

From Likes To Purchases: The Role Of Social Media In Consumer Buying Patterns

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior through a quantitative analysis involving 90 respondents, employing structured surveys for data collection. The findings reveal that WhatsApp and Instagram are the most used platforms, each utilized by 76.7% of participants. Significant factors impacting purchasing decisions include product recommendations from friends and family (41.1%) and online reviews (38.9%), with 53.3% of respondents acknowledging that social media has affected their spending habits. Furthermore, 64.4% reported making purchases based solely on social media recommendations. While 37.8% recognized the influence of social media influencers, their overall impact on purchasing behavior is deemed moderate. These findings highlight the critical role of social media as a strategic tool for enhancing consumer engagement, providing essential insights for marketers to develop effective strategies that leverage these platforms. The study emphasizes the necessity for brands to navigate the complexities of social media to maximize their influence on consumer behavior and adapt to the evolving digital marketplace.

Keywords: Social-Media, Buying behavior, Instagram, WhatsApp.

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I. Introduction

Social media refers to a collection of digital platforms and technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing, and exchange of content among users. It encompasses a diverse array of online applications and websites, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube, among others. As a powerful marketing tool for businesses, social media enables direct consumer engagement and fosters brand loyalty. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in disseminating information and advocating for social issues, empowering users to raise awareness and mobilize support effectively. From a consumer's perspective, social media offers several significant advantages that enhance purchasing behavior and decision-making processes. Primarily, it provides consumers with access to extensive information and reviews concerning products and services, allowing them to seek feedback from other users, read evaluations, and compare various offerings. The prevalence of user-generated content on social media platforms further contributes to this advantage, as it offers authentic insights into products that may not be conveyed through traditional advertising channels. Additionally, social media facilitates direct interaction between consumers and brands, fostering transparency and connection while enabling companies to gather valuable feedback that can inform product improvements. The emergence of social media influencers has profoundly transformed consumer behavior, reshaping how individuals perceive and engage with brands. Influencers, who have cultivated large and engaged followings on these platforms, wield considerable power in shaping consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Their relatability and authenticity foster trust among followers, as consumers increasingly seek genuine connections in contrast to traditional advertising methods. As a result, social media has become an indispensable element of modern marketing strategies, influencing not only consumer behavior but also the broader dynamics of the marketplace.

Data collected from the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) indicates that Mumbai leads India in the number of internet users, with approximately 13 million users, followed by Delhi with 11.3 million. Bangalore, Kolkata, and Chennai follow in subsequent positions. Notably, India has emerged as the second-largest user of internet connections after China. As the utilization of social media continues to rise, companies are increasingly recognizing its significance in shaping consumer perceptions, enhancing brand value, and influencing purchasing decisions. Businesses are now aware that a strategic approach to social media can provide a competitive advantage over those that do not leverage these platforms. To assess the impact of social media on consumer buying behavior, a literature review combined with data analysis regarding its usage and customer perceptions can be employed to identify effective strategies for enhancing consumer engagement through social media channels.

This study provides critical insights into consumer preferences, behaviors, and feedback, which are essential for effective market segmentation and targeting. The real-time nature of social media allows companies

to gather and analyze consumer data, facilitating more personalized and responsive marketing approaches. Additionally, the rise of social media influencers has introduced a powerful dynamic in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.

II. Review Of Literature

Godey et al. (2016) highlights the critical role social media plays in modern marketing strategies. As social media platforms continue to grow, they offer unique opportunities for businesses to engage with consumers and build brand awareness. The survey conducted in the study provides a comprehensive look at how consumers interact with social media and how this interaction influences their purchasing decisions. The findings suggest that active participation on social media sites and the content generated by users are crucial factors in shaping consumer behavior. This research underscores the importance of integrating social media marketing into broader marketing strategies to leverage its full potential in influencing consumer decisions.

Liu et al. (2020) underscores the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior, particularly in the context of impulsive purchases. Social media platforms serve as a rich source of feedback and reviews, which can significantly sway consumer decisions. The findings of this study reveal that recommendations from trusted sources and emotional connections to products play crucial roles in driving impulsive buying behavior. This highlights the dual influence of both the recommender's credibility and the inherent appeal of the product in shaping consumer actions. The study provides valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms behind online shopping behaviors, emphasizing the importance of trust and emotional engagement in marketing strategies.

Voramontri & Klieb (2019) empirically investigated the role of social media in consumers' decision-making process for complex purchases—those characterized by significant brand differences, high consumer involvement and risk, and which are expensive and infrequent. Using the classical EBM model, the research focuses on the stages of information search, alternative evaluation, and purchase decision. The quantitative survey conducted in this study reveals that social media usage significantly influences consumer satisfaction during the information search and alternative evaluation stages, amplifying satisfaction as consumers progress toward the final purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation.

Gupta & Chopra (2020) utilized a quantitative survey methodology to examine the extent to which social media engagement alters consumer experiences. The research identifies that consumer sentiments regarding products and services are increasingly shaped by external influencers within digital environments, thereby affecting perceptions in offline contexts. The proliferation of social media platforms has empowered consumers, as marketers possess limited control over the content, timing, and frequency of online discussions that occur among consumers. The findings indicate that social media usage significantly enhances consumer satisfaction during the stages of information search and alternative evaluation, with levels of satisfaction amplifying as consumers progress toward the final purchase decision and subsequent post-purchase evaluation.

III. Objectives

- Investigate the impact of social media platforms on consumer purchasing decisions by analyzing usage patterns and preferences among respondents.
- Examine the influence of product recommendations, online reviews, and social media influencers on consumer behavior.

IV. Research Methodology

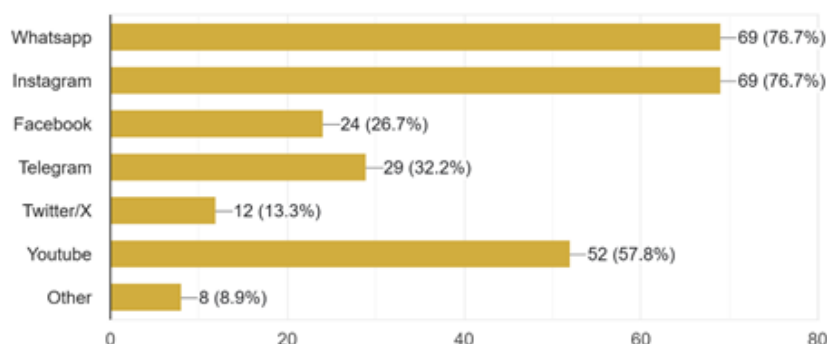
This study employs a deductive approach, starting with the formulation of hypotheses derived from existing theories regarding consumer behavior on social media. The research is quantitative in nature, focusing on the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify trends and relationships among variables. Primary data will be gathered through structured surveys distributed to a sample size of 90 respondents, ensuring diverse representation. The study will specifically examine the impact of various social media platforms on consumer decisions and the role of influencers in shaping purchasing behaviors. The data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire. By focusing on these aspects, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of consumer behavior within the context of social media. The findings will be discussed in relation to existing literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the implications for businesses and marketers.

V. Data Analysis And Findings

Most used social media platform

Which social media platform do you use most frequently?

90 responses

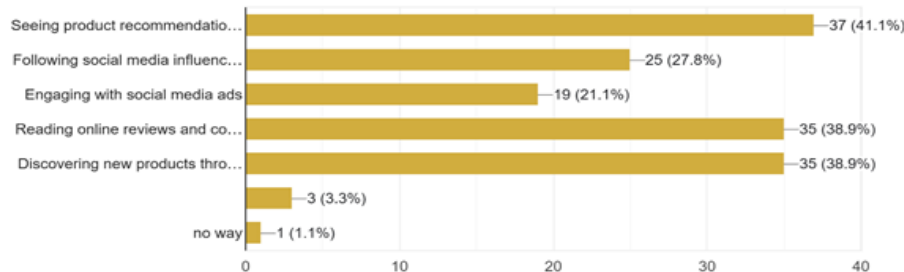


Among 90 respondents, people use multiple social media platforms. The data reveals widespread adoption of social media platforms among respondents, with WhatsApp and Instagram leading as the most utilized, each by 76.7% of participants. YouTube follows closely behind with 57.8% usage. Telegram and Facebook show moderate levels of adoption at 32.2% and 26.7%, respectively. Twitter or other platforms grouped under "X" are used by 13.3% of respondents. A small percentage, 8.9%, use other unspecified social media platforms. This highlights the preference of the consumers across the top available social media platforms.

Mechanism of influence

In what ways does social media influence your purchasing decisions?

90 responses

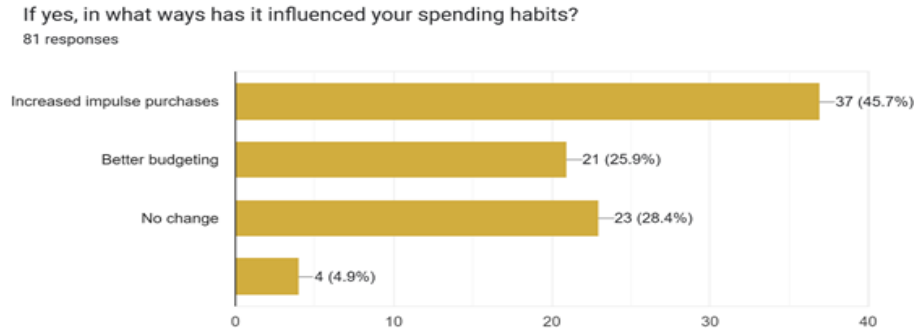


The data shows that product recommendations from friends and family (41.1%) and online reviews (38.9%) hold significant influence on consumer decisions via social media. Following influencers (27.8%) and discovering new products (38.9%) also play substantial roles, while social media ads (21.1%) demonstrate moderate influence. Overall, the findings underscore the varied ways social media channels impact consumer behavior, from personal endorsements to content discovery and advertising.

Impact on spending habit

Options	Responses	Percentage
YES	48	53.30%
NO	16	17.80%
MAYBE	26	28.90%

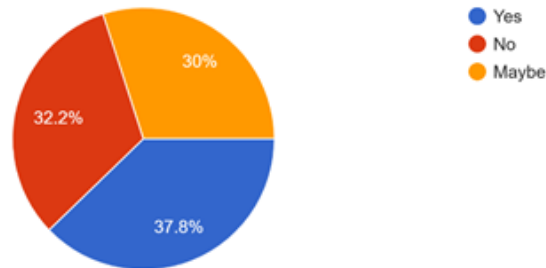
The data suggests that a majority (53.3%) of respondents acknowledge that social media has influenced their spending habits, indicating its significant impact. A considerable proportion (28.9%) is uncertain (maybe), while a smaller group (17.8%) feels social media has not affected their spending decisions, reflecting varied perceptions among respondents regarding the influence of social platforms on their financial behaviors.



Social media influence has led to increased impulse purchases for 45.7% of respondents, while 25.9% reported improved budgeting skills; 28.4% noted no change, with 4.9% citing other effects.

Role of Influencers

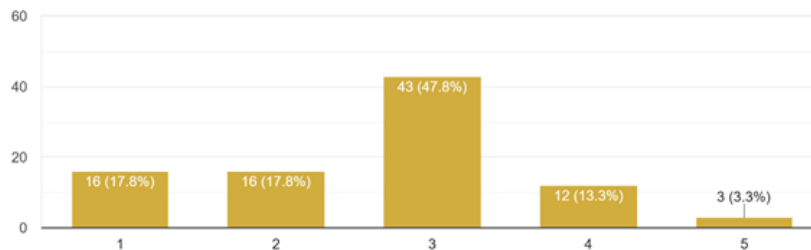
Would you say that social media influencers and celebrities play a big role in influencing your purchasing decisions?
90 responses



The data reveals mixed sentiments regarding the influence of social media influencers and celebrities on purchasing decisions. While a significant portion (37.8%) acknowledges their impact, a sizable minority (32.2%) believes otherwise. Another substantial group (30%) is uncertain ("MAYBE"), indicating diverse perspectives on the influence of influencers and celebrities in consumer choices.

Trustworthiness of Influencers

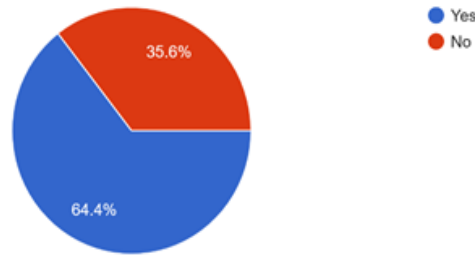
How much do you trust social media influencers' recommendations? (Rate from 1-5 where 1 being the least and 5 being the most)
90 responses



The data shows mixed trust levels in social media influencers' recommendations, with 47.8% giving a moderate trust rating (3), while 17.8% each rated 1 (least trust) and 2 (low trust), indicating varied confidence levels among respondents.

Effectiveness of Social Media Recommendations

Have you ever purchased a product based solely on a recommendation you saw on social media?
90 responses



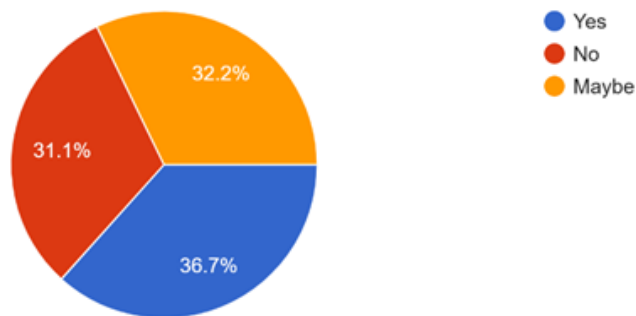
The data indicates that a majority (64.4%) of respondents have purchased a product solely based on a recommendation seen on social media, highlighting the platform's influential role in driving consumer purchasing decisions.

Options	Responses	Percentage
Once in 2 - 3 days	3	3.80%
Once in a week	11	14%
Once in a month	53	66.20%
Other	23	25.55%

The majority of respondents (66.20%) reported buying products from social media once a month, indicating a significant but periodic engagement with online shopping. A notable portion (25.55%) had other purchasing frequencies, suggesting varied consumer behavior beyond weekly or monthly patterns.

Deceptive and Misleading Advertisement on Social Media

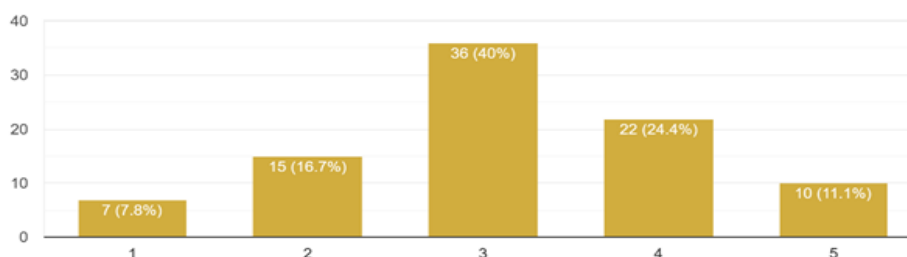
Have you ever felt deceived or misled by an advertisement on social media?
90 responses



The survey reveals a mixed sentiment among respondents regarding feeling deceived or misled by social media advertisements, with 36.70% admitting to having felt so. Another 32.20% were uncertain (maybe), suggesting ambiguity or occasional doubts about the authenticity of ads. Meanwhile, 31% reported never feeling deceived, indicating a notable trust in the advertisements they encounter.

Overall impact on social media

Overall how would you rate the impact of social media on your purchasing decisions. (Rate from 1-5 where 1 being the least and 5 being the most)
90 responses



The survey indicates that a significant portion of respondents (40.00%) rated the impact of social media on their purchasing decisions as moderate (rated 3 on a scale from 1 to 5). This suggests that while social media influences their buying choices to some extent, it's not overwhelmingly decisive. A notable number (24.40%) rated the impact higher at level 4, indicating a more significant influence but still not dominating. Only a minority (11.10%) rated social media's impact at the highest level (5), implying a powerful sway over their purchasing behavior. Conversely, 25.80% rated the impact lower (levels 1 and 2 combined), indicating less influence or negligible impact on their decisions.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study effectively demonstrates the notable impact of social media on consumer buying behavior, highlighting its essential role in shaping purchasing decisions in the digital age. The findings reveal that platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram are predominantly utilized, with each having a usage rate of 76.7%. Product recommendations from friends and family (41.1%) and online reviews (38.9%) are identified as significant influencers, underscoring the value of trust and personal connections in the decision-making process. Additionally, 53.3% of respondents acknowledge changes in their spending habits due to social media, with 64.4% purchasing products based solely on social media recommendations. While 37.8% recognize the influence of social media influencers, their overall effect remains moderate, suggesting that consumers continue to prioritize authentic connections and reliable sources of information. Furthermore, the research highlights that 45.7% of respondents report an increase in impulse purchases linked to social media engagement, indicating the urgency for brands to navigate this landscape strategically. Overall, the insights garnered from this study provide valuable implications for marketers, emphasizing the necessity of leveraging social media effectively to foster consumer engagement and drive purchasing behavior. As social media continues to evolve, understanding its influence will be paramount for businesses aiming to adapt and thrive in an increasingly digital marketplace.

VII. Recommendations

- Leverage influencer partnerships to enhance credibility and reach.
- Encourage user-generated content through contests or specific hashtags.
- Optimize social media content and e-commerce platforms for mobile accessibility.
- Actively showcase customer reviews and testimonials to build trust.
- Utilize data analytics to deliver personalized content and recommendations.
- Foster community through direct interactions via comments and messages.
- Implement targeted advertising strategies to reach specific demographics.
- Continuously track social media trends and consumer feedback to adapt strategies.

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