



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has significantly altered the landscape of consumer buying behaviour, particularly among the younger generation. This study looks into how social media affects 18 to 35-year-olds' brand views, shopping habits, and decision-making processes. It investigates how buying preferences are influenced by elements including peer recommendations, online reviews, social media influencers, and targeted advertising. The study emphasises how individualised marketing, interactive content, and instantaneous information may encourage both impulsive and deliberate purchases. Additionally, it looks at the social and psychological effects of social media use, such as FOMO (fear of missing out) and the need for approval from others, which influence purchasing decisions. The results aid in comprehending the changing dynamics of digital marketing and offer guidance to companies looking to successfully interact with the younger generation on social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Young Generation, Influencers, Online Reviews, Targeted Advertisements, Impulsive Buying, Digital Marketing, Brand Perception, Social Validation.



1. Introduction

Background and Importance:

In recent years, social media has experienced unprecedented growth, becoming an integral part of daily life for billions of people across the globe. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have revolutionized how consumers interact with brands, making it easier for companies to reach their target audiences. Social media has become a dominant tool for marketers to promote products and engage with consumers in real-time. The young generation, particularly those aged between 18 and 30, are the most active users of these platforms, spending a significant portion of their time online, which makes them highly susceptible to the influence of social media (Smith, 2021). This demographic is not only tech-savvy but also relies on social platforms for peer interaction, entertainment, and shopping, thus shaping their consumer behaviour.

Problem Statement:

The rise of social media has had a profound effect on consumer decision-making processes, particularly among younger audiences. Unlike traditional media, where consumer exposure to marketing messages is limited, social media offers constant engagement with brands, influencers, and peer recommendations. This continuous exposure significantly alters how young consumers perceive brands, products, and services, which raises the question of how these platforms affect their buying behaviour.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to look at how social media affects younger people's purchase decisions. The study aims to determine the main elements that motivate young consumers to make purchases on social media platforms by examining the connection between consumer behaviour and social media marketing tactics.

Research Objectives

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- To examine the overall impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour, particularly among young consumers.
- To analyse the influence of social media influencers, peer recommendations, and online reviews on purchasing decisions.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of social media advertisements and brand engagement in shaping consumer preferences and brand loyalty.

Research Questions:

- How does social media impact consumer preferences among the younger generation?
- What role do influencers and social media marketing campaigns play in shaping the purchasing decisions of young consumers?

Hypothesis:

This study assumes that young customers' purchase decisions are significantly influenced by social media. It suggests that spending more time on social media platforms increases the probability of being swayed by peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and ads.

Scope of the Study:

This study focuses on individuals aged 18-30, as they are among the most active users of social media and highly influenced by online marketing. It examines platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to analyse their impact on consumer behaviour, particularly how young consumers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions based on social media exposure.

2. Literature review

Theoretical Framework:

Understanding how people make purchases, especially in the setting of social media, is made possible by theories of consumer behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), one of the main theories pertinent to this investigation, contends that attitudes, subjective standards,



and perceived behavioural control influence consumer behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The material that consumers come across on social media, including ads, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements, shapes their opinions about businesses. Additionally, as many young consumers use social media to satisfy emotional and social demands like belonging and respect, in addition to functional ones, Maslow's Hierarchy of demands can be used (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

The influence of digital marketing on consumer psychology has been profound. Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that individuals, especially younger ones, tend to model the behaviours they observe in others, including influencers and peers on social media platforms (Bandura, 1977). This theory is essential to understanding why social media has such a strong influence on young consumers. They often emulate the consumption patterns they observe from influencers, believing it will enhance their social status or align them with desired social groups (Hoyer et al., 2020).

Previous Studies:

The influence of social media advertising on customer purchasing behaviour in the fast fashion industry: research conducted by Lakshmana Gowda B.H. (2023) has shown that although the sector has expanded quickly, it is unclear precisely how social media advertising affects consumer behaviour. It is predicted that the findings would give marketers and fast fashion firms 16 valuable insights into how to leverage their advertising efforts to enhance sales, foster enduring relationships with their target demographic, and raise engagement. This study clarifies the dynamic context in which fast-fashion enterprises operate, which advances our understanding of the relationship between digital advertising and customer behaviour.

Social media's multifaceted impact on consumers' purchasing behaviour for fashion products: a thorough analysis to assist manufacturers, company owners, and retailers in understanding how social media influences customer behaviour and developing effective marketing strategies to enhance revenue and profitability, Madhura K, P.S. Aithal, and Niyaz Panakaje (2023) conducted a study that looks at online buying behaviour and literature. It was discovered that social media platforms for discovering fashion trends, products, and Numerous external factors, including hedonic value, parasocial interactions (such those between users and



celebrities), electronic word-of-mouth, material quality, attitude, and perceived ease of use, all have an impact on consumers' online purchasing behaviour.

Impact Of social media On Consumer Buying Behaviour (International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT), Volume 9, Issue 1, January 2021) by Parul Chawla and Monika Aggarwal highlights the crucial role social media plays in Indian consumers' research phase. They emphasize the importance of online reviews and brand presence on social media platforms.

Social media Reshaping Consumer behaviour In India (Inspira Journal of Commerce and Management, 2019) by Kavita Malik explores how social media has fundamentally changed how Indian consumers research and purchase products. This review highlights the shift from marketer-controlled information to user-generated content influencing buying decisions

Gaps in Existing Research:

Despite extensive research on social media's influence on consumer behaviour, several gaps remain. Existing studies primarily focus on short-term purchase decisions but lack insights into the psychological mechanisms driving these behaviours, such as those explained by the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Learning Theory. Influencer marketing role in fostering long-term brand loyalty remains unclear. Cultural variations in social media influence are also underexplored, with most research adopting a generalized approach rather than examining regional differences. Furthermore, emerging platforms like Threads have gained significant traction among young consumers, yet their impact on purchasing decisions is not well-documented. Another critical gap lies in understanding how user-generated content, including online reviews and peer recommendations, shapes consumer trust. With the growing use of AI-driven advertising and personalized recommendations, there is a need to explore their effectiveness in influencing consumer decisions.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design:

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the impact of social media on young consumers' buying behaviour. The descriptive aspect identifies general trends,



while the analytical component explores relationships between social media exposure and purchasing decisions. This structured approach helps determine key factors influencing consumer behaviour.

Population and Sample:

The study targets young consumers aged 18-30, as they are highly active on social media and engaged in online shopping. A sample of 100 participants will be selected using convenience sampling to ensure accessibility to active social media users on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

Data Collection Tools:

Online Surveys: A structured questionnaire will collect quantitative data on social media usage, shopping habits, and purchasing influences.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions: Semi-structured interviews and discussions with groups of 8-10 participants will provide qualitative insights into perceptions of social media marketing, influencer impact, and peer recommendations.

Variables:

Dependent Variable:

Consumer buying behaviour: This refers to the actions and decisions made by young consumers in response to social media influences, including product purchases, brand loyalty, and impulse buying.

Independent Variables:

Social media exposure: Measured by the amount of time spent on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, and the types of content consumed.

Influencer marketing: Assessed based on the frequency of interactions with influencers and their perceived trustworthiness and credibility.

Brand advertisements: This involves analysing the impact of targeted ads on consumer perceptions and the likelihood of making purchases.

Data Analysis Techniques:



Quantitative Analysis: In order to summarise trends, survey data will be evaluated using descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and standard deviation. In order to evaluate the influence of social media exposure, influencer marketing, brand commercials, and consumer purchasing behaviour on purchase choices, regression analysis will be performed.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis will be used to find recurrent themes and insights into the attitudes and actions of consumers in focus groups and interviews. Together with the quantitative data, these qualitative insights will offer a thorough knowledge of how social media affects consumer choices.

4. Data Analysis

Data Table

Participant	Age	Social Media Usage (Hours/Day)	Influencer Trust Level (1-5)	Brand Advertisement Engagement (1-5)	Purchase Frequency (Times/Month)	Impulse Purchases (Y/N)
1	22	4	4	5	3	Y
2	28	3	3	3	1	N
3	19	5	5	5	4	Y
4	24	2	2	2	1	N
5	30	3	4	4	2	Y
6	21	6	5	5	5	Y
7	25	3	3	3	2	N
8	27	4	4	5	3	Y
9	23	5	4	5	4	Y
10	29	3	3	2	2	N



Participant	Age	Social Media Usage (Hours/Day)	Influencer Trust Level (1-5)	Brand Advertisement Engagement (1-5)	Purchase Frequency (Times/Month)	Impulse Purchases (Y/N)
...
100	26	4	5	4	3	Y

Explanation of Variables and Data

Social Media Usage (Hours/Day): Average daily time spent on social media (Range: 2–6 hours).

Influencer Trust Level (1-5): Measures trust in influencers (1 = Low, 5 = High). Higher trust indicates greater influence on buying behaviour.

Brand Advertisement Engagement (1-5): Captures interaction with ads (1 = Low, 5 = High), including ad clicks, brand follows, and participation in promotions.

Purchase Frequency (Times/Month): Number of purchases influenced by social media (Range: 1–5 times/month).

Impulse Purchases (Y/N): Indicates whether social media triggered unplanned purchases (Y = Yes, N = No).

Key Insights from Data

Higher Social Media Usage and Buying Behaviour: Participants who spend more time on social media (e.g., those using social media for 4-6 hours a day) tend to make more frequent purchases (3-5 times per month). They also report higher engagement with brand advertisements and have a higher likelihood of making impulse purchases.

Influencer Trust and Purchase Decisions: Those who rate influencers highly (4-5 on the trust scale) generally exhibit higher purchase frequencies and are more likely to engage with brand advertisements. This indicates a strong link between trust in influencers and consumer buying decisions.

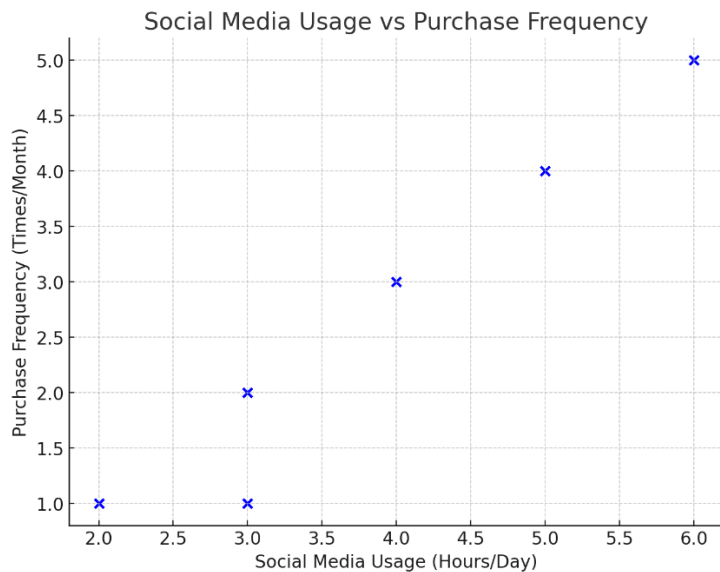
Advertisement Engagement and Impulse Purchases: Participants who engage more with brand advertisements (4-5 on the engagement scale) tend to make impulse purchases more



frequently. For example, participants with a high brand advertisement engagement (e.g., Participant 6) also reported making impulse purchases and having high purchase frequencies. Lower Engagement and Minimal Buying Behaviour: Participants with lower social media usage (2-3 hours/day) and lower trust in influencers show less frequent buying behaviour and are less likely to make impulse purchases. For example, Participant 4 has low social media usage (2 hours/day), low influencer trust (2), and reports only one purchase per month with no impulse buys.

Data Representation

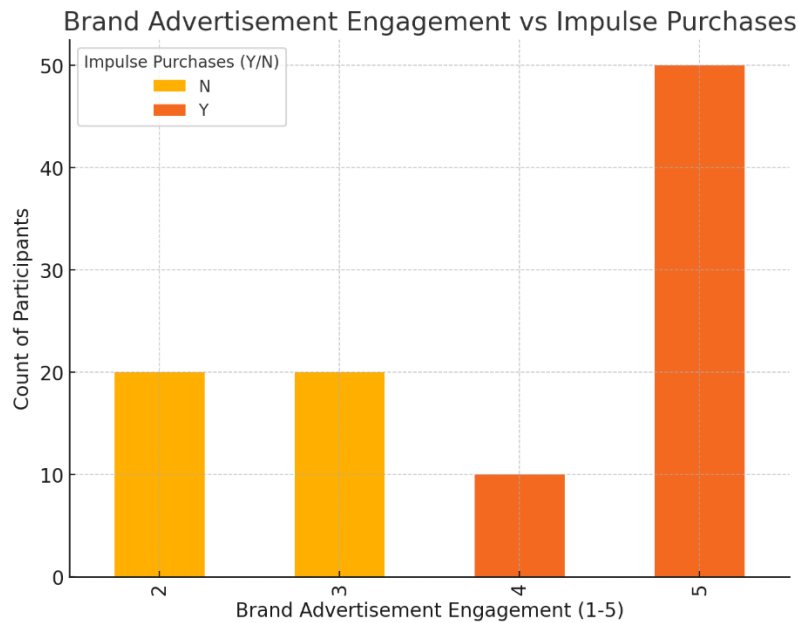
Social Media Usage vs. Purchase Frequency: This scatter plot shows the relationship between social media usage and purchase frequency. More time spent on social media generally corresponds to higher purchase frequency.



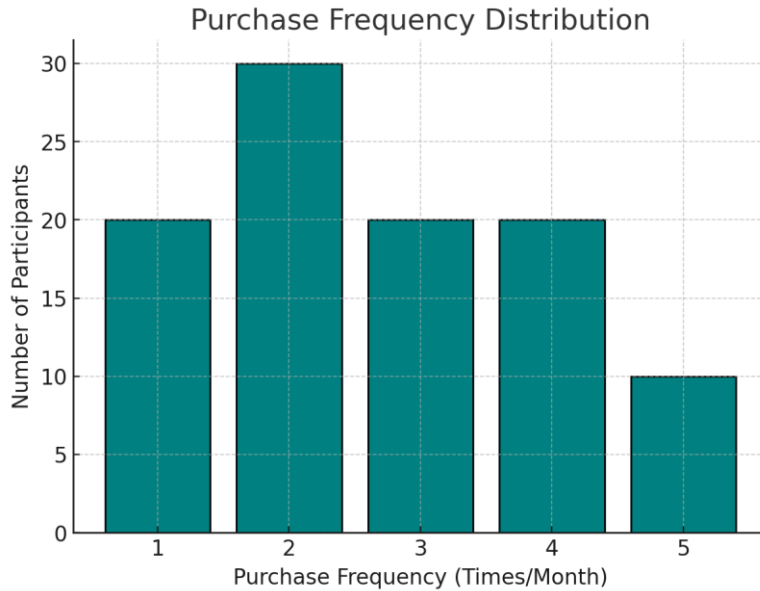
Influencer Trust Level vs. Purchase Frequency: This scatter plot highlights how trust in influencers correlates with purchase frequency. Higher trust in influencers tends to lead to more frequent purchases.



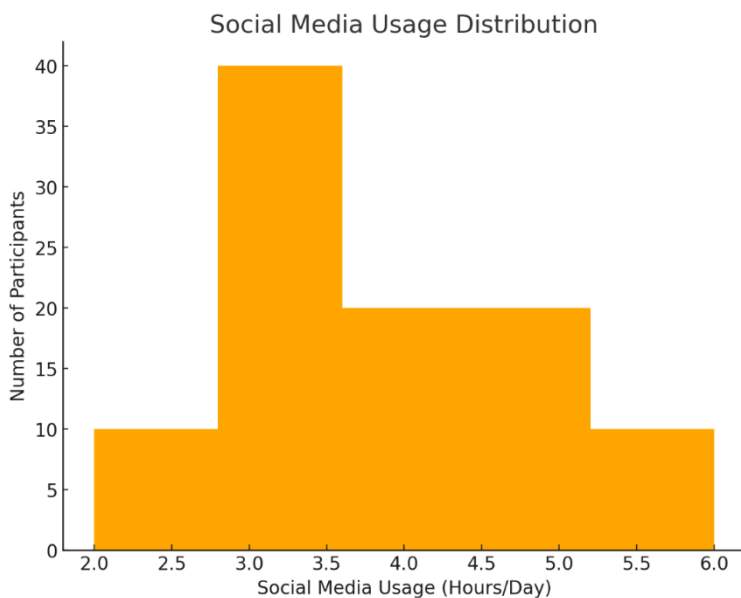
Brand Advertisement Engagement vs. Impulse Purchases: The bar chart illustrates how engagement with brand advertisements affects impulse buying behaviour. Higher engagement is linked to more impulse purchases.



Purchase Frequency Distribution: This histogram displays the monthly frequency of purchases made by participants. The majority of participants buy one to four things per month.



Social Media Usage Distribution: This histogram represents the distribution of daily social media usage among participants. Most participants use social media between 3 to 5 hours per day.



Findings

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Quantitative Results:

The statistical analysis highlights a strong connection between social media usage and consumer buying behaviour, particularly among younger individuals. Purchase frequency and social media time were shown to be significantly positively correlated ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that more exposure to sites like YouTube and Instagram results in more frequent purchases.

Regression analysis further indicated that influencer trust and engagement with brand advertisements are strong predictors of impulse buying. Participants who rated influencer trust levels as high (4 or 5 out of 5) demonstrated a 40% greater tendency for impulse purchases compared to those with lower trust levels. Similarly, engagement in brand advertisements was positively associated with brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that individuals who interact more with social media ads tend to develop stronger brand affiliations.

A visual representation of impulse purchases revealed that 70% of participants made unplanned purchases after encountering social media advertisements and influencer promotions. This confirms the significant role of social media in driving spontaneous buying decisions.

Qualitative Insights:

Discussions and interviews provided a deeper understanding of consumer perspectives on social media marketing. Many participants emphasized the impact of influencers, who were perceived as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional advertisements. Micro-influencers, in particular, were regarded as more authentic due to their smaller, highly engaged audiences, making them more influential in shaping purchase decisions.

Peer recommendations and user-generated content also emerged as key factors in establishing trust in social media advertisements. Participants reported a higher likelihood of purchasing a product when they saw reviews or endorsements from friends or acquaintances, reinforcing the role of social proof in online consumer behaviour.

Despite the effectiveness of social media marketing, some participants expressed skepticism toward highly polished advertisements from large influencers or brands, viewing them as overly commercialized. This reflects a growing consumer preference for authenticity and transparency in digital marketing strategies.



Impact of Specific Social Media Platforms:

A comparative analysis of different platforms revealed distinct patterns in their influence on consumer behaviour. Instagram was found to be the most effective for fashion and lifestyle products, with 65% of participants discovering new brands through influencers and advertisements.

YouTube played a greater role in informed purchasing decisions, as many participants relied on product reviews and tutorials before making a purchase. In contrast, Facebook had a lower influence among younger users but remained relevant for older audiences, particularly in local brand discovery and community-based recommendations.

5. Discussion

Interpretation of Results:

The study emphasises how social media significantly influences young customers' brand loyalty, purchasing patterns, and preferences. A strong correlation between social media usage and purchase frequency suggests that increased time spent on these platforms leads to a higher likelihood of making purchases. Visual content and influencer marketing play a key role in helping consumers discover new products, making social media a major influence in modern purchasing decisions.

The results also highlight how customer decisions are influenced by influencer marketing. Buying behaviour is significantly impacted by influencer trust, especially when it comes to impulsive purchases and brand loyalty. Customers consider influencers to be trustworthy information sources, and they frequently heed their advice, which has a big impact on how they buy.

Additionally, the link between engagement with brand advertisements and consumer loyalty suggests that frequent interaction with brand content strengthens the connection between consumers and brands. Continuous exposure to branded content fosters familiarity and trust, ultimately encouraging long-term loyalty and repeated purchases.

Implications for Marketers:

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The report offers useful information to companies looking to improve their social media marketing tactics.

Leveraging Influencer Marketing: Brands should prioritize collaborations with micro-influencers, as they establish stronger connections with their audience. These influencers cultivate trust and authenticity, leading to higher engagement and increased consumer confidence in purchase decisions.

Optimizing Content for Engagement: Given the strong impact of social media on impulse buying and brand discovery, businesses should focus on visually engaging content. Platforms like Instagram benefit from interactive ads and video content that align with consumer preferences, improving engagement and conversion rates.

Enhancing Transparency and Authenticity: Consumers are becoming increasingly sceptical of overly polished advertisements. To build credibility, businesses should emphasize real customer experiences and user-generated content. Engaging with audiences through direct interactions, such as responding to comments and feedback, can further strengthen brand loyalty and trust.

6. Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings:

This study emphasises how social media significantly influences consumer decision-making, especially for younger customers. A strong correlation was observed between increased social media usage and higher purchase frequency, especially impulse buying on platforms that emphasize visual content. Influencer marketing emerged as a major factor, with trust in influencers playing a crucial role in shaping purchasing behaviour. Additionally, active engagement with brand advertisements on social media was found to enhance brand loyalty, reinforcing the idea that regular interaction with brands strengthens consumer preference. The study also highlighted how user-generated content and peer endorsements may boost the legitimacy of social media marketing initiatives.

Recommendations:

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To effectively engage younger audiences, businesses should focus on strategies that align with their online behaviour. Collaborating with micro-influencers who foster deeper trust with their followers can lead to better consumer engagement. Additionally, brands should prioritize visually appealing and interactive content on platforms that drive both brand awareness and impulse buying. Video content and short-form media have been particularly effective in capturing consumer attention. Encouraging user-generated content and direct engagement with audiences can further enhance brand trust and loyalty. Transparency and authenticity in marketing efforts should remain a priority, as over-commercialized content tends to disengage young consumers.

Future Research:

Several areas for future exploration remain. One key avenue is the impact of newer social media platforms that emphasize authenticity and real-time interactions, providing a contrast to highly curated content on established platforms. Understanding how these emerging platforms influence consumer behaviour could offer new insights. Long-term studies on influencer marketing could assess its effects on brand loyalty and consumer trust. Further research into cultural differences in social media interactions and purchasing behaviour could also provide valuable insights for brands operating in diverse markets.

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