

# Does Digital and Social Media Marketing Play a Major Role in Consumer Behaviour?

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**Abstract:** The research paper defines the role of digital and social media marketing on consumer behaviour. This research paper is described in both positive and negative impacts of digital and social media marketing on consumer's behaviour, due to the current fast-growing adoption of digitalisation the social media and digital technology have enlightened new ways to market a product. The digital culture of consumers due to the growing technology has emerged and taken a new form of culture, the impact of digital environment, mobile and social media platform has significantly grown. There is a new transformation of word of mouth to an online word of mouth, which makes the consumer ease and access to the internet and the information shared to help them take decision making about the product from anywhere in the world. The form of communication has made it simple for the consumers to express and share the information. Though the modern marketing has played a broad change, the process of decision making remains the same, and there is no significant change in the purchase cycle of a consumer and their behaviour towards decision-making process. So, we can say that social and digital media has a measurable impact on consumer behaviour. This paper depicts various merits and demerits which the consumers are prone to during this era of digital and social media marketing.

**Keywords:** Digital and social media marketing, Consumer behavior, Digital culture, Digital environment, Online word of mouth, Decision making, modern marketing, Purchase cycle.

## 1. Introduction

In today's world digital and social media marketing plays an extensive role in the consumer behaviour, consumer mindset is being affected by the digital and social media. The product positioning is done in such a way that it attracts the customer and there is a huge demand created in the market. We can observe that there is a massive transformation from traditional marketing to the modern form of marketing such as social media marketing.



Fig. 1. Transformation of Marketing

In this present world, the use of internet and digital media has become one of the vital parts of business strategies. The internet revolution has created a significant impact on consumers. Now-a-days almost every person has access to the internet, through

smartphones they stay connected to all the social media platforms.

The primary objective of the study is to know "Does Digital and Social Media Marketing play a major role in the consumer behaviour?" So to answer this paradox, we have first examined the positive impact of digital and social media marketing in consumer behaviour, how the consumers are benefited with the digital and social media marketing, their impact on daily life.

Secondly, we have researched the Negative Impact digital and social media marketing in consumer behaviour, how they are becoming more dependent and less individualistic. Finally, a conclusion is drawn based on the above discussion.

The information and the data collected comes from various platforms including marketing and advertising research, economics and social sciences. Also, the other sources would include internet media and books.

The current era of Information and technology has made it possible for every person to access Internet easily. and Social media Digital completely change the way consumers preview about a product or a brand. There are positive and negative impacts of digital and social media marketing; it is effected in both the ways. In the present scenario, every person is forcefully a part of this modern marketing of digital and social media. Let's discuss some positive effects of digital and social media marketing on consumers, how this has evolved or brought a change in the minds of consumers.

## 2. Positive effects of digital culture

Digital culture in the current situation has taken a comprehensive role in the consumers, where the digital platform has emerged as a dominant communication channel through which consumers can learn, share the information and interact with brands they consider, purchase and evaluate. It has become one of the significant part/ cultures on every consumer in the society.

Source: <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>

According to the source, the total population as of Jan 2017 was 7.476 billion in that total population 3.773 billion people are internet users and 2.789 billion active social media users, 4.917 billion mobile users and 2.549 billion mobile social users. This statistic shows the drastic users in various sectors. Through this, we can realize that the digital and social media is booming

day by day and hence marketing can take a vivid role on the same.

The annual growth of internet, mobile and social media users by 10%, 21%, 5% and 30% respectively, it shows that how drastically the users are increasing day by day. This indicates the power of the social and digital platform and the companies make use of this digital culture. Therefore, digital and social media marketing plays a critical role in this scenario to test the consumer behaviour.

Source: <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>

Hence from the above source, we can derive that there is an enormous impact of digital and social media on consumers so when here the companies/private firms take advantage of marketing their products in the digital and social media platforms and gain sales turnover. (Source: Smart insight) Now having seen the digital culture in the current scenario, we get a broad view of how effectively it impacted the consumer behaviour.

### **3. Product reviews (Online word of mouth)**

Product review or online word of mouth is the user-generated content (UGC) (Tanya (Ya) Tang, Eric (Er) Fang, & Feng Wang, JOM, 2014) that are produced on a daily basis in social media, where the users review the product based on the various criteria. 84% say consumer reviews influence their decision making on the purchase of a product/service (Bazaarvoice, 2013). These statistics show how the digital and social media is utilised and influence the customers on a large scale. Word of mouth (Online) helps the other customers to know about the product and then purchase the product based on the reviews online.

Industry Study shows that 68% of consumers say positive reviews make them trust a local business more, it is evident that when the product/service is already tested and tried by another consumer leading to a positive review. The majority of the consumers will try to adopt or purchase that product/service instead of taking the risk of trying a new product/service. 63% of consumers say that they are more likely to purchase from a site which has user reviews, this again proves the trust of the consumers which is already verified by another consumer. Reviews produce an average of 18% uplift in sales, which enhances the company's sales turnover. 86% of people will hesitate to purchase from a business that has negative online reviews, that is again obvious that where there is a negative comment from another consumer about the product the consumer thinks twice whether to purchase that product or not.

Product review online plays a very positive impact on consumer behaviour, by helping them to be more knowledgeable about the product or service they are interested in. As its clear that for every human being decision making process is time consuming and a tough task to establish due to the number of options or choices available. Social media creates a platform for consumers to consult with buyer instantly and

express their perceptions with each other and help them in decision making.

### **4. Decision making**

Decision-making process has been streamlined and narrowed for consumers, and it has put them at ease to decide what is needed and what not needed. Once the consumers get to know about the products through the reviews, then the next significant step is decision making. A study reveals that 81% of the shoppers conduct online research before buying a product (Source: Adweek) this is one of the significant figures to be noted, which shows how important the social and digital media marketing plays a role in consumer behaviour. The consumers know what they need to purchase before they go into the market. Industry research shows that the "62% of the millennial shoppers already know what to buy before entering a store". This helps the consumers and give them a power of making a decision. Usually, the consumers had to go to the market/shop to make a purchase decision, but in the present scenario of digital and social media era, it makes their life simpler to pre-decide their purchases. This creates a positive impact on the consumers. In this way, the social and digital media marketing has played a very vital role. Before the era of digital marketing (Traditional marketing), there required a lot of time and patience in knowing about a product. The search was a lot of time-consuming, and at last, the customer may even end up purchasing which does not suit his/her needs. However, after digitalisation we see that there is an enormous change in this process, it has made the life of consumer easier and simpler in finding out the right product for their needs and wants. A statistics show that "On average, a consumer will look at over ten information sources before making a purchase". So there is a huge impact which is acted upon the decision making process through reviews because the UGC (User Generated Reviews) play a very vital role in the decision making process. In turn, the negative reviews are highly noticed by the companies and based on the reviews the companies take action and improve the product.

### **5. Grievance redressal**

Grievance redressal is one of the processes where the customer can express their grievances, complaints or any other suggestions about the product. So grievance redressal is made simple online, customers can go online and express their opinions about the product. A study shows that 60% of consumers prefer to share their information about the products with others online. This is one of the initiatives where many private firms have made it available digitally for the benefits of consumers. This makes the consumer feel positive towards the brand, and there is a significant impact on the sales turnover.

### **6. Digital advertising**

Digital advertising is one of the crucial parts of marketing

literature, it plays a vital role in consumer behaviour, and it also helps in understanding the way the consumer responds to various aspects of digital ads. Digital advertising brings awareness among consumers. They get to know what kind of products are available for them in the market. Digital advertising helps consumer's current, i.e. as soon as the invention occurs the details are advertised, and consumers get to know the real information time. Another significant benefit is that it opens the door for the consumers to choose, they are provided with many options. It also provides a 24/7 access to the consumer's needs. Few statistics state that "Digital advertising spend is set to grow from \$83 billion this year to \$129+ billion by 2021" which is one of the positive sign for the upcoming generations, helping them make their life simpler and innovative. Digital Marketing experts estimate that most Americans are exposed to around 4,000 to 10,000 advertisements each day. One of the emerging topics is carbon footprint, through social and digital media marketing helps to reduce the carbon footprint by reducing the paper, and it simplifies the life of consumers as they do not need to drive to stores to find what they want. Hence we can conclude that digital advertising plays a positive impact on consumer behaviour. Through these actions we can notice that there is a voice raised by the consumers, to be precise there are formations of opinion leaders, who contribute majorly towards the modern marketing.

### **7. Growth of an opinion leader**

An opinion leader is one who has a higher voice in the community, through social and digital marketing there is the extensive growth of opinions which is shared in the digital platform, which makes the work of a consumer more comfortable as they can take an opinion about the product which they are going to purchase. One infographic put out by blogging experts indicate that there were 152 million blogs on the internet as of 2013. Since then, the number of blogs has continued to grow. Blogging is one of the emerging ways of modern marketing where the feelings of the consumers are expressed. Indeed, it helps consumers find out the merits and demerits of the product/service which they are going to purchase. Social and digital media creates a platform for the customers to share their thoughts and hence a form of marketing to the companies to grow their business. Most sources agree that as of this year (2017), Stastista.com, a well-known statistical news source for tech stats, indicated that there were around 350 million blogs from Tumblr alone as of July 2017, more than 409 million people on WordPress view more than 23.6 billion pages each month. Blogger has over 46 million unique visitors per month. These sources reveal that how the new era of digital and social media marketing is playing a crucial role in every consumer's behaviour, this digital culture has taken a positive impact.

### **8. Communication**

Communication plays a very vital role, each of the social media and digital platform gives out, receives and exchanges information without any limitation, and it also enables a two-way flow of information. Though the flow of communication is made simpler from interpreting the message, searching for alternatives, and as well as actions after purchase, the feedback process is made more accessible, as the digital platform allows the consumers to rate the product quality online and process a feedback real time to the company to provide better service and customer satisfaction. A statistics reveal that "91% of customer who had a bad customer experience will not be willing to do business with the company again." (Source: Glance), so the customer satisfaction and timely feedback play a crucial role in making loyal consumers. Brand loyalty is yet another concept which the consumers prefer which depends on the overall experience towards that product. Hence communication plays a vital role in understanding the behaviour of consumers through the social and digital platform.

### **9. Transparency**

Social Digital media platform has created a transparent world, the process of marketing in these platform has given rise to a transparent form of modern marketing.

It gives up the complete control over the content and the frequency of information, instead, it is made transparent for the consumers which in turn is a significant threat to the big brands and companies as they are losing control over the company's transparency. (Harvard Business Review) This makes up a very positive impact on the consumers to know more about the brand and their products. Social and digital marketing has played a vivid role in creating transparency to the consumers and catering their needs.

### **10. Negative effects of digital culture**

We have discussed the positive effects of the digital marketing, but this digital culture has given rise to new behaviors and created new problems for the companies. In these days' people are sharing their thoughts on online platforms, and everyone is becoming more participative online. According to 'brand watch statistics' "300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute." and "Over 95 million photos are uploaded each day." and "Snapchat has 178m active daily users." This participatory culture is directing us to be more Hive-minded in nature. Hive-Mind is a large entity where people share their knowledge and opinions which results in collective intelligence and concentric rings of group affinity modulated by ritualized behavior. So the consumers are becoming more informative about the products and services. This participatory culture began the online review system popularly known as E-word of mouth. According to 'Forbes', "90% of consumers read online reviews before visiting a business. (2016)" and " 84% of people trust online reviews as



much as a personal recommendation. (2016)". Exposure to both positive and negative comments have different effects on the purchase decisions and Brand Image. People are growing more knowledgeable and making their decision-making process more comfortable by depending on E Word-of-Mouth what can go wrong? Due to this hive - Minded nature and the participatory culture, the decisions are becoming more of a collective decision and less individualistic. People are becoming more dependent on the reviews and are failing to judge on their own.

Digital media is not only affecting the consumer's behaviour but also the companies. The main threat faced by the companies because of this digital era is the way the consumers interact with the traditional brick and motor stores has changed, the consumers are entering the store after making up their mind about which product to buy. Industry research shows that "62% of the millennial shoppers already know what to buy before entering a store". "84% say consumer reviews influence their decision making."

To illustrate the effects of the digital media marketing, we have created two vintages describing the shopping experience of two generations.

**VINTAGE 1: Shopping Prom Dress in 1997(Before Digital Marketing)**

Alice is a high school student, and David has asked her out to Prom, and she is very excited to buy a new dress which best suits the event. 'BLUSH' is the famous and the considered the best prom dressmaker in town. Alice with her friend Megan together drives to the 'BLUSH' store and tries various dresses after several trails she decides which dress to buy and she was ready to make the payment. Before she made the payment, the salesperson offered her to check out the new Necklace which will go well with the dress. Alice never thought of buying the necklace before entering the store, now after the salesperson suggesting the necklace she tried it and loved it. Now she wants to purchase both Dress and the Necklace. So she pays the advance and orders the dress, and she comes and collects the dress after a week. David gives a lovely compliment on her dress on the prom night, and Alice is pleased about it, and she tells about it to all her friends, and she recommends the brand 'BLUSH' to all her close friends.

**VINTAGE 2: Shopping Prom Dress in 2017(After Digital Marketing)**

Alice is a high school student, and David has asked her out to Prom, and she is very excited to buy a new dress which best suits the event. She messages her best friend, Margot and asks her help her to choose the best prom dress. Then Margot sends a few links to find the best suiting prom dress online. Alice visits all the sites and finds that 'Pinterest' is the best website to select a prom dress because it has the feature to try the dress virtually. Alice tries a few dresses online and likes four dresses but couldn't make up her mind, so she shares all the four dresses to Margot through Facebook to help her choose. Margot selects one of the dress, and Alice likes Margot's suggestion and view all the reviews on that dress, and most of them were positive,

so she chooses to buy that dress. Then Alice searches that dress availability and price online she finds the same dress at different stores with different prices she chooses the cheapest and the most comfortable one for her and goes to that store to order that dress. Then after the payment for the dress, Alice finds a poster of a necklace while she is driving back home. Alice likes the necklace so she checks if the necklace is available online and she finds out there is a sale going online and she could get that necklace for a lower price online, so she chooses to purchase it online. David gives a lovely compliment on her dress on the prom night, and Alice is pleased about it, the next day she posts a photo of her and David at the prom on Facebook. One of Alice's friend Kesha finds her dress very charming and beautiful, so she comments on Alice's post stating " I love your dress Alice, where did you get it?" Alice replies to that comment stating " Thank you, I have got this dress at BLUSH store, and it is very comfortable and beautiful, and their service is the best." For that comment, Kesha replies " I will check it out thanks for the suggestion." After that Alice posts a review on the dress online on the website(Pinterest).

## **11. The impact of digital culture on participatory decision making**

### *Effect 1:*

In 'vintage 1' Alice knew her problem (i.e. need a prom dress), but don't know the solution (i.e. which dress to buy) before entering the store. However, in 'vintage 2' Alice knew her problem (i.e. need a prom dress), and solution (i.e. which dress to buy) as well. Because of this, it eliminated the chance of Alice trying different dresses at the store because she already made up her mind, so she directly enters the store and purchases the dress and exits the store. She is closed to any other new options. Due to this, the store will lose a new potential purchase.

### *Effect 2:*

In 'vintage 1' Alice decides which store to visit based on her knowledge and impression of the store but in 'Vintage 2' Alice searches for a dress on different websites and makes up her mind on which dress to buy and she finds the same dress in few different stores and she chooses the cheapest and most comfortable store for her. This means after digital culture consumers have more options and are very knowledgeable.

### *Effect 3:*

In 'vintage 1' Alice decides her dress after visiting the store and trying different dresses, but in 'vintage 2' she decides her dress after trying the dress virtually and reading the reviews on the dress. This means due to the participatory culture the decision making is becoming less individualistic and more of a group decision.

### *Effect 4:*

In 'Vintage 1' the salesperson offer Alice to try new necklace, which Alice did not think of purchasing before entering the store. She tried the necklace, and she decides to purchase it. In 'Vintage 2' Alice finds a necklace through a poster on the way back to her home, but she did not go to the store to purchase it

she checks about the necklace online and finds out there is a sale online, so she decides to purchase the necklace online. Because of this, the store has lost the potential new purchase.

*Effect 5:*

In 'vintage 1' Alice shares her positive opinion about the dress with her close friends. In 'vintage 2' Alice posts a picture on social media and shares her positive opinion and satisfaction with all her friends. She even posts a review of the dress online. Because of its other consumers will be more informed about the dress and helps them in their decision-making process.

The way the consumers interact with the traditional brick and motor stores has changed, the consumers are entering the store after making up their mind about which product to buy. Industry research shows that 62% of the millennial shoppers already know what to buy before entering a store. 84% say consumer reviews influence their decision making. (Bazaarvoice, 2013).

As the consumers are becoming more participative online and as the digital culture is increasing the companies are trying to keep up with the trend and increasing their presence online, but the problems do not end there; Modern consumers are not loyal, they are more variety seekers. Customers expect a consistent and personalised experience. The more personal feel the brand website has, and more convenient the website the higher the chances of making the consumer a loyal customer and make him/her choose the brand instead of other brands. 75% of consumers are more likely to buy from a retailer that recognises them by name, recommends options based on past purchases, or knows their purchase history (Source: Accenture, 2016). 81% of consumers want brands to get to know them and understand when to approach them and when not to (Source: Accenture, 2017). Personalized home page promotions influenced 85% of consumers to buy while personalised shopping cart recommendations influenced 92% of shoppers online (Source: Kibo, 2017). Because of these trends, the companies are trying to make their customers experience more personal. In 2016 one study found that 75% of companies said their top objective was to improve customer experience. 83% of marketers say creating personalised content is their biggest challenge (Source: Rapt Media, 2016). The new trends demand the companies invest a lot of their time and resources into it.

Apart from the personalisation, the other arising issue is consumers responding to discount coupons and vouchers have entirely changed. According to a survey conducted by 'EY' shows that consumers do not have the same focus on chasing offers and discounts as in years past, but they are still spending cautiously and often look for a reason to buy. With 66% of survey respondents saying they take advantage of discounts, special offers and coupons still drive behaviour.

Online brands that regularly provide free shipping are often well-known and generate a faithful and loyal following. 75% of the survey respondents say they are more likely to choose a retailer with free shipping.

This Digital age has given a raise to all these new trends. All the companies are trying very hard increase their digital

presence and increase their digital marketing campaigns. Consumers continually being flooded with more digital content than ever before. Digital Marketing experts estimate that most Americans are exposed to around 4,000 to 10,000 advertisements each day. Consumers are bombarded with different advertisements, and they have no clue which one to believe, and they started to resist them. According to a new IAB report, 26 percent of desktop users and 15 percent of mobile consumers use blockers to remove ads from publishers' websites. 81% of consumers feel negative about mobile add pop-ups. Roughly 32 percent of ad blockers across both groups are males between 18 and 34, and 22 percent are women of the same age. The prime change in consumer behaviour is that consumers, increasingly turn away from anything they perceive as marketing.



Fig. 2. Percentage of survey respondents who say they regularly take advantage of discounts and coupons

If consumers are resisting all the advertisements, then what are their potential sources of information? Most of the consumers get the knowledge about a product from online reviews or other influencers like Youtubers, Bloggers, Vloggers, etc.

**12. Conclusion**

We have seen both positive and negative effects of the digital marketing on the consumers, but if we look at the big picture, there is not much change. The essential elements are still the same.

The 'EKB Model' is the most accepted model for observing consumer behaviour. The Five steps in that model are:

1. Need recognition & problem awareness.
2. Information Search.
3. Evaluation of Alternatives.
4. Purchase.
5. Post Purchase Awareness.

After looking all the examples and facts mentioned above, there are a lot of differences and effects before and after Digital Media Marketing. However, even after Digital Media Marketing, a consumer is going through all the steps of the 'EKB Model' in his purchase cycle.

With this, we conclude that Digital marketing changed the way customers Interact, Search, Communicate, with the companies and the products and services. However, it did not change the cycle (Purchase Cycle) a consumer goes through when he/she is purchasing a product or service.

#### A. Future research and limitations

Considering the scope of research and limited time, we see that there is huge scope of future studies and keeping in mind that digital and social media marketing is a booming industry in the current scenario, though there are many merits and demerits attached to it. One of the key research/future studies can be carried out on the basis of consumer privacy issues with reference to digital and social media. Though (Tucker, October 2014), considered this research to an extend but the understanding of how the consumers think about privacy, what can be done to protect it, how can it be protected (or not), how they value digital media services and is privacy needed or not, this can be a wide scope of research in future. The modern form of marketing or the current era of digitalization will lead to many form of sustainable development and will make the consumers at ease.

How the Digital Revolution has Impacted Consumer Behaviour



Fig. 3. How the digital revolution has impacted consumer behavior

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