Exploring the influence of Digital Marketing Practices on Customer Engagement towards FMCG in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become a vital tool for engaging consumers in the highly competitive fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. This study examines the influence of digital marketing practices on customer engagement towards FMCG products in Chennai, with specific focus on content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and search engine optimization. An exploratory and descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 150 consumers of FMCGs using a structured questionnaire. Independent-samples t-test, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that online store customers demonstrate significantly higher perceptions of digital marketing practices and greater engagement compared to offline store customers. A strong and positive relationship was identified between consumers' perception of digital marketing practices and customer engagement. Regression results indicate that content marketing, social media marketing, and influencer marketing significantly enhance customer engagement, while search engine optimization shows no significant impact. The study contributes context-specific insights to FMCG digital marketing literature and offers practical implications for enhancing customer engagement strategies.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Practices, Customer Engagement, FMCG, Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimisation

1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital technologies has significantly altered how FMCG firms engage with consumers by enabling interactive communication, personalised brand experiences, and continuous online presence. Digital marketing has moved beyond basic promotion to encompass content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and search engine optimization, which collectively shape consumer attention, involvement, and responsiveness (Voorveld et al., 2018; Alamsyah et al., 2021). Prior studies indicate that visually appealing content, targeted communication, and platform-specific strategies enhance consumer interaction and engagement with brands (Addo et al., 2022; Wuisan&Handra, 2023; Lin et al., 2023). Customer engagement has therefore emerged as a crucial behavioural outcome reflecting consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural connections with brands (Fernandes & Esteves, 2016; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018).

Existing literature also confirms that effective digital marketing positively influences engagement, brand awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty through trust and perceived value (SudarsanJayasingh, 2019; Faseeh Amin & Nika, 2022; Tsaur et al., 2023). Although recent research highlights the growing sophistication of digital ecosystems and emerging technologies in shaping engagement (Borenstein& Taylor, 2023; Nafeza& Gayathri, 2024), limited empirical evidence exists on the integrated impact of digital marketing practices on customer engagement within the FMCG sector at a regional level, thereby justifying the focus of the present study in the Chennai context.

2. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although digital marketing adoption has grown rapidly among FMCG brands, there is still insufficient understanding of how individual digital marketing dimensions translate into sustained customer engagement, especially in emerging urban markets such as Chennai. Most existing studies focus primarily on outcomes like brand awareness, purchase intention, satisfaction, or loyalty, while customer engagement is often positioned as a mediating or secondary construct rather than a core behavioural outcome (Fernandes & Esteves, 2016; SudarsanJayasingh, 2019; Clarence Keni, 2021). In addition, prior research largely examines digital marketing tools in isolation, such as social media advertising, influencer marketing, or search-based promotions, without adequately addressing their combined and interactive influence on customer engagement in the FMCG context (Voorveld et al., 2018; Alghizzawi et al., 2023). Given the low-involvement and highly competitive nature of FMCG products, understanding how content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and search engine optimization jointly contribute to sustained engagement is both theoretically important and practically relevant. The lack of region-specific empirical evidence from Chennai, where digital media usage and consumption patterns are rapidly evolving, further highlights the need for a focused examination of digital marketing practices and customer engagement within this context.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP
3.1 Literature Review

Earlier studies clearly demonstrate that digital marketing practices have a strong and positive influence on consumer outcomes such as purchase intention, brand awareness, and satisfaction. Research examining location-based advertising, social media marketing, email marketing, and online advertising consistently shows that attractive content, personalisation, and platform-specific strategies enhance consumer attention and buying behaviour (Wibisurya, 2018; Samsudeen et al., 2020; Dastane, 2020; Wuisan&Handra, 2023). Empirical evidence from diverse sectors, including e-commerce, ICT firms, banking, and retail, further confirms that digital marketing improves customer reach, strengthens information dissemination, and positively shapes consumer decision-making, highlighting its growing strategic importance across industries and geographical contexts (Alwan&Alshurideh, 2022; Chinonso et al., 2025).

Subsequent literature has increasingly positioned customer engagement as a central construct within digital environments. Studies indicate that engagement directly influences brand loyalty, purchase intention, and relationship quality, while also mediating the effects of digital interactions on consumer behaviour (Fernandes & Esteves, 2016; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018; SudarsanJayasingh, 2019; Samala&Katkam, 2020). Research on social media platforms and digital advertising networks further shows that engagement is multidimensional, involving cognitive, emotional, and interactive components that vary across platforms, product categories, and consumer segments (Voorveld et al., 2018; Alghizzawi

et al., 2023). Recent investigations also highlight the role of experiential cues, trust, perceived usefulness, and emerging digital features such as short-form videos and emojis in fostering deeper engagement (Faseeh Amin & Nika, 2022; Lin et al., 2023; Duffett&Maraule, 2024). In addition, studies on advanced digital ecosystems reveal that analytics-driven advertising, targeted communication, and emerging technologies such as blockchain enhance personalisation, transparency, engagement, and satisfaction, while simultaneously raising concerns related to consumer welfare and ethical data use (Addo et al., 2022; Borenstein& Taylor, 2023; Nafeza& Gayathri, 2024; AlKasassbeh et al., 2025).

3.2 Research Gap

Although previous studies highlight the positive effects of digital marketing on outcomes such as purchase intention and brand awareness, gaps remain in understanding its integrated impact. Most research examines digital tools individually and treats customer engagement as a secondary outcome, with limited focus on the FMCG sector and region-specific contexts. The lack of empirical evidence from rapidly digitising urban markets like Chennai further strengthens the need to examine how combined digital marketing practices influence customer engagement in the FMCG context.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts an exploratory and descriptive research design to assess the influence of digital marketing practices on customer engagement towards FMCG products in Chennai. Primary data were collected from 150 consumers using a structured questionnaire through convenience sampling, focusing on respondents who actively use digital media platforms such as social networking sites and search engines for FMCG-related information and purchases. Inferential statistical tools, including the independent samples t-test, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, were applied to examine differences, relationships, and the combined influence of content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and search engine optimization on customer engagement within the FMCG context.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Influence of Customer Type on Perceived Digital Marketing Practices and Customer Engagement – Independent Sample 't' Test

H$_0$: There is no significant difference between the Online and Physical (Offline) StoreCustomers with respect to the Perceived Digital Marketing Practices and Customer Engagement towards FMCGs.

An independent-samples t-test was employed to examine whether a significant difference exists between Online Store customers and Physical Store customers with respect to their perceived digital marketing practices and customer engagement towards FMCGs.

Table 1

TYPE OF CUSTOMERS ANDPERCEIVED DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS FMCGS

VARIABLES	TYPE OF CUSTOMERS						t - value	p − value
	Online Stores			Physical Stores				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Perceived Digital	89	48.77	5.684	61	45.35	6.563	4.512	0.000**

Marketing Practices							
Customer Engagement on FMCGs	89	21.56	3.274	61	19.41	4.115	6.584	0.000**

Source: Primary Data (1% Level of Significance)**

The results reveal that Online Store customers reported a higher perception of digital marketing practices (Mean = 48.77, SD = 5.684) compared to Physical Store customers (Mean = 45.35, SD = 6.563), and this difference was found to be statistically significant (t = 4.512, p < 0.01). Similarly, customer engagement towards FMCGs was significantly higher among Online Store customers (Mean = 21.56, SD = 3.274) than their Physical Store counterparts (Mean = 19.41, SD = 4.115), as evidenced by a t-value of 6.584 with a p-value less than 0.01. Since the p-values for both variables are below the 1% level of significance, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, confirming that a statistically significant difference exists between Online and Physical Store customers in terms of perceived digital marketing practices and customer engagement towards FMCGs, with Online Store customers exhibiting higher levels on both dimensions.

5.2 Relationship between Digital Marketing Practices and Customer Engagement towards FMCG – Correlation Analysis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the Consumers' Perception on Digital Marketing Practices and Customer Engagement on FMCGs.

H_0 states that there is no significant relationship between consumers' perception on digital marketing practices and customer engagement towards FMCGs. To examine this, a Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables.

Table 2
CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION ON DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT WITH RESPECT TO FMCG

VARIABLE	**N**	**'r' VALUE**	**P - VALUE**	**RELATIONSHIP**	**REMARKS**	
					SIGNIFICANT	**RESULT**
Consumers' Perception on the Digital Marketing Practicesand Customer Engagement	150	0.875**	0.000	**Positive**	**Significant**	**REJECTED**

. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a strong and positive correlation between consumers' perception on digital marketing practices and customer engagement (r = 0.875), which is statistically significant at the 1% level (p < 0.01). This finding suggests that favourable perceptions of digital marketing practices are closely associated with higher levels of customer engagement towards FMCG products. As the p-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming the existence of a significant and positive relationship between consumers' perception on digital marketing practices and customer engagement on FMCGs. Hence, it can be concluded that improvements in digital marketing practices substantially enhance customer engagement within the FMCG context.

5.3 Impact of Digital Marketing Practices on Customer Engagement - Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was applied to examine the extent to which digital marketing practices influence customer engagement towards FMCG products. The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant (F = 398.412, p < 0.01), indicating that the selected digital marketing practice dimensions collectively explain variations in customer engagement. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.778 reveals that approximately 78 per cent of the variation in customer engagement is explained by content marketing, social media marketing, influencer marketing, and search engine optimisation, reflecting a strong explanatory power of the model.

Table 3 IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES
ON CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT - REGRESSION COEFFICIENT

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.586	.369		2.526	0.038
	Content Marketing	.458	.056	.306	5.632	0.000**
	Social Media Marketing	.302	.059	.287	4.112	0.000**
	Influencer Marketing	.216	.068	.202	3.580	0.008**
	Search Engine Optimisation	.059	.079	.036	0.695	0.547

Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement towards FMCGs
Source: Primary Data (1% Level of Significance)**

Among the predictors, content marketing emerged as the most influential factor (β = 0.306, t = 5.632, p < 0.01), followed by social media marketing (β = 0.287, t = 4.112, p < 0.01) and influencer marketing (β = 0.202, t = 3.580, p < 0.01), all showing a positive and statistically significant impact on customer engagement. However, search engine optimisation did not exhibit a significant influence on customer engagement (β = 0.036, t = 0.695, p > 0.01). These findings confirm that interactive and content-driven digital marketing practices play a decisive role in enhancing customer engagement towards FMCG products, while search-based visibility alone may be less effective in driving engagement in the present context.

6. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis reveals that digital marketing practices play a substantial role in shaping customer engagement towards FMCG products in Chennai. Online store customers exhibit significantly higher perceptions of digital marketing practices and stronger engagement levels compared to physical (offline) store customers, indicating the effectiveness of digital platforms in fostering interaction and involvement. The correlation results further confirm a strong and positive association between consumers' perception of digital marketing practices and customer engagement, highlighting those favourable digital experiences directly translate into higher engagement. Multiple regression findings show that content marketing, social media marketing, and influencer marketing exert a significant positive impact on customer engagement, with content marketing emerging as the most influential factor. In contrast, search engine optimisation does not demonstrate a significant effect on engagement, suggesting that visibility alone may not be sufficient to stimulate deeper consumer interaction in the FMCG context.

Based on the findings, FMCG firms should prioritise interactive and value-driven digital marketing strategies to strengthen customer engagement. Greater emphasis should be placed on content marketing by developing informative, entertaining, and visually appealing content that resonates with consumers' daily consumption needs. Social media marketing efforts should focus on two-way communication, consistent engagement, and platform-specific strategies to sustain consumer interest. Influencer marketing should be strategically aligned with credible and relatable influencers who can authentically represent FMCG brands and enhance trust. Since search engine optimisation shows limited impact on engagement, firms may integrate SEO with content-rich landing pages and interactive features rather than relying on search visibility alone. Overall, a balanced and integrated digital marketing approach can help FMCG brands build sustained engagement and long-term consumer relationships in the competitive Chennai market.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital marketing practices significantly influence customer engagement towards FMCG products in Chennai, with content marketing, social media marketing, and influencer marketing emerging as key drivers of consumer interaction and involvement. By empirically establishing customer engagement as a primary outcome of digital marketing practices, the study contributes to existing literature by extending prior work that has largely focused on brand awareness and purchase intention, particularly within the underexplored FMCG context. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer clear implications for marketers, suggesting that FMCG firms should adopt integrated, content-driven, and interactive digital strategies to foster sustained engagement rather than relying solely on visibility-oriented tactics. However, the study is subject to certain limitations, including the use of convenience sampling, a limited sample size, and its focus on a single metropolitan region, which may restrict the generalisability of the results. Future studies may address these limitations by adopting probability sampling techniques, expanding the sample across multiple cities or regions, incorporating longitudinal designs, and examining additional digital marketing dimensions or moderating variables such as age, product category, or digital literacy to gain deeper insights into evolving engagement dynamics within FMCG markets.

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