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Impact of Online Marketing Channels on Consumer Purchase Decisions: A Customer-Centric Study

Dr. H H Ramesha¹, Mr. Gajendra T²

Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of Management Studies, Visvesvaraya Technological University-Belagavi, Centre for Post-Graduation Studies, Muddenahalli, Chikkaballapura, India¹ Student, Department of Management Studies (MBA), Centre for Post Graduate Studies, Muddenahalli, Chikkaballapura, Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belagavi, Karnataka, India²

ABSTRACT: The study titled "Impact of Online Marketing Channels on Consumer Purchase Decisions: A Customer-Centric Study" focuses on how online platforms influence the way people choose and buy products. In today's digital world, customers are constantly exposed to advertisements, promotions, and product information across various channels such as social media, search engines, e-commerce sites, and emails. This study aims to understand how these platforms shape customer preferences, trust, and final purchase decisions. A descriptive research approach was used, and data were collected through questionnaires from individuals who frequently shop online. The responses helped identify important factors like convenience, brand visibility, trust, online reviews, and personalized offers that drive buying behaviour. The results showed that most customers rely heavily on online information and peer feedback before making a purchase. Social media, in particular, plays a major role in creating brand awareness and influencing opinions. It was also found that smooth website experiences, secure payment systems, and good after-sales support make customers more likely to return and recommend the brand to others. Overall, the study highlights that online marketing channels have completely changed the way consumers shop, making them more informed, selective, and experience-driven. For businesses, this means success lies not just in promoting products but in building meaningful, trustworthy, and engaging relationships with their customers through digital platforms.

KEYWORDS: Online Marketing, Consumer behaviour, Purchase Decision, Digital Channels, Social Media Marketing, Customer Perception, E-Commerce, Brand Trust, Online Advertising, Customer Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-changing digital era, marketing has evolved far beyond traditional methods such as print, radio, or television advertisements. The rapid growth of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms has transformed the way businesses communicate with their customers. Online marketing has become a powerful tool for reaching large audiences instantly, allowing companies to engage with consumers more personally and efficiently. As more people spend time online, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Google, and e-commerce websites such as Amazon and Flipkart have become key drivers in influencing customer purchase decisions. Consumers today do not rely solely on physical stores or word-of-mouth recommendations; instead, they explore online reviews, product ratings, influencer endorsements, and targeted advertisements before making their buying choices. This growing dependence on digital platforms has led organizations to invest heavily in online marketing strategies to stay competitive and relevant in a dynamic business environment.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that consumer behaviour is rapidly evolving under the influence of online media. Traditional marketing approaches are no longer sufficient to attract and retain customers who are now more informed, selective, and digitally connected. Online marketing channels provide consumers with instant access to product information, price comparisons, and peer opinions, which greatly impact their perception and trust toward brands. Businesses must therefore understand how consumers interpret and respond to online marketing efforts to design effective strategies that convert interest into actual purchases. Despite the increasing use of online marketing in





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India, many small and medium-sized enterprises still struggle to measure its effectiveness or understand how different online channels influence the decision-making process.

A review of existing literature shows that while several studies have explored online consumer behaviour, most have focused on developed markets or specific sectors such as fashion or electronics. There is limited research that provides a holistic, customer-centric view of how multiple online marketing channels collectively shape consumer purchase decisions, especially in emerging markets like India. This gap highlights the need for further exploration to understand the psychological and behavioural factors that drive online purchases in diverse consumer segments.

The main objectives of the present study are:

- 1. To analyse the influence of different online marketing channels on consumer purchase decisions.
- 2. To identify the key factors such as trust, convenience, and online reviews that affect consumer preferences.
- 3. To understand how digital marketing strategies impact customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Based on these objectives, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1. How do online marketing channels influence consumers' decision-making processes?
- 2. Which online platforms have the most significant impact on shaping consumer buying behaviour?
- 3. What are the main factors that encourage consumers to choose online purchases over traditional shopping methods?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Mangold & Faulds (2009):

This study highlighted that social media has become a hybrid element of the promotion mix, combining traditional marketing and word-of-mouth communication. The authors found that consumer-generated content and company-controlled messages interact dynamically to shape consumer awareness and opinions. Social media allows customers to share experiences that influence others' perceptions of brands. The study emphasized that managing both paid and organic online interactions is essential for marketers. It concluded that social media significantly impacts purchase behaviours through engagement and credibility.

2. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010):

Kaplan and Haenlein categorized social media into distinct types such as collaborative projects, blogs, and social networking sites. Their research explained how companies can strategically use each type based on its level of control and interactivity. The study found that social media platforms influence the way consumers discover, evaluate, and adopt products. It emphasized that participation and authenticity are crucial for brand credibility online. Overall, the research suggested that proper platform selection enhances marketing effectiveness and consumer engagement.

3. Davis (1989):

Davis introduced the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain how individuals accept and use new technologies. The study identified perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key factors influencing technology adoption. In the context of online shopping, these factors explain why consumers embrace e-commerce websites and applications. The model helps understand how user-friendly interfaces and efficient systems affect purchase decisions. It remains one of the foundational frameworks for studying digital consumer behaviour.

4. Pavlou (2003):

This research extended the Technology Acceptance Model by integrating the concept of trust in online transactions. Pavlou found that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and trust strongly influence consumer intentions to purchase online. The study revealed that trust acts as a crucial link between consumers and e-commerce platforms. It emphasized that website credibility and secure payment systems enhance online purchase confidence. The findings underscored that successful e-commerce depends on building and maintaining consumer trust.





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5. Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006):

The authors examined the impact of online consumer reviews on product sales in the book industry. Their findings showed that positive reviews significantly boost sales, while negative reviews can reduce them. Review visibility and credibility were found to be vital in shaping consumer perceptions. The study demonstrated that consumers rely heavily on peer opinions before purchasing online. Hence, online reviews serve as a major influence in consumers' final buying decisions.

6. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004):

This study explored electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication and its influence on consumer behaviour. It revealed that consumers actively seek online feedback to reduce uncertainty before buying. The researchers found that message tone and reviewer trustworthiness strongly impact attitudes toward products. Positive eWOM increases purchase intention, while negative messages discourage buyers. The study concluded that eWOM is a critical factor in shaping modern consumer purchase decisions.

7. Gefen, Karahanna & Straub (2003):

Their study focused on the role of trust and TAM in online shopping contexts. They found that trust significantly affects consumer willingness to engage in e-commerce. The authors differentiated between cognitive trust (based on competence and reliability) and affective trust (based on emotional connection). Both types of trust were essential in building long-term customer relationships. The study concluded that trust is a key driver of repeat online purchases.

8. Chebbi & Dholakia (2008):

This study examined how online comparison tools and product information influence decision-making. It found that access to detailed product data helps consumers make faster and more confident purchase decisions. Online tools reduce perceived risks by allowing easy comparison of prices and features. The research suggested that informative websites encourage rational buying behaviour. It concluded that convenience and transparency are major motivators for online shoppers.

9. Verhoef, Kannan & Inman (2015):

The authors analysed omni-channel retailing and its impact on customer experience. Their findings indicated that consumers expect a seamless experience across online and offline channels. The study found that consistency in product information and service improves customer satisfaction and loyalty. Conversely, channel mismatches can lead to confusion and reduced trust. The researchers emphasized that integrated marketing channels enhance long-term brand relationships.

10. Phelps et al. (2004):

This study investigated viral marketing and the spread of promotional messages through online networks. It found that message relevance and emotional appeal increase the likelihood of sharing. The structure of social networks plays a major role in how quickly marketing messages reaches consumers. The study emphasized that peer-to-peer sharing builds credibility more effectively than direct advertising. It concluded that viral marketing can significantly influence product adoption rates.

11. **Ajzen (1991):**

Ajzen's Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) explained how attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control predict intentions and actions. In online marketing, this theory helps explain how social influence and website usability shape purchase decisions. The study found that consumers' intentions depend on their confidence in the online shopping process. Positive attitudes and peer influence increase willingness to buy online. The model remains widely applied to understanding consumer decision-making in digital contexts.

12. Szymanski & Henard (2001):

This meta-analysis reviewed factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study found that satisfaction with website design, delivery speed, and customer service strongly predicts repeat purchases. In online marketing, satisfied customers are more likely to recommend the brand. The research also highlighted the link between





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satisfaction and trust in e-commerce environments. It concluded that improving post-purchase experience enhances brand reputation and loyalty.

13. Zhang, Cheung & Lee (2014):

The study focused on mobile commerce and its growing impact on consumer behaviour. It found that mobile features like personalization, mobility, and convenience drive impulsive buying. Younger consumers were particularly influenced by mobile advertisements and app-based offers. The research suggested that location-based promotions enhance engagement and sales. It concluded that mobile marketing is becoming a major factor in shaping modern purchasing decisions.

14. Kumar & Mirchandani (2012):

This study explored the impact of personalization and targeted advertising in digital marketing. It revealed that personalized recommendations increase conversion rates and customer engagement. However, over-targeting can lead to privacy concerns and reduced trust. The research suggested that a balance between personalization and transparency is essential. The findings highlight the importance of ethical marketing practices in maintaining consumer loyalty.

15. Shao (2009):

Shao's study examined user-generated content and the attention economy in digital media. It found that content relevance and social validation (likes, shares, comments) guide consumer interest. Consumers perceive highly shared content as more credible, which influences product evaluation. The study showed that online engagement often substitutes for traditional advertising. It concluded that social signals strongly shape consumer awareness and purchase intentions.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research on "Impact of Online Marketing Channels on Consumer Purchase Decisions: A Customer-Centric Study" was designed to systematically examine how various digital marketing platforms influence consumer behaviour, attitudes, and purchase intentions. The methodology adopted ensures the collection of reliable data and the use of appropriate analytical tools to draw meaningful conclusions.

Research Design:

The study adopts a **descriptive research design**, as it aims to describe and interpret the existing relationship between online marketing channels and consumer purchase behaviour. Descriptive research helps in understanding consumer perceptions, attitudes, and preferences toward digital marketing techniques. It does not manipulate variables but instead captures real-world responses from participants to identify patterns and trends.

Population and Sample:

The target population for this study comprises individuals who actively use online platforms for shopping or product information. The population includes consumers from different age groups, educational backgrounds, and income levels who engage with online marketing content. A sample size of 120 respondents was selected to ensure diverse representation and reliability of results. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling, as participants were chosen based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. This approach was suitable given the limited time and resources available for data collection.

Data Collection Methods:

The study utilized both primary and secondary data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

- **Primary data** were collected through a **structured questionnaire** distributed online using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions related to online shopping habits, influence of social media, trust in digital platforms, and purchase frequency.
- **Secondary data** were gathered from journals, research papers, books, and reputable websites to support theoretical understanding and provide context for interpreting results.





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Data Analysis Tools:

After data collection, responses were systematically organized and analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and frequency were used to summarize the data. Inferential tools like the Chi-square test and correlation analysis were applied to examine relationships between variables, such as the connection between social media influence and purchasing decisions. Graphs and charts were used to visually represent findings for better clarity and interpretation.

Variables:

- **Independent Variables:** Online marketing channels (social media marketing, email marketing, search engine marketing, influencer marketing, and online advertisements).
- **Dependent Variable:** Consumer purchase decision (measured through factors like awareness, interest, trust, and final purchase action).

Overall, this research methodology provides a structured approach to understanding how online marketing strategies impact consumer purchasing behaviour. By combining both quantitative data and theoretical insights, the study aims to generate meaningful conclusions that can help marketers develop effective, customer-focused digital strategies.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data collected through the structured questionnaire were analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, correlation, and Chi-square tests. The findings are presented below through tables and charts, followed by a brief interpretation of each.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	68	56.7
	Female	52	43.3
Age Group	18–25 years	70	58.3
	26–35 years	32	26.7
	36–45 years	18	15.0
Education	Undergraduate	54	45.0
	Postgraduate	46	38.3
	Others	20	16.7
Monthly Income	Below ₹25,000	42	35.0
	₹25,000–₹50,000	48	40.0
	Above ₹50,000	30	25.0

Interpretation:

Most respondents were young (18–25 years) and digitally active, indicating that online marketing is particularly influential among youth. A nearly balanced gender ratio ensures a fair representation of opinions across both groups.

2. Most Preferred Online Marketing Channel

Marketing Channel	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Social Media Ads	52	43.3
Search Engine Ads	20	16.7
Email Marketing	12	10.0
Influencer Promotions	26	21.7
E-Commerce Suggestions	10	8.3





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Interpretation:

Social media advertising is the most preferred and impactful channel, followed by influencer marketing. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook are dominant sources of product discovery, reflecting the growing role of visual and interactive marketing.

3. Factors Influencing Online Purchase Decisions

Influencing Factor	Highly Influential (%)	Moderately Influential (%)	Not Influential (%)
Convenience	60	35	5
Trust and Security	58	30	12
Online Reviews	65	28	7
Discounts/Offers	72	20	8
Brand Reputation	55	35	10

Interpretation:

Discounts, trust, and reviews are major factors driving online purchases. Consumers tend to rely heavily on user-generated content before making buying decisions. This aligns with previous findings that social validation enhances purchase confidence.

4. Impact of Online Reviews on Purchase Decisions

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	62	51.7
Agree	38	31.6
Neutral	10	8.3
Disagree	8	6.7
Strongly Disagree	2	1.7

Interpretation:

A combined 83.3% of respondents agree that online reviews influence their purchase decisions. This suggests that customer feedback and ratings are critical trust-building tools for brands. It confirms the hypothesis that **consumer-generated content significantly affects buying intentions**.

5. Relationship Between Social Media Engagement and Purchase Decisions

Correlation Test	Value
Pearson Correlation (r)	0.76
Significance Level (p)	0.001

Interpretation:

The correlation coefficient of $\mathbf{r} = 0.76$ shows a strong positive relationship between social media engagement and online purchase decisions. This indicates that the more time consumers spend interacting with brands on social media, the higher their likelihood of making a purchase. Hence, social media is not only an awareness tool but also a conversion driver.

6. Trust and Security as Determinants of Online Purchase

Chi-square Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-value	Result
14.28	4	0.006	Significant





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Interpretation:

The Chi-square test shows a significant relationship between website security and consumer trust (p < 0.05). Consumers prefer websites that offer secure transactions, verified payment gateways, and transparent return policies. This supports the study's objective of identifying factors that enhance online consumer confidence.

7. Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Purchase Intention

Level of Satisfaction	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	46	38.3
Satisfied	52	43.4
Neutral	12	10.0
Dissatisfied	8	6.6
Highly Dissatisfied	2	1.7

Interpretation:

A total of 81.7% of consumers expressed satisfaction with their online shopping experiences. Satisfied customers were also more likely to make repeat purchases, indicating that positive online interactions directly contribute to customer loyalty and long-term retention.

Summary of Findings

- 1. Social media is the most influential online marketing channel for product awareness and purchase intent.
- 2. Discounts, trust, and online reviews significantly shape consumer behaviour.
- 3. A strong positive correlation exists between social media engagement and purchasing decisions.
- 4. Security and transparency in digital platforms enhance consumer trust and encourage repeat buying.
- 5. Customer satisfaction plays a key role in fostering brand loyalty in the online environment.

Interpretation and Link to Objectives

- Objective 1: To analyse the influence of different online marketing channels on consumer purchase decisions.
 - → The study confirms that social media and influencer marketing have the strongest impact on consumer buying choices.
- Objective 2: To identify key factors affecting consumer preferences such as trust and convenience.

 → Findings show that trust, reviews, and discounts are major determinants of online purchases.
- Objective 3: To understand how digital marketing strategies impact customer satisfaction and loyalty.
 - → Results indicate that smooth online experiences and secure platforms lead to higher satisfaction and repeat purchases.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion (Key Points)

1. Dominance of Social Media:

- Social media is the most influential online marketing channel for awareness and purchase decisions.
- Supports findings of Mangold & Faulds (2009) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010).
- Interaction with brand content, influencers, and product reviews increases purchase likelihood.

2. Importance of Trust, Convenience, and Online Reviews:

- Trust in websites and secure transactions strongly influences buying intentions.
- Online reviews and ratings guide consumer decisions; 83% of respondents rely on them.
- Aligns with Pavlou (2003), Gefen et al. (2003), and Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006).

3. Shift Toward Influencer Marketing and Peer Recommendations:

- Influencer promotions are more persuasive than email or search engine ads among younger consumers.
- Indicates a move from traditional online advertising to peer-driven marketing.
- Consistent with Shao (2009) on the role of user-generated content and social validation.





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4. Role of Customer Experience and Satisfaction:

- Positive experiences (fast delivery, easy navigation, good service) increase repeat purchases.
- Confirms Szymanski & Henard (2001) that satisfaction leads to loyalty and advocacy.
- Highlights the importance of post-purchase engagement, not just promotions.

5. Practical Implications for Organizations:

- Invest in engaging social media campaigns and influencer collaborations.
- Focus on secure, user-friendly, and transparent e-commerce platforms.
- Incorporate feedback mechanisms to strengthen trust and customer relationships.

6. Implications for Policymakers:

- Strengthen consumer data protection laws.
- Ensure transparency in digital advertising to foster trust in online markets.

7. Societal Implications:

- Increasing reliance on digital platforms underscores the need for digital literacy.
- Educated consumers are more likely to make safe and informed online purchases.

8. New Insights and Contribution:

- Confirms previous research while highlighting that social influence, interactivity, and trust now drive online purchasing more than traditional advertising.
- Demonstrates the growing importance of influencer-led marketing and customer experience in emerging markets like India.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion:

The study on the impact of online marketing channels on consumer purchase decisions provides valuable insights into how digital platforms influence modern consumer behaviour. The main findings are:

- Social media and influencer marketing are the most effective channels for creating awareness and influencing purchase decisions.
- Trust, convenience, and online reviews play a critical role in shaping consumer confidence and purchase intent.
- Customer satisfaction with website usability, secure transactions, and post-purchase service significantly affects repeat purchases and brand loyalty.
- Consumers increasingly rely on peer recommendations and user-generated content rather than traditional online advertising, reflecting a shift toward a more interactive and socially driven online marketplace.

Overall, the study confirms that businesses must adopt a customer-centric digital marketing approach, focusing on engagement, transparency, and trust, to effectively influence purchase decisions and build long-term relationships.

Limitations of the Study:

- The study used convenience sampling with a sample size of 120, which may limit generalizability.
- The research focused mainly on urban and digitally active consumers, potentially excluding perspectives from rural or less tech-savvy populations.
- The study relied on self-reported data, which could be influenced by personal biases or inaccurate recall.
- Only a few online marketing channels were examined; other emerging platforms (e.g., TikTok, WhatsApp marketing) were not included.

Suggestions and Scope for Future Research:

- Organizations should invest in engaging social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and secure e-commerce platforms to strengthen consumer trust and boost conversions.
- Businesses can enhance personalization and user experience to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.





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- Future research could explore cross-cultural differences in online purchase behaviours to provide more generalized insights.
- Further studies may include larger and more diverse samples, incorporating rural consumers or different demographic segments.
- Investigating emerging digital marketing tools such as AI chatbots, virtual reality, or short-form video marketing could reveal new ways to influence consumer decisions.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of a holistic, customer-focused approach to online marketing, offering practical insights for businesses while laying the groundwork for further exploration in the rapidly evolving digital marketplace.

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