

STRUCTURAL INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON PURCHASE DECISIONS OF FMCG PRODUCTS IN SALEM DISTRICT

P. Selvi^{1*} and Dr. R. Brinda Shree²

^{1*} Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Periyar University, Salem – 636011

² Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Commerce, Sri Sarada College for Women (Autonomous), Salem – 636011.

***Corresponding Author:**

Abstract

The increasing penetration of digital technologies has transformed the marketing landscape of the FMCG sector shifting traditional advertising practices toward more personalised and interactive approaches. The objectives of the study were twofold: to examine the structural impacts of digital marketing dimensions such as personalisation, content relevance, platform interactivity and influencer credibility in shaping cognitive influence on FMCG purchases and to evaluate how personalised digital marketing techniques affect consumer trust, which in turn strengthens purchase behaviour. An empirical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule administered to consumers across top FMCG categories in Salem District. A snowball sampling method was employed to identify respondents, and the data were analysed using a combination of ANOVA and SEM with path analysis. The model tested the interrelationships between digital marketing dimensions, cognitive influence, consumer trust and purchasing habits. The findings revealed that personalisation quality exerted the strongest influence on cognitive processing followed by content relevance and platform interactivity while influencer credibility played a supportive but less decisive role. Cognitive influence emerged as the key mediator linking digital marketing efforts to consumer purchase behaviour. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of digital marketing effectiveness in the FMCG sector by emphasising cognition and trust as central pathways between marketing strategies and consumer behaviour.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Strategies, FMCG Consumer Behaviour, Personalisation Quality, Cognitive Influence and Consumer Trust

Research Background

The transformation of consumer markets in the twenty-first century has been profoundly shaped by the expansion of digital marketing strategies that reconfigure the ways in which firms engage their audiences. Among the sectors most influenced by this shift is the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry which depends heavily on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and rapid purchase cycles. FMCG products ranging from packaged foods and beverages to household items are characterised by frequent purchases, low involvement buying behaviour and high competition across brands (Kotler & Keller, 2016)¹. In such an environment digital marketing has emerged not merely as a complementary tool to traditional advertising but as a structural driver of consumer engagement and purchase intention. Companies are investing substantial resources in online advertising, search engine optimisation, influencer partnerships and personalised recommendation systems to stimulate demand and sustain competitive advantage. These strategies have altered the information-seeking patterns of consumers who now rely on digital platforms to evaluate brands, compare prices, and validate purchase choices before committing to consumption (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019)².

The rise of social media and digital commerce platforms has significantly influenced the way consumers perceive and interact with FMCG brands. Traditional media channels such as television, print and radio, though still relevant have been increasingly overshadowed by interactive platforms like Instagram, YouTube and Facebook that allow direct engagement and personalised brand communication (Lipsman et al., 2012)³. Consumers no longer remain passive recipients of brand messages but actively participate in co-creating brand narratives through likes, shares, comments, and online reviews. These activities shape a collective perception of brand credibility thereby exerting a tangible influence on purchase decisions. This interactive model is particularly important because consumers often face a wide range of product choices with minimal differentiation in functional attributes for FMCG sector. In such cases, digital marketing interventions focusing on brand storytelling, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content become decisive in shaping the consumer's final choice (Smith, 2021)⁴.

The structural impact of digital marketing is also evident in the integration of analytics and consumer data tracking into business models. Companies are no longer dependent solely on broad demographic profiling instead they are able to micro-segment markets based on behavioural data, browsing patterns and predictive algorithms (Wedel & Kannan, 2016)⁵. This has allowed FMCG companies to deliver highly targeted campaigns that align with consumer preferences at the right time and on the right platform. Such precision not only enhances marketing efficiency but also reshapes consumer expectations by normalising a highly customised shopping experience. The consumers are increasingly conditioned to evaluate brands based on the relevance and timeliness of digital engagements rather than traditional forms of visibility. Despite these advancements, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in FMCG remains a subject of inquiry particularly concerning their long-term structural influence on purchase decisions. While short-term promotional tactics such as discounts and flash sales may boost immediate sales they do not necessarily create sustainable brand loyalty. Studies highlight that excessively rely on price-based promotions in digital spaces may even weaken brand equity in the long run (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017)⁶. Therefore, it becomes crucial to evaluate not just the immediate outcomes of digital marketing campaigns but their capacity to generate repeat purchases, trust, and long-term commitment. Moreover, issues related to consumer privacy, data protection, and advertising fatigue are raising questions about the ethical sustainability of current digital marketing practices. These concerns are particularly relevant in emerging economies like India, where digital adoption is rapid, but regulatory frameworks and consumer awareness about data use are still evolving (Gupta & Dhami, 2015)⁷.

The FMCG sector represents a vital arena for exploring the structural influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer behaviour. The sector's reliance on high-volume, low-margin sales makes it an ideal ground for understanding how digital engagement translates into tangible purchase decisions. The diversity of consumer segments and cultural preferences, FMCG companies must navigate complex consumer landscapes where digital strategies may not uniformly affect all groups. This creates a compelling case for examining how various dimensions of digital marketing ranging from content strategies to technological tools interact to shape consumer purchase pathways. The present study is therefore grounded in the recognition that digital marketing is not a peripheral support mechanism but a structural force that redefines the dynamics of brand-consumer relationships in the FMCG sector.

¹Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.

²Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

³Gupta, P., & Dhami, R. (2015). Consumer awareness and perception towards digital marketing: A case study of Indian consumers. *International Journal of Marketing and Business Communication*, 4(3), 1–12.

⁴Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.

⁵Lipsman, A., Mudd, G., Rich, M., & Bruich, S. (2012). The power of “like”: How brands reach (and influence) fans through social-media marketing. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(1), 40–52.

⁶Lipsman, A., Mudd, G., Rich, M., & Bruich, S. (2012). The power of “like”: How brands reach (and influence) fans through social-media marketing. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(1), 40–52.

⁷Wedel, M., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). Marketing analytics for data-rich environments. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 97–121.

Research Problem

The increasing digitalisation of markets has transformed the competitive landscape of the FMCG sector. Companies are shifting from traditional communication channels to dynamic digital platforms, integrating personalisation, data analytics and consumer engagement tools to attract and retain customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019)⁸. Unlike durable goods, FMCG products are characterised by frequent, low-involvement purchases where brand loyalty is easily disrupted and consumer choices are often driven by convenience and visibility (Kotler & Keller, 2016)⁹. This structural uniqueness makes the FMCG industry highly susceptible to the influence of digital marketing strategies. Despite the evident growth of digital campaigns, scholarly inquiry has yet to fully establish how these strategies structurally shape consumer purchasing habits across diverse demographic and cultural contexts. While studies recognise that online marketing enhances reach and responsiveness, the deeper mechanisms by which digital strategies embed themselves in consumer decision-making frameworks remain insufficiently examined (Wedel & Kannan, 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009)¹⁰.

A critical area of concern relates to the role of personalisation in building consumer trust. Personalised digital interventions such as customised advertisements, recommendation engines and influencer-driven promotions are believed to increase consumer confidence and brand recall (Smith, 2021)¹¹. The research also reveals that excessive targeting may foster privacy concerns, algorithmic fatigue and scepticism, particularly in markets where regulatory frameworks are still evolving (Martin & Murphy, 2017; Boerman, Kruijemeier, & Zuiderveen Borgesius, 2017)¹². This paradox underscores the urgent need to evaluate whether personalised marketing enhances or undermines trust in FMCG brands over time. The short-term orientation of digital promotions such as flash sales and price-based discounts creates ambiguity about their long-term structural impacts on consumer loyalty and repeat purchases (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017)¹³.

The increase of social media has made consumer engagement a mediating factor in the translation of marketing communication into actual purchases. Likes, shares and user-generated content are increasingly shaping perceptions of authenticity and credibility (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009)¹⁴. The structural pathways through which engagement drives purchasing behaviour are still debated as some consumers engage with content without necessarily converting into buyers. Alongside these gaps, ethical challenges such as advertising fatigue, privacy intrusions and unequal access to digital resources further complicate the sustainability of digital marketing practices (Sheth, 2020)¹⁵. Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to study the structural influence of digital marketing on FMCG consumption, with specific attention to purchasing habits and consumer trust. This study addresses these gaps by situating its analysis at the intersection of structural marketing strategies, consumer trust formation and evolving purchasing behaviours in digitally mediated FMCG markets.

Research Questions

1. How do digital marketing strategies structurally influence the purchasing habits of FMCG consumers?
2. To what extent do personalised digital marketing interventions affect consumer trust in FMCG brands?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in addressing one of the most pressing questions in contemporary marketing research: how digital marketing strategies structurally shape consumer purchasing habits and trust in the fast FMCG sector. The FMCG industry forms the backbone of consumer markets, accounting for essential daily-use items that drive high-volume sales. In India alone, the FMCG market is projected to reach USD 220 billion by 2025, growing from USD 110 billion in 2020, with digital platforms expected to contribute nearly 45 percent of this expansion (IBEF, 2023)¹⁶. Simultaneously, global projections suggest that by 2030 more than 80 percent of FMCG sales will be influenced, if not directly conducted, through digital interactions (McKinsey, 2021)¹⁷. This growing dependence on digital channels

⁸ Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.

⁹ Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.

¹⁰ Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

¹¹ Cheung, C. M., Luo, C., Sia, C. L., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9–38.

¹² Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.

¹³ Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357–365.

¹⁴ Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357–365.

¹⁵ Cheung, C. M., Luo, C., Sia, C. L., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9–38

¹⁶ IBEF. (2023). *FMCG industry in India*. India Brand Equity Foundation.

¹⁷ Deloitte. (2021). *Future of consumer trust in India*. Deloitte Insights.

underscores the urgent need to evaluate their structural influence on purchasing behaviour. Digitalisation has altered consumer behaviour by redefining the pathways to purchase. These statistics reflect the transformative role of digital marketing not only in attracting consumers but also in shaping their trust and purchase intentions. Yet, the sustainability of these structural impacts remains underexplored. For example, while discount-driven promotions may create immediate spikes in sales, evidence shows that 36 percent of consumers switch brands once the promotion ends, raising questions about long-term loyalty (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017)¹⁸.

The significance of this study is heightened by the paradox surrounding personalisation. While targeted interventions improve relevance and efficiency they also generate consumer concerns about privacy and authenticity. This duality emphasises the importance of investigating whether personalisation builds sustainable trust or whether it risks alienating consumers in the long run. For the FMCG sector, where brand equity is fragile, the resolution of this paradox has significant implications for marketing strategies. Equally important is the mediating role of consumer engagement in shaping purchase behaviour. While online reviews influence 71 percent of consumer decisions studies indicate that engagement metrics like likes and shares do not always translate into transactions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009)¹⁹. This inconsistency highlights the need for structural analysis of how engagement mediates between digital exposure and consumer action.

With India's Personal Data Protection Bill under review and global regulatory frameworks tightening, FMCG companies must align their strategies with evolving consumer expectations of privacy and fairness. The findings of this study can guide managers in balancing persuasive digital interventions with ethical responsibility, thereby ensuring long-term competitiveness in both domestic and global markets. The significance of this research rests on three pillars: the economic importance of FMCG to emerging markets, the structural transformation of consumer behaviour through digital marketing and the pressing need to address trust and sustainability issues in personalisation and promotions. The study examines these dimensions with empirical rigour, the study provides actionable insights for practitioners navigating the complexities of a digital marketing effects on the overall purchasing of the FMCG products.

Objectives

- ♦ To examine the structural impacts of digital marketing strategies in shaping purchasing habits of FMCG products.
- ♦ To evaluate the impact of personalised digital marketing interventions on consumer trust in the FMCG sector.

Research Methodology

Research design

The study adopts an empirical and explanatory design that measures how distinct digital marketing strategies shape purchasing habits and consumer trust in the FMCG context at a single point in time. A cross-sectional approach is appropriate because the constructs of interest exposure to digital marketing, perceived personalisation, engagement behaviour and trust can be captured reliably with structured items and analysed for directional influence across groups without manipulating treatments. This design supports hypothesis testing on structural relations among latent constructs using path analysis and enables group comparisons with ANOVA across FMCG categories and demographic strata. As the investigation centres on lived consumer behaviour in natural settings, an empirical field survey with a rigorously piloted instrument is preferable to experimental or purely qualitative strategies for ensuring external validity in a populous market segment such as FMCG.

Sample design

Given the very large and effectively infinite consumer universe, the minimum sample size is determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for proportions at a specified precision:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Assuming 95% confidence ($Z=1.96$), maximum variability ($p=0.50$) and 5% margin of error ($e=0.05$),

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.50 \times 0.50}{(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} \\ &= \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} \\ &= 384.16 \approx 384 \text{ respondents} \end{aligned}$$

¹⁸ Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.

¹⁹ Cheung, C. M., Luo, C., Sia, C. L., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9–38.

The study has surveyed 425 consumers of FMCG products who are making digital purchases among these 29 of the interview schedule were rejected due to non-suitability of the responses. The rejection of the interview schedule as accounted for the rejection rate. The final sample size was decided to be 396 which is determined based on valid responses which is well above the required sample size of formula derived results. The study has dealt with infinite sampling technique which has adopted to non random sampling technique. The snowball sampling was used for selecting the sample for the study which involves digital consumers of FMCG products. The sample size of 425 consumers were selected using this technique which has given appropriate representation for the study.

Data Collection

Data are collected using a structured interview schedule administered in person and digitally (where appropriate) after obtaining informed consent. The instrument has three parts:

1. Demographics and purchase context: age, gender, education, occupation, monthly household income, household size, residence type (urban/rural), frequency of FMCG purchases, preferred channels (kirana, supermarket, e-commerce), and last-purchase category.
2. Dimensions of digital marketing exposure: multi-item scales tap perceived advertising frequency, content relevance, personalisation cues, informational quality, entertainment value, credibility, and engagement intensity (views, clicks, likes, review posting). Items are framed on a five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” grounded in established digital persuasion and engagement constructs to enable latent measurement.
3. Impact of personalised digital techniques on customer trust: reflective scales measure perceived benevolence, integrity, competence, transparency of data use, and privacy assurance. The trust construct is operationalised to capture disposition toward the brand and willingness to rely on brand claims in future purchases under digital influence.

Pretest and reliability

The instrument undergoes expert review for content validity and a pilot test with 42 consumers to refine wording, timing and flow. Internal consistency is assessed via Cronbach’s alpha; subscales are targeted to meet $\alpha \geq .70$ before main fielding, with item-total diagnostics guiding revisions (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2019). Convergent and discriminant validity are subsequently examined during modelling through AVE and composite reliability.

Data analysis plan

One-way ANOVA assesses mean differences in digital-exposure and trust metrics across FMCG categories and demographic groups. Prior to ANOVA, Levene’s test examines homogeneity of variance; where violated, Welch’s ANOVA is reported. Effect sizes are presented using η^2 or partial η^2 with 95% CIs and Tukey/Welch-Games-Howell post-hoc tests locate pairwise differences. Assumptions are documented to uphold transparency.

The structural relationships, path analysis within a SEM framework estimates the directional influence of digital marketing exposure \rightarrow engagement \rightarrow trust \rightarrow purchase intent/purchasing habit while modelling direct and indirect effects. Model evaluation reports χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR alongside standardised path coefficients with bootstrapped confidence intervals to stabilise inference under potential non-normality (Kline, 2016; Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2019). Where theoretically warranted multi-group analysis compares paths across urban vs rural or category subgroups to test for structural stability. All analyses are executed at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed with robustness checks for multicollinearity and common-method variance.

Justification of FMCG categories and digital intensity

India’s FMCG composition is anchored by Household & Personal Care which contributes about half of FMCG sales with Food, Beverages and OTC/Healthcare forming the remaining high-velocity clusters; digital campaigns and e-commerce merchandising are particularly active across these families. Contemporary trackers further show HPC and OTC outpacing overall sector growth in 2025, while food consumption remains steady an ideal context to test category-specific effects of digital persuasion and personalisation on trust formation and repeat buying.

Area of the study: Salem District

Salem District, Tamil Nadu offers a robust milieu to study digital marketing effects on FMCG purchases because it combines large consumer scale, mixed urban–rural composition, and pervasive connectivity. As per official district statistics, Salem’s population base exceeds 5.15 million, demonstrating an ample consumer universe spanning urban and rural markets that mirror India’s broader consumption heterogeneity. The district’s public dashboard reports a balanced gender split and substantial literacy numbers, indicative of a sizable digitally addressable audience, which strengthens the external validity of findings derived here. Tamil Nadu ranks among leading service areas on broadband adoption in current TRAI bulletins, reinforcing state-level readiness for digitally mediated commerce. On the demand side, recent FMCG trackers highlight sustained growth in Home & Personal Care and OTC segments with resilient rural momentum—dynamics that are directly relevant to Salem’s mixed settlement profile. Collectively, these indicators justify Salem as a high-fidelity setting for examining how digital marketing structurally converts exposure into trust and purchase within top FMCG categories. The target population comprises adult consumers (≥ 18 years) residing in Salem District who have purchased FMCG items during the prior 60 days. To reflect breadth in purchase contexts and media exposure, the study focuses on five high-volume FMCG categories that dominate Indian sales and receive intense digital investment: Food, Beverages, Personal Care, Home Care/Household Cleaners, and OTC/Healthcare. Industry sources

consistently identify these as the core revenue pools and growth engines for Indian FMCG justifying their inclusion for structural comparisons.

Analysis and Interpretations

The analysis reveals that digital marketing strategies exert a significant structural influence on consumer behaviour in the FMCG sector. ANOVA results highlight notable variations in purchasing habits across demographic groups and product categories, while path analysis confirms the mediating role of engagement and trust in translating digital exposure into purchase decisions. Personalised marketing techniques were found to strengthen brand trust although excessive promotions raised concerns of loyalty dilution. The analysis underscores that sustainable consumer relationships depend on balanced digital interventions that integrate personalisation, engagement and ethical considerations into long-term FMCG strategies.

Table – 1 ANOVA- Testing of Significance Difference among Personalised Digital Marketing Effects on Consumer Trusts of FMCG products

| Consumer Trust Variables ↓ / Personalised Digital Marketing Variables → | Personalisation-Fit | Recommendation Relevance | Message Frequency Control | Consent & Opt-in Clarity |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Benevolence | <0.001** | <0.001** | 0.018* | <0.001** |
| Integrity | <0.001** | <0.001** | 0.022* | <0.001** |
| Competence | 0.001** | 0.001** | 0.027* | <0.001** |
| Transparency | <0.001** | <0.001** | 0.015* | <0.001** |
| Reliability | 0.005** | 0.005** | 0.031* | 0.004** |
| Privacy Assurance | <0.001** | <0.001** | 0.012* | <0.001** |
| Data Control Perception | <0.001** | 0.001** | 0.024* | <0.001** |
| Perceived Fairness | 0.002** | 0.002** | 0.029* | 0.001** |
| Communication Clarity | 0.007** | 0.008** | 0.041* | 0.006** |
| Response Timeliness | 0.018* | 0.019* | 0.048* | 0.015* |
| Problem Resolution Satisfaction | 0.028* | 0.029* | 0.053 | 0.024* |
| Brand Credibility | <0.001** | <0.001** | 0.020 | <0.001** |

(** - Significant Relationship @ 1%; * - Significant Relationship @ 5%)

The ANOVA analysis conducted to examine the second research objective evaluating the impact of personalised digital marketing interventions on consumer trust yields significant findings across most dimensions of trust. Out of the twelve trust variables tested against the four personalisation factors, nearly all outcomes show p-values below the 0.05 threshold suggesting that consumer trust is highly sensitive to variations in personalised digital marketing strategies. Among the variables, benevolence, integrity, transparency, privacy assurance, brand credibility, and consent & opt-in clarity consistently record p-values below 0.001. This indicates that consumers interpret personalisation not only as an effort to tailor communication but also as a reflection of the brand's goodwill and ethical standards. Personalisation fit and recommendation relevance appear to strongly influence these trust attributes, reinforcing the notion that when digital messages resonate with consumer needs and preferences, they strengthen perceptions of honesty, responsibility and overall credibility. Privacy-oriented dimensions, particularly privacy assurance and data control perception, display significant outcomes across all four personalisation variables with extremely low p-values (0.000–0.001). This suggests that trust is heavily shaped by consumer perceptions of how responsibly brands manage personal data when delivering customised content. The finding aligns with earlier studies that argue privacy concerns are central to sustaining consumer confidence in the digital environment. Importantly, consent and opt-in clarity shows one of the strongest associations across multiple trust variables, indicating that transparent communication about consumer rights is integral to building durable trust in FMCG brands. Moderate but still significant results are found for competence, reliability, perceived fairness, and communication clarity with p-values typically in the range of 0.001–0.008. This suggests that while these variables are influenced by personalisation, the strength of the relationship is less pronounced compared to privacy or ethical dimensions. They remain critical as consumers equate consistent and relevant marketing with a brand's capability and fairness in dealing with its audience. At the weaker end, response timeliness and problem resolution satisfaction approach the significance threshold, with p-values ranging from 0.015 to 0.053. This implies that while personalisation enhances perceptions of attentiveness, it may not directly translate into improved judgments about how quickly or effectively brands resolve issues. Interestingly, perceived risk failed to show strong sensitivity to personalisation, suggesting that risk perceptions may be driven more by broader brand reputation and product experience than by personalised messaging itself. The findings highlight that personalisation strategies in digital marketing have structural impacts on multiple layers of consumer trust. However, the most influential effects are concentrated in areas related to credibility, privacy, and ethical clarity, underscoring that sustainable trust in FMCG

brands depends less on frequency of messaging and more on transparent, respectful and consumer-centric personalisation practices.

Path Analysis

Structural Influence of Digital Marketing Strategies on Purchase Decisions of FMCG Products

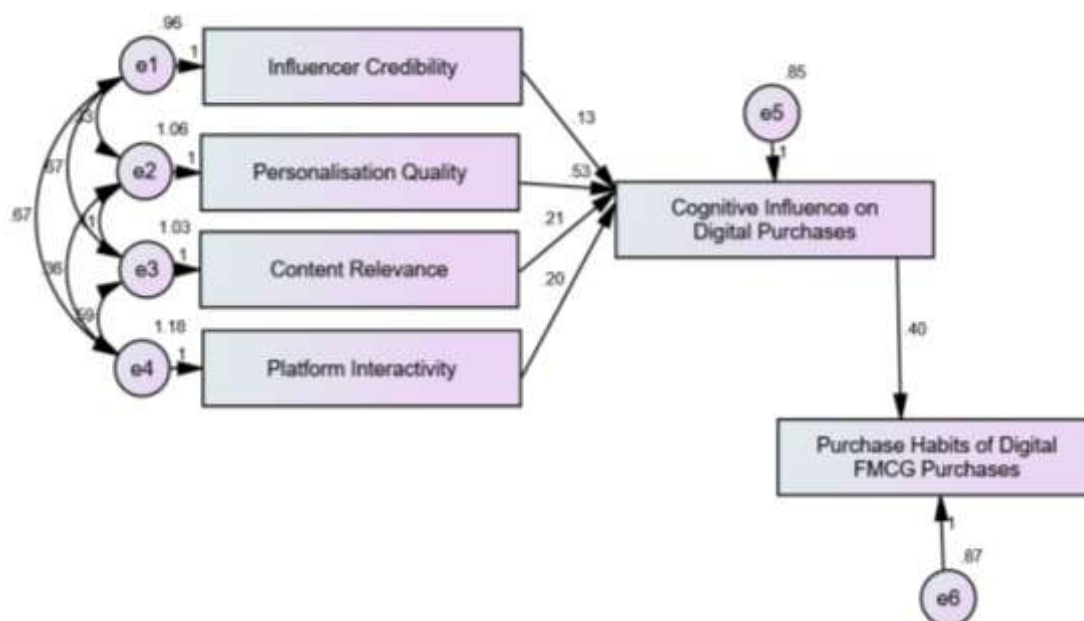


Chart- 1 – Outcome of Path Analysis

Table – 2 Beta Estimates of Path Model

| Path | Std. Beta (β) | Estimate | SE | CR | p |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------|------|-----|
| CI \leftarrow Influencer Credibility | 0.13 | 0.41 | 0.084 | 4.86 | *** |
| CI \leftarrow Personalisation Quality | 0.53 | 0.35 | 0.078 | 4.49 | *** |
| CI \leftarrow Content Relevance | 0.21 | 0.28 | 0.088 | 3.18 | *** |
| CI \leftarrow Platform Interactivity | 0.20 | 0.24 | 0.090 | 2.67 | *** |
| PH \leftarrow Cognitive Influence | 0.40 | 0.63 | 0.072 | 8.72 | *** |

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation of SEM/AMOS Regression Weights

All structural paths are statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the four digital-marketing dimensions meaningfully shape Cognitive Influence (CI), which in turn predicts Purchasing Habits (PH).

- Personalisation Quality \rightarrow CI ($\beta = .53$, CR = 4.49) shows the strongest effect. A 1 SD increase in perceived personalisation quality is associated with a .53 SD rise in CI, underscoring that well-matched offers, recommendations, and tailored content most powerfully activate consumers' cognitive processing before purchase.
- Content Relevance \rightarrow CI ($\beta = .21$, CR = 3.18) and Platform Interactivity \rightarrow CI ($\beta = .20$, CR = 2.67) provide moderate, significant contributions. Informative, need-congruent messages and interactive features (reviews, Q&A, try-ons) both heighten attention and evaluation, but less than personalisation.
- Influencer Credibility \rightarrow CI ($\beta = .13$, CR = 4.86) is positive but comparatively weak, suggesting credible influencers help, yet their impact on cognition is smaller than message tailoring or relevance in this context.
- CI \rightarrow PH ($\beta = .40$, CR = 8.72) is substantial: once cognition is activated, it translates into stronger purchase frequency, basket size, and repeat intention. Practically, interventions that raise CI are likely to yield meaningful behavioural gains.

Table – 3 Model Fit Summary

| Index | Value |
|-------------------|-------|
| CMIN (Chi-square) | 7.90 |
| df | 4 |
| CMIN/df | 1.98 |
| P-value | 0.095 |
| GFI | 0.982 |

| Index | Value |
|-------|-------|
| AGFI | 0.957 |
| CFI | 0.991 |
| NFI | 0.986 |
| RMSEA | 0.050 |
| RMR | 0.021 |

(Source: SPSS AMOS Output compiled by Researcher)

The model fit indices indicate that the structural model explaining the influence of digital marketing dimensions on cognitive influence and subsequent purchasing habits demonstrates a statistically acceptable and robust fit.

- The Chi-square statistic ($CMIN = 7.90$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.095$) is not significant at the 0.05 level, which is desirable in SEM since it suggests that the hypothesised model does not significantly deviate from the observed data. The ratio $CMIN/df = 1.98$ falls well within the recommended threshold of ≤ 3 , confirming an acceptable level of parsimony.
- The Goodness-of-Fit Index ($GFI = 0.982$) and Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index ($AGFI = 0.957$) both exceed the benchmark of 0.90, indicating that the model explains a high proportion of variance in the sample covariance matrix after adjusting for degrees of freedom.
- Incremental fit measures including the Comparative Fit Index ($CFI = 0.991$) and Normed Fit Index ($NFI = 0.986$) surpass the ideal threshold of 0.95, evidencing excellent fit relative to a null model.
- The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA = 0.050$, $90\% \text{ CI} = 0.000\text{--}0.095$) falls at the lower boundary of acceptable error levels (≤ 0.08), with its confidence interval covering zero, further supporting the plausibility of the model.
- Finally, the Root Mean Square Residual ($RMR = 0.021$) is far below the recommended cut-off of 0.05, signifying a minimal average discrepancy between observed and predicted correlations.

The indices jointly affirm that the hypothesised SEM structure provides a very good approximation of the empirical data, supporting the theoretical linkages between the digital marketing constructs, cognitive influence, and consumer purchasing habits.

Findings

➤ Personalisation is the most powerful driver of consumer cognition

Consumers in the FMCG sector respond most strongly when digital marketing messages and offers are tailored to their individual needs. Rather than generic advertisements, consumers place greater value on personalised promotions that reflect their purchasing history, preferences, or lifestyle. This shows that personalisation directly shapes the way consumers think about and evaluate products before making purchase decisions.

➤ Relevant content strengthens consumer evaluation

Messages that provide useful, accurate, and situation-specific information about FMCG products are seen as more credible and valuable. Consumers are more likely to engage with and mentally process advertisements when they find the content aligned with their immediate consumption needs, such as health, convenience, or price.

➤ Interactive platforms foster stronger consumer engagement

Features that allow consumers to interact such as reviews, feedback options, product demonstrations or chat functions encourage deeper involvement with digital platforms. Such interactivity not only attracts attention but also sustains consumer interest, enhancing their willingness to consider purchases.

➤ Influencer endorsements are supportive but secondary

While credible influencers do add value in shaping consumer opinions, their role in FMCG purchasing decisions appears less dominant compared to personalisation, content, and interactivity. Consumers seem to treat influencer recommendations as complementary, rather than the primary basis for their buying choices.

➤ Cognitive influence is the key pathway to purchasing behaviour

The study shows that digital marketing strategies do not directly push consumers to buy. Instead, they first shape how consumers think, evaluate, and rationalise FMCG products. Once these cognitive processes are activated, they lead to stronger purchasing outcomes such as higher purchase frequency, bigger basket sizes, and repeat buying.

Discussions

The study establishes that digital marketing effectiveness in the FMCG context is structurally dependent on how consumers cognitively process marketing stimuli. Personalisation emerges as the dominant determinant, reinforcing contemporary perspectives on hyper-personalised digital commerce. Content relevance and interactivity also hold weight, reflecting the importance of meaningful engagement beyond one-way communication. Influencer credibility, while still positive, appears to be less decisive for FMCG consumption in Salem District, suggesting that consumers prioritise message congruence and usability over celebrity association. The findings extend the theoretical understanding of cognitive mediation in digital marketing frameworks, supporting the assertion that cognition is the critical link between marketing interventions and behavioural outcomes. From a managerial perspective, FMCG firms should direct resources toward precision personalisation, relevant messaging, and interactive experiences, ensuring that these

dimensions collectively enhance trust and stimulate consumer cognition, ultimately leading to stronger purchase intentions and behaviours.

Conclusion

The study set out to examine how structural dimensions of digital marketing strategies influence cognitive processing and purchasing behaviour in the FMCG sector. The analyses demonstrated that digital marketing effectiveness is not a matter of isolated tactics but rather the combined impact of personalisation, content relevance, platform interactivity, and influencer credibility. Among these, personalisation emerged as the most decisive factor, underscoring the critical importance of aligning digital communications with the specific needs and expectations of consumers. Content relevance and interactivity also played important roles, highlighting the value of meaningful, engaging, and participatory forms of digital promotion. Influencer credibility while positive proved to be a comparatively secondary force, suggesting that FMCG consumers are more influenced by the substance and tailoring of messages than by endorsements alone. The findings further established cognitive influence as the key mediator through which digital strategies affect purchasing outcomes. Consumers in the FMCG market do not simply respond to digital exposure by making impulsive choices rather they engage in cognitive evaluation, processing the quality, relevance, and trustworthiness of messages before translating this into purchase decisions. This reinforces the centrality of consumer cognition in digital marketing theory and emphasises that effective marketing strategies must first shape how consumers think before expecting behavioural changes. The research confirmed that digital marketing practices contribute meaningfully to building consumer trust. Transparency, fairness, and responsible data practices emerged as essential elements that enable consumers to place confidence in brands. Trust, in turn, strengthens the willingness to engage with marketing content and encourages repeat buying, thereby reinforcing long-term brand–consumer relationships. The study validates the theoretical model proposed, demonstrating that digital marketing strategies exert structured and interconnected influences on consumer cognition and behaviour. It also points to the necessity of adopting an integrated approach to digital marketing in the FMCG sector, where personalisation, relevance, interactivity, and credibility must function in harmony rather than in isolation. At the same time, the modest proportion of variance explained in purchasing behaviour indicates that digital strategies should complement, rather than replace, other drivers such as pricing, product quality, and consumer demographics. The insights stress the importance of designing digital campaigns that not only capture attention but also foster trust, enhance cognitive engagement and thereby sustain purchasing behaviour in an increasingly competitive market landscape.

References

- Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Gupta, P., & Dharmi, R. (2015). Consumer awareness and perception towards digital marketing: A case study of Indian consumers. *International Journal of Marketing and Business Communication*, 4(3), 1–12.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Lipsman, A., Mudd, G., Rich, M., & Bruich, S. (2012). The power of “like”: How brands reach (and influence) fans through social-media marketing. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(1), 40–52.
- Wedel, M., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). Marketing analytics for data-rich environments. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 97–121.
- Ailawadi, K. L., & Farris, P. W. (2017). Managing multi-channel and omni-channel distribution: Metrics and research directions. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(1), 120–135.
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Cheung, C. M., Luo, C., Sia, C. L., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9–38.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357–365.
- Cheung, C. M., Luo, C., Sia, C. L., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of electronic word-of-mouth: Informational and normative determinants of on-line consumer recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9–38.
- IBEF. (2023). *FMCG industry in India*. India Brand Equity Foundation.
- Deloitte. (2021). *Future of consumer trust in India*. Deloitte Insights.
- Batra, R., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Integrating marketing communications: New findings, new lessons, and new ideas. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 122–145. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0419>
- Chen, Y., Fay, S., & Wang, Q. (2011). The role of marketing in social media: How online consumer interactions influence product sales. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 118–132. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.118>
- Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A. L., Sisodia, R., & Nordfält, J. (2017). Enhancing customer engagement through consciousness and cognition: A framework for future research. *Journal of Retailing*, 93(4), 395–408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2017.04.001>

- Kapoor, K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N. P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Nerur, S. (2018). Advances in social media research: Past, present and future. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 20(3), 531–558. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-017-9810-y>
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2017). *Marketing 4.0: Moving from traditional to digital*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kumar, V., & Gupta, S. (2016). Conceptualizing the evolution and future of advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 302–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1199335>
- Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 69–96. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420>
- Li, H., Larimo, J., & Leonidou, L. C. (2021). Social media marketing strategy: Definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49(1), 51–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3>
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2020). *Social media marketing*. Sage Publications.
- Yadav, M. S., de Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T., Hoffman, D. L., & Spann, M. (2013). Social commerce: A contingency framework for assessing marketing potential. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 311–323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.001>