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Digital marketing practices and consumer buying behavior in Myanmar convenience retail evidence from grab and go stores in Yangon

Zin Myo^{1*}, Zin Ko Ko², La Min Tun³, Nan Wai Linn⁴, Yin Ko Ko⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Myanmar Commercial College, Myanmar.

Corresponding author: Zin Myo (Email: danny.zinmyo@gmail.com)

Abstract

Digital channels increasingly shape retail communication, but evidence from Myanmar convenience retail remains limited. This study examines the relationships between social media marketing, online advertising, mobile marketing, content marketing, and consumer buying behavior at Grab and Go stores in Yangon. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 385 customers who had purchased from Grab and Go during the previous six months. Data from a 35-item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire were analyzed in SPSS version 26 using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression. Scale reliability ranged from .778 to .825. All four digital marketing dimensions were positively associated with consumer buying behavior ($r = .494-.615$, $p < .001$). The regression model was significant, $F(4, 380) = 185.91$, $p < .001$, and explained 66.2% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .658$). Social media marketing had the largest standardized coefficient ($\beta = .334$), followed by content marketing ($\beta = .320$), online advertising ($\beta = .281$), and mobile marketing ($\beta = .207$). Customers who evaluated Grab and Go's digital marketing more positively also reported stronger buying behavior. The findings offer channel-level evidence from an under-researched retail setting, although the cross-sectional and self-reported design does not support causal conclusions.

Keywords: Content strategy, Convenience stores, Myanmar, Digital retailing, Mobile promotion, Purchase behaviour, Social media engagement.

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1. Introduction

Digital technology has changed the way that retailers communicate value, bring product awareness and stay relevant throughout the shopper journey of decision making. Social media platforms facilitate interaction, peer influence, online

advertising allows for targeted exposure, mobile marketing allows for time-sensitive messages, and content marketing provides information that can help diminish uncertainty. These functions are particularly relevant for convenience retailing where many of the buying decisions are made infrequently, with low involvement and are prompt-dependent. Thus, current digital-marketing research recognizes channels as relational touchpoints that can impact attention, evaluation, visiting stores, and repeat purchasing [1, 2]. Channel effects, however, are market specific and dependent on access of the customer, relevance of the message as well as retail format. The learning experience from well-established digital markets cannot be simply transferred to a new retail market like Myanmar.

Myanmar retailers increasingly use social media and mobile communication to promote products, announce offers, and maintain customer contact. Grab and Go uses Facebook and other digital platforms to communicate store and product information. Recent research has linked social media advertising and digital communication with trust, engagement, purchase intention, and buying behavior in emerging-market settings [3, 4]. However, these studies commonly examine online shopping, particular message features, or purchase intention rather than reported buying behavior in physical convenience retail. Evidence from Myanmar is especially limited, and few studies compare the unique statistical contribution of social media marketing, online advertising, mobile marketing, and content marketing within one retail model.

Previous studies provide several reasons to expect positive relationships. Social media combines firm-generated communication with customer interaction and electronic word of mouth, which may strengthen awareness and trust [5, 6]. Recent emerging-market evidence also shows that social media advertising can support trust and online buying behavior, although risk and context shape the response [4]. Online advertising may build recall when messages are relevant to consumer needs, but its effectiveness varies with targeting and the consumer's decision stage [7]. Mobile marketing can reach consumers at personally and temporally relevant moments [8]. Content marketing supports evaluation through useful information, and recent research continues to connect digital content and platform communication with engagement and purchase-related outcomes [3]. These findings establish the value of digital communication, but they do not show whether the same four practices remain statistically distinct predictors of buying behavior in Myanmar convenience retail.

This study addresses three linked gaps. First, it provides evidence from Myanmar, an underrepresented setting in international digital-retailing research. Second, it focuses on physical convenience retail rather than purely online purchasing. Third, it estimates the relative association of four digital marketing practices with customer-reported buying behavior in one regression model. The study therefore asks whether social media marketing, online advertising, mobile marketing, and content marketing are each positively associated with buying behavior among Grab and Go customers in Yangon. Its contribution is contextual and comparative: it identifies which channels show stronger unique relationships after the other practices are considered, without interpreting those relationships as causal effects.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundation

The study uses stimulus-organism-response logic as an explanatory perspective. Digital marketing messages represent external stimuli, while reported buying behavior represents the response. The organism component, such as attention, perceived relevance, trust, or attitude, was not measured. The model therefore examines direct stimulus-response associations rather than a complete stimulus-organism-response mechanism. The Theory of Planned Behavior is not treated as a tested framework because attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and purchase intention were not measured. The hypotheses instead draw on the communication characteristics of each channel and prior empirical evidence.

2.2. Social Media Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior

Social Media Marketing is the term used to describe a retailer's use of networked platforms to share information, offer promotions, engage with users and encourage user-created communication. Social media allows for visible feedback and for interaction to happen in real-time, unlike one-way advertising, firm communication is part of a social environment [5]. Perceptions of credibility and popularity may be affected by reviews, shares and comments. Mangold and Faulds [6] describe social media as a "half-and-half" promotion, in that the organisation will talk with customers, and customers will speak to each other. For a convenience store, a flurry of posts can help to keep promotions and product availability top of mind for people when they make regular shopping visits. These stimuli can help with awareness and trust, store visits and repeat purchase if the content is useful and the interaction is responsive.

H₁: Social media marketing is positively associated with consumer buying behavior.

2.3. Online Advertising and Consumer Buying Behavior

Online advertising is paid messages delivered via the Internet through websites, search services, social media, and other Internet placements. It has the main benefits of wide reach, measurable exposure, and audience targeting through behavioural and/or contextual data. Multiple and meaningful exposures can boost product recognition and recall from memory, and messages designed to persuade can drive store traffic or product assessment. However online advertising is not always effective, as evidence of retargeting reveals that the specificity of a message and a consumer's decision-making stage may influence response [7]. When it comes to convenience retail, details of promotion and reminders could be particularly helpful when they reach a purchase moment. Such advertising that has a positive salience to the customer – meaning that the advertising is perceived as relevant and informative to the customer – should therefore be linked to greater reported buying behavior. Thus:

H₂: Online advertising is positively associated with consumer buying behavior.

2.4. Mobile Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior

Mobile marketing is the communication to customers through mobile devices and services such as messages, notifications, mobile applications and mobile-optimized platforms. Its unique value is that it is ubiquitous, it is immediate and it can be contextually touched. As per Shankar and Balasubramanian [8] a mobile channel is two-way or multi-way communication and can reach consumers both in terms of location and stage in the purchase process. In convenience stores, time-limited offers and reminders can encourage quick decisions, given the easy availability of these products and the regular nature of shopping for them. But irrelevant and over-important messages can be ignored and usefulness and timing will always be important. It is hoped that the more mobile communications are timely, informative and purchase-relevant, the stronger will be the buying response. Therefore:

H₃: Mobile marketing is positively associated with consumer buying behavior.

2.5. Content Marketing and Consumer Buying Behavior

Content marketing is the process of developing and sharing informative, relevant and consistent content with the aim of attracting and engaging an audience. It should not just make sales pitches, but can provide information about products, show how to use them, respond to inquiries, and relate products to consumers' needs. Pulizzi [9] says that brand storytelling and useful content can help organizations connect with the consumer in an era when consumers have a lot of control over the media they view. In retail stores, product information, short videos, tips and promotional posts can help minimize information gaps and maintain interest until a customer returns to the store. Content is also a good way to build trust if it's accurate, consistent and meets the needs of customers. These are informational and persuasive functions that will help in the evaluation of a product, preference, and repeated purchase. Hence:

H₄: Content marketing is positively associated with consumer buying behavior.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Context

Following established quantitative research procedures for cross-sectional studies and multivariable analysis [10, 11] this study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey to examine relationships between customers' perceptions of digital marketing practices and consumer buying behavior. Grab and Go convenience stores in Yangon, Myanmar, formed the research context. Eligible respondents were at least 18 years old and had purchased from Grab and Go during the previous six months. Because all measures were self-reported at one point in time, the design supports analysis of association and statistical prediction but not temporal or causal inference.

3.2. Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

The target population comprised customers of Grab and Go convenience stores in the Yangon Region. Grab and Go operates more than 500 corporate and franchise stores across Myanmar, with a substantial presence in Yangon [12]. Because an updated official figure for Yangon outlets and the total number of customers was unavailable, the population size was treated as unknown. Cochran's large-population formula produced a minimum sample requirement of approximately 385 respondents at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error [10]. Convenience sampling was used because a complete customer list was unavailable. The Google Forms questionnaire was distributed to eligible customers who visited selected Grab and Go outlets in the Yangon Region and were willing to participate. Eligible respondents were at least 18 years old and had purchased from Grab and Go during the previous six months. Data collection continued until 385 valid responses were obtained.

3.3. Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured Google Forms questionnaire distributed to eligible customers of selected Grab and Go outlets in the Yangon Region. The questionnaire contained demographic questions and 35 substantive statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each construct was represented by seven items. The measurement items were developed with reference to established digital-marketing literature. Social media marketing items were informed by Kim and Ko [13], Godey, et al. [14] and Yadav and Rahman [15]; online-advertising items drew on Bleier and Eisenbeiss [16] and Lambrecht and Tucker [7]; mobile-marketing items were informed by Persaud and Azhar [17] and Shankar, et al. [18]; and content-marketing items drew on Rowley [19], Holliman and Rowley [20] and Pulizzi [9]. Consumer buying-behavior items were developed with reference to Kim and Ko [13] and Godey, et al. [14]. The original wording was simplified and contextualized for customers of Grab and Go convenience stores in Yangon while retaining the conceptual meaning of each construct. The questionnaire measured information usefulness, promotional attention, trust, store-visit motivation, purchase relevance, purchasing frequency, preference, habitual purchasing, and repeat purchasing. Therefore, measurement quality was assessed through item-construct alignment and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha.

3.4. Reliability, Validity, and Data Analysis

SPSS version 26 was used to analyze the data. Cronbach's alpha assessed the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized respondent characteristics and the study variables. Pearson correlation analysis examined the direction and strength of the bivariate relationships. Multiple linear regression estimated the unique statistical association between each digital marketing practice and consumer buying behavior while controlling for the other predictors. Tolerance values ranging from .759 to .827 and

variance inflation factor values ranging from 1.209 to 1.318 indicated that multicollinearity was not a serious concern. The statistical significance level was set at ($p < .05$).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire introduction informed respondents about the purpose of the study, the academic use of the data, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Respondents provided implied informed consent by voluntarily continuing with and submitting the Google Forms questionnaire after reading this information. They could stop completing the questionnaire at any time without penalty. No names, contact details, or other directly identifying information were collected. The responses were kept confidential and analyzed in aggregate form. Formal ethical approval was not obtained because the study involved a voluntary, anonymous customer survey that did not collect sensitive personal information.

4. Results

4.1. Respondent Profile

Table 1 summarizes the respondent profile. The sample included 193 men (50.1%) and 192 women (49.9%); 55.1% were single and 44.9% were married. The largest age group was 35-44 years (26.3%). Dependents formed the largest occupational group (26.2%), followed closely by business owners (26.0%). Weekly shopping was the most common pattern (43.4%), followed by daily shopping (29.4%), monthly shopping (23.6%), and rare shopping (3.6%).

Table 1.
Selected respondent characteristics (N = 385).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	193	50.1
	Female	192	49.9
Age	25 years and below	96	24.9
	26-34 years	99	25.7
	35-44 years	101	26.3
	≥45 years	89	23.1
Shopping frequency	Daily	113	29.4
	Weekly	167	43.4
	Monthly	91	23.6
	Rarely	14	3.6

Note: Percentages are based on N = 385 and may not total 100 because of rounding.

4.2. Reliability and Descriptive Results

Table 2 reports reliability and composite means. Internal consistency was acceptable for all five scales, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .778 for mobile marketing to .825 for social media marketing. Mean ratings for the four digital marketing practices were generally positive. Consumer buying behavior had the highest composite mean (M = 4.47), indicating frequent and repeated purchasing among respondents.

Table 2.
Reliability and composite means.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Mean
Social media marketing	7	0.825	3.78
Online advertising	7	0.800	3.85
Mobile marketing	7	0.778	3.83
Content marketing	7	0.815	3.80
Consumer buying behavior	7	0.821	4.47

4.3. Correlations

Table 3 shows that all four digital marketing dimensions were positively and significantly associated with consumer buying behavior. Content marketing had the strongest bivariate correlation with buying behavior ($r = .615$), followed by social media marketing ($r = .605$), online advertising ($r = .570$), and mobile marketing ($r = .494$); all p values were below .001. Correlations among the predictors ranged from .265 to .366, consistent with the low variance inflation factors reported for the regression model.

Table 3.

Pearson correlations among study variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social media marketing	—				
2. Online advertising	0.350***	—			
3. Mobile marketing	0.265***	0.292***	—		
4. Content marketing	0.366***	0.348***	0.362***	—	
5. Consumer buying behavior	0.605***	0.570***	0.494***	0.615***	—

Note: N = 385. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

4.4. Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Tests

Table 4 presents the multiple regression results. The four-predictor model was statistically significant, $F(4, 380) = 185.91$, $p < .001$, with $R = .814$, $R^2 = .662$, and adjusted $R^2 = .658$. Together, the predictors accounted for 66.2% of the variance in self-reported consumer buying behavior. All four standardized coefficients were positive and significant. Social media marketing had the largest coefficient ($\beta = .334$), followed by content marketing ($\beta = .320$), online advertising ($\beta = .281$), and mobile marketing ($\beta = .207$). Table 5 therefore shows support for H1-H4 as positive associations. These coefficients indicate statistical prediction within the observed sample and do not establish causal effects.

Table 4.

Multiple regression predicting consumer buying behavior.

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.052	0.129	—	8.166	<.001	—
Social media marketing	0.247	0.025	0.334	10.019	<.001	1.250
Online advertising	0.229	0.027	0.281	8.442	<.001	1.248
Mobile marketing	0.173	0.027	0.207	6.309	<.001	1.209
Content marketing	0.246	0.026	0.320	9.349	<.001	1.318

Note: N = 385. $R^2 = .662$; adjusted $R^2 = .658$; $F(4, 380) = 185.91$, $p < .001$.

Dependent variable: Consumer Buying Behavior.

Table 5.

Hypothesis decisions.

Hypothesis	Path	β	Decision
H1	Social media marketing → buying behavior	0.334	Supported
H2	Online advertising → buying behavior	0.281	Supported
H3	Mobile marketing → buying behavior	0.207	Supported
H4	Content marketing → buying behavior	0.320	Supported

5. Discussion

All four digital marketing practices were positively associated with consumer buying behavior after their shared variance was controlled. This pattern is consistent with research showing that digital touchpoints can shape attention, information processing, engagement, and purchase-related responses [1]. It also accords with recent emerging-market evidence linking social media advertising with trust and online buying behavior [4]. Nevertheless, $R^2 = .662$ does not mean that digital marketing caused 66.2% of customer purchasing. The predictors and outcome were collected from the same respondents at one time, and some items referred to perceived marketing influence. Common-method effects and conceptual overlap may therefore have strengthened the observed relationships.

Social media marketing had the largest standardized coefficient. Its interactive structure combines retailer messages, customer feedback, reviews, and rapid communication [5, 6]. Recent studies likewise indicate that social media advertising and interactive digital messages can support trust, engagement, and purchase-related responses, although the size and mechanism vary across markets and message formats [3, 4]. Grab and Go customers may respond both to promotional posts and to visible reactions from other users. This result is compatible with stimulus-response logic, but the small difference between social media and content marketing does not establish the universal superiority of social media.

Content marketing was the second-largest unique predictor and the strongest bivariate correlate. Product explanations, short videos, usage information, and promotional posts may reduce information gaps and help customers connect offers with everyday needs. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing useful branded content and digital message features as drivers of engagement and purchase-related attitudes [3, 9]. The coefficient remained substantial after the other channels were controlled, suggesting that respondents distinguished message usefulness from the platform that delivered it. The finding supports investment in content relevance and clarity, not simply higher posting frequency.

A positive unique association was also found for online advertising. Paid online messages can raise awareness, remind customers of products and spark interest in visiting stores. This finding agrees with the notion that targeted exposure can impact response when the message is congruent with consumer needs and decision stage [7]. This smaller coefficient compared to social media and content marketing may be due to the less interactivity of traditional ads or the avoidance of overt promotional messaging by customers. This interpretation is still tentative, as the study did not measure advertising exposures, targeting accuracy, irritation or platform-level differences. However, online advertising gave information in addition to the other three predictors.

Mobile marketing was the smallest standardized coefficient, but was also positive and significant. The 'immediacy' and 'place flexibility' provided by mobile channels can be beneficial for time sensitive convenience store offers [8]. Perhaps this more subtle influence suggests that communication was less individualized, less frequent, or less noticeable than social-media and content-based communication. It could also be an indication that there is some overlap between "mobile marketing" and customers' mobile usage of social media which the questionnaire was not able to completely resolve. Therefore it is important for managers to consider mobile marketing as an additional channel to increase the number of messages, but only if it is done with consent, relevance and timing.

6. Theoretical Implications

The study provides context-specific evidence that several digital stimuli still have distinct association with consumer response when they are put into one model. It lends support to a channel-complementarity interpretation: Interactive, paid, mobile and informational practices account for unique variance, but social media and content seem to be more salient. The results are consistent with the S – O – R logic, as the external digital stimuli and the reported behavioral responses are consistent with one another; however, the study does not measure internal organism state and therefore a full validation of the logic is not possible. In a similar fashion, TPB may assist to account for the conversion of attitudes, social influence and control to behavior but these constructs were not involved. Thus, it is a comparative and contextual and not a definitive theory test. Future theory-driven studies should measure mediating states (attention, perceived value, trust, attitude, and purchase intention), and should distinguish between a broad buying behaviour and habitual or repeat purchasing.

7. Practical and Managerial Implications

Grab and Go managers should prioritize social media interaction and content quality because these variables produced the largest and second-largest standardized coefficients, respectively. A coordinated schedule can combine product explanations, short demonstrations, promotion details, customer questions, and verified reviews. Managers should assess store-level redemptions or campaign-period sales alongside platform metrics such as reach and engagement. Online advertising can use clear calls to action, audience segmentation, and controlled A/B tests. Mobile messages should be permission-based, timely, and relevant because excessive repetition may reduce attention and trust. These recommendations identify priorities suggested by the associations; phased campaigns or experiments are needed to estimate causal effects.

8. Limitations

Several limitations qualify the findings. First, the cross-sectional design prevents temporal or causal inference. Second, all measures were self-reported in one questionnaire, which creates possible common-method and social-desirability bias. Third, the available manuscript does not fully document outlet coverage, the sampling interval, the random start, or the response rate, limiting assessment of representativeness. Fourth, the original sources and adaptation history of the instrument require fuller documentation, and construct validity was not tested beyond internal consistency in the master's study. Fifth, actual purchases, campaign exposure, platform use, and customer-level control variables were not included.

9. Directions for Future Research

Future studies should use clearly sourced and validated scales, documented probability or stratified sampling, and longitudinal or experimental designs. With appropriate consent and data protection, survey responses could be linked to campaign exposure or transaction records to distinguish perceived influence from observed behavior. Researchers should also test mediating states such as attention, perceived value, trust, and attitude, and compare retailers, cities, and customer segments to assess whether the ordering of channel relationships is stable.

10. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between social media marketing, online advertising, mobile marketing, content marketing, and consumer buying behavior among 385 Grab and Go customers in Yangon. All four practices were positive and significant statistical predictors, and the model accounted for 66.2% of the variance in the self-reported outcome. Social media marketing had the largest standardized coefficient, followed closely by content marketing; online advertising and mobile marketing also contributed. The results support an integrated digital approach centered on interaction, useful content, relevant advertising, and well-timed mobile communication. The study adds comparative channel-level evidence from an underrepresented retail setting, while stronger measurement, sampling, longitudinal, and experimental designs are required before causal conclusions can be drawn.

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