



Role of Digital and Social Media Platforms on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Shift from Offline to Online Clothing Shopping

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Abstract: Advancements in technology and increased awareness have created significant opportunities for consumers to buy goods and services online, and the scope for interactions between consumers and businesses through digital platforms such as email marketing, e-commerce websites, and social media (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram) has expanded. These platforms have helped consumers access information about products, prices, reviews, price comparisons, etc., reshaping their journey in the fashion industry and influencing their buying decisions. This research paper aims to find the impact of Digitalization and Social Media platforms on consumers' online Clothing purchasing behaviour and their shift from online to offline purchases. This study also examines how digital platforms influence marketing strategies and customers' interactions with social media platforms. Results of the study showed that the use of effective digital and social media marketing strategies can help companies understand consumer behaviour more effectively and make better buying decisions; on the other hand, it will increase sales and profitability for businesses. The study analyses consumers' online clothing shopping behaviour influenced by social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, highlighting factors behind the shift from offline to online purchasing.

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Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technology has transformed the way consumers search for, evaluate and purchase clothing. At one time in the past, shopping was primarily a physical process that was heavily influenced by the store, sales persons, and the available options to choose from. However, in recent years, digital marketing and social media sites have changed all this by increasing visibility and interactivity of fashion products. Customers are no longer bound by physical stores; they view clothes on the internet, look at trends on Instagram and YouTube, write reviews, compare prices, and decide from their homes (Kotler et al., 2016).

The move from physical to online shopping is best seen in the fashion industry, as the trends change fast, and consumer preferences are highly affected by digital content, influencers, advertising, and group feedback. The use of social media platforms has been a key factor in developing brand recognition and influencing consumers' attitudes towards brands. A well-thought-out digital campaign will help in creating a buzz, building trust, and even provoking impulse purchase behaviour, while the reviews and ratings online decrease risk perceptions prior to purchase (Solomon, 2015). Digital marketing helps not only in promoting products but also in consumer decision-making.

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The fashion industry is very competitive, therefore, companies have been resorting to digital tactics as a way to connect with customers on a much deeper level. Tactics such as targeted advertisements, influence marketing, and interactive content have helped increase customer engagement and satisfaction. Apart from that, customers can take advantage of increased convenience, variety, and instant information, making the shift to online shopping even faster (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

This study aims to examine how digital marketing and social media platforms influence consumer buying behaviour in the clothing sector, and how these factors contribute to the ongoing shift from offline to online purchasing.

Review of Literature

To identify the research gap and set relevant objectives, this section reviews the existing literature on the study.

Al-Debei et al. (2015) suggested that factors such as trust, web quality, perceived risk, and perceived usefulness influence customers' attitudes towards online shopping. The Study also used a structural model to show the relationship between website quality and customers' behaviour based on trust.

Aldousari et al. (2016) examined the determinants of customer behaviour when shopping online and suggested that subjective norms, behavioural control over buying, usefulness, and attitude towards technology influenced their buying decisions.

Mangold and Faulds(2009) stated that social media platforms play an important role in shaping customers' brand awareness, and that feedback ultimately helps them make buying decisions.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) highlighted that social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are more effective for fashion marketing because they provide visuals and interaction.

Kumar et al. (2021) found that social media influencers also play a significant role in changing people's perceptions of fashion brands and in making them purchase.

Statista (2023) reported that more than 60% of internet users prefer online shopping, and social media platforms have helped customers purchase fashion merchandise online.

The above-reviewed literature focuses on personal factors such as price, trust, and convenience in customers' online purchasing, without examining how such transitions occur. This study, therefore, examines the factors that lead consumers to transition from offline to online clothing shopping.

Research Objectives

- To examine the impact of digital and social media platforms on consumer buying behaviour in online clothing shopping.
- To analyse the factors responsible for the shift in consumer preference from offline to online clothing shopping.

Research Methodology and Data Collection

This Research study is conceptual in nature, and data are collected from secondary sources such as Academic journals and magazines, government reports, and official websites over a 10-year period (2015-2025). This study attempts to analyse the impact of digital and social media platforms on consumers' online buying behaviour in the clothing sector, and the factors driving the shift in their buying patterns from offline to online.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

To examine the Impact of Digital and Social Media platforms (YouTube and Instagram) on consumer buying behaviour, the following tables, as per the objectives, are structured to highlight the impact of digital platforms on consumers' online attire buying decisions in India and their transition from offline to online buying

- **Impact of Digital and Social Media platforms on Consumers' Buying Behaviour in India**

Table 1: Influence of Digital and Social Media Platforms on online apparel buying decisions of consumers in India

Year	Influence via social media (in percentage)	Influence via YouTube Review (in percentage)	Influence via Instagram (in percentage)
2015	12	5	0.4
2016	15	8	0.7
2017	18	11	1.2
2018	22	15	1.8
2019	26	19	2.1
2020	31	24	2.5
2021	37	32	3.1
2022	42	38	3.6
2023	46	42	3.9
2024	49	45	4.2
2025	56	52	5.1

Source: Data Consolidated from Google-Kearney (2016), Statista Digital Market Outlook (2025), and Bain & Company India E-retail Reports (2020-2024).

Table 1 indicates the effect of Digital and Social media platforms on online clothing buying in India from 2015 to 2025. The total influence of social media was 12 per cent in 2015 and rose to 56 per cent in 2025. Out of the total influence, 5 per cent came from YouTube and 0.4 per cent from Instagram in 2015, and levelled up to 52 per cent from YouTube reviews and 5.1 per cent from Instagram in 2025, indicating that the percentage share of these social media handles is increasing significantly over the study period, especially in the post-pandemic period. The study ultimately shows that after 2020, i.e., the post-pandemic shift, visual reviews, visual marketing, digitalisation, e-commerce, etc., channel customers' behaviour, especially among youth, towards online apparel purchases.

Table 1.2: Online Clothing Sales Growth Analysis in India (2015-2025)

Year	Revenue (US billion \$)	Annual Growth Rate
2015	2.30	-----
2016	3.10	34.8
2017	3.85	24.2
2018	4.50	16.9
2019	5.80	28.9
2020	7.60	31.0
2021	10.00	31.6
2022	12.80	28.0
2023	15.40	20.3
2024	17.83	15.8
2025 (P)	21.57	21.0
Compound Annual Growth Rate (2015-2025)		29.05

Source: Consolidated from Statista (2025), Technavio (2024), IBEF E-commerce Reports (2016-2023), and PwC Total Retail Survey India (2017).

Table 1.2 shows the revenue from online clothing sales in India in US\$ billion and the annual growth rate over the study period from 2015 to 2025. Total revenue is projected to be US \$21.57 billion in 2025 from US \$2.30 billion in 2015, along with an annual sales growth rate of 34.8 per cent in 2016 and declining to 21.0 per cent in 2025, with some fluctuations in between, but still maintained an upward trend over the study with a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 29.05 per cent. The rising sales performance is closely linked with the findings of Table 1.1, which showed the growing use of platforms, i.e. Instagram, YouTube, and other social media channels have created product awareness, price awareness, consumer engagement and purchase confidence, thereby contributing to higher online clothing sales.

Overall, the table confirms that digital marketing, social media influence, and changing consumer preferences drive India's online apparel growth.

Factors Responsible for Consumers Shift from Offline to Online Clothing Purchase in India

The following table discusses a few important factors responsible for the change in consumer buying behaviour from traditional offline to online purchase.

Table 2: Factors Driving the Shift from Offline to Online Apparel Shopping (India)

Factor	Weightage 2015 (in Percentage)	Weightage 2025 (in percentage)
Price & Discounts	38	58
Convenience	15	65
Product Variety	20	72
Virtual Technology	1	35
Payment Security	5	88

Source: data extracted and compiled from PwC Total Retail Survey: India Insights (2017), IBEF Textile Industry Reports (2024), and Technavio Online Fashion Retail Analysis (2024).

Table 2 presents the key factors, in analytical terms, responsible for consumers' shift from offline to online clothing purchasing over the study period, 2015 to 2025. The first factor is that the price and discount share in consumers' online shopping was 38 per cent in 2015 and rose to 58 per cent in 2025, reflecting end-of-season sales, bulk purchases, discount offers, price comparisons, and other attractive offers on e-commerce channels, which are attracting customers towards online buying. Convenience in buying increases the share from 15 per cent to 65 per cent; this is driven by rising demand for 24*7 shopping, home delivery, and time-saving experiences.

A variety of products is available in depth and width, offering choices in colours, sizes, styles, and brands, resulting in a share of 72 per cent in 2025, up from 20 per cent in 2015. Technological and digital advancements are helping customers make quicker, better buying decisions, ki raising the share of online apparel purchases to 35 per cent in 2025, up from 1 per cent in 2015.

Safe, one-click online and UPI systems, refund policies, and payment security have increased customer trust and influenced customers to buy online, thereby increasing the share from 5 per cent in 2015 to 88 per cent in 2025.

The table shows that better prices, convenience, more product options, advanced technology, and secure payments have collectively driven India's shift from offline to online clothing shopping.

Findings of the Study

Summary of findings are listed below:

- The study revealed that the use of social media and digital media platforms has significantly impacted the consumer purchase decisions in India. The impact of social media on purchasing of clothes has risen from 12% in 2015 to 56% in 2025.
- The social media and YouTube reviews are considered reliable sources by the buyers. Influence of YouTube reviews rose from 5% in 2015 to 52% in 2025 because the buyers take the help of reviews before purchasing clothes.
- The online clothing business in India witnessed remarkable growth during the study period. The revenue rose from US\$2.30 billion in 2015 to US\$21.57 billion in 2025..
- It was also determined that attractive prices, discounts, and special offers constituted one of the most important factors in the adoption of online shopping. The significance of prices and discounts rose from 38% in 2015 to 58% in 2025.
- Convenience and diversity of products serve as the major incentives to online shopping. The significance of convenience increased from 15% to 65%, whereas the diversity of products went up from 20% to 72%.
- Advancements in payment security and technology have facilitated the adoption of online shopping even more. There was a considerable improvement in payment security (from 5% to 88%), while the availability of virtual try-on and other technological elements grew from 1% to 35%.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- The digital and social media platforms are key components in influencing the consumer buying behavior; hence, there is a need to introduce more digital marketing efforts to expand the online

clothing company. The influencer marketing, consumer awareness, and engagement are mainly done using social media channels such as YouTube and Instagram.

- The online merchants need to provide all the necessary information on their products along with the images and customers' reviews. Competitive prices, discounts, cash-back offers, and marketing campaigns can be used to market the online clothes shopping.
- Businesses need to improve their websites in terms of ease of access and use, secure UPI payment methods, return and refund policy, and also the use of virtual try-ons and AI-based suggestions.

Limitations of the Study

- This research paper is conceptual in character and analysis on secondary sources of data (journals, reports and official sources); primary data surveys and consumer responses are partially neglected.
- The research paper deals only with the online purchase of clothing in India, while others industries and other nations are out of scope.
- In the current era, many digital and social media tools exist, but only two media, namely, YouTube and Instagram are studied.
- There are some other demographic factors such as age, education, profession, religion etc. which influence consumer behavior, but these factors are not analyzed here.

Conclusion

This study illustrates the role of social and digital media sites as significant elements influencing the process of Indian consumers' clothing choices. In the course of time, people turned from the traditional shopping options to online clothing shopping as it provides more options, affordable prices, safe payment systems, and entertaining digital content. This rise in the influence of social media, YouTube reviews, and online clothing sales undoubtedly indicates that digital platforms play an integral part in the process of clothing buying.

Furthermore, the results of the research illustrate that the process of switching from traditional to digital shopping is motivated by multiple factors such as affordability, trust, technology, and accessibility. Thus, the obtained results prove the importance of digital marketing and social media in the process of consumer decision-making in the online fashion environment.

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