DIGITAL MARKETING

A Study on Digital Marketing and Consumer Purchase Decisions: *The Influence of Social Media Advertising, Influencer Promotions and Online Reviews*

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Abstract

This study examines the role of digital marketing in consumer brand discovery, trust and purchase decisions, with particular attention to social media advertisements, influencer promotions and online reviews. Primary data were obtained from a structured questionnaire containing 30 responses. The data were analysed using descriptive frequency and percentage methods. Instagram was the most frequently selected platform, reported by 27 respondents (90.0%). Social media advertisements were the most frequently selected influential format, followed by influencer promotions. A total of 28 respondents reported purchasing after seeing online promotion, and 26 rated online reviews important or very important. The results indicate that digital marketing is salient to this respondent group, while the survey does not establish causation, verified sales or financial return. The paper recommends channel testing, credible review practices, transparent influencer partnerships and measurement of incremental conversion and profitability. Because the sample is small and skewed towards younger respondents, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory.

Keywords: digital marketing; consumer behaviour; purchase decisions; social media advertising; influencer marketing; online reviews; Instagram; consumer trust

1 Introduction

Digital marketing has changed how businesses introduce products, communicate brand values and interact with potential customers. Traditional marketing channels often rely on broad communication, while digital platforms enable more targeted messages, interactive content and rapid feedback. Social media advertisements can help brands reach defined audiences; influencer promotions can present products through familiar online personalities; and customer reviews can provide information about product experiences. These channels may contribute to awareness, consideration and purchase decisions, although their effects can vary by audience, product category and message quality.

The consumer decision process commonly involves recognising a need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making a purchase and responding to the post-purchase experience. Digital touchpoints may enter at several stages. A sponsored post may create awareness, an influencer demonstration may provide context, and online reviews may help reduce uncertainty before purchase. However, exposure and engagement should not be confused with commercial effectiveness. A consumer may view an advertisement without buying, and a purchase reported after exposure may

also have been influenced by price, product need, brand familiarity or recommendations from other sources.

For businesses, the central challenge is therefore to understand how consumers perceive digital marketing while evaluating whether campaigns deliver measurable outcomes. Managers must balance reach, relevance, credibility, customer experience and cost. A strategy built only around likes, views or follower counts may overlook whether campaigns generate incremental sales or profitable repeat customers.

The present study analyses 30 questionnaire responses to describe platform preferences, reported brand discovery, perceived influence of digital marketing formats, purchases after online promotion, the importance of reviews and perceptions of trust. It is a descriptive study based on the supplied responses and does not claim to represent the whole consumer population.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Digital marketing investments are often evaluated through platform engagement and campaign reach, but these indicators do not necessarily reveal whether consumers trust the brand, complete purchases or generate profitable long-term value. Brands also face uncertainty when deciding how much to invest in paid social advertisements, influencer partnerships and review-management activities. The problem addressed in this study is to describe how respondents perceive these channels and identify practical questions that businesses should test before scaling digital marketing expenditure.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- To identify the digital platforms most frequently used by respondents.
- To understand whether respondents report discovering brands through digital marketing.
- To examine which digital marketing format respondents perceive as most influential.

1.3 Scope and significance

The study focuses on consumer responses concerning social media use, advertising, influencer promotions, online reviews and purchase decisions. Its practical significance lies in offering an initial view of what this respondent group notices and values. The results may help generate hypotheses for a more comprehensive study or guide a small marketing pilot. They should not be used as a substitute for campaign analytics, market research across a representative sample or a controlled evaluation of return on investment.

2 Findings

2.1 Conceptual and literature context

Digital marketing can be understood as the use of digital channels and technologies to communicate value, attract audiences and support customer relationships. Social media advertising provides paid distribution and audience targeting. Influencer marketing uses content creators to introduce, demonstrate or discuss products. Electronic word-of-mouth, including online reviews, allows consumers to access other customers' opinions. These channels overlap: an influencer post may be sponsored, comments may act as informal reviews, and a paid advertisement may direct users to a review-rich product page.

Consumer trust is an important consideration because online buyers may not be able to inspect a product physically before purchase. Trust can be influenced by perceived honesty, consistency between claims and product experience, transparency about sponsorship, and the availability of useful customer feedback. Reviews may reduce uncertainty, but ratings alone do not establish authenticity or product suitability. Brands need to respond responsibly to criticism and avoid manipulating reviews.

The channel-selection problem is also an evaluation problem. Reach, impressions and engagement describe exposure and interaction; click-through rate and conversion rate describe steps closer to purchase; customer acquisition cost and contribution margin address economics. Incrementality asks whether the outcome would have occurred without the campaign. A survey of perceptions can describe attitudes and recalled behaviour, but it cannot independently estimate these commercial measures.

The literature context above is a conceptual overview, not a systematic literature review.

2.2 Research methodology

Table 1. Research methodology.

Research element	Description
Type of research	Descriptive and exploratory research.
Approach	Quantitative analysis of structured questionnaire responses.
Primary data	Supplied spreadsheet: “Case study (Responses).xlsx”.
Sample size	30 respondents.
Sampling method	Not specified in the supplied data; representativeness cannot be assumed.
Instrument	Questionnaire with demographic and digital marketing behaviour/perception questions.
Analysis technique	Frequency distribution and percentage analysis.
Denominator	Percentages calculated against the full sample of 30 unless otherwise noted.
Ethics and consent	Consent and privacy procedures were not documented in the supplied file.

The responses were counted by category, and percentages were calculated by dividing each category count by the total number of responses. The questionnaire’s original response labels were retained after trimming incidental leading or trailing spaces. No statistical significance tests, causal modelling or external benchmarking were performed. Timestamp data were not used in the substantive interpretation.

2.3 Profile of respondents

2.3.1 Age group

Table 2. Age group of respondents (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	22	73.3%
22-25	5	16.7%

Category	Frequency	Percentage
26-30	3	10.0%

Interpretation: The respondent group is concentrated among younger consumers. Results may therefore be more applicable to the social media habits of young adults than to consumers across all age groups.

2.3.2 Gender distribution

Table 3. Gender distribution of respondents (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	15	50.0%
Female	15	50.0%

Interpretation: The sample includes the gender categories recorded in the questionnaire. The descriptive data do not establish whether gender is associated with different purchase responses.

2.3.3 Most-used digital platform

Table 4. Most-used digital platform (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	27	90.0%
Youtube	2	6.7%
Other	1	3.3%

Interpretation: Instagram is the dominant platform in this sample. It is a reasonable candidate for a pilot targeting a similar audience, but usage frequency alone does not prove superior campaign performance.

2.3.4 Daily social media usage

Table 5. Reported daily social media usage (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
3-4 hours	11	36.7%
1-2 hours	10	33.3%
More than 4 hours	9	30.0%

Interpretation: Reported daily use varies across categories. Time online creates opportunities for exposure, but does not measure attention, ad recall or conversion.

2.4 Data analysis and interpretation

2.4.1 Brand discovery through digital marketing

Table 6. Brand discovery through digital marketing (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	23	76.7%
Not sure	4	13.3%
No	3	10.0%

Interpretation: Most respondents reported discovering a brand through digital marketing. This indicates that digital touchpoints are a familiar discovery route for the group, but does not identify which campaign or platform caused discovery.

2.4.2 Most influential type of digital marketing

Table 7. Most influential type of digital marketing (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media ads	13	43.3%
Influencer promotions	10	33.3%
Online reviews	6	20.0%
Discounts and offers	1	3.3%

Interpretation: Social media advertisements were the most frequently selected format, followed by influencer promotions and online reviews. This is a perception ranking within this sample, not a controlled comparison of conversion rates or costs.

2.4.3 Purchase after seeing an online promotion

Table 8. Purchase after seeing an online promotion (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, many times	19	63.3%
Yes, once or twice	9	30.0%
No	2	6.7%

Interpretation: Most respondents reported purchasing at least once after seeing online promotion. The survey does not verify purchases, purchase value or whether the same transactions would have happened without the promotion.

2.4.4 Importance of online reviews

Table 9. Importance of online reviews (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	18	60.0%
Important	8	26.7%
Neutral	4	13.3%

Interpretation: The high number of respondents rating reviews important or very important suggests that customer feedback may be a relevant consideration during evaluation. It does not establish whether reviews are authentic or predict actual purchase behaviour.

2.4.5 Digital marketing campaigns and brand trust

Table 10. Digital marketing campaigns and brand trust (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	63.3%
Sometimes	11	36.7%

Interpretation: Responses indicate that campaigns do not increase trust uniformly for every respondent. Relevance, credibility, transparency and prior brand experience are plausible factors to investigate, but were not measured directly.

2.4.6 Overall influence on purchase decisions

Table 11. Overall influence on purchase decisions (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
To some extent	21	70.0%
To a great extent	7	23.3%
Very little	2	6.7%

Interpretation: Respondents reported varying levels of perceived influence. These answers reflect self-assessment and cannot be interpreted as a causal estimate of marketing effectiveness.

2.4.7 Influence of social media advertisements on brand preferences

Table 12. Influence of social media advertisements on brand preferences (N = 30).

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Moderately	17	56.7%
Strongly	10	33.3%
Slightly	3	10.0%

Interpretation: Most responses fall in the moderate or stronger influence categories. Further analysis should connect these perceptions to verified behaviour and campaign-level metrics.

2.5 Summary of major findings

- Instagram was the most-used platform for 27 respondents (90.0%).
- 23 respondents (76.7%) reported discovering a brand through digital marketing.
- Social media ads were selected as the most influential format by 13 respondents, followed by influencer promotions (10).
- 28 respondents reported having purchased a product after seeing it promoted online.
- 26 respondents rated online reviews important or very important.
- 19 respondents said campaigns increase trust, while 11 said this happens sometimes.
- The sample is small and age-concentrated; findings should be treated as exploratory.
- No campaign costs, verified transactions, conversion data or profitability measures were provided.

3 Discussion

Taken together, the responses suggest that digital marketing is a familiar part of brand discovery and purchase consideration for this respondent group. Instagram's dominance indicates that it may be an efficient place to begin audience-specific experimentation, but this conclusion should remain bounded by the sample. A platform that is heavily used is not necessarily the platform that produces the lowest acquisition cost or the highest customer lifetime value.

The prominence of social media advertising as a perceived influence suggests that paid content is noticeable to respondents. Influencer promotions also feature prominently, indicating that creator-led content may deserve testing. However, the survey does not record exposure frequency, creator credibility, product category or purchase attribution. A business should therefore compare these formats under consistent objectives and measurement rules rather than allocate budget solely on the basis of survey preferences.

Online reviews emerge as another important touchpoint. This has implications beyond promotion: product quality, fulfilment, customer service and complaint resolution can shape the reviews that prospective customers see. A review-management strategy should prioritise authentic feedback and helpful responses, rather than attempts to artificially improve ratings.

Finally, the reported purchases after online promotions are encouraging as a behavioural signal, but they are retrospective self-reports. To estimate causal impact, businesses would need campaign analytics, a credible comparison baseline or a controlled experiment. This distinction is central to converting descriptive research into a sound marketing decision.

4 Limitations of the study

- Sample size: only 30 responses were available, limiting generalisability and subgroup analysis.
- Age profile: the sample is concentrated among respondents aged 18–21, which may not reflect older consumers.
- Sampling procedure: the method used to recruit respondents is not documented.
- Self-report bias: recall, interpretation and social desirability may affect answers.

- Measurement limits: the questionnaire does not include validated scales for trust, ad attitude or purchase intention.
- Missing commercial data: no campaign spend, click-throughs, conversion records, order value, margins or repeat-purchase data were supplied.
- Causality: the cross-sectional questionnaire cannot establish that digital marketing caused purchases.
- Geographic and product scope: location, income, product category and brand context are not available for robust segmentation.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the role of digital marketing in consumer brand discovery, trust and purchase decisions using 30 responses collected through a structured questionnaire. The analysis focused on the platforms respondents use most frequently, the forms of digital marketing they perceive as influential, their reported experience of purchasing after online promotion, the importance they attach to online reviews, and their perceptions of brand trust. The findings provide a descriptive view of the experiences and opinions of this particular respondent group.

The results show that Instagram was the most frequently selected platform, reported by 27 respondents (90.0%). Social media advertisements were the most frequently selected digital marketing format, followed by influencer promotions. These responses suggest that paid social content and creator-led promotions are visible and relevant touchpoints for the surveyed group. However, platform use and perceived influence should not be interpreted as evidence that a particular channel necessarily delivers the highest conversion rate, the lowest customer acquisition cost or the greatest return on marketing investment.

The purchase-related responses also provide a useful signal. Most respondents stated that they had purchased a product after seeing it promoted online, while online reviews were rated important or very important by most of the sample. This indicates that digital promotion and customer feedback may both form part of the consumer decision journey. At the same time, the questionnaire relies on self-reported answers; it does not verify individual transactions, measure purchase value, or establish whether a purchase would have occurred without digital marketing exposure.

The responses concerning trust show that marketing campaigns do not affect every respondent in the same way. Businesses should not assume that increased advertising frequency automatically creates confidence in a brand. Clear product information, honest claims, appropriate influencer partnerships, transparent sponsorship disclosures, reliable customer service and genuine reviews are practical areas to examine when building trust. A positive digital experience must be supported by the actual product and service delivered.

The study has important limitations. The sample consists of only 30 respondents and is concentrated among younger age groups. The sampling procedure is not documented in the supplied dataset, and no campaign expenditure, verified sales records, conversion analytics or profitability measures were provided. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalised confidently to all consumers and cannot establish a causal relationship between digital marketing and purchases. They should be treated as exploratory findings that help formulate questions for further research.

In conclusion, digital marketing appears to be a meaningful part of brand discovery and self-reported purchase decisions among the respondents surveyed. Instagram, social media advertising, influencer

promotions and online reviews deserve further investigation in a strategy designed for a similar audience. The appropriate managerial response is not to scale a channel solely because respondents report using or noticing it, but to test channel performance systematically. Future research combining a larger and more diverse sample with campaign analytics, controlled comparisons and measures of incremental sales would provide stronger evidence for decisions about marketing investment.

6 Recommendations

- Use Instagram as a pilot channel for a target segment similar to the surveyed group, while testing other platforms before committing to a broad strategy.
- Compare paid social advertisements and influencer promotions using comparable audiences, objectives, campaign periods and budgets.
- Select influencers based on audience fit, credibility, content quality and transparent sponsorship disclosure—not follower counts alone.
- Encourage genuine customer reviews and respond constructively to complaints; do not fabricate, purchase or selectively manipulate reviews.
- Track the complete funnel from reach and qualified visits to conversion, acquisition cost, contribution margin and repeat purchase.
- Use holdout groups or other credible comparison methods where practical to estimate incremental campaign effects.
- Set decision thresholds before campaigns begin, including minimum conversion performance, acceptable acquisition cost and customer-experience safeguards.
- Repeat the survey with a larger, more diverse sample and document recruitment, consent, demographic characteristics and questionnaire design.
- Link survey results with anonymised campaign analytics only where appropriate consent, privacy safeguards and lawful data use are in place.

7 Suggested framework for future campaign evaluation

Table 13. Suggested framework for evaluating future digital marketing campaigns.

Stage	Activity	Suggested indicator	Decision purpose
Awareness	Run paid social and creator content tests.	Target reach, frequency, qualified visits.	Check whether the intended audience is being reached.
Consideration	Improve product information and review visibility.	Product-page engagement, review themes, add-to-cart rate.	Assess whether content helps consumers evaluate the offer.
Conversion	Track campaign traffic and completed purchases.	Conversion rate, cost per acquisition, incremental lift.	Determine whether marketing activity contributes to purchases.
Economics	Compare campaign cost with contribution from acquired customers.	Contribution margin, payback, repeat-purchase rate.	Decide whether the campaign is financially sustainable.
Trust and experience	Monitor feedback, complaints and disclosures.	Complaint themes, review sentiment, disclosure compliance.	Protect credibility and customer relationships.

Stage	Activity	Suggested indicator	Decision purpose
Scale decision	Replicate tests and compare segments.	Consistency across periods and audience groups.	Scale only when results are repeatable and meet agreed thresholds.

This framework is a proposed managerial tool, not a set of results measured by the current questionnaire. The supplied data are insufficient to populate the commercial indicators in the table.

Conflict of interests

No conflict of interest was declared.

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The author recognises that the findings are based on a limited sample and should be interpreted within the scope of the data collected. Responsibility for the analysis, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations presented in this paper rests with the author. This acknowledgement does not imply that the respondents or any institution endorse the conclusions.

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