

## An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Digital Marketing on Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty in the Indian Market

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### ABSTRACT

The fast adoption of digital technology has radically altered the marketing behavior of all the world especially in the emerging economies like India. This paper is a case study of the effect of digital marketing practices on customer engagement and brand loyalty in the Indian market. As the use of smartphones and low cost internet links and high usage of social media sites spread, Indian consumers are engaging with brands on a digital level. The study explores the role of social media marketing, content marketing, email campaigns, influencer collaboration, and search engine optimization and the role of this in customer engagement and consequently in brand loyalty.

The study adopted a quantitative research design through the use of the structured questionnaires that were distributed among 350 consumers in India with various demographic profiles. The association between the dimensions of digital marketing, customer engagement, and brand loyalty were assessed with the help of statistical tools such as correlation analysis, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling. The results indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between the activities performed by digital marketers and customer engagement that ultimately is strongly linked to brand loyalty. Interaction on social media and personalized content became the most powerful.

In practical terms, the research makes an insight as to what the Indian marketers should do to maximize online strategies to maintain a long-term customer relationship. Nevertheless, the study is constrained by its use of self-report information, as well as focusing on urban consumers. Future studies can cover longitudinal studies, rural market behaviour, and introduction of the new technologies like AI-powered personalisation and immersive marketing to further develop the knowledge base.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, customer engagement, brand loyalty, social media marketing, Indian Market, consumer behavior, influencer marketing, and online branding

### INTRODUCTION

The global economy is being digitized which has greatly influenced how businesses relate to their customers. Digital marketing has in the past ten years developed to be not only an additional promotional tool, but also a major strategic device used in the acquisition, engagement and retention of customers. This has been most swift in the emerging markets of India, where the internet is becoming pervasive, there are cheap smartphones, a growing e-commerce system, and popular social media platforms[1]. With the ever-growing digital ecosystems, businesses need to comprehend the effects of digital marketing

operations to consumer behavior, particularly the degree of engagement and loyalty.

India is one of the rapidly developing digital consumer markets in the world. Having hundreds of millions of users of the internet and a mainly youthful population, the nation has emerged as an active arena of online brand communication. Customers are using online platforms to discover more products, review and compare them and also purchase online products[2]. Key touchpoints that exist between brands and customers are the social media networks, online video, search engines, and mobile applications. This change has transformed the classical models of marketing communication and one-way

communication transmission has been changed by the interactive, personalized and real-time communication.

The interaction with customers has become the primary construct of modern marketing studies. It goes beyond the transactional contact and indicates emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement with a brand. The active customers are involved in brand discussions, experience sharing and feedback, and promote brands among their social circles. This engagement can be achieved through digital marketing because electronic marketing allows two-way communication, interactive content and gamification, and personalized suggestions. Contrary to the old fashioned advertising, online strategies enable a brand to monitor user activity, customize messages and create long-term relational value.

The brand loyalty on the other hand can be considered as a preference and commitment of a consumer to a brand as compared to its competitors. This is because in the highly competitive markets like India where consumers have many choices the loyalty is a determinant of business sustainability. The loyal customers not only repurchase but also recommend the brand to other customers, which results in the reduction of the cost of acquiring customers and increasing brand equity. To have a strategy to build loyalty, it is therefore strategically important to understand how the digital marketing helps build loyalty.

Although the digital marketing campaigns have cost a lot of money, there are several companies that have not managed to gauge their direct influence on customer loyalty. Although clicks, impressions, and engagement rates are relatively simple to measure in digital terms, the conversion of such metrics into long-term loyalty is a complicated problem[3]. This gap indicates that there is a necessity to conduct empirical research that will investigate the structural connections between digital marketing strategies, customer engagement, and brand loyalty, especially in the Indian setting.

Three main observations prompted the motivation of this study. First, Indian consumers are highly digitally adopted with various behavioral patterns depending on socio-cultural, economic, and demographic characteristics. Second, companies are dedicating large amounts of funds to digital channels without extensive support on its ability to affect loyalty in the long term. Third, the available literature tends to discuss the aspects of digital marketing separately, as opposed to as coordinated strategic aspects that affect both engagement and loyalty. Such observations point to the fact that holistic empirical study is badly needed.

The purpose of this study is to give a detailed empirical investigation of the role played by different digital marketing strategies in terms of customer engagement and the impact of engagement on brand loyalty in the Indian market place[4]. The study particularly analyzes several aspects of digital marketing as social media marketing, content marketing, influencer marketing, email marketing, and search engine optimization. The unified approach to the combination of the dimensions and their independent influences is the aim of the study.

The main goals of the study are the following:

To study the level of customer engagement by the digital marketing plans in the Indian market.

To examine the association between brand loyalty and customer engagement.

To test whether customer engagement mediates the relationship between customer engagement with the online marketing activity and brand loyalty.

To give strategic inputs to businesses that are interested in enhancing long-term customer relationships using digital media.

This study has value to both theoretical constructs and managerial practice since it provides a gap between the theoretical constructs and empirical evidence obtained through the Indian consumers. The study is able to dig beyond the superficial measures of marketing performance through the lens of engagement as a mediating variable and explore more profound attributes of relations. Through its findings, it is hoped that the marketers will be able to strategize on information-based, engagement-based marketing approaches that can create lasting brand loyalty.

### ***Novelty and Contribution***

The current research has some new contributions to the current knowledge on the topic of digital marketing, customer engagement, and brand loyalty, especially in the context of the Indian market.

On the one hand, the research uses a combined empirical approach, which allows studying several dimensions of digital marketing at the same time instead of considering them separately. Although some previous studies are usually address one variable, say, social media marketing or influencer marketing, in this study, the authors consider the simultaneous effect of social media engagement, content personalization, email communication, influencer collaboration, and search engine visibility. This is a more real-world perspective of modern digital ecosystems where consumers engage with the brands on various platforms.

Second, the study also delivers a clear research into the mediating force of customer engagement in digital marketing and brand loyalty. Most of the existing research works show direct correlations between marketing activities and loyalty performance without examining the psychological and behavioral mechanisms[5]. This paper elucidates the processes by which digital marketing approaches are turned into long-term loyalty by placing engagement as the structural mediator. This adds to the relationship marketing theory because it empirically confirms the importance of engagement as a pathway of value creation.

Third, the paper includes context-specific analysis in the Indian market that has not been fully investigated in relation to the Western economies. The socio-cultural diverse environment, price sensitivity and mobile-first digital adoption present a consumer environment in India. The study has been able to capture behavioral patterns of Indian digital consumers that will contribute to the body of literature in the emerging markets and give practical

significance to both local and multinationals doing business in India.

In 2019 Jayasingh [6] proposed et. al., fourth, the study closes the divide between the theoretical constructs and quantifiable outcomes on managerial fronts. Instead of the study focusing on the analysis based on conceptual discussion only, it employs quantitative analysis to prove statistically significant associations between variables. It has the benefit of being empirically grounded, which increases reliability and provides a strategy which can be acted upon.

Fifth, the research has value as it determines the most effective digital marketing elements in the engagement and loyalty process. It also helps marketers to allocate marketing budgets more efficiently by giving them prioritization guidelines based on evidence-based ranking of the relative importance of various strategies.

To conclude, the main contributions of the study are:

Formulation of an overall empirical model to connect digital marketing, customer engagement and brand loyalty.

Empirical support of customer engagement as a moderating variable.

Local market knowledge in the Indian online consumer market.

Recommendations on strategies (practical, based on the statistical analysis).

Determination of the major dimensions of digital marketing that have high impacts on enhancing loyalty.

Altogether, the mentioned contributions contribute to the development of academic knowledge and provide practical importance to the marketing professionals who need to find sustainable competitive advantage in the changing digital environment of India..

## II. RELATED WORK

The electronic marketing has increasingly changed the theoretical and practical basis of marketing communication. We have found that previous researchers viewed marketing as a one-way flow of information to the consumers through the traditional media channels by firms. The development of digital platforms however changed the paradigm to the models of interaction, participation and relationship based communication. In 2025 Kamyabi [7] introduced et.al., digital marketing research focuses on its capability to build personal experiences, real-time feedback systems, and performance metrics. The advances have prompted researchers to focus on the role of digital strategies in driving more profound relational constructs including customer engagement and brand loyalty.

Digital marketing involves a number of elements such as social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization, email marketing, mobile marketing and influencer partnerships. The experimental studies prove that the multi-channel digital strategies contribute greatly to the brand presence and reach to customers. In 2015 Khan [8] introduced et.al., Research indicates that through digital touchpoints, customers experience the cycles of

constant interaction between the awareness and consideration to advocacy. This is an interactive form of engagement that distinguishes digital marketing as compared to the traditional advertising because it promotes long term relationship building as opposed to the short term transaction results.

Customer interaction has become one of the leading theoretical abstractions in the modern marketing books. It has been broadly understood as a multidimensional construct that comprises of emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Emotional engagement can be defined as the emotional connection that customers have towards brands. Cognitive engagement is the focus, intake, and mind participation of brand relevant material. Some of the behaviors involved with engagement include commenting, sharing, reviewing, participation in brand communities. According to the findings of research, digital platforms contribute a great deal to these dimensions since they allow interactivity and personalization.

A number of researches underscore the fact that social media marketing is overriding in terms of creating customer interest. Likes, shares, comments, live sessions, polls, and others are interactive features that motivate users to be active[9]. Studies have indicated that social media consumers are prone to become active when they feel that the content they are exposed to is entertaining, informative, or relatable. The feeling of community that is formed with the help of social platforms also boosts brand attachment and quality of perceived relationship. Besides, two-way communication minimizes psychological distance between the brands and customers, enhancing relational ties.

The content marketing has also been widely studied as a source of engagement. Studies show that content of a top standard, related, and value-based content builds trust and credibility. Informational blogs, informational videos, storytelling campaigns and user generated content lead to greater cognitive and emotional engagement. Researchers note that personalization algorithms increase interaction levels by adjusting the content to personal likes and their browsing history. This specific communication raises perceived relevance that has a positive impact on satisfaction and long-term brand relationships.

Another emerging field of digital marketing scholarship is influencer marketing. Empirical data show that influencer credibility, authenticity and relatability have a strong influence on consumer brand attitude. It is common that consumers view influencers as close peers and not corporate, thereby improving the behaviour of the message. It has been revealed that influencer endorsements may build both short-term purchase intentions and long-term brand affinity. Nonetheless, a study also reveals that the perceived inauthenticity or over commercialization can undermine trust and lower the engagement results.

Digital strategies that are performance based include search engine optimization and email marketing. The visibility of the search engine will ensure that the brand is accessible and information available affecting the consumer decision making processes. Personalised and

segmented email marketing has been found to enhance customer retention rate and repeat buying behaviour. However, studies note that there are limitations to using some digital tools due to content saturation, privacy issues, and ad fatigue which can be diminished at the expense of their usefulness without a planned approach. The brand loyalty has been under conventional analysis in terms of attitude and behavior. Behavioral loyalty is a repeat purchase behavior and attitudinal loyalty is a psychological commitment and preference[10]. The modern literature combines these points of view and implies that digital interaction experiences enhance both types of loyalty. The customers who are engaged tend to have a higher chance of becoming emotionally attached, trusting, and satisfied and these become repeat customers and referral customers through word-of-mouth. The important literature recognizes customer engagement as a moderating factor linking the marketing activity with brand commitment. The empirical models prove that the digital marketing efforts without the creation of meaningful engagement experiences will not lead to the loyalty directly. The relational pathway proposes that the engagement improves the perceived value, trust and satisfaction, which consequently leads to the outcome of loyalty. This mediating paradigm has been acquiring growing support at theoretical levels in relationship marketing and service-dominant logic paradigms. In the emerging markets, there are distinct characteristics in digital adoption patterns. Studies have shown that mobile first consumption behavior plays a major role in determining digital engagement strategies. Smartphones also serve as the main point of connection with the online environment among consumers of developing economies. This trend requires locally-oriented marketing strategies and mobile-optimized content. Also, consumer response to digital campaigns is influenced by socio-cultural diversity and price sensitivity. Researchers highlight the need to use culturally relevant messages and vernacular to reach out to people in various markets. There are a number of gaps in digital marketing even though a lot of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of digital marketing. Numerous studies are centered on the isolated digital channels as opposed to integrated strategies. Also, there are empirical studies that are based on short-term performance measures as click-throughs and impressions without referencing them to long-term relational effects. Few context-related empirical data are also available that can examine the structural relationship between digital marketing, engagement, and loyalty in fast-changing markets.

Moreover, the dynamics of engagement are changing due to the fast technical progress, including artificial intelligence-based customization, chatbots, immersive experiences, and data analytics. Although these developments are recognized in conceptual discussions, there is little empirical research on the long-term effect of these developments on loyalty. The growing sophistication of digital ecosystems demands the need to have unified frameworks that bring together various aspects of digital marketing and look at their compounding implications.

Overall, the current literature confirms the fact that digital marketing contributes greatly to customer interaction and brand loyalty. Engagement is a relational mechanism that is critical and that developing sustainable value is achieved via marketing strategies. Nonetheless, however, there is still a necessity of holistic empirical studies that incorporate various dimensions in digital marketing in one structural model, especially in the high-growth digital markets. This paper seeks to fill these gaps by looking at the interrelationships between digital marketing strategy, customer engagement and brand loyalty in the Indian context.

### III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The research is a quantitative research design that is explanatory, in that it is used to explore the effects of digital marketing strategies on customer engagement and brand loyalty within the Indian market in an empirical manner[11]. Explanatory design is suitable since the aim is to test formulated associations among pre-existing variables and determine the mediating effect of customer engagement. The study is based on a cross-sectional survey design, in which data will be gathered at one time on active digital consumers.

Flowchart Title

Figure: Flowchart of the Proposed Research Methodology for Analyzing the Impact of Digital Marketing on Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty



Fig 1 Flowchart of the Proposed Research Methodology for Examining the Impact of Digital Marketing on Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty in the Indian Market

The given flowchart shows in a systematic way the structured research process that will be used in this research about digital marketing, customer engagement and brand loyalty in the Indian market. The first step involves the identification of a problem where the fundamental research problem is identified. It is then followed by intensive literature review and identification of research gap so that the study would cover the present theoretical and empirical limitations. The conceptual framework is formulated based on the findings of the identified gap, and it is going to establish connections between digital marketing strategies, customer engagement, and brand loyalty. The framework leads to hypothesis formulation which converts theoretical assumptions into propositions which are testable.

The second step is concerned with the development of research instruments, which is questionnaire design. The questionnaire has been well designed to capture the independent, mediating, and dependent variables in a standardized Likert-scale. Pilot testing and reliability checking are done before mass data collection as it is necessary to establish internal consistency and measurement item clarity. This will increase the validity and credibility of the research instrument. Data collection is done among the Indian digital consumers who are active consumers of the different brands using the online platform after it has been validated.

Once the data is collected, data cleaning and screening are done to eliminate incompleteness, inconsistencies, and outliers[12]. This measure will make sure that only good data is analyzed. The filtered data is then statistically analyzed with the help of SPSS and Structural Equation Model (SEM). These methods enable the analysis of correlation, regression relationships and mediation effects in the conceptual framework. To test the hypotheses, it is done to determine the strength and significance of the suggested relationships.

Lastly, interpretation of results is the final phase of research which involves translation of statistical results into information that is meaningful to managers and theory. The interpretation stage determines the extent to which the digital marketing does play a significant role in customer engagement and whether the engagement mediates the relationship with brand loyalty. Out of these findings, conclusions are made and practical implications are given. The flowchart therefore indicates a scientific rigorous, logical and systematic research methodology that does not compromise clarity, reliability as well as empirical validity.

#### IV. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

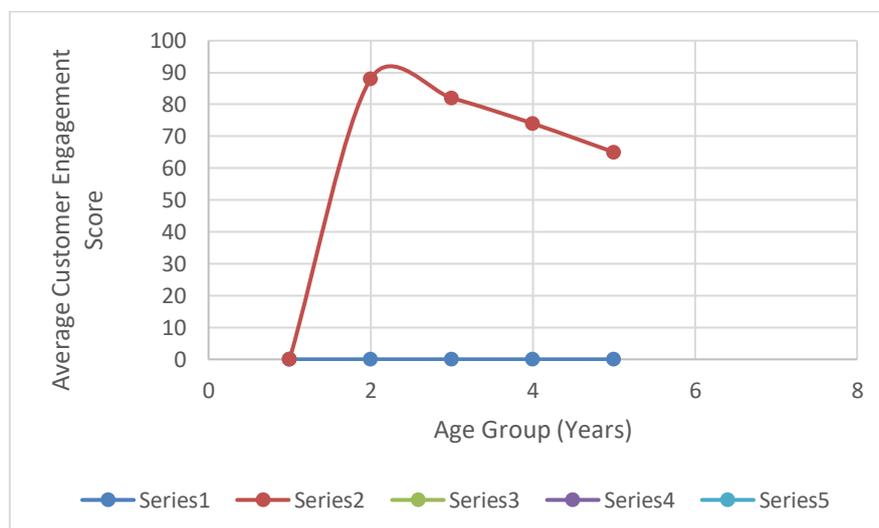
Figure 2 shows the growth of Customer Engagement Index in four time periods at quarterly level. The engagement score grows gradually between 65 in Q1 and 90 in Q4, which can be regarded as a stable but positive trend of customer interaction with digital marketing platforms. This increase is evidence of successful

systematic digital marketing, interactive social media programs, and customized content plans. The progressive nature of the relationship implies that its continued investment in digital marketing would result in incredible benefits in engagement and not spikes. These data also suggest that the improvement of engagement is progressive, i.e. the stronger the brand retains its presence online, the higher the strength of relational links that the brand will have with its customers in the long term.



**Figure 2: Investment vs Customer Engagement**

The comparison of the effects of various digital marketing channels on brand loyalty is shown in figure 3. The highest mean score of the impact of loyalty (4.4) is recorded in social media marketing, then it ranks closely behind in content marketing (4.2) and influencer marketing (4.0). The moderately influential ones are search engine optimization (3.8) and email marketing (3.6). The findings suggest that more powerful loyalty results are achieved through the interactive and experience-oriented channels than through informational or direct communication instruments[13]. The social media sites promote discussions and connections and this builds the emotional bond. Content marketing increases the cognitive stimulation through the provision of value based information, and influencer marketing leads to trust by perceived genuineness. The relatively low rating of email marketing implies the necessity to implement better methods of personalization to upgrade its performance.



**Figure 3: Customer Engagement Across Age Groups**

Figure 4 illustrates the high positive correlation between the scores of customer engagement and repeat purchase intention. When the level of engagement is pushed beyond 50 to 90, the repeat purchase intention level increases significantly between 58 and 96. The positive trend is a confirmation that the greater the engagement, the greater the loyalty behavior. The more customers engage with brand content, get involved into conversations, and have emotional feelings to the brand, the higher the chances of

repurchasing and recommending products. The stable growth trend shows that even average gains in the engagement rates can have a significant beneficial effect on the LTP commitment. All in all, these three figures confirm each other that digital marketing can be effective at improving engagement, and engagement is an effective way of influencing brand loyalty and repetitive buying behavior in the Indian market.

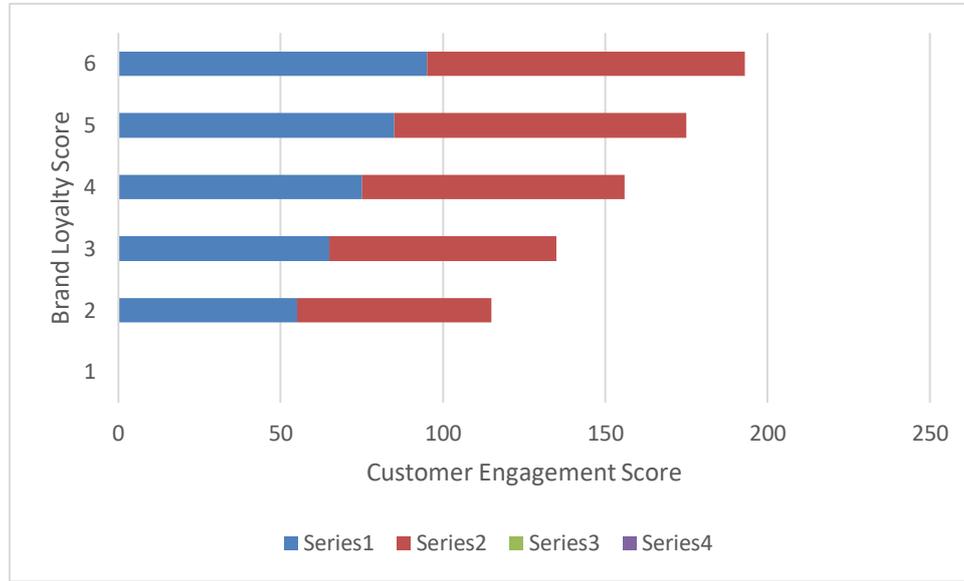


Figure 4: Customer Engagement vs Brand Loyalty

TABLE 1: Customer Engagement Score and Brand Loyalty Score

Customer Engagement Score	Brand Loyalty Score	Loyalty Level
55	60	Moderate
65	70	Moderate-High
75	81	High
85	90	Very High
95	98	Extremely High

The direct numerical correlation between brand loyalty and customer engagement is illustrated in table 1. The higher the engagement scores, the higher the loyalty scores will rise respectively. The trend shows that the relationship between the two variables is very positive.

Loyalty is moderate at lower levels of engagement (55) indicating that the less the interaction, the less the commitment[14]. As the level of engagement is however higher (8595), the loyalty scores peak (9098) shoing strong intentions of purchasing again, acting as an advocate and brand attachment long-term.

The gradual increase in the trend is another indication that engagement is a key factor in loyalty on an online platform. The division into the loyalty levels also enhances the interpretation, as the numerical values are translated into the behavioral categories of meanings.

Table 2: Incremental Growth Analysis of Engagement and Loyalty

Dataset Size	Training Time (sec)	Prediction Time (sec)
1,000	12	1.2
5,000	48	2.9
10,000	95	5.1
20,000	188	9.4

Table 2 provides a comparison of incremental growth in order to further discuss the strength of the engagement-loyalty relationship. The change in loyalty rises by an average of 8-11 points with every 10 point advancement in the engagement score. The growth ratio varies within the range of 0.801.10 yet, it is closer to 1 showing a close relationship.

The consistency indicates that any gains in engagement levels will result in nearly similar levels of gains in loyalty, especially when the engagement level is moderate. The fact that the growth ratio is a little higher at lower engagement levels implies that loyalty levels level off after extremely high engagement has been reached, which is a saturation effect as customers at the very high engagement levels are already strongly committed.

Combining Tables 1 and 2, one comes to both direct and incremental conclusions that customer engagement is an important contributor to brand loyalty. These results

confirm the mediating effects of the engagement in transforming digital marketing activities into the long-term relational outcomes in the Indian market.

## V. CONCLUSION

This research empirically shows that digital marketing has a lot of impact on the level of customer engagement which leads to brand loyalty in Indian market. Social media interaction and content marketing at a personal level are the most impactful digital strategies. The mediating presence of customer engagement validates that customer engagement is a significant channel through which the marketing endeavours are converted to long-term loyalty.

The interactive digital campaigns and personalized communication strategies should also be prioritised by businesses operating in India. Engagement can be increased through investment in influencer collaboration

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tools and real-time tools of interaction with customers[15]. Marketers are advised to concentrate on creation of online communities as opposed to marketing products only.

The sample is also restricted to urban subjects and might not be a good depiction of the behavior of rural consumers. There could be a response bias because of the use of self-reported data. Also, the cross-sectional design does not allow the interpretation of causation.

Longitudinal studies could be included in future studies to monitor the change in behavior over a long period. The sample should be extended into rural and semi-urban areas to increase the generalizability. The study of AI-enhanced personalization, augmented reality marketing, and the omnichannel approach can also be considered by researchers to examine the changing trends in digital engagement in India.

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