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Digital Influence and Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions in Kaval Cities of Uttar Pradesh: a Serial Mediation Analysis Through the Aida Model

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ABSTRACT
Background: With digital media today there has been an effect on consumer. When they are deciding what food product or service they want to buy. Not much research has been done about digital influences while going through each stage of the consumer journey for KAVAL cities in UP.
Aim: In this paper we will look at how Perceived DI affects Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions. Along with finding if there is a mediator of Awareness/Attention → Interest → Desire based on the AIDA model.
Methods: Total 502 consumer were selected from Kanpur Agra Varanasi Prayagraj and Lucknow. The data were analyzed by reliability and descriptive analysis. The Hayes process model 6 with 5000 samples was used to test for serial mediation.
Results: DI was found to significantly predict Awareness/Attention ($\beta = .718$, $p < .001$) which in turn predicted Interest ($\beta = .525$, $p < .001$). It was found that Interest significantly predicted Desire ($\beta = .440$, $p < .001$) and Desire significantly predicted CCPD ($\beta = .384$, $p < .001$). There was a significant total effect of DI on CCPD ($B = .6317$, $p < .001$) but when testing the direct effect of DI on CCPD was not found to be significant ($B = .0650$, $p = .105$). Sequential indirect effect was found to be significant ($B = .0621$, 95% CI [.0346, .0940]).
Implications: Digital marketing can cause people to buy food by using the steps of AIDA. Therefore by using these methods we can allow our target customers to buy food through.
Suggestions: Future research could be done in different areas as well and can look into more aspects of digital and consumers.
Keywords: Digital Influence, Awareness/Attention, Interest, Desire, Action/Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions

1. INTRODUCTION

With the ever increasing usage of social media, online food services, e-menu's and food bloggers etc. It has led to a surge in visual stimulation around food. Whether it may be by coming across restaurants and their offering on digital platforms. Studies have shown that food stimuli, food images on digital platforms, e-menus and such have an impact on consumers perception of food, sensory imagination and purchase behaviour (Vermeir & Roose, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2022). Social media has also been used as a source of information when it comes to searching and making food related decisions (Dwityas et al., 2020; Pande & Mohapotara, 2023).
Consumers can be swayed by digital stimuli when it comes to evaluating food. With food bloggers and e-Word Of mouth helping inform and guide consumers. There are various factors of food bloggers that can affect consumers taste and desire for food, as well as which restaurants to visit and purchase behaviours (Ghosh et al., 2024; Hutchinson et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2025) . Reviews about a restaurant or food pictures on digital platforms can help consumers feel less anxious about trying out a new dish and lead to them wanting to eat at that establishment (Lim et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021). So we see that there is a lot that can play into consumers decision when it comes to culinary decisions.
As mentioned earlier digital stimuli can pique one's Attention or make them Aware of something and they can proceed to look for more information about that topic and build Interest and Desire and take Action to purchase the desired product/service. This theory has been studied with online food delivery services and shown to lead people to purchase intentions (Li et al., 2025). But many studies have only looked at different factors of these variables that can impact someone. And haven't looked into if they lead someone through these steps to buy something,.
Which leads us to India. Where many restaurants now advertise themselves on social media. Studies have been done that show social media factors play a role when selecting a restaurant to dine at in Lucknow (Pande & Mohapotara, 2023). And how restaurants can promote themselves in the braj region using digital platforms (Sharma et al., 2024). However we don't know if people go through each step mentioned above when buying food and taking digital influence into account in major cities in Uttar Pradesh.

Hence why we are studying how perceived Digital Influence (DI) effects Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD). We want to see if it affects them through these steps of Awareness/Attention(AWN), Interest(INT) and Desire(DES). By studying these cities of KAVAL (Kanpur, Agra, Varanasi, Lucknow and Prayagaraj) we hope to find a link between digital marketing and consumers purchasing food.

2. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study should be done as many factors come into play when it comes to consumers choosing what to eat digitally. There is a lack of research on how consumers convert these digital aspects to make a purchase. Studies have found effects of images, social media, influencers, reviews and digital menu's. But all of these effects can be taken in a sequenced manner to allow more research on how consumers progress from digital influence to buying food (Vermeir & Roose, 2020; Dwityas et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021). This study can help look at the chain that leads from a consumer learning about food digitally to purchasing it.[1]

There are many factors that come into play when studying digital food marketing in the KAVAL cities. These cities consist of varying cultures and food preferences. Research from Lucknow and the Braj region shows how digital factors affect consumers when deciding to dine out or buy food related products (Pande & Mohapotara, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). But there is not much research on all five KAVAL cities. This study can be applied to theory and practice. When applying this study to theory we can look at how the stages of AIDA affect digital consumption of food. This can be used to see if there is a relationship between perceived digital influence and purchase intention by mediating each stage of the AIDA framework. Practice would allow restaurant owners, food brands and online delivery services to learn what stages effect their customers purchase.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Digital Marketing Stimuli and Consumer Culinary Choices

Digital marketing can play a role as stimuli for consumers to make food/restaurant decision. By displaying appetizing food images/videos/menus or any sensory cues can be used to draw attention towards consumers perception, assessment and buying intentions (Vermeir & Roose, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025). Through beautiful images and visual appeal of food can cause consumers to have higher perceptions on their beauty and buying intention (Awendo, 2022). Many studies also show digital menu stimuli playing a role on how consumers perceive/assess a restaurant and what they do (Brewer & Sebby, 2021; Lin et al., 2023; Gopal et al., 2024; Elshaer et al., 2025). When having a choice to make about food there are many factors that consumers look at (food, display etc.) which can all be considered when determining if they want to go to that restaurant (Dabral et al., 2025).

Another stimulus consumers can receive through digital forms is social media. Restaurants/influencers/consumers are able to share information regarding food on various platforms. There are multiple studies that show using social media marketing can benefit a restaurant when consumers are making their purchase decision (Fajri et al., 2021; Pande & Mohapotara, 2023). People within a culinary community have also shown to use social media at every stage of their purchasing decision journey (Dwityas et al., 2020).[2] There are studies that show how food influencers can play a role in how a consumer decides what restaurant they want to go to and what type of food they want to eat. This could be due to influencers credibility and relationships (Dinc, 2024; Azis et al., 2025; Kavitha, 2025; Malik et al., 2025; Nurrizal et al., 2025; Syarif et al., 2025).[3] Characteristics about the influencer can also cause behavioral intentions from the consumers point of view by playing off of emotions/self (Ghosh et al., 2024). Vloggers that travel to eat around the world have been studied to see how they communicate to others about restaurants they enjoy visiting (Hutchinson et al., 2024). There has been research done comparing restaurants posts and influencers posts to see how each one affects consumers buying intention to visit a restaurant (Amaro et al., 2026).

Online word of mouth/ reviews and images of food are also stimuli that can be shown digitally. Online reviews have been proven to effect what restaurants people decide to go to and allow them to gain more trust when deciding where they want to dine (Canet et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2020). Information regarding trust and pictures on a review can help effect people's decisions on if they want to purchase restaurant services (Park et al., 2021). Others have also looked at eWOM/social media marketing as factors that effect a person's intention to buy food (Muchammad Ardhianto, 2024). Research has also been completed that shows customers reviews can help build trust with the buyer when purchasing products online (Rolando & Chondro, 2025). People can look at both what influencers say about food and eWOM to determine what foods they want to

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buy. (Rizkita & Sudarmiatin, 2025)[4]. When consumers are gaining trust in these types of social commerce they will have a greater chance of wanting to make a purchase (Wang et al., 2022). How credible a food vlogger is can also effect what type of food people choose to consume (Maderazo et al., 2024).

3.2 AIDA and the Consumer Decision-Making Journey

AIDA model can provide insight as to how digital forms of stimuli can guide consumers towards a purchase decision. During the Attention/Awareness stage consumers may be drawn to visual images of food on social media platforms. This can help them become aware of different foods they may not have known about (Vermeir & Roose, 2020; Dwityas et al., 2020; Fajri et al., 2021). Consumers will begin to look at menu options, reviews, star ratings, information about the food etc. once they reach the Interest stage (Canet et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2023). Consumers can be interested in food by following influencers and food bloggers that show them what the experience may be like through images and videos (Dinc, 2024; Hutchinson et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2025).

When consumers develop a sense of liking for a food product they are entering the Desire stage. By creating appealing images of the food, digital menu attributes and storytelling consumers can be able to picture themselves eating that food product (Awendo, 2022; Cheng et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025). Having influencers that have high credibility can help drive the desire to want to eat or purchase a food product (Ghosh et al., 2024; Syarif et al., 2025). Consumers may become more inclined to purchase food when using digital menus after viewing content about that product (Brewer & Sebby, 2021; Elshaer et al., 2025).

Once consumers have reached the Action stage they will make purchases or actions based on their need. Studies about online food delivery platforms have been able to apply AIDA to explain the concept of purchase intention (Li et al., 2025).[5] Many factors play a role in choosing where to eat or what food products to buy. Having trust in a company or website can allow customers to make a purchase decision (Park et al., 2021; Gopal et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Following food influencers may drive customers to purchase a food product or eat at a certain restaurant (Azis et al., 2025; Malik et al., 2025; Nurrizal et al., 2025).

AIDA can also be applied to the Indian market and specifically the state of Uttar Pradesh. Social media has played a role in allowing customers to know what restaurants to choose from when living in Lucknow, India (Pande & Mohapotara, 2023). The use of digital marketing can allow restaurants in the Braj region to advertise their food and attract tourists (Sharma et al., 2024). When selling food to consumers in Uttar Pradesh it is important to have glocalized versions of dishes and display them digitally (Srivastava et al., 2025). As mentioned above many factors go into deciding what foods we consume from visuals on digital media.

3.3 Gap

From the literature reviewed we can see many studies have focused on certain types of digital stimulus's and how they affect consumers. Not many studies have tried to find out what types of digital stimuli can effect the customers journey from one AIDA stage to another while trying to purchase food. Therefore the current study looks into what digital stimulus may lead people through each AIDA stage while buying food in KAVAL city of Uttar Pradesh.

4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to look at how Perceived Digital Influence may play a role on Consumers Culinary Purchasing Decisions and if it sequentially mediates through Awareness/Attention, Interest and Desire from the AIDA model.

Specific objectives

To examine the influence of Perceived Digital Influence (DI) on Awareness/Attention (AWN) among consumers.

To examine the influence of Awareness/Attention (AWN) on Interest (INT) in the context of digital culinary consumption.

To examine the influence of Interest (INT) on Desire (DES) towards food products, restaurants, and culinary offerings.

To examine the influence of Desire (DES) on Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD).

To examine the direct and indirect effects of Perceived Digital Influence (DI) on Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD).

To examine whether Awareness/Attention, Interest, and Desire sequentially mediate the relationship between Perceived Digital Influence and Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions.

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5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design and Sample

This study used Quantitative research method which is a Cross-sectional Survey Research Design. This study finds out the how DI(P) influences consumers while they go through the AIDA stages to buy food. Total of 502 samples were taken from five KAVAL cities' which are located in Uttar Pradesh i.e Kanpur, Agra, Varanasi (Prayagraj (Allahabad) & Lucknow. They were taken on purposive sampling method according to criteria set by this study.

5.2 Measures

There were several questions asked that had to be answered using a 5 point likert scale with 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree.

Perceived DI was made up of 3 items which were modified and contextualized from Patwardhan et al., (2024).[6] This study looked at how social media affects consumers when making food decisions. We took items about seeing food related content, ads, notifications and food related information online and changed them to pertain to digital culinary decisions.

Decision Making Journey Through AIDA had four dimensions that went in order Awareness/Attention (AWN) Interest (INT) Desire (DES) and Action/Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD). There were 3 items for each of these. They were also taken from Kulkarni et al., (2020) and changed to fit our study. The sequence of Attention- Interest- Desire- Action stayed the same but was changed to pertain to online food content, restaurants, foods, and culinary purchases.

5.3 Reliability and Data Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to check for internal consistency. Internal consistency of the constructs fell between 0.823 and 0.843 which is an indication of good internal consistency for DI and its 4 AIDA dimensions.

Means, SDs, Skewness and Kurtosis were used to check the distribution of variables used in this study. Using Hayes PROCESS model 6 we tested if there was a sequential mechanism at play. We used DI as our IV and AWN INT and DES as our mediators with CCPD as our DV. With bootstrapped samples of 5000 with a CI of 95% we determined if there was significance in the indirect paths. There was significance when the bootstrap CI did not cross zero.

5.4 Analytical Model

The proposed serial mediation model examined the pathway:

Perceived Digital Influence (DI) → Awareness/Attention (AWN) → Interest (INT) → Desire (DES) → Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD).

It allowed for this research to see if peoples consumption of digital media and how they are affected will cause them to buy food products when they go through each stage of the AIDA.

6 RESULTS

6.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Reliability of data

Construct/Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1. Perceived Digital Influence (DI)	3	0.823
2.Decision-Making Journey through AIDA		
Awareness / Attention (AWN)	3	0.833
Interest (INT)	3	0.839
Desire (DES)	3	0.843
Action/ Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD)	3	0.824

[6] Patwardhan, V., Mallya, J., S, K., & Kumar, D. (2024). Influence of social media on young adults' food consumption behavior: Scale development. Cogent Social Sciences, 10(1), Article 2391016.

https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2391016

Source: Author compilation of SPSS output
According to table the Perceived DI has good reliabilities as well as each stage of AIDA with cronbachs alphas between .823 and .843.

6.2 Descriptive & Normality Analysis

Table 2: Descriptive & Normality of data

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Digital Influence (DI)	502	3.4489	1.02006	-0.537	-0.199
Decision-Making Journey through AIDA	502	3.4497	0.89938	-0.588	0.239

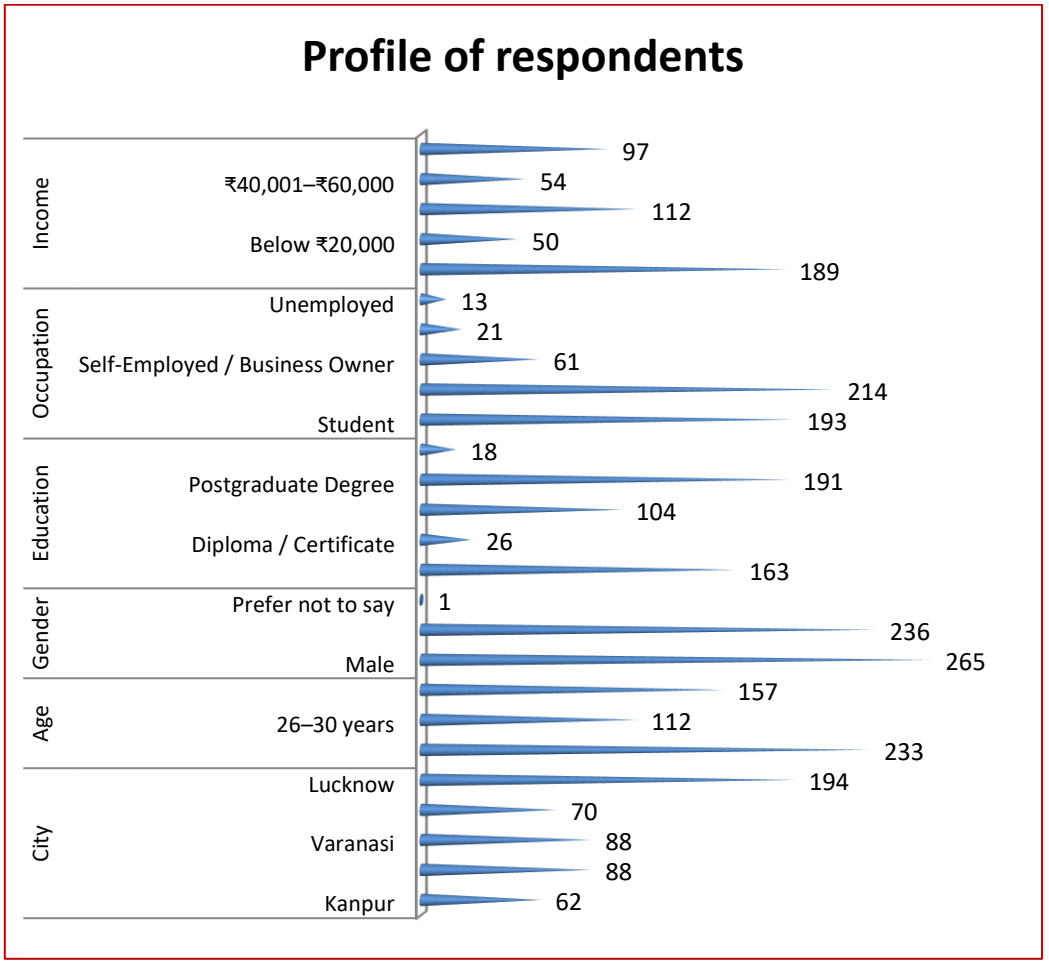
Source: Author compilation of SPSS output
They both have an average of 3.4489 for perceived DI and 3.4497 for the AIDA decision making journey. This would be considered somewhat high. Both are slightly negatively skewed and their Kurtosis is around 0 meaning they have normal distribution.

6.3 Sample profile

Table 3: Sample Profile of respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	N (%)
City	Kanpur	62 (12.4%)
	Agra	88 (17.5%)
	Varanasi	88 (17.5%)
	Allahabad (Prayagraj)	70 (13.9%)
	Lucknow	194 (38.6%)
Age	18–25 years	233 (46.4%)
	26–30 years	112 (22.3%)
	31–35 years	157 (31.3%)
Gender	Male	265 (52.8%)
	Female	236 (47.0%)
	Prefer not to say	1 (0.2%)
Education	High School / Intermediate	163 (32.5%)
	Diploma / Certificate	26 (5.2%)
	Undergraduate Degree	104 (20.7%)
	Postgraduate Degree	191 (38.0%)
	Ph.D.	18 (3.6%)
Occupation	Student	193 (38.4%)
	Employed (Salaried)	214 (42.6%)
	Self-Employed / Business Owner	61 (12.2%)
	Homemaker	21 (4.2%)
	Unemployed	13 (2.6%)
Income	No personal income / Student Allowance	189 (37.6%)
	Below ₹20,000	50 (10.0%)
	₹20,001–₹40,000	112 (22.3%)
	₹40,001–₹60,000	54 (10.8%)
	Above ₹60,000	97 (19.3%)
Total Sample	—	**502 (100.0%)**

Source: Author compilation of SPSS output



Most of our respondents were from Lucknow which made up 38.6% of the sample. 46.4% of the respondents fell under the category of 18-25 years old. There were more male respondents than female with 52.8% and 47.0% respectively. Most of our respondents had post-graduation degree i.e. 38.0%. Working for salary was the highest occupation with 42.6%. Out of all our respondents 37.6% stated they had no income/personal student allowance. Therefore there were 502 total respondents taken from the 5 cities mentioned above.

6.4 Serial Mediation Analysis of Perceived Digital Influence (DI) on Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD)
Hayes' PROCESS Model 6 was used to determine if DI has an effect on CCPD by first passing through the stages of AIDA. DI was the independent variable with the mediators AWN, INT and DES placed in serial fashion leading to our dependent variable of CCPD. Bootstrap samples were taken at 5000 with a confidence level of .95 for significance of the indirect effects. Figure 1 shows the serial mediation model that was tested. Hypotheses, Analysis and Results can be seen below.

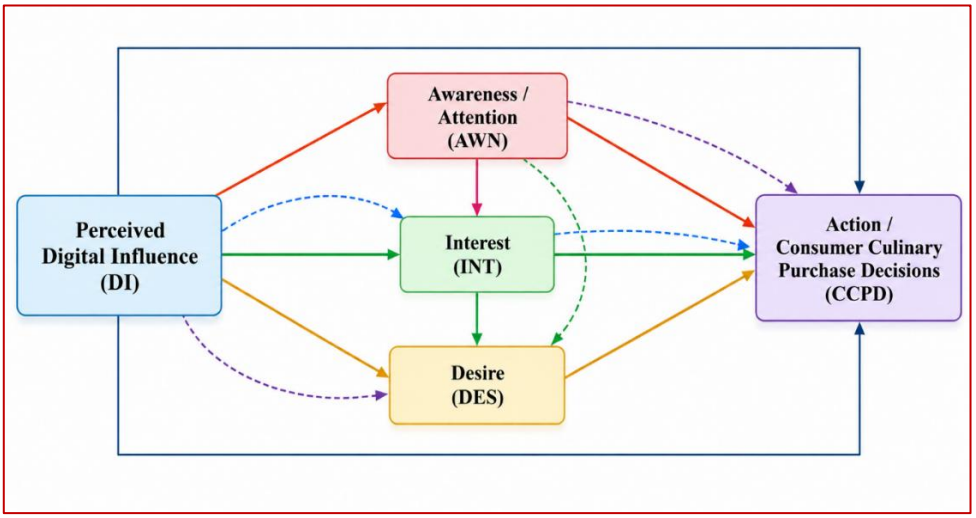


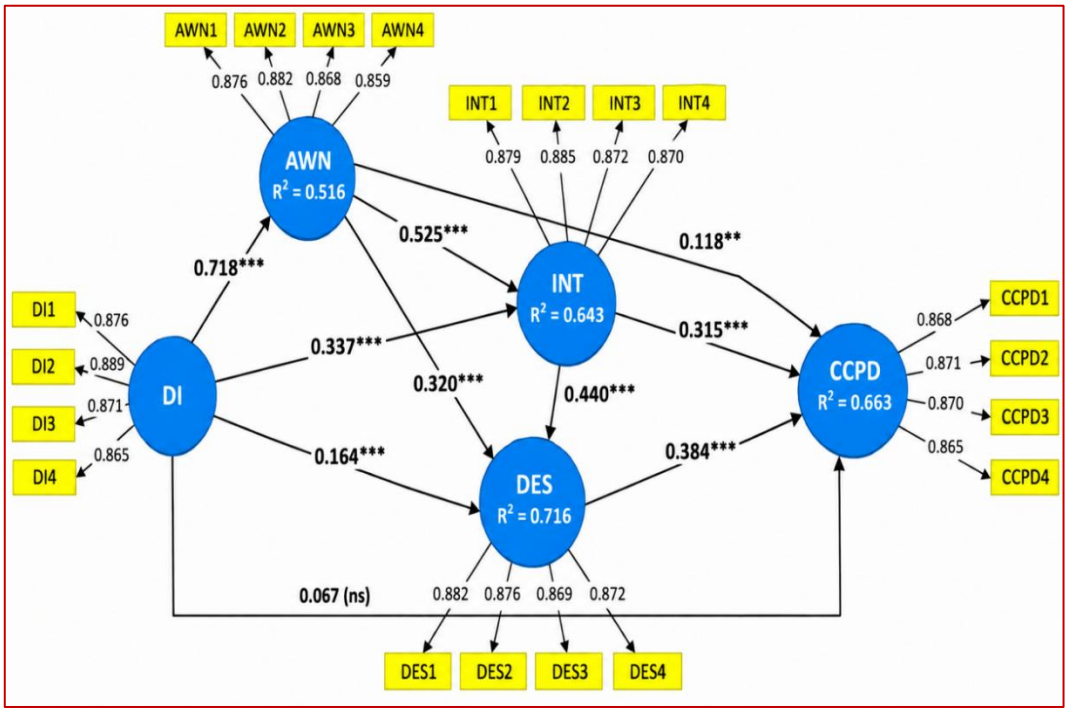
Figure 1: Serial Mediation Analysis of DI on CCPD through AWN, INT, and DES

$H_1.1$: The relationship between Perceived Digital Influence (DI) and Action/Consumer Culinary Purchase Decisions (CCPD) is sequentially mediated by Awareness/Attention (AWN), Interest (INT), and Desire (DES).

Table 4.11: Regression Paths in the Serial Mediation Model

Path	B	SE	B	T	P	R^2
DI → AWN	.6906	.0299	.7180	23.063	<.001	.5155
DI → INT	.3240	.0370	.3368	8.767	<.001	.6431
AWN → INT	.5250	.0384	.5251	13.666	<.001	.6431
DI → DES	.1615	.0364	.1635	4.439	<.001	.7164
AWN → DES	.3282	.0413	.3197	7.954	<.001	.7164
INT → DES	.4521	.0410	.4403	11.024	<.001	.7164
DI → CCPD	.0650	.0400	.0666	1.625	.105	.6627
AWN → CCPD	.1196	.0473	.1179	2.531	.012	.6627
INT → CCPD	.3195	.0493	.3149	6.475	<.001	.6627
DES → CCPD	.3790	.0483	.3835	7.839	<.001	.6627

Source: Author compilation of SPSS output



It was found that DI can significantly predict AWN (DI → AWN; β = .718, p < .001). AWN was able to account for 51.55% of the variance in AWN. When looking at INT we find that AWN is a significant predictor (β = .525, p < .001). DI also significantly predicted INT (β = .337, p < .001). The predictors accounted for 64.31% of the variance in INT.

At the DES level DI (β = .164, p < .001), AWN (β = .320, p < .001) and INT (β = .440, p < .001) were all shown to be significant. They were able to account for 71.64% of the variance.

At the last level CCPD AWN (β = .118, p = .012), INT (β = .315, p < .001) and DES (β = .384, p < .001) significantly predicted CCPD. DI was no longer shown to be significant when predicting CCPD (β = .067, p = .105). All variables together were able to predict 66.27% of the variance.

Table 4.12: Total, Direct and Indirect Effects of DI on CCPD

Effect	Effect	SE	T	P	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total effect of DI → CCPD	.6317	.0333	18.988	<.001	.5664	.6971
Direct effect of DI → CCPD	.0650	.0400	1.625	.105	-.0136	.1436
Total indirect effect	.5667	.0425	—	—	.4834	.6516

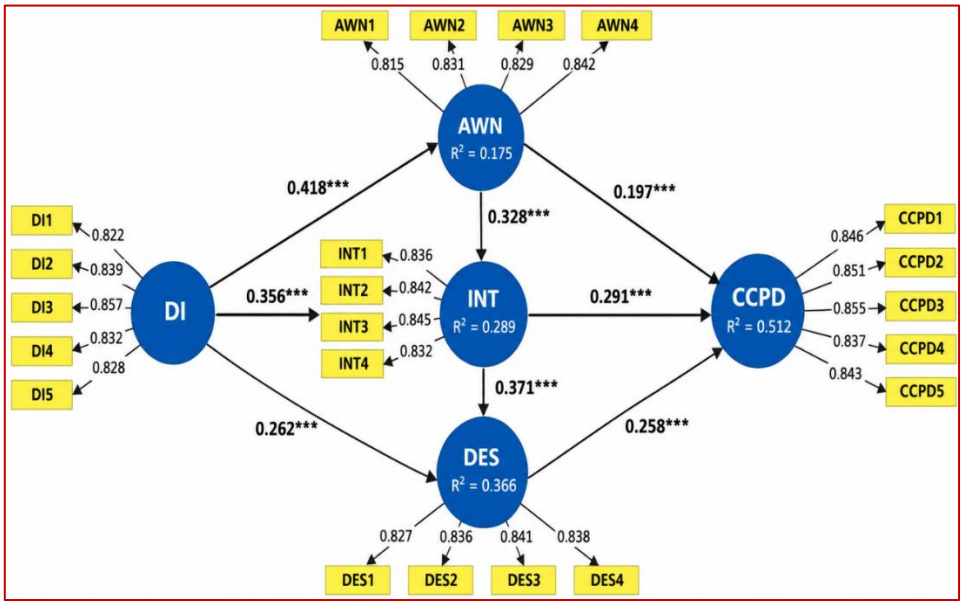
Source: Author compilation of SPSS output

Total effect of DI on CCPD was found to be significant and positive. B = .6317, p< .001. But when AWN INT and DES were added to the equation. The direct effect was not significant B = .0650, p= .105. Total Indirect Effect is .5667 [.4834 , .6516] . Since we have a 95% bootstrap confidence interval and the total indirect effect is significant as zero is not contained within this interval we can say that DI has a significant indirect effect on CCPD when using the AIDA variables as mediators.

Table 4.13: Specific Indirect Effects of DI on CCPD

Indirect pathway	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
DI → AWN → CCPD	.0826	.0424	.0037	.1703
DI → INT → CCPD	.1035	.0246	.0599	.1562
DI → DES → CCPD	.0612	.0199	.0262	.1042
DI → AWN → INT → CCPD	.1159	.0247	.0706	.1663
DI → AWN → DES → CCPD	.0859	.0214	.0482	.1310
DI → INT → DES → CCPD	.0555	.0146	.0304	.0874
DI → AWN → INT → DES → CCPD	.0621	.0150	.0346	.0940

Source: Author compilation of SPSS output



Specific Indirect Effect from the serial pathway of DI to AWN to INT to DES to CCPD was positive (Effect = .0621; BootLLCI = .0346; BootULCI = .0940). Therefor we can say that there is a significant sequential indirect effect because the confidence interval at 95% did not contain 0. Which means DI leads to CCPD through a serial sequence of AWN then INT and then DES. Because the total effect was significant but once the mediators were placed in the model the direct effect was not significant. This means that DI leads to CCPD primarily through the AIDA model. This would support H1.1. There was a significant serial:

DI → AWN → INT → DES → CCPD

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on this study we can infer that Perceived Digital Influence plays a role on Consumer Culinary Purchase Decision through AIDA model in KAVAL Cities of UP. It has been inferred that DI plays a significant role on the stage of Awareness/Attention then leads to Interest & Desire and further leads to Purchase Decision. Serial Indirect effect was found significant (B = .0621, 95% CI [.0346, .0940]). However the direct effect of DI on CCPD was found insignificant. Therefore H1.1 was accepted. It can be said that Digital influence will affect consumers through their path of AIDA.[7]

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

There should be digital campaigns in place to fulfill each aspect of the Attention Interest Desire Action process for food companies and those who digitally advertise. By using pleasing images or videos you can gain attention from your customer. You can create interest through informative information about your food and interesting posts. Create desire with mouthwatering pictures and testimonials from customers. Allow for ease of access when your customer wants to buy. There should be an emphasis on providing the customer with a full journey instead of just gaining awareness from one exposure.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

This paper only covers people living in the five KAVAL cities of Uttar Pradesh. Therefore this cannot be said with certainty for all. Since we have used a cross sectional study which was based on what participants told us. Further studies can be made with more behavioral data. And can look into including eWOM how much influence they play in todays digital world. Also influencer's credibility trust pictures of food and involvement from consumer could be added to this model...

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