

The Role of Social Media Marketing in Shaping Consumer Buying Decisions: A Behavioural Study (With Reference to Chennai City)

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Introduction

In today's interlinked world, digital marketing has transformed how firms reach and engage with their intended audiences. Companies that use online platforms and technologies can create personalised and interactive experiences that increase consumer engagement and loyalty. Digital Marketing uses websites, apps, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other digital channels to endorse and sell products and services. Many of the same ideas apply to digital marketing as to traditional marketing, and it is often viewed as an additional tool for businesses to approach customers and understand their behaviour.

As a type of digital marketing, social media has fundamentally altered how customers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions. The ubiquitous reach of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter has resulted in a dynamic marketplace where advertising and consumer feedback coexist, shaping consumer behaviour in unexpected ways. This study investigates the complex impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour, focussing on how digital campaigns, influencer alliances, and user-generated content affect brand loyalty and purchasing habits. This study seeks to understand the techniques that effectively engage today's digitally savvy consumers and the psychological and demographic bases of their purchasing decisions by conducting a comprehensive examination of existing literature and empirical data.

Objectives

- To examine how social media advertising influences consumer purchasing decisions and brand perception.
- To explore the effectiveness and efficiency of social media marketing strategies in engaging and converting consumers.
- To assess the demographic parameters that influence the impact of social media marketing on purchasing decisions

Review of Literature

Archana R Motta, Dr.C.Muralikumaran, Dr.V.Kalaierasi, Dr.M.Vigneshkumar, and Mr.Vikram Bajaj (2023) have conducted a study on the "Impact of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Behaviour-An Empirical Study" with a sample size of 110 respondents. The questionnaire was analysed using statistical tools like Anova and the Reliability test. The researchers found that authentic and transparent social media communication fosters consumer trust. The researchers suggested that brands should successfully use social media to positively influence consumer attitudes and actions. The researchers suggest that as a marketer it is essential to keep up with the trends of an ever-changing market.

M. Deepa, Dr. V. Krishna Priya (June 2021) have conducted a study "Impact of Social Media on Consumer Purchasing Decision Making" with a sample size of 100 respondents. The questionnaire was analysed using Primary data gathered from the questionnaire, and secondary data from

journals, magazines and websites and using statistical tools like Reliability analysis, Correlation analysis, Regression analysis and ANOVA. The research focused on analysing social media's influence on consumers' buying decisions and the effect of e-word of Mouth (e-WOM) on women's buying decision-making process. The researchers found a positive correlation between social media, e-WOM and ease of use, which were considered variables that impact consumer purchasing decisions. They have suggested that for future research expanding the dimension of social networking sites should include elements other than ease of use and e-word of mouth.

Kunal Gaurav, Aishwarya Suraj Ray (2020) have conducted a study on the "Impact of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Indian E-commerce Industry" with a sample size of 400 respondents. The questionnaire was analysed using the two-step strategy and Multiple Regression Analysis. The researchers found that all constructs of social media advertising, namely, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter advertisements contribute significantly to consumer buying behaviour.

F. Safwa Farook, Nalin Abeysekara (Dec 2016) have conducted a study that examined the "Influence Social media marketing has on Customer Engagement" with a sample size of 50 respondents. The questionnaire was analysed using statistical tools like Linear regression technique, Reliability analysis, Correlation analysis, and Regression analysis. The study was to investigate the impact of organisations' extravagant spending on social media. The researchers found that social media allows marketers to increase market share and communicate with customers while also allowing customers to talk to one another or with the company. The researchers suggest that organisations should strive constantly to update information and maintain an active online presence to network with potential and established clientele.

Irem Eren Erdogan, Mesut Cicek (2012) have conducted a study on "The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty" with a sample size of 338 respondents. The questionnaire was analysed using the statistical tool Multiple Regression Analysis. The researchers found that customer brand loyalty is positively affected when the brand offers advantageous campaigns with relevant and popular content and appears on various platforms. The researchers suggested that campaigns around brands should be entertaining, and fun, doing what other brands did not think of when they engage with customers on social media platforms. The companies should also keep themselves updated on the consumers' interests and stay relevant.

Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire with a sample size of 50 respondents who were all social media users in Chennai. A convenience sampling method was considered for collecting data. The questionnaire contains 22 items with choices in a five-point Likert's Scale and demographic questions in the first section. The sample consisted of 18% male and 82% female. About 54% of them were students and the rest were employed. The questionnaire was developed to measure customers' brand perception, the effectiveness of social media advertising and consumer's knowledge of products through social media.

Analysis and Findings

The Analysis was performed through IBM SPSS and MS Excel. Anova, Correlation and Percentage Analysis Techniques were used to test the relationship between variables and to test the hypothesis.

ANOVA

Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between Age and Engagement.

Table 1: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Engagement	Between Groups	58.998	14.749	2.699	0.042
	Within Groups	245.882	5.464		
	Total	304.880			

Interpretation

From the above table, $p = 0.042$ (between 0.001 & 0.05) indicates a moderately significant relationship. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected at a 5% level of significance and a significant relationship between age and user engagement is established. Age influences

customers' social media engagement. Different age groups show varied engagement levels, likely due to social media habits, purchasing behaviour and interest in awareness-related content.

Correlation

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between Engagement and Knowledge.

Table 2: Correlation

		Engagement	Knowledge
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	0.261
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.067
	N	50	50
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	0.261	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.067	
	N	50	50

Interpretation

The above table shows that the value of significance is 0.067 (between 0.05 and 0.08) indicating a significant relationship. This suggests that as engagement increases, knowledge increases slightly. Customer's social media

engagement with ads and brand pages strongly influences their knowledge. Higher engagement on social media can lead to greater awareness of products, services, brands and trends. This knowledge helps customers make purchasing decisions.

Percentage Analysis

	User Generated Content (UGC)	Influencer Marketing	Unfollow Influencer?
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Frequently	28%	6%	18%
Sometimes	42%	22%	40%
Neutral	20%	34%	24%
Rarely	6%	24%	18%
Never	4%	14%	0%

Interpretation

The above table indicates that 70% of respondents prefer User Generated Content. Thus UGC greatly influences customer purchasing decisions. Consumers trust peer-generated content over influencer marketing, but influencer recommendations still hold value, with a significant percentage making purchases based on their suggestions. However, authenticity plays a crucial role, as 50% of respondents unfollow influencers due to moderate recommendations. Brands that integrate UGC and maintain credibility in influencer partnerships can enhance consumer trust and engagement.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significant impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in Chennai. Findings indicate that social media advertising, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content contribute to brand perception, consumer engagement, and buying behaviour. The research confirms that age plays a major role in social media engagement, with different age groups exhibiting varied interaction levels. Additionally, the correlation analysis suggests that higher social media engagement leads to increased consumer knowledge, reinforcing the importance of interactive digital marketing strategies. Moreover, the percentage analysis indicates that UGC highly influences purchasing decisions. The study emphasises that social media is not just a promotional tool but a powerful medium that shapes consumer behaviour, brand trust, and purchase intentions.

Suggestions

Brands should tailor their social media

campaigns to different age groups, as engagement levels vary across demographics. Maintaining authenticity and transparency on social media can foster consumer trust and positively influence purchasing behaviour. Brands should encourage two-way communication, such as responding to comments, addressing queries, and engaging in real-time interactions, to strengthen consumer relationships and encourage UGC. User Generated Content is highly trusted, so brands should encourage customers to share testimonials, reviews, and real-life product experiences to boost credibility and engagement. Companies must stay updated with emerging social media trends to maintain relevance and competitive advantage in a dynamic marketplace.

References

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