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Toward Decision-Oriented Digital Brand Collaborations: A Review of Spillover Effects, Pricing Mechanisms, and Platform Cooperation

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technologies and the evolution of consumer behavior have radically changed the traditional ways of interaction and competition between brands, driving innovation and creating new forms of collaborative partnerships in business management. In digital entrepreneurial environments, interbrand collaborations, ranging from joint promotional campaigns to shared digital ecosystems, have emerged as strategic instruments for value creation and competitive differentiation. Nevertheless, a review of the literature indicates that many such initiatives fail to achieve the desired outcomes in areas such as perceived value, customer loyalty, and economic returns, largely because of the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that underpin successful digital alliances. This review article seeks to synthesize and integrate existing research by examining three principal dimensions of collaboration-oriented initiatives in digital contexts. The first concerns brand spillover effects and the transfer of credibility and brand image between partners. The second addresses brand power as a determining factor in pricing decisions, benefit-sharing arrangements, and the broader economic structure of collaboration, including revenue models, risk allocation, and governance mechanisms. The third dimension is that of the complementarity of product or service design so as to increase the effectiveness of the campaign and to increase operational efficiency. Moreover, recent studies highlight that the analysis of these interactions in digital ecosystems without the use of quantitative approaches (game theory and demand models in two-sided markets in particular) leads to a partial understanding of cooperative dynamics. The review of the literature shows a major gap between the practical needs of business managers and the analytical models currently available. On the one hand, intuition-based decision-making in digital collaborations tends to lead to inefficient resource allocation and brand dilution. On the other hand, the lack of predictive frameworks prevents the design of sustainable alliances. The article integrates theoretical perspectives and empirical results to provide a comprehensive framework for partner selection, designing profitable collaborations, and developing a future research agenda for the advancement of digital marketing management and the economic productivity of collaborative ventures.

Keywords: Game theory, Pricing, Sales model, Brand spillover, Co-marketing, Platforms.

1 | Introduction

Strategic partnerships are considered an important tool for companies to develop competitive advantage. The literature discusses various types of such collaborations, including strategic alliances and joint ventures. Collaborations occur when companies pool resources, expertise, and complementary skills to achieve objectives that are beyond their individual capabilities. This approach not only shares risks and costs but also provides opportunities for entering new markets and enhancing competitive efficiency for the partners involved [1]. From this perspective, strategic partnerships can also enhance strategic agility, helping businesses in the emerging shared economy adapt to weak institutions, market uncertainty, and regulatory pressures. This adaptability contributes to value creation, the preservation of competitive advantage, and the strengthening of brand identity [2].

Recent studies reveal new forms of collaboration between startups and big companies, beyond traditional partnerships. Such collaborations are often executed through mechanisms such as accelerators, innovation hubs, joint ventures, and corporate venture client models that pool resources, accelerate innovation, and create shared value. A recent systematic review of the literature in this field has shown that such collaborations, on the one hand, provide startups with access to broader resources and markets, while on the other hand, help large companies enhance their organizational flexibility and innovation capabilities [3]. Among these emerging collaborative forms, co-marketing can be viewed as a specific type of interfirm collaboration focused on marketing activities. It refers to a joint marketing effort in which partners work together to promote their products or services. Such partnerships are viewed as strategic alliances that enable firms to enhance their market position through joint promotional efforts. Such alliances typically involve organizations that collaborate on marketing plans while maintaining their independent identities [4]. The main objectives of co-marketing typically include the following [5–7]:

- I. Enhancing the competitive position of each partner is one of the key goals through joint marketing efforts.
- II. Attracting new customers and expanding market reach.
- III. Developing new business relationships.
- IV. Access to information, technologies, and other capabilities available in partner entities.
- V. Optimizing costs for more effective resource allocation than in independent operations.

Organizations involved in co-marketing gain several advantages. One of these is the location advantage, especially in geographic clusters where being in proximity to partners that are part of the value chain can be of tremendous advantage. In addition, the sharing of resources and marketing costs between partners improves the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of campaigns, which is particularly important for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with limited marketing budgets [5]. Companies benefit from working with others close to the core company. Co-marketing supports knowledge, information, and technology transfer between organizations. The combination of complementary offerings or expertise in co-marketing creates more value for customers [6].

These collaborations also provide access to new markets and customer segments that may otherwise remain difficult to reach. In addition, joint marketing efforts often generate greater visibility and impact than individual campaigns, while also encouraging innovative approaches and new perspectives that are less likely to emerge independently. However, co-marketing also involves several challenges. The coordination of strategies, messages, and activity execution among partners is often complex, particularly in consumer goods industries where sales and marketing efforts are already difficult to align [7], [8].

The subject of this study is digital entrepreneurial strategic partnerships as a factor in the formation and strengthening of the competitive advantages associated with innovation. In particular, the study examines the impact of these collaborations on interfirm interactions, sales, pricing, and the main factors influencing consumer purchase decisions. It also considers other dimensions of these partnerships, including brand

spillover effects, resource sharing, and joint value creation. The central goal is to develop a conceptual framework that explains how business partnerships can enhance brand positioning and competitiveness through entry into new markets or the introduction of new products and services. The article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 discusses the main insights and outlines directions for future research. Section 4 concludes the study.

2 | Literature Review

Recent research on digital collaborative arrangements can be organized around three interrelated streams, one for each of the core dimensions presented in the abstract. The first looks at cooperation among platforms, in particular brand spillover effects and how credibility, trust, and brand image flow among partners within digital ecosystems. The second is dedicated to platform pricing strategies and stresses the impact of brand power on pricing decisions, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and the overall economic architecture of collaboration. The third is about determinants of co-marketing effectiveness, especially service complementarity and its impact on campaign effectiveness, productivity, and operational efficiency. These three streams provide a coherent framework for synthesizing prior scholarship and the analytical foundation for the literature review that follows.

2.1 | Cooperation Among Platforms and Brand Spillover Effects

Brand spillover effects refer to the increase in demand, sales, or visibility of a weaker brand as a result of its association with a stronger brand through collaborative interactions. These effects typically operate through mechanisms such as word of mouth and exposure to overlapping audiences. Previous empirical work has highlighted that spillovers are not only short-term reputational transfers, but also dynamic and persistent patterns, particularly when content or offerings are strategically aligned across platforms. In such contexts, exposure on follower platforms may subsequently redirect user attention toward leading platforms, thereby sustaining cross-platform demand over time [9].

Additional research indicates that inter-platform collaboration promotes spillover dynamics through processes of co-creation and ecosystem integration. For instance, in Internet of Things ecosystems, platforms generate business value through interoperability and sharing economy principles, enabling the integration of fragmented markets and the alignment of complementary user groups [10]. However, the longevity of these spillovers depends critically on complementor engagement. Such engagement is driven by platform resources, value proposition, and changing customer needs, and it is manifested in content generation, network expansion, and continuous coordination [11]. Related studies on interconnection in quality of service-based networks reinforce this perspective by modeling these environments as two-sided systems characterized by reciprocal externalities. This analytical lens provides a structured basis for examining cooperative strategies among platforms. Within this stream, agent-based modeling has been advanced as a useful method for capturing strategic decision processes at the actor level and tracing their aggregate consequences for system-level interconnection outcomes [12].

Extending the above theory to e-commerce, cooperation-competition-based approaches imply that cooperative dynamics are highly relevant to the development and transformation of digital ecosystems. In this respect, symmetric symbiosis based on mutual dependency and balance of interests usually brings about sustainable development and the emergence of real synergies among the parties involved [13]. However, spillovers are not necessarily beneficial to both sides. Research in the area of two-sided markets shows that a strong cross-side network effect can help non-cooperating platforms maintain their competitive position [14]. Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that direct cooperation between manufacturers and platforms can weaken the position of e-tailers, whereas alliances formed around e-tailers typically lead to a more balanced and sustainable distribution of benefits among participants [15].

However, the effectiveness of such mechanisms depends on the cost structures and the degree of strategic alignment between platform partners in general, as gains from spillover effects may be offset by misalignment.

More recent work formalizes this trade-off: When a platform sells a national-brand product and its own private label through a common supplier, information disclosure produces a consumer-heterogenization effect that softens price competition, while brand spillover produces a brand-homogenization effect that increases the perceived attractiveness of the private label. The platform's optimal strategy depends on how cost-efficient the two products are relative to each other; importantly, at intermediate cost-efficiency levels, the two strategies are substitutes: spillover increases the disclosure threshold and makes joint adoption suboptimal even if both are costless [16]. Vertical sourcing strategies affect brand spillover efficacy beyond platform-level dynamics. A downstream firm can separate brand association from physical procurement (through co-branding or endorsement) to reap reputational spillover benefits, while reducing the risk of supply disruption. However, this strategy depends on the pricing behavior of the trusted supplier: As the intensity of brand spillover increases, the supplier increases the wholesale price to extract downstream surplus and protect its own B2C market position [17].

Moreover, the strategic implications of brand spillover also extend to the manufacturer's choice of logistics service. The manufacturer's threshold for adopting retailer logistics moves upward (i.e., increasing the parameter region in which third-party logistics is preferred) when free brand spillover is offered by a retailer. This deterrence effect is due to the fact that the spillover increases the private label as a competitive substitute, thereby reducing the incentive of the manufacturer to invest in the premium logistics channel of the retailer. Hence, the retailer faces a strategic trade-off. For a range of intermediate spillover conditions, the lost logistics revenue outweighs the profit gains from private-label products, and the retailer optimally opts out of free spillover. The results show that brand spillover is not always positive, and its overall value depends on the interaction between competitive positioning and revenue streams [18].

2.2 | Pricing Strategies of Platforms

The vertical collaboration between focal firms and manufacturers in platform ecosystems depends on differences in brand value, cross-selling opportunities, and platform empowerment. Optimal decisions in original equipment manufacturer and original brand manufacturer frameworks support arrangements in which brand values are strategically aligned. Transfer payments are then used to correct misalignment. Product pricing is determined by the trade-off between cross-selling revenues, demand elasticity, and cost coefficients. Firms reduce prices only when the gains from increased sales volume exceed the marginal returns from higher prices [19]. At the horizontal level, cooperation between two-sided platforms and social media leverages traffic attraction but also faces same-side crowding out. In single-homing scenarios, crowding out increases profits and prices, while cross-side effects dampen them. Under cooperation, multi-homing, promoted by basic utility and cross-side effects, leads to higher prices. Non-cooperating platforms can still compete effectively when cross-side effects are strong, and attracting social media traffic can also benefit rivals [14].

In e-commerce environments, platforms usually differentiate between individual and professional sellers to adapt their cooperation schemes. When professional sellers have strong market appeal, combining both groups tends to outperform a focus on only one segment. However, exclusive cooperation with professional sellers is more beneficial when professional sellers are less attractive, and individual sellers have high performance requirements [20]. Similarly, e-tailers and manufacturers generally prefer the agency selling model when competition is moderate, and commission rates are reasonable, but shift to reselling when competition becomes more intense or commission rates rise. Direct manufacturer platform collaboration may disadvantage e-tailers, while collaboration with e-tailers can increase overall supply chain profitability [15]. This governance choice is also further shaped by customer service technology in platforms with competing brands. When the human service cost is either low or high, human service dominates; when the human service cost is at intermediate levels, the AI-powered service is more profitable. Under agency selling, this pattern reverses as brand competition increases, and the supply chain optimal structure re-emerges as resale under high competitive intensity or strong consumer acceptance of AI [21].

Evolutionary game models with reciprocal network effects in cross-border e-commerce reveal that platforms can attract small and medium-sized enterprises more sustainably through network enhancement rather than revenue sharing. As infrastructure develops, network benefits increase while the cost of attracting sellers decreases for platforms [22]. A similar tension of competition and cooperation exists in social commerce platforms, where the extent and direction of network effects impact their strategic positioning [23]. Under network externalities, banks and e-commerce platforms also develop supply chain finance cooperation, gradually supporting the emergence of stable and long-term relationships [24].

In two-sided markets, pricing is driven primarily by indirect network effects, where activity on one side generates value for the other. Such effects are endogenously determined by consumers' preferences for variety and the extent of competition among producers [25]. Platforms are intermediaries that facilitate the organization of multiple market sides, such as buyers and sellers or riders and drivers, and the allocation of value through tariff structures that seek to overcome coordination failures and internalize cross-side externalities [26]. Recent research also shows that pricing structures are closely linked to governance choices regarding sales arrangements, including first-party retail models, third-party marketplace models, and hybrid models. Pricing power can shift between platforms and brands. These governance forms reshape revenue models, risk sharing, and value appropriation in digital ecosystems [27]. Pricing in platform settings can also be a governance device, not only a revenue-extraction device. The joint design of insulating membership fees and per-unit transaction fees/subsidies can facilitate participation, diminish incentives for off-platform transactions, and maintain within-platform exchange under cost information asymmetry in B2B supply-chain settings. Our findings contribute to the pricing literature by showing how tariff structures can be designed to redistribute surplus across market sides as well as to align incentives and preserve platform transaction continuity [28].

The platform commission structure also affects the governance of quality innovation: Low commission rates induce contract-manufacturer-led innovation to improve product quality and profits for both parties, while at medium commission rates, the manufacturer prefers to delegate innovation leadership to the platform, which is better equipped with demand data and market intelligence. A high commission rate leads to a higher benefit of platform-led innovation for the manufacturer. Interestingly, with a moderately high commission rate, there exists a strategic conflict: the manufacturer prefers platform-led innovation, while the platform prefers to avoid innovation costs and free-ride on the manufacturer's effort. The more pronounced brand spillover effect also pushes the platform to be more innovative as it is able to realize more value from the enhanced own-brand product [29]. Private-label introduction adds a dynamic competitive layer to platform ecosystems by transforming the platform-brand manufacturer relationship from pure cooperation into co-opetition; in this setting, product quality and consumers' waiting behavior jointly shape both the preferred co-opetition pattern and the timing of market entry [30]. Brand spillover further alters competitive positioning by influencing how private labels and national brands interact across alternative sales modes [31]. Moreover, the strategic relevance of pricing timing varies across transaction formats, becoming more consequential under agency arrangements than under wholesale settings [32].

In the broader literature on two-sided platform pricing, the division of fees across market sides is a function of the structural characteristics of cross-side interactions. Greater participation on one side can increase effective diversity and decrease substitutability on the other, thereby shifting market power and reshaping platform revenue structures. Fees therefore serve as strategic tools for the distribution of surplus among platform actors. The sign and size of fees are strongly related to consumers' preferences for variety and the degree of competition among suppliers [33]. A closer look at two-sided platform pricing suggests that fee sharing between sides of the market should not be taken as a universal rule of thumb. For the one-sided charging structures, the pricing results still relate closely to the network-externality conditions of the paying side, and the platform profit increases with the strength of the cross-side effects associated with the paying side.

On the other hand, when both sides are charged, the pricing logic is non-monotonic. The optimal tariffs depend simultaneously on the platform service costs, the buyers' operational benefits, and the sellers' opportunity costs. This distinction suggests that two-sided fee design is not simply a more aggressive form of surplus extraction, but rather a more subtle balancing device that must satisfy the incentive conditions of both market sides simultaneously [34]. In this vein, recent studies of Content Self-E-Commerce (CSE) platforms provide a more dynamic view of platform pricing that goes beyond surplus distribution mechanisms. The results show that the effectiveness of pricing strategies, especially price reductions, is dependent on both the decay rate of consumer preferences and the relative market share of the platform. Specifically, reducing prices may not help platforms with a low market share retain users, and its effectiveness may be significantly weakened when consumer preferences change rapidly. In contrast, platforms with stronger market positions might respond to preference decay more sustainably with a combination of premium pricing and service quality improvements rather than direct price competition [35].

Building on this perspective, recent research proposes that platforms also exercise pricing power through financial mechanisms. By jointly determining referral fees and financing terms such as interest rates, platforms can influence demand, reallocate risk, and design arrangements for benefit sharing between operators and sellers [36]. Extending the finance-based view of platform pricing, evidence from dual-channel systems indicates that financing not only influences the allocation of surplus but also the equilibrium structure of channel prices. When there is a dual-channel supply chain that involves an e-commerce platform, the manufacturer's risk aversion reduces the wholesale price, the direct-selling price, and the retail price. The retailer's risk aversion reduces the retail price but increases the wholesale price and the direct-selling price. The analysis also shows that the introduction of financing increases the manufacturer's cost base. Consequently, all the equilibrium prices are increased. The higher the financing interest rate, the stronger the upward effect becomes [37].

In e-commerce advertising markets, Stackelberg leader-follower dynamics between platforms and advertisers shape commission rates, advertising prices, and effort levels, allowing platform leaders to capture a disproportionate share of the generated surplus [38]. Pricing outcomes in content platform ecosystems may also be indirectly influenced by creator-side governance rules, not just tariff setting alone. Eligibility for ad revenue sharing based on followers can simultaneously change creator participation, user engagement, and platform profit. When advertising prices rise with user engagement but fall with advertising inventory, tightening the eligibility threshold could decrease the number of ad-supported creators and the quantity of ad supply, and at the same time, weaken users' negative response to advertising exposure. This additional channel may lead to an increase in the unit price of advertising, thus establishing a connection between platform access regulation on the supply side and advertising pricing outcomes [39].

2.3 | Factors Affecting Co-Marketing Effectiveness

Co-marketing effectiveness refers to the extent to which collaborative efforts between firms achieve their intended objectives. These efforts often involve strategic alliances in which firms pool resources to extend market reach, increase innovation, and improve performance outcomes such as value creation, customer satisfaction, and the fulfillment of unmet needs. This review brings together the key factors influencing co-marketing effectiveness, with particular emphasis on service complementarity, which captures the extent to which partners' services support each other through synergies in resource integration, knowledge sharing, and value co-creation. Drawing on the resource-based view, relational theories, and empirical work on alliances, prior research highlights several important drivers, including lower power asymmetries, stronger partner fit [40], using complementary resources to generate dynamic value over the alliance life cycle, leveraging knowledge relatedness across business units [41], and aligning market orientation with marketing and innovation capabilities [42].

Seminal work in industrial branding research provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing the strategic role of co-branding in B2B markets. In such contexts, the effectiveness of co-branding goes beyond its use

as a promotional device and depends on the operationalization of three key mechanisms: complementarity, perceived risk reduction, and meaning spillover. Complementarity is not only at the brand level but also in terms of technical and functional integration of the offerings that allows the creation of a joint value proposition for industrial customers. In complex procurement and evaluation processes, the total credibility of the partnering brands gives reassurance and reduces uncertainty, thereby creating perceived risk reduction. Meaning spillover also improves the alliance by enabling qualitative associations and brand equity to spill over across partners, such that product differentiation in competitive markets is facilitated. Simultaneously, a more expansive interpretation implies that co-branding should be perceived not merely as an inter-firm arrangement premised on strategic fit, but also as a process situated within a larger identity system influenced by multiple stakeholders. In this sense, synergy between brands is not only a question of technical alignment or compatibility on the market, but also of the continuous interplay between the intended brand identity and the identity that is constructed and performed by brand communities. Crucially, the tensions produced by this interaction should not be seen as purely negative. Instead, they can be constructive triggers for synergy, as differences between official brand expressions and socially negotiated interpretations can spark processes of collective meaning-making, reinterpretation and adaptation. Thus, co-branding in industrial contexts could more properly be regarded as a network-oriented strategic process where value creation depends not only on complementary resources and reduced uncertainty but also on stakeholders' ability to negotiate, absorb and transform identity-related tensions into more resilient and meaningful forms of brand collaboration [43], [44].

The effectiveness of collaboration is largely dependent on the characteristics of the partners' resources and capabilities. Previous theoretical work suggests that the greatest benefit of collaboration is achieved when the partners contribute heterogeneous but complementary resources rather than similar and overlapping capabilities, as complementarity reduces redundant activities, reduces costs, and increases the speed to market. In this regard, knowledge spillovers and absorptive capacity are important in realizing the benefits of complementarity, as partners with higher absorptive capacity are better able to recognize, absorb, and commercialize external knowledge. Excess heterogeneity, on the other hand, may increase coordination costs and reduce the effectiveness of collaboration. The optimum therefore is when the benefits of knowledge and synergy from heterogeneity outweigh the cost of coordination and the risks of knowledge leak [45].

In this stream of research, service complementarity is a key driver of co-marketing effectiveness. Complementarity allows firms to combine distinct but synergistic service offerings and co-create value through network interactions, customer participation, and integrated service design [46], [47]. Empirical evidence further suggests that complementarity is more decisive in generating superior performance outcomes than mere similarity between partners, especially in service-oriented contexts where customer involvement amplifies the effects of collaboration [48]. Complementarity can also affect performance via pricing and promotional structures in digital markets, according to further research. The effectiveness of co-development in analytical models of manufacturer–retailer collaboration depends not only on the allocation of development costs but also on the functioning of pricing decisions as signals under asymmetric information. In particular, the retailer's *ex ante* willingness to share development costs is affected by its expectations on product quality and expected economic gains, which implies that the success of collaboration depends on the interplay of information structure, pricing strategy and early-stage financial commitment [49]. The strength of the complementary relationship between products should be taken into account when deciding to offer them and how much to charge for them. In the case of weaker complementarity, analytical evidence suggests that stronger price incentives are required to generate demand, while for more robust complementarity, small price changes may be enough to trigger demand and increase retailer returns. This suggests that pricing schemes of collaborative supply environments should be tuned towards the functional and consumption-based connection between paired offerings rather than uniformly across complementary combinations [50].

Analytical evidence from online retail settings suggests that a higher degree of complementarity between core and add-on offerings is positively related to profitability under bundling strategies. By contrast, under add-on pricing models, stronger complementarity may produce weaker or even adverse effects [51]. In addition to the analytical models focusing on economic aspects, the profitability of cooperation is also important to

consider the consumer's psychological involvement in these omnichannel systems. In omnichannel retail, platform synergy and personalized incentives are the key drivers in managing consumer experience. The integration of online and offline channels allows for operational integration, creating a seamless experience for consumers shopping across platforms. The synergy is further boosted by personalized incentives, which act as active catalysts. These incentives significantly boost 'situational involvement' and targeted interventions effectively upgrade the shopping process from a purely utilitarian or functional activity (Usability) to a more engaging and enjoyable experience (Hedonic). This evidence ultimately indicates that multi-channel presence is not enough to satisfy the needs of customers; the success of these ecosystems is dictated by their capacity to seamlessly integrate channels and provide incentives in accordance with the situational needs of the consumer [52].

Knowledge synergies between partners or business units also affect co-marketing outcomes, especially when services are complementary. Evidence from multi-business firms suggests that synergies derived from relatedness in product, customer, or managerial knowledge domains do not necessarily translate into better performance. Rather, complementarity across these knowledge domains improves both market-based and accounting-based performance indicators [41]. Such a logic is a logic that extends naturally to co-marketing alliances, where service complementarity allows firms to combine different knowledge bases, and hence strengthen innovation and customer-related advantages. For example, research shows that market orientation translates into performance via marketing and innovation capabilities, and that the complementarity between these two capabilities is particularly critical for customer-related outcomes, although it is less decisive for purely innovation-driven performance [42]. Similarly, in high technology mergers and acquisitions, complementary scientific and technological knowledge acquired after the merger leads to higher quality inventions and greater innovation than strategies based solely on similarity [53].

More broadly, service complementarity is a key pillar of co-marketing because it forms part of resource integration and network-based interactions that extend beyond traditional exchange relationships. From a value co-creation perspective, marketing activities emerge from interactions among multiple actors that combine complementary services to generate mutual benefits [46]. Service-dominant logic further proposes that value and quality are created through the participation of different stakeholders, including customers. This perspective calls for a many-to-many view in which complementary services contribute to a balance of quality, productivity, and profitability [48]. Participatory platforms such as brand websites, social media accounts, digital applications, and brand communities developed by companies provide structured spaces for interaction between marketers and stakeholders that facilitate this co-creative process. In these settings, firms are likely to be more facilitators, platform providers, and moderators of interaction, and less controllers, which in turn shapes how collaborative value is generated and sustained [54].

Based on this platform perspective, recent studies suggest that the development of brand value in social media environments is characterized by a gradual and iterative process of participatory value creation rather than as an immediate result of interaction. More specifically, the process of value formation begins with some basic conditions such as brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand experience, then proceeds to relational processes, especially brand value-in-use and brand relationship quality, and culminates in behavioral effects such as brand loyalty and brand co-creation behavior. Importantly, brand value-in-use acts as a key link from these initial conditions to downstream outcomes and trust as a key component of brand relationship quality in an interactive platform. This processual perspective adds conceptual precision to platform-enabled collaboration by clarifying how structured interaction spaces are translated into enduring relational and behavioral outcomes rather than merely enabling participation at a general level [55].

Customer participation further enhances this process by enabling customers to contribute resources that alter offerings and impact other actors. This process frames co-marketing as a phenomenon at the system level. For example, customer involvement in partnerships for public transport has been demonstrated to facilitate the wider integration of services and positively influence perceptions and behavioral responses to services co-marketed [56]. Recent research on brand and digital influencer collaborations further refines this view by

distinguishing between consumer engagement with the brand and engagement with the collaborative partner. The evidence suggests that both forms of engagement can enhance performance, while under specific conditions their joint intensification may induce spillover effects, weaken relational ties, and reduce co-marketing effectiveness [57].

Another analytical view in the co-branding literature stresses that the success of a partnership depends not only on the compatibility of the partners but also on the heterogeneity of the market, the spillover effects on the parent brands, and the risk preferences of the partners. Market segmentation is strategically important when consumers differ in social influence, particularly for snob versus conformist segments, when there is co-branding between fast-fashion and luxury brands. Target market selection is a key part of the alliance decision. The study also reveals that the economic effects of co-branding extend beyond the focal co-branded product. Collaboration can impact the performance of the core product lines of the parent brands and shift the distribution of gains between partners. Moreover, the effect of risk aversion is asymmetric across the allied firms and depends on the position of each brand within the alliance. Overall, the results emphasize the importance of taking into account market structure, wider economic spillovers, and partner-specific risk attitudes when assessing co-branding strategies [58].

Complementarity also influences the design of interdisciplinary services, where the combination of expertise from areas such as marketing, operations, and interaction design facilitates service innovation [47]. Evidence from interfirm collaboration further indicates that established firms can exploit complementary assets through cooperative arrangements. For example, in biopharmaceutical alliances, strategic emphasis on asset complementarity has been shown to outperform technology exploration in enhancing new product development outcomes [59]. At the same time, dynamic relational perspectives suggest that although complementarity can stimulate value creation, its benefits may decline over time unless relational mechanisms such as trust, dedicated assets, and coordination routines are carefully managed. In this regard, the level of resource interdependence has a decisive influence on both the speed of value creation and the durability of collaborative relationships [60].

3 | Discussion and Future Research Directions

3.1 | Discussion

This literature review integrates three related streams of research, inter-platform collaboration and brand spillover effects, platform pricing strategies, and the determinants of co-marketing effectiveness, to develop an integrated understanding of joint marketing activities in digital business environments. The body of studies reviewed indicates that the effectiveness of co-marketing cannot be explained by single strategic decisions. Rather, it stems from the fit of cooperation mechanisms, pricing and governance structures and the extent of service complementarity between the cooperating brands.

A key finding in the literature is that inter-platform cooperation tends to magnify brand spillovers, but these spillovers are neither automatic nor uniformly value-enhancing. Market structure, partner roles, and strategic fit are the conditions of success for cooperation-oriented strategies that can enhance legitimacy, visibility, and value creation through ecosystem integration. In particular, the literature suggests that spillovers can generate asymmetric effects, favoring weak brands or some leading platforms, but possibly hurting some intermediaries depending on governance arrangements and competitive positioning. These findings point to the need to consider brand spillover as a strategic asset within digital ecosystems rather than just a reputational side effect.

The discussion of platform pricing strategies further highlights that mechanisms of economic coordination play a central role in shaping the outcomes of joint business collaborations. Pricing structures, revenue sharing models, and financial instruments are not limited to value appropriation; they also serve as coordination mechanisms that align incentives and reduce coordination failures among participating actors. The literature consistently finds that the presence of indirect network effects increases both the opportunities and risks of collaboration. Value creation across the two sides of the market needs to be carefully balanced against same-

side congestion and competitive pressures. Importantly, decisions about pricing authority and governance, such as agency or resale models or hybrid arrangements, dramatically change the way value is shared between platforms and brands, with significant implications for enhancing productivity and developing long-term collaborative relationships.

A third stream of literature finally emphasizes service complementarity as a key driver of co-marketing effectiveness. Complementarities often have more powerful performance implications than similarity within an alliance-based perspective, service-dominant logic, and engagement-oriented perspective, as it allows further resource integration, knowledge recombination, and value co-creation. However, the reviewed studies provide an important cautionary insight that complementarity is not universally superior in all conditions. Effectiveness is contingent on a number of structural factors including pricing models, coordination mechanisms, and relational governance arrangements. For example, in digital markets, complementary goods improve performance only in certain bundling arrangements but can have negative or weaker effects in other pricing arrangements. Similarly, engagement-based collaborations imply that too much or misaligned intensity of participation among multiple actors can create negative spillovers, inadvertently negatively affecting relational stability and co-marketing outcomes.

In conclusion, the results suggest that co-marketing effectiveness in digital environments is better viewed as a contingent and system-level phenomenon. Successful joint brand collaborations require alignment of platform cooperation strategies, pricing and governance mechanisms, and configurations of service complementarity. Failure to manage these interdependencies properly can result in value erosion, relational instability, or unintended spillover effects, even when each strategic element is individually beneficial.

3.2 | Future Research Directions

Integrative insights of this review suggest several important directions for future research. First, future studies need to examine the dynamic nature of service complementarity in joint brand collaborations. Rather than treating complementarity as a static characteristic, scholars should explore its emergence over time as a result of technological change, shifts in the rules of platform governance, and changes in the level of consumer engagement. Longitudinal and process-oriented research designs are useful to understand how different stages of collaborative relationships reinforce, weaken, or transform forms of complementarity.

Second, a future research direction that is gaining more importance is the role of AI-driven personalization in co-marketing contexts. As platforms increasingly depend on artificial intelligence algorithms to generate personalized recommendations, curate content, and analyse customers' past behavioral patterns, joint business collaborations are likely to be increasingly mediated by data-driven matching processes. Future research may study how AI-based recommender systems affect the visibility, perceived fit, and prices offered in co-marketing offerings, and how algorithmic content curation reconfigures power asymmetries between platforms and collaborating brands.

Third, and most importantly, future research should pay more attention to the strategic structure of decision-making in joint business collaborations. Previous research has largely concentrated on qualitative outcomes like spillover effects, complementarity, and co-marketing effectiveness. Nevertheless, this research line also provides a strong analytical foundation for the game-theoretic modelling that quantitatively considers the effect of different factors on the demand functions, finds the best strategies and pricing decisions of the participating actors, and corresponding profit functions in such collaborative settings.

4 | Conclusion

This article contributes to the understanding of joint brand collaborations in digital environments by integrating research streams that have been examined in a fragmented way, namely, inter-platform cooperation and brand spillover effects, firms' pricing and governance mechanisms, and service complementarity as a driver of co-marketing effectiveness. Through this integration, the article also reconceptualizes digital co-marketing as a higher-level phenomenon in which collaborative outcomes emerge

from the alignment of technological infrastructures, economic coordination, and relational configurations, rather than from isolated strategic choices alone. One of the key contributions of this review is to reframe brand spillover as a manageable phenomenon in ecosystems rather than just a passive reputational effect. The reviewed studies suggest that spillover effects are influenced by partner fit, pricing authority, and competitive structures, and that they may produce asymmetric or even undesirable results under misalignment conditions. This insight exposes the strategic trade-offs inherent in digital collaborations with co-opetition.

The review also demonstrates that the pricing and economic design of products or services are key to the sustainability of brand collaborations. Value appropriation is influenced by pricing structures, revenue sharing arrangements, and governance choices that also serve as coordination mechanisms to align incentives and distribute risk among businesses. In this view, economic design is an important link between platform cooperation and co-marketing performance.

Moreover, the paper stresses that, while service complementarity facilitates resource integration, knowledge recombination and value co-creation, its performance implications are inherently contingent. Complementarity yields better outcomes only under very particular structural and relational conditions, including suitable pricing models, engagement arrangements, and governance mechanisms. This review thus provides a more nuanced and accurate explanation for the poor performance of many digital collaborations, despite strategic fit being seemingly in place.

To sum up, this article offers an integrated analytical perspective that brings together research from marketing, platform economics, and collaboration research. It stresses that the sustained success of co-marketing in digital ecosystems relies on the structuring and alignment of collaborative arrangements to relevant contingencies, economic governance, and complementary offerings in contexts characterized by multilateral interactions and competitive forces. Moreover, the findings are valuable to managers who want to expand existing markets, enter new markets, or design new products and services since they can support more effective decision-making to foster innovation, improve efficiency, and build more sustainable collaborations.

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All aspects of the research and manuscript preparation were carried out by the author. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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All data supporting the reported findings in this research paper are provided within the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by the author.

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