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IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become an important part of the way businesses communicate with customers. People now discover products through social media, search engines, websites, online videos, emails and influencer recommendations. These channels can affect what consumers notice, what they think about a brand, which products they compare and what they finally decide to buy. This paper examines how digital marketing influences consumer behaviour, with a focus on the Indian market. It discusses the role of social media advertising, online reviews, personalised messages, influencer content, convenience and trust. The study is based on secondary information from published industry reports, consumer research and academic literature. It does not claim to have conducted a new questionnaire survey. Published evidence suggests that digital channels have become a major source of product discovery and advertising in India, while concerns about privacy, misleading promotions and excessive advertising remain important. The paper concludes that useful content, honest communication, secure transactions and good customer service can help businesses build long-term relationships with consumers.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media Marketing, Online Advertising, Purchase Decision, Influencer Marketing, Brand Trust, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour refers to the way people identify their needs, search for information, compare available options, make purchases and evaluate products after buying them. In the past, consumers often depended on newspapers, television, shop displays and personal recommendations to learn about products. Today, a large part of this process also happens online. A person may see a product in an Instagram post, watch a review on YouTube, compare prices on shopping websites and then purchase it through an app or a physical store.

Digital marketing means promoting products and services through internet-based channels. Common methods include social media marketing, search engine marketing, email campaigns, websites, mobile applications, online video advertisements and influencer collaborations. These methods allow businesses to reach specific groups of people, share information quickly and receive feedback from customers.

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The growth of digital advertising in India shows why this subject matters. The ET Brand Equity–Ipsos report for 2025–26 states that digital advertising reached ■49,000 crore in FY2024–25 and accounted for 44% of total advertising expenditure. It also reports that mobile platforms represented 78% of digital advertising spend [1]. These figures describe the advertising market, not the behaviour of every individual consumer, but they show the increasing importance of digital channels for businesses.

A. Problem Statement

Consumers receive a large number of advertisements, recommendations and promotional messages every day. Some information is helpful, but some may be repetitive, misleading or difficult to verify. Consumers may also feel pressure to buy products because of discounts, influencer promotions or limited-time offers. Businesses therefore need to understand which digital marketing activities genuinely help consumers and which factors influence trust and purchase decisions.

B. Research Gap

Existing reports explain the growth of digital advertising and the increasing role of social media, online reviews and personalised content. However, the effect is not the same for every consumer. Age, income, product type, digital experience, trust and privacy concerns can change how a person responds to an online message. This paper brings these factors together in a simple review focused on consumer behaviour in India. It provides a secondary-research overview rather than claiming results from a new local survey.

C. Objectives

- To explain the meaning and major forms of digital marketing.
- To understand how digital marketing affects consumer awareness and product discovery.
- To examine the influence of social media, online reviews and influencers on purchase decisions.
- To identify the role of personalisation, convenience and brand trust in consumer behaviour.
- To discuss challenges such as privacy concerns, misleading advertisements and information overload.
- To suggest practical ways for businesses to use digital marketing responsibly.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on digital marketing shows that online communication can influence several stages of the consumer decision-making process. It can introduce a product to a person, provide information for comparison, create expectations about a brand and encourage a purchase. At the same time, consumers do not accept every online message without question. They may check reviews, compare prices and look for information from more than one source.

A. Digital Advertising and Consumer Attention

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Digital advertisements appear on search engines, websites, social networks, mobile applications and video platforms. Their main advantage is that businesses can choose audiences based on interests, location or online activity. The Ipsos report on India's digital marketing market describes the growing importance of digital media, social media, online video and paid search [1]. Such visibility can help consumers learn about products they may not have considered earlier. However, repeated advertisements can also create advertising fatigue and may be ignored.

B. Social Media and Online Reviews

Social media allows consumers to see product demonstrations, customer comments, ratings and recommendations. It also gives customers a place to ask questions and share their experiences. PwC's Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024, based on 1,000 consumers in India, reported that 47% used social media for brand discovery. The India report also found that 82% ranked social media advertisements among the most influential forms of personalised digital advertising, and 81% said they looked for reviews to validate a company before purchasing through social media [2]. These findings suggest that social media can attract attention, while reviews can help consumers decide whether a brand appears reliable.

C. Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing uses creators who have an audience on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and other social networks. Consumers may pay attention to influencers because they demonstrate products in a familiar or entertaining way. Their recommendations can help people discover brands and understand how a product is used. Academic research in the Indian context has examined how social media advertising relates to online, habitual, variety-seeking and impulse buying behaviour [3]. The impact can depend on the creator's credibility, the relevance of the product and whether a paid partnership is clearly disclosed.

D. Personalisation and Consumer Trust

Personalised marketing uses information such as browsing interests, previous purchases or location to show more relevant messages. When done carefully, it can save time and make product discovery easier. However, consumers may feel uncomfortable when they do not understand how their information is collected or used. PwC's India survey reported that 76% of respondents were concerned about privacy and data sharing on social media [2]. This indicates that relevance alone is not enough; businesses also need transparency and responsible handling of customer information.

E. Online Convenience and Purchase Decisions

Digital channels make it possible to search for products, compare prices, read specifications and place orders at almost any time. Features such as home delivery, digital payments, order tracking and easy customer support can reduce the effort involved in buying. On the other hand, poor website design, hidden charges, delivery delays or difficult return policies can reduce customer

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confidence. A positive online experience therefore depends on more than the advertisement itself.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper follows a descriptive research approach based on secondary data. Information was reviewed from published industry reports, consumer research and academic studies related to digital marketing and buying behaviour. The purpose is to explain the main patterns and factors discussed in these sources in clear language.

A. Sources of Data

- Industry reports on digital advertising and consumer behaviour in India.
- Published consumer surveys discussing social media, reviews, privacy and brand discovery.
- Academic studies related to social media advertising and online buying behaviour.
- Publicly available information from recognised organisations and research publishers.

B. Method of Analysis

The information was organised by common themes: consumer awareness, product discovery, trust, purchase intention, convenience, personalisation and privacy. Published percentages are reported with the name and year of the original source. No new survey responses, sample counts or statistical tests have been created for this paper.

C. Scope and Limitations

The paper focuses mainly on digital marketing and consumer behaviour in India. It provides an overview of published findings and does not represent every region, age group or income group. Different reports may use different samples and question formats, so their percentages should not be directly compared as if they came from one survey. Since this is a secondary study, it cannot establish that a particular advertisement alone caused a consumer to make a purchase.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion below summarises patterns reported in the selected sources. These are secondary-source findings, not results from a questionnaire conducted by the authors of this paper.

D. Digital Marketing Has Become a Major Advertising Channel

The ET Brand Equity–Ipsos report states that digital advertising in India reached ■49,000 crore in FY2024–25, representing 44% of total advertising expenditure. Mobile accounted for 78% of digital advertising spend [1]. This shows that mobile devices and online platforms have become important spaces for brands to communicate with consumers. For consumers, this means product information and advertisements are increasingly available through the devices they use every day.

Table 1: Selected published indicators related to digital marketing in India

Indicator	Published finding	Source

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Digital advertising spend in India	■49,000 crore in FY2024–25	ET Brand Equity–Ipsos, 2025–26 [1]
Share of total advertising spend	44% attributed to digital advertising	ET Brand Equity–Ipsos, 2025–26 [1]
Mobile share of digital ad spend	78%	ET Brand Equity–Ipsos, 2025–26 [1]
Social media used for brand discovery	47% of surveyed Indian consumers	PwC India, 2024 [2]
Consumers checking reviews before buying via social media	81%	PwC India, 2024 [2]
Concern about privacy and data sharing on social media	76%	PwC India, 2024 [2]

E. Social Media Influences Product Discovery

The PwC survey indicates that social media is an important place where consumers discover brands. A post, short video or product demonstration can introduce a product to someone who was not actively searching for it. This can influence the first stage of the buying process by creating awareness and interest. Still, discovery does not always lead to a purchase. Consumers may continue to compare alternatives or decide that the product is not suitable.

F. Reviews Help Consumers Reduce Uncertainty

Online reviews provide information from people who have already used a product or service. Consumers may look at ratings, photographs, comments and complaints before placing an order. The PwC survey found that 81% of respondents looked for reviews to validate a company before purchasing from it through social media [2]. This suggests that customer experience and public feedback can influence trust. Fake reviews or selectively displayed feedback, however, can mislead buyers.

G. Influencer Content Can Affect Purchase Interest

Influencer content can make product information feel more personal and easier to understand. A clear product demonstration may help consumers judge appearance, use and suitability. Academic work on Indian consumers has found relationships between social media advertising and different forms of buying behaviour, including impulsive and habitual buying [3]. Businesses should therefore choose creators for relevance and credibility, not only for the size of their follower count.

H. Privacy Concerns Can Reduce Trust

Personalised advertisements may be useful when they match a consumer's interests. But when

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advertisements seem to follow a person across many websites, consumers may wonder how their personal information is being used. The 76% privacy concern reported by PwC [2] highlights the importance of clear privacy information, appropriate consent and responsible data practices. If consumers do not trust a brand, personalised messages may have the opposite of the intended effect.

I. Digital Marketing Can Encourage Impulse Buying

Flash sales, countdown timers, limited-stock messages and one-click checkout can make buying quick and easy. These features may encourage unplanned purchases, particularly when a consumer is emotionally excited or fears missing a discount. Such purchases are not always harmful, but consumers should have enough information and time to make decisions that suit their needs and budgets.

J. Overall Discussion

The reviewed evidence suggests that digital marketing can influence consumer behaviour at different stages: it creates awareness, supports product comparison, builds or weakens trust and can encourage purchase. The effect depends on the quality of the message, the credibility of the source, the consumer's needs and the experience provided by the business. Digital marketing should therefore be understood as one influence on decision-making, not as the only reason a person buys a product.

IV. KEY FACTORS THAT SHAPE CONSUMER RESPONSE

Table 2: Common factors and their possible influence

Factor	Possible influence on consumer behaviour
Content quality	Clear photographs, demonstrations and useful explanations can help consumers understand a product.
Reviews and ratings	Customer feedback can reduce uncertainty and help people compare alternatives.
Influencer credibility	Relevant and honest recommendations may increase interest; hidden sponsorships can damage trust.
Personalisation	Relevant suggestions can save time, while excessive tracking can create privacy concerns.
Price and offers	Discounts and easy price comparison can affect value perception and purchase timing.
Website and app experience	Easy navigation, secure payment and clear returns can make purchasing more comfortable.

V. FINDINGS

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- Digital advertising has become a major part of the Indian advertising market, with mobile platforms playing a leading role [1].
- Social media is an important channel for discovering brands and products among surveyed Indian consumers [2].
- Consumers often use online reviews to check a company's reliability before buying through social media [2].
- Influencer content and social media advertising can shape product interest and different forms of buying behaviour [3].
- Personalised advertising can be useful, but privacy and data-sharing concerns may affect consumer trust [2].
- The online buying experience also matters: clear product information, secure payment, delivery and customer support can influence satisfaction.
- Digital marketing can encourage quick or unplanned purchases, so honest communication and responsible promotional practices are important.

These findings are based on the published sources reviewed in this paper. They should not be interpreted as the results of a new survey or as a measurement of every Indian consumer.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Provide accurate product information:** Use clear descriptions, real product images, correct prices and updated details.
- **Build trust through genuine reviews:** Encourage honest customer feedback and avoid fake ratings or misleading testimonials.
- **Work with relevant influencers:** Select creators whose content and audience match the product, and clearly disclose paid promotions.
- **Respect consumer privacy:** Explain what information is collected and why. Collect only what is needed and handle it responsibly.
- **Avoid misleading urgency:** Do not use false countdowns, fake scarcity or exaggerated discount claims to pressure customers.
- **Make digital platforms easy to use:** Keep websites and apps simple, mobile-friendly and accessible, with clear return and refund information.
- **Offer reliable customer support:** Respond to questions and complaints in a timely and respectful manner.
- **Measure more than clicks:** Evaluate customer satisfaction, repeat purchases and trust, not only views and short-term sales.

VII. CONCLUSION

Digital marketing has changed the way consumers learn about products, compare brands and make purchase decisions. Social media, online advertisements, influencer content, search engines and customer reviews provide information that was once harder to access. Published Indian consumer research shows that social media plays a meaningful role in brand discovery and that many consumers check reviews before buying through these platforms. At the same time, privacy concerns remind businesses that consumers value trust as much as convenience.

The overall impact of digital marketing is not always positive or negative. It depends on whether the message is useful, truthful and relevant, and whether the business delivers what it promises. Companies that respect consumer choice, protect personal information and provide good service are more likely to develop lasting relationships. In simple terms, successful digital marketing should not only persuade people to buy; it should help them make informed decisions.

A. Future Scope

- Conduct a primary survey with a larger and more diverse group of consumers in different regions of India.
- Compare the influence of Instagram, YouTube, search engines, email and online shopping platforms.
- Study differences in digital buying behaviour across age groups and occupations.
- Examine how influencer credibility and sponsorship disclosure affect consumer trust.
- Study the relationship between personalised advertisements, privacy concerns and purchase intention.
- Compare online purchase intention with actual buying behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction.

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