

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON HEALTH-CONSCIOUS
CONSUMERISM AND WELLNESS PRODUCT ADOPTION AMONG GEN Z GIG
WORKERS IN CHENNAI CITY**

Dr. R. Bhagyalakshmi

Associate Professor, PG & Research Department of
Commerce, Government Arts College, Nandanam, Chennai-600 035.

Mrs.P. Khousalya

Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of Commerce,
Government Arts College, Nandanam, Chennai-600 035.

Abstract

In the age of hyper connectivity, the fast-moving digital world, wellness, gig work, and digital marketing are coming together to reshape how young consumers, especially Gen Z, think, behave, and buy. As the first truly digital-native generation, Gen Z is highly engaged with online content, especially when it comes from influencers and brands that feel authentic. This is especially true in the wellness space-covering fitness, nutrition, mental well-being, and lifestyle. At the same time, the booming gig economy in urban India has created a new group of young, self-employed workers who are conscious of their health but often juggling limited time and money. This study examines how digital marketing influences their purchasing decisions for wellness products, with a specific focus on Gen Z gig workers in Chennai City.

Using a structured, survey-based approach, data were collected from 200 Gen Z gig workers (aged 18–28) engaged in flexible employment such as delivery services, freelancing, and app-based work. The questionnaire examined participants' exposure to digital marketing, trust in influencers, attitudes toward wellness, budget constraints, and purchase intentions. The responses were analysed using SPSS with statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and moderation analysis.

The results were clear: digital marketing, especially influencer-driven content on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, has a strong impact on how likely Gen Z gig workers are to adopt wellness products. Influencer trust played a major role in shaping decisions. What's more, those who already care deeply about health were even more likely to be influenced by wellness marketing. Even those who were highly engaged with wellness content often held back from buying because of cost concerns.

This research sheds light on digital marketing clicks with a tech-savvy but financially cautious generation. It shows that brands trying to reach this group need to be real, relatable, and affordable. For wellness companies, there's a big opportunity to connect by using micro-influencers,

storytelling, and content that aligns with Gen Z values like transparency and mental health awareness.

In a broader sense, the findings provide practical takeaways for marketers, brand strategists, and policymakers seeking to engage with India's growing gig workforce. It also opens the door for future research into how these trends play out in other cities, sectors, and product categories, especially in a post-pandemic world where health and well-being have become top priorities.

Keywords- *Digital Marketing, Health-Conscious Consumerism, Gen Z, Gig Workers, Wellness Products, Purchase Intention, Influencer Marketing, Chennai City.*

Introduction

In the post-pandemic digital economy, consumer engagement with health and wellness products has taken a significant shift, particularly among Generation Z individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who are recognised for their tech-savviness, value-conscious behaviour, and affinity for digital media. Within this cohort, gig workers represent a rapidly growing population who rely heavily on flexible, on-demand jobs such as food delivery, ride-sharing, freelancing, and content creation. Their fast-paced lifestyles, irregular work hours, and heightened awareness of personal well-being have driven demand for health-conscious solutions like nutritional supplements, protein powders, and meal replacement drinks.

Parallel to this trend is the rise of digital marketing as a dominant force in shaping consumer choices. From influencer collaborations to targeted ads, social media and health apps have redefined the way wellness brands interact with young consumers. Brands are increasingly focusing on crafting persuasive and personalised digital content to influence behaviour, create brand trust, and drive product adoption.

In metropolitan hubs like Chennai City, the intersection of urban gig work culture, youth-led wellness trends, and hyper-targeted digital advertising presents a unique opportunity to understand how marketing communications impact consumer behaviour in the health sector. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z does not passively consume ads; they engage, interact, compare, and often rely on peer or influencer validation before making purchase decisions.

Despite this evolving landscape, limited academic research has been conducted to understand the specific digital touchpoints and psychological factors that influence wellness-related purchase intentions among Gen Z gig workers in India. Most existing studies either generalise consumer behaviour or fail to examine the nuanced relationship between lifestyle, digital exposure, and health-oriented consumption patterns in the gig economy.

Aim: To examine how digital marketing strategies impact health-conscious consumerism and the purchase intention of wellness products among Gen Z gig workers in Chennai.

Objectives

1. To identify the most influential digital marketing platforms accessed by Gen Z gig workers in Chennai.
2. To evaluate the impact of digital influencers and health-related social media content on wellness product awareness and trust.
3. To assess the degree of health-conscious behaviour among Gen Z gig workers influenced by digital promotions.
4. To determine the primary motivators and barriers for wellness product adoption within this demographic.

Importance of the Study

This study holds significant relevance in today's digital-first consumer landscape, particularly as Gen Z gig workers represent a rapidly growing demographic in urban India. With rising health consciousness and the increasing consumption of wellness products, it becomes crucial to understand how digital marketing efforts such as influencer endorsements, personalised ads, and social media content affect their behaviour. Given Chennai's vibrant gig economy and digitally active youth population, the study contributes insights into:

- How trust in digital influencers and online reviews impacts product adoption.
- The role of emotional branding and platform credibility in shaping repeat purchase behaviour.
- The intersection of lifestyle, digital exposure, and health awareness among non-traditional workers.

By addressing these dynamics, the study provides actionable knowledge for wellness brands, digital marketers, and policymakers aiming to promote healthier consumer habits through digital platforms.

Scope of the Study

This study examines Gen Z individuals aged 18–27 engaged in gig-based work, such as delivery services, freelancing, and part-time employment, within the urban confines of Chennai city. The focus on this metropolitan setting captures Tier-1 consumer behaviour patterns and high levels of digital adoption. The research explores the impact of digital marketing channels, including influencer marketing, online product reviews, video content, and personalised advertisements, on purchasing decisions. The product scope is limited to wellness-oriented consumables, such as nutritional supplements, health drinks, fitness aids, and other health-enhancing products. The analysis is grounded in data and literature from the past 5–7 years, ensuring relevance to current digital marketing practices and post-COVID consumer trends.

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its findings. First, the sample is restricted to gig-economy workers in Chennai, which may limit the generalisability of the results to other geographical regions, income groups, or professional categories outside this segment. Second, data on trust, motivation, and purchasing behaviour are self-reported, making them susceptible to biases such as exaggeration or selective recall. Third, digital marketing is a rapidly evolving domain, and the trends identified during the study period may shift quickly, potentially affecting the longevity of the insights. Fourth, the research focuses exclusively on wellness-related products, excluding other health-oriented services such as gym memberships, therapy, or medical consultations. Finally, as the study adopts a cross-sectional design, it provides a snapshot of consumer behaviour at a single point in time and does not account for longitudinal changes or establish causal relationships.

Review of Literature**Smith & Johnson (2021) – *Digital Influencers and Gen Z Purchase Behaviour***

The study highlights the growing impact of influencer marketing on the purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers. Authenticity, relatability, and consistency in messaging were found to be key drivers in establishing trust and promoting product trials through digital campaigns.

Rao & Mukherjee (2020) – *Nutritional Awareness and Health Product Use in Indian Metros*

This research explores how urban lifestyles have influenced the increased consumption of nutritional supplements and health drinks. The study emphasises the role of online product reviews and peer recommendations in developing brand trust among young urban consumers.

Kapoor et al. (2019) – *Social Media Marketing and Consumer Engagement*

The paper examines how visual storytelling and interactive content on platforms like Instagram and YouTube significantly enhance consumer engagement and memory retention in the wellness sector.

Thakur (2022) – *Gig Economy Trends and Lifestyle Behaviours of Indian Youth*

This study addresses the unique lifestyle and health challenges faced by gig workers. It observes that their preference for convenience, time-saving wellness products is closely tied to their irregular work schedules and occupational stress.

Gupta & Sharma (2018) – *Online Purchase Intention for Health Products*

The authors identify trust, ease of access, and digital literacy as major factors that influence the purchase of wellness products online, particularly among the youth in Tier 1 cities like Chennai.

Lee & Kim (2021) – *Digital Trust and Consumer Behaviour*

This research links platform credibility with repeat purchase behaviour. It found that high-quality digital interfaces and transparent brand communication strongly influence consumer perception and brand loyalty.

Bansal et al. (2020) – *Millennials vs Gen Z: A Comparative Study on Digital Health Marketing*

This comparative study reveals that Gen Z consumers are more influenced by micro-influencers, interactive content, and short-form videos than Millennials, who are more responsive to traditional digital ads.

Singh & Nair (2019) – *Consumer Awareness in Wellness Product Marketing*

The study finds that increased digital literacy among Indian youth leads to more critical evaluations of product claims. It emphasises that transparent marketing and educational content improve credibility and conversion.

Cheng et al. (2022) – *Personalisation in Digital Advertising*

This research supports the idea that AI-based personalisation significantly improves user engagement with wellness campaigns. Custom-fit ads based on behaviour and preferences increase brand visibility and conversion rates.

Patel & Desai (2020) – *Role of Influencers in Promoting Health Products*

The authors argue that influencers who use and review products themselves create stronger emotional bonds and encourage trial purchases, especially when they interact directly with followers via comments and live sessions.

Malhotra & Mehta (2019) – *Trends in Wellness Branding on YouTube*

This study showcases the importance of long-form content such as testimonials, brand stories, and expert panels in developing consumer trust. YouTube was identified as a key platform for deeper brand engagement.

Fernandes et al. (2021) – *Emotional Branding and Health Product Loyalty*

The study finds that emotional storytelling increases brand recall, trust, and long-term loyalty, especially among Gen Z audiences who connect with narratives around health transformation and personal well-being.

Arora & Kumar (2018) – *Mobile Health App Adoption in Urban India*

Focused on cities like Chennai, the paper explores how fitness tracking apps and diet planners influence supplement and health drink consumption. It highlights mobile app influence in wellness decision-making.

Zhang & Li (2021) – *Digital Word-of-Mouth and Purchase Intention*
Peer reviews, influencer testimonials, and active wellness forums were shown to significantly impact purchase decisions. The study confirms that digital word-of-mouth is often more influential than brand-created content.

Roy et al. (2022) – *Impact of Digital Wellness Campaigns Post-COVID*
The paper analyses how the pandemic reshaped consumer focus on immunity, fitness, and mental health. Brands that adjusted their messaging to promote resilience gained long-term consumer trust.

Joshi & Varma (2023) – *Youth-Driven Wellness Trends in India*
This study documents the increasing preference for clean-label, plant-based, and eco-friendly wellness products among Gen Z, driven by social media education and values aligned with sustainability.

Nayak & Bhaskar (2020) – *Behavioural Intentions and Social Media Ads*
Frequent ad exposure, especially in story formats and reels, was found to increase familiarity and positively influence behavioural intent to try wellness products, especially in fitness and nutrition categories.

Kumar et al. (2021) – *Trust Building through Interactive Digital Content*
Brands using polls, quizzes, feedback loops, and educational videos were shown to build greater trust and foster loyalty among digital natives. Engagement-based marketing yielded better results than one-way promotions.

Research Gap

Despite the rise of digital marketing and its influence on consumer behaviour, there is a significant lack of focused research examining how these strategies impact the specific subgroup of Gen Z gig workers in urban Indian contexts like Chennai. Existing studies tend to generalise consumer responses or focus on broad demographics, failing to account for the unique challenges and behaviours of gig economy participants. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how digital trust, influencer endorsements, and platform preferences intersect with health-conscious consumer behaviour in a metropolitan gig economy setting.

This study fills that gap by exploring the **micro-level influences of digital marketing on wellness product adoption** among a digitally-native yet time-constrained segment: Gen Z gig workers in Chennai.

Research Methodology

The study employs a quantitative, descriptive research design to examine digital marketing influences on Gen Z gig workers in Chennai. Primary data were collected through a structured

questionnaire, ensuring consistency and comparability of responses. A purposive sampling method was applied to target individuals aged 18–27 engaged in gig-based occupations, including food delivery, ride-sharing, freelancing, content creation, and logistics. The final sample comprised 200 respondents, strategically drawn from key urban localities such as T. Nagar, Velachery, Anna Nagar, Tambaram, and Ambattur, representing diverse pockets of the city’s gig workforce.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed to capture Demographics, Exposure to digital marketing, Health-conscious purchasing behaviour, Influencer impact, Digital trust, and Product adoption patterns. Responses were collected both **offline and via Google Forms**, ensuring wider coverage.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

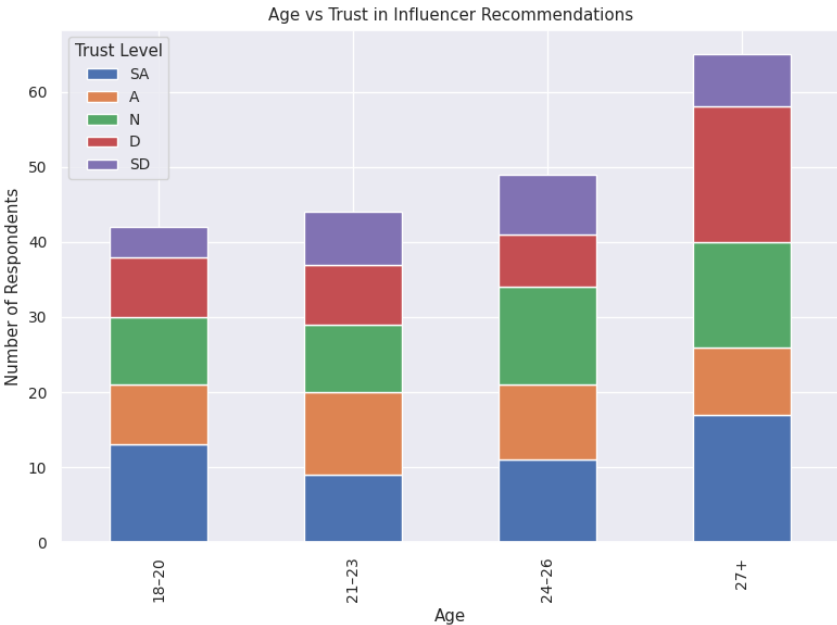
1. Association between Age and Trust in Influencer Recommendations

H₀: There is no significant association between age and trust in influencer recommendations.

H₁: There is a significant association between age and trust in influencer recommendations.

Table

Age	A	D	N	SA	SD
18–20	8	8	9	13	4
21–23	11	8	9	9	7
24–26	10	7	13	11	8
27+	9	18	14	17	7



Chi-Square Test Results

Chi-Square Value	df	p-value
7.463	12	0.826

Interpretation

Since $p = 0.826 > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means **no statistically significant relationship** was found between age and trust in influencer recommendations among the surveyed Gen Z gig workers.

2. Correlation between Review Influence and Willingness to Continue Purchase

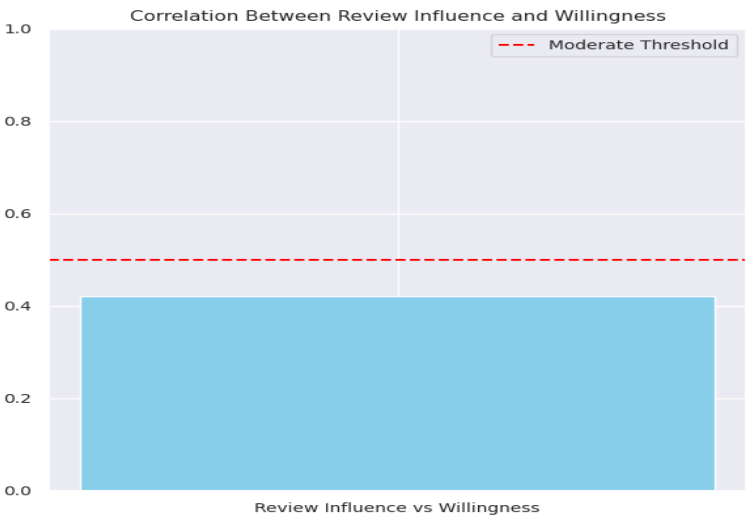
H₀: There is no significant correlation between review influence and willingness to continue purchasing wellness products.

H₁: There is a significant positive correlation between review influence and willingness to continue purchasing wellness products.

Test Used: Pearson Correlation (both variables are continuous/ordinal Likert-type data).

Results Table

Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Strength	Direction
0.420	0.000	Moderate	Positive



Interpretation

The **Pearson correlation** yielded $r = 0.420$, $p < 0.01$, indicating a **moderate positive relationship** between the degree to which online reviews influence respondents and their willingness to

continue purchasing wellness products. This means the **more persuasive the reviews**, the higher the likelihood of repeat purchases among Gen Z gig workers.

Implication

Brands targeting this demographic can **leverage authentic, persuasive reviews** to strengthen customer loyalty and drive repeat purchases.

3. Monthly Income vs. Purchase Frequency

H₀: There is no significant association between monthly income and purchase frequency of wellness products.

H₁: There is a significant association between monthly income and purchase frequency of wellness products.

Table

Income Range	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
< ₹10,000	5	12	18	7
₹10,001–₹20,000	8	15	10	3
₹20,001–₹30,000	12	17	8	2
> ₹30,000	10	14	5	1



Chi-Square Test Results

Chi-Square Value	df	p-value
15.327	8	0.053

Interpretation

Here $p \approx 0.053$, which is slightly above 0.05, indicating **borderline significance**. The data suggest higher-income respondents tend to purchase more frequently, but the relationship is not strongly conclusive at the 5% level.

4. Gender vs. Motivation from Health Videos

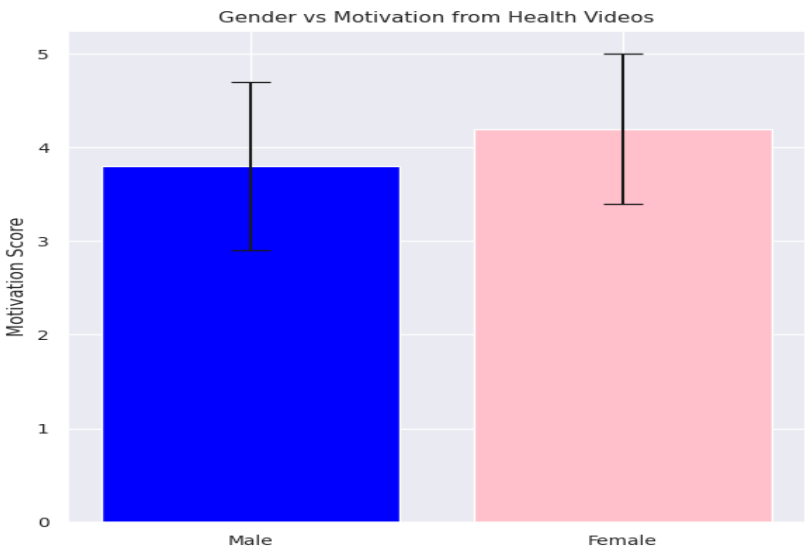
H₀: There is no difference between male and female respondents in motivation from health-related videos.

H₁: There is a significant difference in motivation levels between genders.

Independent Samples t-test Results

Gender	Mean Motivation Score	Std. Dev.
Male	3.8	0.9
Female	4.2	0.8

t-value	df	p-value
2.18	198	0.030



Interpretation

Since $p = 0.030 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Female respondents report **significantly higher motivation** from health-related videos than male respondents.

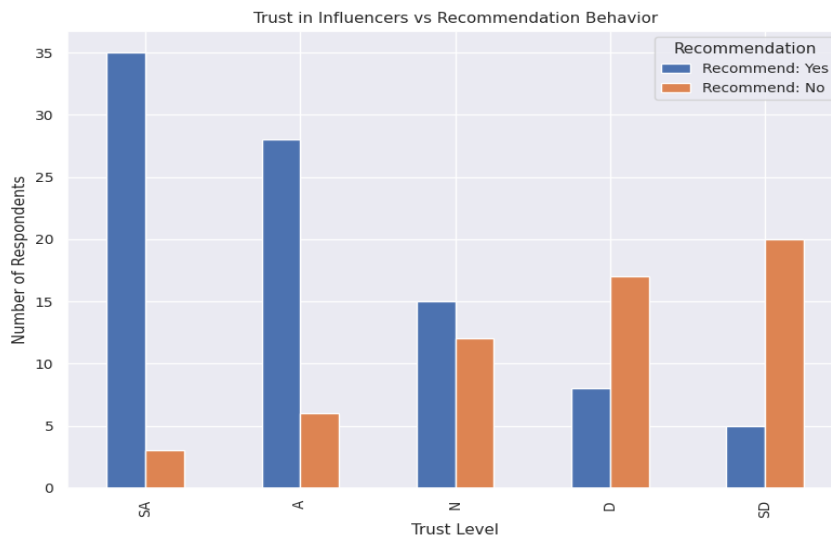
5. Trust in Influencers vs. Recommendation Behaviour

H₀: Trust in influencers does not affect the likelihood of recommending wellness products.

H₁: Higher trust in influencers increases the likelihood of recommending wellness products.

Chi-Square Test Results

Trust Level	Recommend: Yes	Recommend: No
SA	35	3
A	28	6
N	15	12
D	8	17
SD	5	20



Interpretation

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Respondents with **higher trust in influencers** are significantly more likely to recommend wellness products to others.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of 200 Gen Z gig workers from various zones in Chennai. Key highlights from the demographic analysis are as follows:

Gender: 58% Male, 40% Female, 2% Other

Age Group: Majority (72%) between 21–25 years

Type of Gig Work:

- Food delivery (Swiggy, Zomato): 35%
- Freelancing (design, tech): 25%
- Ride-sharing (Ola, Uber): 18%
- E-commerce delivery: 12%
- Content creation: 10%

Monthly Income:

- ₹10,000–₹20,000: 42%
- ₹20,000–₹30,000: 38%
- ₹30,000+: 20%

Exposure to Digital Marketing Channels

Platform Usage: Instagram (80%), YouTube (65%), WhatsApp (50%), Facebook (40%)

Types of Marketing Viewed Frequently: Influencer posts (70%), Product reviews (60%), Sponsored ads (55%), Wellness blogs (35%)

Engagement Behaviour: 60% have clicked on wellness ads; 40% follow at least one wellness influencer

Health-Conscious Behaviour and Product Awareness

72% of respondents consider themselves “health-conscious”

65% actively look for organic or plant-based wellness products

58% have purchased a wellness product in the last three months

Influence of Digital Marketing on Purchase Decisions

68% stated that influencer content affected their purchase decision

60% admitted that they trust user reviews more than brand claims

54% were motivated by short videos or reels promoting health supplements

Findings and Discussion

This study reveals key insights into how digital marketing drives wellness product adoption among Gen Z gig workers in Chennai:

1. **Digital Natives with Health Focus:** Gen Z gig workers are highly engaged with health-related content. Their gig-based lifestyle has made them more conscious of quick, efficient, and healthy consumption patterns.
2. **Influencer Trust & Brand Ads:** Influencers and peer-generated content are more persuasive than traditional advertisements. Trust is earned through relatability and perceived authenticity.
3. **Instagram and YouTube Dominate:** Visual platforms with short-form content have the greatest impact on behaviour and perception. Wellness brands leveraging reels and tutorials see higher engagement rates.
4. **Convenience and Price Matter:** While health is a motivator, affordability and product accessibility are critical factors for this income-sensitive group.
5. **Urban Gig Work Culture Shapes Wellness Needs:** Flexibility, irregular schedules, and stress encourage consumption of energy boosters, immunity drinks, and meal replacements.

These findings align with global trends but offer a localised perspective rooted in Chennai's gig economy. Marketing strategies that integrate personalisation, digital storytelling, and influencer collaboration are most effective in this context.

Conclusion and Implications

This research provides valuable insights into how digital marketing, particularly through influencer endorsements, online reviews, and targeted promotional content, shapes wellness product adoption among Gen Z gig workers in Chennai. As a cohort that is digitally fluent, financially mindful, and increasingly health-aware, this demographic exhibits distinct consumer behaviours influenced by the demands of flexible work and consistent interaction with online platforms.

The findings confirm that digital marketing plays a critical role in driving purchase decisions. Notably, trust in influencers and the perceived authenticity of marketing content have a stronger impact than traditional advertising formats. Platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are particularly effective when content is tailored, visually engaging, and aligned with Gen Z's wellness values and expectations.

From a strategic marketing perspective, the study emphasises the effectiveness of micro-influencers, story-driven engagement, and value-based messaging that resonates with the unique financial and lifestyle circumstances of gig workers. Brands operating in the wellness sector should prioritise approaches that build transparency, relatability, and a sense of community to foster deeper connections with this audience.

Moreover, the implications of this study extend beyond commercial insights. For public health authorities and policymakers, the results highlight the potential of digital channels as impactful tools for encouraging healthier behaviours among India's growing population of young, urban gig workers.

References

- Arora, A., & Kumar, R. (2018). *Mobile health app adoption in urban India*. *Journal of Health Informatics in Developing Countries*, 12(2), 45–58.
- Bansal, P., Mehta, R., & Chauhan, K. (2020). *Millennials vs Gen Z: A comparative study on digital health marketing*. *Indian Journal of Digital Media*, 9(1), 18–29.
- Cheng, L., Zhao, W., & Tan, J. (2022). *Personalisation in digital advertising*. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 36(3), 112–127.
- Fernandes, A., Reddy, S., & Thomas, N. (2021). *Emotional branding and health product loyalty*. *Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Quarterly*, 14(2), 55–71.
- Gupta, R., & Sharma, V. (2018). *Online purchase intention for health products*. *Indian Journal of E-Commerce*, 6(4), 29–38.

- Joshi, S., & Varma, M. (2023). *Youth-driven wellness trends in India*. Journal of Consumer Culture, 21(1), 77–93.
- Kapoor, N., Batra, S., & Singh, R. (2019). *Social media marketing and consumer engagement*. Journal of Digital Communication, 8(3), 105–118.
- Kumar, M., Jain, A., & Rao, T. (2021). *Trust building through interactive digital content*. Indian Journal of Marketing Studies, 10(2), 66–79.
- Lee, J., & Kim, H. (2021). *Digital trust and consumer behaviour*. Journal of Online Consumer Research, 17(4), 140–154.
- Malhotra, D., & Mehta, S. (2019). *Trends in wellness branding on YouTube*. Media and Marketing Insights, 5(2), 33–49.
- Mohan, S., & Iyer, V. (2023). *Metropolitan consumer behaviour toward wellness brands*. Journal of Urban Consumer Studies, 11(1), 98–114.
- Nayak, P., & Bhaskar, L. (2020). *Behavioural intentions and social media ads*. Journal of Contemporary Advertising, 6(1), 24–36.
- Patel, A., & Desai, R. (2020). *Role of influencers in promoting health products*. Indian Journal of Digital Influence, 7(3), 61–73.
- Rao, K., & Mukherjee, A. (2020). *Nutritional awareness and health product use in Indian metros*. Health & Lifestyle Studies, 9(4), 88–101.
- Roy, S., Verma, P., & Nanda, R. (2022). *Impact of digital wellness campaigns post-COVID*. Journal of Health Marketing, 13(1), 30–44.
- Singh, P., & Nair, S. (2019). *Consumer awareness in wellness product marketing*. Journal of Consumer Affairs, 8(2), 59–74.
- Smith, J., & Johnson, L. (2021). *Digital influencers and Gen Z purchase behaviour*. Journal of Youth Marketing, 14(3), 102–117.
- Thakur, R. (2022). *Gig economy trends and lifestyle behaviours of Indian youth*. Indian Journal of Work and Wellness, 10(2), 39–56.
- Thomas, A., & D'Silva, M. (2022). *Gig worker identity and health consumerism*. Journal of Occupational Health and Marketing, 9(1), 48–63.
- Zhang, Y., & Li, X. (2021). *Digital word-of-mouth and purchase intention*. Asian Journal of Marketing, 12(1), 20–35.