

“The Impact of Social Media on Customer Behavior Between Ages 21-30”

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INTRODUCTION:

The digital revolution has fundamentally reshaped how consumers interact with brands, discover products, and make purchasing decisions. Previously, marketing operated through controlled, one-way mass media advertisements. Today, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have empowered individuals to become active participants, with their reviews, shares, and content holding significant power. This shift has created a critical business challenge: understanding the dynamic, two-way relationship that now dictates brand perception and sales outcomes, effectively dismantling the traditional marketing funnel.

To address this challenge, this research specifically focuses on the consumer behaviours of the **21-to-30 age demographic**. This group, consisting of late Millennials and early members of Generation Z, are true digital natives who use social media not just for communication, but as their primary search engine for product information. Their buying habits are driven by high expectations for authenticity, transparency, and value alignment, making them uniquely responsive—and sceptical—of online marketing efforts. This makes them the most relevant segment for analyzing modern digital influence.^[1]

The core business issues this study investigates is how to effectively bridge the gap between business strategy and the fast-evolving digital behaviours of this key consumer segment. Our goal is to move beyond general observations to pinpoint specific mechanisms of influence. The research will specifically analyze the impact of key factors like brand image, online presence, brand generated content, the role of user-generated content (UGC), and the efficacy of platform-specific marketing strategies (e.g., short-form video ads) on the purchase intentions of young adults.

By employing a descriptive, quantitative approach, the study aims to generate empirical data that provides actionable insights for brands. The findings will help businesses determine which social media investments yield the highest return in terms of brand trust and loyalty within the 21-30 age bracket, allowing them to optimize their digital presence and secure future market relevance.

HYPOTHESIS

There is a significant impact of social media usage on the purchasing behaviour of consumers aged 21–30, influencing their buying decisions.

AIM & OBJECTIVE

AIM:

To study and analyze the impact of social media on customer behaviour among individuals aged 21–30.

OBJECTIVE:

- To examine how social media platforms influence purchasing decisions of customers aged 21–30.
- To identify the role of social media advertisements, influencers, and peer recommendations in shaping buying behaviour.
- To study the effect of social media engagement (likes, comments, shares) on brand perception and consumer trust.

- To evaluate how brand engagement on social media affects long-term customer loyalty within the 21–30 age group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social media has become a powerful driver of consumer behaviour, especially among young adults, by influencing the way they discover, evaluate, and purchase products. It fosters trust through user-generated content such as reviews and testimonials, which enhance brand credibility and encourage informed decision-making. At the same time, social media triggers impulsive buying behaviour through the “fear of missing out” (FOMO), where exposure to limited offers and trending items pushes consumers toward unplanned purchases. Unlike traditional marketing, it allows for direct, two-way communication between businesses and customers, reshaping how brands build relationships. Companies like Flipkart and Amazon have effectively used social media to strengthen their marketing efforts and accelerate growth, highlighting its crucial role in modern commerce.

To maximize this influence, businesses employ diverse social media marketing strategies. Content marketing, for instance, involves blogs, articles, infographics, videos, and user-generated posts that establish thought leadership, educate audiences, and reinforce brand authority. Social listening plays an equally important role by monitoring mentions, hashtags, feedback, and competitor activity. This helps businesses understand customer preferences, identify opportunities, and address challenges in real time. Social media advertising, another key strategy, makes use of sponsored posts, carousel ads, and videos that blend seamlessly with regular content. These ads aim to increase visibility, drive traffic, and convert potential customers into buyers.

The impact of these practices on consumer behaviour is evident in multiple ways. Social media has become central to product discovery, exposing users to new offerings through posts, ads, and recommendations. FOMO encourages impulsive purchases, while direct feedback and support channels build trust and customer loyalty. Finally, social media reflects and shapes cultural and social trends, influencing lifestyle choices and brand preferences. Overall, social media not only transforms marketing strategies but also plays a defining role in shaping modern consumer behaviour.^[3]

2. Consumers today are no longer passive buyers; they actively co-create value by engaging with brands and providing feedback that shapes products and services. This active role has been amplified by the seamless integration of commerce, community, and content on social media platforms, which has streamlined the consumer journey and often led to impulsive purchases. At the same time, research highlights the importance of ethical engagement, where brands must balance trust, transparency, and technological innovation. By maintaining this balance, businesses can foster long-term relationships while adapting to the evolving expectations of digital consumers in a competitive market.^[4]

3. Social media has become a central part of consumer life, with people using it primarily to stay connected with family and friends, follow current events, and find entertainment. Although connecting with brands is a smaller slice of usage, it has significant implications for businesses. One of the strongest influences on consumer behaviour is influencer marketing, where collaborations with trusted personalities build authenticity and social proof. Research shows that influencer marketing is highly cost-effective, delivering strong returns while effectively reaching niche audiences, particularly younger consumers.

Another crucial factor is engagement, which strengthens consumer-brand relationships, boosts loyalty, and drives sales. Studies indicate that nearly half of consumers are more likely to purchase from brands they feel connected to on social media. User-generated content further enhances authenticity by allowing customers to share experiences and foster a sense of community. Alongside this, personalization has emerged as a game-changer, with 80% of consumers more likely to make a purchase when they encounter tailored content. Personalized communication not only enhances engagement but also increases brand loyalty and repeat purchases.

The findings confirm that social media significantly impacts consumer behaviour through exposure, social proof, influencer marketing, and personalization. Businesses that leverage these strategies effectively can boost visibility, attract customers, and build lasting brand loyalty in today's competitive digital marketplace.^[5]

4. Social media is much more than just a place to talk or share updates. It has become a powerful tool that changes how people see brands, helps them decide what to buy, and builds stronger connections between customers and businesses. For companies to grow in today's digital world, using social media wisely is very important. In simple terms, the study shows that social media marketing directly affects how people shop and interact with brands. It plays a key role in shaping modern consumer behaviour and is essential for business success.^[6]

RESEARCH DESIGN

Type of research:

Our research falls under descriptive and quantitative research design. This approach is chosen because the study systematically measures and characterizes the behaviours of the 21-30 age group, rather than manipulating variables or establishing definitive cause-and-effect relationships. By using quantitative methods—specifically a structured survey with scaled responses and defined categories—the research has collected numerical data. This allows for statistical analysis to describe the frequency (e.g., how often they buy impulsively) and the strength of correlation (e.g., how much in brand trust relates to purchase decisions) across the target demographic. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a comprehensive, data-backed description of how this segment is currently using and being influenced by social media.

Target Population:

The target population for this study consists of young adults aged 21–30 years, as they represent the age group most actively engaged with social media and influenced by online platforms in their purchasing behaviour.

Sample Size:

A total of 100 respondents was considered as the target sample size for this research. This number was chosen to ensure adequate representation and to allow meaningful analysis of consumer behaviour patterns. (Note: The initial phase collected 55 responses, which are analysed in Section 10.)

Sampling Method

The study employed a convenience sampling method. Respondents were selected based on easy accessibility and willingness to participate, primarily through the distribution of a Google Forms survey. This method was suitable for reaching the defined age group efficiently within the available time and resources.

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

Types of data:

The study has relied entirely on quantitative data, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical information to measure consumer attitudes, usage frequencies, and the perceived level of social media influence. This data is being used to statistically describe the patterns and correlations within the 21-30 age group.

Measurement tools:

- Likert Scales: Were used for measuring attitudes, agreement, or influence. Example: Questions asked respondents to rate their agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) on statements like "I trust product recommendations from social media ads."
- Ordinal Scales (Frequency/Intensity): Were used for measuring how often a behavior occurs. Example: Questions asked about usage frequency (e.g., "Daily," "Weekly," "Rarely") or purchase frequency.
- Nominal Scales (Categorical): Were used to classify the participants and their platform preferences. Example: Questions asked "Which social media platforms do you prefer?" (Select all that apply).

Sample Questionnaire

- 1) How often do you use social media?
- 2) Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?
- 3) Have you ever purchased a product or service directly from a social media advertisement or post?
- 4) How important are the following factors on social media when considering a purchase?
- 5) What kind of content from brands do you find most engaging on social media?
- 6) Have you ever stopped using a brand or service due to negative social media feedback or reputation?
- 7) How much do social media reviews and recommendations influence your purchase decisions?
- 8) How likely are you to share a positive experience with a brand on social media?
- 9) Do you believe a brand's presence and engagement on social media affect your overall perception of the brand?
- 10) How often have you made a purchase based on a recommendation from a social media?
- 11) How would you rate the accuracy of social media algorithms in recommending products you are genuinely interested in?
- 12) How much do you trust information about products/services found on social media?

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Informed Consent: All participants were provided with a clear introductory statement outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the estimated time required before they accessed the survey questions.
- Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw: Participation is completely voluntary. Respondents were explicitly informed that they could skip any question they preferred not to answer, and they have the unrestricted right to exit the survey at any point without penalty or need for explanation.

- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** The survey did not collect any personally identifiable information (such as names, email addresses, or IP addresses). All responses have been treated with strict anonymity to ensure that individual data cannot be traced back to any specific respondent.
- **Data Security:** All collected quantitative data is stored securely on password-protected devices, used solely for the academic analysis required for this research project, and will be permanently deleted upon completion of the course assessment.
- **No Deception:** The research purpose and methods were truthfully represented to avoid any form of deception, ensuring participants fully understood what they were consenting to.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND MANEGERIAL USEFULLNESS

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

Based on the objectives and existing literature, it is expected that the survey will reveal a strong influence of social media on the buying behaviour of young adults aged 21–30. The responses are likely to show that platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube play a major role in shaping purchase intentions, product discovery, and brand preferences. A significant number of participants may report that advertisements, influencer recommendations, and peer reviews on social media affect their decision-making, either by encouraging impulse purchases or by strengthening trust in certain brands.

It is also anticipated that the survey will highlight how social media engagement (likes, comments, and shares) contributes to building a positive brand perception and consumer trust. Many young adults may associate high engagement with reliability and popularity of a brand. Furthermore, the findings are expected to show that consistent interaction with brands on social media helps in developing long-term customer loyalty.

Therefore, it is likely that the hypothesis will be proved right, showing a statistically significant impact of social media on consumer behaviour. While individual responses may vary, overall trends are expected to confirm that social media acts as a major driver of buying patterns among this age group.

MANAGERIAL USEFULLNESS:

The consumer trends in the 21-30 age group offer specific, actionable insights for managers across different functional areas.

A. Marketing and Sales Management

Prioritize Influencer Marketing: Allocate a significant portion of the budget to authentic, niche-specific influencers rather than solely relying on celebrity endorsements. Focus on relationships and long-term partnerships over one-off sponsored posts.

Invest in Video Content: Short-form, entertaining, and highly visual video content (like Reels and TikTok's) is essential for brand awareness and engagement, as this format dominates their consumption habits.

Leverage Social Listening: Implement tools for social listening to track real-time consumer sentiment, identify emerging trends, and monitor competitors. This data is invaluable for agile product development and marketing campaign optimization.

Simplify the Purchase Path: Utilize in-app shopping features (social commerce) to reduce friction and enable instant purchasing directly from the content they view.

B. Brand and Communication Management

Cultivate Authenticity and Transparency: Ensure brand communication is honest, relatable, and authentic. Avoid overly polished or corporate messaging, which this demographic often distrusts. Be ready to communicate about brand values and ethical practices.

Be Responsive to Feedback: Establish a system for real-time customer service and crisis management on social media. Quick, personalized, and empathetic responses to both positive and negative feedback can turn a detractor into a loyal advocate.

Encourage User-Generated Content (UGC): Run campaigns and create spaces (e.g., branded hashtags) that encourage customers to share their experiences. UGC serves as powerful social proof that drives sales.

C. Strategic Management and R&D

Integrate Data Analytics: Use the rich, granular data provided by social media analytics (demographics, interests, behaviour) to develop precise micro-segmentation for hyper-personalized marketing campaigns and to inform product development based on consumer conversations and feedback.

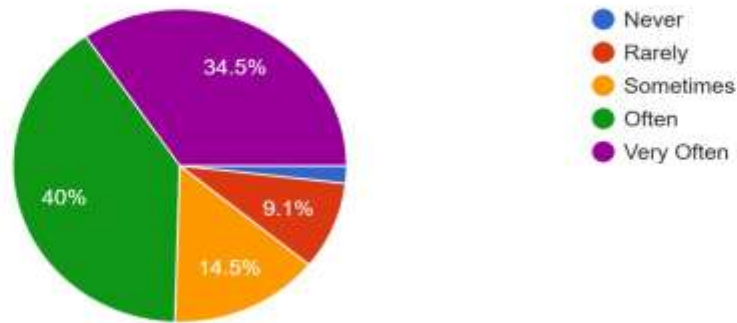
Digital-First Mentality: Recognize that social media isn't just a marketing channel- it's a core business environment. Integrate social media strategy with overall business objectives for a cohesive omnichannel experience.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF SURVEY DATA

Total Responses: 55

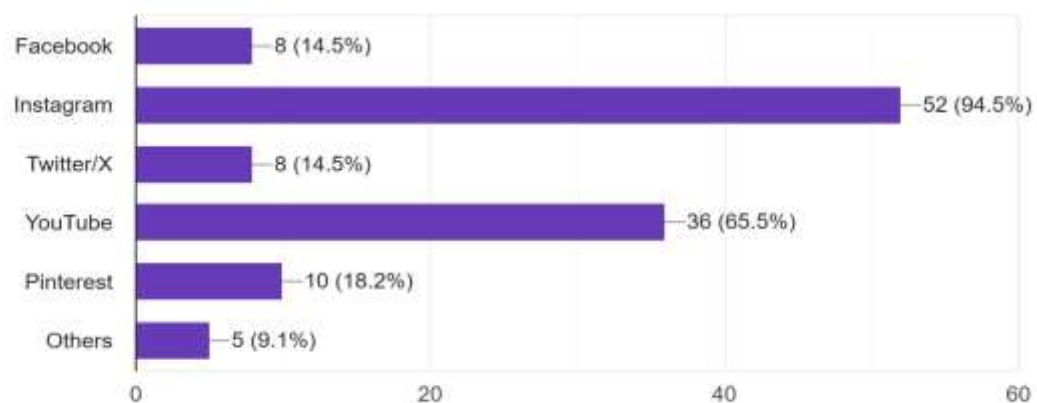
How often do you use social media?

55 responses



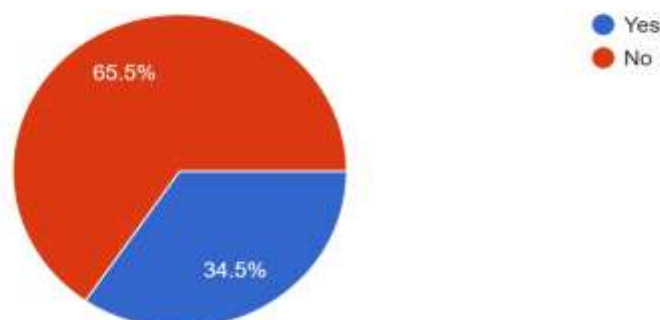
Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?

55 responses

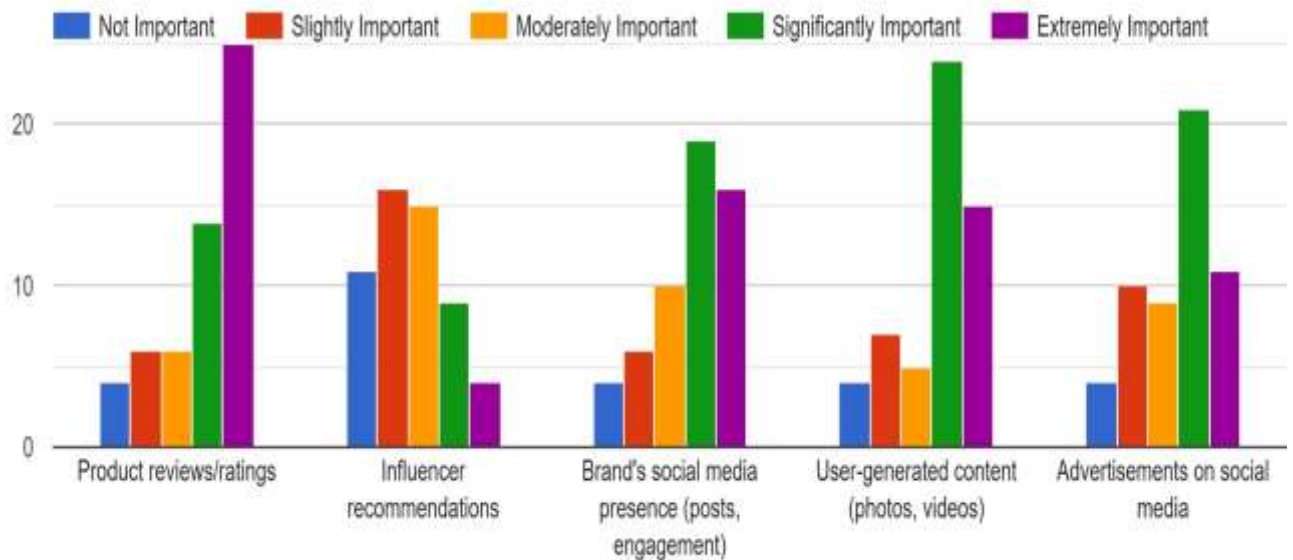


Have you ever purchased a product or service directly from a social media advertisement or post?

55 responses

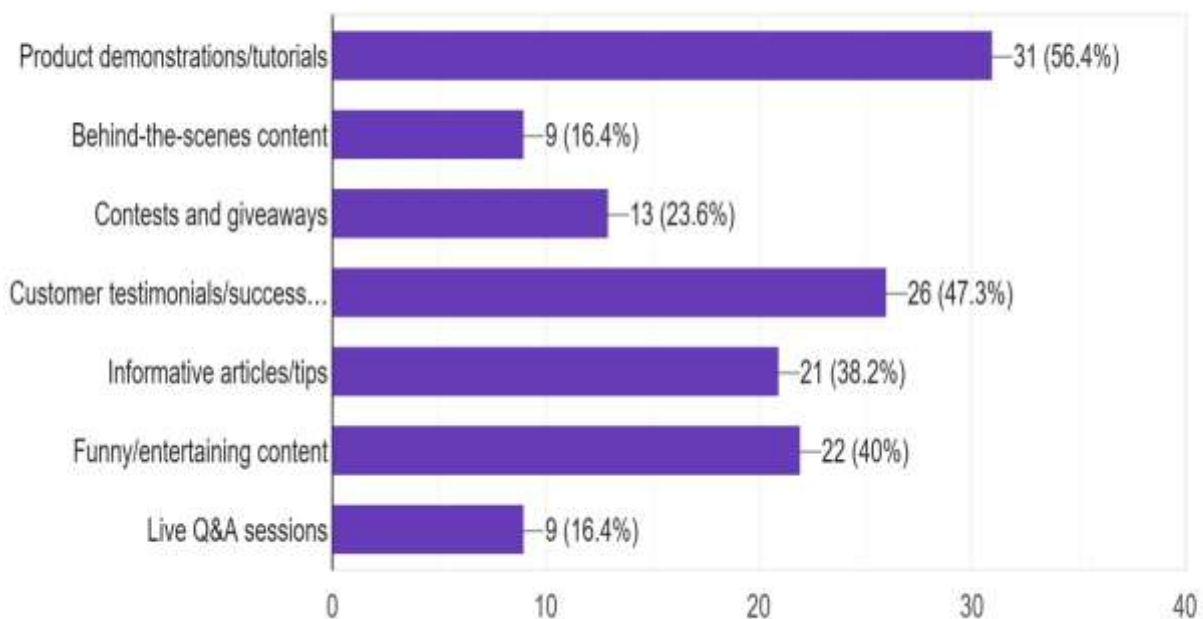


How important are the following factors on social media when considering a purchase?



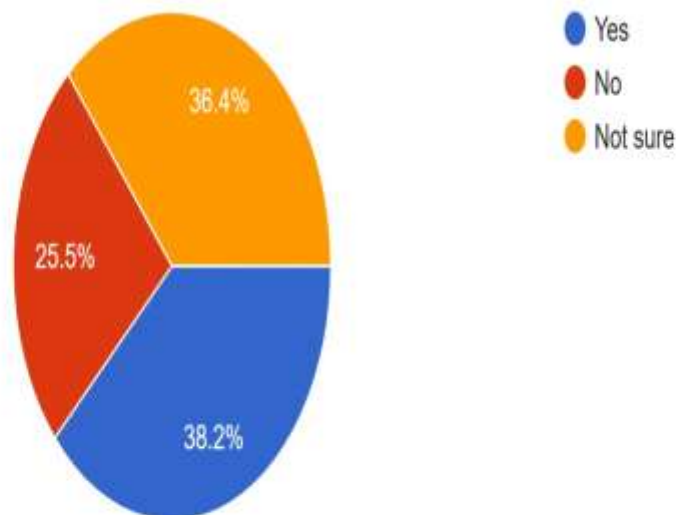
What kind of content from brands do you find most engaging on social media?

55 responses



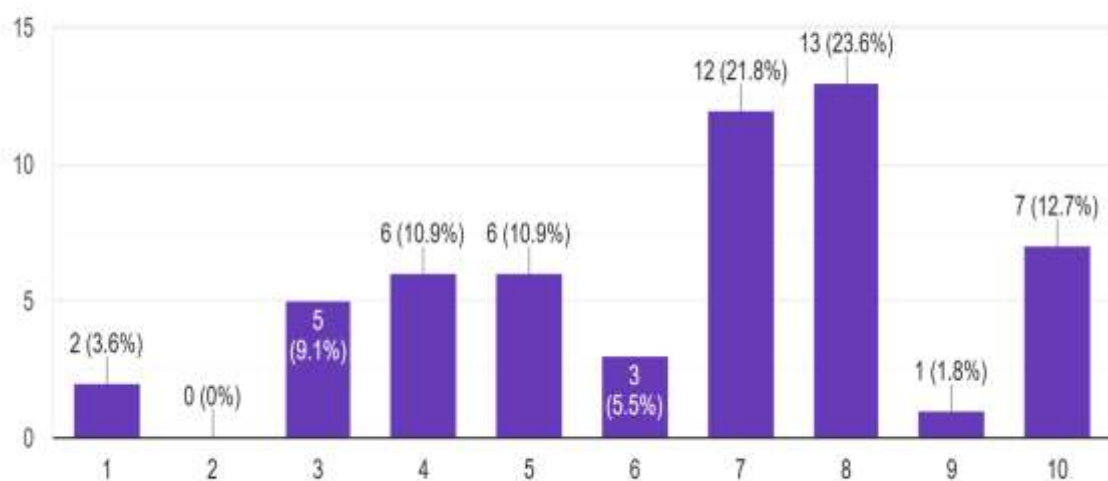
Have you ever stopped using a brand or service due to negative social media feedback or reputation?

55 responses



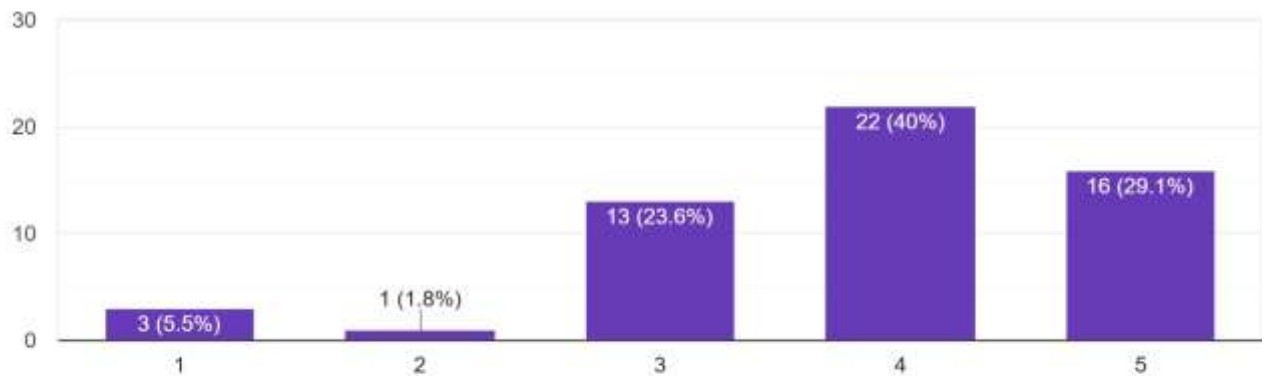
How much do social media reviews and recommendations influence your purchase decisions?

55 responses



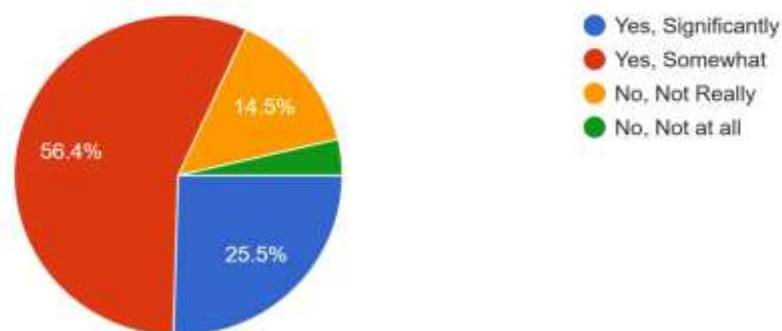
How likely are you to share a positive experience with a brand on social media?

55 responses



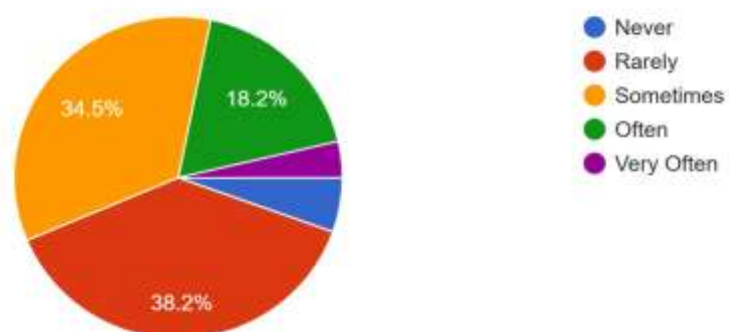
Do you believe a brand's presence and engagement on social media affect your overall perception of the brand?

55 responses



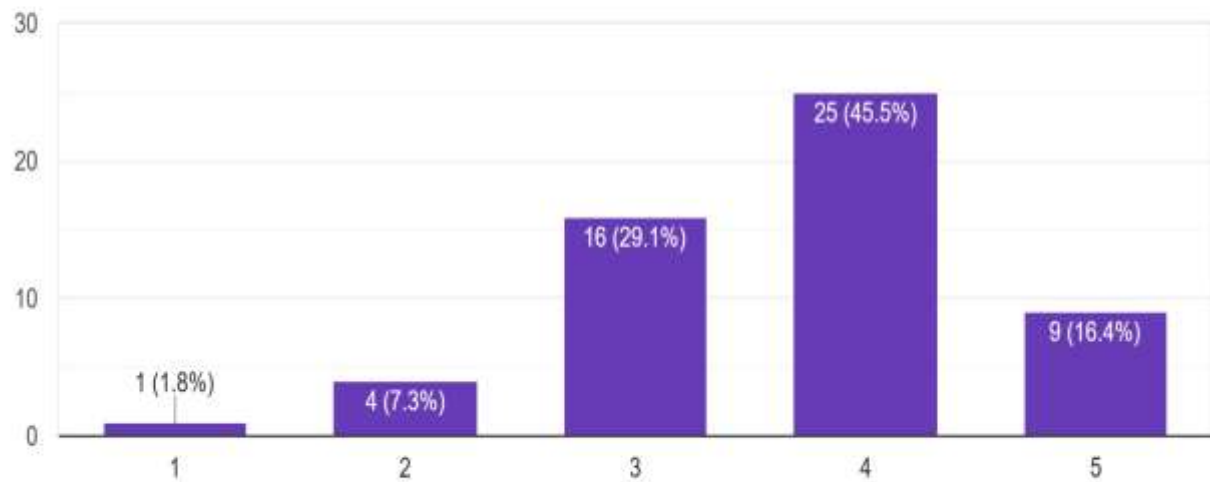
How often have you made a purchase based on a recommendation from a social media?

55 responses



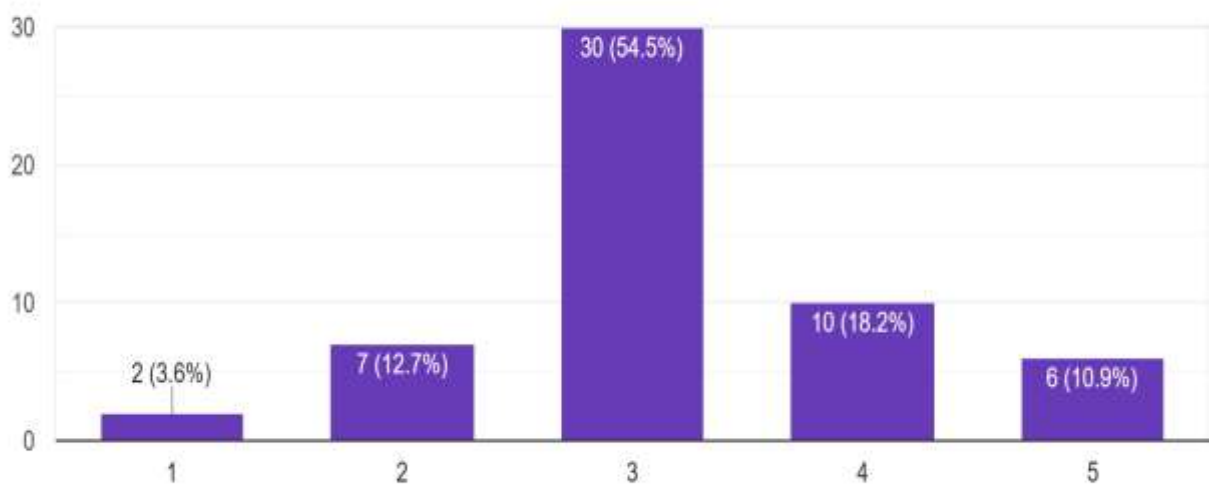
How would you rate the accuracy of social media algorithms in recommending products you are genuinely interested in?

55 responses



How much do you trust information about products/services found on social media?

55 responses



- Question 1: How often do you use social media?

Analysis:

This shows that most respondents are highly active on social media. About 40% use it often and 34.5% very often, while 14.5% use it sometimes. This indicates that the majority are frequent users of social platforms.

- Question 2: Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?

Analysis:

Instagram is the most used platform, with 94.5% of people using it regularly.

YouTube comes next, with 65.5% of users. This shows that platforms with visual and short video content are the most popular for this group. Facebook and Twitter/X are much less used, showing that people are moving away from text-based platforms towards those that offer more visual storytelling.

- Question 3: Have you ever purchased a product or service directly from a social media advertisement or post?

Analysis:

Most people (65.5%) haven't made a direct purchase from a social media ad or post.

However, 34.5% have, proving that social media is a real way to make money. Even though many use social media for learning about products, a third of them will act on what they see, showing that social media can lead to real purchases.

- Question 4: How important are the following factors on social media when considering a purchase?

Analysis:

The key factors people care about are trust-based and based on others' opinions, like product reviews and user-generated content.

This means people value real feedback more than ads or brand presence. While brand presence and ads are still important, they aren't as influential as reviews and comments from real people. Influencers can be trusted by some but not all, showing that trust is mixed.

- Question 5: What kind of content from brands do you find most engaging on social media?

Analysis:

The most engaging content is practical and informative, like product demonstrations and tutorials (56.4%), and content that builds trust, such as customer testimonials and success stories (47.3%).

This shows that people use social media to research and learn about products, not just for looks or ads.

- Question 6: Have you ever stopped using a brand or service due to negative social media feedback or reputation?

Analysis:

About 38.2% of people have stopped using a brand because of bad feedback on social media.

A large number (36.4%) were unsure, showing that reputation on social media is a big factor in decision-making. This means brands need to manage their online reputation and monitor social media carefully to avoid losing customers.

- Question 7: How much do social media reviews and recommendations influence your purchase decisions? (Scale 1-10)

Analysis:

People rate social media reviews and recommendations very highly, with most scoring between 7 and 10.

Scores of 7, 8, and 10 make up 58.1% of the responses. This supports the main idea of the study, showing that peer influence is a strong and important factor in purchasing decisions for this group.

- Question 8: How likely are you to share a positive experience with a brand on social media? (Scale 1-5)

Analysis:

Most people (69.1%) say they are very or somewhat likely to share positive experiences.

This means brands can grow their reputation naturally through customer-generated content. This aligns with the earlier finding that user-generated content is highly valued.

- Question 9: Do you believe a brand's presence and engagement on social media affect your overall perception of the brand?

Analysis:

About 81.9% of people believe that a brand's social media activity affects their view of the brand.

This shows that social media is not just for short-term campaigns but is a main way to build and maintain the brand image. Without a strong social media presence or engagement, people may have a negative view of the brand.

- Question 10: How often have you made a purchase based on a recommendation from a social media?

Analysis:

The combined 72.7% who say they make purchases rarely (38.2%) or sometimes (34.5%) indicates that social media recommendations often start the buying process, but they may not immediately lead to a purchase.

This is similar to the earlier finding that only 34.5% make direct purchases from ads. The buying journey is often influenced, but not always an instant decision.

- Question 11: How much do you trust information about products/services found on social media? (Scale 1-5)

Analysis:

Trust in social media information is mostly neutral, with 54.5% of people rating it as a 3.

This shows that people are being careful and not trusting everything they see online. Even though they are influenced by social proof (Q7), they are still cautious. This suggests that brands should rely on real, third-party content like user reviews and UGC to build trust.

SURVEY CONCLUSION

The quantitative analysis of the 55 responses strongly validates the study's central Hypothesis: There is a significant impact of social media usage on the purchasing behaviour of consumers aged 21–30, influencing their buying decisions.

The key takeaways confirm that this demographic is highly active (74.5% 'Often' or 'Very Often' usage) and visually driven, with Instagram and YouTube being the dominant platforms. Their purchase decisions are primarily driven by the need for authenticity and social proof, prioritizing Product Reviews/Ratings and User-Generated Content (UGC) over direct brand advertisements.

The findings also reveal two critical areas for brands: Trust and Risk. While they are highly influenced by social feedback (58.1% rate influence as 7/10 or higher), they maintain a neutral/skeptical trust level, demanding transparent and functional content (like Product Demonstrations). The significant risk is evident in the finding that 38.2% have dropped a brand due to negative social media reputation, making real-time engagement and reputation management non-negotiable for commercial success within this segment.

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