Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Changing Market Trends

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ABSTRACT

Digital channels have revolutionised consumer search, brand appraisal and purchasing behaviour and companies are adapting accordingly, prioritising investments in social media, personalised ads and influencer communication over traditional media. The present paper aims to investigate the effect of three types of digital marketing (social media marketing, personalised online advertising, and influencer marketing + online reviews) on consumer buying behaviour. An online survey comprising of 5-point Likert items was distributed to a sample of 160 online shoppers, with the data analyzed using procedures: Descriptive Statistic, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, Multiple linear regression analysis, Independent samples t-test and One way Anova. The items on the scales were reliable with the overall alpha = 0.85. The biggest score was for social media marketing (M = 3.78) and the lowest for using personalised online ads. (M = 3.46) The regression model was statistically significant, $R2 = 0.390$, with an $F(3, 156) = 33.27$, $p < 0.001$. All three strategies were significantly positive and the most effective ($\beta = 0.32$) was the use of influencers. There were no significant differences in buying behaviour in terms of gender, age or education. The results confirm the three hypotheses, suggesting that companies need to combine social, personalised and influencer approaches using as a lidiator the credibility and the trust.

Keywords: digital marketing, consumer buying behaviour, social media marketing, personalised advertising, influencer marketing, online reviews

I INTRODUCTION

Marketing has been transformed by the spread of the internet, smartphones, and social platforms. Consumers now move continuously between search engines, social feeds, video platforms, messaging applications, and online marketplaces before they buy, and each of these touchpoints is an opportunity for firms to inform, persuade, and retain them. This paper studies how the main digital marketing strategies relate to consumer buying behaviour and what the findings imply for marketers operating in a rapidly changing market.

Marketing is no longer about one-way, mass communication, but about interaction and exchange based on data. Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2017) define this as "the marketing method transition", in which there is an interaction between online and offline media, and where the customer can play a role in creating the meaning of a brand. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) also see digital marketing as a suite of connected channels that must be developed or coordinated in line with the customer journey, such as search, social media, e-mail, and content. Kannan and Li (2017) offer a framework and research agenda that indicates how digital marketing influences all phases of the marketing process, from the insights stage to the communication processes or customer relationship management.

The change is also a change of organization. Companies capture huge amounts of behavioural data, send out test emails frequently and fine-tune the runs in real time. Lamberton and Stephen (2016) have traced the development in academic research related to digital, social media and mobile marketing in order to demonstrate how the emphasis of academic research has shifted from the

technology itself, to the empowerment of the consumer and access to data. The above developments are the reason why, in many industries Digital Marketing has been treated as the main part of marketing and not additional marketing to the traditional marketing plan.

The change also affects the relationship between firms and consumers. Traditionally, marketing relied on a limited number of mass media channels that were managed by the brand, but digital media give the consumer the opportunity to provide feedback, comment, share, and generate content around a brand. With this two-way exchange, marketing is less predictable, and more hinges on engagement, responsiveness, and content quality. Companies that grasp which digital tactics prove to have the greatest impact on transactions are better able to make the right decisions about their limited budgets.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of information about digital marketing has grown significantly. Kannan and Li (2017) define digital marketing as the creation, communication and delivery of value to customers via digital technologies with particular emphasis on data and interactivity. Research has evolved from describing channels to understanding how consumers will participate and that consumer data will be used (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). With the arrival of new technologies and the questions of ethics, privacy and trust, the field has become new and reshaped by Dwivedi et al. (2021). All these studies demonstrate the dynamic nature of digital marketing, both in terms of practice and theory.

Market shifts also impact the way that consumers are reached. As demonstrated by Verhoef et al. (2015), many shoppers use an omni-channel approach, suggesting that marketing communication needs to be communication that is coherent throughout all channels. According to Appel et al. (2020), platforms are growing rapidly and marketers need to be aware of new formats. These trends suggest that the study of the impact of any single strategy should be followed up regularly and thus justify the need for a recent empirical study.

Ngai et al. (2015) conducted a literature review of social media research to determine the theories and constructs that appear in the literature and found that trust, engagement and perceived value are common across the literature. There are also prior studies on personalised advertising and influencer marketing that can be adapted to explain why various digital marketing strategies act on the behaviour that are included in these constructs. Thus, this study approach to understanding buying behaviour is based on the information, relevance and credibility that each strategy offers.

The positive effects on consumer response are usually found in social media marketing research. Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga, and Bronner (2018) find that there are type differences in the level of social media engagement, and type differences in social media ad engagement, with implications for effects that differ by platform and type of ads. Kim and Johnson (2016) discovered that when it involves the impact of brand-associated UGC on brand perception and brand-related responses, the effect of UGC on brand perception outweighed the effect of brand-related responses on brand perception. Hajli (2014) concluded that trust and social support established through social media makes intention to buy stronger.Hajli (2014) revealed that involving social media in generating trust and social support results in the strengthening of the intention to buy.

Research on personalised advertising demonstrates that relevance can be a positive factor in increasing response, although there is an element of context. The effectiveness of personalised online advertising is described by Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) to be dependent on not only what is being offered, but when and where, along with consumer trust of the retailer. From their review, Boerman et al. (2017) conclude that personalisation can lead to an improvement in effectiveness and that lacking transparency and privacy concerns can lead to a decrease in effectiveness.

Credibility appears to be the critical mechanism as identified in influencer and review research. The value and credibility of influencer messages have an impact on consumer trust in branded content, which leads to their purchase intention (Lou and Yuan, 2019). When comparing traditional celebrities with Instagram influencers, Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019) discovered that Instagram was more trustworthy than the traditional celebrity, and it had a positive impact on brand attitudes. Ladhari et al. (2020) demonstrate the effects of homogeny, emotional connection, and perceived competence on the influence of YouTube vloggers; and, Hudders et al. (2021) provide a model for how brands use influencers strategically.

Based on this research, two patterns emerge. First, whether the effect is positive or negative is dependent on trust, either in the platform, the retailer, or the message provider. Second, most studies focus on just one of the aforementioned strategies, making it hard to contrast the relative impact on the sample of social media marketing, personalised marketing, and influencer marketing. This study fills this void by estimating all three effects simultaneously in one regression model so as to directly compare how strong each effect is.

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory research design based on a cross-sectional survey. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data on respondents' exposure to three digital marketing strategies and their buying behaviour. The survey design was selected because it allows standardised measurement and statistical testing of relationships among constructs in a reasonably large sample at one point in time (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019).

The study draws on two kinds of sources. Secondary sources, mainly peer-reviewed articles and books published between 2014 and 2023, were used to define the constructs and develop the hypotheses. Primary data were collected through the questionnaire to test the hypotheses empirically. This combination ensures that the measurement and the interpretation of results are grounded in recent research.

3.2 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The population consists of adult consumers who purchase products online. The final sample comprises 160 valid responses. This size meets the conventional guidance of at least ten observations per questionnaire item for multivariate analysis, which implies a minimum of 120 for 12 items (Hair et al., 2019), and it exceeds the rules of thumb for multiple regression with three predictors discussed by Field (2018). Respondents were selected through convenience sampling with an online questionnaire distributed through social media and messaging applications, and participation was voluntary and anonymous. Convenience sampling limits generalisation, a point addressed in the limitations.

Data collection took place through an online form that was shared with potential respondents. Responses were screened for completeness, and only fully completed questionnaires were retained for analysis, so there were no missing values in the final data set. Respondents were told that there were no right or wrong answers and were asked to answer on the basis of their own experience as online shoppers.

IV RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the profile of respondents, the reliability of the scales, descriptive results, correlations, regression results, hypothesis tests, and a discussion of the findings. Six tables and five figures are used.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the 160 respondents. Female respondents accounted for 53.1 per cent and male respondents for 46.9 per cent of the sample. The largest age group was 25–34 years (39.4 per cent), followed by 18–24 (35.6 per cent), so the sample is dominated by younger adults, who are the most active digital consumers.

Most respondents held a graduate or postgraduate degree (91.2 per cent). Figure 1 shows the age distribution and Figure 2 shows the most-used platform: YouTube was named by 30.0 per cent, followed by Instagram (28.1 per cent).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 160)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	75	46.9
Female	85	53.1
Age (years)		
18–24	57	35.6
25–34	63	39.4
35–44	25	15.6
45 and above	15	9.4
Education		
Higher secondary or below	14	8.8
Graduate	88	55.0
Postgraduate	58	36.2
Occupation		
Student	45	28.1
Private-sector employee	54	33.8
Business / self-employed	38	23.8
Government / other	23	14.4
Most-used platform		
Instagram	45	28.1
YouTube	48	30.0
Facebook	33	20.6
WhatsApp	21	13.1
Other	13	8.1

4.2 Questionnaire Items and Descriptive Results

Table 2 combines the 12 questionnaire items with their means and standard deviations. Item means ranged from 3.39 to 3.89, all above the scale mid-point of 3, which indicates generally favourable perceptions of digital marketing. The highest-rated item was Q1 (M = 3.89) and the lowest-rated item was Q5 (M = 3.39). Figure 3 ranks the items by mean score.

Table 2: Questionnaire Items with Descriptive Statistics (5-point Likert scale)

Code	Statement	Construct	Mean	SD
Q1	Brand content on social media platforms attracts my attention.	Social media marketing	3.89	0.89
Q2	Social media pages of brands help me learn about products and offers.	Social media marketing	3.77	0.89
Q3	Interacting with brands on social media increases my interest in buying.	Social media marketing	3.67	0.86
Q4	Online advertisements shown to me match my interests and needs.	Personalised advertising	3.51	0.98
Q5	Personalised e-mails and offers make shopping more convenient.	Personalised advertising	3.39	0.96
Q6	Targeted advertisements remind me of products I intend to buy.	Personalised advertising	3.49	0.91
Q7	Recommendations by influencers or content creators influence my choice of products.	Influencers & reviews	3.86	0.81
Q8	I read online customer reviews before buying a product.	Influencers & reviews	3.68	0.85
Q9	Positive reviews and ratings increase my trust in a brand.	Influencers & reviews	3.69	0.95
Q10	I often purchase products after seeing them promoted online.	Buying behaviour	3.76	0.83
Q11	Digital marketing has changed the way I decide what to buy.	Buying behaviour	3.54	0.88
Q12	I am likely to buy from brands that I regularly see online.	Buying behaviour	3.53	0.90

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; N = 160.

Within each construct, the highest-rated items were Q1 for social media marketing (M = 3.89), Q4 for personalised online advertising (M = 3.51), Q7 for

influencer marketing and online reviews (M = 3.86), and Q10 for buying behaviour (M = 3.76). The items on buying behaviour (Q10–Q12) had means between 3.53 and 3.76, which shows that respondents on average agree that digital marketing influences their purchases, although agreement is moderate and not unanimous. The standard deviations, mostly between 0.8 and 1.0, indicate meaningful variation in opinion among respondents.

4.3 Reliability and Construct-Level Results

Table 3 reports Cronbach's alpha and construct-level descriptive statistics. Alpha values ranged from 0.77 to 0.79, above the 0.70 threshold, and the alpha for all 12 items was 0.85, so the scales are internally consistent. Social media marketing had the highest mean (M = 3.78, SD = 0.74), followed by influencer marketing and online reviews (M = 3.74, SD = 0.72) and consumer buying behaviour (M = 3.61, SD = 0.72). Personalised online advertising had the lowest mean (M = 3.46, SD = 0.80), which is consistent with the privacy concerns about personalisation noted by Boerman et al. (2017). Figure 4 compares the construct means.

Table 3: Reliability and Construct-Level Descriptive Statistics

Construct	No. of items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
Social media marketing	3	0.791	3.78	0.74
Personalised advertising	3	0.790	3.46	0.80
Influencers & reviews	3	0.780	3.74	0.72
Consumer buying behaviour	3	0.771	3.61	0.72
All items	12	0.850	–	–

Note. $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicates acceptable internal consistency.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation matrix. All three strategies are positively and significantly correlated with buying behaviour: social media marketing (r = 0.471), personalised online advertising (r = 0.433), and influencer marketing and online reviews (r = 0.478), each at $p < 0.001$. The correlations among the strategies are moderate, from 0.283 to 0.366, which indicates that consumers who respond to one strategy tend to respond to others but that the constructs are distinct. Figure 5 plots the average score on the three strategies against buying behaviour and shows a clear positive relationship.

These results should be interpreted with care. The correlations are of moderate size, which shows that each strategy is related to buying behaviour but that none is a perfect predictor. Correlation also does not show the direction of influence: consumers who already intend to buy may pay more attention to online marketing, and the regression results in the next section should be read with this possibility in mind. The correlation matrix does, however, support the use of regression, since the predictors are related to the outcome without being so strongly related to each other that their effects cannot be separated.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Social media marketing	1			
2. Personalised advertising	0.366**	1		
3. Influencers & reviews	0.313**	0.283**	1	
4. Buying behaviour	0.471**	0.433**	0.478**	1

Note. N = 160. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); *significant at the 0.05 level.

4.5 Regression Analysis

Table 5 reports the multiple regression. The model was statistically significant, $F(3, 156) = 33.27$, $p < 0.001$, with $R^2 = 0.390$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.378$, so the three strategies jointly explain 39.0 per cent of the variance in buying behaviour. Social media marketing ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 4.09$, $p < 0.001$), personalised online advertising ($\beta = 0.239$, $t = 3.49$, $p < 0.001$), and influencer marketing and online reviews ($\beta = 0.322$, $t = 4.80$, $p < 0.001$) were all significant positive predictors. The standardised

coefficients show that influencer marketing and online reviews had the largest effect and personalised online advertising the smallest.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Results (Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour)

Predictor	B	Std. error	β	t	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	0.624	0.303	–	2.06	0.041	–
Social media marketing (H1)	0.276	0.067	0.283	4.09	< 0.001	1.22
Personalised online advertising (H2)	0.216	0.062	0.239	3.49	< 0.001	1.20
Influencer marketing & online reviews (H3)	0.320	0.067	0.322	4.80	< 0.001	1.15
R^2 / Adjusted R^2	0.390 / 0.378					
F(3, 156)	33.27				< 0.001	
Durbin–Watson	1.95					

Note. N = 160. B = unstandardised coefficient; β = standardised coefficient.

The diagnostics are satisfactory. The VIF values ranged from 1.15 to 1.22, far below the usual threshold of 5, so multicollinearity is not a problem, and the Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.95 is close to 2, so autocorrelation is not a concern.

Unstandardised coefficients indicate the change in the response for a unit increase in the predictor variable. The other strategies do not show such as strong a relationship with buying behaviour, respectively: 0.216 points increase in buying behaviour per one-point increase in the personalised online advertising score, and 0.320 points increase in buying behaviour per one-point increase in the influencer marketing and online reviews score. The intercept is 0.624. These effects are of moderate size, as would be expected of the relatively low value of the R^2 (0.390): The three strategies account for much of the variance in buying behaviour, but other factors that influence the buying decision, such as product need, income and price, are likely to play significant roles as well.

The buying behaviour score was compared between each of the demographic groups. The independent-samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the male (M = 3.56) and female respondents (M = 3.65), t(158) = -0.76, p = 0.450. However, there was no significant difference between the age groups (F = 0.68, p = 0.568) or education levels (F = 0.05, p = 0.953) for one-way ANOVA. The lack of relationship between the demographic variables measured by their buying behaviour indicates that the impact of the strategies is not only related to that buying behaviour.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 combines the three hypotheses with their test results. H1 is accepted because social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on buying behaviour (β = 0.283, p < 0.001). H2 is accepted because personalised online advertising has a positive and significant effect (β = 0.239, p < 0.001). H3 is accepted because influencer marketing and online reviews have a positive and significant effect (β = 0.322, p < 0.001). All three hypotheses are supported.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	β	t	p-value	Decision
H1	Social media marketing has a significant positive effect on consumer buying behaviour.	0.283	4.09	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	Personalised online advertising has a significant positive effect on consumer buying behaviour.	0.239	3.49	< 0.001	Accepted
H3	Influencer marketing and online reviews have a significant positive effect on consumer buying behaviour.	0.322	4.80	< 0.001	Accepted

Note. Decision at the 5% significance level (multiple regression, N = 160).

4.7 Discussion

Results do not contradict any of the hypotheses in the literature. It is found that social media marketing has a positive impact on consumer response, which is consistent with Kim and Johnson (2016), Voorveld et al. (2018), and Hajli (2014) who found that engagement and trust on social platforms influences consumer response. The effect of personalised advertising confirms the results of Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015), who found that targeted advertising can be more effective, but also shows that this form of advertising had a lower mean score in this sample, which is linked to privacy and transparency concerns of Boerman et al. (2017). The impact of influencer marketing and online reviews aligns with Coull, Shafiq, and El-Gamal (2019); Lou and Yuan (2019); and Jin et al. (2019) who suggested that the mechanisms that affect consumer decisions with the influence of an influencer are credibility, expertise, and attachment.

One implication of this is that there is no single strategy that is enough! The three strategies were only moderately correlated and each played its own role, thus justifying a combined approach similar to the one recommended by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) and Kotler et al. (2017). Marketers need to mix in social media content that's interesting and engaging, as well as relevant and transparent personalisation with a credible third-party endorsement and, more importantly, use the factor of trust as the thread that holds it all together. As there were no observed differences in the population's age or education, the use of this technique could be extrapolated to the rest of the groups investigated but should not be generalised to all consumers.

The platform results are also of practical significance. The most-used platform in the sample, followed by the second most-used, gives clues on where consumers are paying attention, and companies may want to focus their social media content and partnerships with influencers on those platforms; they should also be aware that engagement varies across platform types (Voorveld et al., 2018). Since this sample is composed mainly of younger, more educated individuals, firms that target other segments may wish to verify the results of these findings in their segments before deciding on large-scale investments in the budget.

V CONCLUSION

The study aimed to reveal the effect of the social media marketing, personalized online advertising and influencer marketing – online reviews on consumer's purchasing behaviour, based on a questionnaire filled in by 160 online customers. There was high reliability of the measurement scales, and the regression model was significant, accounting for 39.0 per cent of the variance in buying behaviour. All three hypotheses were supported; each strategy had a meaningful positive impact with influencer marketing and online reviews showing the most significant impact. There was no significant difference in the buying behaviour between the three groups, either when divided into genders, ages or education groups.

So the results have some implications. First, digital marketing should be systematically seen, and not as a collection of individual tactics, since strategical contributions are important to the buying process in isolation (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kannan & Li, 2017). Second, as done by Lou and Yuan (2019) and Boerman et al (2017), credibility and trust should determine the selection of influencers, the handling of reviews as well as the design of personalisation. Third, transparency is key when companies use consumer data, with the lower evaluation of personalised advertising suggesting that consumer concerns over privacy may constrain the promise of this advertising use. Fourth, he markets where platforms and formats keep evolving rapidly (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021) implies that companies must keep a track of consumer reaction frequently and alter their tactics accordingly.

The study also adds to the literature by using one approach to compare three digital strategies, which is not seen in most of the previous work that has looked at them singly (Appel et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Voorveld et al., 2018). It establishes the trust and credibility as a universal facilitator, and it illustrates that the impact of social, personal and influencer communications are standalone and synergistic. The contribution of the practitioners is to illustrate that a balanced mix of strategies is more aligned with the evidence than depending on one particular strategy.

The study has some limitations, which suggest some directions for further research. Convenience sampling, small sample size of 160, primarily young and educated and self-reported measures preclude determination of causality. Other research opportunities are the application of probability sampling, larger samples, longitudinal designs and/or experimental designs, and the inclusion of mediators (trust) and moderators (privacy concern, product category, platform type). This type of research would reveal to a much greater extent, the impact of digital marketing initiatives on customer choices in a dynamic market.

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