

Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer in Punjab.

Under the guidance of & submitted to:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of Social Media Growth

The history of social media development background.

During the last ten years, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter transformed the way people communicated to become significant commercial ecosystems. What used to be a personal networking field has influenced the ways in which the views about brands and purchasing choices of millions of individuals are made. This has been so especially in Punjab where cheap mobile data has quickly digitalised consumer behaviour even in the semi-urban and rural regions. As opposed to the traditional form of advertising that was a one-way process, social media allows companies to get instant feedback in the form of comments, shares, and reactions and creates a continuous loop between a company and its customers. This is a two-way channel that is direct and it has thus resulted into making social media marketing one of the most cost-effective and measurable tool that business can use nowadays. One of the most effective forces has turned out to be user-created content reviews, unboxing videos and peer recommendation which may at times override the paid advertisement in influencing purchase behavior.

1.2 Emergence of Social Media Marketing as a Strategic Tool

In Punjab, companies such as clothing shops in Ludhiana to farm suppliers in Amritsar have diverted a lot of their marketing budget towards social media. The explanation is simple enough, websites such as Instagram enable a brand to target a particular buyer profile, monitor whether he or she has been targeted, and edit the message on the fly. A retailer is able to determine in 24 hours whether a reel brought the traffic and turn about.

With time, companies came to the realization that social media would enable them to target individual groups of people in relation to their age, interests, position and online behaviour. This makes marketing more efficient as compared to the traditional methods. The brands will be able to develop personalized campaigns and monitor the reaction of the customers in terms of likes, comments, shares, and views. Companies can use this information to enhance their strategies and present improved content.

Influencer marketing has been especially radical in Punjab where a review of a local content creator who speaks Punjabi and whose review concerns products offered by markets in Chandigarh can be more persuasive than a refined national campaign. Once resonant, the communities of Punjab are well connected enough to push the post to hundreds of thousands of organic visits. Such an ability to target accurately, gauge results and amplify the community has made the social media the first line of marketing to businesses in the region.

1.3 Importance of Studying Consumer Behaviour in the Digital Era

The consumers of Punjab are no longer inactive receivers of advertising. A larger number of people depend on Instagram reels or YouTube reviews and WhatsApp suggestions of friends and family before purchasing a product, be it a smartphone, a piece of clothing, or a household appliance. A bad commentary can ruin the reputation of a brand in a few hours; a word of mouth can gather sales in a single night. The new reality not only renders the study of consumer behaviour on social platforms interesting to an academic perspective but also practically crucial to any business enterprise in the region. The cultural influences on consumer patterns in Punjab include cultural factors that are independent of national patterns, such as the effect of the NRI diaspora, aspirational spending associated with social status and a bias towards community-approved purchases.

Research into the interaction of social media marketing with these factors can enable marketers to create campaigns that touch people and not just reach a large number of people. By knowing what influences the buyers on this particular environment, businesses can tailor their messages, enhance customer care, and achieve long-term customer loyalty.

1.4 Research Problem and Rationale

Although companies spend a lot of money on social media marketing, they are yet to determine the actual effect it has on the attitude and purchasing behaviour of consumers. It is necessary to examine the effects of social media marketing activities on consumer trust, brand perception, engagement and purchase intention. This paper will fill this gap and offer insights that can be of help to marketers. A lot of ads and sponsored posts are seen by many consumers on a daily basis and not all of them result into a purchase. There are those who believe what they see in social media, and some can disregard it. One should always know the kind of content that appeals to the consumers and leads them into action, by clicking on a link or purchasing a

product. Lack of this knowledge could lead to a waste of marketing funds by the companies on unproductive strategies.

This gap is directly of practical interest. Once the marketers understand what formats will actually lead to purchase decision within the market in Punjab: a short-form video, influencer testimonials, or targeted display ads, they will be able to cease guesswork and invest their budgets in areas where they will make a difference.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

1. Discuss the role of social media marketing in consumer awareness and interest..
2. Determine the impact of interactions on social media (likes, comments, shares) in influencing consumer attitudes.
3. Examine how social media marketing influences the purchase intention and decision making of the consumers.
4. Learn consumer attitudes to marketing content on social media.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What is the impact of social media marketing on consumer perception and awareness?
2. What are the social media activities that affect consumer interaction with the brands?
3. Does the use of social media motivate consumers to buy products?
4. What is the relationship between consumer opinion and reviews on social media and buying behaviour?

1.7 Hypotheses (if applicable)

H1: Social media marketing positively affects consumer purchase intention.

H2: Social media (likes, shares, comments) consumer engagement is a positive predictor of brand perception.

H3: The online reviews and peer recommendations in social media have a significant impact on purchasing decisions.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has made a comprehensive theoretical and empirical study on the effects of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on consumer behaviour. This review, in contrast to generic marketing research, is a critical synthesis of the global paradigms, including the shift of Web 2.0 into the AI-driven Web 3.0, and the socio-cultural realities of Punjab. The review determines how the "Granary of India" is becoming a "Digital Hub," by analyzing the data between 2000 and 2025, in which agrarian prosperity, diaspora influence, and hyper-digital social networking interact in a distinctive manner in determining consumption.

2.2 Concepts of Social Media and Social Media Marketing

2.2 Social media concept and Social Media Marketing

2.2.1 The Development: Broadcast to Omni-Social.

Marketing used to be a monologue, where the brand communicated something through television or the print press and the consumer was a passive receiver. With the emergence of social media, this framework was radically overturned to form a Networked Economy.

The Hybrid Mix: Mangold and Faulds (2009) theorized about the social media as a hybrid portion of the promotion mix. This is witnessed in Punjab whereby a brand's official discourse (firm-controlled) vies against the Galli-Mohalla gossip (consumer controlled) that has since shifted to WhatsApp groups.¹

The Omni-Social Reality: According to the authors of the article, social media is not the channel anymore, but the infrastructure of everyday life; to a consumer in Jalandhar, visiting Instagram does not mean a separate activity, it is a part of eating, commuting, and even working (Appel et al., 2020).

2.2.2 Defining SMM in the Punjabi Context.

2.2.2 The SMM definition According to the Punjabis

The Social Media Marketing in the context of this research paper is the strategic application of digital platforms geared towards creating a Relationship Equity.

Relationship Equity in High-Context Cultures: Punjab Punjab is another high-context culture in which relationships (Sanjh) take the centre stage. SMM in this case is not only about transactions, but it is about the digitalization of these relations. An example is that of local boutique owners in Ludhiana, who not only sell suits via the Facebook Live feature, but also strive to keep with their customers an everyday conversational connection, emulating the social interaction of an actual bazaar.²

2.3 Consumer Behaviour Theories Applicable online

In order to comprehend why Punjabi consumers behave as they do on the Internet, we will need to resort to the application of certain psychological frameworks.

2.3.1 Social Identity Theory and the "Diaspora Effect"

- **The Social Identity Theory and the Diaspora Effect**

According to the Social Identity Theory, people define themselves based on the membership of groups. The Non-Resident Indian (NRI) connection has been a huge driving force of digital behaviour in Punjab.

The Shadow Consumer: Studies have shown that the consumption patterns in Punjab are mostly shadowed by the trends in Canada, UK as well as Australia. Once the NRI cousin shares a picture of a certain brand of sneakers or handbag, the family back at Punjab instantly he/she has a new status. Social media makes this spatial divide, and in effect forms a Transnational Consumer Identity that local aspirations are influenced by global images.³

2.3.2 The Theory of conspicuous consumption by Veblen.

The theory of the Leisure Class, by Thorstein Veblen is essential in the analysis of the Punjab market, that has a high aspirational spending.

Digitization of Taur Taur (status/swag) is a social currency in Punjabi society. Instagram has turned into the new platform of the Conspicuous Consumption. As Bhardwaj (2020) discovered, the act of demonstrating wealth online (pre-wedding shoots, decor reels) is a more crucial element that can be practiced and showcased during the Punjabi wedding than the actual ceremony. The social value of the consumption reduces in case the consumption is not visible online.⁴

Music as a Temperance: It is the Punjabi music industry that enhances this "showing off" culture. Musicians such as Diljit Dosanjh and AP Dhillon popularize the habit of using luxurious brands (Gucci, Prada) in their music videos, and these videos are an unofficial advertisement of expensive brands.

2.3.3 Cultural Dimensions Hofstede

- **Collectivism:** Punjabi decision-making is still collective, although individual devices have become dominant. According to a study by Kaur (2024) on FMCG products in Punjab, the search itself may be an individual process (through a smartphone) but the decision may be confirmed by the family or peer group through dark social platforms such as WhatsApp.

2.4 Digital participation, Content Marketing, and Influencer Marketing.

2.4.1 Content Marketing: The Vernacular Revolution

One such trend observed in literature (2023-2025) is the trend of abandoning English-centric content.

Linguistic Affinity: According to a study conducted by the Atom COMM (2024), 68 percent of Indian internet users choose the material in the native language. The use of local dialects and Gurmukhi scripts or Hinglish that use Punjabi dialects are far more engaged in Punjab. This Vernacular Content creates a sense of trust as it has an indication that the brand is aware of the cultural peculiarities of the local context, unlike neutral corporate advertising.

2.4.2 Influencer Marketing: The Trust Brokers

Influencer marketing has become not only a new but a major channel.

State-Sanctioned Influence: Punjab is unique by having the Punjab Influencer Empowerment Policy 2023 that splits influencers by the number of followers and provides them with the status of government empanels. This justifies the profession yet it casts doubt on authenticity.

Micro vs. Mega: Celebrities in Punjab create awareness, but Micro-Influencers (10k-50k followers) create action. Research into youth purchasing behaviour identified that micro-influencers would be seen as friends and not salespeople, and as a result, the product purchase rates of cosmetics and electronics were increased.

The sensitivity of digital engagement in agriculture is demonstrated through the adoption of digital innovations in agriculture.

2.4.3 Digital Engagement in Agriculture

The sensitivity of digital engagement in agriculture is manifested via the uptake of digital innovations in agriculture.

In Punjab, SMM is important to agriculture as opposed to this situation in the Western markets where it is retail-heavy.

Sangha Mittra Phenomenon: Farmers do not only use WhatsApp to chat but also as a marketplace intended to be used as a B2B. Research indicates that WhatsApp groups are being utilized to monitor mandi prices, renting machinery, and even crop advice, and in certain points of the value chain, the use of the traditional middlemen (Artigas) is being bypassed.

2.5 Past Research on the Impact of Social Media on the Consumer Attitude, Trust, and Purchase Intentions.

2.5.1 Consumer Attitude: The Rural-Urban Dilemma.

The Rural Paradox: Singh and Singh (2018) found an opposite effect, the Rural consumers in Punjab seem to express greater satisfaction with online shopping than the Urban consumers.⁵

Rationalisation: The physical malls are available to the urban consumers in Ludhiana or Chandigarh. To a village consumer in Moga the social media has been the only entry point to world brands. Therefore, rural demographics have a greater perceived value of SMM.^{2.5.2}

Trust: The "Academic" Barrier

2.5.2 Trust: The "Academic" Barrier

Deficit of trust: Trust is the one greatest obstacle. Punjabi consumers are cautious with the emergence of the so-called Impersonation Scams (e.g., compromised WhatsApp accounts requesting money) and the appearance of fake Instagram shops.

Mitigation Strategies: According to a study by Khanna and Sood (2022), consumers reduce this risk using so-called Social Proof, namely, video testimonials and Cash on Delivery (COD). The absence of a face behind the brand name or a user-created video review can be considered as untrustworthy.

The anthropic element of purchase intention: Purchase intention and Income.

Income Over Age: A recent 2025 study of 500 respondents in Punjab, found that Income is the biggest determinant of the online purchasing frequency, and that it surpasses age or gender.⁷ High-income earners utilize social media to engage in Discovery and Verification, whereas lower-income earners use it to engage in Deal Hunting.

2.6 Theoretical Frameworks Applied

2.6.1 The AIDA Model (Reimagined)

The conventional Attention - Interest - Desire - Action model has failed.

The "Loop" Model: With Instagram Reels, a user is able to take a few seconds in the "Attention" phase and immediately proceed with a purchase with a tag that will say "Shop Now" to the user. The incremental cycle is substituted by an endless cycle whereby, the Post-Purchase Evaluation (posting a photograph of the purchased product) serves as the direct trigger of the Attention phase to a new user.^{12.6.2}

2.6.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

TAM implies that the adoption depends on Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU).

Application: This justifies why WhatsApp is dominant in Punjab where the research indicates that 96 percent of farmers and rural entrepreneurs use it. It is seen as a very useful tool in business relationships, and it is also very convenient to use, as voice recording apps do not demand any typewriting skills. 8, on the other hand, complicated e-commerce applications tend to have high drop-off rates among older users because of low PEOU.

2.6.3 Uses & Gratifications Theory (U&G)

The question posed by this theory is why individuals consume media.

Application: Social Surveillance (seeing what others are doing/buying) and Self-Presentation (curating their own image) are the most important gratifications in Punjab. Marketing that contributes towards such ends, e.g. Instagram able cafes or packaging, work because it is in line with the motivation of the user to use the platform.⁹²

2.6.4 Consumer Decision-Making Process (The ZMOT)

2.6.4 Decision-Making Process of the Consumers (The ZMOT)

The concept of Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) of Google is very applicable.

The Digital Shelf: a Punjabi buyer has already decided whether to purchase a car or a phone before going to the store as a result of YouTube reviews and opinions of the influencers. The very buying is mere formalities; the marketing occurred several hours ago on a screen.¹⁰

2.7 Comprehensive Longitudinal Research Data (2000–2025)

The table below shows a 25-year outlook of the research, where the simple internet behaviour is replaced with sophisticated social behaviours that are dictated by AI. It contains seminal global studies that constituted the theory and regional studies of Punjab/India that confirm these theories in the regions.

Year	Context	Author(s)	Key Findings & Strategic Insights	Source
2000	Global	Cuthrell, J.	Relational Value: Established that online communities drive value through relationship building (loyalty) rather than just direct sales ROI.	Link ¹
2001	Global	Muniz & O'Guinn	Brand Community: Defined "Consciousness of Kind," shifting focus to consumer-consumer-brand triads. Foundational for understanding fan groups.	Link ¹

2002	Punjab	Bhatia & Bawa	Rural vs. Urban: Early study showing rural	<u>Link</u> ¹¹
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			consumers rely heavily on brand familiarity and retailer trust due to information asymmetry.	
2006	Global	Maylin, D.	Economics of Authenticity: Proved eWOM (electronic Word of Mouth) remains persuasive even when consumers suspect firm manipulation (fake reviews).	Link ¹

2007	Global	Boyd & Ellison	Social Network Definition: Defined SNS as platforms to maintain <i>existing</i> offline relationships, crucial for understanding Punjab's close-knit digital circles.	<u>Link</u> ¹
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2009	Global	Mangold & Faulds	The Hybrid Mix: Classified social media as a "hybrid" element combining firm-control with consumer-control (the "loss of control" era).	Link¹
2010	Global	Kaplan & Haenlein	Classification: Created the matrix of "Social Presence" vs "Self-Disclosure," categorizing platforms like blogs vs. social networks.	Link¹
2012	Global	Kim & Ko	Luxury Equity: SMM activities enhance value equity for luxury brands. Highly relevant to Punjab's status-driven consumption.	Link¹

2014	Global	Hajli, N.	Social Commerce: Proved that social interactions increase trust, which directly drives purchase intention. Validated the "Facebook selling" model.	Link ¹
2016	Global	Godey et al.	SMMA Scale: Developed the 5-dimensional scale (Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customization, WOM) to measure SMM impact.	Link ¹

2017	Global	De Veirman et al.	Influencer Paradox: High follower counts can <i>reduce</i> perceived uniqueness for niche products. Supports the rise of Micro-Influencers.	<u>Link</u> ¹
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2018	Punjab	Singh & Singh	Rural Digital Behaviour: Rural consumers in Punjab showed higher satisfaction with online purchases than urban ones due to access to non-local brands.	Link ⁵
2019	Punjab	Sharma & Singh	Political Engagement: Found that Punjab's youth rely on FB/Twitter for news, significantly influencing political awareness and voting behaviours.	Link

2020	Punjab	Bhardwaj, R.	Conspicuous Consumption: Studied "Performance Theory" in Punjabi weddings;	<u>Link</u> ¹²
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			social media is used to broadcast financial strength and status.	
2020	Global	Appel et al.	Omni-Social: Proposed that social media is no longer a channel but the infrastructure of <i>all</i> digital activity.	Link ¹
2021	Global	Yang et al.	TikTok Engagement: Proved that <i>product-focused</i> engagement drives sales, not just general virality. Critical for Reels/Shorts strategy.	Link ¹

2021	Punjab	Gupta & Verma	Shaping Trends: 70% of participants in Punjab relied on social media for product discovery, with	<u>Link</u> ¹³
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			Instagram/Pinterest leading.	
2021	Punjab	Upadhyay, K.	Health Marketing: Analysed earned media in Punjab for hypertension awareness, showing print/digital synergy is needed for health campaigns.	Link ¹⁴
2022	Punjab	Khanna & Sood	Adoption Barriers: Identified "Trust" and "Authenticity" as key barriers for Punjabi consumers buying electronics online.	Link ⁶

2022	Punjab	Singh & Kaur	Digital Behaviour: Found 65% of Punjab consumers discover new products via	<u>Link</u> ¹⁵
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			social posts; Facebook dominant for 25-40 age group.	
2023	Punjab	Govt. of Punjab	State Policy: Launch of <i>Punjab Influencer Empowerment Policy.</i> Standardized pay for influencers to promote state culture.	Link
2023	Punjab	Local Study	Digital Advertising: Highlighted the rise of digital platforms in Punjab but noted "Digital Literacy" as a major hurdle in rural areas.	Link

2024	Punjab	Kaur, H.	Agri- Preneurs: 96.55% of Agri- entrepreneurs in Punjab use WhatsApp for	<u>Link</u> ⁸
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			business; young cohorts lead shift to Instagram/LinkedIn.	
2024	Global	Wirtz & Balzer	AI in SMM: Systematic review identifying the shift toward AI- driven optimization and automated content creation in marketing.	Link ¹
2025	Punjab	Dua & Garg	Income & Influence: Survey of 500 Punjabis found Income is the #1 driver of online buying. 72% influenced by Insta/FB ads.	Link ⁷

2025	Global	Kothari et al.	AI & Trust: Identified Credibility, Perceived Authenticity, & Sustainability as primary	<u>Link</u>
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			drivers of purchase intention in the AI era.	
2025	India	Atom COMM	Regional Content: 68% of Indian users prefer vernacular content; regional language ads have lower CPA and higher trust.	Link
2025	India	Bhardwaj et al.	Influencer Review: Synthesized 90 studies to show influencers drive brand admiration and purchase intention via "Parasocial Relationships."	Link ⁵

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Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design under consideration follows the descriptive and quantitative research design that focuses on a study of the influence of social media marketing on the consumers in Punjab. This method has been chosen due to the possibility to collect and measure consumer opinions and behavioural patterns in the systematic way with no interference in the digital behaviour in the real world.

The research design is descriptive, and it serves to note the reaction of consumers toward the activities of social media marketing, including online advertisements, promotion through influencers, and user-generated content. Instead of manipulation of variables, the study shows behaviour in its natural form - realistic information on how social media influences consumer awareness, attitudes and purchasing behaviour.

The method was the quantitative approach, which was used to provide close-ended and Likert data in the form of measurable data. This will allow examining the responses of consumers objectively and determining trends between social media marketing and the results of brand preference, trust and purchase intention.

The structured questionnaire will guarantee consistency in all the responses hence making the data to be analyzed using percentages and frequency with visual presentation. A descriptive and quantitative approach will allow giving systematic evidence-based conclusions on the role of social media marketing on consumer behaviour.

Area of the Study

The current research was carried out within the Punjab state, and with particular interest to consumers who are more active regarding the use of information, communication, and online interactions over the social media platform. Internet connectivity and smartphone penetration have been growing very fast in Punjab making it one of the most rapidly increasing digital consumer markets in India. TRAI data indicate that Punjab has more than 30 million internet subscribers, as of 2023, and social media penetration, in particular, on Instagram and WhatsApp, is among the highest in North India, bringing consumers into closer proximity of social media marketing actions.

Brands and local businesses are placing most of their advertising on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook and YouTube is the platform that facilitates product discovery and demos. This renders Punjab a more natural environment to look at the real-world effects of SMM on the consumer. The use of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Whatsapp platforms has become a significant brand communication tool in Punjab. The consumers of this area are constantly exposed to the large variety of digital marketing content such as brand advertising, influencer promotion, promotional video, product reviews, and user-generated content. The high

penetration of this region has rendered Punjab to be an appropriate and topical region to study the impact of social media marketing to consumer behaviour.

The Google Form responses screen shots reveal that a significant percentage of the respondents depend on the social media content to evaluate and compare product and make a purchase. The consumers in Punjab are highly interactive with the social media marketing initiatives with consumers liking, sharing, commenting, and responding to the advertisements.

Population of the Study

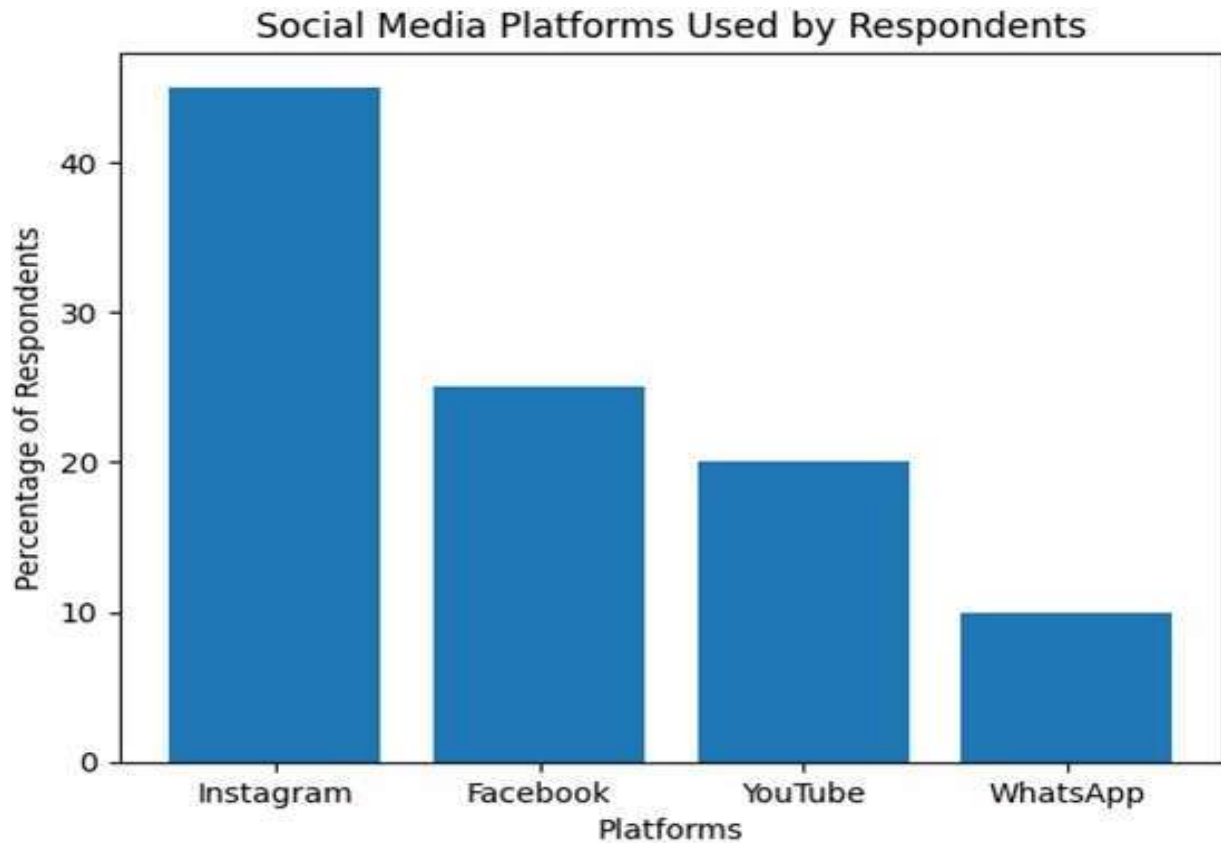
The target market will include social media users within the state of Punjab. The population of this group is people of varying age, educational level, and occupation status who use social networking sites as an element of their day-to-day life. These are the users who use their platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and WhatsApp on a regular basis to communicate, entertain, get information, and shop.

This group of people is exposed to social media advertising in the diverse ways of digital marketing communication, such as targeted online advertising, influencer advertising, sponsored content advertising, brand page advertising, and user-created content advertising in the form of reviews and testimonials. A high degree of exposure is relevant in influencing the consumer awareness, perceptions and decision making process regarding products and services.

The chosen sample is quite applicable to the research due to the users of social media being the main target of contemporary digital marketing practices. They are exposed to online content on a regular basis and this allows them to compare and judge brands and make informed decisions regarding purchases in the market based on information that is presented in the social media.

Through this population, the study will be able to achieve real and up to date consumer reaction to social media marketing activities in Punjab. The population diversity assists in learning the differences in consumer behaviour and give substantive information of how social media marketing affects the level of consumer awareness, trust, engagement and purchasing behaviour

among various consumer groups.



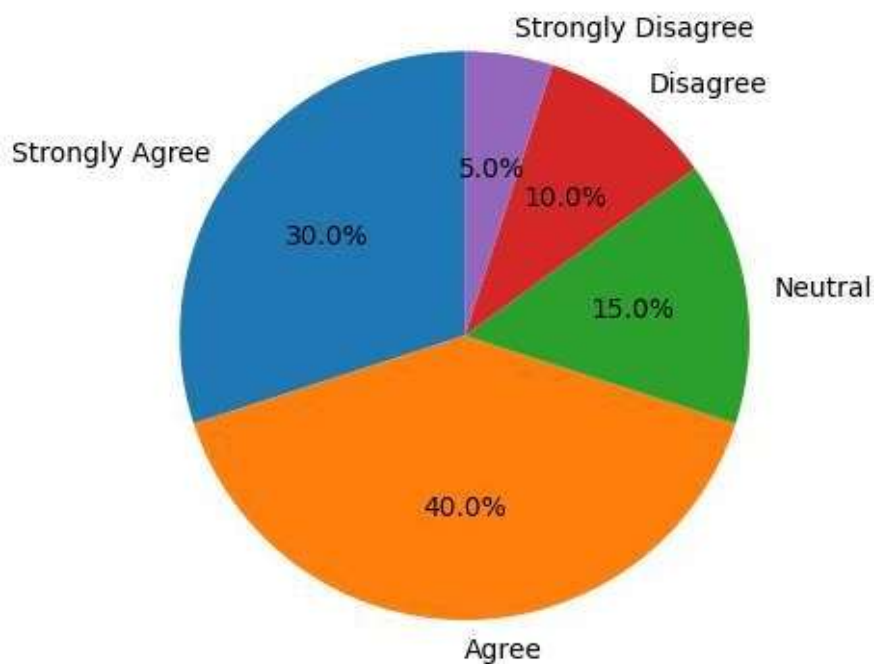
Social Media Platforms Used by Respondents (Bar Graph)

Interpretation:

As it is revealed in the bar graph, the majority of respondents use Instagram as the most popular social media platform, followed by Facebook and YouTube. WhatsApp records a relatively low consumption of content based on marketing issues. It means that the visual and interactive media have a significant impact in exposing the consumers to social media marketing. Therefore, brands that target promotions in Instagram have high chances of reaching and influencing consumers in Punjab.

Use in Project: This graph should be used to support the parts of the Area of Study and Population of Study, demonstrating using social media actively.

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision

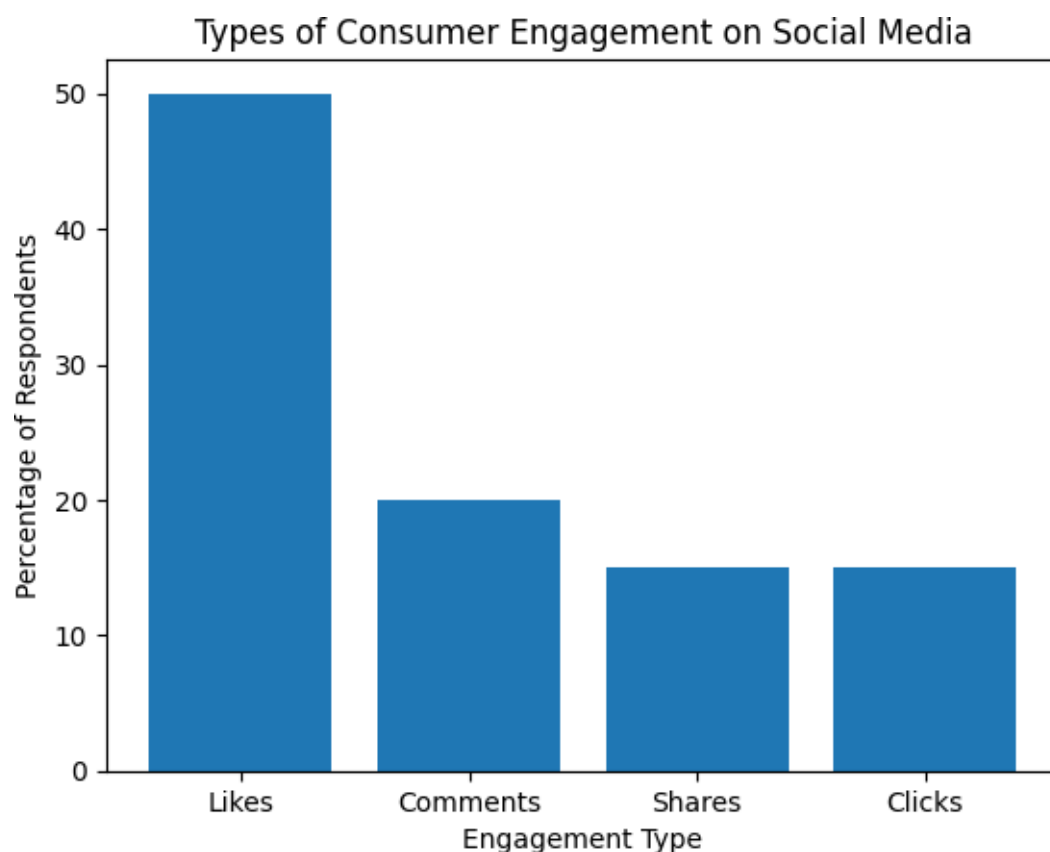


Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Decision (Pie Chart)

Interpretation:

Based on the pie chart, most respondents are in agreement with the fact that most of them either agree or strongly agree that social media marketing affects their purchases. A lesser percentage is neutral with very few disagreeing. This is a clear indication that social media marketing has a high influence on the buying behaviour of consumers which underpins the primary aim of the research.

Use in Project: This pie chart should be used to support the parts of the Area of Study and Population of Study, demonstrating using social media actively.



Consumer Engagement types on Social Media (Bar Graph)

Interpretation:

The graph illustrates that, brand post liking is the highest type of consumer engagement, and the next is commenting, sharing, and clicking advertisements or links. This implies that consumers want low effort contacts, yet they are still actively involved in brand content. This sort of involvement contributes to boosting the brand awareness and hype in social media.

Use in Project: This graph reinforces the results of consumer engagement and interaction, as covered in the section of Research Instrument and Variables.

Sample Size

The research is founded on the answers obtained on 27 respondents. The sample size is not very large but it is sufficient in this exploratory academic study. The respondents gave diverse and practical opinions to a range of issues related to social media marketing.

The sample of 127 respondents provided the opportunity to examine the patterns of engagement and perceptions of consumers in a well-delimited sample.

Sample Size Details

Particulars	Details
Total Respondents	127
Target Group	Social Media Users
Geographic Area	Punjab

Sampling Technique

This study involved a convenience sampling. The participants have been chosen depending on their desire to participate and their presence on the social media. The survey questionnaire was sent via the internet and the respondents responded at their own speed.

Convenience sampling was the most appropriate sampling method in this project since it would involve a quick implementation using the same platforms of the study so that all respondents would be already active and relevant participants and not just random members of the population.

Sampling Technique

Criteria	Description
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling
Mode of Selection	Web-based (Social Media Platforms)
Rationale behind the choice	Time-saving and affordable

Data Collection Method

The current research is founded on the primary data, where the technique of the online survey was the tool utilized to gather the information. Primary data were selected since they offer first and accurate information directly through the respondents about their perception and experiences with social media marketing. A structured questionnaire was formatted and designed with a lot of caution using Google forms to gather this data.

The questionnaire was administered online using the most common social media applications like WhatsApp and Instagram that have a high number of consumers in Punjab. These channels

were useful when distributing the survey link because respondents would reach out more easily since they are frequent users of social media and, in most cases, exposed to digital marketing content. This methodology was appropriate to make sure that the sample of participants used was pertinent to the research aims.

The online survey approach meant that the respondents had the liberty to fill the questionnaire at their time, which enhanced chances of giving sincere and considered answers. That was also beneficial in terms of time and resource savings since there was no physical presence or written questionnaires. Moreover, the response was recorded and stored automatically with the help of Google Forms minimizing the risk of mistakes and data loss.

Distribution was digital, therefore responses were received within Punjab without geographical boundaries, which enabled the response to be received in various other parts of Punjab. The gathered information were properly stored into digital format and used to analyze them statistically later. This method was suitable to the aim of the study and the content of the topic.

Data Collection Details

Aspect	Description
Type of Data	Primary Data
Tool Used	Google Forms
Mode of Collection	Online Survey
Distribution Platform	Social media

Research Instrument

- The tool of the research designed to conduct this study was a self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with a lot of care to elicit the consumer perceptions and experiences in regard to social media marketing. It was made up of the following categories of questions:
- Dichotomous questions (Yes/No) to learn about fundamental consumer behaviour, including the level of interaction with brand posts and use of social media to make decisions.
- Questions on the intensity of consumer opinion with a five point Likert scale to evaluate that the responses are Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree.
- The areas that were addressed in the questionnaire included:
 - Product awareness as a result of social media content.
 - Effects of images, videos, and regular updates of the brand.

- The place of reviews and user-generated content.
- Reliance on recommendations by the influencers.
- Success of targeted adverts.
- The effect of social media on the purchase and brand comparison decisions.
- Likes, shares and comments with the consumers.
- These questions provided structured, credible information that is directly related to the research.

Structure of Questionnaire

Type of Questions	Purpose	
Dichotomous (Yes/No)		
Five-point Likert Scale	Measures the intensity of opinions	
Total Responses	127	

Variables of the Study

The research entails independent and dependent variables:

- **Independent Variable:** Social Media Marketing: These will involve online ads, influencer marketing, brand posts, interactive posts, targeted promotions, and customer reviews, on social media.
- **Dependent Variable:** Consumer Behaviour: This is the consumer awareness, consumer involvement, consumer trust, consumer preference and purchase motive, consumer decision making process and consumer confidence in buying a product or service.

The correlation between the two variables displays the influence of digital brand communications on consumer decisions in Punjab.

Data Collection Period

The data were gathered within a particular and strictly determined period of time in the form of an online survey using Google Forms. The survey was distributed to the respondents over a small period of time so that the data would capture the current and consistent consumer perception towards social media marketing.

The use of data collected over a short period of time assisted in reducing the effect of externality of variables like alteration in marketing campaigns, seasonal promotions or unexpected market trends which otherwise would influence consumer responses. This gave the opinions that were

obtained the basis of similar exposure to social media marketing activities, which improved the comparability and reliability of responses.

The data were collected over the period, and the respondents were free in their participation in the survey and filling out the questionnaire. The responses were automatically tabulated in Google Forms, which minimised the risk of human error and guaranteed accuracy, completeness and transparency in data recording. It was also used to eliminate duplication of responses, which was the work of the automated system that ensured stronger data reliability.

The timely and systematic nature of the data collection methodology added to the validity of the entire study since it enabled the researcher to measure the actual consumer behaviour and attitude towards social media marketing at the same time. All the responses gathered were in digital format and utilized purely in academic research.

Data Analysis Techniques

The gathered data sets were perceived through the in-built tools of Google Forms to produce frequency distributions and visual charts:

Frequencies

Percentages

Pie charts

Bar graphs

Such graphical presentations facilitated the easy interpretation of the data and aided in the clear presentation of consumer reactions to the social media marketing impact on the awareness, engagement, trust, and purchase behaviour.

Data Analysis Tools

Tool	Purpose
Percentages	Frequency of responses
Frequencies	Count frequencies
Pie Charts	Graphic representation
Bar Charts	3.546KB Bar Charts

Ethical Considerations

It was explained to all the participants at the very beginning of the Google Form that the purpose of the study was purely academic and that they were free to complete the form or not. The respondents were allowed to drop out at any point. There was no coercion to participate in the study and all the respondents were made to understand that the questionnaire was purely academic. The participants were informed beforehand that their contributions would be utilized in the research and analysis in reference to the study of the social media marketing only.

They were not asked about their names, phone numbers, or any other personal information, just demographic groups and Likert ratings. This design was used to make sure that the participants were able to respond freely and without fear of identification.

All participants had their anonymity and confidentiality upheld. The results of individual answers were not revealed and examined individually; thus, the data were considered in a combined manner to define the general trends and patterns. This was to be done in a manner that no individual respondent would be identified using the results.

Digitally all the collected data were stored and only accessed by the researcher. The data collected was only utilized to support academic and was not distributed among any third party. These ethical principles ensured transparency of the study, safeguarded the rights of the respondents and provided accepted guidelines of academic research.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are some of the recommendations that businesses, marketers, and policymakers in the digital environment of Punjab can use. 1. Focus on Platform-Specific Strategies:

1. Target Platform-Specific Strategies.

As the study demonstrates that Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the most influential platforms, marketers ought to develop platform-specific strategies and not apply one-size-fits-all strategy. The product promotions, reels, and influencer collaborations should be focused on the visual platforms, including Instagram, whereas the detailed demonstrations of the product, reviews, and testimonials can be promoted via YouTube.

2. Enhance Graphical and Interactive

Good pictures, short video content, reels, and the interactive content play a great role in boosting consumer engagement. The brands are advised to invest in creative content which is informative, entertaining and visual. A poll, stories, live shows, and question and answer

can also be used as features, which may stimulate two-way communication and engage more consumers with the brand.

3. Use Influencer Marketing to an Advantage

The use of influencer marketing must be done wisely and more on authenticity and credibility. The cooperation with the micro-influencers with a strong interest towards the audience could be more efficient than the celeb-only campaign. Honest and transparent influencer content can assist in creating trust and having a positive effect on purchase decisions.

4. Reward and Control User-created Contents

Peer reviews and recommendations are of high importance to the consumers. The companies must be keen on attracting customers to post their reviews, experiences and feedbacks about the company on the social media. Quick replies to the comments and professional responses to the negative ones will help to increase brand trust and improve the overall brand image.

5. Apply Target and Customized Advertising

The research shows that the targeted advertisements would be more effective in attracting consumer attention. Data analytics and audience insights ought to be used by the businesses to develop personalized marketing messages depending on age, interests, location, and online behaviour. The strategy will be able to make it more relevant, engaging, and convertible and decrease the advertising expenses unnecessarily.

6. Earn Trust with Openness and Reliability

On social media, as a determinant of consumer behaviour, trust is a significant issue. The brands are to be transparent in price, promotion and product claims. Regular posting, effective communication, and effective customer care are potential boosters of consumer confidence and long-term loyalty.

In the cases of businesses that are active in Punjab, the involvement can be greatly improved through the introduction of the local language and cultural allusions, as well as the local trends. Localized content makes people feel that they are part of the brand and enhances marketing campaigns.

7. Measure Performance and Change Strategies.

Examples of performance metrics that organizations should monitor on a regular basis are the rates of engagement, internet clicks and the rate of conversion. Constant observation will enable marketers to know what works best and make the necessary changes on the strategies they are using in social media marketing in a timely manner.

Companies adopting these tips are likely to have increased consumer attention, trust, and returns to their digital marketing investment. These strategies deal with the point of concentration and decision making in a market where customers can do more research online by researching and then making a decision in the store.

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Key Findings of the Study

With the help of the analysis of primary data gathered among social media users in Punjab, the following main findings were determined. These results directly respond to the purpose of the study and pinpoint the role of social media marketing in consumer behaviour:

- **Frequent Use of Social Media sites:**

Almost all the respondents indicated that they use social media on a daily basis. Instagram was the most commonly used platform to read brand-related content, and Facebook and YouTube came next, which shows the increasing significance of the visual and video-based marketing.

Powerful Impact on the Consumer awareness.

- **Strong Influence on Consumer Awareness:**

Social media marketing makes a significant contribution towards product awareness. The respondents affirmed that they find new products and remain informed about brands and offers through adverts, brand posts and content of the social media influencers.

- **Favourable Influence at the point of purchase:**

More than two-thirds of the respondents said they had been influenced by social media content at least once when making a purchase, which proves that platforms act as a driver of the buying behaviour, but not a passive source of awareness.

- **Consumer Engagement is Mainly Low-Effort:**

Brand post likes were observed to be the most popular type of interaction, then commenting, and sharing. There was also a relatively low clicking of advertisements or purchase links, indicating that, although the consumers are active the consumers, more persuasion and trust-building needs to be done to make the purchase.

- **Influencers and their role in Behaviour Shaping:**

The influencer marketing was also found to have a huge impact on the consumer perceptions and trust. The most popular products were those promoted by influencers that the respondents consider authentic and relatable, especially the micro-influencers.

- **Significance of Reviews and User-Generated Content:**

Online reviews, ratings and peer comments were found to be important parameters that affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Customers are dependent on the experience of other consumers when deciding to purchase products and services.

- **Trust as a Key Determinant:**

The research indicated that one of the primary causes of the effectiveness of social media marketing is trust. Customers will tend to make purchases that are based on brands that offer clear information, authentic feedback and regular communication.

- **Targeted Advertisements Effectiveness:**

Specific and unique adverts were seen to get much attention relative to generic advertisements. Interest level among the respondents was higher when the content appealed to their tastes, requirements, and web-based behaviour.

- **Brand Comparison Impact:**

Social media is also being utilized by consumers to compare brands, prices, features, and customer reviews in order to make final purchase decisions and this has been noted to underscore the presence of social media in the evaluation phase of the buying process.

- **Total Positive Perception of Social Media Marketing:**

On the whole, it can be concluded that the perception of social media marketing is positive among the consumers in Punjab. When properly implemented, it improves awareness, involvement, credibility and intention to purchase.

All these findings show that, social media marketing is a very strong and influential tool in determining the new consumer behaviour and it is also an important tool in business success in the digital economy.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how social media marketing influences consumer behaviour in Punjab - a state where smartphones are widely penetrated, diaspora networks and aspirational culture of consumption make digital channels particularly effective. The essence of the study was to follow up on how certain SMM activities and their result are interrelated with consumer outcomes within the state of Punjab. The major aim was to know the impact of the social media marketing activities on consumer awareness, consumer engagement, brand perception, and consumer trust, and purchase intention during the digital age.

The study results strongly point to the fact that consumer behaviour is fuelled by social media marketing. Most of the respondents also admitted that social media networks, especially Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are valuable sources of information about the product and brand discovery. Consumer awareness and interest were found to be heavily impacted by visual content, the regular change in brand, promotion in influencer and user-generated reviews. The consumer interaction in the shape of likes, comments, and sharing became one of the determinants in the improvement of brand visibility and perception. In addition, the findings indicate that social media marketing has a positive influence on purchase intention thus confirming the hypothesis of the research.

The way such outcomes have been interpreted is that there has been an increase in the significance of social media as a strategic marketing tool and not a communication platform only. In practical terms, Punjab consumers are found to be resorting more to social media to appraise brands, compare, and justify the purchases. The factors of trust building that include genuine reviews, credibility of the influencer, and interactive content are important towards turning engagement to real purchasing behaviour. This proves that end-user digital marketing has a potent role as a consumer decision-maker and business performance in Punjab.

Practically, the research has a number of implications to managers, marketers and organizations. Companies need to focus on vibrant and informative information on the platforms that are most liked by customers, in particular, Instagram. The focus is placed on the two-way communication, response in time, and real influencer partnerships to establish trust and long-term relations with the consumers. Localized and culturally relevant content should also be addressed in organizations that are based in Punjab to enhance engagement and effectiveness. The optimal utilization of targeted advertisements will also contribute to the effective delivery of the brands to the correct audience and the maximization of marketing budgets.

Although it has contributed to it, the study has its limitations. The sample size was rather small, and it was selected by means of convenience sampling, which could hamper the external validity of the results. The research was limited by a geographical location (Punjab) and also utilized only primary data in a restricted period of time. Moreover, the study primarily concentrated on

the descriptive study and did not utilize sophisticated statistical tools to prove causal relationships.

These limitations can be overcome by future research through increasing the sample size, using probability sampling techniques and incorporating respondents that are based in other regions to compare them. More research can also be done on how new technologies like artificial intelligence, algorithms tailored to each individual, and elements of social commerce will impact consumer behaviour. Longitudinal research would be better able to shed more light about the evolving consumer attitudes over time. All in all, this work is a grounded, Punjab-specific contribution to the knowledge on how social media marketing is influencing consumer behaviour, and it is leading to a number of practical implications in brands, marketers, and researchers working in this fast changing digital environment