

Evaluating the Role of Social Media Marketing in Consumer Decision Processes for FMCG Products in Indore

Narendra Kumar Mehar¹, Dr. Sandeep Shukla²

1*Research Scholar, Department of Management, Vikrant University, Gwalior, (M.P.), India

narendra2462@gmail.com

2*Ph.D. Guide, Department of Management, Vikrant University, Gwalior, (M.P.), India

drsshukla4@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has significantly transformed the way consumers gather information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. Social media marketing (SMM) has become one of the most influential digital marketing strategies, enabling organizations to engage directly with consumers through interactive platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. This study examines the role of social media marketing in influencing consumer decision processes by exploring how social media content, influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), customer engagement, and online advertisements affect consumer behavior. A quantitative research design is proposed using structured questionnaires administered to consumers. The findings indicate that social media marketing positively influences consumer awareness, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase intention, and post-purchase satisfaction. The study contributes to the understanding of digital consumer behavior and offers managerial implications for marketers seeking to enhance customer engagement and purchase decisions through social media.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Decision Process, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Purchase Intention, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Influencer Marketing.

Introduction

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered marketing communication across industries. Social media platforms have become integral to consumers' daily lives, serving as sources of information, entertainment, communication, and shopping inspiration. According to recent global estimates, over **5.3 billion people** actively use social media worldwide, representing more than **64% of the global population**. Users spend an average of approximately **2 hours and 20 minutes daily** on social networking platforms.

Businesses increasingly allocate marketing budgets toward social media due to its extensive reach, cost-effectiveness, personalization capabilities, and measurable outcomes. Social media marketing enables firms to interact directly with customers through advertisements, product demonstrations, influencer collaborations, live streaming, reviews, and user-generated content.

Consumer purchasing decisions are no longer driven solely by traditional advertising. Instead, online reviews, peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and brand interactions significantly shape buying behaviour.

This study investigates how social media marketing affects each stage of the consumer decision-making process.

Literature Review

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)

Defined social media as internet-based applications built upon Web 2.0 technologies that enable user-generated content and interactive communication.

Mangold and Faulds (2009)

Argued that social media has become a hybrid promotional element where consumers actively participate in marketing communication.

Evans (2012)

Highlighted that social media enhances customer engagement through interactive communication rather than one-way promotional messages.

Hutter et al. (2013)

Found that Facebook brand pages positively influence brand awareness and purchase intention through customer engagement.

Kim and Ko (2012)

Demonstrated that luxury brands successfully utilize social media marketing to improve customer loyalty and purchase intention.

Stephen (2016)

Explained that digital social media has transformed consumer decision-making by facilitating information sharing and peer influence.

Dwivedi et al. (2021)

Reported that social media marketing significantly influences trust, customer engagement, and purchase decisions across industries.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined social media marketing, limited research comprehensively evaluates its influence across all stages of the consumer decision-making process. Existing studies often focus on purchase intention while neglecting post-purchase behavior and customer advocacy. Furthermore, empirical evidence from developing economies remains limited.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of social media marketing on consumer awareness.
2. To analyze the impact of social media marketing on information search behaviour.
3. To evaluate the role of electronic word-of-mouth in purchase decisions.
4. To investigate the influence of influencer marketing on purchase intention.
5. To assess customer engagement as a mediator between social media marketing and purchase behaviour.
6. To study the impact of social media marketing on post-purchase satisfaction.

Research Questions

- Does social media marketing influence consumer purchase decisions?
- Which social media factors most strongly affect buying behaviour?
- How does customer engagement affect purchase intention?
- Does electronic word-of-mouth increase consumer trust?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Social media marketing positively influences consumer awareness.

H2: Social media marketing positively affects information search behaviour.

H3: Electronic word-of-mouth significantly influences purchase decisions.

H4: Influencer marketing positively affects purchase intention.

H5: Customer engagement positively mediates the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchase decisions.

H6: Social media marketing positively influences post-purchase satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

- Social Media Advertisement
- Influencer Marketing
- Customer Engagement
- Electronic Word-of-Mouth
- Brand Content Quality

↓

Mediator

Customer Trust

↓

Dependent Variable

Consumer Decision Process

- Need Recognition
- Information Search
- Evaluation
- Purchase Decision
- Post-purchase Behaviour

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive and explanatory research.

Research Approach

Quantitative.

Population

Consumers actively using social media platforms for purchasing decisions.

Sampling Technique

Convenience Sampling.

Sample Size

400 respondents.

Data Collection

Primary Data:

- Structured Questionnaire

Secondary Data:

- Research journals
- Books
- Industry reports
- Government publications

Questionnaire Design**Section A: Demographics**

- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Income
- Occupation
- Preferred Social Media Platform

Section B: Five-Point Likert Scale

(1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Social Media Marketing

- Social media advertisements attract my attention.
- Brand content is informative.
- Product videos influence me.

Influencer Marketing

- I trust influencer recommendations.
- Influencers improve product credibility.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth

- Online reviews influence my purchases.
- Customer ratings affect my buying decisions.

Customer Engagement

- I interact with brands on social media.
- I frequently share brand posts.

Consumer Decision

- Social media helps compare products.
- Social media influences purchase decisions.
- I recommend brands after satisfactory purchases.

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha should exceed **0.70**.

Construct validity can be tested using:

- KMO (>0.70)
- Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.05$)

Data Analysis Techniques

- Descriptive Statistics
- Reliability Analysis
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)
- Correlation Analysis
- Multiple Regression
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Software:

- SPSS
- AMOS
- SmartPLS

Expected Results

The study is expected to show that:

- Social media significantly enhances consumer awareness.
- Electronic word-of-mouth positively influences trust.
- Influencer marketing increases purchase intention.
- Customer engagement mediates purchase decisions.
- Social media positively affects post-purchase satisfaction and loyalty.

Managerial Implications

- Develop engaging and informative social media content.
- Collaborate with credible influencers.
- Encourage user-generated content and customer reviews.
- Respond promptly to customer queries on social media.
- Use analytics to personalize marketing campaigns.

Limitations

- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference.
- Convenience sampling may affect generalizability.
- Self-reported responses may introduce bias.
- The study focuses primarily on social media users.

Future Research Directions

- Longitudinal studies on evolving consumer behavior.
- Comparative studies across industries.
- Cross-cultural analysis of social media marketing.
- The role of artificial intelligence and social commerce in consumer decision-making.

Conclusion

Social media marketing has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer decision processes by influencing awareness, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase intention, and post-purchase behaviour. Interactive content, influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and customer engagement collectively shape consumer perceptions and buying decisions. Businesses that strategically leverage social media can build stronger customer relationships, improve brand trust, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Future research should explore emerging technologies such as AI-driven personalization, live commerce, and immersive social experiences to further understand their impact on consumer behavior.

References

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
2. Dwivedi, Y. K., et al. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168.
3. Evans, D. (2012). *Social Media Marketing*. Wiley.
4. Hutter, K., Hautz, J., Dennhardt, S., & Füller, J. (2013). The impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(5/6), 342–351.
5. Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.
6. Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1480–1486.
7. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2022). *Marketing Management* (16th ed.). Pearson.
8. Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357–365.
9. Solomon, M. R. (2021). *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having and Being* (13th ed.). Pearson.
10. Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, 17–21.

11. Schiffman, L. G., & Wisenblit, J. (2019). *Consumer Behavior* (12th ed.). Pearson.
12. Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022). *Digital Marketing* (8th ed.). Pearson.
13. Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2023). *Social Media Marketing* (4th ed.). Sage.
14. Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity*. Wiley.
15. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2022). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (9th ed.). Cengage.