Social Media Marketing and Its Influence on Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

Social media has become one of the main ways firms reach, persuade and keep customers. This study asks how social media marketing (SMM) shapes consumer buying behaviour. A structured questionnaire was given to 200 social media users, covering four aspects of SMM exposure (engagement with brand content, influencer credibility, peer reviews or electronic word-of-mouth, and brand trust) along with a purchase behaviour construct. Every multi-item scale was reliable, with Cronbach's alpha between 0.755 and 0.787. A chi-square test showed that age group and purchase action after SMM exposure are significantly associated, $\chi^2(3, N = 200) = 11.28$, $p = .010$, Cramér's $V = 0.24$, with younger respondents the most likely to have bought something. A one-way ANOVA found that purchase behaviour differed by the platform people used most, $F(3, 196) = 3.42$, $p = .018$, $\eta^2 = 0.050$, and Tukey's HSD showed that Instagram users scored higher than WhatsApp/Other users. In the multiple regression, the four SMM factors together explained 11.1% of the variance in purchase behaviour, $F(4, 195) = 6.09$, $p < .001$. Influencer credibility ($\beta = .246$), peer reviews ($\beta = .162$) and brand trust ($\beta = .149$) all had significant positive effects, while engagement with brand content did not ($\beta = .088$, $p = .196$). In short, credibility and social proof count for more than simple exposure. The paper recommends that marketers invest in credible influencer partnerships, genuine customer reviews and trust-building.

Keywords: social media marketing, consumer buying behaviour, influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, brand trust, purchase behaviour

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Smartphones and cheap internet access have changed how people find, weigh up and buy products. Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp are no longer just places to keep in touch; they have also become spaces for information, entertainment and, often, a sales pitch. Social media marketing (SMM) means using these platforms to create, communicate and deliver offerings of value to customers, whether through paid advertising, brand pages, influencer collaborations, short videos or conversations with customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Traditional marketing mostly sent messages one way, from the firm to the consumer. Social media turns that into a two-way, networked exchange. Consumers comment on, share and remix brand content, and they often trust other consumers and creators more than the brand itself. The consumer decision journey runs from need recognition through information search, evaluation and purchase to post-purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016), and today part of it plays out inside social media feeds.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Firms keep raising their social media budgets, but it is still unclear which parts of SMM actually change what consumers buy. Likes, views and follower counts are easy to measure, yet they do not always lead to sales. Marketers therefore need evidence on two things: whether consumer characteristics such as age, and the choice of platform, make a difference, and which SMM factors best predict purchase behaviour.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To describe the profile of social media users and their level of exposure to social media marketing.
- To test whether age group is associated with taking a purchase action after seeing social media marketing.

- To examine whether purchase behaviour differs across the social media platforms that consumers use most.
- To measure the effect of engagement with brand content, influencer credibility, peer reviews (eWOM) and brand trust on consumer purchase behaviour.
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1.4 Significance of the Study

For marketers, the results point to where limited budgets are likely to do the most good. For academics, the study adds to the empirical literature on digital consumer behaviour by bringing tests of association, group difference and prediction together in one replicable analysis. For consumers and policymakers, it underlines why credibility and transparency matter in influencer and review-based promotion.

1.5 Scope and Organisation of the Paper

The study covers active social media users in [city/region]. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and develops the hypotheses, Chapter 3 explains the methodology, and Chapter 4 describes the analytical tools. Chapter 5 presents the data analysis, Chapter 6 discusses the findings, and Chapter 7 closes with recommendations, limitations and the conclusion.

2. Review of Literature and Hypotheses

2.1 Social Media Marketing

Mangold and Faulds (2009) described social media as a hybrid element of the promotion mix: firms use it to talk to consumers, but consumers also use it to talk to each other, and firms cannot fully control that conversation. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) sorted social media into collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds, and argued that success depends on picking the right medium and taking part authentically. Erdoğmuş and Çiçek (2012) found that brand content strengthens brand loyalty when it is relevant, interactive and popular.

2.2 Influencer Credibility

Influencers act as opinion leaders, and their recommendations feel personal. Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that how informative an influencer's content is, and how credible the influencer seems (trustworthy and expert), shape consumers' trust in the branded content, which in turn affects purchase intention. On this view, credibility should matter more than the size of an influencer's audience.

2.3 Peer Reviews and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) identified consumers' desire for social interaction, their concern for others, and the chance to enhance their own self-worth as motives for sharing opinions online. Reviews, ratings and comments work as social proof and lower perceived risk, especially for products that cannot be inspected before purchase.

2.4 Brand Trust

In the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing, trust is a key ingredient of long-term exchange relationships because it reduces uncertainty and encourages commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). On social media, trust grows through consistent, honest communication and responsive service, and it should make consumers more willing to act on what brands tell them.

2.5 Consumer Buying Behaviour

Buying behaviour covers the decisions and actions consumers take when they select, purchase and use products (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The theory of planned behaviour explains action through intentions, which are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). Influencer endorsements and peer reviews work mostly through subjective norms and attitudes, and that is what links the SMM factors in this study to purchase behaviour.

2.6 Research Gap

Many studies look at a single SMM factor, or measure only purchase intention. Fewer test, within one design, (a) whether demographic groups differ in their purchase action, (b) whether platform choice matters, and (c) how much each of several SMM factors contributes to purchase behaviour. This study aims to fill that gap.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The framework proposes four independent variables (engagement with brand content, influencer credibility, peer reviews/eWOM and brand trust) that influence one dependent variable, purchase behaviour. Age group and most-used platform are treated as grouping variables.

2.8 Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant association between age group and taking a purchase action after exposure to social media marketing.

H2: Mean purchase behaviour differs significantly across the platforms consumers use most.

H3: Engagement with brand content has a significant positive effect on purchase behaviour.

H4: Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on purchase behaviour.

H5: Peer reviews (eWOM) have a significant positive effect on purchase behaviour.

H6: Brand trust has a significant positive effect on purchase behaviour.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study uses a cross-sectional survey with a descriptive and causal (explanatory) design. Primary data came from a structured questionnaire, and inferential statistics were used to test the relationships among the variables.

3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population is active social media users aged 18 and above in [city/region], and the sample was 200 respondents. For a regression with four predictors, that is comfortably above the common guideline of at least 10 to 15 observations per predictor (Hair et al., 2019). [Describe the sampling method actually used, for example convenience or stratified sampling, and the data collection period.]

3.3 Research Instrument

The questionnaire had two parts. Part A collected demographic and usage details: age group, gender, most-used platform, daily hours on social media, and whether the respondent had bought a product or service after seeing social media marketing in the last three months (Yes/No). Part B had 15 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with three items for each construct:

Table 1: Constructs measured

Construct	Items	Focus
Engagement with brand content (EN)	3	Interest in and interaction with brand posts, ads and videos
Influencer credibility (INF)	3	Perceived expertise and trustworthiness of influencers
Peer reviews / eWOM (EW)	3	Reliance on ratings, reviews and comments of other users
Brand trust (TR)	3	Confidence in brands that communicate on social media

Construct	Items	Focus
Purchase behaviour (PB)	3	Actual buying and repeat buying after social media exposure

A full questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

3.4 Variables

The independent variables are engagement, influencer credibility, peer reviews (eWOM) and brand trust. The dependent variable is purchase behaviour, the mean of three items. Age group and most-used platform serve as grouping variables, and purchase after SMM exposure (Yes/No) is the categorical outcome. Each construct's composite score is the mean of its three items.

3.5 Reliability

Internal consistency was checked with Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), where 0.70 or above counts as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). As Table 4 shows, alpha ranged from 0.755 to 0.787, so every scale clears that threshold.

3.6 Tools of Analysis

The data were analysed in Microsoft Excel using the COUNTIFS, AVERAGE, STDEV, CORREL, CHIDIST, FDIST and LINEST functions, and the results were cross-checked with an independent calculation in Python (SciPy). All tests use a significance level of 0.05. Table 2 summarises the tests.

Table 2: Statistical tests used

Test	Purpose	Variables	Hypothesis
Chi-square test of independence	Association between two categorical variables	Age group × Purchased (Yes/No)	H1
One-way ANOVA + Tukey HSD	Difference in means across 3+ groups	Platform → Purchase behaviour	H2
Multiple linear regression	Effect of several predictors on one outcome	EN, INF, EW, TR → Purchase behaviour	H3 to H6

4. Analytical Framework

4.1 Chi-Square Test of Independence

The chi-square test compares the observed cell frequencies (O) with the frequencies expected if the two variables were independent (E): $\chi^2 = \Sigma\ (O - E)^2 / E$, with $(r - 1)(c - 1)$ degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis of independence is rejected when the p-value falls below 0.05. Cramér's V measures how strong the association is. The test assumes that expected counts are large enough, typically at least 5.

4.2 One-Way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA tests whether the means of a continuous variable differ across three or more independent groups, by comparing between-group variance (MSB) with within-group variance (MSW): F = MSB / MSW. Eta-squared (η^2 = SSB / SST) gives the share of variance explained by group membership. A significant F only says that at least one mean differs, so Tukey's honestly significant difference test (Tukey, 1949) is used to compare pairs of groups.

4.3 Multiple Linear Regression

The regression model is $PB = \beta0 + \beta1(EN) + \beta2(INF) + \beta3(EW) + \beta4(TR) + \varepsilon$. Coefficients are estimated by ordinary least squares. The model as a whole is tested with an F statistic and each coefficient with a t statistic, and explanatory

power is reported as R^2 and adjusted R^2. Standardised betas make it possible to compare the relative importance of the predictors.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Profile of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic and usage profile (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age group	18-24	65	32.5%
Age group	25-34	74	37.0%
Age group	35-44	36	18.0%
Age group	45 and above	25	12.5%
Gender	Male	91	45.5%
Gender	Female	109	54.5%
Most-used platform	Instagram	69	34.5%
Most-used platform	Facebook	43	21.5%
Most-used platform	YouTube	48	24.0%
Most-used platform	WhatsApp/Others	40	20.0%
Purchased after SMM	Yes	103	51.5%
Purchased after SMM	No	97	48.5%

Source: Survey data (Excel workbook, Descriptives sheet).

Most respondents were young: 32.5% were aged 18 to 24 and 37.0% were aged 25 to 34. Females made up 54.5% of the sample. Instagram was the most-used platform (34.5%), followed by YouTube (24.0%) and Facebook (21.5%). Overall, 51.5% of respondents (103 of 200) had bought a product or service after seeing social media marketing in the last three months.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha (5-point scale)

Construct	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Alpha
Engagement	200	3.33	0.70	1.00	4.67	0.787
Influencer credibility	200	3.13	0.68	1.67	5.00	0.761
Peer reviews (eWOM)	200	3.39	0.69	1.67	5.00	0.783
Brand trust	200	3.24	0.68	1.00	5.00	0.769
Purchase behaviour	200	3.45	0.64	1.67	5.00	0.755

Source: Survey data (Excel workbook, Descriptives sheet).

Every construct has a mean above the scale midpoint of 3, so perceptions are moderately favourable. Purchase behaviour had the highest mean (M = 3.45, SD = 0.64), followed by peer reviews (M = 3.39). Influencer credibility had the lowest mean (M = 3.13), which suggests respondents are somewhat wary of influencers. All alpha values are above 0.70, so the scales are reliable.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Pearson correlation matrix

	Engage.	Influencer	eWOM	Trust	Purchase
Engagement	1.000	.021	-.018	-.058	.081
Influencer	.021	1.000	.040	-.103	.239
eWOM	-.018	.040	1.000	-.004	.170
Trust	-.058	-.103	-.004	1.000	.118
Purchase Behaviour	.081	.239	.170	.118	1.000

For n = 200, $|r| \geq .139$ is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Source: Excel workbook, Correlation sheet.

Purchase behaviour is positively correlated with influencer credibility ($r = .239$, $p < .001$) and peer reviews ($r = .170$, $p < .05$). Its correlations with engagement ($r = .081$) and brand trust ($r = .118$) are positive but not significant on their own. The correlations among the four predictors are all very small ($|r| \leq .103$), so multicollinearity is not a concern.

5.4 Chi-Square Test: Age Group and Purchase Action (H1)

H0: Age group and purchase action after SMM exposure are independent. **H1:** They are associated.

Table 6: Age group × Purchased after social media marketing

Age group	Yes (n)	No (n)	Total	% Yes
18-24	44	21	65	67.7%
25-34	32	42	74	43.2%
35-44	18	18	36	50.0%
45 and above	9	16	25	36.0%
Total	**103**	**97**	**200**	**51.5%**

Source: Excel workbook, ChiSquare sheet.

Table 7: Chi-square test result

Statistic	Value
Chi-square (χ^2)	11.280
Degrees of freedom	3
Critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$)	7.815
p-value	0.0103
Cramér's V	0.237
Smallest expected count	12.13

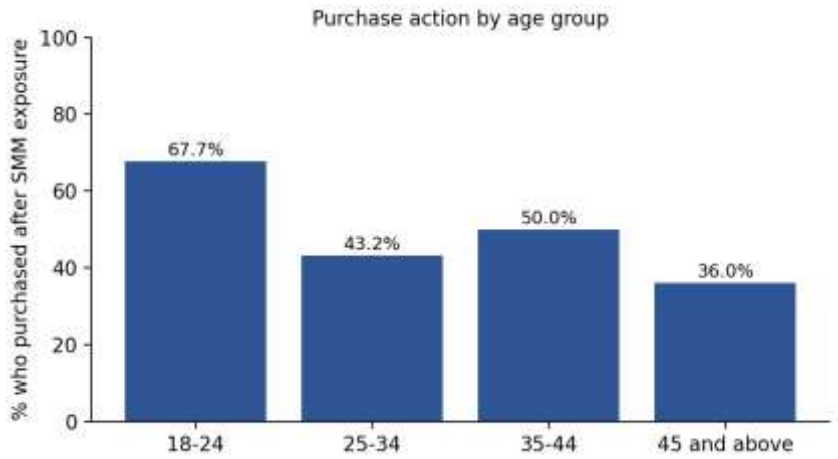


Figure 1: Percentage who purchased after SMM exposure, by age group

The calculated χ^2 (11.280) is above the critical value of 7.815 at 3 degrees of freedom, and the p-value (0.0103) is below 0.05. The assumption that all expected counts are at least 5 is met (smallest expected count = 12.13). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected: age group and purchase action are significantly associated. Cramér's V of 0.237 points to a small to moderate association. The 18 to 24 group had the highest purchase rate (67.7%) and the 45-and-above group the lowest (36.0%). H1 is supported.

5.5 One-Way ANOVA: Platform and Purchase Behaviour (H2)

H0: Mean purchase behaviour is equal across the four platform groups. **H1:** At least one group mean differs.

Table 8: Purchase behaviour by most-used platform

Platform	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
Instagram	69	3.633	0.674
Facebook	43	3.349	0.539
YouTube	48	3.438	0.572
WhatsApp/Others	40	3.267	0.713
All respondents	**200**	**3.452**	**0.644**

Source: Excel workbook, ANOVA sheet.

Table 9: One-way ANOVA summary

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between groups	4.098	3	1.366	3.419	0.0184
Within groups	78.323	196	0.400		
Total	82.422	199			

F critical ($\alpha = 0.05$) = 2.651; $\eta^2 = 0.050$.

Table 10: Tukey HSD pairwise comparisons

Pair	Mean difference	Critical difference	Significant?
Instagram vs Facebook	0.284	0.318	No
Instagram vs YouTube	0.195	0.308	No
Instagram vs WhatsApp/Others	0.366	0.326	Yes
Facebook vs YouTube	-0.089	0.344	No

Pair	Mean difference	Critical difference	Significant?
Facebook vs WhatsApp/Others	0.082	0.360	No
YouTube vs WhatsApp/Others	0.171	0.351	No

Studentised range q = 3.665 (α = 0.05, k = 4, df = 196). Source: Excel workbook, ANOVA sheet.

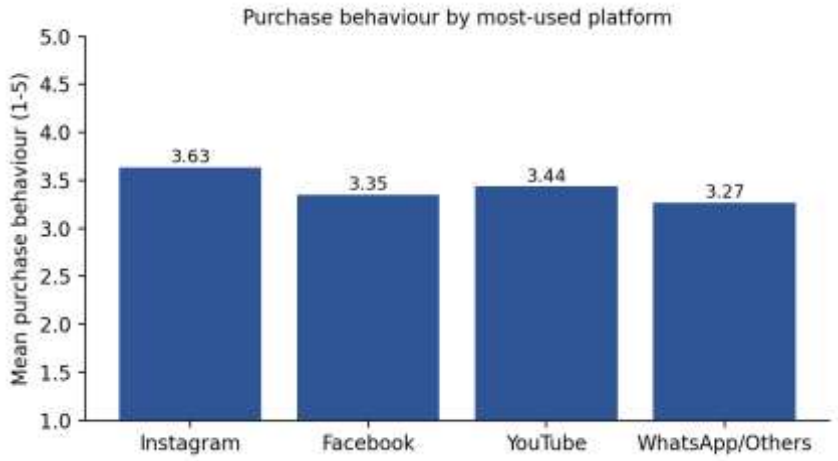


Figure 2: Mean purchase behaviour by most-used platform

The calculated F (3.419) is above the critical value (2.651) and the p-value (0.0184) is below 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected: purchase behaviour differs significantly by platform. Platform explains about 5.0% of the variance in purchase behaviour ($\eta^2 = 0.050$), a small-to-medium effect. Instagram users reported the highest mean (M = 3.63) and WhatsApp/Other users the lowest (M = 3.27). In Tukey's test only the Instagram versus WhatsApp/Others difference (0.366) exceeds the critical difference (0.326); no other pair differs significantly. H2 is supported.

5.6 Multiple Linear Regression (H3 to H6)

Table 11: Model summary and regression ANOVA

Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.333
R^2	0.111
Adjusted R^2	0.093
Std. error of estimate	0.613
F (4, 195)	6.088
Significance F	0.0001
Durbin-Watson	2.051

Source: Excel workbook, Regression sheet (LINEST).

Table 12: Regression coefficients (dependent variable: Purchase behaviour)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p-value	VIF
Intercept	1.485	0.430	-	3.456	0.0007	-
Engagement	0.080	0.062	0.088	1.298	0.1959	1.00
Influencer credibility	0.233	0.064	0.246	3.621	0.0004	1.01
Peer reviews (eWOM)	0.150	0.063	0.162	2.393	0.0176	1.00
Brand trust	0.142	0.065	0.149	2.194	0.0294	1.01

B = unstandardised coefficient; β = standardised coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor.

The regression equation is: Purchase behaviour = 1.485 + 0.080(Engagement) + 0.233(Influencer) + 0.150(eWOM) + 0.142(Trust).

The model as a whole is statistically significant, $F(4, 195) = 6.088$, $p < .001$. Together the four predictors explain 11.1% of the variance in purchase behaviour (adjusted $R^2 = 0.093$). That is modest, and it shows that purchase behaviour depends on other things the study did not measure, such as price, product need and income.

Influencer credibility is the strongest predictor ($B = 0.233$, $\beta = .246$, $p < .001$), followed by peer reviews ($B = 0.150$, $\beta = .162$, $p = .018$) and brand trust ($B = 0.142$, $\beta = .149$, $p = .029$). Engagement with brand content is not a significant predictor ($B = 0.080$, $p = .196$). Holding the other factors constant, a one-point rise in perceived influencer credibility goes with a 0.23-point rise in purchase behaviour. H4, H5 and H6 are supported; H3 is not.

Assumption checks: the VIF values (1.00, 1.01, 1.00, 1.01) are close to 1, so there is no multicollinearity; the Durbin-Watson statistic (2.05) is close to 2, so the residuals are independent; and a Shapiro-Wilk test on the residuals ($W = 0.996$, $p = .867$) does not reject normality.

5.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 13: Summary of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Test	Result	Decision
H1: Age group and purchase action are associated	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 11.28$, $p = .010$	Supported
H2: Purchase behaviour differs by platform	One-way ANOVA	$F = 3.42$, $p = .018$	Supported
H3: Engagement → Purchase behaviour	Regression	$\beta = .088$, $p = .196$	Not supported
H4: Influencer credibility → Purchase behaviour	Regression	$\beta = .246$, $p < .001$	Supported
H5: Peer reviews (eWOM) → Purchase behaviour	Regression	$\beta = .162$, $p = .018$	Supported
H6: Brand trust → Purchase behaviour	Regression	$\beta = .149$, $p = .029$	Supported

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Major Findings

- 51.5% of respondents had bought something after seeing social media marketing, and mean scores on every construct were above the scale midpoint.
- Age group is significantly associated with purchase action ($\chi^2 = 11.28$, $p = .010$), and the 18 to 24 group is the most likely to buy (67.7%).
- Purchase behaviour differs by platform ($F = 3.42$, $p = .018$): Instagram users score highest and WhatsApp/Other users lowest.
- Influencer credibility, peer reviews and brand trust significantly predict purchase behaviour; engagement with brand content does not.
- The model explains 11.1% of the variance in purchase behaviour, so other factors clearly matter too.

6.2 Discussion

Younger consumers were more likely to act on social media marketing, which fits their heavier use of visual, mobile-first platforms and their comfort with in-app shopping. The platform effect suggests that format matters. Visually rich,

creator-led platforms such as Instagram seem to turn attention into purchases more effectively than messaging-oriented channels, where marketing is less visible and less interactive.

The regression results show that credibility and social proof matter more than exposure. Once credibility, reviews and trust were taken into account, engagement with brand content, such as liking or watching posts, no longer predicted purchase behaviour. Attention alone, in other words, does not persuade: consumers act when the source seems credible, when other consumers vouch for the product and when they trust the brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The link between influencer credibility and purchase behaviour is especially strong, which fits the idea that influencers work as trusted peers rather than as advertisers.

The modest R^2 tells us something too. Social media marketing is one influence among many, so marketers should not expect it to explain the whole purchase decision.

7. Recommendations, Limitations and Conclusion

7.1 Managerial Recommendations

- **Prioritise credibility over reach.**

Choose influencers for their expertise, authenticity and audience fit, not just their follower counts, and require clear disclosure of paid partnerships.

- **Build social proof.**

Encourage verified customer reviews, user-generated content and visible ratings, and answer comments and complaints promptly.

- **Invest in trust.**

Communicate honestly, keep the promises made on social media, and protect customer data.

- **Target by age and platform.**

Aim conversion-focused campaigns at younger users and at platforms such as Instagram, and use messaging channels mainly for service and retention.

- **Measure outcomes, not only engagement.**

Track conversions, repeat purchases and referrals instead of treating likes and views as success.

7.2 Limitations

The study has several limitations. The sample is limited to 200 respondents from [city/region], and the sampling method may restrict how far the results can be generalised. The data are self-reported, so recall and social desirability bias are possible. The design is cross-sectional, so the regression shows association, not proof of causation. Several relevant variables, including income, product category, price sensitivity and platform-specific advertising formats, were not measured. [Add limitations that apply to your actual data collection.]

7.3 Scope for Future Research

Future studies could use larger and more diverse samples, compare product categories, adopt longitudinal or experimental designs, and add moderators such as income or gender. Structural equation modelling could also be used to test mediation, for example whether trust mediates the effect of influencer credibility on purchase.

7.4 Conclusion

This study examined how social media marketing influences consumer buying behaviour, using chi-square, ANOVA and multiple regression. Purchase action varies with age, and purchase behaviour varies with platform. Three of the four SMM factors (influencer credibility, peer reviews and brand trust) significantly predict purchase behaviour, while engagement alone does not. Taken together, the results suggest that being believed counts for more than being seen. Firms that build credibility, encourage authentic peer voices and earn trust are in a better position to turn social media attention into purchases.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Part A: Demographic and usage details

1. Age group: 18-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45 and above
2. Gender: Male / Female / Other
3. Platform you use most: Instagram / Facebook / YouTube / WhatsApp or Others
4. Average time on social media per day (hours): _____
5. In the last three months, have you purchased a product or service after seeing it on social media? Yes / No

Part B: Statements (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Code	Statement
EN1	I pay attention to brand posts, ads and videos on social media.
EN2	I like, comment on or share brand content that interests me.
EN3	Brand content on social media is interesting and relevant to me.
INF1	Influencers I follow are experts in the products they promote.
INF2	Influencers I follow are honest in their recommendations.
INF3	I consider the opinions of influencers when choosing products.
EW1	I read reviews and comments by other users before buying.
EW2	Ratings and reviews on social media reduce my doubts about a product.

Code	Statement
EW3	I am influenced by what my friends and other consumers say online.
TR1	I trust brands that communicate regularly on social media.
TR2	Brands on social media keep their promises.
TR3	I feel safe buying from brands I follow on social media.
PB1	I have bought products after seeing them on social media.
PB2	I buy from brands I discovered through social media again.
PB3	Social media strongly influences my final buying decisions.