reyes-Mercado & Barajas-Portas, 2020). In an era where billions of people connect online, digital advertising provides a direct channel for engaging with diverse audiences. It allows companies to tailor their messages to specific population groups, maximizing the impact of their campaigns (Chakraborty & Jain, 2022). Businesses use digital

advertising to promote products, reach consumers, and create awareness online (AL-Nsour, 2024). Furthermore, it has proven economically viable as an alternative to traditional media (Daqar & Smoudy, 2019).

Digital ads offer precise targeting and data-driven insights. Advertisers can leverage user data to create highly customized and relevant content, significantly increasing conversion rates (AL-Nsour, 2023). This data also enables real-time analysis of campaign performance, allowing for rapid adjustments and improvements (da Silva et al., 2024). Cost-effectiveness is another critical aspect of digital advertising. Unlike traditional methods, such as television or print, which often involve high production and distribution costs (Tahir & Man, 2018), digital advertising is more budget-friendly. It provides opportunities for companies of all sizes and empowers startups and small businesses to compete on a global scale with larger enterprises (Ištvančić et al., 2017).

Additionally, digital ads allow for accurate measurement of campaign effectiveness, identifying successful strategies and marketing tactics. The dynamic nature of digital advertising fosters creativity and innovation, enabling marketers to utilize various formats—such as social media posts and interactive videos—to engage audiences in unique ways (Rocque & Sisodia, 2023). Consequently, digital advertising has become an essential tool for businesses aiming to succeed in the digital age, thanks to its capabilities in targeting, affordability, measurability, and creativity, making it a cornerstone of modern communication strategies (Semerádová & Weinlich, 2014). Moreover, digital advertising has shifted the balance of power regarding the advertising message, giving recipients the choice to accept or reject it (Wiktor & Sanak-Kosmowska, 2021). Therefore, businesses must leverage all aspects of digital advertising by utilizing available advertising spaces, integrating interactive features, and merging electronic advertising with other elements of e-communication to enhance their marketing efforts and meet business objectives (Du et al., 2018).

4.3 Concept and Importance of Competitive Advantage :

Competitive advantage refers to a distinct edge that allows a company to outperform its rivals. Stevenson (2005) notes that competitive advantage is a process aimed at meeting customer needs and desires, ultimately motivating them to purchase a product. This advantage arises when a company can perform its activities at a lower cost or with greater effectiveness than its competitors, utilizing its resources wisely, and demonstrating creativity and expertise (da Silva et al., 2024). Essentially, competitive advantage signifies a company's ability to perform better than its competitors, granting it a superior position in the market and enabling it to offer products that are different from those of its rivals (Dickey & Lewis, 2011). According to Porter (1993), competitive advantage is achieved when a business discovers methods that are more effective than those employed by its competitors.

The importance of competitive advantage is foundational for successful companies navigating changing business environments (Liu et al., 2018). It serves as the unique trait that differentiates a company from its competitors, allowing it to sustain its market presence. In an increasingly competitive and globalized world, companies must consistently seek and maintain competitive advantages to remain relevant and profitable (Kubina et al., 2015). One of the primary reasons competitive advantage is crucial is its direct effect on a company's ability to attract and retain customers. With consumers having numerous choices, they are naturally drawn to companies that offer something unique or superior to alternatives (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Firms with a competitive market advantage tend to build customer loyalty and can often charge premium prices for their products (Nuseir et al., 2023).

Competitive advantage also serves as a key driver of innovation. Companies driven to outperform their competitors typically invest in research and development, fostering innovation that benefits both themselves and society by stimulating technological advancements and enhancing product

offerings (Rodríguez et al.,2023). Moreover, competitive advantage is closely linked to profitability (McGrath, 2013). A company that excels in maintaining efficiency and excellence in the market can achieve higher profit margins and control over pricing and costs (Bilgihan et al., 2011). This profitability allows businesses to reinvest, expand, and avoid economic stagnation. In summary, competitive advantage is essential for modern companies, as it enhances market presence, drives innovation, and promotes profitability (Hossain et al.,2022). Companies that understand and leverage the importance of competitive advantage will be better positioned to thrive in a competitive business landscape (Bonardi, 2021).

4.4 The Relationship between Using of Digital Tools and Competitive Advantage:

In the digital era, companies seek competitive advantages, and effectively utilizing digital advertising tools has emerged as one of the most powerful strategies to achieve this (Fernandes et al.,2023). Digital advertising tools encompass a wide range of online marketing solutions, including search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click advertising (PPC), social media advertising, and email marketing (Qurtubi et al.,2022). These tools significantly impact a company's competitive position, illustrating a clear relationship between digital advertising and competitive advantage. Companies can leverage these tools to maintain their market presence (Denga et al., 2022) and target precisely defined audiences (Shrivastava, 2018). With access to data analytics and user profiles based on demographics, interests, and behaviors, businesses can effectively identify and reach valuable customers (Khanfar et al., 2024). This capability allows for the creation of personalized content, promotions, customer engagement, and improved conversion rates (Nadanyiova, 2021).

One of the main advantages of digital advertising is the ability to measure and analyze business performance in real time (Al-Shaikh et al.,2024). This data-driven approach offers accurate insights into marketing efforts. Metrics such as click rates, conversion rates, and return on investment (ROI) serve as standards for evaluating the effectiveness of advertising campaigns (Cvitanović, 2018). Thus, the ability to measure results and assess ROI is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage. Understanding and responding to customer needs enables companies to make informed, data-driven decisions and refine their campaigns(Almustafa et al., 2023), . This continuous improvement process enhances cost-effectiveness and positions businesses ahead of competitors reliant on traditional advertising methods (Kano et al., 2022).

Digital advertising tools also provide unique flexibility, allowing companies to adapt their campaigns quickly in response to market changes, emerging trends, or competitive pressures (Stephen, 2016). This agility is a significant asset in achieving a competitive advantage. Traditional advertising methods, such as print or television ads, are limited by fixed schedules and formats (Kumar, 2024). In contrast, digital advertising enables companies to swiftly adjust their campaigns, achieving global reach while accurately targeting local markets. This adaptability is key to capturing new markets and demographics while servicing existing customers (Nuseira & Aljumahb, 2020).

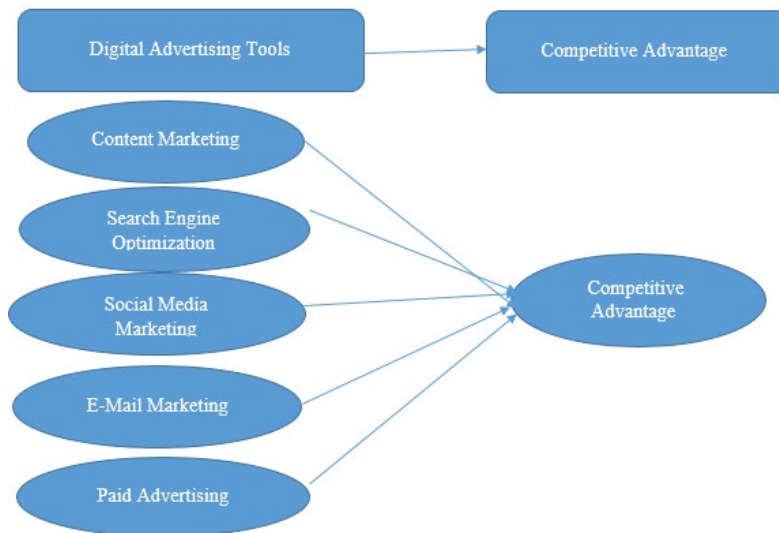
Compared to traditional advertising, digital advertising tools are a cost-effective means to reach a broad audience (Sirmon et al., 2011), often resulting in lower costs per impression or click. Additionally, the pay-per-click model allows companies to pay only when a user interacts with the ad (Kircova & Cinar,2017), reducing the risk of wasted advertising spend. This cost-effectiveness drives competitive advantage, enabling companies to reach a wider audience at a lower cost, allowing them to allocate resources towards product development and customer service improvements (Kasim et al., 2023). Automation capabilities provided by digital advertising tools streamline communication and enhance efficiency. Automation can schedule and send customized emails to customers, effectively guiding them through the sales conversion process (Nuseira & Aljumahb,2020). In PPC campaigns, automated bidding systems can optimize advertising expenditures in real time, improving ROI (Al-Owaidi,2024). Automation reduces manual work and the risk of human error,

allowing companies to manage communications more effectively, thus gaining a competitive advantage over competitors who rely on manual processes (Alonso et al.,2021).

The vast data generated through digital advertising is a wellspring of innovation. Companies utilize this data to deepen their understanding of customer preferences, market dynamics, and emerging trends (Apolinario & Soriano,2021). Digital marketing can lead to the development of new products, improved offerings, and more persuasive marketing strategies (Blazeska et al.,2020). Furthermore, digital advertising tools facilitate ongoing communication with customers through email marketing, social media, and content marketing (Wibowo & Indartono,2017). Maintaining dialogue with the public after conversion fosters customer relationships, loyalty, and advocacy, making a loyal customer base a significant source of competitive advantage (Kircova & Cinar, 2017). Customers who feel connected to a brand tend to make frequent purchases and become brand advocates, which drives business growth and success (Edan, 2024). Finally, digital advertising tools enable real-time feedback from customers and prospects (Al-Nsour,2022). Feedback gathered from social media, online reviews, and email interactions provides immediate insights into customer perceptions and impressions, allowing businesses to adjust their strategies accordingly. Thus, the principal hypothesis is as follows:

There is a Statistical Impact of Digital Advertising Tools on the Competitive Advantage of Beauty Care Centers in Riyadh.

After the theoretical framework and previous studies related to the field of research, the appropriate conceptual framework can be designed. This conceptual framework clarifies the IV and DV and determines the shape and direction of the relationship between them.



Source: Bin Khunin & Al-Nsour, 2024; Nadanyiova, 2021 ; Makau, 2021; Nuseira & Aljumahb, 2020; Blazeska & Ristovska, 2019; Al-Khunin & Al-Nsour, 2024.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A. Pilot Study: The survey was conducted with 20% of employees at accredited beauty care centers, totaling 35 participants. The results indicated that digital advertising tools are most frequently used by beauty centers in the Kingdom. The rankings are as follows: social media marketing at 39.1%, content marketing at 34.4%, SEO (search engine optimization) at 26.6%, paid advertising at 18.8%, and email marketing at 9.4%. The remaining digital advertising tools (video marketing

and referral marketing) had very low usage rates and were therefore excluded from the study.

B. **Research Method:** A quantitative method was deemed appropriate for this study, which is analytically descriptive. The study describes and analyzes the relationships between digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of specialized beauty care centers in Saudi Arabia (KSA).

C. **Research Population:** The research population includes all specialized beauty care centers in Riyadh. According to the SABAI standard, there are 15 accredited centers in this category. The SABAI standard refers to the accreditation criteria for health facilities that comply with international standards. The study employed a full survey method targeting all specialized beauty care centers. Each center has between 10 to 13 employees, resulting in a total sample size of approximately 150 to 165 employees, along with 15 individuals at the top management level. Consequently, the total population size ranges from 165 to 180 individuals working in relevant departments within the beauty care centers.

D. **Research Instrument:** A fully structured questionnaire was designed as the primary data collection method. This questionnaire was developed based on relevant previous studies and evaluated by academics and professionals to confirm its external validity, relevance, and effectiveness in achieving the research objectives. After refinement, the questionnaire reached its final form and was distributed electronically via Google Drive, achieving a response rate of 100%.

5. **Measurement:**

The study used a five-point Likert scale to assess and measure research variables. The response levels ranged from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates a very high level and 1 represents a very low level. The scale for interpreting these response levels is as follows: (1) 5 to 4.2 signifies a very high level, (2) greater than 3.6 but less than 4.2 indicates a high level, (3) greater than 2.4 but less than 3.6 represents a moderate level, (4) greater than 1.6 but less than 2.4 signifies a weak level, and (5) any score below 1.6 indicates a very low level. Sample responses were evaluated using descriptive analysis, which included indicators such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative frequencies. This analysis aimed to assess the level of social media involvement and its impact on online buying decisions through the Facebook platform. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with PLS Smart software. This method relies on several statistical assumptions and indicators, including the p-value, which shows the direction of the relationship between research variables. The Standard Beta coefficient indicates both the strength and direction of the relationship, while the f-squared (f^2) and R-squared (R^2) values assess how well the independent variable explains the dependent variable. The Q-squared (Q^2) value predicts the behavior of the research variables, and the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) test evaluates the overall performance of the regression model.

6. **Respondents Profile :**

1. **Digital Advertising (IV) consists of 5 tools as follow:**

A. **Content Marketing:** This tool consists of 12 items, and the response level was high. The arithmetic mean is 3.957, with a standard deviation of 0.83, indicating a high level of effectiveness in content marketing.

B. **Search Engine Optimization SEO:** This tool comprises 11 items, and the response level was also high. The arithmetic mean is 3.975, with a standard deviation of 0.83, suggesting a strong level of SEO practices.

C. **Social Media Marketing SMM:** This section includes 13 items, with a high response level. The arithmetic mean is 3.937, and the standard deviation is 0.839, reflecting a high effectiveness in social media marketing.

D. **Email Marketing:** This area consists of 9 items, and the level of responses was high. The arithmetic mean is 3.511, with a standard deviation of 1.052, which indicates a good level of email marketing effectiveness.

E. **Paid Advertising:** This category includes 15 items, and the response level was also high. The arithmetic mean is 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.913, indicating a moderate level of effectiveness in paid advertising.

- **Competitive Advantage DV:** This variable includes 15 items, and the response level was also high. The arithmetic mean is (3.9559), with a standard deviation of (0.822), indicating a high level of effectiveness in competitive advantage.

7. Testing and Data Analysis:

1) Reliability and Validity:

- Construct Reliability: According to the statistical guidelines, an acceptable value for construct reliability falls between 0.7 and 0.95 (Hair et al., 2014). As indicated in Table 1, all values fall within this range, demonstrating an acceptable level of internal consistency among the items. Therefore, these results can be trusted for testing the research hypotheses.

- Average Variance Extracted (AVE): The recommended lower limit for AVE is 0.5, with values above 0.7 considered very well (Hair et al., 2016). Table 1 shows that all latent variables have AVE values greater than 0.5, confirming their statistical acceptability for testing the study's hypotheses.

Table 1: Results of Cross Loading, CR, AVE and CR

| Construct | Items | Cross Loading | CR | AVE |
|----------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| Content Marketing | CM1 | 0.713 | 0.697 | 0.644 |
| | CM7 | 0.752 | | |
| | CM13 | 0.746 | | |
| E Mail Marketing | EM1 | 0.869 | 0.695 | 0.649 |
| | EM2 | 0.785 | | |
| | EM4 | 0.741 | | |
| Paid Advertising | PA2 | 0.755 | 0.627 | 0.618 |
| | PA5 | 0.794 | | |
| | PA9 | 0.742 | | |
| Search Engine Optimization | SEO3 | 0.743 | 0.632 | 0.611 |
| | SEO6 | 0.841 | | |
| | SEO9 | 0.730 | | |
| Social Media Marketing | SMM1 | 0.918 | 0.732 | 0.634 |
| | SMM4 | 0.798 | | |
| | SMM7 | 0.768 | | |
| | SMM10 | 0.756 | | |
| Competitive Advantage | Y4 | 0.701 | 0.733 | 0.688 |
| | Y11 | 0.792 | | |
| | Y13 | 0.715 | | |

2) Discriminant Validity: It assessed as follow:

- Cross Loading: For cross-loading, a value higher than 0.7 is deemed statistically acceptable (Hair et al., 2016). As shown in Table 1, all items exceed this threshold, confirming that they meet the reliability and accuracy criteria.
- The Variance Inflation Factor: VIF test has a minimum value of 1, with no upper limit. According to statistical guidelines, a VIF below 5 indicates no collinearity problem, while a VIF above 10 signifies serious collinearity that could render regression estimates inaccurate (Shrestha, 2020). Table 2 demonstrates that the VIF values are below 5, indicating no collinearity among the independent variables (IVs). This further validates the reliability of the statistical model

Table 2: VIF Test

| IV | VIF |
|-----|-------|
| CM | 1.464 |
| EM | 1.651 |
| PA | 1.310 |
| SEO | 1.119 |
| SMM | 1.497 |

- **Fornell Larcker Criterion:** The test is based on a rule that requires comparing the construction correlation box with the Average Variability Extracted (AVE) and a model of the common factor (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the test rule, the underlying variable should explain a significant portion of the variability highlighted in the 1981 comparison. Table 2 below lists the AVE values, which, for the current latent variable, should be higher than the total associations with other variables (Hilkenmeier et al., 2020). The Fornell-Larcker test value for the current underlying variable exceeds its value in other underlying variables, indicating that there is no significant relationship with those other variables.

Table 3: Fornell Larcker Criterion

| Items | CA | CM | EM | PA | SEO | SMM |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| CA | 0.693 | | | | | |
| CM | 0.373 | 0.737 | | | | |
| EM | 0.326 | 0.534 | 0.741 | | | |
| PA | 0.356 | 0.311 | 0.365 | 0.731 | | |
| SEO | 0.279 | 0.240 | 0.280 | 0.178 | 0.711 | |
| SMM | 0.464 | 0.378 | 0.477 | 0.445 | 0.259 | 0.755 |

8. RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- ***H0₁: There is a Statistical Impact of Digital Advertising Tools on the Competitive Advantage of Beauty Care Centers in Riyadh.***

Path analysis is closely related to multiple regression and offers theoretical insights into cause-and-effect relationships. While there may be causal correlations between variables, these are often insufficient to validate causal research assumptions. In this context, independent variables are classified as exogenous, whereas dependent variables are referred to as endogenous. Path analysis identifies two types of effects: direct and indirect. A direct effect occurs when an external variable has a direct influence on the dependent variable, indicated by an arrow pointing toward it. In contrast, an indirect effect arises when an external variable influences the dependent variable through another variable (Hair et al., 2016).

As an extension of the regression model, path analysis provides a correlation matrix and illustrates the model pathways using squares and arrows to represent causal relationships between variables, along with various statistical indicators such as Standardized Beta and t-statistics (Hair et al., 2022). According to statistical conventions, a P-value below 0.05 is deemed statistically significant, indicating a directional relationship between the variables in question. The Standardized Beta also indicates the direction of these relationships, with a negative sign (-) denoting a negative correlation. In this study, the path coefficient reflects the direct impact of digital advertising on competitive advantage. The path coefficients serve as indicators of the proposed relationships between the variables. It was found that the P-value for most correlation relationships exceeded 0.05, suggesting that some sub-hypotheses were not validated. This indicates that most digital advertising tools do not correlate with the competitive advantage of specialized beauty care centers in the Kingdom. However, a positive correlation between digital advertising and competitive advantage has been confirmed, specifically attributed to the use of social media marketing.

Table 4: Path Direct Effects of First Hypotheses

| Relations hip | Std. Beta | Std. Error | T- Value | P- Value | Decision | f² | Decision |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| CM -> CA | 0.182 | 0.112 | 1.659 | 0.098 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.034 | Small Effect Size |
| EM -> CA | 0.028 | 0.106 | 0.044 | 0.965 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.000 | No Effect |
| PA -> CA | 0.146 | 0.097 | 1.473 | 0.141 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.022 | Small Effect Size |
| SEO -> CA | 0.163 | 0.078 | 1.698 | 0.090 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.022 | Small Effect Size |
| SMM -> CA | 0.315 | 0.099 | 3.003 | 0.003 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.184 | Moderated Effect Size |
| DA -> CA | 0.573 | 0.055 | 9.477 | 0.000 | Supported Positive Relationship | 0.034 | Moderated Effect Size |

Significant at P₀* < 0.01. Significant at P₀** < 0.05.

The Effect Size (f²) is a complementary test to the P-value (Hair et al., 2020). This statistical measure quantifies the impact size of digital advertising tools (or any of the sub-independent variables) on competitive advantage. The statistical rules state that an f² value greater than 0.35 indicates a significant impact; values between 0.15 and 0.35 suggest a moderate effect, values less than 0.15

indicate a small effect, and values below 0.02 show no impact. Table 5 presents the results of the path coefficients for the dependent variable (DV) and independent variables (IVs). The IVs consist of five digital advertising tools: Content Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Email Marketing, Paid Advertising, and Social Media Marketing, while the DV is Competitive Advantage (CA). The analysis revealed a small impact of content marketing on competitive advantage (0.034). Additionally, email marketing had no effect on competitive advantage (0.00). Both paid advertising (0.022) and SEO (0.022) also demonstrated small impacts on competitive advantage. Conversely, social media marketing showed a moderate impact on the competitive advantage of beauty care centers in Saudi Arabia (0.184). These results suggest that social media marketing is the most influential factor among the five digital advertising tools regarding the competitive advantage of specialized beauty care centers in Riyadh, while email marketing showed no impact. The findings also underscore the importance of social media marketing strategies for enhancing competitive advantage, although the influences of content marketing, SEO, and paid advertising are minimal. The Coefficient of Determination R^2 represents a statistical measure of variation in one variable as a function of changes in another. In simpler terms, R^2 assesses the strength of the linear relationship between two variables (Hair et al., 2020). The statistical rule indicates that an R^2 value below 0.02 signifies a small explanatory power, an R^2 between 0.02 and 0.13 suggests moderate power, and an R^2 above 0.26 reflects significant explanatory power. In this model, both R^2 and Adjusted R^2 were employed to analyze the competitive advantage. These values indicate how well the IVs (digital advertising tools: content marketing, email marketing, paid advertising, SEO, and SMM) explain the variation in the DV. According to Table 5, the coefficient of determination is 0.294, meaning that the five IVs explain 29.4% of the variation in competitive advantage. Consequently, 70.6% of the variation in competitive advantage is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.256 is also significant, indicating that 25.6% of the variation in competitive advantage can be explained by the five tools. This suggests a moderate power of utilizing digital advertising tools to achieve competitive advantage in beauty care centers in Riyadh. There is a strong need to explore other digital advertising tools that may impact the competitive advantage further

Table 5: R^2 & Adjusted R^2 Results

| DV | R^2 | Adjusted R^2 | The Result |
|-----------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Competitive Advantage | 0.294 | 0.256 | Moderated Power |

The Goodness of Fit (GOF) value is the geometric mean of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and R^2 for all internal measures (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). GOF can be utilized to determine the predictive power of a highly complex model and to assess the indicators of both the measurement and structural models (Chin & Dibbern, 2010). Consequently, the Goodness of Fit emphasizes overall model performance. According to statistical decision-making rules, a GOF value below 0.10 indicates a lack of Goodness of Fit. A value between 0.10 and 0.25 signifies a small fit, while a value from 0.25 to 0.36 indicates a moderate fit. A GOF value greater than 0.36 suggests a great fit (Odekerken-Schroder & Van Oppen, 2005). The GOF results indicate a moderate predictive power for the general model encompassing both measurement and structure. Therefore, the overall performance is considered moderately appropriate for the current study and the variables examined. The Q^2 value reflects the predictive power within the structural model and its performance indicators (Fornell & Cha, 1994). According to the statistical decision-making standard, a Q^2 value above 0.00 suggests the possibility

of prediction (Wold, 1982). As shown in Table 6, the results indicate an acceptable potential to analyze differences in competitive advantage ($Q^2 = 0.096$) attributed to digital advertising tools. Furthermore, an f^2 value between 0.15 and 0.35 indicates medium predictability of competitive advantage

Table 6: Q^2 Results

| IV | SSO | SSE | $Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$ |
|-----|---------|---------|--------------------|
| CA | 396.000 | 357.836 | 0.096 |
| CM | 297.000 | 297.000 | |
| EM | 297.000 | 297.000 | |
| PA | 297.000 | 297.000 | |
| SEO | 297.000 | 297.000 | |
| SMM | 396.000 | 396.000 | |

9. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

The results showed that digital advertising tools generally had a weak impact on the competitive advantage of beauty centers in the Kingdom. However, there was a statistically significant correlation between the use of digital advertising tools and the competitive advantage of these centers. Specifically, content marketing, email marketing, paid advertising, search engine marketing (SEO), and social media marketing have contributed to achieving a competitive edge. While content marketing plays a limited yet important role in enhancing competitive advantage at beauty care centers, its impact is relatively smaller compared to other tools. A recent study (2023) supported the effectiveness of content industry-based marketing communication strategies. Content marketing enhances communication with the public and fosters long-term relationships with customers by providing educational and engaging content that showcases cosmetic services, benefits, and values. Utilizing videos or posts on common topics in the global beauty care industry may attract customers' attention and enhance their experience. The study by Jalban and Naji (2022) confirmed that content marketing does not lead to an immediate increase in sales. Instead, it focuses on building strong long-term relationships with customers, improving their experience, and offering valuable information for their purchasing decisions. The true benefit of content marketing lies in its long-term effects, particularly in enhancing positive brand image and maintaining a sustained competitive advantage. Search Engine Optimization (SEO), despite having a relatively limited role in the digital advertising strategy of beauty centers in Saudi Arabia, has an immediate and significant impact. Like other marketing tools, it effectively improves the brand image of these centers, thereby raising awareness and attracting customers. This aligns with the findings of Panchal et al. (2021), which noted that SEO is an essential tool for enhancing brand visibility, increasing digital presence, and raising competitive advantage over time. A study by Wiktor and Sanak-Kosmowska (2021) indicated that while SEO improves brand digital presence, it requires a significant amount of time to yield remarkable results. Therefore, an effective SEO strategy must be part of a long-term marketing plan to achieve desired outcomes. Consequently, SEO becomes a sustainable tool that builds brand status and becomes a significant factor in attracting attention in the beauty industry. The current study has shown that SEO is a fundamental component of digital marketing strategies for beauty care centers, especially when combined with other marketing tools such as social media marketing (SMM) and paid advertising. According to the study by Panchal et al. (2021), ongoing efforts to improve brand positioning enhance awareness, increase visibility among competitors, and build a long-term sustainable competitive

advantage. Although the effects of SEO may take longer to manifest, it is a vital component for establishing a robust and sustainable brand presence in the digital environment.

Conversely, email marketing showed no impact on competitive advantage, indicating that it is ineffectual within the context of beauty care centers, likely due to inefficient email strategies and customer preferences. This finding is consistent with the study by Ravichandrani & Kumar (2024), regarding the effectiveness of email marketing and the necessity of adapting strategies to suit the beauty care center context. On the other hand, the Obeidat study (2021) noted that email marketing could produce an impact if linked to interaction and personalization. The results revealed that providing personalized content to customers via email significantly enhances interaction. Personalized messaging aligns with the study conducted by Ahmed et al. (2019), which highlighted the importance of direct communication in building long-term relationships with customers and enhancing brand loyalty and satisfaction, particularly in verbal and written communication within Riyadh. Additionally, the study by Barton and Behe (2017) emphasized that high-quality content is crucial for increasing customer interaction. They explained that employing promotional strategies such as offers and gifts through email can lead to improved interaction and customer loyalty while maximizing the positive impact of email marketing as a vital tool in marketing campaigns.

The results of the current study indicate that social media marketing (SMM) is the most influential tool for achieving a competitive advantage for beauty care centers in Saudi Arabia. The use of SMM significantly impacts marketing goals. It promotes brand awareness, enhances direct interaction, attracts new market segments, and retains existing customers. A study by Anosur (2024) supports the notion that SMM enhances brand value by providing opportunities for interaction through valuable content tailored to targeted customers. The findings also highlight that a strong digital presence across various channels improves brand knowledge and increases engagement. This aligns with the research by Novitasari et al. (2021), which suggests that SMM can offer a sustainable competitive advantage when implemented effectively and directed toward the target audience. Beauty care centers can utilize targeted ads to reach specific audiences based on interests, geographical locations, and age, among other factors. In conclusion, the current study confirms that SMM is a vital tool for beauty care centers in Saudi Arabia, due to its effectiveness in building brand awareness, fostering customer interaction, and attracting new market segments. SMM is a fundamental pillar of digital marketing strategy, particularly when integrated with other tools such as paid advertising and search engine optimization (SEO) to maximize its impact in a competitive environment.

The study also revealed that while paid advertising has a limited impact on competitive advantage, it remains important for building brand awareness and effectively targeting the public. Its role stems from being part of an integrated marketing strategy that combines various digital tools, including SMM and SEO, to accurately and effectively reach target segments. Paid advertising is essential for increasing brand awareness, especially within specific time frames. Its positive impact on brand image aligns with the findings of Makau (2021), who emphasized the significance of paid advertising in creating awareness. However, this tool alone is insufficient for achieving a competitive advantage; it is more effective when used in conjunction with other marketing strategies. Furthermore, the current study confirmed that relying solely on paid advertising may not yield sustainable competitive advantages, as noted by Saxenaa and Mittal (2019). These authors pointed out that paid advertising lacks the capacity to enact real changes in customer attitudes and behaviors (Gulzar & Aslam, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen advertising efforts by incorporating personalized content, direct

engagement with the public through social media, and enhanced customer experience across other digital platforms. Makau (2021) and Saxena and Mittal (2019) both demonstrated that paid advertising significantly boosts brand awareness when combined with other strategies for achieving competitive advantage, confirming that it is insufficient on its own. Panchal et al. (2021) highlighted that SEO is one of the key tools that improve brand visibility. The study by Wiktor and Sanak-Kosmowska (2021) confirmed that while SEO enhances the online presence of brands, achieving noticeable results takes time.

The results show that digital advertising tools have significantly increased brand awareness and reach among targeted audiences, positively impacting brand excellence, customer base development, cost reduction, and efficiency improvement. The study indicates that digital advertising has been more cost-effective for beauty care centers compared to traditional marketing, enabling better resource allocation. Data show that beauty care centers utilizing digital advertising can analyze customer data, create personalized offers, enhance customer satisfaction, and assess the impact of various digital advertising tools. Supporting this, a consistent study (2023) underscored the importance of competitive advantage elements within the context of digital marketing for beauty centers. Bin Khuni and Alnsour study (2024) also highlighted the significance of digital advertising strategies in enhancing the competitive advantage of Saudi SMEs, reinforcing the current study's findings that reliance on digital marketing strategies fosters competitiveness. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between digital advertising tools and competitive advantage, allowing companies to maintain a leading market position (Denga et al., 2022). These tools empower companies to achieve global reach while accurately targeting local markets, thereby securing a competitive advantage (Albrecht et al., 2015). This approach allows businesses to explore new markets and demographics while continuing to serve existing customers (Nuseira & Aljumah, 2020) and minimizes the risk of wasteful spending on advertising, with cost-effectiveness as a key driver of competitive advantage (West et al., 2015).

According to above discussion, the study presents several recommendations as follow:

- Integrated digital advertising tools such as content marketing, email marketing, paid advertising, SEO, and SMM to achieve effective and multi-channel communication.
- Increase collaboration with social media influencers to enhance brand credibility and attract potential customers.
- Activate direct communication strategies with customers via social media to increase interaction and build long-term relationships with existing customers.
- Monitor recent trends in the beauty care industry and present them attractively through content to increase attention and interest.

10. Future Studies:

The rapid advancement of technology has introduced new tools for digital advertising, prompting future research to evaluate their impact on the competitive advantage of beauty care centers. Key technologies to study include artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality. There is a significant need to investigate how demographics—such as age, gender, and geographic location—affect customer responses to digital advertising tools in beauty care centers. While the focus is on digital tools, traditional marketing continues to play an essential role in overall marketing strategies.

Future studies can also explore the integration of digital and traditional marketing methods to enhance effectiveness.

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