

Digital Marketing Strategies and Consumer Engagement in Indian E-Commerce: A Systematic Review of Literature and Future Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

The paper provides a comprehensive literature review of the concept of digital marketing strategies and the role of it in consumer behaviour and engagement with reference to the leading Indian e-commerce platforms like Amazon India and Flipkart. In this case, the study brings together a review of the various conceptual, empirical, and methodological studies published in marketing, information systems and consumer behaviour papers, to add a qualitative dimension to existing work, but without original primary data. The review categorises the previous studies based on the theme, research method and theoretical basis, as well as identifies the research gaps (most significantly the lack of empirical validation of digital marketing-engagement-behaviour relationship at the firm level in the Indian context). Drawing on the synthesis, the paper suggests a conceptual framework for future empirical study, based on Stimulus – Organism – Response (S-O-R) model and Customer Engagement Theory concepts. The review ends with specific recommendations — such as using of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique and mediation analysis — for future research to bridge the gaps.

Keywords: Digital marketing, consumer engagement, consumer behaviour, Indian e-commerce, systematic literature review, Amazon India, Flipkart

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce businesses utilize digital marketing as their main strategic tool to expand their operations in a fast-evolving business environment. Digital marketing utilizes the latest technology tools, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data analytics, to deliver customized advertising to particular segments. The technologies are used by companies to analyze customer data, predict future patterns of behavior, and develop a customer-specific marketing plan.

Amazon India and Flipkart are among the leading platforms offering shopping, leveraging AI recommendation systems, influencers, social media marketing and real-time customer engagement techniques. These strategies impact customer experience, which can drive customer decisions and brand loyalty.

The Indian ecommerce market has evolved in a stage of technological advancement and evolving consumer habits. During the first decade, from the late 1990s to early 2000s, e-commerce penetrated only urban markets, as the internet network was not well developed and there was a lack of confidence in online payments. During the first decade (late 90s – early 2000s), online shopping was used in a limited manner because of less advanced internet network and public concerns about payment security. A surge in growth began from the time of around 2010 when Internet access and the use of smart phones increased and platforms like Flipkart and Amazon India came into the market.

The platforms adopted customer-centric measures, such as cash on delivery (COD) and flexible return policies, which contributed to consumer trust and customer base growth. With the speedy development of this growth, a huge and fragmented body of literature has developed in the area of digital marketing, customer engagement and consumer behaviour in e-commerce. This paper systematically reviews that literature, puts it together and categorizes it based on theme, methodology, and theoretical supports, as well as e-commerce specific to India, to find the areas for which there are still deficiencies in research.

Objectives of the Review

- To conduct a systematic review and classification of the published literature on the topic of digital marketing strategies in e-commerce, especially from an Indian perspective.
- To explore how customer engagement and consumer behaviour have been conceptualised and measured in previous studies.
- To categorize the methodological approaches (conceptual, survey-based, experimental, SEM-based, qualitative, mixed-methods) of the research that is already available.
- To map the theoretical foundations underpinning digital marketing and consumer behaviour research.
- To map out the research gaps and suggest an integrated conceptual framework and research agenda for future empirical work on e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart in India.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This paper does not present empirical primary research, but is based on a systematic literature review (SLR). The four stages followed all throughout the review are typical of SLR methodology, specifically (i) identifying relevant literature by scanning databases (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar) using search creations such as “digital marketing,” “consumer engagement,” “consumer behaviour,” “e-commerce,” and “India”; (ii) filtering the identified literature based on title, abstract, and theme; (iii) categorizing the shortlisted literature by theme, methodology, and theory; and (iv) synthesizing the results to discern convergences, divergences, and gaps in the literature. The review does not gather and analyze primary data from consumers or firms, but rather the published study as the unit of analysis. Results are thus presented in the form of thematic, methodological and theoretical syntheses and not in a statistical form.

Thematic Classification of the Reviewed Literature

Thematic categorisation of the literature reviewed indicates that digital marketing research has emerged as a multi-faceted and interwoven research field, such as strategy, customer engagement, AI, and consumer behaviour. With emphasis on customer engagement and social media marketing, it is clear that social media and its importance in consumer decision making is a key focus of the literature. There are three themes that seem to be gaining ground: AI marketing personalization, omnichannel retailing and the evolution of larger marketing-technology ecosystems. An important shortcoming across themes is that there are still no comprehensive empirical models that relate these constructs together in emerging markets like India.

Table 1: Thematic Classification of Reviewed Literature

Theme	Key Authors (Year)	Core Focus Area	Representative Variables	Key Insights	Research Gap
Digital Marketing Frameworks & Strategy	Kannan & Li (2017); Dwivedi et al. (2021); Chaffey (2015); Kingsnorth (2022, 2024); Ryan	Evolution and structure of digital marketing	Strategy, integration, digital transformation	Digital marketing is evolving toward data-driven and integrated	Lack of firm-level empirical validation in the Indian context

	(2017, 2024)			ecosystems	
Social Media Marketing & Engagement	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010); Mangold & Faulds (2009); Felix et al. (2017); Ashley & Tuten (2015); Tsiotsou (2024)	Social media platforms and user engagement	Content, interaction, engagement	Social media enhances customer interaction and brand relationships	Limited measurement of ROI and engagement depth
Customer Engagement Theory & Models	Brodie et al. (2011); Vivek et al. (2012); Hollebeek et al. (2014); Kumar et al. (2016); Harmeling et al. (2017)	Conceptualization of engagement	Cognitive, emotional, behavioural engagement	Engagement is multidimensional and drives loyalty and behaviour	Lack of unified measurement models
Consumer Behaviour & Adoption Theories	Ajzen (1991); Davis (1989); Venkatesh et al. (2003); Pavlou (2003); Schiffman & Wisenblit (2019)	Behavioural intention and adoption	Attitude, perceived usefulness, intention	Behaviour is influenced by psychological and technological factors	Need for digital-specific behavioural models
Trust, Loyalty & Relationship Marketing	Gefen et al. (2003); McKnight et al. (2002); Kim et al. (2008); Srinivasan et al. (2002); Anderson & Srinivasan (2003)	Trust and loyalty in e-commerce	Trust, satisfaction, loyalty	Trust is a critical determinant of online purchase behaviour	Limited integration with engagement and AI
Artificial Intelligence & Marketing Analytics	Davenport et al. (2020); Huang & Rust (2021); Wedel & Kannan (2016); Dwivedi et al. (2024, 2025)	AI-driven marketing and analytics	Personalization, big data, automation	AI enhances targeting, personalization, and decision-making	Limited empirical studies in Indian e-commerce
Influencer & Content Marketing	De Veirman et al. (2017); Lou & Yuan (2019); Djafarova & Rushworth (2017); Xu & Pratt (2018); Agarwal & Mishra (2024)	Influencer credibility and impact	Trust, authenticity, persuasion	Influencers significantly shape purchase intention	Lack of long-term behavioural impact studies
Website Quality & Online Experience	Akram et al. (2018); Rose et al. (2012); Wolfinbarger & Gilly (2003); Parasuraman et al. (2005)	Digital interface and experience	Usability, design, service quality	Website quality drives satisfaction and impulse buying	Limited omnichannel experience integration
Omnichannel & Retail Innovation	Verhoef et al. (2015); Brynjolfsson et al. (2013); Rigby	Integration of online and offline retail	Omnichannel, customer journey	Seamless integration enhances customer	Lack of emerging-market empirical

	(2011); Pantano et al. (2018); Grewal et al. (2017)			experience	validation
Social Commerce & Online Communities	Hajli (2014); Liang et al. (2011); Islam et al. (2018); Dessart et al. (2015)	Social interaction in commerce	Community, trust, engagement	Social commerce builds trust and engagement	Limited structural modelling studies
Personalization & Customer Experience	Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015); Tam & Ho (2006); Lemon & Verhoef (2016);	Personalized marketing and CX	Customization, experience, satisfaction	Personalization improves engagement and conversion	Privacy concerns and ethical issues underexplored
Indian Digital Marketing & E-commerce Context	Sharma & Gupta (2024); Singh & Saini (2024); Verma & Bala (2024); Duggal et al. (2025)	India-specific digital behaviour	Mobile usage, platform engagement	Rapid growth of digital adoption in India	Lack of integrated empirical frameworks
Customer Experience & Flow Theory	Novak et al. (2000); Hoffman & Novak (2009); Childers et al. (2001); Babin et al. (1994)	Experience-driven behaviour	Hedonic/utilitarian value, flow	Experience significantly influences engagement	Limited integration with modern digital platforms
Marketing Communication & Branding	Keller (2013); Batra & Keller (2016); Kotler et al. (2022)	Brand communication strategies	Brand equity, IMC	Integrated communication enhances brand value	Limited digital-first branding models
Emerging Trends & Future Research	Cioppi et al. (2023); Nguyễn (2024); Brüggemann et al. (2025)	Future of digital marketing	AI, analytics, ecosystems	Digital marketing is becoming ecosystem-driven	Need for longitudinal and cross-country studies

Source: Own compilation

Research Gaps Identified from the Literature

As can be observed in Table 2, the literature with regard to digital marketing and consumer behaviour has certain recurring shortfalls. The literature review revealed some areas with little attention to digital marketing strategies, customer engagement, and consumer behaviour in developing countries, which is lacking integrated framework to connect these. The contents of literature are mostly of theoretical approach and the analysis used in research is limited in conducting the analysis using advanced analysis techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and mediation analysis. The model of traditional consumer behaviour, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Technology Acceptance Model, fails to capture the dynamics of digital environments with personalisation, AI and multiple channels. Although the role of engagement is considered crucial for marketing outcomes, it has not received the same level of research focus as other constructs in the context of Indian market digital marketing strategy and consumer behaviour, especially digital marketing platforms like Amazon and Flipkart.

Table 2: Research Gaps Identified from the Reviewed Literature

Theme Area	Key Authors	Established Findings	Identified Research Gap	Implication for Future Research
Digital Marketing Strategy	Kannan & Li (2017); Dwivedi et al. (2021); Chaffey (2015)	Digital marketing is strategic and data-driven	Lack of empirical validation in Indian e-commerce	Future studies should empirically test strategy frameworks in the Indian

				context
Social Media Marketing	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010); Mangold & Faulds (2009); Felix et al. (2017)	Social media enhances engagement	Limited measurement of engagement outcomes	Future research should link social media strategies to measurable behavioural outcomes
Customer Engagement	Brodie et al. (2011); Hollebeek et al. (2014); Kumar et al. (2016)	Engagement is multidimensional	Lack of consensus on measurement and mediation role	Future studies should operationalize engagement as a mediating construct
Consumer Behaviour Models	Ajzen (1991); Davis (1989); Venkatesh et al. (2003)	Behaviour influenced by attitude and technology	Traditional models lack digital context	Future research should integrate digital marketing variables with behaviour models
Trust in E-commerce	Gefen et al. (2003); Kim et al. (2008); McKnight et al. (2002)	Trust drives online purchase	Limited integration with engagement and marketing strategies	Future studies should examine trust as an indirect mechanism through engagement
AI & Marketing Analytics	Davenport et al. (2020); Huang & Rust (2021); Wedel & Kannan (2016)	AI enhances personalization and targeting	Limited empirical studies in emerging markets	Future research should examine AI-driven strategies on Indian platforms
Influencer Marketing	De Veirman et al. (2017); Lou & Yuan (2019); Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	Influencers impact trust and purchase intention	Lack of long-term and platform-specific studies	Future studies should examine influencer-driven engagement effects over time
Website Quality & UX	Akram et al. (2018); Parasuraman et al. (2005); Wolfinbarger & Gilly (2003)	Website quality affects satisfaction and buying	Limited integration with engagement and behaviour simultaneously	Future research should integrate UX with engagement and behaviour jointly
Omnichannel Retailing	Verhoef et al. (2015); Brynjolfsson et al. (2013); Rigby (2011)	Omnichannel improves customer experience	Lack of empirical testing in Indian e-commerce	Future studies should compare strategies followed by platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart
Social Commerce	Hajli (2014); Liang et al. (2011); Islam et al. (2018)	Social interaction builds trust and engagement	Limited structural modelling of relationships	Future research should apply SEM for relationship testing
Personalization	Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015); Tam & Ho (2006)	Personalization increases engagement	Privacy and behavioural impact underexplored	Future studies should examine behavioural outcomes of personalization alongside privacy concerns
Customer Experience	Lemon & Verhoef (2016); Novak et al. (2000)	Experience influences engagement and loyalty	Lack of integration with digital strategies	Future research should link experience with digital marketing efforts
Indian E-commerce Context	Sharma & Gupta (2024); Singh & Saini (2024); Duggal et al. (2025)	Rapid growth of digital adoption in India	Limited integrated empirical models	Future studies should provide India-focused empirical evidence
Engagement–Behaviour Link	Hollebeek et al. (2014); Harrigan et al. (2017)	Engagement influences behaviour	Limited mediation testing	Future research should test engagement as a mediator using SEM
Methodological Gaps	Multiple studies	Heavy reliance on conceptual and survey studies	Limited use of advanced techniques (SEM, mediation)	Future studies should apply SEM and mediation analysis

Source: Own compilation

Methodological Trends in the Reviewed Literature

There is a great variability in the applied research design within the studies reviewed. A significant proportion are concept based or review based, which are helpful to make various directions in the path of research and theoretical framework, but not having any empirical validation on the Indian e-commerce scenario. There are many common survey-based studies that use regression and correlation analysis to study relationships between variables, but of course, these do not make the claim of cause/effect relationships. There are relatively few studies that have tested complex, mediated relationships (although more common than in other contexts) and even fewer that have examined mediated relationships in developing markets. There are also a smaller number of experimental and qualitative studies that offer a causal or in-depth interpretation, but generally have few participants and little generalisability. More recently, research has used analytics and bibliometric techniques based on artificial intelligence to trace the process in which organizations take decisions with data, with a view to marketing, but there is limited use of these methodologies in empirical academic studies in India so far.

Table 3: Methodological Classification of Reviewed Studies

Methodology Type	Key Authors	Research Design	Data Collection Method	Analytical Techniques	Key Contribution	Research Gap
Conceptual / Theoretical	Kannan & Li (2017); Brodie et al. (2011); Kotler et al. (2017)	Conceptual framework	Secondary sources	Thematic synthesis	Builds foundational frameworks for digital marketing and engagement	Lack of empirical validation
Literature Review / Systematic Review	Dwivedi et al. (2021); Cioppi et al. (2023); Nguyễn (2024)	Systematic review	Secondary data	Bibliometric, thematic analysis	Identifies trends and research agendas	Limited contextual (India-specific) insights
Survey-Based Empirical Studies	Vivek et al. (2012); Kim et al. (2008); Sharma & Gupta (2024)	Cross-sectional survey	Questionnaires	Regression, correlation	Examines relationships between variables	Limited causal inference
Experimental Studies	De Veirman et al. (2017); Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015)	Experimental design	Lab / online experiments	ANOVA, regression	Tests causality in controlled settings	Limited real-world applicability
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Studies	Gefen et al. (2003); Pavlou & Fygenson (2006); Kumar et al. (2016)	Quantitative	Survey data	SEM, CFA	Validates complex relationships	Limited adoption in Indian studies
Qualitative Studies	Dessart et al. (2015); Harrigan et al. (2017)	Exploratory	Interviews, content analysis	Thematic coding	Provides deep insights into engagement	Limited generalizability
Mixed Methods	Akram et al. (2018); Rose et al. (2012)	Combined approach	Survey + qualitative	Regression + thematic	Holistic understanding	Complexity and resource intensity
Case Study Approach	Turban et al. (2018);	Case-based	Secondary + firm data	Descriptive analysis	Industry-level insights	Lack of statistical

	Laudon & Traver (2020)					validation
Bibliometric Analysis	Seth et al. (2023); Legito & Andriani (2023)	Quantitative review	Database extraction	Citation/network analysis	Maps research evolution	Limited theoretical integration
Advanced Analytics / AI-Based Studies	Davenport et al. (2020); Dwivedi et al. (2024); Brüggemann et al. (2025)	Data-driven	Big data	Machine learning, predictive analytics	Enhances precision marketing	Limited adoption in academic empirical work

Source: Own compilation

Theoretical Foundations of the Reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature's theoretical underpinnings come from a variety of inter-disciplinary theories that range from information systems, marketing, and psychology. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and technology acceptance model (TAM) are two widely applied traditional models that explain consumer buying decisions and technology adoption, but both are deficient in understanding electronic environments, which feature both emotional involvement and interactive experiences. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model is a model that often serves to explain the effect of digital marketing stimuli on consumer response (organism state) which then leads to purchase responses. Theory of customer engagement builds upon it, by defining the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dynamics of consumer–brand interaction. Trust Theory, Flow Theory and Personalization Theory are other theories that help complement comprehension of online consumer behaviour by focusing on risk mitigating, immersive experience, and personalized marketing, respectively; however, the literature suggests that these theories are seldom combined in a single empirical model.

Table 4: Theoretical Foundations of Reviewed Studies

Theory / Model	Key Authors	Core Concept	Application in Literature	Relevance to Review	Identified Gap
Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)	Ajzen (1991)	Behaviour driven by intention, attitude, norms	Used to explain purchase intention	Explains consumer decision-making	Limited digital context
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Davis (1989)	Perceived usefulness and ease of use	Explains technology adoption	Relevant for e-commerce usage	Lacks emotional/engagement factors
Unified Theory of Acceptance (UTAUT)	Venkatesh et al. (2003)	Social influence, effort expectancy	Explains IT adoption	Supports digital platform usage	Limited marketing integration
Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Model	Mehrabian & Russell (1974)	Stimulus affects internal state → response	Widely used in digital marketing	Explains DMS → Engagement → Behaviour pathway	Needs empirical validation in India
Customer Engagement Theory	Brodie et al. (2011); Hollebeek et al. (2014)	Engagement as cognitive, emotional, behavioural	Used in brand and social media studies	Central to the review's proposed framework	Measurement inconsistency
Relationship Marketing Theory	Morgan & Hunt (1994); Kumar & Reinartz (2018)	Long-term customer relationships	Explains loyalty and retention	Supports the engagement–behaviour link	Limited digital integration
Trust Theory	Gefen et al. (2003);	Trust reduces uncertainty	Explains online	Relevant for e-commerce	Not fully integrated with engagement

	McKnight et al. (2002)		purchase decisions	platforms	
Flow Theory	Novak et al. (2000); Hoffman & Novak (2009)	Immersive experience drives behaviour	Used in online experience studies	Explains engagement depth	Limited modern platform validation
Consumer Value Theory	Babin et al. (1994); Childers et al. (2001)	Hedonic and utilitarian value	Explains purchase motivation	Relevant for digital shopping behaviour	Limited integration with digital marketing
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	Keller (2013); Batra & Keller (2016)	Consistent brand messaging	Explains brand positioning	Supports digital strategy effectiveness	Limited digital-first adaptation
Omnichannel Theory	Verhoef et al. (2015); Brynjolfsson et al. (2013)	Seamless channel integration	Explains customer journey	Relevant for comparing Amazon and Flipkart	Limited emerging-market evidence
Social Commerce Theory	Hajli (2014); Liang et al. (2011)	Social interaction influences commerce	Explains community-based buying	Supports engagement mechanisms	Limited structural modelling
Personalization Theory	Bleier & Eisenbeiss (2015); Tam & Ho (2006)	Tailored content enhances engagement	Used in targeted marketing	Relevant for AI-driven marketing	Privacy concerns underexplored
Service Quality Theory (E-S-QUAL)	Parasuraman et al. (2005)	Service quality affects satisfaction	Used in e-commerce evaluation	Relevant for platform performance	Limited behavioural integration

Source: Own compilation

SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

As a whole, these thematic, methodological, and theoretical classifications reveal a consistent pattern: although there is conceptual maturity in the scholarship around the concepts of engagement, trust, personalisation, and omnichannel experience, the number of studies measuring the interactions of these concepts, especially in the Indian E-commerce context, does not yet match. While the use of AI in personalisation, influencer marketing and omnichannel strategies is often mentioned in conjunction with these two platforms, the body of knowledge does not compare their strategies against one another on the basis of similar measures.

The second pattern relates to the methodology, as the field continues to be dominated by conceptual and cross-sectional survey research studies, whereas SEM-related and mediation-oriented research studies are limited to developed-market settings. It indicates that the theoretical framework to model digital marketing strategy-engagement-consumer behaviour pathways is in existence, however, it has not been applied in a systematic way to Indian platforms.

Proposed Conceptual Framework for Future Research

Extending the S-O-R framework and Customer Engagement Theory, the review suggests a conceptual model that considers the digital marketing strategies as stimulus, the customer engagement (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) as organism level mediating state, and the consumer behaviour outcomes as response. This framework serves as a guide for the empirical studies that are yet to be undertaken, and this is not a tested model as it was not relevant to the present purpose to gather primary data. The technologies used for Digital Marketing Strategies are: AI personalization, influencer and content marketing, social media marketing, and omnichannel integration.

Digital Marketing Strategies (stimulus): AI personalization, influencer and content marketing, social media marketing, omnichannel integration.

Customer Engagement (mediating organism state): cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions.

Consumer Behaviour (response): purchase intention, brand loyalty, repeat purchase, word-of-mouth.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Aligned with a strong organizational vision, the review brings together the numerous theories about digital consumer behaviour (TPB, TAM, UTAUT, S-O-R, Trust Theory, Flow Theory, and Personalization Theory) in a way that provides a conceptual map that reveals where they overlap and where they differ. This synthesis can be supportive to future researchers in choosing a theoretical lens or stacking them in the context of Indian e-commerce scenarios.

Practical Implications

To practitioners, the review notes that positive aspects of engagement-building strategies (AI personalization, influencer marketing, omnichannel experience) were mentioned repeatedly in the literature, implying that engagement should be regarded as a strategic intermediate goal for ecommerce organisations to meet instead of only a means to an end, namely marketing expenditure.

Limitations of the Review

The review only focuses on secondary sources and no primary data is collected or tested – the conceptual framework is not empirically validated. The review focuses on sources found using the search strategy; it is possible that relevant grey literature or industry reports, or non-English literature may not be identified. These thematic, methodical and theoretical classifications were not considered to be definitive and depended on interpretive judgement.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to review the literature systematically on the digital marketing strategies and their impact on consumers engagement and behavior in the ecommerce field in India, and specific platform of Amazon India and Flipkart. The review reveals that the constructs namely personalization, trust, engagement, and omnichannel experience are well researched individually, but an integrated model with a strong empirical foundation linking digital marketing strategy to consumer behaviour, through the prism of engagement, for e-commerce in India is missing. The proposed conceptual framework in this paper, based on S-O-R and CET, provides a launching ground for the empirical study necessary for the field as identified in this paper, which is rooted in SEM and mediation research.

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