
MARKETING

RECEIVED:
15 December 2025
ACCEPTED:
18 February 2026
RELEASED:
20 March 2026

  **CC BY 4.0**

UDC 658.8:004

DOI 10.26661/2522-1566/2026-1/35-16

DIGITAL MARKETING IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS: INSIGHTS FROM THE FMCG SECTOR IN MTHATHA

Asemahle Dumisana
Postgraduate Student
*Department of Marketing, Public Relations
& Communication*
Walter Sisulu University
Butterworth, South Africa
[ORCID 0009-0009-7475-8678](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7475-8678)

Tshepo Tlapana*
Associate Professor
*Department of Marketing, Public Relations &
Communication*
Walter Sisulu University
Butterworth, South Africa
[ORCID 0000-0002-1777-6177](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1777-6177)

* *Corresponding author email: tlapana@wsu.ac.za*

Abstract. This study investigated the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Mthatha, South Africa. The research aimed to identify the most effective digital marketing channels, analyse key factors influencing consumer behaviour, and understand barriers to digital marketing adoption in a semi-urban context. A quantitative research design was employed using a descriptive survey method. The study targeted consumers aged 18 and above who regularly purchase FMCG products in Mthatha. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was adopted due to geographic constraints, resulting in a sample size of 100 respondents. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed both online and offline to ensure inclusivity. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS to examine relationships between digital marketing exposure and purchasing behaviour. The findings reveal that platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube are the most influential in shaping consumer decisions, with promotions and user reviews identified as the most impactful content types. Influencer marketing also emerged as a key driver of trust and engagement. The study highlights infrastructural challenges, including limited internet access and high data costs, which hinder full adoption of digital marketing. Key recommendations include prioritizing social media platforms, leveraging influencer collaborations, and integrating promotional content and user reviews into marketing strategies. Furthermore, businesses should adopt hybrid marketing approaches and invest in digital literacy initiatives to enhance consumer engagement.

Keywords: consumer purchasing decisions, digital marketing, FMCG sector, influencer marketing, social media platforms.

JEL Classification: M31, M37, D12.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital marketing has transformed how businesses communicate with consumers, shifting from traditional advertising to dynamic, data-driven strategies that utilise online platforms. Digital marketing encompasses a range of tools, including social media, email campaigns,

content marketing, and search engine optimisation, all designed to enhance brand visibility, engage consumers, and ultimately influence purchasing decisions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In South Africa, especially in semi-urban areas like Mthatha, increased internet access and smartphone use have created new opportunities for businesses to connect with tech-savvy consumers. Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies, which rely on frequent and impulsive purchases, can greatly benefit from digital marketing strategies that deliver timely, relevant, and personalized content (Keller & Kotler, 2009). However, even with the expanding digital landscape, many FMCG businesses in Mthatha still rely on traditional marketing methods such as flyers and posters, which have limited reach and engagement potential (Li et al., 2024; Obeid, 2023). This disconnect between consumer behaviour and marketing practices highlights a significant gap in understanding how digital marketing influences purchasing decisions in this context.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector in Mthatha. Furthermore, this study will identify the most effective digital marketing channels used by FMCG companies, analyse the key factors influencing consumer behaviour, and understand the challenges hindering the adoption of digital marketing in the region. Specifically, the study addresses the question: How does digital marketing influence consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector of Mthatha? The importance of this research is underscored by the scarcity of localized studies on digital marketing in smaller urban centers, such as Mthatha, where infrastructure, digital literacy, and consumer preferences differ significantly from those in larger cities. By filling this research gap, the study provides valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and business owners seeking to enhance digital engagement, improve customer satisfaction, and foster sustainable growth in the FMCG industry. Additionally, the findings contribute to the broader academic discussion of consumer behaviour in emerging markets, offering practical guidance for developing inclusive and effective digital marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aims to establish a solid theoretical and contextual foundation for understanding the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector, specifically in the semi-urban area of Mthatha. It examines essential models, including the Consumer Decision-Making Process, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, and the Technology Acceptance Model. Furthermore, the review examines the psychological, social, and technological factors that influence consumer behaviour. It particularly highlights the growing importance of social media, influencer marketing, and search engine marketing in enhancing customer engagement and influencing purchase decisions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by three key theoretical models that together offer a strong foundation for understanding how digital marketing influences consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector in Mthatha. These models are the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Each provides unique yet complementary insights into how consumers interact with digital marketing platforms and make purchasing decisions in a digitally evolving marketplace. The Consumer Decision-Making Process Model describes the stages consumers go through when making a purchase: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, post-purchase behaviour, and disposal (Lin, 2021). This model is especially relevant in digital marketing contexts, as online platforms influence each stage. For example, consumers in Mthatha might recognize a need through social media ads, search for product details on Google or YouTube, evaluate options based on online reviews, and make purchases through e-commerce sites. Lin (2021) also introduces a disposal phase, reflecting the growing awareness of sustainability, which is becoming increasingly important in FMCG consumption. Muzumdar (2021) and Allen (2024) highlight that using mobile devices speeds

up decision-making, as consumers heavily rely on online reviews and influencer content, especially when time is limited or when they feel uncertain. These insights support the study's focus on how digital marketing impacts consumer behaviour in a semi-urban South African context.

The TPB, developed by Ajzen, posits that behavioural intentions are influenced by attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In digital marketing, TPB explains how consumer attitudes toward online ads, social media content, and influencer endorsements influence their intention to buy FMCG products. For instance, if consumers see digital marketing as trustworthy and relevant, they are more likely to engage with it and make purchasing decisions. This theory is especially helpful in understanding the psychological and social influences on consumer behaviour in Mthatha, where cultural relevance and peer influence are significant in shaping attitudes toward digital content. The TAM, developed by Davis, focuses on how users accept and adopt new technology. Its main factors are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In this study, TAM explains how consumers in Mthatha embrace digital marketing platforms, driven by the perception that these tools can make shopping easier and improve product discovery. For example, if consumers find social media platforms simple to use and helpful for finding FMCG products, they are more likely to engage with digital marketing campaigns. This model is especially relevant given the infrastructural challenges in Mthatha, such as limited internet access and low digital literacy, which can impact consumers' willingness and ability to utilise digital marketing tools. The study uses these two established theories to guide analysis and does not aim to extend or develop new theoretical contributions.

Together, these three models provide a comprehensive framework for examining the connection between digital marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour. They facilitate the exploration of both the mental and behavioural aspects of decision-making, while also considering the technological and local factors unique to Mthatha. By combining these models, the study establishes a solid theoretical foundation and addresses noticeable gaps in research on digital marketing in semi-urban South African settings and in the questionnaire design. The Consumer Decision-Making Process Model guides the measurement of how digital marketing shapes need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and purchase decisions. The Theory of Planned Behaviour informs questions about attitudes towards digital marketing, peer social influence, and consumers' perceived control when using online platforms. The Technology Acceptance Model contributes items assessing perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital channels. Together, these theories ensure that each construct in the questionnaire is grounded in established behavioural principles and captures how consumers engage with digital marketing. Figure 1 visually represents the essential elements discussed earlier, enhancing the reader's understanding of the concepts.

Digital Marketing and Consumer Decision Making

Consumer decision-making is a complex psychological and behavioural process through which individuals or groups identify their needs, evaluate alternatives, and make choices regarding the acquisition, use, and disposal of goods and services (Blackwell et al., 2001; Solomon & Nancy, 2014). In the FMCG sector, this process often occurs rapidly and is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, psychological determinants such as motivation, perception, attitudes, personality, and learning significantly shape consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour (Dibie et al., 2019). Externally, social influences, including family, reference groups, social class, and cultural beliefs, play a crucial role in affecting consumer choices, particularly within rural and diverse market segments (Verma et al., 2023). It is worth noting that the landscape of consumer decision-making in the FMCG sector has undergone a profound transformation due to the rise of digital marketing channels. Traditionally characterized by low involvement and habitual purchasing, FMCG decisions were often spontaneous, with only 35% of consumers planning their purchases in advance (Ewerhard, Sisovsky, & Johansson, 2019). However, the emergence of digital platforms, such as social media, influencer marketing, and e-commerce, has introduced new stimuli that influence consumer behaviour at every stage of the decision-making process. Digital marketing now plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions, stimulating need recognition, and guiding choices

through targeted content, peer reviews, and interactive promotions (Yadav, Singh, & Dash, 2025). Furthermore, technological advancements have added complexity to this process, introducing tools such as virtual reality to analyse emotional responses during product selection (Wiścicka-Fernando & Biercewicz, 2023).

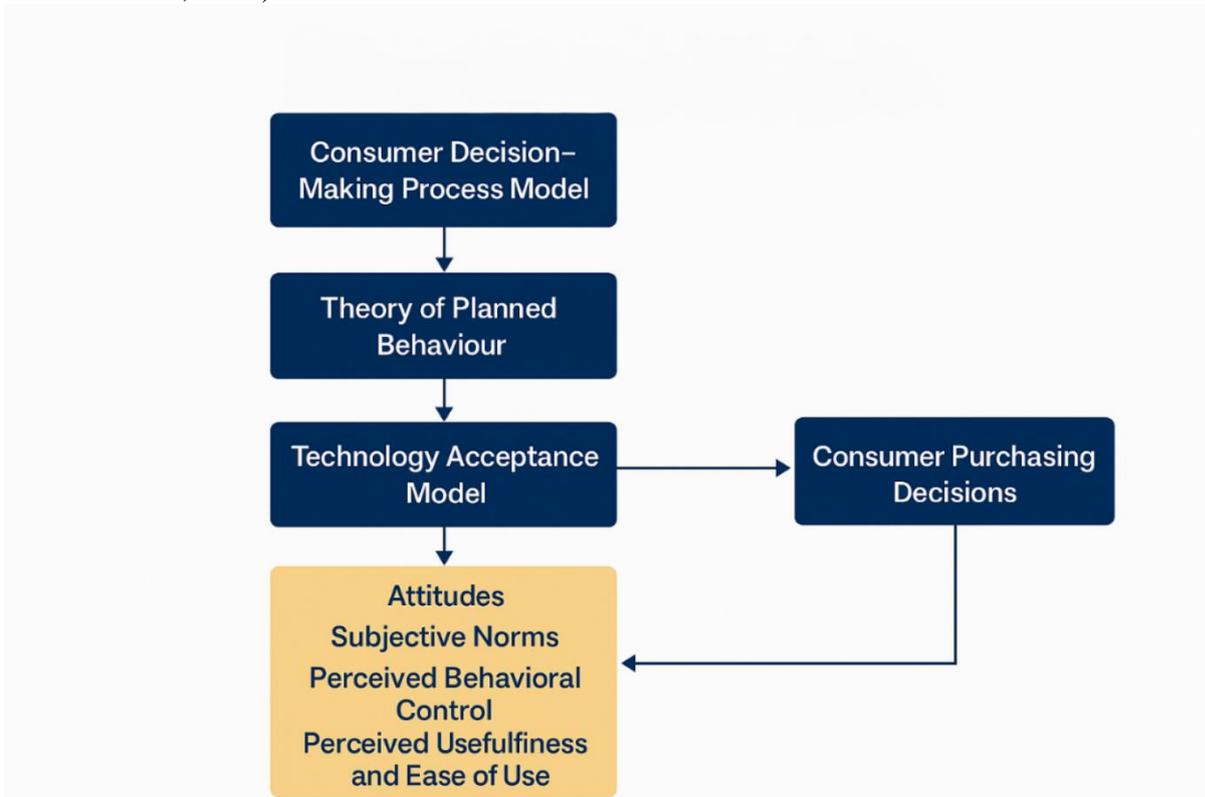


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Digital marketing has become a transformative force in promoting FMCGs, allowing businesses to reach large audiences quickly and cost-effectively. As Pei (2024) explains, digital marketing encompasses a range of tools, including websites, email campaigns, databases, digital television, blogs, podcasts, and social media, which together create interactive channels for product promotion and consumer engagement. These tools are designed not only to attract consumers but also to retain them throughout their purchasing journey, fostering long-term brand relationships. Digital marketing strategies, including display advertisements, social media advertising, search engine marketing, email promotions, content marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), are designed to enhance brand visibility, foster consumer trust, and stimulate engagement. These strategies are effective because they generate valuable data, enabling marketers to monitor campaign performance and adjust their tactics in real-time (Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019; Schutte & Chauke, 2022). Collectively, these insights emphasize the strategic role of digital marketing in shaping consumer behaviour, especially in digitally active markets like Mthatha, where mobile connectivity and online engagement are increasingly influencing purchasing decisions. Susanti (2025) notes that digital platforms provide continuous product visibility, personalized advertising, and convenient purchasing options, all of which enhance brand loyalty and promote repeat purchases. In urban areas like Mthatha, where younger, digitally literate consumers are more active online, digital marketing plays a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions for essential goods, including food, beverages, and personal care items (Jabeen et al., 2024). The widespread use of smartphones and mobile internet has also enabled consumers to compare brands, access promotions, and shop from the comfort of their

homes, making digital marketing a crucial strategy for FMCG companies. However, despite its potential, Mthatha faces infrastructural challenges that limit the full adoption of digital marketing. These include slow internet speeds, high data costs, and limited access to secure digital payment systems, which largely impact smaller retailers.

Effective Digital marketing channels that influence consumer attitudes

Digital marketing has emerged as a vital component of modern consumer engagement, with various channels exhibiting varying degrees of effectiveness in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Notably, search engine marketing (SEM) and social media marketing (SMM) stand out in this landscape. SMM plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perspectives, as platforms like Instagram and TikTok have demonstrated effectiveness in boosting consumer interest and purchase intentions through interactive content and influencer collaborations (Utari et al., 2023; Meliawati et al., 2023).

Additionally, Mukhtar et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of SMM in fostering consumer loyalty and engagement, demonstrating that peer recommendations and engaging social media content significantly influence consumer behaviour. In contrast, traditional channels such as email and print advertising tend to be less influential. The personalization and immediacy of social media interactions cultivate emotional connections and foster brand loyalty. According to Abu Seman and Segar (2023), both SEM and SMM play a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions, with SEM facilitating targeted outreach by aligning marketing content with consumer search behaviour, thereby enhancing relevance and trust.

In Mthatha, where young consumers increasingly rely on digital platforms for product information, the effective implementation of these strategies can significantly impact purchasing behaviour. However, poor execution may result in poor engagement and missed growth opportunities. Among the various digital marketing strategies, SMM has also emerged as one of the most influential, particularly in the FMCG sector. Nyaguthii (2025) notes that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have evolved from supplementary tools to essential components of marketing strategies. These platforms enable businesses to engage with consumers through two-way communication, provide immediate feedback, and facilitate personalized interactions. Rehman et al. (2025) emphasize that social media fosters customer relationships and sustained engagement, while Faisal and Ekawanto (2021) highlight its role in enhancing brand perception and purchase intentions. Chatterjee et al. (2021) argue that social media has transitioned from being beneficial to indispensable for business growth.

Influencer marketing has emerged as a crucial component of SMM, effectively building trust and credibility among consumers. According to Misra et al. (2024), influencers with large followings on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have a profound impact on shaping consumer preferences and behaviours. In places such as Mthatha, where trust and cultural relevance are crucial, influencer endorsements can be particularly influential in engaging consumers. As people increasingly turn to digital platforms to discover and evaluate products, influencers and individuals with substantial online followings serve as vital guides in the purchasing process. They provide authentic, relatable content that resonates deeply with audiences, often viewed as trustworthy sources of information and recommendations (Hasan & Sohail, 2021). Unlike traditional advertisements, their endorsements are perceived as more genuine, fostering emotional connections and enhancing brand trust. This trust is essential, as it influences purchase intentions as consumers are more likely to rely on influencers' opinions when making buying decisions (Sharma, 2020).

Empirical studies demonstrate that collaborations with influencers drive electronic word of mouth, facilitating consumer decision-making by providing peer-based insights and mitigating perceived risks (Seereddi, 2024). Influencers also play a vital role in helping brands cultivate online communities where consumers discuss, share experiences, and develop loyalty. These communities, often centered around influencer-generated content, promote two-way communication and foster a sense of belonging, further reinforcing consumer trust and intention to purchase (Hasan & Sohail, 2021). Moreover, influencer marketing has proven particularly effective in non-Western contexts,

where emotional resonance and cultural relevance are critical for driving consumer engagement (Seerreddi, 2024). The impact of influencer marketing extends beyond initial purchase decisions, influencing post-purchase behaviours and long-term brand loyalty. Consumers who form a strong emotional connection with influencers and their endorsed brands are more likely to become repeat buyers and advocates (Hasan & Sohail, 2021). This emotional attachment, nurtured through consistent and personalized interactions with influencers, strengthens the consumer-brand relationship. Nonetheless, research highlights the importance of brands strategically selecting influencers whose values align with those of their target audience to maximize credibility and engagement (Sharma, 2020). In an ever-evolving social media landscape, influencer marketing remains crucial for businesses seeking to enhance visibility, establish trust, and effectively influence consumer behaviour. Although there is extensive literature on customer service and consumer behaviour, there is a notable lack of localized research focusing on the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions within the FMCG sector in Mthatha. Most existing studies focus on general service quality or national trends, overlooking the unique socio-economic and digital engagement patterns of consumers in smaller urban centers, such as Mthatha. Additionally, little attention has been given to identifying which digital marketing channels are most effective in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in this context. This gap limits the local FMCG sector's ability to tailor its digital strategies effectively. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the specific behavioural patterns of consumers interacting with the FMCG sector in the region. Given this situation, the study has proposed the following research questions:

• **R1:** To what extent does digital marketing influence consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector in Mthatha?

• **R2:** Which digital marketing channels are most effective in influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward FMCG products in Mthatha?

• **RQ3:** How do mediating factors, such as attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, trust, and perceived usefulness, affect the relationship between digital marketing and consumer purchasing decisions?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector in Mthatha. A descriptive survey method was employed to capture consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours in a structured and measurable way (Malhotra, 2010). The population targeted for this study consisted of consumers in Mthatha who regularly purchase FMCG products. This demographic was chosen because of the growing presence of digital platforms in South Africa's semi-urban areas, where mobile technology and social media use are increasingly prevalent (Schutte & Chauke, 2022). Participants were digitally active individuals aged 18 and older from various socio-economic backgrounds.

In recruiting participants, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed, valued for its practicality and efficiency given the geographical constraints in Mthatha. Although it may limit the generalizability of the results, convenience sampling is suitable for exploratory studies that aim to identify patterns and generate insights (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The sample size was set at 100 respondents, which is sufficient for preliminary analysis and statistically relevant for detecting trends and correlations (Hair et al., 2014). This size also aligns with similar research conducted in emerging markets examining the links between digital marketing and consumer behaviour (Yadav, Singh, & Dash, 2025). A sample size of 100 was ultimately deemed appropriate and methodologically defensible, given the study's contextual constraints. Data collection occurred within semi-urban areas of Durban, characterised by inconsistent network coverage and limited internet access, which significantly reduced the likelihood of securing a larger pool of respondents. These structural barriers, coupled with generally low survey participation rates in digitally marginalised communities, resulted

in fewer completed questionnaires than initially anticipated. Nonetheless, a sample of 100 remains sufficient for descriptive and exploratory quantitative analysis, enabling the identification of meaningful patterns in consumer behaviour while maintaining reasonable statistical power for a study of this scope. Data collection involved a structured questionnaire based on constructs from the aforementioned theoretical models. The instrument included both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items designed to measure variables such as digital marketing exposure, perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust in digital platforms, and purchase intentions. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of participants to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness.

The data collection process involved both online and offline channels to maximize reach. Online surveys were distributed via social media and email, while physical copies were provided in local retail outlets and public spaces to accommodate individuals with limited internet access. This dual method not only increased inclusivity but also boosted response rates. For data analysis, the study used descriptive statistics to summarize demographic information and response patterns. Inferential statistics were used to examine the relationships between digital marketing factors and purchasing decisions. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, which provided effective tools for data validation and hypothesis testing (Pallant, 2020). To ensure the research's validity, questionnaire items were aligned with established scales from previous studies, and expert reviews assessed content validity. Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the research's purpose, assured of their confidentiality, and given informed consent before participating. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of Walter Sisulu University and complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act of South Africa. No personal identifiers were collected, and all data were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

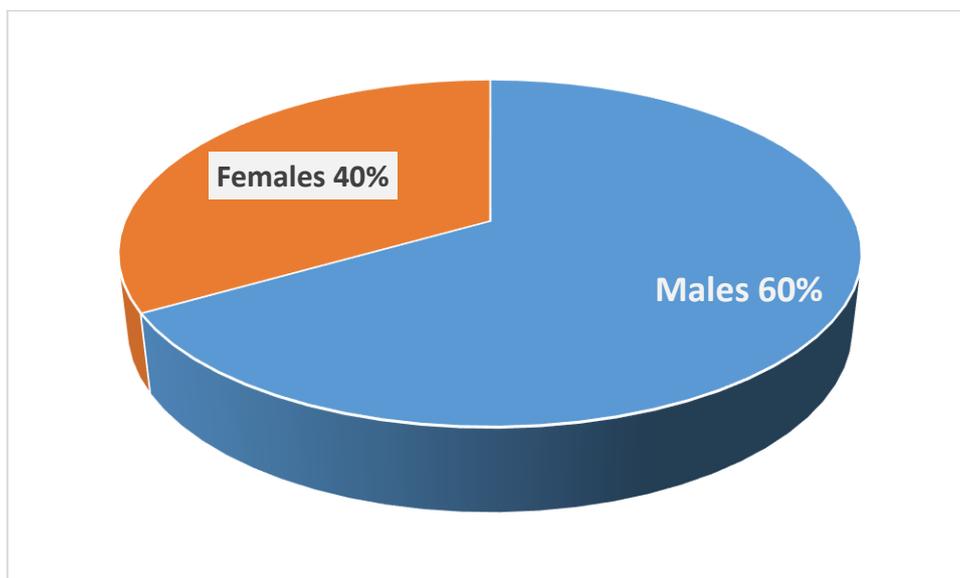


Figure 2. Gender of the respondents

Figure 2 shows that males comprised 60% of the respondents, while females represented 40%. This suggests that, although male participants were in the majority, both genders were well represented in the study. As a result, while the insights from male consumers may carry a bit more weight, the balanced gender representation helps maintain the credibility and inclusiveness of the overall findings.

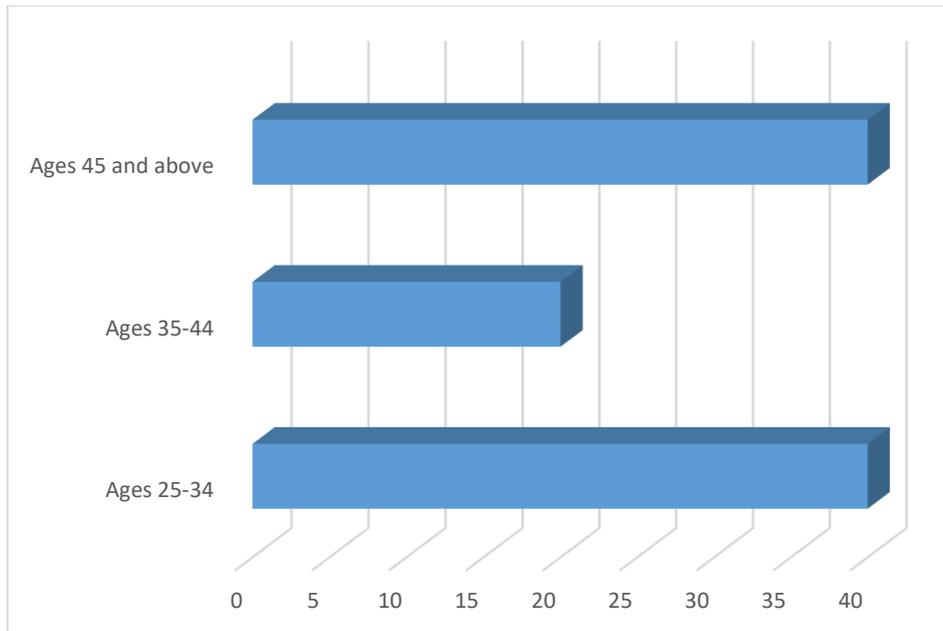


Figure 3. Age of the respondents

Figure 3 shows that the respondents in the study were fairly representative of various age groups, with a balanced distribution across demographics. Notably, 40% of respondents were in the 25–34 age category, indicating a strong presence of younger consumers in the survey. Additionally, another 40% of respondents were aged 45 and above, demonstrating that the study effectively captured the perspectives of older adults. This dual representation is essential, as it enables a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour across various life stages. In contrast, the 35–44 age group accounted for a smaller share, comprising 20% of respondents. This distribution suggests that the study was well-designed to capture a wide range of viewpoints and experiences, reflecting the attitudes of both younger and older consumers equally. Such balanced participation is crucial for gaining insights into the varying preferences, needs, and motivations of different age demographics. Overall, the data highlights the importance of including diverse age groups in research to ensure that the findings are relevant and applicable to a broad audience.

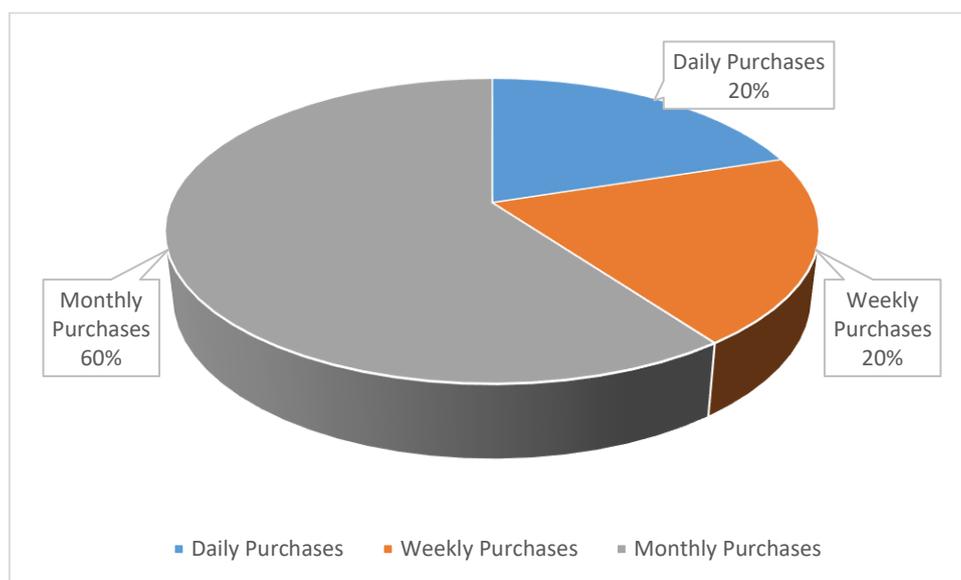


Figure 4. Frequency of purchasing FMCG Products

The data in Figure 4 reveal interesting insights into FMCG consumers' purchasing patterns. According to the figure, 20% of consumers make daily purchases of these products, highlighting a market segment that consistently requires quick, frequently consumed items. Another 20% of consumers purchase FMCG products weekly, indicating a slightly less frequent but still regular buying pattern.

The largest segment, accounting for 60% of consumers, purchases these goods monthly. This trend suggests that most consumers do not feel the need to replenish household supplies daily or even weekly. Instead, they choose to stock up on FMCG products less often, typically aligning their purchases with monthly shopping trips. This is quite common for items that do not require daily replenishment, such as toiletries, cleaning supplies, and non-perishable foods. Overall, the data indicate that while some consumers prefer to buy FMCG products frequently, a larger group tends to buy them in greater quantities less often, likely to optimize their time and manage their budget effectively.

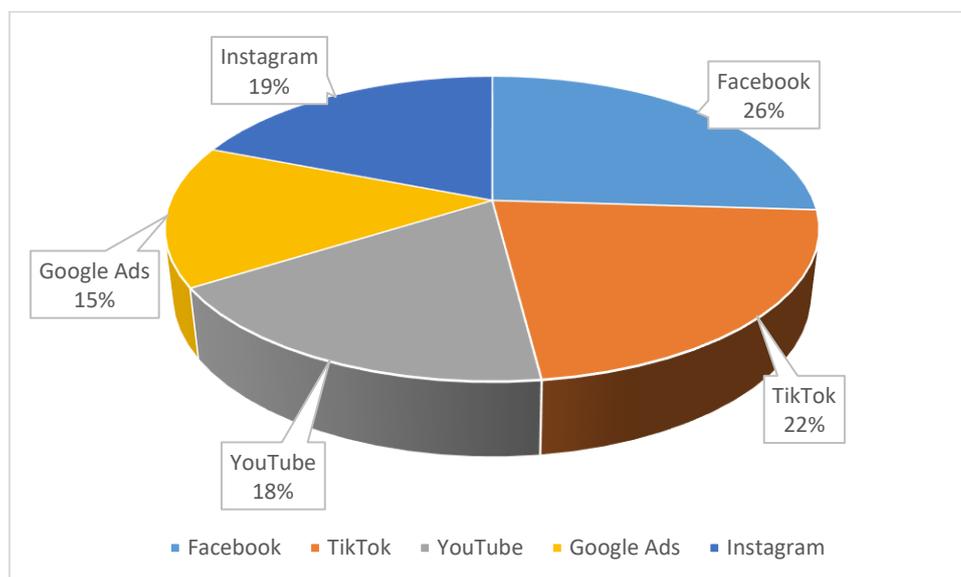


Figure 5. Digital Marketing Platforms Encountered by Consumers

The analysis of Figure 5 reveals that Facebook leads all digital marketing platforms with a significant 25% share of consumer interactions, underscoring its pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. TikTok captures 22%, indicating its growing prominence among younger demographics, while Instagram and YouTube attract 19% and 18%, respectively. Google Ads, with a 15% engagement rate, further emphasizes the diverse digital landscape. These statistics suggest that brands should prioritize Facebook for effective FMCG marketing outreach, while also leveraging TikTok's growing popularity to reach younger audiences. Tailoring content to the unique characteristics of these platforms could enhance consumer engagement and drive conversions.

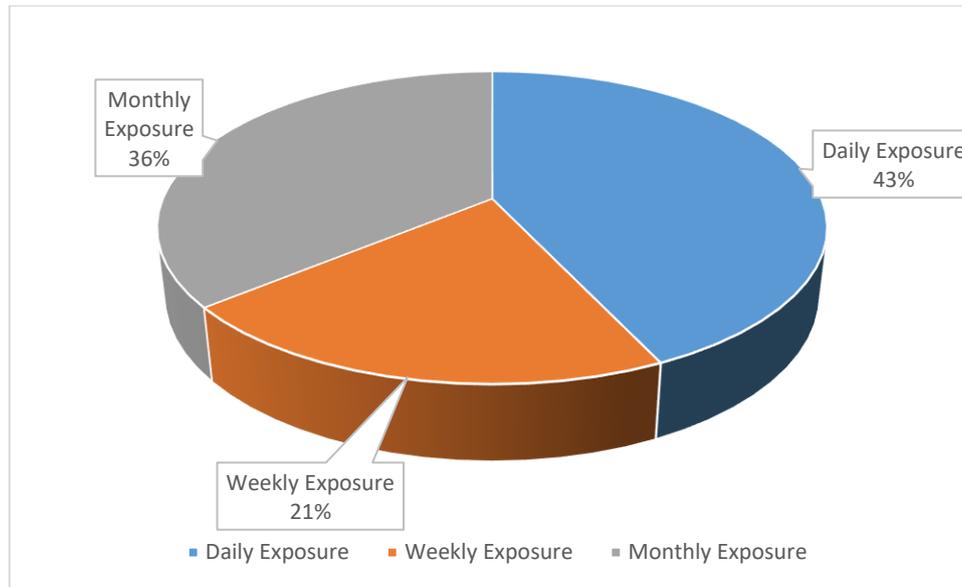


Figure 6. Online Exposure to FMCG Advertising

The findings presented in Figure 6 shed light on consumer exposure to FMCG online advertisements. A significant proportion of respondents reported frequent encounters with these advertisements: 43% daily and 36% monthly. This high frequency of exposure demonstrates the effectiveness of FMCG brands' digital marketing strategies in reaching their target audience. Furthermore, the 21% of respondents who see advertisements weekly further emphasizes the visibility of FMCG brands. This consistent exposure is crucial for maintaining brand messaging and consumer awareness. As consumer behaviour increasingly shifts toward digital engagement, it may be beneficial for brands to boost their online advertising efforts to better capture their target demographics' attention. These insights underscore the ongoing relevance and success of online advertising in building brand awareness and encouraging consumer engagement.

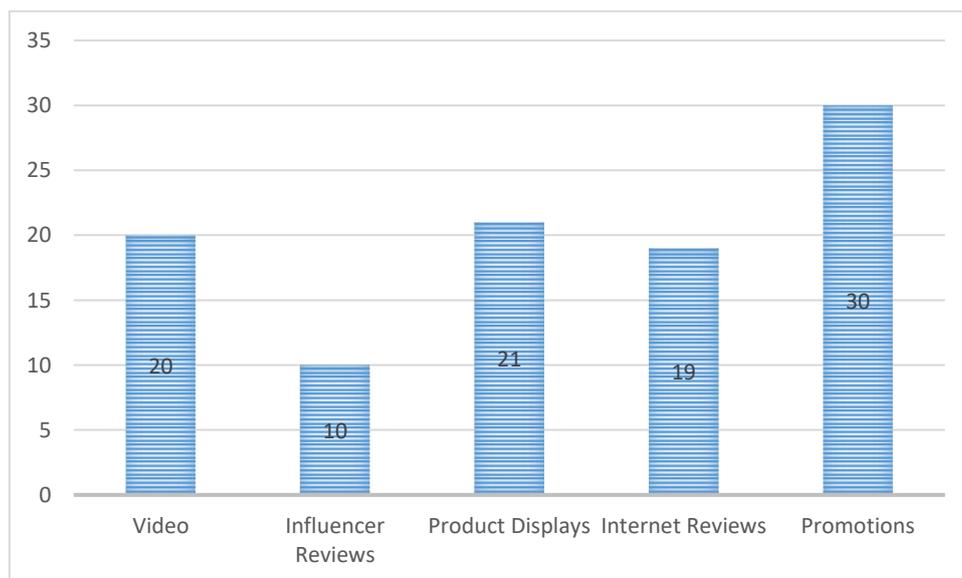


Figure 7. Types of online content influencing purchases

Figure 7 illustrates the various types of online content that significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions. Notably, respondents view promotions as the most influential form of online

content, affecting the purchasing choices of approximately 30% of the respondents. This suggests that potential buyers heavily rely on promotions when making purchasing decisions. User reviews often offer valuable insights into product quality, reliability, and overall satisfaction, enabling consumers to make informed decisions. The data highlights the importance of maintaining a positive online reputation through genuine customer feedback, as these reviews can sway the opinions of a substantial segment of the market. Understanding the types of online content that resonate with consumers is crucial for businesses seeking to refine their marketing strategies and boost sales.

The study investigated the impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in the FMCG sector in Mthatha. The demographic analysis revealed balanced gender representation, with 60% of respondents male and 40% female. Age distribution was also diverse, with 40% of participants aged 25–34 and another 40% aged 45 and above, ensuring insights from both younger and older consumers. Regarding purchasing frequency, 60% of respondents reported buying FMCG products monthly, 20% weekly, and 20% daily. This indicates a preference for bulk purchasing among the majority, likely driven by budget and time management considerations.

In terms of digital marketing exposure, Facebook emerged as the most frequented platform for consumer interactions, effective in reaching consumers in Mthatha. Online exposure to FMCG advertising was notably high, with 42.9% of respondents encountering ads daily and 35.7% monthly. This frequent exposure highlights the effectiveness of digital marketing in maintaining brand visibility and consumer engagement. When examining the types of online content influencing purchasing decisions, promotions were identified as the most impactful, affecting 30% of respondents. User reviews also played a significant role, emphasizing the importance of peer feedback in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions. Findings from Vidhya and Kalaiselvi (2021) and Nipa and Chowdhury (2024) indicate that advertisement and brand preference are significant predictors of purchase intention. Nipa and Chowdhury extend the discussion to multinational FMCG firms, demonstrating that digital marketing strategies, such as SEO, content marketing, and influencer engagement, enhance brand awareness; however, their impact on overall marketing effectiveness is nuanced. All studies underscore the growing influence of digital platforms but also reveal contextual differences. Mthatha's infrastructural limitations contrast with the broader digital maturity of multinational firms. Collectively, these studies advocate for localized, data-driven, and platform-specific digital marketing strategies to optimize consumer engagement.

Overall, the results highlight the increasing impact of digital marketing on Mthatha's FMCG sector, particularly through social media and influencer-driven content. The findings suggest that businesses should prioritize platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube and focus on promotional content and user reviews to effectively engage consumers and drive purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the transformative impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions within the FMCG sector of Mthatha. Given that platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have high engagement levels, FMCG businesses should prioritise these channels in their marketing strategies. These platforms facilitate interactive, visual content that resonates particularly well with younger demographics, fostering real-time engagement essential to building brand trust and loyalty. Companies should focus on creating compelling promotional content and leveraging user-generated reviews, which are highly influential in guiding consumer choices. Engaging promotions can drive immediate purchases and enhance brand visibility, while positive user reviews serve as social proof, boosting consumer confidence.

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy for shaping consumer preferences in this landscape. FMCG brands should collaborate with local influencers who embody the cultural values of Mthatha's consumers. These influencers can serve as authentic brand ambassadors, cultivating emotional connections and encouraging repeat purchases. However, it is crucial for brands

to strategically select influencers whose values align with their audience to maintain credibility and effectiveness.

Despite the strong potential of digital marketing, challenges such as limited internet access, high data costs, and low digital literacy persist, hindering its widespread adoption. To address these issues, policymakers and stakeholders should collaborate to enhance digital infrastructure and promote digital literacy initiatives, thereby improving consumer access and empowering businesses. Additionally, retailers should consider a hybrid approach that integrates digital marketing with traditional methods to appeal to diverse consumer segments, including older demographics that may prefer conventional media. By adopting data-driven marketing strategies, FMCG companies can refine their tactics based on consumer behaviour and campaign performance, ultimately driving engagement, building brand loyalty, and achieving sustainable growth in a competitive market.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has highlighted the significant impact of digital marketing on consumer purchasing decisions within the FMCG sector in Mthatha. However, several directions for future research remain to be explored. One important avenue is conducting comparative studies across various semi-urban and rural regions in South Africa, which could reveal regional differences in digital engagement and consumer behaviour. Furthermore, researchers could investigate the long-term effects of digital marketing on brand loyalty and customer retention using qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, to reveal deeper consumer perceptions and emotional responses to digital marketing content, thereby enriching the quantitative findings.

Future studies could investigate the impact of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven personalization, chatbots, and augmented reality, on consumer experiences in the FMCG sector. As digital tools continue to evolve, their impact on consumer behaviour may shift, underscoring the need for ongoing research to ensure that marketing strategies remain relevant and effective. Overall, these efforts will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of digital marketing's role in diverse consumer contexts and can inform better policy and practice in emerging markets.

REFERENCES

- Abu Seman, N. A., & Segar, V. (2023). The impact of digital marketing channels on consumer buying decision. *Journal of International Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship (JIBE)*, 8(1), 42–53. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/84182>
- Blackwell, R. D., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. F. (2001). *Consumer Behavior*. Thomson South-Western.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). London: Oxford University Press.
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing*. London: Pearson.
- Chatterjee, S., Chaudhuri, R., Sakka, G., Grandhi, B., Galati, A., Siachou, E., & Vrontis, D. (2021). Adoption of social media marketing for sustainable business growth of SMEs in emerging economies: the moderating role of leadership support. *Sustainability*, 13(21), 12134. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112134>
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–340.
- Desai, V., & Vidyapeeth, B. (2019). Digital marketing: A review. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 5(5), 196–200.
- Dibie, V. M., Unanam, E. L., Nwakwue, A. O., & Kalu, K. U. (2019). Determinants of Consumer Purchase Decision Making for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(11), 5–15.

- Dumisana, A. & Tlapana, T. (2026). Digital marketing impact on consumer purchasing decisions: insights from the FMCG sector in Mthatha. *Management and Entrepreneurship: Trends of Development*, 1(35), 221-234. <https://doi.org/10.26661/2522-1566/2026-1/35-16>
- Faisal, A., & Ekawanto, I. (2021). The role of social media marketing in increasing brand awareness, brand image, and purchase intention. *Indonesian Management and Accounting Research*, 20(2), 185–208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25105/imar.v20i2.12554>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Hasan, M., & Sohail, M. S. (2021). The influence of social media marketing on consumers' purchase decision: Investigating the effects of local and nonlocal brands. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 33(3), 350–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2020.1795043>
- Jabeen, R., Khan, K. U., Zain, F., Atlas, F., & Khan, F. (2024). Investigating the impact of social media advertising and risk factors on customer online buying behavior: A trust-based perspective. *Future Business Journal*, 10(1), 123. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-024-00411-8>
- Kottler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2009). *Marketing management*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Li, W., Xu, S., Zheng, X., & Sun, R. (2024). Bridging the knowledge gap in artificial intelligence: the roles of social media exposure and information Elaboration. *Science Communication*, 46(4), 399-430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10755470241232352>
- Malhotra, N. K. (2010). *Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Meliawati, T., Gerald, S. C., & Aruman, A. E. (2023). The effect of social media marketing Tiktok and product quality towards purchase intention. *Journal of Consumer Sciences*, 8(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jcs.8.1.77-92>
- Misra, A., Dinh, T. D., & Ewe, S. Y. (2024). The more followers the better? The Impact of Food Influencers on Consumer Behavior in the Social Media Context. *British Food Journal*, 126(12), 4018–4035. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-01-2024-0096>
- Mukhtar, S., Mohan, A. C., & Chandra, D. (2023). Exploring the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior and loyalty. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 11(9), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v11.i9.2023.5308>
- Nipa, M. N., & Chowdhury, M. S. A. (2024). The Impact of Digital Marketing on Brand Awareness in the Multinational FMCG Sector. Available: <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202407.0550.v1> [Accessed 7 November 2025].
- Nyaguthii, T. (2025). Influencer marketing and its impact on purchasing behaviour of young adults in Kenya (Bachelor of Business Administration; International Business Dissertation. LAB University of Applied Sciences, Kenya)
- Obeid, C. (2023). Exploring digital marketing optimization: Enhancing company performance with a focus on the FMCG industry in Lebanon. *Dutch Journal of Finance and Management*, 6(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.55267/djfm/14163>
- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS Survival Manual* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Pei, J. (2024). Digital marketing and consumer behaviour: The role of social media in decision-making. *Advances in Economics, Management, and Political Sciences*, 137(1), 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/2024.18607>
- Rehman, F. U., Zahid, H., Qayyum, A., & Jamil, R. A. (2025). Building Relationship Equity: Role of Social Media Marketing Activities, Customer Engagement, and Relational Benefits. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 20(3), 223. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer20030223>
- Schutte, F. & Chauke, T. (2022). The Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Behaviour: A Case Study of Millennials in South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 11(2):875–886. <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.263>
- Seerreddi, S. (2024). Social Media Marketing: Its Impact on Consumer Decision-Making. *AG Volumes*, 1, 52-59.
- Sharma, K. (2020). Impact of social media marketing on consumer buying behaviour. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology*, 8(1), 472–475.
- Solomon, M. R., & Nancy, K. P. (2014). *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having and Being* (7th ed.). London: Pearson.

- Susanti, L. (2025). Product Marketing Strategy Using Digital Marketing Technology. *Journal of Social Science and Business Studies*, 3(1), 386–391. <https://doi.org/10.61487/jssbs.v3i1.128>
- Utari, R., & Yulida, R. (2023). The Influence of Brand Image and Social Media Instagram on Consumer Buying Interest. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis Jagaditha*, 10(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jj.10.1.2023.37-46>
- Verma, S., Rojhe, K. C., Horská, E., Sharma, S., & Šedík, P. (2023). Consumer Decision-Making Rules for FMCG Products—Study of Rural in North India. *Economies*, 11(1), 26. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies11010026>
- Vidhya, R., & Kalaiselvi, K. (2021). A Study on the Influence of Social Media in Digital Marketing on Purchase Intention of FMCG Products. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*, 12(10), 7094–7100.
- Wiścicka-Fernando, M., & Biercewicz, K. (2023). Using High-Tech Tools for Consumer Buying Decisions of FMCG. *Scientific Papers of Silesian University of Technology, Organization and Management Series*, 174, 388–402. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29119/1641-3466.2023.174.27>
- Yadav, A., Singh, S. K., & Dash, M. K. (2025). Digital marketing and consumer behavior: Analyzing purchase intentions of Generation X and Y in the FMCG sector. *Journal of Advanced Management Studies*, 2(1), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.36676/jams.v2.i1.31>

ВПЛИВ ЦИФРОВОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ НА РІШЕННЯ ПРО ПОКУПКИ СПОЖИВАЧІВ: АНАЛІЗ СЕКТОРУ ТОВАРІВ ШИРОКОГО ВЖИТКУ У МТАТХІ

Asemahle Dumisana

*Walter Sisulu University
Butterworth, South Africa*

Tshepo Tlapana

*Walter Sisulu University
Butterworth, South Africa*

В статті досліджено вплив цифрового маркетингу на рішення споживачів про покупки в секторі товарів швидкого споживчого вжитку (FMCG) у Мтаті, Південна Африка. Метою дослідження було визначити найефективніші канали цифрового маркетингу, проаналізувати ключові фактори, що впливають на поведінку споживачів, та зрозуміти перешкоди для впровадження цифрового маркетингу в напівміському контексті. Був застосований кількісний дизайн дослідження з використанням методу описового опитування. Дослідження було спрямоване на споживачів віком від 18 років, які регулярно купують товари FMCG у Мтаті. Через географічні обмеження було застосовано неімовірнісний підхід до вибірки зручності, що призвело до розміру вибірки 100 респондентів. Дані були зібрані за допомогою структурованих анкет, розповсюджених як онлайн, так і офлайн, для забезпечення інклюзивності. Описовий та висновковий статистичний аналіз було проведено за допомогою SPSS для вивчення взаємозв'язків між впливом цифрового маркетингу та купівельною поведінкою. Результати дослідження показують, що такі платформи, як Facebook, TikTok та YouTube, мають найбільший вплив на формування рішень споживачів, а рекламні акції та відгуки користувачів визначені як найвпливовіші типи контенту. Маркетинг впливу також виявився ключовим фактором довіри та залученості. Дослідження висвітлює інфраструктурні проблеми, включаючи обмежений доступ до Інтернету та високі витрати на передачу даних, які перешкоджають повноцінному впровадженню цифрового маркетингу. Ключові рекомендації включають пріоритетність платформ соціальних мереж, використання співпраці з інфлюенсерами та інтеграцію рекламного контенту та відгуків користувачів у маркетингові стратегії. Крім того, підприємствам слід застосовувати гібридні маркетингові підходи та інвестувати в ініціативи з цифрової грамотності для підвищення залученості споживачів.

Ключові слова: рішення споживачів про купівлю, цифровий маркетинг, сектор товарів широкого вжитку (FMCG), маркетинг впливу, платформи соціальних мереж.