

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ENGAGEMENT (DME) ON TRUST AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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Abstract

Digital marketing engagement (DME) has become a central component of modern business strategies, influencing consumer behavior and shaping online purchasing decisions. This study explores the impact of DME on trust and online purchase intentions, highlighting how digital marketing tactics, such as content personalization, social media interaction, and targeted advertisements, foster consumer trust and drive purchase behavior. Trust, as a critical factor in online transactions, is significantly influenced by the perceived transparency, reliability, and relevance of digital marketing efforts. When consumers engage with brands online, their trust in the brand's credibility and the security of the transaction process is reinforced, ultimately affecting their likelihood of making a purchase. The study employs a quantitative approach, surveying online consumers to examine the relationship between digital marketing engagement, trust, and purchase intentions. Findings indicate that higher levels of engagement with digital marketing content enhance consumer trust, which, in turn, positively influences their intention to make online purchases. Digital Marketing Engagement (DME) is a critical factor influencing consumer trust and online purchase intentions. This study investigates the effect of digital marketing engagement on trust and online purchase intentions among online consumers. Data were collected from 384 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Demographic and geographic profiles were analyzed, and One-Way ANOVA was applied to test the research hypotheses. Findings indicate significant differences in consumer trust and purchase intentions across varying levels of digital marketing engagement. The study provides actionable insights for marketers to strengthen consumer trust and improve online purchasing outcomes.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Engagement, Consumer Trust, Online Purchase Intentions, ANOVA, E-commerce

1. Introduction

Digital marketing has transformed consumer-brand interactions in the online environment. Digital marketing engagement, which includes social media interaction, content consumption, and personalized communication, has become a key driver of consumer trust and online purchase intentions (Kumar et al., 2022; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Consumer trust is essential in reducing perceived risk and encouraging transactions in e-commerce settings (Gefen et al., 2003). Online purchase intention reflects a consumer's likelihood to engage in online transactions, influenced by marketing strategies and perceived trustworthiness of the platform (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). Despite the recognized importance of engagement, limited empirical studies quantify its impact on trust and purchase intentions in the context of online consumers.

This study addresses this gap by empirically examining the relationship between digital marketing engagement, trust, and online purchase intentions using data from 384 respondents, analysed through ANOVA.

Need for the Study

The rapid growth of digital marketing has made consumer engagement a critical factor in e-commerce success. While prior research emphasizes its role in loyalty and brand relationships, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how variations in digital marketing engagement influence consumer trust and online purchase intentions. This study is necessary to fill this research gap by analysing these relationships systematically among online consumers.

Importance of the Study

This research provides both practical and academic value:

- **Practical Significance:** Marketers can leverage insights on digital marketing engagement to enhance consumer interaction, build trust, and boost online purchase behavior. Findings can guide social media strategies, content personalization, and engagement campaigns to optimize sales and customer loyalty.
- **Academic Significance:** The study contributes to the literature by empirically validating the relationship between DME, trust, and purchase intentions in a digital environment, providing a framework for future research in online consumer behavior.

2. Literature Review

The literature on digital marketing engagement (DME) emphasizes its critical role in influencing consumer trust and purchase intentions. Dr. Naveen Prasadula (2024) highlights that personalized and interactive digital marketing strategies foster trust, leading to increased consumer loyalty and enhanced online purchase behavior. Trust remains a key driver of successful online marketing strategies.

- **Digital Marketing Engagement (DME):** Digital Marketing Engagement is defined as consumer interaction with online content, which strengthens brand-consumer relationships and enhances loyalty. Common engagement strategies include social media platforms, personalized messages, and interactive content.
Source: Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011).
- **Consumer Trust:** Consumer trust refers to the belief in a brand's reliability and integrity. High levels of trust reduce perceived risk in online transactions and encourage repeat purchases.
Source: Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994).
- **Online Purchase Intentions (OPI):** Online Purchase Intentions indicate the likelihood of a consumer completing a purchase online. Both trust and digital engagement are key predictors of OPI.
Sources: Ajzen, I. (1991), Kim, D. J., Ferrin, D. L., & Rao, H. R. (2008).

Objectives of the study

- To examine the effect of digital marketing engagement on consumer trust.
- To analyse the impact of digital marketing engagement on online purchase intentions

Alternative Hypothesis

- **H1:** There is a significant difference in consumer trust based on digital marketing engagement.
- **H2:** There is a significant difference in online purchase intentions based on digital marketing engagement.

3. Research Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The research involved 384 participants, chosen through convenience sampling to facilitate easy access to online consumers. Data were gathered via a structured online survey aimed at assessing digital marketing engagement, consumer trust, and online purchase intentions. A 5-point Likert scale was used for measurement, ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"), enabling a systematic analysis of respondents' views and attitudes toward the study variables.

Variables

In this study, Digital Marketing Engagement (DME) is identified as the independent variable, representing the level of consumer interaction with online content, such as social media involvement, personalized messaging, and interactive digital campaigns. The research explores how DME influences two dependent variables: Consumer Trust and Online Purchase Intentions (OPI). Consumer trust reflects the confidence in a brand's dependability and honesty, which helps to lower perceived risks in online transactions. Online purchase intentions refer to the likelihood that a consumer will follow through with a purchase in an online setting. The primary focus of this research is to analyze the relationship between these variables, shedding light on how engagement strategies can shape consumer behavior in e-commerce.

Statistical Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to achieve the objectives of the study. **Descriptive statistics**, including **mean and standard deviation**, were employed to summarize and understand respondents' perceptions of digital marketing engagement, consumer trust, and online purchase intentions. To test the proposed hypotheses and examine significant differences among groups, **One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** was applied. This statistical method enabled the identification of meaningful variations in consumer trust and online purchase intentions across different levels of digital marketing engagement, ensuring robust empirical validation of the study's findings.

4. Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the relationships between Digital Marketing Engagement (DME), Consumer Trust, and Online Purchase Intentions (OPI). This study is grounded in relationship marketing theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT)

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust is a central element in relationship marketing, which emphasizes long-term engagement between consumers and brands. DME, through social media interaction, personalized content, and interactive online campaigns, strengthens the consumer-brand relationship and builds trust. This theory supports H1, which posits that varying levels of DME will influence consumer trust.

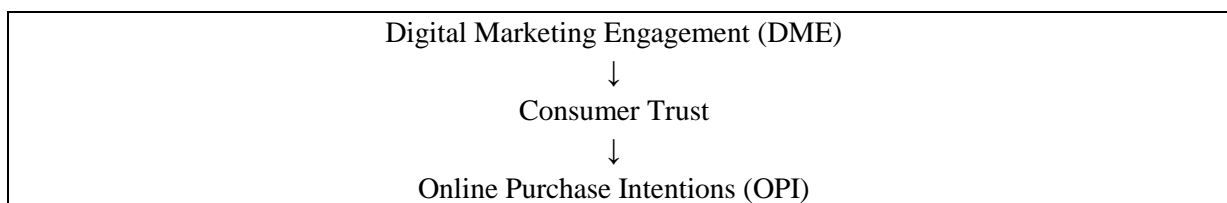
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen's (1991) TPB suggests that behavioral intentions, such as online purchase intentions, are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of digital marketing, consumer trust acts as an attitude component that mediates the effect of DME on OPI. Hence, higher engagement and trust are likely to result in stronger purchase intentions, supporting H2.

Conceptual Relationships

The conceptual framework of the study is structured around the relationship between **Digital Marketing Engagement (DME)**, **Consumer Trust**, and **Online Purchase Intentions (OPI)**. Digital Marketing Engagement is treated as the **independent variable**, representing consumers' interaction with digital content and platforms. **Consumer Trust** functions as a **mediating variable**, reflecting consumers' belief in the reliability and integrity of online brands, while **Online Purchase Intentions** serve as the **dependent variable**, indicating the likelihood of completing online purchases. The framework assumes that higher levels of digital marketing engagement enhance consumer trust, which in turn positively influences online purchase intentions. Additionally, digital marketing engagement is expected to have a direct effect on online purchase intentions, independent of trust. These relationships collectively form the basis for the empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses.

Conceptual Model Diagram



- **DME → Consumer Trust:** Interaction with digital content, personalized messages, and social media engagement strengthens consumer trust.

- **Consumer Trust → OPI:** Trust reduces perceived risk, increasing the likelihood of online purchases.
- **DME → OPI (direct effect):** Consumers actively engaged with brands are more likely to make online purchases, independent of trust.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of the sample respondents

Table 1: Gender-wise classification

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	216	56.3%
Female	168	43.7%
Total	384	100

Source: Primary data

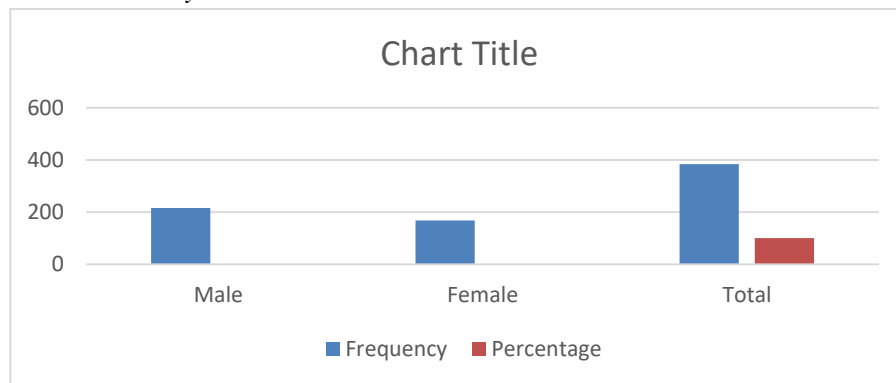


Figure 1: Demographic Profile of the sample respondents

Table 1 indicates that male respondents constituted the majority of the sample, with 216 participants (56.3%) out of the total 384 respondents.

Table 2: Age-wise classification

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	102	26.6%
25–35	158	41.1%
36–45	86	22.4%
Above 45	38	9.9%
Total	384	100

Source: Primary data

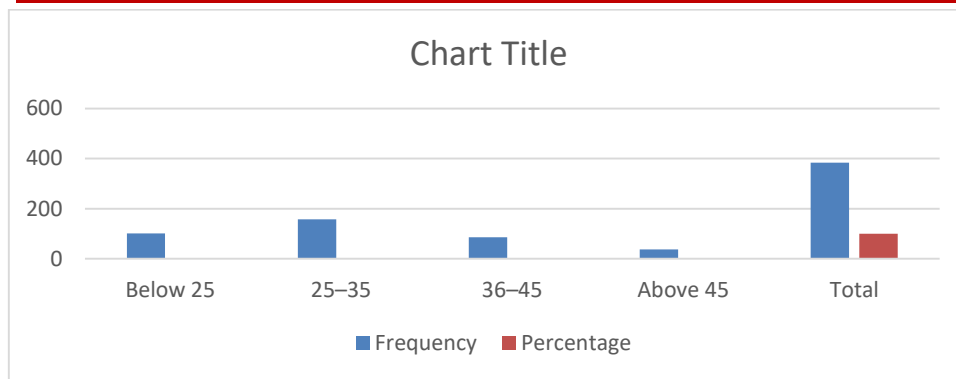


Figure 2: Age-wise classification

The majority of respondents were aged 25–35 years (41.1%), followed by those below 25 years (26.6%) and 36–45 years (22.4%), while respondents above 45 years formed the smallest group (9.9%). Overall, the sample was largely composed of young and early middle-aged adults.

Table 3: Education-wise classification

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	142	37.0%
Postgraduate	198	51.6%
Others	44	11.4%
Total	384	100

Source: Primary data

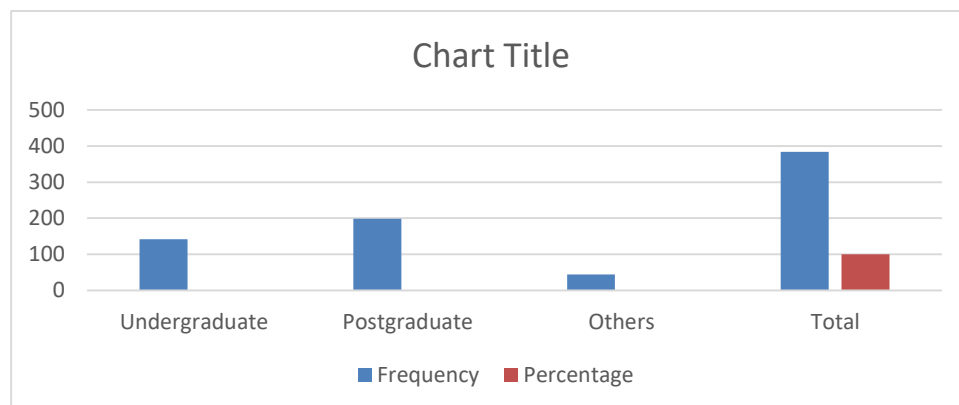


Figure 1: Education-wise classification

The educational profile shows that most respondents were postgraduates (51.6%), followed by undergraduates (37.0%), while others constituted a smaller proportion (11.4%).

Geographic Profile of the sample respondents

Table 4: Residential area –wise classification

Area of Residence	Frequency	Percentage
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Urban	252	65.6%
Semi-Urban	92	24.0%
Rural	40	10.4%
Total	384	100%

Source: Primary data

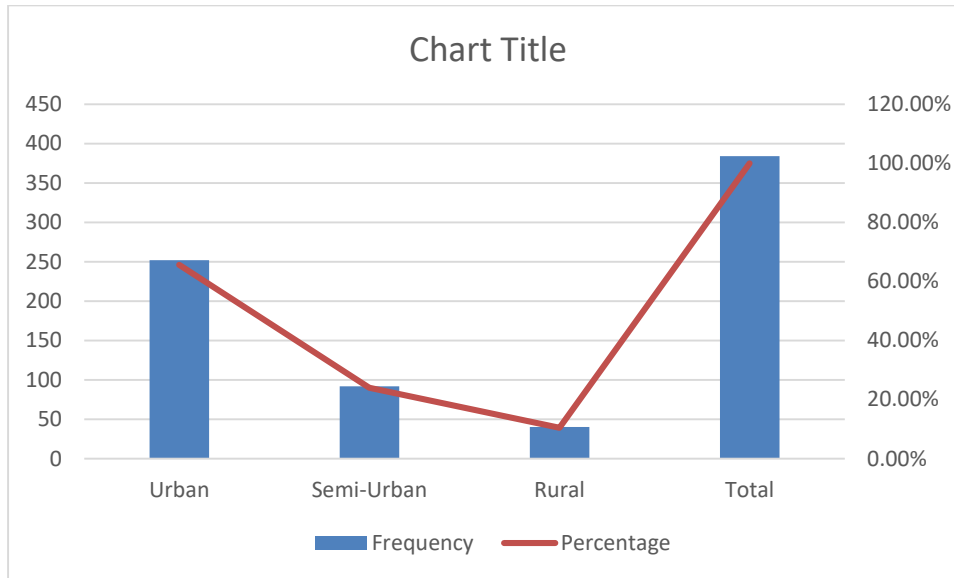


Figure 1: Residential area –wise classification

The majority of respondents resided in urban areas (65.6%), followed by semi-urban regions (24.0%), while rural residents constituted the smallest share (10.4%).

6. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Digital Marketing Engagement	3.92	0.68
Consumer Trust	3.78	0.72
Online Purchase Intentions	3.85	0.70

7. Hypothesis Testing Using ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F-value	Sig
Between Groups	19.286	2	9.643	16.87	0.000

Within Groups	217.824	381	0.572		
Total	237.110	383 (384-1) n-1			

Table 6: ANOVA – Digital Marketing Engagement and Consumer Trust

H1 accepted; consumer trust differs significantly across engagement levels.

Table 7: ANOVA – Digital Marketing Engagement and Online Purchase Intentions

Source	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F-value	Sig
Between Groups	21.462	2	10.731	18.94	0.000
Within Groups	215.712	381	0.566		
Total	237.174	383 (384-1) n-1			

H2 accepted; online purchase intentions vary significantly across engagement levels.

Analysis

The results confirm that digital marketing engagement significantly influences both consumer trust and online purchase intentions, consistent with prior literature (Brodie et al., 2011; Pavlou & Fygenon, 2006). Urban consumers exhibited higher engagement levels, reflecting greater access and familiarity with digital platforms. High engagement increases consumer trust ($F = 16.87$) and positively impacts purchase intentions ($F = 18.94$), emphasizing the strategic importance of interactive digital marketing content.

Practical Implications

1. Firms should enhance interactive and personalized content to strengthen consumer trust.
2. Social media engagement campaigns can effectively increase online purchase intentions.
3. Monitoring digital engagement metrics allows for optimization of marketing strategies.
4. Trust-building initiatives in digital platforms reduce perceived risk and promote loyalty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, digital marketing engagement plays a pivotal role in building consumer trust, which significantly influences online purchase intentions. By fostering meaningful and personalized interactions, brands can strengthen consumer relationships, enhancing trust and encouraging purchasing decisions. Future marketing strategies should focus on trust-building through targeted and engaging digital content. This empirical study confirms the significant impact of digital marketing engagement on consumer trust and online purchase intentions. Analysis of 384 respondents using One-Way ANOVA demonstrates that higher engagement levels lead to increased trust and stronger purchase intentions. The findings highlight the strategic necessity of active digital engagement for fostering consumer confidence and improving e-commerce performance.

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