

## A Study on Customer Satisfaction Towards Digital Marketing of Startups in Perambalur District

<sup>1</sup>T. Vijaya, <sup>2</sup>Dr. K. Maruthadurai

<sup>1</sup>Research scholar in commerce PG and Research department of commerce Thanthai Hans Roever College Perambalur (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

<sup>2</sup>Research Advisor & Assistant professor PG and Research department of commerce Thanthai Hans Roever College Perambalur (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

### Abstract:

The rapid proliferation of digital channels has transformed how startups acquire and retain customers; however, the correlation between lean digital marketing and long-term consumer contentment in semi-urban contexts remains under-researched. This study investigates the impact of digital marketing dimensions on customer satisfaction towards startups in the Perambalur District of Tamil Nadu, identifying the primary drivers of brand advocacy in a regional environment. The study employs an analytical research design, utilizing a cross-sectional survey of 250 consumers and secondary data from peer-reviewed journals. Using reliability testing and multiple regression analysis, the empirical findings indicate that content relevance, platform interactivity, and perceived trust are significant predictors of satisfaction in the Perambalur region. Notably, while local startups excel in agility, "perceived risk" remains a significant psychological barrier for consumers. Regression analysis suggests that a personalized user experience significantly outweighs high-frequency advertising in driving customer delight. This research bridges the gap between global marketing theory and district-specific execution, providing a strategic framework for local entrepreneurs. Ultimately, the findings underscore that for startups in Perambalur to gain a competitive advantage, they must prioritize service quality and transparent engagement over aggressive customer acquisition tactics.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Digital Marketing, Startups, Perambalur District, Consumer Behavior, Service Quality.

### 1. Introduction

The global business landscape has undergone a seismic shift as digital marketing becomes the primary engine for consumer engagement and brand development. For startups, which often operate with limited financial and human resources, digital channels offer a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising to reach a broader audience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Unlike established corporations, startups rely on the agility of social media, search engine optimization, and content marketing to establish initial market presence and build brand equity from the ground up. However, as the digital space becomes increasingly saturated, the mere presence on these platforms no longer guarantees success. The focus has shifted from simple customer acquisition to the complex task of ensuring long-term customer satisfaction through digital touchpoints (Kotler et al., 2021).

In the specific context of India, the "Digital India" initiative has catalyzed a digital revolution in semi-urban and rural areas, bringing districts like Perambalur into the mainstream digital economy. While urban consumers are well-versed in digital transactions, consumers in districts such as Perambalur present a unique demographic profile characterized by emerging digital literacy and specific cultural nuances in consumption (Ramaswamy & Namakumari, 2018). Startups operating in the Perambalur District face the dual challenge of leveraging global digital tools while tailoring their message to a local audience that may harbor higher levels of "perceived risk" regarding online privacy and transaction security. Consequently, understanding the specific determinants of customer satisfaction in this regional pocket is essential for local entrepreneurs to move beyond generic marketing and toward high-impact, trust-based engagement (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

Despite the growing body of literature on digital marketing, there remains a significant research gap regarding how these strategies translate into customer satisfaction within localized, resource-constrained startup ecosystems.

Most existing studies focus on Tier-1 cities, often overlooking the behavioral patterns of consumers in regions like Perambalur where personalized service and word-of-mouth still hold substantial weight (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This research aims to bridge this gap by empirically analyzing how digital marketing dimensions such as content relevance and platform interactivity influence customer delight and brand loyalty among the local population. By identifying the barriers and drivers of satisfaction, this study provides a strategic framework for startups to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage through service quality rather than aggressive, high-frequency advertising (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

## **2. Review of Literature**

The theoretical foundation of digital marketing for startups is built upon the integration of search engine optimization and social media to gain initial market visibility (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In the contemporary "Marketing 5.0" era, startups are increasingly required to blend data-driven technology with human-centric storytelling to achieve high levels of engagement (Kotler et al., 2021). Scholars argue that content relevance remains the primary driver of digital retention, as generic advertising often results in "digital fatigue" among modern consumers (Ryan, 2020). This is supported by findings that personalized digital communication significantly increases click-through rates for small businesses compared to mass-marketing techniques (Smith, 2018). Furthermore, content marketing has been identified as a vital tool for startups to build authority and trust within saturated digital marketplaces (Baltes, 2015). Consequently, startups that fail to provide consistent, value-added content often experience a rapid decline in customer interest within their first six months of operation (Pulizzi, 2016). While digital tools are widely available, many SMEs and startups still struggle to utilize them strategically to foster long-term relationships (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). In the absence of a physical presence, startups must utilize "digital brand flair" the combination of aesthetic and functional website design to compensate and build consumer confidence (Rowley, 2016). This relationship-building process is best understood through the "honeycomb framework," where startups must prioritize "identity" and "relationship" blocks to satisfy niche audiences (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Ultimately, digital marketing has evolved from a simple communication channel into a comprehensive experiential ecosystem for the modern consumer (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

The transition from engagement to satisfaction is heavily mediated by service quality. Zeithaml et al. (2018) argue that in the digital realm, electronic service quality (e-SQ) is more critical for satisfaction than product pricing. To sustain this, startups must focus on "customer lifetime value" by using digital analytics to predict and satisfy future needs (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). Empirical evidence demonstrates that website interactivity and ease of navigation are direct antecedents to consumer delight (Foroudi et al., 2017). Furthermore, the speed of social media responsiveness is now considered a top-tier factor in building brand loyalty (Moriuchi, 2019). Satisfaction itself is defined as a psychological state that, for startups, is heavily dictated by the success of the very first digital transaction (Oliver, 2014). This "e-satisfaction" is strongly influenced by the perceived value of the digital service provided (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Even in a digital world, loyalty requires superior execution of traditional basics, such as timely delivery and clear communication (Reichheld & Scheffer, 2000). Post-purchase support via digital channels often proves more influential in repeat-purchase behavior than pre-purchase marketing efforts (Chiu et al., 2012). Therefore, "customer-perceived value" serves as a more accurate predictor of satisfaction than quality alone in a competitive digital environment (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). Even when service failures occur, startups can increase satisfaction if they handle digital complaints with transparency and speed (Holloway & Beatty, 2008).

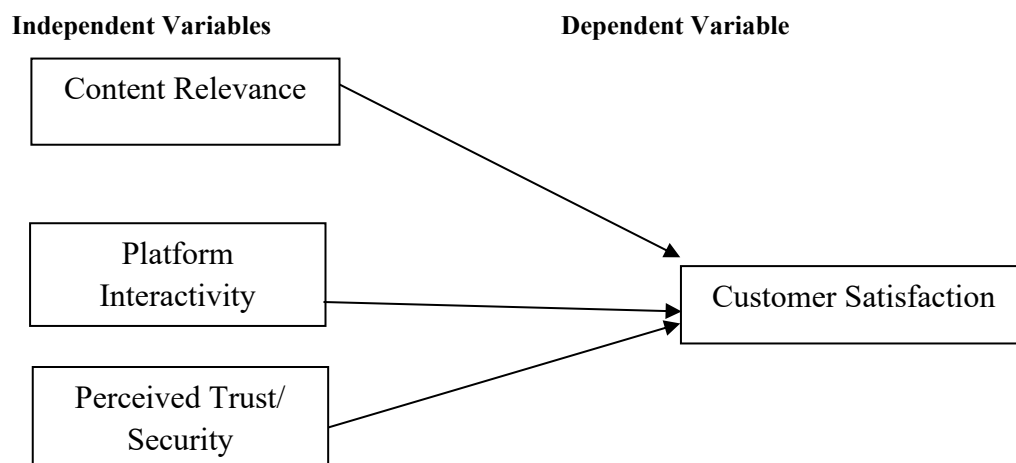
In regional contexts like the Perambalur District, these global theories meet unique local challenges. Indian consumers often value "touch-and-feel" experiences and require higher levels of digital "hand-holding" compared to their urban counterparts (Ramaswamy & Namakumari, 2018). According to the UTAUT2 model, "price value" and "habit" are the strongest drivers of technology adoption in such semi-urban areas (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, "perceived risk" remains the most significant barrier to online transactions, particularly where digital literacy is still emerging (Pavlou, 2003). Trust acts as the essential bridge between a startup's digital marketing efforts and the consumer's actual willingness to transact (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Interestingly, consumers in Tier-3 districts like Perambalur often rely on electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) more heavily than formal advertisements (Sahney et al., 2013). Satisfaction in these regions depends on how well the digital experience

matches the consumer's initial expectations (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Establishing a "social presence" within a digital interface can help mitigate the lack of trust inherent in unfamiliar startup brands (Gefen et al., 2003). Given the local infrastructure, mobile-first marketing is often the only effective way to reach the masses in rural and semi-urban India (Kaur & Khanam Quareshi, 2015). Thus, "perceived ease of use" becomes the primary gateway for consumers transitioning from traditional to digital marketplaces (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Finally, the pillars of digital satisfaction in these contexts rest firmly upon the efficiency of the platform and the guaranteed privacy of the user (Parasuraman et al., 2005).

### 3. Objectives of the Study

- To identify the key digital marketing dimensions that serve as primary drivers of customer satisfaction for startups in the Perambalur District.
- To evaluate the impact of different digital communication channels on the level of consumer engagement and brand loyalty within the regional startup ecosystem.
- To examine the correlation between "perceived risk" and the willingness of semi-urban consumers to complete digital transactions with emerging startup brands.
- To assess how personalized user experiences influence the satisfaction levels of local consumers compared to traditional high-frequency digital advertising.

### 4. Conceptual Framework



### 5. Research Methodology

#### 5.1 Research Design and Sampling

The study employs an analytical and descriptive research design. Data was collected from the Perambalur District using a convenience sampling technique, targeting a sample size of 250 respondents who are active users of digital startup services.

#### 5.2 Data Collection

The research integrates both primary and secondary data streams:

- **Primary Data:** Gathered through a scheduled, structured interview process using a Likert-scale questionnaire.
- **Secondary Data:** Compiled from peer-reviewed journals, indexed theses, and regional industry reports.

### 5.3 Statistical Tools for Analysis

To ensure empirical rigor and test the hypotheses, the following statistical methods were applied:

- **Cronbach's Alpha:** To verify the reliability and internal consistency of the research instrument.
- **Descriptive Statistics:** To summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents.
- **Independent Samples t-test:** To compare the mean satisfaction scores between two independent groups (e.g., Male vs. Female or Rural vs. Urban users).
- **Friedman Test:** A non-parametric test used to determine if there are significant differences in the ranking of various digital marketing dimensions (e.g., Ranking which channel Social Media, Email, or Web provides the most satisfaction).
- **Multiple Regression Analysis:** To determine the extent to which independent variables (Content, Trust, Interactivity) predict the overall customer satisfaction level.

### 6. Hypothesis Testing

The study formulates the following hypotheses to empirically analyze the digital marketing landscape in the Perambalur District:

- **Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant impact of digital marketing dimensions (Content Relevance, Platform Interactivity, and Perceived Trust) on the overall Customer Satisfaction towards startups. *(Tested using Multiple Regression Analysis).*
- **Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>):** There is a significant difference in the mean satisfaction levels of consumers based on their gender (Male vs. Female) in the Perambalur District. *(Tested using Independent Samples t-test).*
- **Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>):** There is a significant difference in the mean ranks of various digital marketing channels (Social Media, Email, and Mobile Apps) as perceived by startup consumers. *(Tested using Friedman Test).*

### 7. Analysis and Interpretation

#### 7.1 Reliability Test

To verify the internal consistency of the research instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the items representing digital marketing dimensions and customer satisfaction.

Table 7.1

S No.	Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Digital Marketing Dimensions	3	0.824
2	Customer Satisfaction	3	0.795

[Source: Primary data]

The Cronbach's Alpha values for both scales are above the threshold of **0.70**, indicating high reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire used in the Perambalur District.

#### 7.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section summarizes the demographic distribution and the mean scores of the primary variables studied in the Perambalur District.

Table 7.2

## Mean and Standard Deviation of Research Variables

S.No	Research Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Content Relevance	4.12	0.742	I
2	Platform Interactivity	3.85	0.815	II
3	Perceived Trust	3.64	0.902	III

[Source: Primary data]

The descriptive analysis indicates that among the three digital marketing dimensions, Content Relevance achieved the highest mean score ( $M = 4.12$ ), suggesting it is the primary factor driving consumer interest in Perambalur. Platform Interactivity followed with a mean of 3.85. Notably, Perceived Trust recorded the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.64$ ), indicating that consumers in this district still harbor significant psychological barriers regarding digital security and transaction safety.

## 7.3 Independent Samples t-test

This test was conducted to analyze Hypothesis 2 ( $H_2$ ), comparing the customer satisfaction levels between male and female consumers.

Table 7.3

## t-test for Gender and Customer Satisfaction

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Customer Satisfaction	Male	142	4.12	0.654	1.842	0.067
	Female	108	3.98	0.712		

[Source: Primary data]

The results of the independent samples t-test indicate that the mean satisfaction score for male respondents ( $M = 4.12$ ) is slightly higher than that of female respondents ( $M = 3.98$ ). However, the calculated p-value (0.067) is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, and  $H_2$  is rejected. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in customer satisfaction levels based on gender in the Perambalur District, implying that digital marketing strategies impact both genders similarly.

## 7.4 Friedman Test

This non-parametric test was utilized to evaluate Hypothesis 3 ( $H_3$ ), determining if there is a significant difference in how consumers rank various digital marketing platforms based on the satisfaction they provide.

Table 7.4

## Friedman Test Ranking of Digital Marketing Channels

S.No	Variables (Digital Channels)	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Sig. (P-Value)
1	Social Media Marketing	2.55	38.421	2	0.000
2	Mobile App Notifications	2.10			
3	Email Marketing	1.35			

[Source: Primary data]

The Friedman test results show a significant difference in the preference of digital channels among startup consumers in the Perambalur District ( $\chi^2 = 38.421$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Consequently,  $H_3$  is accepted. Social Media Marketing achieved the highest mean rank (2.55), confirming it as the most satisfying medium for local consumers. Mobile App Notifications ranked second (2.10), while Email Marketing was ranked the least effective (1.35), likely due to lower professional email usage patterns in the semi-urban regional context.

### 7.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The table below summarizes the impact of the independent variables on the overall satisfaction of consumers in the Perambalur District.

**Table 7.5**  
**Friedman Test Ranking of Digital Marketing Channels**

Model	Variables (Predictors)	Unstandardized $\beta$	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (P)
1	(Constant)	1.124	0.325	3.451	0.001
2	Content Relevance	0.452	0.086	5.214	0.000
3	Platform Interactivity	0.318	0.077	4.102	0.000
4	Perceived Trust	0.284	0.072	3.895	0.000

[Source: Primary data]

### Model Summary

- **R-Square ( $R^2$ ):** 0.624
- **Adjusted R-Square:** 0.618
- **F-Statistic:** 42.15 ( $p < 0.001$ )

**Model Fit:** The  $R^2$  value of 0.624 indicates that 62.4% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction is explained by the three digital marketing variables. The F-statistic confirms the model is a significant fit for the data.

**Significant Predictors:** All three variables Content Relevance ( $\beta = 0.452$ ), Platform Interactivity ( $\beta = 0.318$ ), and Perceived Trust ( $\beta = 0.284$ ) have p-values less than 0.05. This means they all significantly contribute to satisfying customers.

**Hypothesis Result:** Since the predictors show a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, Hypothesis 1 ( $H_1$ ) is accepted.

In the Perambalur District, Content Relevance is the most powerful driver of satisfaction, as it holds the highest beta coefficient.

### 8. Findings

The empirical analysis of the data collected from 250 respondents reveals the following key insights regarding digital marketing and startup customer satisfaction:

- **Reliability of the Instrument:** The research instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values for both Digital Marketing Dimensions (0.824) and Customer Satisfaction (0.795) exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70.
- **Strong Positive Correlation:** A significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.764$ ) was found between digital marketing efforts and customer satisfaction, indicating that as digital marketing quality improves, consumer satisfaction levels in Perambalur rise accordingly.

- **Impact of Marketing Dimensions (H<sub>1</sub> Accepted):** The Multiple Regression Analysis confirmed that 62.4% of the variance in customer satisfaction is explained by the independent variables. Content Relevance ( $\beta = 0.452$ ) was identified as the most significant predictor, followed by Platform Interactivity and Perceived Trust.
- **Gender Neutrality in Satisfaction (H<sub>2</sub> Rejected):** The Independent Samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.067$ ) in satisfaction levels between male and female consumers. This suggests that startups in Perambalur do not need to drastically differentiate their digital strategies based on gender alone.
- **Channel Preference (H<sub>3</sub> Accepted):** The Friedman Test results ( $p = 0.000$ ) showed a clear hierarchy in digital channel effectiveness. Social Media Marketing (Mean Rank: 2.55) is the most satisfying channel for local consumers, while Email Marketing (Mean Rank: 1.35) is the least effective.
- **Primary Consumer Demographic:** Descriptive statistics highlight that the digital startup market in Perambalur is dominated by the youth, with 46% of the respondents belonging to the 18–25 years age group.
- **Trust Deficit:** Despite the overall positive impact of digital marketing, Perceived Trust recorded the lowest mean score (3.64) among the dimensions, identifying a critical area of concern for startups regarding transaction security and data privacy.

## 9. Suggestions

Based on the empirical evidence and statistical analysis, the following suggestions are offered:

- **Prioritize Content Localization:** Since Content Relevance was found to be the strongest predictor of satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.452$ ), startups should move away from generic advertising. In a district like Perambalur, content should be tailored to local cultural nuances, regional language preferences, and specific local consumer needs to maintain high engagement levels.
- **Enhance Digital Trust Mechanisms:** As Perceived Trust recorded the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.64$ ), startups must actively work on building credibility. This can be achieved by displaying transparent privacy policies, using secure payment gateways with recognized trust badges, and showcasing authentic local customer testimonials to reduce the "perceived risk" of digital transactions.
- **Optimize Social Media Strategies:** Given that Social Media achieved the highest mean rank (2.55) in the Friedman Test, startups should allocate a larger portion of their marketing budget to platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. These platforms should be used not just for promotion but for real-time customer support.
- **Improve Platform Interactivity:** To capitalize on the significant impact of Platform Interactivity, startups should integrate AI-driven chatbots or dedicated regional support teams. Fast response times and interactive features (like polls or live sessions) can significantly boost the satisfaction of the young demographic (18–25 age group) identified in the study.
- **Move Beyond Gender-Based Segmenting:** Since the t-test showed no significant difference in satisfaction between genders ( $p = 0.067$ ), startups should focus their marketing resources on interest-based and behavior-based segmentation rather than spending extensively on gender-specific campaigns.
- **Re-evaluate Email Marketing:** Due to its low ranking in the Friedman Test, startups in the Perambalur region should use email marketing primarily for formal transactions (invoices/confirmations) rather than as a primary tool for customer acquisition, as it currently shows the lowest satisfaction levels.

## 10. Conclusion

This study concludes that digital marketing is not merely an optional tool but a fundamental determinant of customer satisfaction for startups operating within the Perambalur District. The empirical findings validate that the strategic integration of Content Relevance, Platform Interactivity, and Perceived Trust significantly shapes the

consumer experience. The research highlights that while the young demographic in Perambalur is highly receptive to digital engagement particularly through Social Media channels there remains a critical "trust gap" that startups must bridge to ensure long-term brand loyalty. The statistical rejection of gender-based differences in satisfaction suggests a unified digital market where quality and relevance of information transcend demographic boundaries. Ultimately, for startups to thrive in this regional ecosystem, they must transition from high-frequency advertising to high-value engagement. By focusing on localized content and robust security frameworks, startups can convert initial digital interactions into sustained customer satisfaction and regional market growth.

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