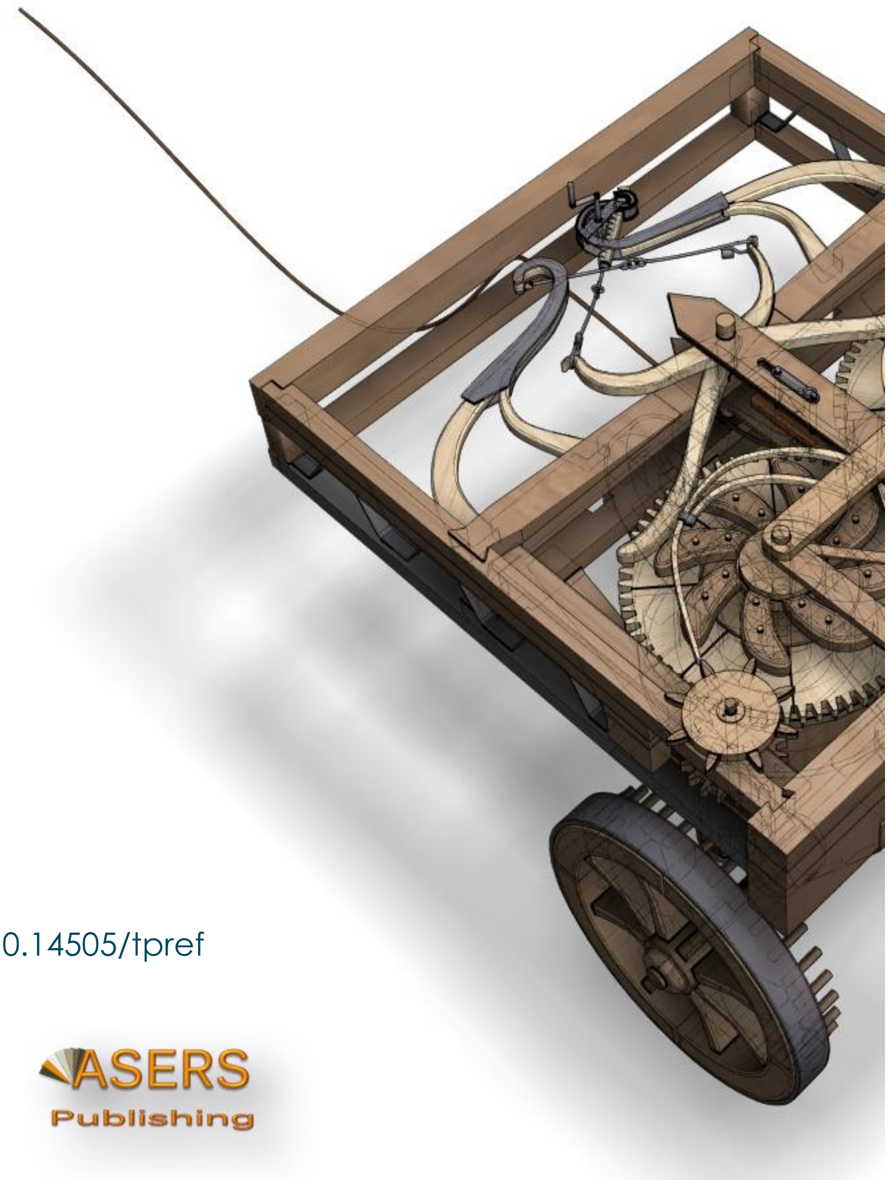
Theoretical and Practical Research in Economic Fields



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The Impact of Brand Management Strategy on the Trading Companies' Competitiveness

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Abstract: The study analyses the impact of brand management strategy on the retail companies' competitiveness in the current conditions of globalization and digital transformation. The relevance of the issue is determined by the need to create sustainable competitive advantages of companies in a highly competitive environment, where effective brand management contributes not only to enhancing consumer loyalty, but also to ensuring long-term financial stability. The aim of the study was to identify key brand management factors that affect the competitiveness of retail companies in an international context. The research used a comprehensive approach, including the methods of correlation analysis, benchmarking, and dynamic (trend) analysis. The results of the study showed that companies that invest more than 10% of total revenue in brand management demonstrate an average revenue growth of 11.4% over five years, and the customer retention rate among such companies increases by 8.2% compared to competitors. It was found that the use of digital communication platforms, social networks, and personalized marketing significantly increases the level of trust in the brand and strengthens its position in the market. The academic novelty of the study is the determined optimal combination of traditional and digital brand management tools to increase the retail companies' competitiveness. The practical significance of the obtained results is the possibility of their application for the development of strategic marketing programmes aimed at increasing brand recognition and its adaptation to digital markets. Further research may focus on at developing methods for assessing the effectiveness of digital brand strategies in various retail segments, as well as studying the impact of new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain.

Keywords: competitiveness; brand management; brand strategy; retail companies; marketing communications; branding.

JEL Classification: M31; L81; A12.

Introduction

Current globalization and digital transformation make trading companies to constantly strengthen their competitive positions. Growing competition and changes in consumer preferences emphasize the role of brand management in shaping long-term competitive advantages and financial stability of companies (Chernysh 2024).

The rapid development of trade and economic interaction of Ukraine with the countries of the European Union (EU) creates the prerequisites for expanding market opportunities for domestic trading companies, entailing an increased competition from leading European players. The volume of bilateral trade in goods between the EU and Ukraine in 2023 reached €61.9 milliard, which is more than twice the figures at the time of the entry into force of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) in 2016. The EU's share in Ukraine's foreign trade was about 56% in 2023, which confirms the significant importance of the European vector for the sale of Ukrainian goods. At the same time, Ukraine ranked 16th among the EU's trading partners, accounting for 1.2% of the total EU trade. Exports from Ukraine to the EU in 2023 amounted to €22.8 milliard, and EU return exports to Ukraine amounted to €39.1 milliard, which indicates a relatively stable structure of mutual supplies despite the existing political and economic risks (European Commission 2024).

In the current retail sector, brand management is a multi-component process that includes the development and implementation of strategic decisions regarding brand identity, communication policy, and differentiation in the market (Marques *et al.* 2020; Teece 2025). A strong brand promotes consumer trust, reduces sensitivity to price changes, and strengthens the market position of companies.

Growing digital competition requires an active online presence of brands. Fayvishenko *et al.* (2023) emphasize that social networks are a key tool for attracting customers and maintaining their loyalty. At the same time, Gyenge *et al.* (2021) emphasize that branding should be integrated into the overall business strategy, taking into account the development of e-commerce and changes in consumer preferences. Despite a wide range of research, a unified approach to assessing the effectiveness of brand management in retail remains uncertain. There is a lack of empirical data on the impact of digital transformation on brand stability, while the adoption of blockchain and smart contract technologies is still limited.

The aim of this study is to determine the impact of brand management strategies on the retail companies' competitiveness in an international context, in particular by analysing the effectiveness of digital brand strategies and their adaptation to the global digital transformation. The aim of the study involved the fulfilment of the following research objectives:

1. Study theoretical approaches to brand management and the competitiveness of retail companies in an international context.

2. Analyse the impact of digital brand management tools on the market position of retail companies in different countries, as digital transformation significantly changes the competitive environment, and the effective use of digital technologies enables companies to adapt brand strategies to changes in consumer behaviour and improve their market sustainability.

3. Identify the correlation between the effectiveness of brand management strategies and the level of retail companies' competitiveness through an empirical analysis of key economic indicators in several countries and to offer recommendations for improving brand strategies in the digital economy.

1. Literature Review

Brand management is one of the key factors in shaping the retail companies' competitiveness. Academic studies examine different approaches to brand management that affect its positioning and market sustainability. According to Mullabayev and Ravshanbekov (2025), marketing strategies are the basis of brand management, as they cover market analysis, consumer segmentation and value proposition creation. As Huda *et al.* (2025) have shown, companies that systematically apply such strategies achieve better results in promoting and satisfying customer needs. On the other hand, Tambunan *et al.* (2025) emphasize that brand effectiveness depends on the alignment of brand strategy with operational processes.

Ali and Anwar (2021) states that strategic brand management contributes to the long-term competitive advantages, which is confirmed by the positive impact of brand identity on the level of consumer loyalty. Gupta *et al.* (2020) express a similar opinion, who prove that effective brand management can improve not only the company recognition, but also its financial performance. Zhang (2025) notes that the use of data-driven management models allows for more accurate marketing decisions and increases brand effectiveness.

Academic literature demonstrates that branding plays a central role in shaping the company's value for both consumers and investors. Rahman *et al.* (2021) notes the concept of "brand love" as one of the key aspects of long-term competitiveness, as it establishes an emotional connection between the consumer and the company. They prove that optimizing product policy can significantly increase the company's market position and contribute to the development of sustainable competitive advantage. On the other hand, Chi *et al.* (2024) point to the growing role of customer experience management in retail brand management.

Current marketing concepts also emphasize the significant role of strategic brand management in retail. The research by Musayeva *et al.* (2022) demonstrates that marketing approaches focused on building brand loyalty are key to the long-term success of retail businesses. Dal Mas *et al.* (2022) add that corporate social responsibility is becoming an important element of brand management, which significantly affects consumer trust.

The digitalization of marketing processes is an important direction in modern brand management. The study by Al Kurdi *et al.* (2022) showed that blockchain and smart contract technologies can significantly improve the level of consumer trust in brands, reducing the risks of counterfeiting and increasing transparency in retail. However, the implementation of digital technologies does not always provide the desired results. Qi *et al.* (2020) note that although digital marketing tools can significantly increase a company's competitiveness, they need to be adapted to the specifics of local markets. Varadarajan (2020) describe similar results, indicating that excessive dependence on digital technologies can create risks of losing brand authenticity and differentiation.

The relationship between brand and consumer behaviour is a key aspect of research. Choedon and Lee (2020) found that an active brand presence on social media positively impacts customer engagement. Tran *et al.* (2020) emphasize the importance of brand authenticity, as consumers prefer companies that demonstrate transparency and alignment with their values. Zhou *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that personalized recommendation systems affect brand competitiveness, especially in online retail. Yu *et al.* (2021) emphasize that social platforms create new opportunities for personalized interaction with consumers.

Brand management determines the retail companies' competitiveness, but approaches to its implementation vary depending on market conditions. Dembitska and Kudyarko (2024) reveal insufficient analysis of the adaptation of brand strategies in retail, which indicates methodological gaps. Maiboroda and Marchuk (2021) emphasize the need to revise brand strategies during periods of economic instability. Mostaghel *et al.* (2022) note that digital brand management can both strengthen and weaken market positions depending on its integration with traditional methods, which is also confirmed by Rodinova *et al.* (2024), who focused on adaptation to digital transformation, especially in countries with transitive economies. Another important aspect is the correlation between brand management and financial stability of companies. Paydas Turan (2021) investigates the effectiveness of co-branding, arguing that it can strengthen the companies' competitive position. At the same time, Sumets *et al.* (2022) developed a methodology for assessing the sustainability of companies that can be applied to the analysis of brand strategies.

So, the literature review demonstrates that brand management is a critically important factor that determines the retail companies' competitiveness. But there are still some gaps in the academic literature related to insufficient coverage of the specifics of brand management in retail, contradictory results on the effectiveness of digital branding, and the lack of a unified methodology for assessing the effectiveness of brand strategies. Further research should focus on analysing the adaptation of brand management to the conditions of global digital transformation and the integration of its strategies into international trading systems.

2. Methods

The research methodology is aimed at empirical assessment of the impact of brand management strategies on the retail companies' competitiveness in an international context. The research was conducted in several stages (Figure 1), which included the collection, processing, and analysis of data on the impact of brand management strategies on the retail companies' competitiveness in an international context. All calculations were performed in Microsoft Office Excel (version 2016). The research sample included 30 retail companies (10 from the USA, 10 from the EU, 10 from Ukraine), which are leaders in their regions by market share.

Figure 1. Research design

Source: developed by the author.

The sample was formed based on the following criteria: financial stability (income level and growth dynamics over the past 5 years), intensity of brand management use (active communication strategy and application of digital technologies), and industry specifics (representation in the e-commerce, fashion, food retail segments). The general population for the study is companies in the trade sector of countries with a high level of economic development and a structured market environment. Brand management directly affects competitiveness, so the sample included those companies that demonstrate significant influence in their sectors, taking into account the following conditions: 30 companies (the optimal number to ensure representativeness and in-depth analysis), the USA, the EU, and Ukraine (for comparing brand strategies in mature and transformational economies), three industries (for assessing the impact of brand management in different consumer segments). The comparability of operating conditions is ensured by selecting companies with a similar level of international activity, competitive environment, and application of digital strategies, which eliminates the influence of external factors on the analysis results. The research employed the following methods:

- Correlation analysis was used to identify and assess the relationship between key brand management parameters and competitiveness indicators of retail companies (in particular, profitability, market share, and customer loyalty level). Correlation coefficients were calculated in Microsoft Excel (version 2016) based on panel data for 2020–2024, which made it possible to establish the strength and direction of the influence of brand management strategies on the companies' performance. The dependence of operating profitability on the share of investment in brand management, as well as the dynamics of brand awareness and customer retention rate for 2020–2024, were also studied in order to assess the long-term impact of brand strategies on the companies' competitiveness.

- Benchmarking was used to compare the brand management strategies of the studied companies with leading market practices. At the same time, brand awareness indicators, the target audience coverage, as well as general approaches to promotion and positioning were taken into account. The obtained benchmarking results gave grounds to identify effective brand management tools and elements of communication strategies that have the greatest impact on strengthening competitive advantages;

- Dynamic (trend) analysis was used to study changes in the main brand management indicators over time. The dynamics of brand awareness and the level of consumer loyalty were assessed based on the statistics for 2020–2024. This approach made it possible to trace positive trends in the development of retail companies and to support the results of correlation analysis with a quantitative assessment of the long-term impact of brand strategy on competitiveness.

The main analytical tools used were Microsoft Office Excel (version 2016) for processing statistical data, calculating correlations, and analysing trends, as well as official data sources Statista, Euro-stat, European Commission and Ministry of Economy of Ukraine and scientific research of the authors, which are indicated in the list of sources used. Particular attention was paid to developments on the formation of competitive advantages through brand management, as well as practical recommendations and cases on the implementation of brand strategies in trading companies. The proposed approach to assessing the effectiveness of brand management strategies provides sound results that can be used to develop practical recommendations on increasing the trading companies' competitiveness.

3. Results

The results of the study revealed common features of brand management strategies based on emotional engagement and creating long-term competitive advantages. However, the mechanisms for their implementation differ significantly depending on the level of digitalization of markets. Personalized marketing and interactive communication technologies dominate in developed countries (USA, EU), while a traditional approach focused on strengthening customer relationships prevails in less digitalized markets. Ukrainian companies demonstrate a mixed strategy, which indicates a gradual adaptation to integrated digital solutions in brand management.

The impact of brand management strategies on the retail companies' competitiveness was analysed by studying 30 companies from different regions of the world, which have high market positions and actively use brand management tools. Table 1 presents the general characteristics of the research sample. The obtained indicators show that the studied US companies demonstrate a relatively higher level of market share and implementation of innovative branding tools, while the sample from Ukraine has lower indicators of the use of AI technologies in marketing, which potentially affects their competitiveness. At the same time, European companies are distinguished by a relatively high share of online sales and positive dynamics of revenue growth. The data show a potential connection between the active use of digital brand management strategies and competitiveness in the global market.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study sample

Region	Number of companies	Average market share (%)	Average revenue growth (2020-2024), %	Share of online sales (%)	Use of AI in marketing (%)
EU	10	12.3	8.5	45.2	67
USA	10	14.8	7.9	51.7	72
Ukraine	10	6.7	5.1	32.4	48
Average	**30**	**11.3**	**7.2**	**43.1**	**62.3**

Source: created on the basis of Statista (2024), Eurostat (2024), Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (2024).

The impact of digital brand management tools on market position was assessed by using input data on online sales, the level of activity in social media, and brand recognition in the online environment. The results of the analysis confirmed a significant improvement in market performance for companies that use digital promotion channels and personalized marketing tools. In particular, an increase in market share was found for companies that actively used the so-called "digital-first" strategies, compared to competitors that focus mainly on offline communications. The advantage of digital strategies is clearly recorded in consumer loyalty indicators, as companies that actively use elements of interactive services and consumer data analytics demonstrate an increase in repeat purchases and average check.

The relationship between the intensity of brand management and the main indicators of competitiveness was determined through correlation analysis. The companies' competitiveness was assessed using two groups of indicators: financial and market metrics (revenue growth rates - %, market share - %, and operating profitability - operating profit as a percentage of revenue); marketing indicators (customer loyalty - Customer Retention Rate, and average revenue per customer - Customer Lifetime Value, CLV). Each pair of variables (for example, Brand Awareness and Revenue Growth Rates) was considered separately for 30 companies for 2020–2024. As the data were panel (several years of observation for each company), the final coefficient values are weighted averages. The correlation matrix in Table 2 demonstrates the relationships between the main variables of the study.

Table 2. Correlation matrix between brand management and competitiveness indicators

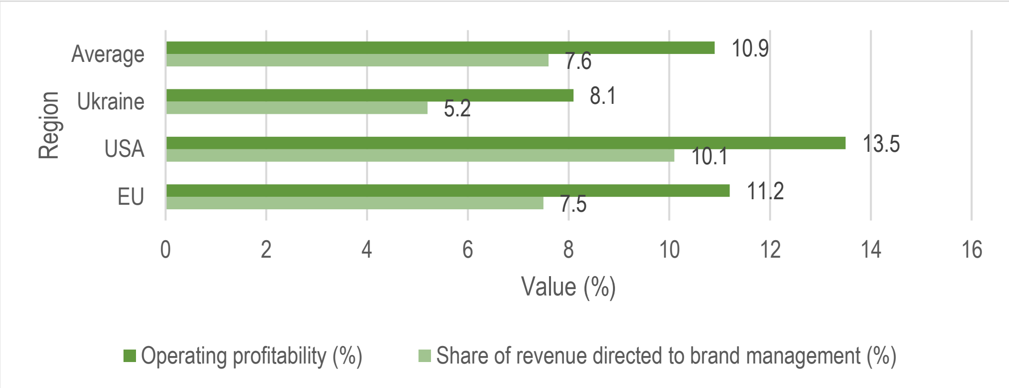
Parameter	Revenue Growth Rate	Market Share	Profitability	Customer Loyalty	CLV
Brand Awareness	0.74	0.79	0.71	0.83	0.78
Brand management costs	0.82	0.73	0.75	0.8	0.76
Digital channel usage intensity	0.77	0.69	0.7	0.79	0.82

Source: created on the basis of systematized data from Statista (2024), European Commission (2024), Eurostat (2024), Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (2024) with the values of the Pearson correlation coefficient displayed.

The analysis of relationships confirms a significant correlation between investment in brand management and financial and market indicators (r = 0.82 for revenue growth rates and r = 0.75 for profitability). High values of correlation coefficients between brand awareness and customer loyalty (r = 0.83) indicate that shaping of a clear and attractive brand directly affects the company's ability to retain consumers. Furthermore, a strong relationship was found between the digital channel usage intensity and CLV (r = 0.82), which reflects the importance of personalized and interactive communication with customers.

Analysis of the relationship between investment in brand management and operating profitability of companies assesses the effectiveness of strategic marketing decisions. Figure 2 shows that companies that allocate more than 7.5% of revenue to brand development demonstrate higher profitability, with the best indicators recorded in the USA (13.5%). This confirms that active investment in brand management has a positive impact on business profitability. Figure 2 illustrates that a higher level of investment in brand management (USA – 10.1%) correlates with higher profitability (13.5%), while lower investment (Ukraine – 5.2%) correspond to lower profitability (8.1%).

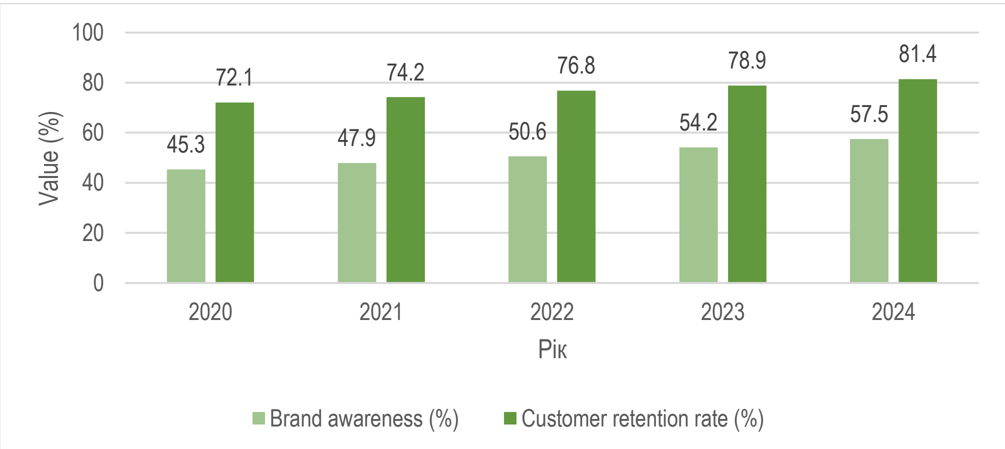
Figure 2. The impact of investment in brand management on the companies' profitability (2020–2024)



Source: created on the basis of Statista (2024), Eurostat (2024), European Commission (2024), Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (2024).

Studying the dynamics of brand awareness and customer retention makes it possible to assess the long-term effect of brand management on the company's sustainability in the market. Figure 3 shows that both indicators have grown steadily from 2020 to 2024, confirming the effectiveness of comprehensive marketing strategies. The most significant increase (+12.2% in brand awareness and +9.3% in customer retention) indicates the importance of personalized marketing and digital communications.

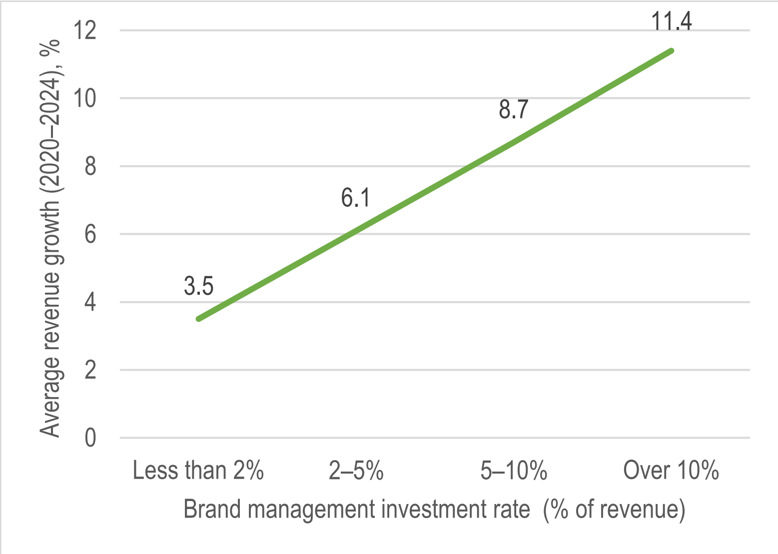
Figure 3. Dynamics of brand awareness and customer retention (2020–2024)



Source: created on the basis of Statista (2024), Eurostat (2024), European Commission (2024).

The effectiveness of brand management in the long run was assessed by analysing the dynamics of companies' revenues depending on the volume of their investment in brand strategy. The study took into account indicators from the annual reports of leading retail companies, as well as open statistics published in Statista (2024), Eurostat (2024), and the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (2024). All quantitative values were combined into a single database and processed in Microsoft Office Excel. Figure 4 shows the summarized results, reflecting the average revenue growth rates for 2020–2024 depending on the share of investment in brand management. The data indicate that the highest revenue growth rate (11.4% over 5 years) was recorded among companies that direct more than 10% of total revenue to brand strategy. So, high activity in the field of brand management correlates with better financial results and can be considered a significant factor in increasing competitiveness.

Figure 4. The relationship between the brand management investment rate and revenue growth



Source: created on the basis of Statista (2024), European Commission (2024), Eurostat (2024), Ministry of Economy of Ukraine (2024).

The obtained results give grounds to provide recommendations for increasing the retail companies' competitiveness by improving brand strategies. Optimization of digital communications costs is a key factor in modern brand management. A significant correlation between brand strategy costs and the growth of financial indicators confirms the feasibility of expanding investment in digital channels of interaction, especially for companies that focused mainly on traditional marketing.

Personalization of marketing communications contributes to increased customer engagement and long-term loyalty. The high level of correlation between the use of digital technologies and CLV indicates the need for detailed consumer segmentation. The use of big data analysis technologies and AI makes it possible to create personalized offers, which increases the effectiveness of communications and average revenue per customer.

Strengthening brand identity is important for growing competitive positions. The correlation between brand awareness, market share, and customer loyalty emphasizes the need to create a consistent visual and communication image of the brand. Integration of offline and online channels helps to build trust with the target audience.

Regular assessment of the effectiveness of the brand strategy enables adjusting marketing decisions in accordance with changes in consumer behaviour and the competitive environment. The development of a system of key performance indicators will contribute to more accurate monitoring of the impact of brand activities on financial indicators.

So, the results of the study confirm that the integration of digital technologies into brand management significantly increases the competitiveness of retail companies. Personalization of marketing activities and the use of modern information tools can significantly strengthen the market positions of companies and ensure their long-term profitability.

4. Discussion

The obtained results confirmed the research hypothesis that brand management strategy is a key factor in increasing the retail companies' competitiveness. Our study found that companies that invested more than 10% of their revenues in brand management demonstrated an average revenue growth of 11.4% over five years, which is consistent with the findings of Chen *et al.* (2021) and Fayvishenko *et al.* (2023).

Comparison with previous studies confirms the general trends in the relationship between brand management and competitiveness. Correlation analysis showed that the intensity of brand management is directly related to profitability (r = 0.75) and customer loyalty (r = 0.83). Marques *et al.* (2020) and Gupta *et al.* (2020) also indicate a close relationship between brand strategies and market performance of companies.

However, there are also some differences in the impact of brand management on companies in different regions. For example, the study by Lelyk *et al.* (2022) shows that brand management has a smaller impact on competitiveness in countries with transition economies because of limited company resources. Our results partially confirm this: Ukrainian companies that had a lower level of AI use in branding (48%) showed slower revenue growth (5.1%) compared to European (8.5%) and American (7.9%) ones.

Another contradiction is found in comparison with the study by Mostaghel *et al.* (2022), where the authors note that digital brand management does not always guarantee the stability of the company's business model. In contrast, our study recorded a high correlation between digital strategies and CLV (r = 0.82), which indicates a positive impact of personalized marketing.

The practical significance of the results gives grounds to provide recommendations for retail businesses. First, an active digital presence on social media is critical for brand identity, as confirmed by the findings of Choedon and Lee (2020). Second, it is necessary to implement personalized marketing strategies, as Yu *et al.* (2021) proved that such measures increase customer trust. It is also appropriate to combine traditional brand management with digital tools for businesses to adapt to changes in consumer preferences.

However, our study has certain limitations. In particular, the analysis was conducted on the basis of a sample of 30 businesses, which limits the possibility of generalizing the findings. The study covered mainly large companies, which may not reflect the situation for small businesses. Further research can be aimed at expanding the sample and analysing the impact of brand management strategies in small and medium-sized businesses. So, the results confirm that effective brand management is a key factor in increasing the retail companies' competitiveness, especially in the context of digital market transformation.

Conclusions

The studied issue is relevant as the increased competition in the market of goods and services encourages retail companies to look for new approaches to shaping a positive image and increasing consumer loyalty. In this context, the brand management strategy is a determining factor in ensuring the recognition and attractiveness of a retail brand, which directly affects the competitiveness and sustainable growth of companies in a dynamic market environment.

The analysis showed that the purposeful development of a brand strategy has a positive effect on increasing market share and increasing sales. The use of an integrated approach to brand management contributes to the differentiation of the offer, the formation of a value proposition for consumers, and the strengthening of competitive advantages. The results also indicate that the use of integrated marketing tools (advertising campaigns, awareness-raising activities, digital communications) ensures the establishment of a stable emotional connection with consumers and long-term commitment to the brand.

The academic novelty lies in the identification of key elements of an effective brand strategy that directly affect the competitiveness of retail enterprises. The practical value of the study is the possibility of using the obtained results to develop comprehensive brand management programmes that will enable retail companies to adapt to the current market challenges and ensure sustainable development. It is appropriate to apply the developed recommendations in the field of marketing communications, strategic management, as well as in the corporate culture and customer service quality management.

Research prospects include further expanding of methodological approaches to the analysis and measurement of the impact of brand strategy on the financial performance of retail companies. The relationship between internal branding, staff motivation and the overall level of competitiveness also requires deeper empirical study.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

The authors contributed equally to this research.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of Use of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies

The authors declare that they have not used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies during the preparation of this work.

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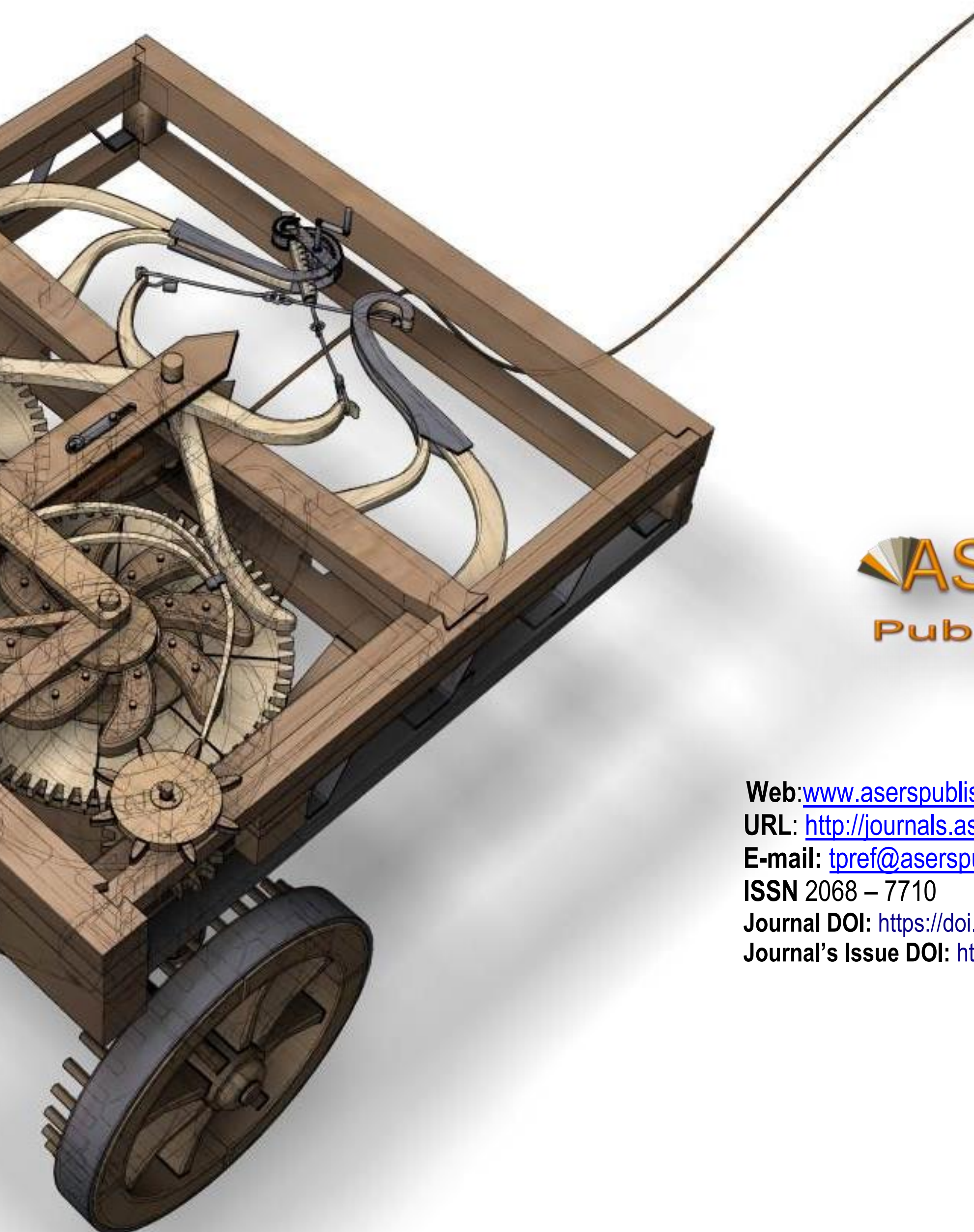

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