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A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF E-COMMERCE MARKETING IN INDIAN COMPANIES

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Abstract

Ecommerce marketing has turned into a key growth capability of Indian businesses as it is an enabler to reach, engage, retain and convert customers through digital visibility in a measurable online environment. Indian companies are spread across a wide spectrum of business sectors – such as big markets, direct-to-consumer brands, omnichannel retailers, service platforms, quick commerce and digitally adapting SMEs. The study of the role of e-commerce marketing in Indian companies has been done by descriptive-analytical and literature based research design. It builds a conceptual structure connecting marketing resources, mechanisms involving the customers, governance, strategic capability and firm results. The analysis reveals that e-commerce marketing generates value for customers via search, social and influencer channels, marketplace ads, content commerce, mobile, personalisation, electronic word of mouth, customer relationship management and omnichannel coordination. It shows in its wider market reach, higher brand awareness, better conversion, engagement, repeat purchase and competitive agility. But an increasing acquisition cost, dependence on promotion, siloed data, attribution challenges, privacy and trust issues, lack of credibility for influencers, regional variations, logistics-service gaps and restricted capabilities of smaller companies are all limitations on e-commerce marketing. The paper suggests formula-based metrics to assess marketing maturity, ROI on marketing investments, lift on conversion, cost of customer acquisition, C.L.V., and attribution confidence. It finds that Indian companies must look at e-commerce marketing as a strategic competency, which involves customer insight, creative communication, platform execution, analytics, responsible data usage and the consistent post-purchase experience rather than just a toolbox of advertising solutions.

Keywords: e-commerce marketing, Indian companies, digital marketing, customer engagement, online retail, social commerce, omnichannel marketing, personalisation, customer acquisition, marketing analytics

1. Introduction

Marketing has been revolutionized by e-commerce, where it has become an interactive process, filled with data, and constantly measurable. In the traditional way businesses would build awareness in the mass media, push customers to physical stores and measure results by looking at sales results at regular intervals. From ad hoc discovery and comparison to transaction, delivery, review and repeat purchase, the entire customer journey can be impacted by digital touchpoints, in e-commerce. Marketing thus becomes part of the platform, interface, content, pricing and service/fulfilment journey and not just limited to promotion.

This transformation is of great strategic importance in the Indian context. It is a fact that there are consumers who are different in Indian companies in terms of their language, income, geographic location, digital confidence, and preferred payment method and logistics. Large marketplaces fight on assortment, price, trust and delivery; direct-to-consumer brands fight on storytelling and community; fashion and beauty brands compete with influencers and content-driven discovery; food delivery and quick commerce brands compete by engaging users on mobile, communicating with them about hyperlocal offerings and immediacy; and now, in the wake of COVID, established retailers are increasingly bridging the physical and digital worlds through websites, apps and marketplaces. So, there's a need to marry the national and regional aspects of e-commerce marketing in India.

Ecommerce marketing is more than just getting traffic to the website. It covers areas such as better product discoverability, establishing brand credibility, eliminating customer doubt, assisting with conversion, tailoring communication, customer feedback collection and market intelligence. Digital marketing is a process of adapting and using technology which can be done by both firms, customers and partners, according to Kannan and Li (2017). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) go on to state that customer experience is created over a series of touchpoints, over time. The views shared highlight how e-commerce marketing can be broken down and understood as a strategic system where the creation of demand is integrated with customer experience and business performance.

Businesses in India frequently use one tool after another, such as social media pages, online ads, marketplace listings, influencers, or email automation or mobile push notifications, but without realising that they are not a part of a bigger customer journey. This creates activity in the channel but doesn't always lead to strategic value. The question is not really whether companies are utilizing digital marketing but how they're utilizing it.It's not really if companies use digital marketing, but how they do it to enhance customer and firm outcomes.

1.1 Research Problem

While e-commerce marketing is essential for businesses in India, numerous businesses find it difficult to translate their online efforts into a successful and sustainable business. Discounts and paid media become overused and reliant on acquiring customers, fragmented data leads to disjointed customer views, and metrics are measured at the campaign level, rather than the revenue level, potentially rewarding clicks instead of sales; and over-targeting can lead to loss of privacy and trust. Marketing promises may also not be valid, and inventory, delivery, and return/customer-service performance may not meet expectations. The problem under investigation in this paper is that the question is how e-commerce marketing can provide a measurable customer value and business value to the Indian Companies while addressing their strategic, operational and ethical challenges in the digital commerce.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To provide an understanding of the meaning and strategic role of e-commerce marketing for Indian businesses.
- To recognize the key e-commerce marketing channels and mechanisms that are used to acquire, convert, engage and retain customers.
- To explain how e-commerce marketing contributes to brand awareness, customer experience, market reach and competitiveness.
- To analyse the technology, organizational, financial and trust based challenges that are faced by the companies in India.
- To build an integrated conceptual framework and measures for e-commerce marketing performance based on formula.
- To suggest a gradual and prudent approach to build e-commerce marketing capability.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What role does e-commerce marketing play in Indian companies throughout the customer journey?
2. Which digital channels and marketing mechanisms are best suited to different customer segments and business contexts?
3. How can acquisition, conversion, engagement, retention and marketing returns be measured more effectively?
4. What are the major challenges to effective e-commerce marketing in the Indian business context?
5. What strategies can help companies grow ethically and profitably through e-commerce?

1.4 Hypotheses

For future empirical testing, the study proposes the following null hypotheses:

H01: There is no significant relationship between e-commerce marketing exposure and the frequency of online purchases.

H02: There is no significant relationship between consumer trust and intention to purchase online.

H03: There is no significant association between promotional sensitivity and impulsive online buying.

H04: There is no significant association between reliance on online reviews and purchase confidence for high-involvement products.

H05: There is no significant association between privacy concerns and acceptance of personalised e-commerce marketing.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is important for various levels of digital maturity of managers, researchers and Indian companies. Combines customer acquisition, engagement, trust, conversion, retention, analytics, and omnichannel execution, all in one place. It also separates promotional activities from marketing capabilities—e.g., a business could spend vast sums on digital advertising programs but still not have a first-party data source, customer knowledge, great content, discipline around experimentation, or consistency after sales. The study offers practical formulas, matrices and a roadmap which will support your internal assessment without offering "statistics" from the market.

2. Conceptual Background

2.1 The role of E-Commerce Marketing and the scope of its use.

Ecommerce marketing involves utilizing digital channels, customer data, content, platforms and technology to attract potential customers, make online transactions possible, build a customer base and create a better relationship between the two. It involves search engine optimisation, paid search, marketplace advertising, social media marketing, influencer marketing, content marketing, eWOM, email and messaging, mobile-app engagement, affiliate marketing, personalisation and customer relationship management. It is also the Marketing elements which are integrated into an e-commerce interface, including product information, recommendations, reviews, promotions, checkout design and communication of the checkout service.

It is a concept different from e-commerce. E-commerce is about the electronic exchange, e-commerce marketing is about the creation of demand, communicating the value, and managing relationships around this exchange. The two are intertwined; effective advertising cannot offset poor product information and/or delivery reliability; an effective platform can be underutilised if there's no good product information or trust.

E-commerce marketing also varies from traditional online marketing as it is highly related to the behaviors and transaction results. Firms can watch what products people view, what they type into a search, adding them to their shopping carts, whether they forgot to add a product, whether they converted, whether they returned, how they looked at their products on the website and whether they responded to specific products and campaigns. While this can lead to quicker learning, it also will raise the importance of responsible analysis and utilization of personal information.

2.2 Indian Companies as a Distinct E-Commerce Context

Indian market is a highly heterogenous market. While the consumers in the metros may value speedy delivery, the associated app based discovery and personalised recommendations, the consumers in smaller cities may value more trust, value, local-language communication and flexibility in terms of payment options. The types of products also vary: fashion and beauty is highly reliant on visual content and influencers; electronics rely heavily on information and comparison; grocery and quick commerce rely on being immediate and local; financial and travel services rely on assurance and credibility.

Thus, adaptation, and not uniformity is the key to success in the Indian market. Companies have to have regional content, be multilingual, have a mobile first approach and have channel-specific pricing, all while holding onto a brand promise. More recently, the expansion of omnichannel strategies also requires the website, app, marketplaces, socials, call centres and physical stores to increasingly operate and communicate with each other as a single integrated system. In a study of 166 Indian retailers in five sectors, Avvad et al. (2026) revealed that there is varying channel integration even though retailers are digital, suggesting that digital is not synonymous with omnichannel maturity.

Quick-commerce and platform businesses are also an example of how business can be marketing. Verma and Pahwa (2026) claimed that using the speed of delivery, the use of humour, cultural timing and emotional storytelling to build a brand experience, can all be combined into the collaborative campaigns run by Blinkit and Zomato. In e-commerce, fulfilment is not just a functional process, interface design and service are a reflection of the brand and influence customer reaction to the business, supporting a broader statement: fulfilment, interface design and service are not just tasks, they are brand and customer response builders.

2.3 Key Constructs Used in the Study

Table 1. Key constructs used in the analytical framework

Construct	Meaning in this study	Strategic relevance	Indicative literature
E-commerce marketing capability	Ability to combine channels, content, data, technology, talent and governance for online market action.	Determines whether digital activity becomes repeatable business value.	Kannan & Li (2017); Dwivedi et al. (2021)
Customer acquisition	Creation of qualified traffic and first purchase through search, social, marketplaces and referrals.	Expands reach but must be evaluated through cost and quality.	Kumar et al. (2016); Appel et al. (2020)
Customer engagement	Cognitive, emotional and behavioural interaction with a brand across digital touchpoints.	Supports trust, advocacy, co-creation and repeat purchase.	Lim et al. (2022); Lim & Rasul (2022)
Conversion	Movement from interest to desired action, such as enquiry, registration or purchase.	Links marketing execution with revenue outcomes.	Bleier et al. (2019); Kannan & Li (2017)
Retention and loyalty	Continuation of the relationship through satisfaction, value and repeat purchase.	Improves lifetime value and reduces dependence on repeated acquisition.	Kumar & Ayodeji (2021); Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022)

Construct	Meaning in this study	Strategic relevance	Indicative literature
Trust and governance	Privacy, transparency, consumer protection, platform credibility and responsible design.	Reduces perceived risk and protects long-term brand value.	Pavlou (2003); Chawla & Kumar (2022)

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Digital Marketing, Strategy and Firm Value

The scope, scale and speed of business activity are changing with digital business strategy, says Bharadwaj et al. (2013). For e-commerce marketing, the concept is also applicable because not only can businesses get to a market quickly, but they can also have partners and adhere to customer data in real time. In an adaptive framework that incorporates customer touchpoints, data, technology and value creation, Kannan and Li (2017) offered a framework that positions digital marketing. They found that not only the performance of the channels, but also the entire organisational system is important for digital marketing.

Dwivedi et al. (2021) suggested the key research questions that need to be addressed in digital and social media marketing, such as customer engagement, analytics, mobile, AI and ethical issues. They found that digital marketing is becoming more data-driven, platform-centric and interactive. In addition, Erhan et al. (2024) concluded that digital marketing innovation is positively correlated with the firm performance and comprehensiveness of decision making has a positive effect on the intensity of the benefit. The studies suggest that the value of e-commerce marketing is not a given, it is dependent on managerial interpretation and integration with strategy.

3.2 Customer Experience, Conversion and Retention

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) said that the customer experience is created during pre-purchase, purchase and post purchase, and across multiple channels. Marketing for e-commerce companies, then, starts before the visit to their website and is maintained after the delivery, as service, reviews, loyalty communication and repeat offers. Bleier et al. (2019) demonstrate the interaction of shopping goals and design elements as essential to effective online experiences.

This is an affirmation of the importance of combining persuasiveness, usefulness, ease and confidence with communication.

Goodwill and trust are vital elements in India, and they are emphasized by the evidence. According to Kumar and Ayodeji (2021) there are factors that determine the success of e-retail, such as service quality, system quality, information quality, trust and net benefit, which determine satisfaction and repeat purchase among Indian online shoppers. On the basis of 411 Indian consumers in the online grocery sector, Jebarajakirthy et al., (2022) demonstrate that fostering value co-creation and repurchase intention is a possibility through positive e-engagement. These results indicate that customer acquisition is not the only measure of marketing success; customer experience is what makes acquisition retention.

3.3 Social media, influencers and electronic word of mouth (WOM)

Social media has made e-commerce marketing more than a one-sided communication: it is an interaction between networked members. Social platforms are becoming more pertinent as they continue to play strategic role as indicated by Appel et al. (2020) and brand-consumer and brand-business interactions through social media are gaining importance in customer engagement research as stated by Lim and Rasul (2022). There has been a decrease in uncertainty due to the use of eWOM, ratings and user-generated content as evidence as prospective buyers consult the experience of others.

Fashion, beauty, lifestyle and food are some categories which are particularly relevant for influencer marketing. In an Indian perspective, Tiwari et al (2024) conclude that there is a relationship between perceived trust and attitudes towards influencers and purchase intention. Vrontis et al. (2021) stress the importance of establishing the credibility of an influencer, the fit of the audience and the quality of their relationship. The management message is that it is not enough for fans to follow just any company, there should be clear partnerships, categories that relate to them and the measurement of the results of their actions.

3.4 the processes and principles of consumer protection, trust and risk.

One reason why trust is so essential in online transactions is because no one can physically go to the seller or the product prior to a customer buying it. Pavlou (2003) combines TR and perceived risk with technology acceptance to account for the adoption of e-commerce, and Gefen et al. (2003) show that TR can be combined with the factors of perceived usefulness and ease of use in online shopping. The findings by Chawla and Kumar (2022) in the Indian context indicate that the factors affecting trust and loyalty are security, privacy, information about the website, and service to customers and consumer protection.

Marketing practices are also a factor in building trust. While hidden conditions, ‘scarcity’ issues, misleading reviews and personalisation that intrude upon their user experience can boost short-term conversions, they can erode longer-term trust and confidence. Thus, a good marketing design and consumers protection must be considered as a source of value and not as a cost of compliance.

3.5 Omnichannel and Hyperlocal Marketing.Omnichannel marketing and Hyperlocal marketing.

In a sense, omnichannel retailing is not a mere multichannel presence, but rather focuses on the integration of the channels and the customer journey, as Verhoef et al. (2015) explicitly point out. For Indian businesses, this implies that they need to coordinate their online promotions, inventory in stores, returns policies, and communication with their loyal customers. Many Indian retailers are still not fully integrated with the digital channel, even though they have embraced digitisation, as indicated by Avvad et al. (2026).While there has been a rise in digitisation, many retailers are still not fully integrated with the digital channel, as shown by Avvad et al. (2026).

The meaning of marketing continues to be broadened by hyperlocal and quick commerce models. When paired with cultural resonance and digital stories, immediacy can be turned into a front-end brand message by Verma and Pahwa (2026). This means, the ecommerce marketing can help to distinguish a company based on: delivery timelines, local relevance, responsiveness in communication.

Table 2. Thematic synthesis of selected literature

Author(s)	Focus	Main contribution	Relevance to Indian companies
Kannan & Li (2017)	Digital marketing framework	Connects touchpoints, data, technology and value creation.	Supports integrated e-commerce marketing capability.
Lemon & Verhoef (2016)	Customer journey	Explains experience across pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages.	Shows why acquisition, checkout, fulfilment and retention must align.

Author(s)	Focus	Main contribution	Relevance to Indian companies
Kumar & Ayodeji (2021)	Indian e-retail retention	Links system, information, service quality and trust with satisfaction and repeat purchase.	Provides direct evidence from Indian online shoppers.
Jebarajakirthy et al. (2022)	E-engagement and repurchase	Shows that engagement and value co-creation support repurchase intention.	Highlights engagement as a retention mechanism in India.
Tiwari et al. (2024)	Influencer marketing	Finds that trust and attitude toward fashion influencers shape purchase intention.	Guides influencer selection in Indian fashion e-commerce.
Chawla & Kumar (2022)	Consumer protection and trust	Emphasises security, information and customer care.	Shows that trust is both legal and marketing capital.
Avvad et al. (2026)	Omnichannel integration in India	Finds uneven integration among 166 retailers across five sectors.	Identifies a strategic execution gap.
Verma & Pahwa (2026)	Hyperlocal marketing	Connects immediacy, humour and cultural storytelling with engagement.	Explains quick-commerce branding in India.

3.6 Research Gap

The literature has documented the various aspects of digital marketing, customer experience, social media, trust, e-retail quality, and the integration of omnichannel. But these themes are usually studied independently. Studies on consumers may be focused on purchase intention, particular sectors and/or particular channels, whereas strategic studies may be general and not linked to the operational aspects of Indian companies. This paper is based on the gap; it provides a single, unifying analytical framework for acquisition, conversion, engagement, retention, trust, analytics, omnichannel execution and post-purchase delivery. It also recommends practical formulas and a roadmap for implementation that can be followed on a phased basis by both large companies and resource-limited companies.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study is descriptive-analytical and conceptual research design. It's descriptive as it addresses the channels, processes and results of e-commerce marketing. It is analytical because it explains the interactions of those elements in Indian companies, finds out the challenges and formulates measurement formulas and strategic solutions. The study is not an original survey study.

4.2 Data Sources and Selection

The paper is based on academic secondary literature, mostly between 2003 and 2026, written by secondary authors. The sources were picked from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly books related to digital marketing strategy, e-commerce acceptance, online customer experience, social media, customer engagement, influencer marketing, e-retail retention, consumer protection, omnichannel retailing, and hyperlocal marketing. Studies directly relevant to India or those that had a well established theoretical framework of relevance to Indian companies received greater weightage.

4.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis was carried out in four stages. The literature was firstly organised into six themes: strategy, acquisition, engagement, conversion, retention and trust. In the second step, themes were projected onto the Indian business setting such as marketplaces, DTC brands, omnichannel retailers, quick-commerce platforms, and smaller businesses. Third, the relationships were linked into a conceptual framework connecting resources, mechanisms, customer outcomes and firm outcomes. Fourth, indicators and strategic recommendations were worked out for managers in the form of formulas.

4.4 Scope and Limitations

The unit of analysis is Indian companies that do e-commerce or digitally enabled retail and services. No company-level financial estimates, econometric testing or official industry survey is provided in the paper. The scores in the figures are not market statistics but literature-based interpretive indicators to communicate relative salience. Conceptual integration, strategic interpretation and a practical measurement framework are the contributions of the study.

Table 3. Methodological framework of the study

Element	Description	Purpose
Research type	Descriptive, analytical and conceptual literature-based study.	To explain and integrate the strategic role of e-commerce marketing.
Source base	Author-based academic literature, mainly 2003-2026.	To provide scholarly grounding and recent Indian relevance.
Unit of analysis	Indian companies using online, marketplace, app or omnichannel commerce.	To examine firm-level marketing capability and outcomes.
Analytical lens	Customer journey, marketing capability, trust, measurement and governance.	To avoid treating e-commerce marketing as advertising alone.
Main limitation	No primary survey or official firm-level dataset.	To keep claims transparent and conceptually supported.

4.5 Conceptual Framework

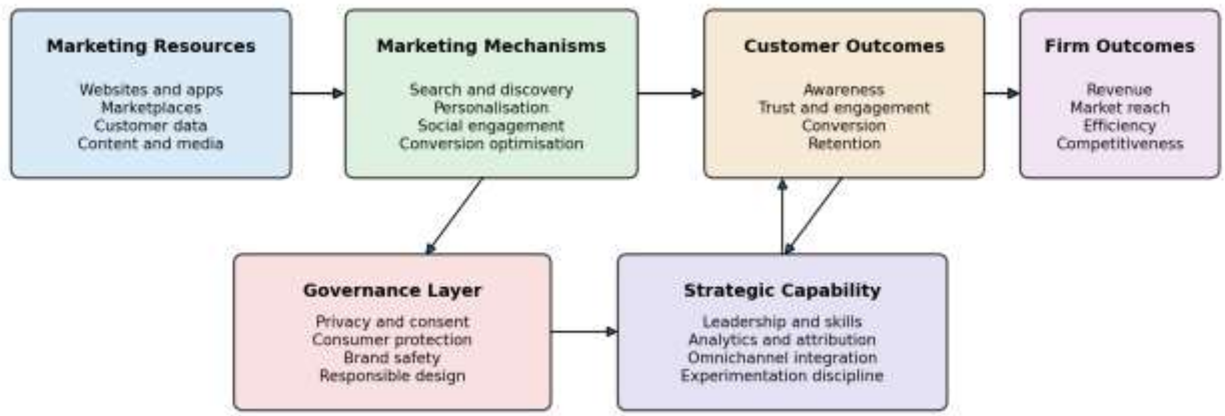

Figure 1. Integrated framework for the role of e-commerce marketing in Indian companies.

5. Role of E-Commerce Marketing in Indian Companies

5.1 Expanding Market Reach and Brand Visibility

The first big task of ecommerce marketing is to get the business found of its region of geographic distribution. Indian businesses can target customers in different parts of the country via search engines, marketplaces, social media and mobile applications. In the case of smaller brands, a marketplace listing or presence on social commerce can decrease the amount of cash that is required in order to develop a retail network that reaches across the country. For already established companies, the web can open new horizons for the brand in new areas and target groups.

But, when it comes to visibility, it should be referred to as qualified reach. Vanity metrics can be created when there is a campaign that shows impressions but fail to engage relevant users. In order to achieve effective reach, the keyword match, quality of product-feed, audience selection, regional language match, channel match play a crucial role. When a brand becomes memorable, credible and helps customers buy, its visibility becomes of strategic importance.

5.2 Customer Acquisition & Conversion

E-commerce marketing is a tool that assists companies gain customers via organic search, paid search, social advertisements, marketplace promotion, affiliates, referrals and influencer partnerships. Pros of the analysis is that business can compare channels based on the cost of acquiring a customer, the conversion rate and the contribution margin. That allows the re-allocation of budget towards channels that have a higher probability of purchasing and also have higher lifetime value.

The power of advertising is not the only factor to consider in driving conversions. Whether or not there is interest is determined by product info, reviews, photos, shipping visibility, payment security, return policy and checkout process. The marketing team thus should collaborate with product, technology, operations and customer service teams. An underwhelming platform or fulfilment experience, combined with high abandonment rates due to the need to create demand for it through advertising, leads to wasted acquisition spend and high abandonment rates.

5.3 Personalisation and customer engagement.

Indian companies can use customer data to tailor the content, offers and service messages that they send to their customers. Personalisation can minimize the search effort and make a search more relevant, especially when the assortment of a search online is large. It can additionally enable area language messaging, area promotions, and behaviour-based communications. Engagement increases with useful, entertaining and/or culturally relevant or socially interactive content.

Personalisation should be proportionate and be clearly explained. Over targeting can cause discomfort, and not doing a good job on suggestions can let the customer know that the business isn't "getting it". The aim should be to add value to the customer and not simply more messages. Human escalation is also a key element when the delivery, payment, quality or refund issues are affecting the customer.

5.4 Retention, Loyalty and Customer Lifetime Value (CLTV)

Customer retention is one of the most crucial functions of eCommerce marketing; where multiple paid media-generated leads can be costly to the same person. A variety of communication channels, such as email, messaging, loyalty programmes, replenishment reminders, personalised recommendations and service recovery, can help to foster repeat purchase. Relationships can be further developed by a review and community engagement following the initial transaction.

Kumar & Ayodeji (2021) demonstrate that the satisfaction and repeat purchase is dependent on service quality, system quality, information quality and trust. That is why there needs to be a link between retention marketing and fulfilment and customer care. While repeat purchase based on discounting can be short-lived, effective service, communications that are relevant and valuable can lead to a more enduring relationship.

5.5 Market Intelligence and Competitive Agility

When it comes to e-commerce marketing, there are always signals that are pointing at demand. Companies can use search term trends, product views, response to campaigns, reviews, price sensitivity, return reasons and regional trends to determine emerging product preferences. They provide an assortment planning assist, product improvement, pricing, content generation and inventory decisions. Marketing thus is not just a source of communication but also source of market intelligence.

The reason that competitive agility occurs is because companies are able to quickly test messages, offers and experiences and make decisions based on the outcomes. But hasty experimentation has to be orchestrated. Firms should formulate a hypothesis, choose an appropriate outcome, have a similar control or baseline and control for only a few variables (if any) at a time. If not, there's a danger of data overload resulting in false confidence rather than learning.

5.6 Coordinating and differentiating service across all channels

Ecommerce marketing can help Indian retailers with its features for omnichannel commerce—such as online discovery leading to offline purchase, offline fulfillment of online orders and click-and-collect, cross channel return and unified loyalty. When customers can seamlessly navigate from one channel to another without missing out on any information or benefits, the marketing promise is enhanced.

Marketing is also a service that differentiates. Delivering swiftly, making your products visible in the order, allowing for easy returns, a responsive chat, and providing accurate inventory, this all conveys reliability. When used in conjunction with culturally relevant narration, hyperlocal delivery can be looked at as experiential branding as seen by Verma and Pahwa (2026). So, businesses need to understand that how they perform in their operations affects how they are perceived by their target customers and the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Table 4. Strategic roles, instruments, outcomes and risks

Strategic role	Typical instruments	Expected outcome	Key risk
Market reach and visibility	SEO, marketplace listings, social media, content and paid search.	Qualified traffic, brand awareness and category discovery.	High exposure with weak audience relevance.
Acquisition and conversion	Performance media, affiliates, product pages, reviews and checkout optimisation.	New customers, enquiries, orders and improved conversion.	Rising acquisition cost and promotional dependency.
Engagement and personalisation	Recommendations, social interaction, messaging and behavioural segmentation.	Higher relevance, interaction and basket development.	Privacy concerns and intrusive targeting.
Retention and loyalty	CRM, email, loyalty, service recovery and replenishment communication.	Repeat purchase, advocacy and customer lifetime value.	Over-communication and discount-only loyalty.
Market intelligence	Search analytics, review analysis, cohort analysis and experimentation.	Better decisions, assortment planning and competitive response.	Misinterpretation and weak attribution.

Strategic role	Typical instruments	Expected outcome	Key risk
Omnichannel coordination	Unified inventory, loyalty, returns and cross-channel messaging.	Seamless experience and stronger trust.	Channel conflict and inconsistent execution.

6. Major E-Commerce Marketing Instruments

6.1 Search Engine and Marketplace Marketing

SEO & Pay per click brings in customers who are actively looking for a Product/Service. The search terms that should be included in the Indian search strategy are category terms, brand terms, regional language variations and mobile intent. List quality, sponsored products, ratings, fulfilment badges, selling events and selling responsiveness are all a part of marketplace marketing. Marketplaces have the advantage of access to demand, but the disadvantage is that it comes with fees; and there is competition on price and ownership of customer data.

6.2 Social Media, Content and Influencer Marketing.

Social platforms can be used to discover, tell a story, entertain, build a community and drive direct response. Content can inform customers, show how it can be used, or eliminate customer uncertainty and make it culturally relevant. One example of social proof that influencers can offer is in the fashion and beauty sectors, as well as food and lifestyle. The number of followers should not be the only criteria used for choosing creators for a company.But for a company, not the followers' number should be the only criterion for selecting creators, but rather their audience fit, credibility, content quality and content relevance for conversion. These contracts should include the obligations of disclosure and be brand safe.

6.3 Email and Messaging Marketing

Emails, SMS and messaging tools facilitate the communication of your business life cycle: Welcome sequences, cart reminders, order updates, replenishment reminders, loyalty offers, and service recovery. These channels are beneficial as they can leverage and rely on a first party relationship to minimize the need for repeated paid acquisition. They work best when they are: consensual, segmented, frequent and relevant. When messaging is not well managed, it can easily be considered spam in the user's inbox, and engenders loss of trust.

6.4 Mobile-App and Push-Notification Marketing

Businesses can add discovery, payment, loyalty, service and personalised communication in mobile apps. The downside of push notifications is that they cause interruption. The notifications should be timely, relevant and limited. The quality of the interface, search, loading speed and checkout simplicity are also the key factors in app marketing. Download of an app is not a customer, there are other things to consider like activation and repeat use, and contribution.

6.5 Analytics, Automation and Artificial Intelligence

Analytics enables companies to break down their customer base, determine channels that are profitable, analyse customer cohorts and evaluate conversion optimisations. Automation can provide messages on events, AI can provide support for the recommendations, content variation, demand prediction and conversational service. While these tools are useful for making scales better, they still need clean data, and monitoring of the models and human supervision. Message volume can grow but customer value can not — that doesn't make marketing automation a good thing.

6.6 Spread the word about the product and manage its reputation electronically.

The 4Rs (ratings, reviews, comments, referrals and social conversations) have an impact on trust. For reputation management, it's essential to have positive reviews, act quickly on negative feedback, and rectify and learn from repeated problems. There's no room for companies to influence or squelch constructive criticism. It is not about removing negative feedback, it's about showing responsiveness and enhancing the experience.

Table 5. Channel selection matrix for Indian companies

Channel	Best suited for	Primary metric	Management caution
Organic search	Sustained category discovery and information-led demand.	Qualified organic traffic and assisted conversion.	Results require time, technical quality and useful content.

Channel	Best suited for	Primary metric	Management caution
Paid search/social	Rapid acquisition, launch support and retargeting.	CAC, conversion and incremental contribution.	Avoid optimising only for clicks or platform-reported return.
Marketplaces	Demand access, trust and national reach.	Marketplace conversion, rating and contribution margin.	Manage fees, price pressure and customer-data limitations.
Influencers/content	Discovery, education and cultural relevance.	Engagement quality, assisted sales and brand search lift.	Check credibility, disclosure and audience fit.
Email/messaging	Retention, replenishment and service communication.	Repeat purchase, revenue per recipient and unsubscribe rate.	Consent, frequency and relevance are essential.
App/push	High-frequency categories and loyalty ecosystems.	Activation, monthly active users and repeat purchase.	Do not treat downloads as business value.
Omnichannel	Retailers combining stores and digital channels.	Cross-channel conversion, unified loyalty and return convenience.	Requires inventory, data and service integration.

7. Formula-Based Analytical Framework

E-commerce marketing generates large quantities of data, but metrics become useful only when they answer managerial questions. The following indicators provide a practical measurement structure. They are adaptable diagnostic formulas and do not replace detailed financial or econometric analysis.

E-Commerce Marketing Maturity Index (EMMI): *EMMI = (0.20S + 0.20C + 0.20D + 0.15O + 0.15T + 0.10G) × 100*

Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI): *ROMI (%) = [(Incremental Gross Contribution - Marketing Cost) / Marketing Cost] × 100*

Conversion Lift: *Conversion Lift (%) = [(Post-Campaign Conversion Rate - Baseline Conversion Rate) / Baseline Conversion Rate] × 100*

Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC): *CAC = Total Acquisition Marketing Cost / Number of New Customers Acquired*

Customer Lifetime Value to CAC Ratio: *CLV:CAC = Expected Customer Lifetime Contribution / Customer Acquisition Cost*

Retention Lift: *Retention Lift (%) = [(Post-Programme Retention - Baseline Retention) / Baseline Retention] × 100*

Attribution Confidence Score (ACS): *ACS = 0.30DC + 0.25CT + 0.25EX + 0.20IR*

The components of the maturity index are S for strategic alignment, C for channel and content capability, D for data and analytics, O for omnichannel integration, T for technology and automation and G for governance. The scores for each component range from 0 to 1. The data completeness (DC), consistent campaign tagging (CT), experiment quality (EX), and identity resolution (IR) are the four components of the attribution confidence score. The higher, the more confidence in the reported results being reflective of real incremental marketing contribution.

Table 6. Formula-based indicators for e-commerce marketing

Indicator	Managerial question	Interpretation
EMMI	Is the company capable of coordinating e-commerce marketing at scale?	Low scores identify gaps in strategy, data, channels, integration or governance.
ROMI	Does the campaign create contribution after marketing cost?	Use incremental gross contribution, not total sales attributed by a platform.
Conversion lift	Did the intervention improve the probability of purchase?	Compare with a valid baseline or control and monitor margin and returns.
CAC	How much does it cost to acquire a new customer?	Segment by channel, category and customer quality.
CLV:CAC	Is acquisition economically sustainable over the relationship?	Higher ratios are desirable, but lifetime assumptions must be realistic.
Retention lift	Did the programme improve continued customer activity?	Evaluate cohorts rather than aggregate repeat sales only.
ACS	How reliable is the marketing attribution system?	Low confidence requires better tagging, experiments and customer identity resolution.

7.1 Illustrative Application

Suppose an Indian direct-to-consumer company improves its product content, product reviews, and product checkout communication and the website conversion rate goes up from 2.5 per cent to 3.2 per cent. Conversion lift is [(3.2 - 2.5) / 2.5] × 100 = 28 per cent. If the campaign and optimisation programme costs INR 600,000 and produces incremental gross contribution of INR 1,200,000, ROMI is [(1,200,000 - 600,000) / 600,000] × 100 = 100 per cent. Although this is a good result, it should be viewed alongside return rates and customer quality/repeat purchase as a short term conversion boost may not be sustainable value.

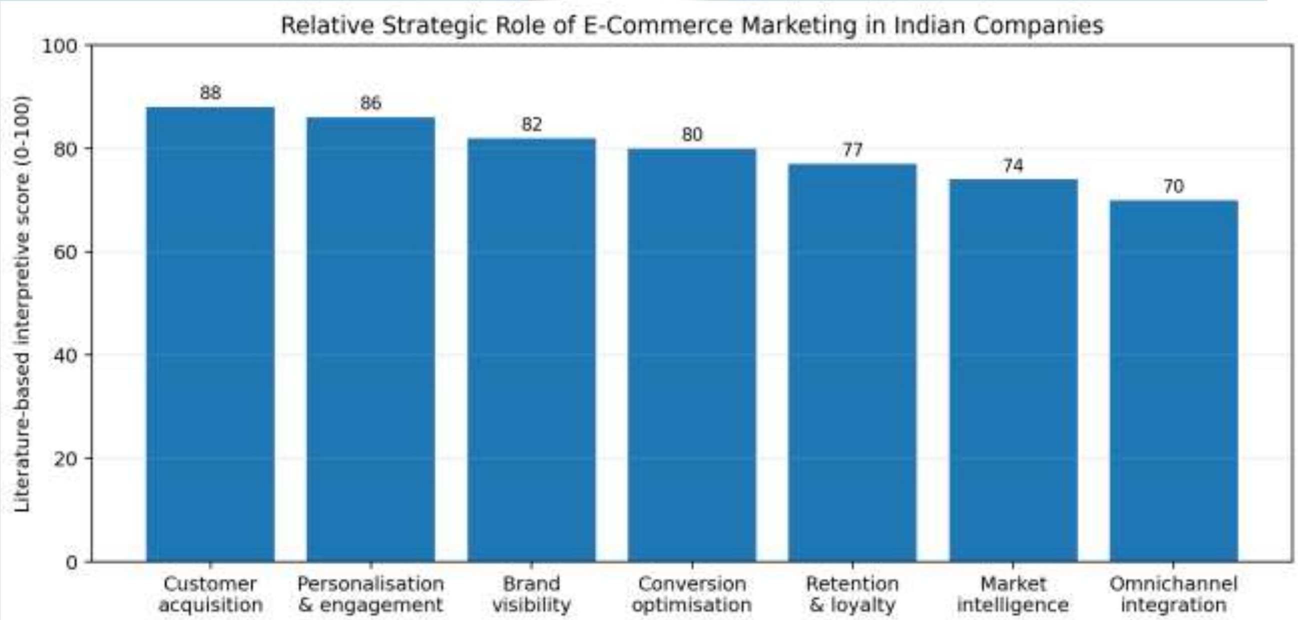

Figure 2. Literature-based interpretive assessment of the strategic role of e-commerce marketing. Scores are analytical indicators, not survey statistics.

8. Challenges Limiting E-Commerce Marketing Effectiveness

8.1 Rising Acquisition Cost and Promotional Dependence

With more and more companies being vying for the same digital attention, paid traffic can start to get costly. Frequent discounts, no delivery charges or giving back cash, may cause the company to lose customers due to the promotion instead of preference. This reduces margins and requires ongoing investments for growth. The answer is to enhance the organic discovery, first-party relationships, retention and differentiated value, rather than simply paying for acquisition.

8.2 Social Skills and the Internet of Things

While e-commerce marketing relies on data, customers might not know what it's used for with regard to their browsing history or purchase and location details. When it comes to trust, intrusive retargeting, hidden conditions, false scarcity, and mistaking the disclosure of influencers can harm trust. Indian firms should adopt consent-based data practices, have clear policies, and accurate information about the product and accessible methods to handle complaints. Complaint rate, review sentiment, as well as the refund experience and repeat purchase, should be leveraged to monitor trust, beyond campaign engagement.

8.3 Fragmented Data/Weak Attribution

Customers can interact via marketplaces, websites, apps, social platforms, call centres and in physical stores. These systems are unable to track the entire funnel or even know where the sale came from when they're not connected. Calculations based on data from the platform may overestimate the performance as several channels attribute to the same conversion. There is a need for consistent tagging, one customer identifier for customers, incrementality testing and finance aligned contribution metrics for companies.

8.4 Content Clutter and Influencer Credibility

There are many ads, promotions and influencer content that consumers have to deal with. Repeatedly asking attention diminishes the attention offered and fake endorsements will diminish the credibility of the message. Companies require unique creative concepts, category knowledge, local and genuine partnerships. The key to measuring content quality should be qualified engagement, search lift, assisted conversion and sentiment and not views alone.

8.5 Regional and Cultural Diversity

India is NOT a monolithic online market. Different regions and customer segments have different language preferences, cultural references, product preferences, expectations of payment and delivery times. National campaigns can backfire if they take a local perspective. Companies need to consider language, imagery, offer structure and offer choice by region but with an underlying common set of brand principles.

8.6 Logistics-Service Mismatch

Demand can be created in marketing faster than can be met by the company. When stocks are not available on time, delays occur, product is damaged or returns and refunds are hard to come by, it turns a successful promotion into a displeased customer. Therefore, ecommerce marketing needs to rely on actual stock data, more realistic delivery promises and segmentation based on services. Planning campaign operations and customer care have to be part of the planning.

8.7 Limited Skills and Resources

Smaller businesses might not have experts in performance marketing, analytics, content or technology and compliance. May rely on agencies or platforms heavily without building up their own learning. A modular approach is more appropriate: Start with a well-defined customer segment, a small number of channels, easy to measure and documented experiments. Capability should be built up upon the ability to read and respond to results.

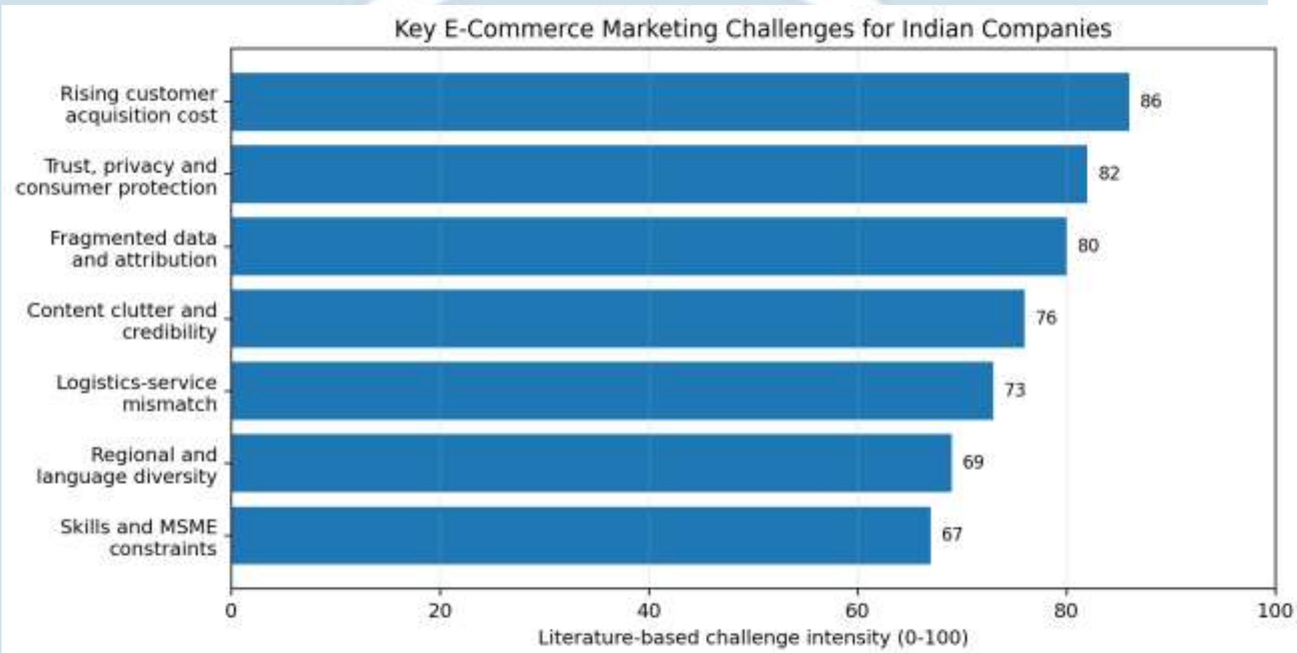

Figure 3. Literature-based interpretive assessment of major e-commerce marketing challenges. Scores are analytical indicators, not official statistics.

9. Strategic Solutions for Indian Companies

9.1 Design Marketing Around the Customer Journey

It is important that companies draw a line on discovery, evaluation, purchase, fulfilment, service and repeat purchases before they choose channels. Stages should include a customer need, a responsible function and a measurable outcome. This ensures that marketing focuses on getting in the door without missing the checkout, delivery or retention of the customer. Marketplace and offline touchpoints are included, if applicable, in a journey map.

9.2 To build First Party Data and Consent Capability.

Through a first-party method, based on transactions and service interactions, loyalty and voluntary preferences, companies can minimize reliance on external platforms. Data should be collected in an intentional and consensual manner. The companies should decide on the criteria of ownership, quality checks and access rights and retention criteria. The best customer profile isn't the one that has a lot of information, it's the one that is as relevant and serviceable as possible while keeping the information to a minimum.

9.3 Develop a Content Strategy that benefits your business.

Performance campaigns get people to buy now, brand-building content gets them to remember, believe and want to buy later. Indian businesses need to spread their resources over both time scales. Useful content, social proof, creation partners and brand stories should be leveraged for search and conversion advertising. This means fewer discounts and better quality acquisitions in the future.

9.4 Integrate Marketing With Product, Operations and Service

The following factors should be part of the campaign planning – inventory, pricing, fulfilment, customer care and return capacity. Use accurate information on product pages; operational reality in delivery promises; operational reality in complaint themes, with influence on content and targeting. It's imperative that it is cross functional – the customer doesn't experience separate departments, he or she experiences one company.

9.5 Experimentation & Incrementality Measurement

It is important for companies to have a test and learn calendar for creative interventions, audience interventions, offer interventions, landing page interventions, and retention interventions. Tests should include a hypothesis, a main measure, and a main control and/or a valid baseline. Incrementality testing can assist in figuring out to pick out sales that would have happened if the campaign had not been executed. One must make sure the metrics delivered by the platforms and website match up with contribution margin and finance records.

9.6 Improve Trust and Responsible Marketing Governance

Good governance should include privacy, disclosure for influencers, review integrity, transparency of promotions, dark patterns and complaint escalation and brand safety requirements. If the campaign is of high risk, it should be reviewed by law and customer-experience. Governance should be proportional: a basic product email should have simpler controls in place and a personalised pricing or a sensitive targeting should have a more robust governance.

9.7 Have an internal capability and agency governance that meets and exceeds requirements.

Despite the agencies' campaigns, companies must take ownership of their customer strategy, data, learning and measurement internally. Senior leaders, marketing managers, analysts, and content teams and customer-service staff need role-based training. Data access, standards for attribution, write-up and handing over of experiments should be specified in agency contracts to ensure that knowledge builds up in the company.

Table 7. Strategic solution matrix

Challenge	Strategic solution	Implementation action	Primary metric
High acquisition cost	Balance paid acquisition with organic, referral and retention channels.	Track CAC and CLV by channel and customer cohort.	CAC, CLV:CAC and repeat purchase.
Weak trust	Adopt transparent information, consent and service recovery.	Audit product claims, reviews, privacy notices and complaint handling.	Complaint rate, review sentiment and retention.
Data fragmentation	Create a unified marketing data layer and tagging standard.	Connect website, app, CRM, marketplace and service data where permitted.	Data completeness and ACS.
Attribution ambiguity	Use experiments and finance-aligned contribution measures.	Run holdouts, geo tests or matched baselines.	Incremental contribution and ROMI.

Challenge	Strategic solution	Implementation action	Primary metric
Content clutter	Build distinctive, useful and regionally relevant content.	Develop content pillars and creator-fit criteria.	Qualified engagement and assisted conversion.
Service mismatch	Integrate marketing calendars with inventory and fulfilment capacity.	Use real-time availability and realistic delivery promises.	Cancellation, return and fulfilment satisfaction.
Skill constraints	Adopt phased capability building and documented learning.	Train teams and use a limited initial channel portfolio.	Training completion, adoption and test velocity.

9.8 Phased E-Commerce Marketing Roadmap

Table 8. Suggested roadmap for Indian companies

Phase	Time horizon	Main focus	Expected output	Control
Phase 1: Diagnose	0-2 months	Customer journey, channel, data and capability audit.	Baseline EMMI and priority problem list.	Avoid technology-first decisions.

Phase	Time horizon	Main focus	Expected output	Control
Phase 2: Prioritise	2-4 months	Select target segments, channels and measurable use cases.	Focused marketing portfolio and KPI definitions.	Exclude channels with weak economics or unclear ownership.
Phase 3: Prepare	3-6 months	Improve content, tagging, consent, landing pages and service coordination.	Measurement-ready campaigns and cleaner customer experience.	Privacy and quality review.
Phase 4: Test	4-9 months	Run controlled acquisition, conversion and retention experiments.	Evidence on incremental value and customer response.	Use controls or valid baselines.
Phase 5: Integrate	6-15 months	Connect CRM, marketplaces, app, website and offline channels.	Stronger personalisation and omnichannel consistency.	Monitor data access and channel conflict.
Phase 6: Scale	12+ months	Automate proven journeys and optimise the channel portfolio.	Sustainable capability, learning and profitable growth.	Review ROMI, trust and customer-quality outcomes.

10. Discussion

Based on the analysis, there are three functions of e-commerce marketing in the Indian companies which are intertwined with each other. Firstly, it generates demand by putting products and brands out there in the search, social, markets and content. Second, it is a way to convert demand, as it eliminates uncertainty, makes the purchase more relevant, and makes the purchase easy. Thirdly, it builds relationships via service communication, personalisation, community and retention activity. Such functions are dependent on each other. No one wants to spend money on something they don't want and don't need, or service without foundation or investment, or repeat promotion without value.

Trust, localisation and mobile execution come into the picture, making it more relevant in the Indian context. There is a wide range of language and digital experience and expectations amongst customers. It is therefore important for companies to have a flexible communication and interface design, but also to be transparent. The findings from the Indian empirical literature reviewed in this paper have confirmed that the service quality, information quality, trust, engagement and value co-creation are related with the satisfaction and repurchase. New studies on how to integrate channels and the use of hyperlocal campaigns also reveal the impact of channel and operational decisions on marketing results.

One of the key findings is that e-commerce marketing should be considered as a cross-functional capability. Marketing can't manage the information about the product, the accuracy of the stock, delivery, experience of returns and ability to resolve complaints on its own; all these factors affect the efficiency of marketing. Split the promotion and the business and may get some short-term traffic, but be harmful to the long-term value of the customers.

Another factor that can make a difference is measurement. The web offers a wealth of metrics, but not all are necessarily incremental. Businesses should look at channel metrics and experiment, margin contribution, cost of acquisition/retention of customers. It's possible to get a high reported ROI from a campaign and just collect customers who were going to purchase regardless of the campaign. The proposed attribution confidence score aims to be transparent, not obfuscating, the uncertainty.

Last but not least, responsible marketing is a competitive asset should be understood. When there is less perceived risk, privacy, transparent pricing, honest reviews, honest disclosure of influencers and easy access to service all contribute to it. It's possible that this aggressive design can lead to more conversions in the short-term, but it's confidence and repeat behaviour that will provide the growth in e-commerce. Trust is thus not only an ethical need, but also a monetary asset.

11. Key Findings

- E-commerce marketing is valuable when everything from acquisition to conversion, engagement, retention and service is considered a single customer journey.
- Qualified Customer Acquisition, Personalised Engagement, Brand Visibility, Conversion Optimisation and retention are the significant roles.
- Indian experience reveals that Trust, Service quality, Information quality, Engagement and Value co-creation are key factors in the satisfaction and repeat purchase.
- Social, influencer and hyperlocal marketing is effective when it's credible and relevant to the culture and has clear value to customers.
- However, having an omnichannel presence is not enough for retailers to be integrated – this is still a challenge for many Indian retailers with respect to data, inventory, service and cross-channel continuity.
- Challenges that hinder acquisition costs are significant, especially the reliance on promotions, privacy concerns, lack of attribution and logistics-service alignment.
- Don't measure marketing effectiveness based on clicks, measure based on ROMI, CAC, CLV:CAC, Conversion lift and Retention lift and Attribution confidence.
- Encouraging sustainable e-commerce growth, responsible data use and consumer trust go hand in hand.

12. Recommendations

- Set up a cross-functional e-commerce marketing council comprising of marketing, technology, operations, finance, legal and customer service.
- Establish one customer-journey map and a limited number of business outcomes prior to channel and/or tool selection.
- Create first party data, consent and tagging guidelines for enhanced personalisation and attribution.
- Avoid using aggregate / overall dashboards and instead measure segment performance across a range of channels, categories, regions and customer cohorts.
- Ensure that there is a balance between short-term performance marketing and content, brand building, community and organic discovery.
- Ensure there is an audience match, credibility and disclosure / commercial relevance before engaging with influencers and creators.
- Incorporate campaign calendars into inventory, delivery, return and service capacity.
- Ensure that there are controlled tests to measure incremental contribution and not double counting across platforms.

- Use multilingual and mobile-first communication that can cater to various Indian consumers.
- Track indicators of trust - complaints, sentiment, refund experience and opt-out as well as sales indicators.
- For SME's, start with a small group of customers, two or three priority channels, easy CRM and regular monthly customer reviews.
- Examine and eliminate ecommerce marketing activities that are not adding value for customers or profits every quarter.

13. Conclusion

Ecommerce marketing has carved a niche for itself as an integral part of every Indian businesses strategy as it has become a link between market access, customer understanding, communication, transaction and relationship building. It is not just an Internet advertising product. These all impact on the opportunities that customers have to find, assess, buy, and stay with a company, but it is the combined effect of these elements that creates search visibility, marketplace execution, social and influencer communication, content, mobile engagement, personalisation, reviews, customer relationship management and omnichannel coordination that drive the customer experience. The author's conclusion is integration is key to the success of ecommerce marketing. There is a need for strategy, content, data, technology that works, cross functional execution, ability to measure and a responsible governance. It is simply not possible to generate value that is sustainable when the product page is wrong, the delivery promise is not realistic, there is a difficult return process or data is used without trust. On the contrary, businesses that promote based on experience will convert digital reach to customer lifetime value and competitive agility.

The proposed framework can be tested empirically in Indian sectors to see how the two groups of companies (large and small) perform in the promotion of quick commerce using their Hindi and regional-language marketing strategies and how marketing strategy is connected with responsible design and customer loyalty in the quick commerce market. Longitudinal studies are also possible at a company level to explore if there are any significant relationships between the moves toward e-commerce marketing maturity and better profitability, retention and market resilience.

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