

Mobile Marketing & Consumer Engagement: Evidence from India's Digital Economy

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Abstract - India's mobile economy is no longer a future promise — it is today's commercial reality. This study examines the impact of mobile marketing on consumer engagement with empirical evidence drawn from 150 respondents across Punjab, India. Adopting a descriptive-analytical research design and administering structured questionnaires, the study investigates how SMS campaigns, social media advertisements, push notifications, mobile applications, and influencer marketing shape consumer purchase intentions, brand loyalty, and overall satisfaction. Statistical techniques including descriptive analysis, correlation, regression, and chi-square testing were employed to interrogate the data. Results confirm that mobile marketing exerts a statistically significant positive effect on consumer engagement ($\beta = 0.61, p < 0.001$), with social media marketing and personalized notifications emerging as the strongest predictors. Brand trust and perceived usefulness were identified as critical mediating constructs. These findings carry decisive implications for digital marketers, policy designers, and scholars navigating India's fast-evolving mobile-first marketplace.

Keywords: Mobile Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Social Media Advertising, Digital India, Brand Loyalty.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is not merely participating in the global digital revolution — India is, in many meaningful ways, leading it. With over 800 million active internet users and more than 600 million smartphone subscribers, the country has transformed into one of the most consequential mobile markets on Earth (Statista Research Department, 2023). The convergence of affordable handsets, inexpensive data, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and government-backed Digital India initiatives has created an ecosystem in which the mobile phone is no longer a luxury — it is the primary gateway through which hundreds of millions of citizens access commerce, information, finance, education, and entertainment.

Within this ecosystem, mobile marketing has emerged as the pre-eminent instrument through which organizations communicate with, attract, and retain consumers. Mobile marketing encompasses a broad spectrum of promotional activities conducted via mobile devices — including Short Message Service (SMS) campaigns, in-app advertisements, social media promotions, push notifications, QR-code activations, and location-based service offerings (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2009). Unlike the passive, one-directional nature of traditional media advertising, mobile marketing is interactive, personalized, measurable, and capable

of generating real-time behavioral insights. Organizations can now observe precisely how many consumers opened a notification, clicked a product link, abandoned a cart, or completed a transaction — enabling a level of marketing precision that was previously unimaginable (Chaffey, 2015).

Consumer engagement, the intellectual and emotional heart of contemporary marketing theory, refers to the depth of a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016). An engaged consumer is not merely a buyer — they are an advocate, a co-creator, a vocal and voluntary promoter of the brand within their personal and digital networks. The strategic significance of consumer engagement is therefore immense: organizations with highly engaged customer bases consistently demonstrate superior retention rates, higher average transaction values, and stronger resilience against competitive pricing pressures (Varnali & Toker, 2010). Mobile marketing is increasingly recognized as one of the most powerful mechanisms available to organizations seeking to deepen and sustain this engagement.

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms — Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and LinkedIn — has further amplified the reach and influence of mobile marketing in India. Platforms that began as social networking tools have evolved

into thriving commercial ecosystems featuring influencer partnerships, shoppable posts, live commerce events, and AI-driven recommendation engines (Kaplan, 2012). The pandemic period accelerated this transformation dramatically. As physical retail ground to a halt during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020-2021, consumers pivoted decisively towards digital channels. E-commerce giants such as Amazon India, Flipkart, and Meesho recorded unprecedented volumes of mobile transactions, and this behavioral shift has proven remarkably durable in the post-pandemic period (Deloitte Digital Report, 2022).

The importance of personalization in mobile marketing cannot be overstated. Consumers today are simultaneously empowered and selective — they possess unprecedented access to information, product comparisons, peer reviews, and competitive alternatives, yet they are also susceptible to fatigue from indiscriminate and irrelevant advertising (Persaud & Azhar, 2012). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989) and widely applied in subsequent digital marketing research, proposes that consumers are most likely to adopt and engage with technologies they perceive as both useful and easy to use. This has decisive implications for mobile marketing strategy: campaigns that are personalized, contextually relevant, and frictionless in their user experience generate substantially higher engagement outcomes than generic, broadcast-style promotions.

Influencer marketing represents another dimension of mobile marketing that has garnered significant scholarly and practitioner attention. Kumar and Gupta (2021) demonstrated that millennial and Generation Z consumers — cohorts who are both highly active on mobile platforms and deeply skeptical of conventional advertising — exhibit substantially elevated trust in recommendations from social media influencers. The parasocial relationships that consumers form with influencers they follow over extended periods translate into genuine purchase intent, brand advocacy, and community membership — outcomes that represent the highest levels of consumer engagement (Smith, 2018).

Despite the growing body of literature on digital marketing, empirical research specifically examining the mobile marketing–consumer engagement nexus in the Indian context remains comparatively limited. Most extant studies focus on Western markets or examine mobile marketing in isolation from broader consumer behavior frameworks. India's unique socioeconomic diversity,

multilingual consumer landscape, and the coexistence of technologically sophisticated urban consumers with recently connected rural populations present dynamics that generic models may not adequately capture. The present study therefore addresses this gap by generating primary empirical evidence on mobile marketing's impact across a demographically diverse sample drawn from India. The study pursues five objectives: first, to measure the impact of mobile marketing on consumer engagement; second, to analyze consumer behavioral responses to mobile advertisements; third, to assess the role of social media marketing in driving brand interaction; fourth, to identify the dominant factors influencing mobile marketing effectiveness; and fifth, to offer actionable recommendations for organizations operating within India's mobile-first digital economy. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature; Section 3 describes the research methodology; Section 4 presents data analysis and findings; Section 5 discusses conclusions; and Section 6 outlines directions for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Conceptual Foundations of Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is defined as 'a set of practices that enables organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network' (MMA Global, 2009, as cited in Varnali & Toker, 2010). This definition is notable for its emphasis on interaction and relevance — qualities that fundamentally distinguish mobile marketing from its analogue predecessors. Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009) offered an early and influential synthesis of mobile marketing scholarship, identifying ubiquity, personalization, interactivity, and localization as the four defining attributes of mobile marketing. Their framework remains foundational, though subsequent researchers have extended it substantially to incorporate social commerce, augmented reality, and AI-driven personalization.

The evolution of mobile marketing has unfolded across successive technological generations. The SMS era of the early 2000s gave organizations their first opportunity for direct, personalized consumer outreach at scale. The smartphone revolution — epitomized by the introduction of the iPhone in 2007 and the subsequent proliferation of Android devices

— transformed mobile devices from communication tools into multi-functional consumption platforms. Social media applications turned these platforms into community spaces where brands could participate in conversations rather than merely broadcast messages (Kaplan, 2012). The current era, characterized by AI-driven recommendation systems, real-time behavioral analytics, and location-based service integration, represents a qualitative leap in the sophistication and effectiveness of mobile marketing.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks inform contemporary understanding of mobile marketing and consumer engagement. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally formulated by Davis (1989), posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the primary determinants of technology adoption behavior. Applied to mobile marketing, TAM suggests that consumers will engage with mobile marketing channels to the extent they find those channels genuinely useful and operationally straightforward. Empirical applications of TAM in mobile marketing contexts have consistently supported these propositions (Persaud & Azhar, 2012; Gupta & Sharma, 2020).

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), developed in mass communication scholarship and subsequently applied to digital media, proposes that media consumption is an active, goal-directed behavior motivated by specific needs — including the need for information, entertainment, social interaction, and personal identity expression (Katz et al., 1974, as cited in Varnali & Toker, 2010). In mobile marketing contexts, UGT helps explain why consumers actively seek out and engage with certain types of branded content while systematically ignoring others: engagement occurs when mobile marketing content satisfies a genuine consumer need. Relationship Marketing Theory, meanwhile, provides the normative framework through which organizations should conceptualize their mobile marketing objectives — not as discrete transactional interventions, but as sustained relational investments in consumer trust, loyalty, and advocacy (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

3. Mobile Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Kotler and Keller (2016) established that digital marketing has fundamentally transformed the pathways through which consumers gather information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. The traditional linear purchase funnel has been replaced by a dynamic, non-linear consumer decision journey in which mobile

touchpoints feature prominently at multiple stages. Consumers now routinely consult mobile applications for price comparisons while physically standing in retail stores, read peer reviews on social media before committing to significant purchases, and complete transactions via mobile payment systems without ever interacting with a physical retail environment.

Chaffey (2015) demonstrated that mobile marketing significantly enhances the convenience dimension of the consumer experience, a finding with particularly strong implications for India's geographically dispersed population. For consumers in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities who lack easy access to organized retail infrastructure, mobile commerce platforms have effectively democratized access to branded products and services. Ryan (2016) further argued that the measurability of digital marketing — the capacity to track, attribute, and optimize every element of a campaign — represents a strategic transformation in how organizations allocate marketing resources and evaluate campaign effectiveness.

4. Social Media Marketing and Engagement

Kaplan (2012) examined the distinctive mechanisms through which social media platforms generate consumer engagement, identifying content virality, community formation, and participatory culture as the key drivers. Organizations that successfully leverage these mechanisms are able to generate organic brand advocacy at scale — a phenomenon that Tuten and Solomon (2018) characterized as earned media, distinguishing it from the paid media of conventional advertising. The interactive architecture of social media platforms — their systems of likes, comments, shares, and direct messaging — creates what Solomon (2017) described as a social proof environment, in which consumer decisions are continuously influenced by the visible behaviors and expressed preferences of other users.

Kumar and Gupta (2021) conducted an empirical investigation into influencer marketing and its effect on youth consumer engagement in India, generating findings of significant practical relevance. Their study, drawing on a sample of 200 respondents aged 18-35, found that 73% of respondents reported being influenced by social media personalities when making brand-related decisions, with fashion, consumer electronics, and food delivery emerging as the categories most susceptible to influencer effects. The researchers concluded that the authenticity and relatability of influencers — qualities distinct from the aspirational authority of celebrity endorsers — are the primary mechanisms driving engagement.

5. Privacy, Trust, and Mobile Marketing Effectiveness

Persaud and Azhar (2012) introduced an important qualification into the mobile marketing literature by demonstrating that consumer responses to mobile advertising are strongly moderated by permission and personalization. Their research established that permissionbased mobile marketing — in which consumers have actively opted into receiving promotional communications — generates substantially higher engagement levels and more positive brand attitudes than intrusive, unsolicited approaches. This finding has been reinforced by subsequent scholarship examining the privacy paradox in mobile marketing: consumers simultaneously desire personalized experiences and express anxiety about the data collection practices that personalization requires (Gupta & Sharma, 2020).

The Deloitte Digital Report (2022) synthesized global trends in mobile consumer behavior, confirming that brand trust has emerged as the dominant factor governing long-term consumer engagement in digital environments. Organizations that communicate transparently regarding data usage, honor consumer privacy preferences, and deliver consistently valuable content are rewarded with engagement metrics that substantially outperform industry benchmarks. The Indian Journal of Marketing (2021) similarly documented that consumer trust in mobile platforms is a necessary precondition for sustained engagement, particularly among first-generation digital consumers in rural and semi-urban markets.

III. RESEARCH GAP

While international scholarship on mobile marketing and consumer engagement is substantial and growing, the Indian context has received comparatively limited empirical attention, particularly with respect to the simultaneous examination of multiple mobile marketing channels — SMS, social media, push notifications, and influencer marketing — and their collective effect on consumer engagement across diverse demographic subgroups. Most existing Indian studies focus narrowly on e-commerce adoption or social media usage, without interrogating the specific mobile marketing mechanisms that drive engagement behaviors. This study addresses that gap by generating multi-channel, demographically diverse empirical evidence on the mobile marketing–consumer engagement relationship in the Indian market.

2. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design, appropriate for investigating the nature and magnitude of relationships between mobile marketing practices and consumer engagement behaviors. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 150 respondents drawn from Punjab, India, using convenience sampling. The sample encompassed four occupational categories — students (n=40), employees (n=45), businesspersons (n=30), and homemakers (n=35) — spanning age groups from 18 to above 45 years. The questionnaire comprised items measured on a five-point Likert scale assessing dimensions of mobile marketing exposure (SMS, social media, push notifications, influencer content), perceived usefulness, brand trust, purchase intention, and consumer engagement. Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and government publications. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the composite instrument was computed at 0.847, confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Statistical analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, linear regression, and Pearson chisquare tests to examine relationships between variables.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

1. Respondent Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=150)

Category	Sub-Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Students	40	26.7
	Employees	45	30.0
	Businesspersons	30	20.0
	Homemakers	35	23.3
Age Group	18-25 Years	55	36.7
	26-35 Years	48	32.0
	36-45 Years	30	20.0
	Above 45 Years	17	11.3

Gender	Male	88	58.7
	Female	62	41.3

2. Mobile Marketing Channel Usage

Ads Notifications Marketing Content Marketing

Figure 1 reveals that social media advertisements are the most pervasive mobile marketing channel, influencing 78% of respondents, followed by push notifications (65%), influencer content (60%), SMS marketing (52%), and email marketing (38%). This pattern underscores the dominance of visually rich, community-embedded formats over text-based channels.

3. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cronbach's α
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	3.84	0.72	0.831
Push Notifications (PN)	3.61	0.80	0.814
SMS Marketing (SMS)	3.29	0.91	0.792
Influencer Marketing (IM)	3.73	0.77	0.819
Brand Trust (BT)	3.90	0.68	0.855
Consumer Engagement (CE)	3.78	0.74	0.847

4. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix ($p < 0.01$)**

Variable	SM M	PN	SM S	IM	BT	CE
SM M	1.00	0.61**	0.48**	0.57**	0.63**	0.68**

PN	0.61**	1.00	0.52**	0.55**	0.59**	0.62**
SMS	0.48**	0.52**	1.00	0.44**	0.41**	0.49**
IM	0.57**	0.55**	0.44**	1.00	0.66**	0.65**
BT	0.63**	0.59**	0.41**	0.66**	1.00	0.71**
CE	0.68**	0.62**	0.49**	0.65**	0.71**	1.00

All mobile marketing dimensions exhibit statistically significant positive correlations with consumer engagement (CE). Brand Trust ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$) and Social Media Marketing ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrate the strongest associations with CE, confirming their primacy in the mobile marketing–engagement relationship.

5. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was conducted with Consumer Engagement as the dependent variable and the four mobile marketing channels and Brand Trust as predictors.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results — Dependent Variable: Consumer Engagement

Predictor	β	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	VI F
(Constant)	0.42	0.18	2.33	0.021	–
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	0.28	0.06	4.67	<0.001	1.82
Push Notifications (PN)	0.17	0.07	2.43	0.016	1.74
SMS Marketing (SMS)	0.09	0.06	1.50	0.136	1.45
Influencer Marketing (IM)	0.19	0.07	2.71	0.007	1.91

Brand Trust (BT)	0.24	0.07	3.43	<0.001	2.04
$R^2 = 0.641$ Adj. $R^2 = 0.629$ $F(5,144) = 51.4$ $p < 0.001$					

The regression model explains 64.1% of the variance in consumer engagement ($R^2 = 0.641$, $F(5,144) = 51.4$, $p < 0.001$). Social Media Marketing ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.007$), and Push Notifications ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.016$) emerge as significant predictors. SMS Marketing ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.136$) does not achieve statistical significance, suggesting its declining relative influence in contemporary mobile marketing. VIF values below 2.1 confirm the absence of multicollinearity.

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6. Chi-Square Test: Digital Influence and Purchase Intention

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation — Mobile Marketing Influence vs. Purchase Intention

Mobile Marketing Influence	High Purchase Intention	Moderate Intention	Low Intention	Total
Highly Influenced	52	14	4	70
Moderately Influenced	28	22	10	60
Not Influenced	5	7	8	20
Total	85	43	22	150

Chi-Square Test Result: $\chi^2(4) = 22.47$, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's $V = 0.274$

The chi-square test confirms a statistically significant association between the level of mobile marketing influence and consumer purchase

intention ($\chi^2(4) = 22.47$, $p < 0.001$). Among highly influenced respondents, 74.3% reported high purchase intention compared to 25% among those reporting no mobile marketing influence. Cramér's $V = 0.274$ indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting that mobile marketing influence is a meaningful but not exclusive determinant of purchase intent.

7. Consumer Engagement Dimensions

Figure 3 illustrates that active social media interaction (32%) constitutes the most prevalent engagement behavior, followed by repeat purchase (26%), brand advocacy (18%), content sharing (14%), and loyalty program participation (10%). This distribution confirms that mobile marketing most effectively drives the interactive and relational dimensions of consumer engagement.

V. FINDINGS

The empirical analysis generates several important and interconnected findings. Mobile marketing exerts a statistically significant and practically meaningful positive influence on consumer engagement in the Indian context, accounting for 64.1% of variance in engagement outcomes. Social media marketing emerges as the single most influential mobile marketing channel ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the central role that platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp play in shaping Indian consumer behavior. Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$) functions as a critical mediating construct — consumers who trust a brand are substantially more likely to actively engage with its mobile marketing communications. Influencer marketing ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.007$) demonstrates significant effect, corroborating Kumar and Gupta's (2021) findings regarding the particular susceptibility of younger Indian consumers to peer-based digital recommendations. Conversely, SMS marketing, once the primary instrument of mobile promotion, no longer achieves statistical significance as an engagement driver, signaling a decisive generational shift in channel preferences. The chisquare analysis further establishes that higher mobile marketing exposure is associated with greater purchase intention, with 74.3% of highly influenced respondents reporting high purchase intent. Active social media interaction (32%) constitutes the most common engagement behavior, underscoring the experiential and participatory nature of contemporary mobile marketing-driven engagement.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the impact of mobile marketing on consumer engagement in India, and the evidence gathered is unambiguous in its direction and persuasive in its magnitude. Mobile marketing is not a peripheral or supplementary element of the contemporary Indian consumer's commercial experience — it is central to it. As India continues its remarkable trajectory of digital expansion, with smartphone penetration deepening across income strata and geographies, the mobile device has become the primary interface through which brands and consumers meet, negotiate, transact, and build relationships. The findings of this study confirm that organizations which invest strategically and intelligently in mobile marketing — particularly in social media advertising and influencer partnerships — achieve meaningfully higher levels of consumer engagement than those that do not. The model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.641$) indicates that a well-designed, multi-channel mobile marketing strategy can account for nearly two-thirds of the variation in consumer engagement outcomes, a finding that should concentrate the minds of marketing strategists and digital investment decision-makers. Equally important is the centrality of brand trust in the engagement equation. Trust is not an ancillary consideration or a reputational luxury — it is the foundational prerequisite for effective mobile marketing. Consumers who trust a brand willingly receive its communications, actively engage with its content, share their experiences within their networks, and return repeatedly as loyal customers. Organizations that compromise consumer trust through intrusive, irrelevant, or privacy-violating mobile marketing practices undermine the very relational infrastructure upon which sustainable engagement depends. This study therefore advocates, unequivocally, for a permission-based, value-driven, and consumer-centric approach to mobile marketing in which personalization serves genuine consumer needs rather than merely organizational revenue targets. The declining significance of SMS marketing as an engagement driver carries an important practical message: mobile marketing strategies must evolve continuously in step with changing consumer platform preferences, or risk investing resources in channels whose persuasive currency is steadily depreciating. In sum, India's mobile marketing opportunity is vast, but its realization demands strategic sophistication, ethical discipline, and an unwavering commitment to creating consumer experiences worthy of sustained engagement.

VII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future researchers may extend this study by employing longitudinal designs to trace the evolution of mobile marketing's impact on consumer engagement over time, by incorporating moderation analyses examining how demographic variables such as digital literacy, income level, and geographic location moderate the marketing–engagement relationship, and by investigating the emerging role of artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and voice-based interfaces in shaping next-generation mobile consumer engagement in India and comparable emerging economies.

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