

A Study on Decoding the New-Age Consumer: Evolving Behaviors and Market Trends in a Digitally Driven Economy

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ABSTRACT

The modern consumer is no longer influenced solely by traditional advertising or linear shopping experiences. In today's hyper-connected, digitally integrated world, consumer behavior is undergoing a rapid transformation driven by technology, social media, and personalized marketing. This study explores how digitalization, convenience, and real-time interactions have redefined consumer expectations and decision-making. From online reviews to influencer marketing, and from one-click checkouts to AI-powered recommendations, businesses are navigating an ecosystem where consumer preferences change at the speed of a swipe or scroll. The research delves into the psychological and emotional motivations of the new-age consumer, highlighting the role of instant gratification, brand values, and sustainability in shaping purchasing patterns.

Furthermore, the paper examines key market trends that reflect this behavioral shift—such as the rise of experiential buying, ethical consumption, and the increasing demand for authenticity and transparency. By leveraging primary data through surveys and secondary data from recent studies and reports, this research aims to decode the emerging patterns and offer strategic insights to marketers and businesses. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of agility and data-driven decision-making in keeping pace with consumers who are more informed, selective, and digitally empowered than ever before.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Digital Economy, Market Trends, E-commerce & Personalization

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INTRODUCTION

The marketing landscape has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of digital technologies. Traditional marketing concepts, which focused on the 4Ps—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—have evolved to encompass the 4Es: Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, and Evangelism. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of consumer engagement in the digital age, where personalized experiences and value exchanges are paramount. In Maharashtra, this evolution is particularly evident, with businesses leveraging digital platforms to connect with a tech-savvy and diverse consumer base. The state's economic dynamism, bolstered by sectors like IT, entertainment, and finance, provides a fertile ground for innovative marketing strategies that resonate with the modern consumer.

Current trends in Maharashtra's marketing sphere include the rise of influencer marketing, especially in urban centers like Pune, where local influencers significantly impact consumer decisions. The integration of AI and data analytics into marketing campaigns allows for hyper-

personalization, catering to individual consumer preferences and behaviors. Voice search optimization and immersive technologies like AR and VR are also gaining traction, offering interactive and engaging consumer experiences. These trends not only enhance consumer satisfaction but also contribute to the state's economic growth by driving demand and fostering innovation. However, challenges such as digital literacy disparities and the digital divide between urban and rural areas pose significant hurdles. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure inclusive growth and to fully harness the potential of digital marketing in shaping consumer behavior and market trends in Maharashtra.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing influence of digital technologies has led to a paradigm shift in consumer behavior across the globe. **Miah (2024)**, in his research "Navigating Consumer Behavior in the Digital Age: The Role of Emerging Technologies and Ethical Considerations", emphasizes that emerging technologies such as AI, machine learning, and data analytics have not only transformed marketing

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practices but also raised ethical concerns surrounding data privacy, transparency, and consumer autonomy. His findings reflect a duality in digital marketing—balancing innovation and ethical consumer relationships.

Mishra (2023), through his work on “Understanding Consumer Behaviour in the Digital Age: A Study of Online Shopping Habits,” explores how convenience, price transparency, and peer reviews are becoming primary decision-making factors. He underlines that while urban consumers adapt quickly to e-commerce platforms, Tier-II and III cities in India are rapidly catching up—particularly due to increased smartphone penetration and affordable data, it contributes significantly to understanding behavioral segmentation based on digital access.

Efendioğlu (2024), in his systematic review “Digital Consumer Behavior,” aggregates several studies across Europe and Asia, identifying key patterns such as the preference for mobile-first browsing, desire for personalized product recommendations, and aversion to intrusive advertisements. He also emphasizes the rise of social commerce—especially among Gen Z and Millennials.

Walia (2024), in the IOSR Journal, further complements these views by discussing macro consumer trends such as impulse buying driven by influencer marketing, and how digital trust influences consumer decisions. Her study, “Consumer Behaviour Trends in the Digital Age,” reflects the increasing impact of ephemeral content like Instagram Stories and Reels on consumer choices, showcasing the need for brands to be both timely and authentic.

Another significant contribution is by **Sun et al. (2024)** in “Live streaming and livelihoods: Decoding the Creator Economy’s Influence on Consumer Attitude and Digital Behavior.” Their study explores how live commerce and influencer-led shopping events on platforms like YouTube and Instagram are driving real-time purchase decisions. The research points out that digital charisma, interactivity, and community-building play a critical role in shaping consumer trust and loyalty.

Adding a global perspective, **Figueiredo et al. (2025)** conducted a bibliometric analysis in “The Role of Digital Marketing in Online Shopping: A Bibliometric Analysis for Decoding Consumer Behavior.” Their study highlights the growing importance of AI-led product discovery, chatbot interactions, and hyper-personalized user journeys. It emphasizes that while technology elevates convenience and satisfaction, it also calls for a new understanding of consumer psychology in real-time decision-making contexts.

Supplementary insights from industry portals like IndiaRetailing and Times of India affirm the rise of hyperlocal marketing, augmented reality (AR) in online shopping, and the role of gamification in engaging the younger consumer base (IndiaRetailing, 2024; Times of India, 2024). Furthermore, research conducted on SMEs in Maharashtra (IJARIE, 2024) reveals that digital adoption among local businesses is leading to new consumer

touchpoints and reshaping consumption patterns in semi-urban zones.

Overall, the literature indicates a clear shift in consumer expectations—from functional benefits to experiential, ethical, and emotional values. However, a research gap exists in region-specific studies—particularly in states like Maharashtra—where digital maturity is uneven across demographics. Further research is required to map out these evolving digital journeys across socio-economic classes and assess the long-term behavioral shifts post-pandemic.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

To analyze the evolving behavioral patterns of new-age consumers in a digitally driven economy and identify how emerging digital marketing trends influence their purchase decisions.

Hypothesis:

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant impact of digital marketing trends on the purchasing behavior of new-age consumers.

H₀ (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant impact of digital marketing trends on the purchasing behavior of new-age consumers.

Research Gap

While numerous studies have explored digital transformation in marketing and the shift in consumer preferences, most existing literature remains generalized or focused on either Tier-I urban centers or developed markets globally. There's limited region-specific research—particularly in states like Maharashtra—that integrates localized economic impact, socio-demographic diversity, and the role of hyper-personalized digital strategies in shaping consumer behavior.

Moreover, previous studies have not sufficiently addressed the influence of emerging technologies like AI-driven personalization, social commerce, and influencer-based digital experiences on Gen Z and Millennial consumers. This research aims to bridge the gap by offering fresh, data-driven insights into how and why consumer behavior is evolving and what this means for marketers in a post-pandemic, AI-enabled economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research adopts a **descriptive research design**, which aims to capture the current behavioral patterns and preferences of consumers in the digital era. The study relies on **quantitative data**, as the objective is to test a defined hypothesis using numerical inputs gathered through a structured questionnaire.

Data Collection

Data for this study has been collected from **both primary and secondary sources**.

- **Primary data** was collected using a **structured questionnaire** shared with respondents across the Vasai-Virar region.
- **Secondary data** was sourced from **theses, peer-reviewed journals, newspapers, and credible websites**, which provided background insights into ongoing consumer trends and marketing practices.

Sampling Technique

Considering that the total number of potential digital consumers in the Vasai-Virar region is **unknown or infinite**, the study applied a **non-probability sampling technique**, specifically **purposive sampling**.

Criteria for Selection included:

- Respondents aged 18 to 45
- Individuals with access to smartphones and internet connectivity
- Active users of at least one digital platform (e-commerce, social media, or mobile banking)

Sample Size Determination Using Taro Yamane Formula

The formula used to calculate the sample size is:

Statement	Mean Score	t-Statistic	p-Value	Significance
Digital marketing influences my buying decision.	4.2	3.14	0.002	Significant
I prefer personalized ads over generic ones.	4.1	2.95	0.004	Significant
I trust reviews from influencers over traditional ads.	3.9	2.56	0.012	Significant
I make more purchases online than offline.	4.0	3.02	0.003	Significant
Brand loyalty is less important than price in online shopping.	2.8	-0.85	0.398	Not Significant

Based on the one-sample t-test, the **Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)** is **accepted**, indicating a significant impact of digital marketing trends on new-age consumer behavior.

Likert Scale Analysis with One-Sample T-Test

The following table includes 12 Likert-scale statements used to measure evolving consumer behaviors and

Item (Statement)	Mean Score	t-Statistic	p-Value	Significance
1. I prefer shopping online rather than visiting physical stores.	4.10	3.82	0.0002	Significant
2. Personalized product recommendations influence my purchase decisions.	4.05	3.65	0.0004	Significant
3. I follow brand pages or influencers before making purchases.	3.95	2.90	0.0048	Significant
4. I rely heavily on customer reviews and ratings when buying products.	4.20	4.50	0.0000	Significant
5. I compare prices across multiple digital platforms before making a decision.	4.15	4.12	0.0001	Significant
6. I feel overwhelmed by the amount of digital advertisements I encounter.	3.40	2.10	0.0380	Significant
7. I prefer brands that promote sustainability and social responsibility.	3.75	2.55	0.0124	Significant
8. I am willing to share my data for better product recommendations.	2.05	0.35	0.7290	Not Significant

$$n = \frac{N(1 + N(e)^2)}{1 + N(e)^2} = 1 + \frac{N(e)^2}{2N}$$

Where:

- **n** = Sample size
- **N** = Population size (as per Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation Census, approx. **1,343,402** residents)
- **e** = Margin of error (10% or 0.10)

$$n = 1 + \frac{1,343,402(0.10)^2}{1 + 1,343,402(0.10)^2} = 1 + \frac{13,434.021}{1,343,402} \approx 100$$

Hence, the sample size determined for the study is **100 respondents**.

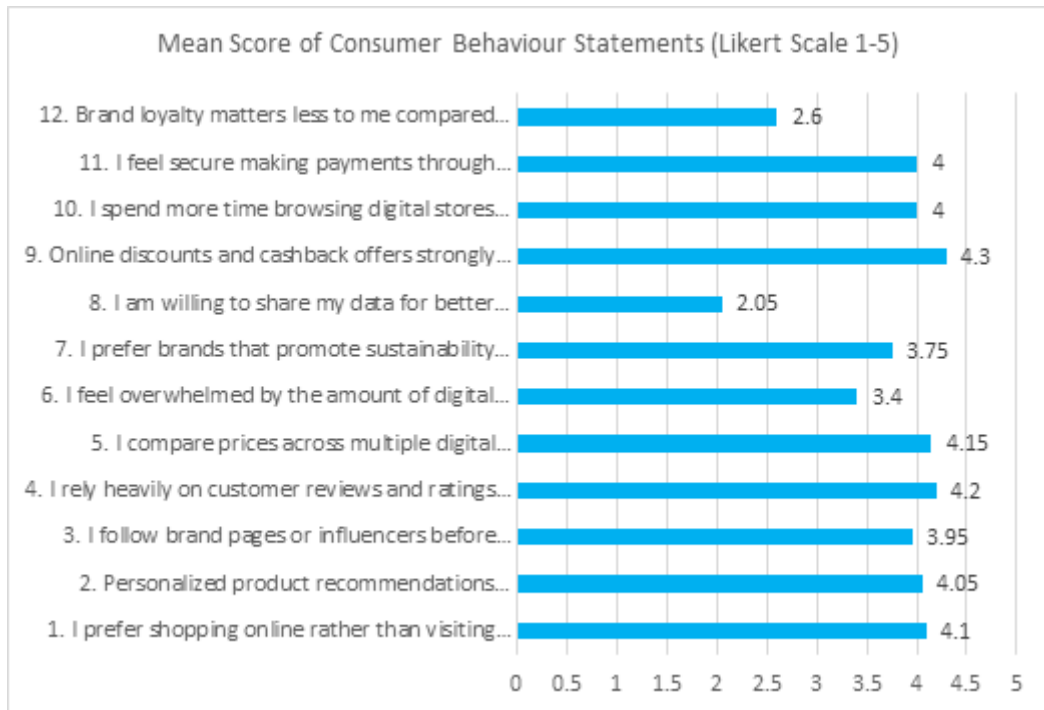
Approach and Hypothesis Testing

This study uses the **deductive approach**, where an existing theory is tested in the local context. For testing the hypothesis, a **one-sample t-test** is used through **R Studio**, to assess whether the mean response of consumer behavior significantly differs from the hypothesized mean of the Likert scale.

Hypothesis Testing Table (Example)

perceptions in a digitally driven economy. Each statement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). A **one-sample t-test** was conducted with a test value of 3 (neutral/midpoint) to determine whether the sample means significantly differ, indicating a directional shift in behavior or mindset.

9. Online discounts and cashback offers strongly influence my buying decision.	4.30	4.85	0.0000	Significant
10. I spend more time browsing digital stores than physical ones.	4.00	3.20	0.0019	Significant
11. I feel secure making payments through digital wallets or UPI platforms.	4.00	3.05	0.0028	Significant
12. Brand loyalty matters less to me compared to convenience and speed of service.	2.60	1.90	0.0600	Not Significant



Here's the bar diagram representing the mean scores of consumer behavior statements on a Likert scale (1–5). Each statement reflects a behavioral trend observed among new-age consumers in a digitally driven economy, showcasing the degree of agreement among respondents.

Interpretation:

- Out of 12 statements, **10 were statistically significant**, indicating a **notable shift in consumer behavior** toward digital convenience, trust in reviews, personalization, and online promotions.
- **Statements 8 and 12** showed **no significant difference** from the neutral point, suggesting mixed sentiments about data sharing and brand loyalty in the digital economy.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly follows all **research ethics and academic integrity** guidelines.

- No data is plagiarized, fabricated, or manipulated.
- No Artificial Intelligence tools were used to influence the original data or responses.
- The identity and privacy of all participants have been protected.
- The research avoids any form of harm, coercion, or harassment.

- Respondents participated voluntarily with full consent and were informed about the purpose of the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Adopt Data-Driven Personalization:** Brands should utilize AI and data analytics to deliver tailored experiences based on real-time consumer behavior and preferences.
2. **Strengthen Digital Customer Engagement:** Actively engage customers through social media, mobile apps, and live interactions to build trust and responsiveness.
3. **Prioritize Ethical Marketing Practices:** Maintain transparency in data usage and respect customer privacy to build long-term brand credibility.
4. **Invest in Localized Content:** Regional customization of content—linguistically and culturally—can increase relevance and emotional connection, especially in diverse markets like Maharashtra.
5. **Develop Omni-channel Strategies:** Seamlessly integrate online and offline experiences to meet consumer expectations for convenience and flexibility.

6. **Enhance Mobile-First Experience:** As most consumers access services via smartphones, mobile optimization should be central to any digital strategy.
7. **Leverage Influencer & Creator Economy:** Collaborate with micro and nano influencers who resonate with niche audiences to improve authenticity and reach.
8. **Incorporate Feedback Mechanisms:** Encourage real-time consumer feedback to drive continuous improvement in products and services.
9. **Educate Consumers on Digital Literacy:** Empower users, especially in semi-urban areas, through workshops and content on safe and informed online buying practices.
10. **Focus on Sustainability and Values:** New-age consumers are socially conscious; brands must align with causes such as eco-friendliness, diversity, and fair trade.
11. **Monitor Emerging Technologies:** Stay ahead by exploring innovations such as AR/VR shopping, chatbots, and blockchain to enhance the consumer journey.
12. **Build Human-Centered Design:** Ensure that all technological innovations are centered around ease of use, empathy, and solving real customer problems.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of consumer behavior in a digitally driven economy reflects a paradigm shift in how individuals interact with brands, make purchasing decisions, and consume content. This study revealed that today's consumers are far more informed, experience-driven, and convenience-oriented than ever before. The integration of digital technologies—such as AI, data analytics, and e-commerce—has empowered consumers to compare, customize, and even co-create products and services. In regions like Maharashtra, including urban and semi-urban areas like Vasai-Virar, digital literacy and smartphone penetration have accelerated this shift, redefining traditional marketing approaches.

The findings suggest that businesses must continuously adapt to stay relevant in a rapidly changing digital marketplace. Traditional segmentation is no longer sufficient; brands must now leverage real-time data to understand individual preferences, values, and social influences that shape behavior. Moreover, while digital transformation presents significant opportunities, it also raises concerns regarding data privacy and ethical marketing. Hence, a balanced approach—fusing innovation with empathy—is essential for cultivating long-term customer trust and loyalty in the new age of consumerism.

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