

Original Article

Exploring the Impact of Digital Marketing Channels on Purchase Intentions
for Herbal Cosmetics: Evidence from Urban Consumers in Pune

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Abstract:

The explosive growth of digital technologies has shifted consumer markets, and herbal cosmetics are one of the brightest segments that are promoted by the increasing health awareness and sustainability concerns. This paper discusses how digital marketing channels affect purchase intention of herbal cosmetics among the urban population in Pune, India. A stratified random sample was used to sample 400 respondents who were selected using a structured questionnaire in the various city zones. The measurement of constructs (digital marketing exposure, opportunities, challenges, awareness, attitude, consumer buying behavior, and purchase intention) was conducted on a five-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis confirmed high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.85), while validity tests (CR and AVE) supported construct robustness. Regression results revealed that digital marketing significantly influences both opportunities ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) and challenges ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Opportunities positively affected consumer buying behavior ($\beta = 0.70$), whereas challenges had a negative effect ($\beta = -0.53$). Buying behavior strongly predicted purchase intention ($\beta = 0.79$), confirming the mediating role of digital exposure.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Herbal Cosmetics, Consumer Buying Behavior, Purchase Intention, Opportunities and Challenges, Social Media Marketing.

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Introduction:

In the digital economy today, marketing has taken a paradigm shift given the traditional modes of marketing including television, print and outdoor advertising but very interactive and targeted digital marketing modes. Social networks, online stores, influencer-created content, and online community are now major contact points to consumers. This change is especially noticeable in consumer driven industries like cosmetics where the perceptions of consumers, their aspiration to use a brand due to their lifestyle, and the brand authenticity play a major role in determining their buying intentions. In this area, herbal cosmetics have become one of the rapidly developing categories because of increased health awareness, environmental awareness, and the need to use chemically-free products [19]. The insights on how various digital marketing platforms influence the intentions to purchase the herbal cosmetics are important to scholars and practitioners in particular in urban areas like Pune, an example of a young and educated consumer population with a high level of digitization.

1. Background of the Study:

The increased spread of digital technologies has provided a business with new opportunities and challenges. The digital marketing is both cost-effective, as well as personalized, consumer-sensitive and two-way communication with the consumers [12]. The digital platforms provide access to instant information, peer reviews and influencer content as opposed to the traditional approaches, which has redefined how consumers make decisions [6]. The digital media have boosted brand development and exposure in the cosmetics industry, utilizing the social media influencers, e-commerce campaigns, and targeted ads. Digital storytelling has been

helpful to herbal cosmetics, especially because it focuses on natural ingredients, safety, and eco-friendly positioning [13], [19]. Nevertheless, digital environments are equally problematic, including greenwashing, (un)authenticity, consumer distrust [9], which can undermine buying intentions unless handled in a strategic way.

The market in Indian cities, specifically in Pune, is an urban consumer that is on a very specific niche, with a high level of internet penetration, growing disposable income, and the growing interest in sustainable lifestyles. This customer group is likely to be very dependent on digital content to discover and buy products [2]. Therefore, it will be appropriate and timely to explore the impact of digital marketing channels on their intentions to purchase herbal cosmetics.

2. Herbal Cosmetics and Consumer Demand:

Herbal cosmetics are rapidly gaining a share of the world and Indian cosmetic market, combining the ancient Ayurvedic and natural ingredient expertise with the new branding methods. The consumers are progressively viewing such products as safer, healthier and environmentally friendly than the synthetic ones [7], [14]. Research has revealed that eco-consciousness and awareness of health are also a significant predictor of positive purchase behavior of green and herbal products [15], [16]]. Herbal brands like the Himalaya, Biotique, Patanjali, and Forest Essentials have found momentum in the Indian market, following the patterns of digital footprint, reaching younger consumers in the urban markets through its marketing efforts in the digital sphere, where they emphasize authenticity and innovation. Nevertheless, the challenges of competition between domestic and foreign players are also involved, along with the

situation of false and false advertisements, which are challenging to long-term consumer confidence. [11], [20].

3. Digital Marketing Channels and Purchase Intention:

The consumer experience has changed its linear structure such as AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action) model to a multi-step process that includes awareness, evaluation, trial, and advocacy [6]. Digital marketing channels are significant in this journey. Social Media Marketing: Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook help a brand to communicate with consumers by using highly interactive and visually rich content that is community-driven. It has been established that social media campaigns have a strong impact on attitudes and purchase intention [5], [18]. Influencer Marketing: Famous personalities and micro-influencers influence credibility and relatability and affect the intention and consumer trust [18]. E-commerce Platforms: Online business markets ease both convenience and contesting prices in addition to peer detailing, which affect ultimate buying behavior [6], [13]. Websites and Blogs: There are official brand websites and educational websites, which enhance consumer awareness and create transparency regarding product formulation and sustainability practices [7]. The attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control affect purchase intention as postulated in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [1]. These factors in the online space are conditioned by the quality of information, peer recommendation, and platform credibility. [8], [10].

Literature Review:

Social media, e-commerce, influencer endorsements, and online

communities have increasingly become the base of marketing strategies as a result of the rapid development of digital platforms, which have transformed consumer markets. In this change, the cosmetics sector has experienced an increased use of digital means to generate awareness, develop trust and formulate purchase intentions especially in the herbal and green cosmetics category.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been extensively accepted to describe consumer purchase intentions in various situations [1]. TBP suggests that an intention to act is determined by attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, and perceived control over behavior. Within the green marketing frameworks, the TPB has been extended to forecast the eco-conscious consumer behavior in other countries such as Pakistan and Malaysia [14], [2]. Indicatively, Al Mamun et al. [2] indicated that attitudes and environmental concern played a significant role in the purchase behavior of the Malaysian consumers in green skincare. On the same note, Hameed et al. [14] demonstrated that pro-environmental values were highly significant predictors of green consumer behavior in Pakistan.

The use of TPB in the cosmetics industry is salient as it can be used to predict the purchase intentions of skincare and herbal products. The authors Hsu et al. [15] evaluated TPB in the context of green skincare and demonstrated that purchase intention was moderated by country of origin and price sensitivity.

1. Green and Herbal Cosmetics Consumption:

The trend of consumers who change to natural and eco-friendly products is not new. The herbal and green cosmetics are marketed to the health conscious people who consider them as a healthier

alternative to the synthetic products [19]. Research has proven that consumer environmental attitude and eco-consciousness has a positive effect on purchase decisions. As an example, a study by Malik and Singhal [20] discovered that environmental attitudes were strong predictors of willingness to purchase eco-friendly commodities, whereas Chen et al. [7] emphasized that sustainability is an influential factor in encouraging green products purchase in Belt and Road nations. Ghazali et al. [13] examined organic personal care products and discovered that the values exhibited by the consumers with regard to health and environmental consciousness had a strong influence on their willingness to pay. On the same note, Dhanwani et al. [11] investigated the perception of green products by Indian consumers and found that the issue of trust as well as authenticity remains a limitation in spite of the increasing popularity of herbal products. This information demonstrates the paradox, the level of demand of herbal cosmetics increases, but distrust and lack of trust can prevent the real purchase of goods. [9].

2. Role of Digital Marketing in Consumer Decision-Making:

In affecting the perceptions, preferences and purchase intentions of consumers, the digital marketing platforms have taken centre stage. According to Chen, Lu, and Wang [6], social learning, peer influence, and community validation are the three factors that support purchase decisions in social commerce. This view is especially applicable to herbal cosmetics, in which consumers have a great dependence on online reviews and influencer content. Bhaskaran and R [5] did a scientometric review of social media and consumer behavior, and found out that social media is a very important factor in purchase

intention. Equally in line with this, Lili et al. [18] discovered that celebrity endorsements and brand equity directly affected the intention to buy green cosmetics among the Chinese youth and upheld the effectiveness of influencer marketing in influencing digital behavior.

Moreover, as Cheng et al. [9] said, the interaction of hedonic and utilitarian values of shopping with consumer skepticism is shown, and the perception of digital advertisements has an influence on consumer trust in green shopping.

3. Social Media Marketing and Influencers:

Social media is considered to be one of the main sources of consumer awareness and interaction. Hsu et al. [15] emphasized peer influence and subjective norms as the determinants of intentions to purchase skincare products. On the same note, Chin et al. [10] also showed that the pro-environmental behavior models are predictors of consumers using green skincare products in digital environments. Such results indicate that consumer purchase intentions are supported by the social aspect of digital marketing likes, shares, and endorsements by influencers.

Lili et al. [18] demonstrated a direct impact of celebrity support on the brand equity, which directly affects the green cosmetics purchase intention of the young consumer.

4. Consumer Trust, Skepticism, and Challenges:

Digital marketing has its possibilities but it has challenges. Among them is the green claim skepticism of the consumers which can be caused mainly by the false or overstated advertisement. Cheng et al. [9] opined that environmental involvement and locus of control moderate skepticism, i.e. informed consumers tend to critically evaluate product claims. The lack

of trust is a major issue especially in the third world countries, which are exposed to the counterfeit products and unreliable labeling, diminishing the consumer confidence [11]. Chen and Hung [8] built on TPB to demonstrate that consumer acceptance of green products is focused on perceived product authenticity.

5. Environmental Awareness and Consumer Behavior:

The sustainability in consumption has been identified as environmental consciousness. Multi-group analysis carried out by Azila et al. [3] showed that gender had a significant difference in environmental awareness, with women being generally more susceptible to environmental friendly messages.

Kiatkawsin and Han [17] merged both the value-belief-norm theory and the expectancy theory finding that youth behavior was highly predicted by pro-environmental values. Dwivedi et al. [12] also added that digital technologies may become a problem and a solution to sustainability challenges.

Results and Discussion:

This study presents the results of the empirical investigation and discusses the findings in light of the study objectives and prior literature. Data from 400 respondents in urban Pune were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests, factor analysis, correlation, and regression-based hypothesis testing.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Factor Loadings
Digital Marketing	DM1	4.32	.745	0.78
	DM2	4.23	.827	0.82
	DM3	4.37	.692	0.80
	DM4	4.41	.723	0.84
	DM5	4.35	.760	0.81
Challenges	CHL1	4.39	.854	0.77
	CHL2	4.04	.856	0.73
	CHL3	4.20	.805	0.79
	CHL4	4.22	.824	0.81
	CHL5	4.23	.752	0.76
	CHL6	4.05	.897	0.74
	CHL7	4.01	.898	0.71
Opportunities	OPP1	4.12	1.010	0.80
	OPP2	3.83	.970	0.74
	OPP3	3.93	.941	0.78
	OPP4	4.20	.855	0.82
	OPP5	4.15	.883	0.79
	OPP6	4.38	.676	0.85
	OPP7	4.25	.754	0.83
	OPP8	4.26	.783	0.84
Awareness	AWR1	4.04	.863	0.74
	AWR2	4.08	.855	0.75
	AWR3	3.93	1.008	0.72
	AWR4	4.06	.905	0.76
	AWR5	3.98	.905	0.73
	AWR6	4.07	1.015	0.78
	AWR7	4.03	.954	0.74

	AWR8	4.08	.961	0.77
	AWR9	4.04	.987	0.73
	AWR10	4.09	.987	0.79
	AWR11	4.21	.892	0.82
	AWR12	4.16	.979	0.80
	AWR13	4.13	.896	0.76
	AWR14	4.18	.846	0.81
	AWR15	4.19	1.012	0.83
Consumer Buying Behaviour	CBB1	4.02	.996	0.75
	CBB2	4.34	.794	0.82
	CBB3	3.47	.878	0.71
	CBB4	3.65	.997	0.72
	CBB5	3.70	1.051	0.74
	CBB6	3.75	.997	0.76
	CBB7	3.56	1.002	0.73
	CBB8	3.74	1.086	0.77
	CBB9	3.68	1.060	0.78
	CBB10	3.52	1.110	0.72
	CBB11	3.54	1.148	0.74
	CBB12	3.97	1.122	0.80
Attitude	ATT1	4.31	.851	0.83
	ATT2	4.24	.835	0.80
	ATT3	4.24	.826	0.82
	ATT4	4.18	.812	0.79
	ATT5	4.11	.812	0.77
	ATT6	3.90	1.152	0.73
	ATT7	4.16	.862	0.78
	ATT8	4.19	.756	0.82
	ATT9	4.09	.770	0.80
	ATT10	4.03	.759	0.79
	ATT11	4.23	.881	0.81
	ATT12	4.16	.999	0.78
Preferred Digital Channel	PDC1	4.16	1.026	0.76
	PDC2	4.11	.991	0.74
	PDC3	4.17	.925	0.78
	PDC4	4.11	.935	0.75
	PDC5	4.16	.808	0.79
	PDC6	4.19	.797	0.80
	PDC7	4.31	.754	0.83
	PDC8	4.22	.838	0.82
	PDC9	4.15	.791	0.78
	PDC10	4.19	.794	0.81
	PDC11	3.97	.848	0.73
	PDC12	3.74	.865	0.71

Descriptive Statistics with Factor

Loadings:

The factor analysis findings suggest that all of the constructs Digital Marketing, Challenges, Opportunities, Awareness, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Attitude and

Preferred Digital Channels had high factor loading with most of the values ranging between 0.71 and 0.85. This shows great convergent validity and high internal consistency among the measurements model.

Reliability and Validity:

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Digital Marketing	0.896	0.921	0.682
Challenges	0.858	0.884	0.622
Opportunities	0.902	0.923	0.658
Awareness	0.960	0.969	0.702
Consumer Buying Behaviour	0.915	0.932	0.685
Attitude	0.953	0.964	0.713
Preferred Digital Channels	0.930	0.945	0.671

The findings of reliability and validity provided in Table 4.105 prove the statistically supported and sound character of the measurement model. Cronbachs Alpha values of all constructs were greater than 0.85, which is a very high internal consistency and Composite Reliability (CR) values were greater than the value of 0.70 which once again affirmed the reliability of the scales. Further, the values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were found to range between 0.622 and 0.713 with all them being above the minimum acceptable value of 0.50 thus, creating

excellent convergent validity. Among the constructs, Awareness ($\alpha = 0.960$, CR = 0.969, AVE = 0.702) and Attitude ($\alpha = 0.953$, CR = 0.964, AVE = 0.713) showed the strongest reliability and validity, highlighting their central role in explaining consumer responses to digital marketing.

Hypothesis Testing:

H₀₁: Digital Marketing has no significant impact on Opportunities for influencing consumer buying behavior of herbal cosmetics.

Table 3: Regression Results – Digital Marketing → Opportunities

Predictor	Beta (β)	R ²	t-value	p-value	Result
Digital Marketing	0.68	0.46	12.15	<0.001	Significant

The results show a strong positive effect of Digital Marketing on Opportunities ($\beta = 0.68$, $R^2 = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, H₀₁ is rejected, confirming that digital marketing activities significantly create opportunities such as personalization, influencer outreach, and AR/VR engagement.

H₀₂: Digital Marketing has no significant impact on Challenges that affect consumer buying behavior of herbal cosmetics.

Table 4: Regression Results – Digital Marketing → Challenges

Predictor	Beta (β)	R ²	t-value	p-value	Result
Digital Marketing	0.58	0.34	10.22	<0.001	Significant

Digital Marketing significantly influences the perception of Challenges ($\beta = 0.58$, $R^2 = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that exposure to digital channels also highlights issues such as trust deficits, pricing, and authenticity concerns. H_{02} is rejected.

H_{03} : Opportunities created by Digital Marketing have no significant impact on Consumer Buying Behavior of herbal cosmetics.

Table 5: Regression Results – Opportunities → Consumer Buying Behavior

Predictor	Beta (β)	R ²	t-value	p-value	Result
Opportunities	0.70	0.49	13.44	<0.001	Significant

Opportunities emerging from digital marketing strongly predict Consumer Buying Behavior ($\beta = 0.70$, $R^2 = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that innovative opportunities enhance purchase tendencies, repurchase likelihood, and reliance on online reviews. H_{03} is rejected.

H_{04} : Challenges arising from Digital Marketing have no significant impact on Consumer Buying Behavior of herbal cosmetics.

Table 6: Regression Results – Challenges → Consumer Buying Behavior

Predictor	Beta (β)	R ²	t-value	p-value	Result
Challenges	-0.53	0.29	-9.56	<0.001	Significant

The results reveal a significant negative impact of challenges on consumer buying behavior ($\beta = -0.53$, $R^2 = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). Higher trust issues, pricing concerns, and product authenticity doubts reduce purchase likelihood. Thus, H_{04} is rejected.

H_{05} : Buying Behavior has no significant impact on Intention to Purchase herbal cosmetics.

Table 7: Regression Results – Buying Behavior → Purchase Intention

Predictor	Beta (β)	R ²	t-value	p-value	Result
Buying Behavior	0.79	0.62	15.78	<0.001	Significant

Purchase Intention is highly influenced by Consumer Buying Behavior ($\beta = 0.79$, $R^2 = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that once the consumers form positive purchasing behavior due to the digital exposure, this translates into future

purchasing intentions. Hence, H_{05} is rejected.

The paper indicates that online marketing platforms are critical in determining consumer buying intent towards herbal cosmetics in Pune. Though the likes of influencer work, social media

interactions, and customized content have a positive effect on consumer awareness and purchasing behavior, such factors as trust, price dimension, and product authenticity make consumers less confident and hesitant to adopt the innovation. The close connection between consumer buying behavior and purchase intention substantiates that positive digital experiences do reflect into a final purchase decision, as in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior.

Conclusion:

It draws a conclusion that the views of the urban consumers in Pune on the buying intentions of herbal cosmetics are largely dependent on digital marketing channels. Social media and influencer marketing, and online stores appeared as effective tools of awareness and involvement, whereas concern of trust, authenticity, and price sensitivity is still causing disbelief among consumers. Digital marketing opportunities were found to have a positive impact on the purchasing behavior that, in its turn, is a strong predictor of purchase intention. All in all, the conclusions indicate that to build trust and successfully transform digital exposure into consumer loyalty, the brands should incorporate transparent, consumer-oriented, and innovative digital engagement.

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