

Exploring the Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Case Study of Algeria

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior in Algeria, focusing on purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and trust. With 64% internet penetration and over 25 million social media users, Algeria offers significant opportunities for digital marketing. However, challenges such as limited e-payment adoption, infrastructural gaps, and low digital literacy hinder growth. Using a case study approach, the research highlights social media's role in driving awareness and decision-making while identifying barriers like distrust in online payments. The study recommends trust-building measures, localized strategies, and enhanced infrastructure to optimize Algeria's digital marketing potential and foster economic growth.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Algeria

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, marketing has undergone a profound transformation, fueled by advancements in technology and shifting consumer preferences. Digital marketing has become a fundamental component of contemporary business strategies, utilizing platforms like social media, mobile apps, and e-commerce websites to connect with consumers in highly interactive and personalized ways. Globally, spending on digital advertising reached approximately \$681 billion in 2023, representing over 60% of total advertising expenditures, underscoring its growing dominance over traditional methods (Statista, 2023). With more

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than 4.9 billion active social media users worldwide, digital marketing has revolutionized the decision-making process for consumers, enabling businesses to engage with their audiences in real time and deliver enhanced experiences (We Are Social, 2023).

Regions such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are experiencing rapid adoption of digital marketing, driven by increasing internet connectivity, expanding mobile usage, and the rise of e-commerce. Within the MENA region, digital advertising expenditures are expected to exceed \$4 billion by 2024, as businesses capitalize on the growing prevalence of online activities. However, obstacles such as inconsistent internet access and varying levels of digital literacy hinder the full potential of digital marketing in these regions (GSMA, 2023; McKinsey, 2022). Similar patterns are evident in Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, where mobile marketing strategies are particularly effective in engaging diverse consumer groups across urban and rural areas.

In Algeria, the growth of digital marketing is accelerating as the country integrates into the global digital economy. With an internet penetration rate of 64% and over 25 million active social media users, Algeria offers a fertile ground for exploring the relationship between digital marketing and consumer behavior. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are widely used, presenting businesses with opportunities to connect with a predominantly young, tech-savvy audience. However, challenges such as limited broadband availability, low adoption of e-payment systems, and restricted use of credit cards continue to limit the effectiveness of digital strategies (Kilani, 2022; Zekraoui, 2022). To address these issues, the Algerian government has initiated efforts to enhance digital infrastructure and promote digital literacy, signaling a commitment to fostering a more inclusive digital economy.

Despite these developments, research specifically examining the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior in Algeria remains scarce. Existing studies tend to focus on broader regional contexts, leaving a gap in understanding the country's unique socio-economic, cultural, and technological dynamics. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing how digital marketing affects Algerian consumers' purchasing decisions, with a focus on factors such as purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and trust.

The research provides valuable insights into Algeria's evolving digital economy, offering practical recommendations for businesses and policymakers seeking to optimize digital marketing strategies. By employing a case study approach, this study explores the potential of

tailored digital marketing solutions to boost consumer engagement and drive economic growth in Algeria. It also highlights the influence of cultural and infrastructural factors on consumer interactions with digital platforms, providing actionable strategies for stakeholders.

The findings are particularly relevant for businesses navigating Algeria's digital marketing landscape. By examining key strategies, including social media marketing, email campaigns, and search engine optimization, this study highlights opportunities to develop impactful, culturally aligned campaigns. Moreover, the insights can inform policymakers on initiatives to bridge Algeria's digital divide, fostering sustainable growth in the country's digital economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

Digital marketing and consumer behavior are interconnected through several theoretical frameworks that explain how individuals engage with digital platforms. One prominent model is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis (1989). TAM emphasizes that a consumer's willingness to adopt new technologies is largely influenced by their perceptions of the technology's usefulness and ease of use. This framework has been widely utilized to study consumer behavior on platforms such as e-commerce websites, social media, and mobile applications. Another notable model is the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) model, which outlines the stages of consumer decision-making, from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation. The model demonstrates how digital marketing influences each stage by providing timely, personalized information and fostering consumer confidence (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is another critical framework that integrates attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control to explain consumer actions in digital environments. For example, digital marketing campaigns leveraging social proof and peer influence on platforms like Instagram or Facebook can directly impact consumer intentions and behaviors. Together, these frameworks underline the necessity of understanding consumer interactions in digital ecosystems to develop effective marketing strategies.

2.2. Global Perspective

Research from emerging markets offers valuable insights into the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior. In India, studies show

that digital marketing significantly improves brand awareness and purchase intention, especially among younger, tech-savvy consumers (Mehta, 2020). Similarly, in Brazil, campaigns using localized content and mobile platforms have successfully engaged both rural and urban markets (Palos-Sanchez & Saura, 2018).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the increasing penetration of mobile internet has enabled small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to reach broader audiences, fostering the growth of e-commerce. For instance, research in Kenya highlights the role of mobile-based digital marketing, with social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook being particularly effective in driving online sales (GSMA, 2023). These findings underscore the transformative power of digital marketing in regions with diverse infrastructural and cultural contexts.

2.3. Algerian Context

In Algeria, digital marketing is still in its early stages compared to global standards. Although internet penetration and social media usage have grown, challenges such as limited broadband infrastructure and inadequate e-payment systems hinder widespread adoption of digital marketing strategies (Kilani, 2022). Research shows that many Algerian SMEs rely on basic tools like Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups for their marketing activities, often lacking the resources or expertise to implement advanced analytics or targeting techniques (Bensaad & Annabi, 2024).

Public institutions in Algeria have also started adopting digital marketing to enhance communication and service delivery. For example, social media platforms and official websites are being used to engage with citizens and promote electronic services. However, these efforts are frequently constrained by a lack of digital literacy among businesses and consumers (Zekraoui, 2022). In comparison to neighboring countries like Morocco and Tunisia, which have made significant strides in digital adoption, Algeria faces a digital divide that requires targeted efforts to bridge (Coreynen, Matthyssens, & Van Bockhaven, 2017).

2.4. Independent and Dependent Variables

- **Independent Variable: Digital Marketing Strategies**

Digital marketing strategies, such as social media marketing, email campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), and mobile marketing, are considered the independent variable in this study. These approaches aim to increase visibility, foster engagement, and enhance interactions with consumers. TAM highlights that the perceived ease of use and utility of these strategies influence consumer willingness to engage with them. For

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instance, personalized emails or targeted advertisements on platforms like Facebook effectively capture consumer attention and influence purchasing behavior (Davis, 1989; Mehta, 2020).

- **Dependent Variable: Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior, the study's dependent variable, includes aspects such as purchase intention, brand loyalty, and actual buying behavior. According to the EKB model, consumer behavior progresses through several stages, from need recognition to post-purchase evaluation. Digital marketing plays a vital role in this process by delivering relevant information, enabling comparisons, and building trust. For example, interactive advertisements and online reviews have been shown to boost consumer confidence and influence purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

2.5. Relationship between Digital Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Empirical research highlights the profound impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, particularly in driving awareness, influencing purchase intentions, and fostering loyalty. Studies underscore the effectiveness of digital platforms in shaping consumer decisions across various regions and demographic groups. For instance, Mehta (2020) identified how targeted digital advertisements significantly boosted brand visibility and consumer engagement in India. Similarly, Lamichhane (2022) emphasized that social media and email marketing played a pivotal role in enhancing consumer awareness and purchase decisions in Nepal.

In Algeria, research by Kilani (2022) and Zekraoui (2022) demonstrated that social media-based digital marketing campaigns positively influenced consumer purchasing behavior and brand loyalty, especially among younger demographics. Expanding this understanding to the broader MENA region, Dib (2016) and Bensaad and Annabi (2024) highlighted the role of personalized marketing strategies in building consumer trust and driving repeat purchases. In Sub-Saharan Africa, GSMA (2023) revealed that mobile-based marketing campaigns significantly affected purchase intentions, particularly in urban markets.

Further insights come from Stephen (2016), who examined consumer responses to digital advertising and online word-of-mouth (WOM), emphasizing their critical influence on purchase decisions and brand engagement (Stephen, 2016). Meanwhile, Jain and Pandey (2020) demonstrated that digital marketing channels, especially mobile and social media, significantly drive sales and consumer engagement in India (Jain & Pandey, 2020).

Mukhtar et al. (2023) explored the role of social media endorsements, finding them crucial in influencing consumer loyalty and purchase

decisions, further stressing the need for relationship-based marketing strategies (Mukhtar et al., 2023). Moreover, Widyatmoko (2022) highlighted that the rise of social media platforms has driven consumers to transition from traditional purchasing habits to digital transactions, due to their convenience and accessibility (Widyatmoko, 2022).

In the context of e-commerce and technological advancements, Rakhmetzhan and Medukhanova (2017) explored how digital marketing tools, including search engine optimization (SEO), improved consumer trust and repeat purchases, as demonstrated by the success of Alibaba Group (Rakhmetzhan & Medukhanova, 2017). Additionally, Kaur (2023) underscored the importance of interactive and personalized digital content in enhancing consumer satisfaction and influencing decision-making processes (Kaur, 2023).

Lastly, Yushkevych et al. (2023) analyzed the role of digital infrastructure in shaping consumer behavior, highlighting the significance of price, product features, and digital presentation in purchasing decisions (Yushkevych et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies illustrate the transformative impact of digital marketing in diverse contexts, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies that resonate with specific cultural and demographic attributes.

3. Methodology

- **Research Design**

This study adopts a **case study design**, which provides an in-depth examination of the relationship between digital marketing and consumer behavior in Algeria. The case study approach is particularly suited for this research, as it relies on the analysis of secondary data from previous studies to explore the unique characteristics of Algeria's digital marketing landscape and its influence on consumer decision-making. Case study research is a widely accepted methodology for exploring complex phenomena in specific contexts, allowing for a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge (Yin, 2014).

- **Data Collection**

The study is based exclusively on **secondary data**, gathered from credible academic research, industry reports, and government publications. Key sources include empirical studies on digital marketing in Algeria and the broader MENA region (Kilani, 2022; Zekraoui, 2022), reports from Algerian government agencies on digital adoption trends, and market analyses detailing consumer behavior in digital environments (Dib, 2016).

These sources were selected to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and reliable data on the impact of digital marketing on Algerian consumers.

- **Sampling**

As a secondary data-based study, no direct sampling was conducted. However, a systematic selection process was applied to identify relevant literature and reports. Sources were chosen based on their focus on digital marketing and consumer behavior in Algeria, their methodological rigor, and their contribution to understanding the local market dynamics. Priority was given to studies that examined variables such as consumer awareness, purchase intention, and brand loyalty, ensuring that the analysis is both comprehensive and contextually relevant.

- **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using a **thematic analysis approach**, a method that facilitates the identification of key themes and patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Studies were systematically reviewed to extract and categorize insights related to digital marketing's influence on consumer awareness, engagement, purchase intentions, and loyalty. Particular attention was paid to the socio-economic and cultural factors unique to Algeria, as identified in the selected studies (Kilani, 2022; Zekraoui, 2022). The analysis also synthesized findings from regional and global contexts to provide a comparative perspective, thereby situating Algeria's digital marketing trends within a broader framework (Palos-Sanchez & Saura, 2018; Mehta, 2020).

4. Case Study: Algeria's Digital Marketing Landscape and Consumer Behavior

4.1. Introduction to the Case Study

Algeria, as a developing economy, is witnessing a notable shift toward digitalization, with an internet penetration rate of **64%** and **25 million active social media users**, accounting for more than half of its population. This growth highlights the increasing importance of digital platforms for business expansion and consumer engagement (Kilani, 2022). Despite these advancements, significant barriers persist. Rural areas face limited broadband access, and the adoption of e-payment systems remains low, with cash-on-delivery still dominating online transactions. Additionally, cultural resistance to online payments and a lack of digital literacy hinder the full potential of Algeria's digital transformation (Zekraoui, 2022).

4.2. Digital Marketing Strategies in Algeria

Adopted Strategies

Social media is the cornerstone of Algeria's digital marketing landscape. **Facebook** (with over **19 million users**) and **Instagram** are the primary platforms leveraged by SMEs to enhance visibility and engage with younger demographics, who make up **65% of Algeria's population under 35** (Kilani, 2022). These platforms are attractive due to their affordability and accessibility, even in areas with weaker infrastructure.

Larger companies and multinational enterprises employ more diverse strategies, such as **email campaigns** and **search engine optimization (SEO)**, to target broader audiences. However, the adoption of data analytics and advanced targeting remains minimal, as only **15% of Algerian businesses** reported using advanced digital tools in 2022 (Elaihar, 2024).

Public Sector Initiatives

Government and public institutions, such as the Algerian Post Institution, are increasingly adopting digital platforms to enhance service delivery. For example, the Algerian Post launched a **mobile app with over 2 million downloads**, facilitating interactions and promoting electronic services (Bensaad & Annabi, 2024). These efforts aim to improve consumer engagement while reducing the dependency on traditional systems.

Challenges

- **Infrastructural Barriers:** Broadband coverage is limited, particularly in rural areas, where **only 25% of households** have access to reliable internet, compared to urban areas at **78%** (Kilani, 2022).
- **Payment Systems:** With fewer than **5% of transactions** completed through e-payment systems, cash remains the dominant mode of payment. This low adoption stems from both consumer trust issues and limited availability of digital payment infrastructure (Zekraoui, 2022).
- **Digital Literacy:** A survey revealed that **60% of Algerian SMEs** lack adequate knowledge to implement effective digital marketing strategies, reflecting a critical need for training and education (Bensaad & Annabi, 2024).

4.3. Consumer Behavior Analysis

General Trends

Social media platforms significantly influence consumer behavior in Algeria. According to a recent survey, **75% of Algerian internet users** discover new products through social media, with **60% of those purchases** driven by recommendations from influencers and online reviews (Elaihar,

2024). Younger consumers, particularly those under 30, dominate this space, making them a key demographic for digital marketing campaigns.

Impact of Digital Marketing

- **Awareness:** Social media ads and influencer campaigns generate substantial visibility, with **70% of Algerians** reporting that online advertisements have introduced them to brands they were previously unaware of (Kilani, 2022).
- **Evaluation:** Consumers frequently rely on online reviews, social media recommendations, and peer feedback to assess products, with **80% of Algerian social media users** reporting they consult online opinions before making purchases (Zekraoui, 2022).
- **Purchase:** Despite increased online shopping interest, **85% of e-commerce purchases** in Algeria are cash-on-delivery, reflecting ongoing trust and payment security concerns (Bensaad & Annabi, 2024).
- **Loyalty:** Businesses that maintain consistent engagement on social media see higher loyalty rates, with **50% of consumers** indicating they prefer brands that respond actively to their queries and concerns online (Elaihar, 2024).

4.4. Comparative Insights

Regional Comparison

Algeria lags behind regional peers like Morocco and Tunisia, where digital payment adoption exceeds **30% of online transactions** compared to Algeria's **5%**. Additionally, these countries benefit from stronger digital literacy programs and governmental support for e-commerce, enabling faster digital transformation (Kilani, 2022; Zekraoui, 2022).

Global Perspective

Globally, Algeria mirrors the trends seen in markets like India, where mobile-first strategies have driven significant e-commerce growth. For example, mobile penetration in Algeria stands at **103%**, creating opportunities for mobile marketing campaigns that align with global best practices (Bensaad & Annabi, 2024). However, Algeria's unique cultural and economic characteristics require tailored strategies to address local trust and infrastructural challenges.

5. Case Study Findings

Key Observations

1. Social media is the most influential platform for engaging Algerian consumers, particularly among urban and younger demographics.

2. SMEs rely heavily on low-cost digital tools like Facebook and WhatsApp but lack the resources to implement advanced strategies such as data-driven targeting.
3. Infrastructural and cultural barriers, such as limited broadband access and low e-payment adoption, hinder the full potential of digital marketing (Kilani, 2022; Elaihar, 2024).

Implications

- **For Businesses:** Companies should invest in consumer trust-building initiatives, such as offering secure payment options and leveraging localized content to enhance engagement.
- **For Policymakers:** Government initiatives should focus on improving digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and encouraging the adoption of e-payment systems to support the growth of digital marketing.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Key Themes and Findings

- **Social Media as a Tool for Building Awareness**

Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are widely used in Algeria to increase brand visibility, especially by small and medium enterprises (SMEs). These platforms are affordable and accessible, making them popular among younger audiences. However, limited use of advanced targeting techniques reduces the overall impact of marketing campaigns.

- **Trust and Challenges in E-Payments**

Consumer trust in digital payments remains a significant hurdle, with many Algerians preferring cash-on-delivery due to concerns about online fraud. Cultural skepticism toward e-commerce further exacerbates this issue, emphasizing the need for secure payment systems and efforts to build consumer confidence.

- **Digital Marketing's Role in Fostering Loyalty**

Consistent and personalized engagement on social media helps businesses build customer loyalty. However, many companies lack the tools to effectively track and evaluate the success of these efforts, hindering their ability to make data-driven improvements.

6.2 Theoretical Context

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Social media's ease of use and perceived value align with TAM principles, demonstrating that these

factors significantly influence consumer willingness to engage with digital marketing.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): Barriers such as lack of trust in online transactions reflect TPB concepts, where perceived obstacles and societal norms influence behavior. Addressing these barriers could encourage more widespread adoption of e-commerce.

Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model: Digital marketing affects various stages of consumer decision-making, including awareness and evaluation. However, challenges such as limited trust in online payments disrupt the purchase phase, reducing overall effectiveness.

6.3 Comparative Insights

- **Regional Perspective**

Algeria lags behind Morocco and Tunisia in adopting advanced digital marketing and e-payment technologies. These neighboring countries have made greater strides in digital infrastructure and trust-building initiatives, offering valuable lessons for Algeria.

- **Global Perspective**

Similar to other emerging markets like India, Algeria can benefit from adopting mobile-first strategies to enhance digital engagement. Mobile marketing has proven effective in reaching broader audiences in markets with similar challenges.

6.4 Implications

1. For Businesses

- Enhance trust through secure payment options and transparent communication about policies and processes.
- Create culturally relevant and localized content to resonate with Algerian consumers.
- Invest in data analytics tools to measure the success of marketing campaigns and refine strategies based on performance.

2. For Policymakers

- Expand digital infrastructure, including broadband access, particularly in underserved areas.
- Develop initiatives to improve digital literacy among businesses and consumers, enabling better use of online platforms.
- Implement regulatory measures to ensure secure and reliable e-payment systems, fostering greater trust in e-commerce.

7. Recommendations

To improve digital marketing effectiveness in Algeria, businesses should focus on creating localized content that reflects the cultural and

demographic characteristics of Algerian consumers. Building trust through secure payment systems and clear return policies is essential to address concerns about online transactions. Additionally, investing in analytics and automation tools can enhance campaign performance and provide valuable consumer insights.

Policymakers should prioritize expanding digital infrastructure, especially in underserved regions, to promote inclusivity. Digital literacy programs targeting businesses and consumers are crucial for safe and effective use of digital tools. Supporting the adoption of secure, user-friendly e-payment systems will further encourage online transactions and enhance consumer confidence.

Future research should investigate Algerian consumer attitudes toward digital marketing and e-commerce through primary data collection. Studies on the role of influencer marketing and mobile applications in shaping consumer behavior are also needed. Additionally, sector-specific research on industries like retail and tourism could identify targeted strategies to drive growth and innovation.

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