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Digital marketing strategies and their influence on consumer decision-making: A comparative analysis of urban and rural Hooghly

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of digital marketing on consumer decision-making in the Hooghly District of West Bengal. With the rise in internet access and smartphone usage, digital marketing channels have become pivotal in shaping consumer behavior. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to capture the complexities of individual consumer behavior and broader population trends. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across various age groups, income levels, and geographic areas, with a sample size of 70 respondents. The findings indicate that mobile advertising is more effective among urban consumers (68%) than rural consumers (50%), with an overall effectiveness rate of 60%. Social media platforms significantly influenced consumer decisions, affecting 75% of the urban population and 57% of the rural population. Online reviews have a substantial impact on both urban (85%) and rural (66%) populations, underscoring the critical role of peer evaluation. Influencer marketing had a moderate effect, with urban consumers (60%) being more susceptible than rural consumers (42%). E-mail marketing demonstrates limited reach, particularly in rural areas (36%). The study also identifies challenges related to digital literacy, internet connectivity, socio-economic disparities, linguistic and cultural barriers, and trust and security concerns that impede the effectiveness of digital marketing in rural regions. The findings underscore the necessity of digital marketing strategies that consider the unique characteristics and challenges of both urban and rural areas in the Hooghly district to enhance the efficacy of digital marketing efforts.

Keywords: Digital marketing, consumer decisions, mixed-methods approach, social media marketing, mobile advertising, online reviews, influencer marketing, email marketing, Hooghly, etc.

Introduction

Digital marketing is a key factor in consumers' decisions to buy. This has changed how businesses connect with customers. Today, with more people using the internet and smartphones, digital marketing is essential for influencing what people buy (Kurdi et al., 2022; Mukhtar et al., 2023) ^[8]. This study examines how digital marketing affects consumer choice in Hooghly, West Bengal. Digital marketing includes many strategies such as social media, email, search engine optimization, and mobile marketing. These methods can help engage consumers (Mukhtar et al. 2023) ^[8]. They have a significant impact on the buying process, from recognizing the need to what happens after a purchase (Bachri et al., 2023; Omar & Atteya, 2020) ^[9]. Some digital marketing techniques work well, whereas others vary in effectiveness at different buying stages (Omar & Atteya, 2020) ^[9]. As more businesses use digital marketing to improve and reach online customers, understanding how consumers react to these methods is crucial (Mukhtar et al., 2023 ^[8]; Shah, 2023) ^[11]. This study adds to the current knowledge by exploring how digital marketing affects consumer choices in Hooghly, considering the social and economic factors that affect online buying (Shah, 2023) ^[11]. By examining the effectiveness of different digital marketing channels, this study aims to provide useful insights for marketers and businesses in this area. This study notes that there is no specific information on how cultural factors in Hooghly affect consumer responses to digital marketing. We can examine how culture affects digital marketing and consumer behaviour. Culture greatly influences how people react to digital marketing in different places (Pratesi et al., 2021 ^[10]; Thompson & Brouthers, 2021) ^[7]. Studies show that cultural aspects, such as those identified by Hofstede, change how people see website usability, trust, and risk.

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This affects their decision to use websites and buy them online (Pratesi et al., 2021) ^[10].

For instance, cultural factors change how European consumers view website usability and risk, while Asian consumers' trust is influenced more by culture (Pratesi et al., 2021) ^[10]. Additionally, cultural differences within a country, such as how strict or loose a culture is, can change how people engage in digital content (Thompson & Brouthers, 2021) ^[7]. This means that, even in a specific area, such as Hooghly, cultural details can affect how people interact with digital marketing, such as clicking and sharing. Although we do not have specific data on Hooghly, it is clear that culture is important for how people respond to digital marketing. Marketers should consider both national and local cultural differences when creating digital marketing strategies to connect with consumers in places such as Hooghly.

Challenges and Limitations of Digital Marketing

1. Limited Digital Literacy in Rural Areas: One of the principal challenges identified in this study is the variation in digital literacy levels across the Hooghly District. Urban areas generally exhibit higher proficiency in digital technology, whereas rural regions continue to encounter difficulties in understanding and effectively utilizing digital platforms. This disparity impedes the reach and efficacy of digital marketing strategies in rural areas, as consumers may be hesitant to trust or engage with online content, thereby influencing overall outcomes.

2. Inconsistent Internet Connectivity: In the rural areas of the Hooghly district, unreliable internet connectivity presents significant challenges, impacting consumers' access to digital marketing materials. The combination of slow internet speeds and intermittent network disruptions impedes consumers' ability to engage with online advertisements, videos, and product information. Consequently, this restricts the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts and influences consumer behaviour.

3. Socio-Economic Disparities: In the Hooghly district, economic conditions significantly impact consumer behaviour. Urban residents are generally more inclined to engage in online shopping, whereas rural individuals often face financial constraints that impede their participation in digital marketing initiatives. This economic disparity can skew data, as individuals with greater financial resources tend to be more responsive to digital marketing than those with lower income.

4. Language and Cultural Barriers: Despite the proliferation of mobile phones and internet usage, a substantial portion of digital content remains predominantly in English. The Hooghly district is characterized by a diverse population that communicates in various regional languages and dialects. If digital marketing content fails to accommodate local preferences and cultural nuances, this linguistic barrier may hinder its effectiveness, potentially alienating rural consumers.

5. Trust and Security Concerns: A significant limitation of this study is the widespread distrust of online transactions among rural consumers. In the Hooghly district, numerous individuals express concerns about the security and safety of

online payments, fear of potential fraud, and the misuse of their data. This skepticism towards e-commerce platforms and digital transactions impedes the success of digital marketing, particularly in promoting purchases through online channels.

Literature Reviews

Bharti (2025) ^[1] investigated the impact of digital marketing on consumer decision-making processes in Bihar, India. This study reveals that the increasing use of the Internet and smartphones, particularly among younger consumers, has heightened exposure to digital strategies such as social media, targeted advertising, and online reviews. This underscores the significant influence of social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, on consumer perceptions and preferences. Despite challenges such as limited digital literacy and inconsistent Internet connectivity, the adoption of vernacular and region-specific content enhances consumer engagement. Overall, digital marketing is progressively transforming consumer behaviour in Bihar, with younger consumers demonstrating greater responsiveness to online advertisements and reviews. This underscores the need for marketers to develop culturally tailored digital strategies in this emerging market. Khosla (2024) ^[3] investigated the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer behaviour with a particular focus on the Indian e-commerce sector. This study underscores that digital marketing facilitates direct customer engagement, enhances online visibility, and influences purchasing decisions through targeted advertising, social media, and real-time feedback mechanisms. This highlights the rapid evolution of digital marketing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to increased consumer reliance on online platforms, resulting in higher sales and revenue growth for e-commerce firms. However, the study also addresses challenges, such as Internet accessibility issues in remote areas, the necessity of ensuring consumer trust, and the need to adapt to rapidly changing technological trends. Ultimately, this study concludes that effective digital marketing strategies can significantly shape consumer behaviour, foster loyalty, and enhance business performance in a competitive market. Masfer and Helmi (2025) ^[4] studied how digital marketing affects consumer behaviour on e-commerce platforms. They examined key factors such as Digital Marketing Compatibility, which is how well marketing matches consumers' lifestyles; trust, which involves security and positive reviews; Perceived Ease of Use, which is about easy-to-use interfaces; and Perceived Usefulness, which is the practical benefit of e-commerce. They used a survey of 285 people to gather the data. The results show that all of these factors positively affect consumer behaviour on Saudi e-commerce platforms. Trust and Perceived Ease of Use were the most important factors, while perceived usefulness and technological factors also helped increase user satisfaction. Compatibility was important, but had a smaller impact. This study suggests that e-commerce platforms should focus on building trust, improving technology, and designing user-friendly interfaces to improve consumer satisfaction and behaviour.

Gupta (2025) ^[2] explains how digital marketing changes how companies connect with customers. It focuses on the use of online tools to send personalized messages. This study shows that more information helps consumers make

better choices and engage with brands on different platforms. It examines which digital marketing tools affect consumer behaviour the most and examines the role of social media, search engines, and online ads in consumer awareness and decision-making. This research uses data to collect, process, analyse, and create marketing strategies while evaluating consumer behaviour. This paper includes visual aids such as a pie chart showing consumer behaviour with marketing tools, a bar chart on decision-making across social media, a confusion matrix, and a classification report on purchase categories with 88% accuracy, and a line graph comparing classification algorithms with Logistic Regression at 97% accuracy. The study concludes that digital marketing has changed how businesses and consumers interact, stressing the importance of personalization, social media, and technology in shaping consumer behaviour. It also highlights the need for businesses to address data privacy issues and adapt to the changing digital world.

In his 2025 study, Saraf examined how digital marketing affects how people buy things. This study examines different marketing methods and their effects on people's actions. This shows how digital marketing helps people research products and compare options. Digital marketing uses consumer data to create personalized experiences. Key methods include using social media such as Facebook and Instagram to increase engagement, search engine optimization (SEO) to boost website visits, and video marketing to increase interaction. Email marketing builds relationships, while content marketing draws audiences by providing valuable content. The study also looks at future trends, such as using artificial intelligence (AI) for personalized marketing, augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) for product experiences, and adding sustainability to marketing practices. Digital marketing has greatly changed how consumers behave and businesses interact, highlighting the importance of data-driven, value-focused experiences in building customer relationships.

Mishra and Varshney (2024) ^[5] study how digital content marketing affects people buying tech gadgets. They examined how marketing strategies, consumer engagement, content preferences, and social media use impact buying choices. The study found that people like engaging and accurate content to build trust in products. Reviews are more credible and influential than blogs and emails. Even with digital marketing, many people still prefer in-store experiences, especially for big and rare purchases, such as tech gadgets. YouTube and Instagram have more consumer engagement than Twitter and Facebook. This study shows that content engagement and quality matter more than marketing strategies in influencing buying decisions. This finding highlights the need for trustworthy and engaging content to influence consumer choices in the tech gadget market. The study also uses Dual Process Theory to explain how consumers process information when making decisions.

Research Gap

Although many studies have examined how digital marketing influences consumer behaviour in urban and metropolitan settings, there is a scarcity of research specifically targeting emerging markets, such as the Hooghly district, where digital adoption is still in its developmental stages. The majority of the existing literature

fails to consider the distinct socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural characteristics of this area. Additionally, there has been minimal focus on the impact of local language content, regional influencers, and mobile-based marketing on consumer choices in the semi-urban and rural regions of the Hooghly District. This study aims to address this gap by offering insights specific to the region on the effectiveness of digital marketing and its influence on consumer behaviour in the Hooghly district of West Bengal.

Objectives of the Study

The aims of this study are (i) to examine the influence of digital marketing on consumer awareness, (ii) to analyse the role of social media in shaping consumer preferences, and (iii) to assess the effectiveness of mobile marketing strategies in the rural and urban areas of the district of Hooghly, West Bengal.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it shows how digital marketing affects people in the Hooghly District. This area has both problems and opportunities for digital business. As digital marketing grows, businesses need to know local preferences to do well. The study shows how people in both urban and rural Hooghly use digital tools, such as social media and online reviews. This helps businesses change their plans to fit the area's special traits. Businesses wanting to improve their digital marketing in Hooghly can use this study's insights. This helps marketers know which platforms and content work best in different parts of the district, leading to better targeting and more success. This study highlights the digital gap between urban and rural areas. This shows how mobile marketing and local content can bridge this gap. Understanding rural challenges with digital access and trust issues can help businesses create better strategies. While there is a lot of research on digital marketing in urban India, there is less research on places such as Hooghly. This study fills this gap and adds to the knowledge on digital marketing in smaller and rural markets. The findings of this study can help policymakers and those involved in digital literacy programmes. It highlights the need for better digital education, especially in rural areas, to maximize digital marketing. Better Internet, awareness campaigns, and training can boost digital engagement in Hooghly.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to investigate the influence of digital marketing on consumer choices in the Hooghly district. The methodology is designed to capture the complexities of individual consumer behaviour as well as broader population patterns. The research design is descriptive and aimed at understanding the current impact of digital marketing on consumer behaviour in the Hooghly district. This study focuses on digital platforms, such as social media, mobile marketing, and email marketing. The target population comprises consumers from both urban and rural areas within the Hooghly district. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across different age groups, income levels, and geographic areas (urban vs. rural). The sample size consisted of 70 respondents: 35 from urban areas and 35 from rural areas. The data collection

methods included both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed via online platforms (Google Forms) to capture personal experiences with digital marketing in May 2025. Secondary data were obtained from a literature review of previous studies, reports, and data from relevant organizations on digital marketing trends in India. A frequency table and percentage analysis were used to analyse the primary data and achieve the research objectives.

Analysis and Discussion

Data collected from the survey were analysed. The primary data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Data collected from the survey were analysed. The primary data are presented

Tools for Digital Marketing	Total Customers Percent	Rural Customers Percent	Urban Customers Percent
Mobile Advertisements	60%	50%	68%
Social Media	65%	57%	75%
Online Reviews	78%	66%	85%
Influencer Marketing	50%	42%	60%
Email Marketing	42%	36%	47%

(Source: Primary Data)

Observation: The observations from the above table are exhibited below. Mobile advertising demonstrates a high degree of effectiveness among urban consumers, with an efficacy rate of 68%. However, it also has a significant impact in rural areas, where its effectiveness is recorded at 50%, resulting in an overall effectiveness rate of 60%. Social media exert a substantial influence on consumers, affecting 75% of the urban population and 57% of the rural population, culminating in an overall impact of 65%. Online reviews significantly influenced both urban (85%) and rural (66%) populations, highlighting the critical role of peer evaluation and social validation, with an overall impact of 78%. Influencer marketing exerted a moderate effect, with urban consumers (60%) displaying greater susceptibility than rural consumers (42%), leading to an overall impact of 50%. E-mail marketing demonstrates limited reach, particularly in rural areas, with only 36% of rural consumers reporting engagement, resulting in an overall impact of 42%.

Overall Effects of Various Digital Marketing Tools

This study sought to investigate the impact of digital marketing on consumer decision-making in the Hooghly district, with particular emphasis on social media marketing, mobile advertising, influencer marketing, and online reviews. The principal findings and their analyses are as follows.

1. Effect of Mobile Advertisements

Mobile advertisements have proven to be more effective among urban consumers, achieving an engagement rate of 68%, in contrast to rural consumers, who demonstrated a 50% engagement rate. The overall engagement rate was 60%. In the Hooghly district, both urban and semi-urban areas exhibit significant smartphone usage, making mobile advertising a viable strategy. Conversely, rural regions showed lower engagement rates, likely due to limited

exposure to digital advertisements and concerns about mobile data costs. To engage rural audiences more effectively, marketers should focus on developing lightweight and easily accessible mobile advertisements.

2. Effect of Social Media

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, have been identified as significant influencers in shaping consumer decisions, particularly in urban environments. Approximately 75% of urban and 57% of rural consumers reported that advertisements on social media affected their awareness and purchasing decisions. Social media function as potent instruments for enhancing brand visibility, especially among younger consumers in urban areas. With the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet connectivity, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have emerged as key drivers of consumer behaviour in the Hooghly district. Although rural areas demonstrate slightly lower engagement, there is a noticeably growing interest in social media facilitated by mobile Internet access. This underscores the need for businesses to concentrate on social media campaigns that address diverse regional preferences.

3. Effect of Online Reviews

Online reviews and recommendations exert a substantial influence on consumer decision-making, with 85% of urban consumers and 66% of rural consumers relying on peer reviews when making purchasing decisions. In the Hooghly District, peer reviews constitute a critical component of the consumer decision-making process. Consumers place significant value on others' experiences, particularly in the context of online purchases. This trend is evident in both urban and rural areas, although rural consumers tend to rely on recommendations from friends and family. Businesses must focus on generating authentic online reviews and leveraging word-of-mouth marketing to cultivate trust in the market.

4. Effect of Influencer Marketing

Urban consumers (60%) demonstrate a higher propensity to be influenced by digital influencers than their rural counterparts (42%), resulting in an overall effect of 50%. Influencer marketing exerts a particularly significant impact on younger consumers in urban areas where digital literacy and engagement with influencers are more prevalent. By contrast, the concept of influencer marketing is still nascent in rural areas, which may account for its reduced impact. Marketers may consider collaborating with local influencers or micro-influencers who have a stronger resonance with rural audiences to enhance their effectiveness.

5. Effectiveness of Email Marketing

Email marketing has a relatively limited impact, with 47% of urban consumers and 36% of rural consumers responding favourably. This limited impact can be attributed to factors such as restricted email usage in rural areas and a general lack of trust in online communication. Email campaigns tend to be more successful in urban regions where Internet usage is more prevalent; however, their effectiveness can be enhanced by incorporating mobile-optimized designs and personalized content. For rural consumers, alternative communication methods, such as SMS-based marketing or WhatsApp, may yield more favourable outcomes.

6. Findings of the Study

Based on the provided text, the key findings from the study are on the role of digital marketing in shaping consumer decisions in the Hooghly district of West Bengal.

1. Mobile Advertising Effectiveness

- 68% effective among urban consumers.
- 50% effective among rural consumers.
- 60% overall effectiveness.

2. Social Media Impact

- Affects 75% of the urban population.
- Affects 57% of the rural population.
- 65% overall impact.

3. Influence of Online Reviews

- Impacts 85% of the urban population.
- Impacts 66% of the rural population.
- 78% overall impact.

4. Influencer Marketing Effect

- 60% impact on urban consumers.
- 42% impact on rural consumers.
- 50% overall impact.

5. Email Marketing Reach

- 47% impact on urban consumers.
- 36% impact on rural consumers.
- 42% overall impact.

6. Challenges related to digital literacy and Internet connectivity in rural areas constrain the efficacy of digital marketing strategies.
7. Socio-economic disparities between urban and rural regions influence engagement with digital marketing.
8. There exist linguistic and cultural barriers, as a significant portion of digital content is available in English rather than in local languages.
9. Concerns related to trust and security, particularly in the context of online transactions, hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing in rural areas.
10. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, exert considerable influence, particularly among younger urban consumers.
11. Peer reviews and recommendations have a significant influence on purchasing decisions in both urban and rural regions.
12. Alternative communication strategies, such as SMS or WhatsApp marketing, may be more efficacious in engaging rural consumers.

Conclusion

The study of the impact of digital marketing on consumer choices in Hooghly, West Bengal, shows important results. Mobile ads work better for city people (68%) than for those in rural areas (50%), with an overall success rate of 60 %. Social media strongly affects consumer choices, influencing 75% of city dwellers and 57% of rural residents, with a total impact of 65 %. Online reviews greatly influence buying decisions, affecting 85% of urban and 66% of rural consumers, with an overall effect of 78 %. Influencer marketing has a moderate impact, affecting 60% of urban and 42% of rural consumers, with a total impact of 50 %. Email marketing has limited reach, especially in rural areas,

with a 42% overall impact. Problems with digital skills and internet access in rural areas have limited digital marketing strategies. Economic differences between cities and rural areas affect how people engage in digital marketing. Language and cultural barriers exist because much of the digital content is in English, not in local languages. Trust and security concerns, especially regarding online transactions, reduce digital marketing success in rural areas. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are major influencers, especially for younger city consumers. These findings highlight the need for digital marketing strategies that consider the unique traits and challenges of both cities and rural areas in Hooghly. Marketers should focus on mobile-friendly content, use social media and online reviews, address trust issues, and find other ways to communicate with rural consumers to improve digital marketing.

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