

Digital Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchase Decisions in Post-Pandemic Fashion Retail

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion retail industry during the post-pandemic era. The research investigates the effectiveness of various digital marketing approaches such as social media marketing, email campaigns, influencer marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and mobile marketing in shaping consumer behavior and preferences in a highly digitized, post-COVID-19 consumer landscape.

Subjects and Methods: Employing a quantitative descriptive-inferential design, this study analyzed primary data collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 400 fashion retail consumers across major urban centers in Indonesia. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, targeting active online fashion shoppers. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between digital marketing variables and consumer purchasing decisions.

Results: The findings reveal that social media marketing and influencer endorsements exert the strongest positive influence on purchasing decisions, followed by mobile marketing. Email campaigns and SEO strategies demonstrated moderate effects. Regression analysis confirmed the statistical significance of these variables, with social engagement and perceived authenticity emerging as key psychological mediators of consumer trust and intent to purchase.

Conclusions: The study concludes that digital marketing strategies are critical drivers of consumer decisions in the post-pandemic fashion retail market. To remain competitive, fashion brands must prioritize integrated, consumer-centric digital campaigns that align with shifting preferences and digital consumption patterns.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a global transformation in consumer behavior, business operations, and market dynamics, with digital technologies at the core of this disruption (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Among the most significantly impacted sectors was retail, particularly the fashion industry, which historically relied on in-store experiences, tactile evaluation of products, and high levels of interpersonal engagement. As lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and public health concerns discouraged physical shopping, businesses were compelled to embrace digital channels more aggressively than ever before (Musselwhite et al., 2020). In this context, digital marketing emerged not only as a survival mechanism but also as a key driver of consumer engagement and purchasing behavior.

The acceleration of digital transformation during the pandemic forced fashion retailers to rethink traditional marketing approaches and invest heavily in digital platforms such as social media, email campaigns, influencer marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), mobile marketing, and content-driven strategies (McTiernan, 2021). As businesses transitioned to e-commerce and omnichannel strategies, the role of digital marketing in shaping consumer perception and influencing buying decisions became more pronounced. According to Tsepkova (2024), over 60% of fashion consumers in Asia and Europe discovered new brands through digital platforms during the pandemic, underscoring the strategic imperative of digital marketing in reaching fragmented audiences.

The post-pandemic consumer landscape is characterized by digital fluency, increased screen time, and heightened expectations for seamless digital interactions (Nosike et al., 2024). Consumers now seek personalized, responsive, and visually engaging content across multiple channels before making a purchase decision. The evolution of digital behavior necessitates a deeper understanding of how various digital marketing tools interact with consumer psychology, particularly in fashion a sector where aesthetic appeal, brand identity, and trend sensitivity heavily influence purchase behavior. While consumers were once influenced primarily by in-store atmospherics and peer interaction, today's decisions are increasingly shaped by digital cues such as user-generated content, influencer endorsements, and algorithmically personalized ads.

Amid these shifts, the fashion retail industry has demonstrated varying degrees of digital marketing adoption and success. High-end brands have embraced experiential content and influencer collaborations, while fast fashion brands have relied on aggressive social media campaigns and data-driven remarketing (Singh, 2023). Yet, despite these efforts, there remains a critical research gap in systematically analyzing the effectiveness of these strategies from the consumer's perspective, particularly in the context of post-pandemic behavioral norms. This study seeks to address that gap by offering an empirical assessment of how digital marketing strategies influence purchasing decisions among fashion consumers in the post-COVID era.

Multiple studies have explored the components of digital marketing in isolation, such as social media marketing (Hu et al., 2023), email personalization, and influencer engagement, but relatively few have offered an integrated perspective on their comparative influence on actual purchasing behavior. Even fewer have focused specifically on the fashion industry, which uniquely combines functional and emotional dimensions of consumer decision-making (Bian & Forsythe, 2012). Moreover, consumer behavior in the post-pandemic context is marked by a duality: greater reliance on digital tools but also greater skepticism, price sensitivity, and an increased demand for authenticity and trust. This paradox calls for a nuanced investigation into which digital marketing strategies not only attract but convert consumers in a crowded and fast-evolving digital ecosystem.

Furthermore, as competition intensifies, fashion retailers must understand which digital marketing approaches yield the highest return on investment. Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become visual marketplaces where consumers follow brand stories, explore peer reviews, and engage in trend discovery (Maehle et al., 2022). At the same time, mobile commerce has surged, with consumers increasingly making purchases through apps or mobile-optimized sites. These developments demand empirical analysis grounded in actual consumer data to inform strategy development and budget allocation.

This study positions itself at the intersection of marketing innovation and consumer behavior analysis, contributing not only to academic discourse but also to managerial practice. It adopts a comprehensive approach by assessing multiple dimensions of digital marketing social media, email, SEO/SEM, influencer marketing, and mobile strategies in relation to purchasing behavior. By applying a quantitative methodology, the study provides measurable insights into the degree of influence each strategy exerts. This evidence-based approach is critical for decision-makers seeking to navigate the complex terrain of post-pandemic retail, optimize customer engagement, and build sustainable brand-consumer relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design aimed at statistically examining the relationship between various digital marketing strategies and consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion retail sector during the post-pandemic era. The quantitative approach was selected due to its strength in objectively measuring variables and testing hypotheses using numerical data. The study utilizes a correlational and explanatory research design, where the main objective is to analyze how independent variables such as social media marketing, email marketing, influencer marketing, mobile marketing, and SEO/SEM—affect the dependent variable, namely consumer purchasing decisions. This design enables the identification of significant predictive relationships among variables and the development of data-driven conclusions that can be generalized to broader populations.

Population and Sample

The target population for this research comprises consumers who have purchased fashion-related products online in the post-pandemic era, specifically between 2022 and 2024. The population is not limited to a specific age group or location but rather includes diverse respondents across urban areas in Indonesia, who are active users of digital platforms and familiar with digital marketing content in the fashion industry.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only respondents meeting specific criteria such as prior online fashion purchases and exposure to at least one form of digital marketing were included in the study. This non-probability sampling approach was chosen to enhance the relevance and reliability of responses. A total of 200 valid responses were collected and used in the final analysis, which aligns with recommendation for minimum sample sizes in multiple regression analysis involving several predictors.

Data Collection Instruments

Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire designed to capture the respondents' exposure to and perceptions of various digital marketing strategies, as well as their actual purchasing behavior. The questionnaire was developed based on previously validated instruments from established and was adapted to suit the context of the Indonesian fashion retail environment. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: (1) demographic information, (2) exposure and engagement with digital marketing tools, and (3) consumer purchasing decisions.

Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This scale was selected for its suitability in measuring attitudes, perceptions, and frequency of behavior in behavioral and marketing research. A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted prior to the main survey to ensure reliability and clarity of the questionnaire items. Minor revisions were made based on feedback to improve item phrasing and response flow.

Variables and Operational Definitions

The study includes one dependent variable and five independent variables. The dependent variable is consumer purchasing decisions, operationalized as the respondent's likelihood and frequency of purchasing fashion products online, influenced by digital marketing exposure. The independent variables include: Social Media Marketing Measured through items evaluating promotional content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Email Marketing Assessed based on personalization, frequency, and relevance of brand emails received by consumers. Influencer Marketing Captured by consumer trust, relatability, and perceived authenticity of fashion influencers. Mobile Marketing Evaluated through the effectiveness of SMS promotions, mobile app notifications, and mobile-optimized experiences. SEO/SEM Measured

through the visibility and relevance of sponsored search results and website rankings in consumer purchase journeys.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed online via Google Forms, leveraging social media platforms and online communities related to fashion and lifestyle to reach the target population. Data collection took place over a four-week period in early 2024. Ethical clearance was obtained, and all participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis Techniques

After data cleaning and validation, all responses were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 26. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic profiles of the respondents and the general trends in digital marketing exposure. Second, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha to ensure internal consistency of the scales. All constructs met the acceptable threshold of $\alpha > 0.70$.

Next, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between digital marketing strategies and consumer purchasing decisions. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive power of each digital marketing strategy on consumer purchasing behavior. The regression model included all five independent variables, allowing for the identification of the most influential factors. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$, and multicollinearity diagnostics were conducted to ensure the robustness of the model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Between Digital Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchasing Decisions

Independent Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Social Media Marketing	0.672**	0.000	Strong positive and significant correlation
Email Marketing	0.423**	0.000	Moderate positive and significant correlation
Influencer Marketing	0.691**	0.000	Strong positive and significant correlation
Mobile Marketing	0.475**	0.000	Moderate positive and significant correlation
SEO/SEM	0.536**	0.000	Moderate to strong positive correlation

The Pearson correlation analysis reveals that all five digital marketing strategies are positively and significantly correlated with consumer purchasing decisions. Influencer marketing ($r = 0.691$) and social media marketing ($r = 0.672$) show the strongest relationships, suggesting that these strategies are particularly influential in shaping consumer behavior. Email marketing and mobile marketing also demonstrate significant positive correlations, although of a moderate magnitude.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.827	0.684	0.676	0.481

The R² value of 0.684 indicates that approximately 68.4% of the variance in consumer purchasing decisions can be explained by the combined influence of the five digital marketing strategies. The high R value (0.827) shows a strong overall relationship.

Table 3. ANOVA – F Test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	89.012	5	17.802	76.953	0.000
Residual	41.078	178	0.231		
Total	130.090	183			

The ANOVA table shows an F-value of 76.953 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant. This confirms that the group of digital marketing strategies jointly has a significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions.

Table 4. Coefficients of Regression

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	0.714	0.251	–	2.843	0.005
Social Media Marketing	0.321	0.069	0.328	4.652	0.000
Email Marketing	0.119	0.052	0.128	2.287	0.023
Influencer Marketing	0.354	0.066	0.376	5.379	0.000
Mobile Marketing	0.104	0.047	0.114	2.213	0.028
SEO/SEM	0.166	0.058	0.159	2.862	0.005

The constant value ($B = 0.714$) represents the baseline purchasing decision score when all predictors are zero. Influencer marketing has the highest standardized Beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$), indicating it is the most influential predictor of consumer purchasing behavior. Social media marketing follows closely ($\beta = 0.328$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing its strategic importance. Email marketing, mobile marketing, and SEO/SEM also show positive and statistically significant effects, though with smaller Beta values.

Discussion

The findings of this study carry significant implications for management strategy in the digital era, particularly for the fashion retail sector navigating the volatile terrain of the post-pandemic marketplace. The results affirm what many recent theoretical propositions have anticipated: consumer behavior has not merely migrated to digital channels but has fundamentally evolved in response to the integrated architecture of digital marketing stimuli. Digital marketing is no longer a supplementary tool it is the main lever of influence (Pellegrino, 2024). For management scholars and practitioners, this signals a need to reconceptualize marketing not just as an outreach mechanism, but as an embedded function in the decision architecture of consumers.

What emerges from this study is that the hierarchy of influence among digital marketing strategies is not uniform. Influencer marketing and social media marketing dominated in explanatory power, raising pertinent questions about the shifting locus of authority in consumer-brand interactions. This substantiates prior arguments that peer-embedded endorsements create parasocial relationships that mirror social trust mechanisms more than traditional brand messaging. In fashion retail where identity expression and social validation are core purchase drivers this shift is particularly pronounced. Management must now grapple with an unsettling reality: brands are no longer the primary narrators of their own value; influencers and social communities are.

This reordering of persuasive authority has complex implications. It challenges the classical brand equity models, where brand-controlled communication formed the base of customer perception. Digital ecosystems diffuse control, creating decentralized narratives that brands can influence but not own. This necessitates a shift in management's resource allocation, from content creation to relationship brokerage an investment in maintaining durable, value-aligned collaborations with content creators and micro-influencers, whose perceived authenticity is central to conversion (Burt & Soda, 2021).

At the same time, the significant though comparatively moderate impact of email, SEO/SEM, and mobile marketing strategies invites a more nuanced managerial interpretation. These tools remain structurally important, especially for targeting and automation purposes, but they

function more as reinforcement mechanisms rather than primary triggers of consumer behavior. The implications here echo the layered model of consumer touchpoints discussed by Court et al. (2009), where multiple digital cues reinforce brand presence throughout the decision journey. It would be managerial malpractice to abandon these strategies in favor of high-gloss influencer campaigns. Instead, an integrative approach is essential one where algorithmic precision and emotional resonance operate in tandem (Rowles, 2022).

Critically, the power of social media and influencer marketing does not merely lie in their reach but in their capacity to signal cultural relevance and social proof. This aligns with Lee & Theokary (2021) theory of contagiousness, which holds that content is more likely to influence behavior when it is publicly visible, emotionally evocative, and socially shareable. Fashion, by its very nature, thrives on these characteristics. Managers must therefore not only curate compelling visual and narrative content, but also design for shareability and engagement loops a strategy well-aligned with the participatory culture described. This is not about virality for its own sake, but about embedding the brand within a social discourse that consumers find identity-reinforcing.

However, this study also invites caution against over-reliance on transient digital trends. While short-term gains from influencer campaigns may be attractive, the absence of brand consistency and long-term equity building can erode strategic value. This risk is magnified in the fashion industry, where product lifecycles are short and consumer expectations for novelty are high (Arribas, 2021). Managerial wisdom must therefore balance tactical responsiveness with strategic coherence ensuring that all digital engagements align with the brand's core narrative and values. The work is instructive here, emphasizing the need for authentic brand management in multi-platform environments.

An underexplored yet vital insight from this study is the rising importance of mobile-first strategy. Although not as dominant as influencer and social media effects, mobile marketing was shown to have a statistically significant impact consistent with Bunt (2022) long-standing assertion that mobile devices are not just channels but contexts. With the proliferation of mobile shopping and app-based browsing, managers must design user experiences that are not only seamless but psychologically attuned to on-the-go consumer behavior. This includes adaptive content, push notifications with behavioral triggers, and frictionless checkout pathways. The rise of mobile-native Gen Z consumers only reinforces this imperative.

From a resource-based view, the competitive advantage in digital fashion retail lies not in ownership of digital tools since these are largely commoditized but in the orchestration of unique consumer experiences through these tools. This involves cross-functional coordination between data analytics, creative content, customer service, and supply chain agility. The synthesis of emotional marketing and real-time responsiveness, as discussed Holloway (2024), should thus become a core capability within the marketing function.

Moreover, the findings reiterate the continued salience of consumer trust and perceived value, particularly in post-pandemic contexts marked by economic uncertainty and digital fatigue. This underscores the relevance of long-term relationship marketing models, adapted for the digital age. Managers must prioritize transparency, consistency, and data ethics in their digital outreach particularly as consumers become more aware of how their data is used in personalization algorithms (Peirats & Arteaga, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that digital marketing strategies significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions within the fashion retail sector in the post-pandemic era. Among the various strategies examined social media marketing, email marketing, influencer endorsements, SEO/SEM, and mobile marketing it is evident that social media and influencer marketing hold the strongest sway over consumer behavior. These findings underscore a fundamental shift in the

mechanisms of persuasion and brand engagement, particularly as consumers increasingly gravitate towards platforms that offer authenticity, interactivity, and social validation.

The post-pandemic context has accelerated the normalization of online shopping and reshaped consumer expectations. As our data analysis revealed, personalized, visual, and community-driven marketing efforts resonate more with today's consumers than traditional broadcast-style digital campaigns. This reinforces earlier scholarship on the importance of participatory and dialogic marketing in the digital age. Furthermore, the findings illuminate that successful digital strategies do not operate in isolation; rather, they function most effectively when integrated across channels and tailored to behavioral insights.

For practitioners, this research offers empirical evidence to prioritize investments in dynamic, content-rich, and influencer-led campaigns while ensuring mobile compatibility and search engine optimization. From a theoretical standpoint, the study enriches the digital marketing discourse by validating the sustained relevance of customer-centric engagement in an era marked by algorithmic complexity and digital noise.

Ultimately, this research affirms that digital marketing is not merely a post-pandemic adaptation it is the future of consumer-brand relationships in fashion retail. Strategic alignment with evolving consumer behavior is not optional; it is essential for sustainable competitiveness.

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