

Effect of Advertising Medium (Digital Ads vs. Print Ads) on FMCG Purchase Intention (Examine how ad Channels Shape Consumer Awareness and Buying)

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ABSTRACT

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry relies heavily on advertising to raise brand recognition, shape customer opinions, and ultimately drive sales. The function of conventional print media has changed due to the rise of digital platforms, and there is still much discussion over which is more effective. In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, this research compares the impact of digital and print ads on consumers' knowledge and intent to buy. To investigate demographic differences in responsiveness, trust, credibility, engagement, and memory, we used a mixed-method approach that combined primary survey data from 300 participants with secondary literature. Digital advertising has a greater impact on younger, urban, and higher-income customers' brand memory, immediacy, and impulsive purchasing, according to the data. However, when it comes to health-related and high-trust fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), print ads still hold greater credibility and trust, especially among older and semi-urban customers. According to the research, it's not enough to use one medium; to maximise consumer effect, an integrated strategy that takes use of the best features of both channels is required.

Keywords: Advertising effectiveness; Digital ads; Print ads; FMCG; Consumer awareness; Purchase intention; Trust and credibility; Consumer behavior; Media strategy.

Introduction

Advertising is the process of conveying information about a product or brand in order to persuade potential buyers to make a purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Any business worth its salt will inevitably communicate the created goods. Marketing goods to people living in rural areas and convincing them to buy them is much more difficult. In order for goods and brands to reach rural areas, we must overcome obstacles such as low literacy rates and insufficient infrastructure (Choudhary, 2020). Getting marketing messages to rural places requires a lot of work. A large body of evidence suggests that commercials do, in fact, affect the purchasing decisions of potential consumers (Belch & Belch, 2018). Experts from a variety of fields in the media have pointed out the role of ads as reinforcing factors in shaping audience beliefs, attitudes, and actions (Arens, Weigold, & Arens, 2013). Ads are powerful ways for marketers to get their names and wares in front of consumers and cement their position in their hearts and thoughts. To put it simply, advertising is a kind of storytelling that aims to sell products or services (Hackley & Hackley, 2021).

Many believe that advertisements seen on television have the greatest impact on rural audiences. Any kind of audience, regardless of their reading level, may benefit from the audiovisual impact (Sinha, 2017). Another media behemoth is television. Television still has a far larger audience in rural India than there is online (Kantar IMRB, 2019). Even though television will transition to digital formats in the future, it will still be a dominant medium. There are televisions in rural places, and the proportion of people who possess televisions is growing annually (FICCI-EY, 2022). The growth of Dish TV has further shown that people in rural regions like watching television (Bajpai, 2020). Since purchasing is a common occurrence and consumers' decision-making process is dynamic, the advertising sector is one of the most dynamic in the world. Thus, in order to keep consumers

aware about the items and help them choose brands, adverts should break the clutter and serve as constant reminders (Belch & Belch, 2018). Advertisers are now obligated to influence client decisions via commercials, and a significant percentage of their budget is set aside for this reason (Deloitte, 2023). Commercials need to pique consumers' interest in the advertised items. Customers cannot make a purchase choice, regardless of how amazing the product or brand is, unless they are informed about it (Kotler & Keller, 2016). So, ads are essential for swaying consumer choices.

Due to the wide range of goods and intense competition, advertising for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) is unavoidable. Food, drink, and consumer goods are things that people buy and use on a daily basis. It is another name for packaged items that customers buy again and again. These are the kinds of things that people buy almost every month and use every day, but they won't last. The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry ranks fourth in India in terms of economic contribution due to the size and scope of its market (IBEF, 2023). Commercials for fast-moving consumer goods are clearly needed. Advertising, according to many marketing academics, drives down the price of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) by increasing sales and generating massive turnover (Arens et al., 2013). Some examples of fast-moving consumer goods include oral care, health care, shampoo, skin care products, soaps and detergents, cigarettes, coffee and tea, and so on.

In recent years, India's advertising sector has expanded from a little startup to a fully fledged service provider. The majority of advertising revenue—38.2%—comes from television commercials (Deloitte, 2023). Advertising on television may accomplish a two-dimensional goal. The twin purpose of commercials is to raise brand awareness and to sell the brands. Commercials influence consumers to alter their habits and remain loyal patrons for a longer period of time (Sinha, 2017). Commercials not only inform consumers, but they also encourage them to buy more of both current and future items, bolster the effectiveness of marketing channels in driving sales, and finalise the purchase. Introducing items to potential buyers, bolstering intermediaries in sales, and creating loyal clients are all made more challenging without marketing (Belch & Belch, 2018).

Methodology

Examining the impact of digital and print advertising on FMCG consumers' awareness and purchase intention, this study used a descriptive and analytical research approach. To guarantee a thorough comprehension of the issue, data was culled from both main and secondary sources.

A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from people who buy fast-moving consumer goods. Advertising memory, trust, trustworthiness, engagement, and desire to buy were some of the factors measured by the questionnaire's closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. So that we could compare different groups of consumers, we also logged their demographic information, including their age, income, and level of education. The research included 300 participants chosen using a mix of convenience and selective selection methods. This reflected the varied media consumption patterns and ad exposure of active FMCG customers by including them from urban and semi-urban locations. Scholarly articles, studies on marketing research, surveys of relevant industries, and FMCG-related periodicals were the primary sources of secondary data. In addition to confirming the results of the main data, this secondary evidence also offered theoretical backing.

We used both descriptive and inferential statistics to look at the data we gathered. Consumers' levels of knowledge, trust, and desire to buy were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and frequencies. To determine if digital and print ads elicited different responses from consumers, researchers used cross-tabulations for comparative analysis. To find out how demographics and advertising preferences were related, we used inferential statistics like chi-square tests. To see whether there were any variations in how the two media affected purchase intention, we utilised t-tests. We also used correlation analysis to look at how trust, engagement, and intent to buy were related.

Snacks, drinks, personal care, infant care, and home cleaning products were the only FMCG items included in the research. To better understand the gap between digitally exposed consumers and those who still depend significantly on print media, the survey focused on both urban and semi-urban respondents. Nevertheless, there are some constraints. The findings cannot be applied to a larger population due to the small sample size of 300, which is sufficient for analysis. Furthermore, bias might be introduced if self-reported replies are relied upon. Lastly, the research only looked at fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), hence the results may not be generalisable to other types of items.

Data and Analysis

Impact of Digital Advertising on Consumer Awareness and Purchase Intention

Digital advertising has emerged as a dominant driver of consumer awareness in the FMCG sector. Survey results indicate that over two-thirds of respondents recalled recent FMCG brands through digital platforms such as social media, search engines, and e-commerce portals. Interactive features such as targeted recommendations, influencer endorsements, and personalized offers strengthened consumer engagement. Younger consumers (18–35 years) displayed the highest susceptibility to digital ads, with 72% reporting that online promotions directly influenced their purchasing decisions. This suggests that digital ads not only increase awareness but also stimulate impulse buying, particularly for low-involvement FMCG products like snacks and beverages.

Table 1: Impact of Digital vs. Print Advertising on Consumer Awareness

Advertising Medium	High Recall (%)	Moderate Recall (%)	Low Recall (%)	Primary Reason for Recall
Digital Ads	68	22	10	Frequent exposure, interactive content
Print Ads	40	35	25	Credibility, detailed product info

Influence of Print Advertising on Consumer Awareness and Purchase Intention

Print advertising continues to hold significance, though its impact is relatively subdued compared to digital media. Consumers reported associating print ads with higher credibility and informational depth. For example, health-related FMCGs (nutritional products, baby care, personal hygiene) were perceived as more trustworthy when promoted in newspapers and magazines. Approximately 40% of respondents above the age of 40 acknowledged that print ads reinforced their purchase intention, particularly when accompanied by detailed product information. However, recall rates for print ads were significantly lower compared to digital campaigns, reflecting declining readership among younger demographics.

Table 2: Purchase Intention Generated by Digital vs. Print Ads (FMCG Products)

Product Category	Purchase Intention via Digital Ads (%)	Purchase Intention via Print Ads (%)	Dominant Medium
Packaged Foods & Snacks	74	36	Digital
Beverages	70	32	Digital
Personal Care Products	65	45	Digital
Baby Care & Health FMCGs	52	58	Print
Household Cleaning Products	60	42	Digital

Comparative Effectiveness of Digital vs. Print Advertising

A comparative analysis highlights a generational and behavioral divide. Digital advertising is superior in reach, immediacy, and engagement, with higher purchase conversions in categories such as packaged foods, beverages, and personal care products. Print advertising, while less engaging, plays a reinforcing role in trust-building and long-term brand equity. Consumers often perceive digital ads as cluttered or intrusive, whereas print ads are considered more authentic. Overall, digital advertising demonstrated greater effectiveness in influencing immediate purchase intention, while print advertising was more effective in establishing brand credibility.

Table 3: Demographic Variations in Response to Advertising Mediums

Demographic Factor	Preference for Digital Ads (%)	Preference for Print Ads (%)	Key Insight
Age 18–35	78	22	Younger consumers favor digital
Age 36–50	55	45	Mixed preference
Age 50+	30	70	Older consumers favor print
High-Income Group	72	28	More online engagement
Low-Income Group	45	55	Print trusted in semi-urban/rural
Highly Educated	70	30	Digital for comparisons/info
Less Educated	40	60	Print seen as more straightforward

Demographic Variations in Consumer Response

- **Age:** Younger consumers (18–35) favored digital ads due to exposure on smartphones and social media. Older consumers (40+) relied more on print ads, citing trust and habit as reasons.
- **Income:** Higher-income groups showed greater responsiveness to digital campaigns, aligning with their active online presence and use of e-commerce platforms. Lower-income consumers, particularly in semi-urban areas, showed more receptiveness to print media.
- **Education:** Educated consumers leaned toward digital ads, appreciating interactive content and product comparisons online. Less-educated consumers trusted print ads, perceiving them as more straightforward and less manipulative.

This segmentation suggests that advertising effectiveness is mediated by socio-demographic profiles, reinforcing the need for a multi-channel approach.

Table 4: Trust, Credibility, and Engagement Scores (Scale: 1–5)

Attribute	Digital Ads (Mean Score)	Print Ads (Mean Score)	Key Insight
Trust	3.2	4.5	Print stronger in credibility
Credibility	3.4	4.6	Print perceived as more reliable
Engagement	4.6	3.1	Digital excels in interactivity
Purchase Intention	4.0	3.7	Digital slightly ahead overall

Role of Trust, Credibility, and Engagement

Trust emerged as a critical factor in consumer response. Print advertisements were consistently rated as more credible, particularly in categories that involve health, safety, or personal well-being. In contrast, digital ads scored higher on engagement, interactivity, and entertainment value, but suffered from skepticism due to concerns over misleading claims, excessive targeting, and fake endorsements. Respondents indicated that digital campaigns incorporating transparency (such as verified influencers, customer reviews, and clear product demonstrations) significantly improved purchase intention. Thus, while print drives credibility, digital enhances experiential engagement.

Table 5: Strategic Recommendations Matrix

Objective	Suggested Strategy
Increase Awareness	Use digital ads for quick reach and frequent exposure
Build Credibility	Invest in print media, especially for healthcare & baby care FMCGs
Target Young Consumers	Leverage social media campaigns, influencer marketing, interactive video content
Target Older Consumers	Reinforce trust through newspaper and magazine ads
Balance Trust & Reach	Integrate print (credibility) with digital (engagement) for maximum purchase impact

Conclusion

The study highlights the dynamic role of advertising mediums in shaping consumer awareness and purchase intention in the FMCG sector. Digital advertising has emerged as a powerful tool for increasing product visibility, enhancing engagement, and influencing impulse purchases, particularly among younger, tech-savvy, and high-income consumers. Its interactive features, personalization, and broad reach make it a critical driver of immediate buying behavior. On the other hand, print advertising continues to maintain its relevance by building credibility and reinforcing consumer trust, especially in categories where health, safety, and reliability are paramount. Older and semi-urban consumers still perceive print as a dependable source of information, which strengthens its role in long-term brand building. The comparative analysis underscores that consumer response to advertising is shaped significantly by demographic factors such as age, income, and education, and by perceptual attributes like trust and engagement. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. For FMCG marketers, the findings suggest that strategic integration of both digital and print advertising is essential to maximize reach, trust, and

purchase conversions. Digital ads should be employed for awareness creation, interactive promotions, and younger audiences, while print ads should reinforce credibility and brand image among traditional consumers. Ultimately, a hybrid advertising strategy ensures balanced consumer influence and sustainable growth in the highly competitive FMCG market.

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