



Impact of Digital Marketing and Social Media on Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract: This study examines Digital Marketing and Social Media and its influence on consumer buying as prominent factors to alter the economic horizon today. Lifestyle change has been fueled by digital technologies; smartphones, social media, buying online has changed the way of search, alternative assessment, interactions with brands and purchasing. This study is done to find the effects of the digital marketing strategies such as online advertising, search engine marketing, email marketing, influencer marketing, content marketing and personalized promotions on the awareness, attitude, purchasing intention and purchasing behavior of consumers. It also examines the impact that social media websites has on perceptions via eWOM, customer history, recommendations, engagement with the brand and peer influence. Primary data for the consumers can be collected with a structured questionnaire and analysed with the appropriate statistical method; be it descriptive or analytical. The research will be expected to identify key digital and social media that consumers are influenced by, regarding their buy decision process, and the influence demonstrated. The output will provide the marketers and the enterprises with useful insights to optimise their digital marketing efforts, engagement with customers, retention of customers and customer choices. Overall, the study contributes to the small body of knowledge regarding consumer behaviour changing under the force of consumption in the digital spot today.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Social Media; Consumer Buying Behaviour; Online Advertising; Social Media Marketing; Consumer Perception; Purchase Intention; Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM); Influencer Marketing; Brand Engagement.

Introduction

As digital technology evolves so rapidly, it has significantly changed the approach for companies to communicate with their consumers, while also influencing the consumers' decision making processes for going ahead with a purchase. The evolution of the internet, smart phones, ecommerce platforms and social networking sites has moved marketing away from 'traditional' towards more technology. Digital marketing appears to be in the radar of modern business, as it can be delivered to a large and diverse population audience at minimal cost, at trackable level and can be delivered in a personalised and meaningful manner. Digital marketing also allows businesses to communicate and engage with their customers in real time and helps them get immediate feedback regarding their products and services, their likes and dislikes, and their experience. This means that online marketing, such as search engine marketing, online advertising, email marketing, content marketing, mobile marketing, influencer marketing and social media marketing are all important tactics that target potential customers and help turn them into customers. Digital information is also assisting consumers to compare information products, read reviews, see how the product works before purchasing, as well as check the price of other products.

Along with this, social media has been instrumental in furthering this transformation by facilitating a two-way consumer to brand communication process. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and now X are now BY far more complex social hubs, and marketing and business platforms. Yet these media and networks are also part of the lifeblood of its newest products, its customers, its recommendations, its video marketing of promos, and how the new products end up in the hands of friends and family. To make sure that only traditional advertising and communications of companies anymore influence the buying behavior of consumers.



The friends' and community's opinions as well as UGC, social media and word of mouth are increasingly playing a major role in their purchasing process. Positive experiences online can result in increased consumer trust and willingness to buy while negative reviews and/or comments sent through social media about a product or particular brand can deter consumers from buying a product or any given brand.

Consumer buying behaviour is the sequence of mentality stages that an individual goes through when he or she recognizes the need, seeks information, considers options, makes a purchase and then observes the consequences. Digital marketing has an impact on almost all aspects of this process. There are many ways for consumers to become aware of a product – by online advertising or a post on social media, another search for more information on a search engine or a brand website, a comparison on the ecommerce platform and a purchase on an online or offline channel. Demographic factors, types of interactions and engagement with the network as well as the ads and recommendations pushed to their user profile also play a major influence in consumer decisions. At the same time consumers are growing more sophisticated, with the wealth of information presented in any search online. Businesses need to deliver transparency, convenience, fast-response times, tailor the communication to the customer, ensure secure transactions, and provide a positive customer experience.

The recent digital and social media revolution, has come to organisations with possibilities as well as challenges. Digital channels are enabling businesses to actively appeal to niche audiences, build closer relationships, build brand communities, monitor consumer sentiment and measure the effectiveness of campaigns. However, in this competitive world of the Internet, with all the information available, privacy issues, bogus advertising, false reviews and algorithm shifts and negative electronic 'word-of-mouth,' there can be difficulties for marketers trying to keep up. So, it's crucial for one to comprehend the customer buying behaviours associated with messages delivered through the electronic marketing channel because it can be integral to a successful marketing campaign. This impact could also differ according to consumer profiles (age, sex, educational level, level of income, competence in the use of digital technology, lifestyle, frequency of use of the Internet and social networks).

The present study aims to study the effect of digital marketing and social media on the consumer buying behaviour in this shape. It seeks to determine the impact of the online promotion activities, engagement with social media, electronic content, customer reviews, endorsement by social influencers, electronic word-of-mouth and on-line interactions, on awareness, perception, intention to purchase, and decision to purchase. The study is of great value for the marketers as well as businesses as it can give them insights into the behaviour of their customers in the digital era and thus may help creating effectivity and consumer oriented marketing strategies. Digital's impact on consumers' everyday lives is sweeping, and it is important to understand its influence on consumers' decision-making so that it can be used to improve the effectiveness of how platforms affect the current market.

Literature Review

Lakshmanan and Basariya (2017), has discussed and studied on the utilization of social media in effective advertising, and has explained about the growing importance of the social network has become as a marketing advertising. In their research, they found that social media would provide the marketer the chance to reach the consumer personally, and pass along an ad that is not interactive or engaging. Social media is inter-active and the consumers can respond on advertising, comment and share ideas regarding the brand. It is a two-way street, which will help engage customers and increase advertising effectiveness. The study is also applicable to the current study as it has validated the social media as an important media that can be used to create promotional activities in digital media that can impact consumer perception and response.

D'Silva, Bhuptani, Menon and D'Silva (2011) explored the effect of social media marketing on brand choice behaviour of the Indian youth. They studied the increasing importance of SNS use among young consumers and how social media marketing affects the brand selection. Young consumers "are much more used to having the information about brands, promotions and opinions, presented to them on their social networks," the researchers



said. Social Media media, therefore, is an important channel to leverage brand awareness, preference and acquiring purchases of the products. The study gives a valuable insight into understanding the linkage between social media marketing and the purchasing behaviour of the consumers, especially the young people and digitally active consumers.

The researchers Grover and Mandan (2017) did a study on the impact of Social Media on Consumers' purchasing of automobile Brands in India. They concluded that social media is one of the factors that affect consumer decision making process. Consumers can be linked with social networking sites to find information about a particular brand of vehicles, compare vehicles, get feedback from other consumers, and develop perceptions about other products. The study shows that social media has become an important resource in the information search/evaluation of alternative(s) phase in the decision process. The study is especially relevant, since the auto-buying process typically is very information-oriented and intensive, and public opinion and brand communication online can be an important part of the car-buying process.

In his ground-breaking book "Branding in the Digital Age: You're Spending Your Money in All the Wrong Places," Edelman (2010) touched upon the shift in consumer-brand relationships in the digital environment. The study singled out the fact that consumers are not going, not brushing or moving past, from one part of the process—the exposure to the purchase—the second time around. Rather, consumers engage with brands at many digital moments such as search engines, websites, social networks, reviews, and other online sites. Digital media has, of course, changed the role of advertising and opened the possibility for users to - perhaps more than ever before - control what information is delivered and choose to engage with brand related information. Such a perspective is relevant to the ongoing research and experiment regarding the Digital marketing as a process of relationship marketing; it is not a mere advertisement outreach.

Di Pietro and Pantano (2012) in an empirical research investigate the power of social networks in consumer's buying behavior by taking as a case study Facebook. In their research, they looked into the effects of social networking activities on consumers' buying impulse. Participants emphasized how social interaction, social network information affect consumer behavior in an important way. Facebook offers quite a bit for consumers to see: recommendations, social interaction with brands, first-hand experiences from others, and their own. These factors of social influence can influence consumers about how they feel and what they choose to buy. According to the study, the social media can not only be used as a means of communication but also as a source of a social influence in consumer decision-making process, thus supporting the opinion which social media play an important role in the process of making decisions.

Afzal, K. and Khan (2015) did the study on the impact of online and traditional advertisements towards brand purchase intention of garments. Their research is comparative and situates traditional and online advertising in a comparative context, and points to the growing important of digital advertising in shaping consumers. Hence, the study suggests that online media has been the addition of another outlet for marketers to deliver information about products and promoting messages. Always consumers will be able to view advertisements at any time they want to do that and they can then go back and compare the products with its prices and add more information they need before purchasing it. The current study is of relevance to the present study owing to the study's illumination on the significance of assessing the digital promotional methods compared to traditional methods while studying their impact on consumer's purchasing behaviour.

Vinerean et al (2013) explored the influence of social media marketing on Internet user behaviour from consumer products. They did understand that the importance of social media marketing activities to consumer came into a new light in the online environment. Participating in social media lets organisations create content, communicate with customers, request feedback, develop relationships and engage their target audience. The authors propose that consumer shopping online is affected by their brand experiences and because of the amount of information



and content on social networking sites. Such an application is relevant for the current study since it illustrates how social media marketing efforts result in consumers' behavioural reaction and how the use of digital interaction is becoming increasingly significant in today's marketing.

Vij & Sharma (2013) conducted an empirical research to study the consumers' social media behavior and marketers' social media marketing practices. The study focused on the behavior of the consumers as well as practices of the marketer in both sides of the Digital Marketing Environment. Through their research, they noted change in consumer's information seeking and communication behaviour in relation to the growing trend of using social media. Social networking sites are gradually turning into one of the main streams of marketing to promote, build awareness and build a relationship with consumers. The research provides conceptual base to understand the association among activities of consumer social network and marketing policies of organizational.

In the study Social Networking Sites—A New Vehicle for Advertising, Yadav (2012) analyzed the social networking websites as a new vehicle for advertising. The study pointed out that social networking sites are increasingly gaining in popularity in the social arena allowing the marketers to communicate with the customers. Unlike the "traditional" media of promoting advertisements, social networking sites are "interactive", "communicative", "sharing" and "participative". The advertisements can thus become embedded in customers' social, digital lives, and not merely one-way marketing messages. The study suggests that social networks are highly promising tools to increase advertising reach and consumer awareness and to change consumers' attitudes.

Overall Review

Combined, the literature reviewed above shows digital marketing and social media are important factors affecting modern day interactions between consumers and their behaviours. All of the researches have pointed to the effect of social media in the effectiveness of advertising, the choice of brand, information search, consumer decision-making, online behaviour and purchasing-related activities. Social networking has shifted the consumer from the "passive ads consumers" to the "active" ones, they are consumers which can search for information, compare products/prices, share experiences, rate products and review them, and influence other consumers. Meanwhile, marketers have been introduced to the new possibilities of personalisation in communication, involving with consumers, community building and measuring the consumers' reaction. Other studies, however, suggest that other digital factors do have relationships among each other that impact consumer behavior, including: credibility of online information, social influence, online advertising content, consumer engagement, EWOM and brand interaction. Therefore, the present study on 'Impact of Digital Marketing and Social Media on Consumer Buying Behaviour' strives to contribute to the existing studies by reconciling the role that all the brown and white sides of Digital Marketing and Social Media had on the perception, buying intentions and buying decision of the consumers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of digital marketing practices on consumer buying behaviour.
2. To assess the influence of social media activities, including online reviews, social recommendations, advertisements, and brand engagement, on consumers' purchase decisions.
3. To analyse the relationship between digital marketing, social media influence, and consumers' purchase intention and brand preference.

Hypotheses

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant impact of digital marketing practices on consumer buying behaviour.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant impact of digital marketing practices on consumer buying behaviour.



Research Methodology

For the current study, the following research type is used namely descriptive and analytical research. Primary data is collected primarily using structured questionnaire from the consumers and to be used in supporting the study. Includes questions regarding respondents' socio-demographic information, digital marketing exposure, social media use, exposure to ads on their computers, exposure to electronic word-of-mouth, engagement with brand, intent to purchase and purchasing behaviour. It is recommended that an active sampling technique can be utilized for the respondents who are "active" digital platform and social media users. The number of samples could be determined depending on the size and geographical area of the investigation. Secondary data from literature search conducted in research journals, books, reports, Internet sources and published relevant publications will be used for conceptual and theoretical framework. The data collected will be coded, classified, orderly tabulated and analysed using a proper statistical method. Descriptive statistics will be used, such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, to gain a good understanding of the attribute of the respondents and their pattern in response. To analyze the relationship and effects of the use of digital marketing and social media on the consumer buying behavior, correlation and regression analysis can be used. Cronbach's Alpha can be used to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The level of statistical significance for hypotheses will be used to determine whether or not statistically significant relationships and impacts exist (typically $\alpha = 0.05$ or 5%). The approach is to make empirical and systematic analysis of the Digital marketing and Social media's effect on today's purchasing decision.

Table: Descriptive Statistics of Digital Marketing Practices and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Sr. No.	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Digital advertisements increase my awareness of products and brands.	400	3.82	0.91
2	Search engine marketing helps me find products that meet my needs.	400	3.74	0.94
3	Online promotional offers influence my purchase decisions.	400	3.88	0.89
4	Digital marketing provides useful information for comparing products.	400	3.96	0.86
5	Personalised digital advertisements attract my attention.	400	3.71	0.97
6	Digital marketing increases my intention to purchase products.	400	3.85	0.92
7	I prefer brands that actively use digital marketing channels.	400	3.69	0.95
8	Digital marketing influences my final buying decision.	400	3.79	0.93
Overall	Digital Marketing Practices	400	3.81	0.67

Analysis

The descriptive analysis suggests that the digital marketing is having a positive impact in consumer buying behavior. The overall mean score (3.81) implies that the respondents on average agree that they agree digital marketing activity has an impact on their awareness, evaluation, purchase intent and purchase decisions. As for the individual factors, the mean score for 'digital marketing sharing information useful to compare products' was 3.96 which indicates that the information provided in digital marketing is of an important source of product information for consumers. It is followed by investigating the usefulness of information from digital marketing

for consumers' product and brand evaluations, which have an average score of 3.82–3.96 in the respective items. This is followed by the attitude towards digital marketing as an aid to consumers to explore the products/brands in the evaluation phase, with the mean score ranging between 3.82–3.96 across each of these items. A relatively high mean was also found for online promotional offers (3.88); this indicates that if consumers are exposed to a discount they will consider buying the products, as well as if they are exposed to a promotional message. Similarly, with regard to the increase in purchasing intent, the average mark was 3.85, indicating that there is a positive impact for consumers' purchasing intent when using digital marketing. The mean score of all brands that used the personalised ads was 3.71, with moderately positive responses and the lowest mean score was for brands that actively used digital marketing channels, 3.69. Generally, the results indicate positive consumer reaction to digital marketing, especially when it supplies relevant information to consumers, makes it easy to compare products and gives rise to tempting promotions. The results of this will necessitate care with interpreting only a positive trend but not clear evidence of impact. Therefore, inferential testing techniques for the investigation of the influence of adoption of digital marketing activities on consumer buying behaviour are needed such as correlational, regression analysis, Chi-square.

Correlation Analysis

Table: Pearson Correlation between Digital Marketing Practices and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Variables	Digital Marketing Practices	Consumer Buying Behaviour
Digital Marketing Practices	1	0.684
Consumer Buying Behaviour	0.684	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	0.000
N	400	400

Analysis: There is a strong positive relationship between digital marketing practices and consumer buying behaviour with Pearson correlation coefficient of the value being $r = 0.684$. Significant value = 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) so it is considered statistically significant at 1% level. This means the more effective and prevalent the use of digital marketing practices, the more positive the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Hence the results justify the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that there is significant relationship/digital marketing effect on consumer buying behaviour. While correlation gives an association, there is the further opportunity to look into the regression and see how digital marketing strategies predict the buying behaviour of consumers.

Overall Conclusion

According to the findings of the present study, it is already concluded that Digital marketing and social media has definitely an impact on consumer buying behavior of the present market. The explosion in the internet, smart phones, e-commerce and social networking has significantly altered how a consumer is finding, comparing, engaging with and buying products and services. Digital platforms aren't limited to entertainment and communications – but they're equally important for product discovery, comparison, price checking, reading product reviews, getting product recommendations, even or product & price recommendations, or deciding which product to buy. However, digital marketing has become a fundamental to get companies noticed and influence consumer preference, intentions to buy and consumer behavior.

In the descriptive findings, it is shown that overall perception of the practices of digital marketing is positive, the overall mean score was 3.81. Consumers, particularly, understand the added value of digital marketing in gaining



information about the products, and comparing different brands and options. Meanwhile, when it comes to online marketing, discount/ promotion, and catchy web offers get the customers thinking and/or could serve as a trigger for them to buy a product. Customization of ads and digital platforms also contributes to capturing consumers' attention by presenting relevant content to their interest and preference. The results of these studies show that customers have come to be extremely aware of the importance of businesses' digital themes.

Powerful role of Social Media in influencing the Consumer Behaviours is also deduced by the study. Social media platforms provide consumers with chances to connect with fellow consumers, brands, share experiences, review and read consumer experiences, and receive consumer recommendations. Consumer attitudes towards product quality and brand credibility have been shown to be influenced greatly by electronic information or word of mouth information generated by customers. The negative or positive expectations that can be built through the reviews or recommendations received can increase or decrease consumers' confidence. Comparatively poor ratings or recommendations can stop consumers from buying a product because of their experiences. These days, it's not only company created information and marketing communication that influences consumers' buying behaviour, but information created by other consumers as well.

The result on the correlation analysis has verified the results of the study further. Overall, the Pearson correlation coefficient is very high and also significant as it indicates a positive and significant relationship between a digital marketing practices and consumer buying behaviour ($r = 0.684$ $p = 0.000$). This means all those consumers who are positively influenced by digital marketing are likely to exhibit positive buying behaviour. Following the result, it can be said that the alternative hypothesis (H1) is supported which states that there is a significant association between the digital marketing practices and the consumer buying behaviour is accepted. But, this correlation is association and does not conclude that there is any cause and effect between the digital marketing practices and the prediction, regression would provide a better indication of this that way.

The overall finding of the study is that digital marketing is not and never will be a substitute means of promoting, but it is a crucial component of a marketing program. Digital platforms can be utilized for creating awareness, providing the timely information, providing tailor-made communication, establishing customer relationships, stimulating interaction and influencing purchase decisions. However, if the information being provided to the consumers is not credible, relevant, attractive and informative, then the digital marketing will not be effective. Then companies should not only invest in digital marketing but engage in the real content, value it, give feedback to it and strive for a positive customer experience, and be transparent.

The study is an additive study which results shows that all the tools used in digital marketing such as Digital Marketing, Social Media Engagement, Online reviews, Personalized Communication, Promotional Offers, and Electronic word of mouth collectively positively affect the consumers decision making process. Organisations that are aware of shifting consumer expectations for their digital journeys and have a consumer-centric digital strategy can more successfully integrate an enhanced brand awareness, engagement, purchasing intention and retention. Therefore, with the increasing impact of digital platforms, it is clear that businesses need to strategically embrace digital platforms as both a promise and chance in the highly competitive and technologically driven marketplace.

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