



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Social media has become an important component of modern marketing and has significantly changed the way consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products and services. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and other digital channels allow businesses to communicate directly with consumers through advertisements, influencer marketing, short-form videos, customer reviews, brand communities, and personalized content. This study examines the impact of social media marketing on consumer buying behavior, with particular reference to Indian consumers. The study is based on secondary data published during 2024 and 2025 by PwC, DataReportal, EY, and other relevant sources, along with selected recent academic studies. The findings indicate that social media contributes significantly to product discovery, brand awareness, information search, consumer engagement, and purchase decisions. In 2025, India had approximately 491 million social media user identities, compared with 462 million in January 2024. PwC's 2024 India survey found that 77% of consumers discovered new brands through social media, while 57% reported purchasing products directly through social media. The study also highlights the importance of influencers, electronic word-of-mouth, reviews, personalized advertising, and visual content. At the same time, privacy concerns, misleading content, fake reviews and lack of trust remain important challenges. The study concludes that social media marketing has become an important influence on consumer buying behaviour, although its effect differs according to consumer characteristics, product category and level of trust.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Buying Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Social Media, Digital Marketing, India*

Introduction:-

The rapid growth of digital technology has transformed traditional marketing practices. Earlier, businesses mainly depended on television, newspapers, radio, outdoor advertising and personal selling to communicate with consumers. The growth of social networking platforms has created a

more interactive marketing environment in which consumers can communicate with brands, share experiences, provide reviews and influence other consumers.

Social media marketing refers to the use of social networking and digital platforms to promote products, services and brands and to develop relationships with consumers. It includes paid advertisements, influencer promotions, short videos, product demonstrations, customer reviews, competitions, user-generated content and direct communication.

India represents an important market for social media marketing because of its large internet and mobile-user population. DataReportal reported approximately **462 million social media user identities in India in January 2024**. By January 2025, this had increased to approximately **491 million**, representing 33.7% of India's population.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives are:

1. To examine the relationship between social media marketing and consumer buying behaviour.
2. To analyse the role of social media in product and brand discovery.
3. To examine the influence of social media advertisements on purchase decisions.
4. To study the role of influencer marketing and electronic word-of-mouth.
5. To examine the importance of customer reviews and user-generated content.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study follows a **descriptive and analytical research design**.

Nature of Data

The study primarily uses **secondary data** from published reports, research articles and digital-market studies.

Period of Study

The analysis focuses mainly on **2024 and 2025**, with earlier studies used only where necessary to provide background.

Sources of Data

Major sources include:

- PwC Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024
- DataReportal Digital 2024 and Digital 2025: India
- EY India media and entertainment industry data
- Published academic research on social media marketing
- Industry reports and relevant secondary sources

Method of Analysis

The study uses percentage analysis, comparative analysis and interpretation of published findings.

Limitation: Since this paper uses secondary data, it does not claim that the findings represent a newly collected survey by the researcher.

Review of Literature

1. PwC (2024)

PwC's *Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024: India Perspective* examined consumer behaviour among 1,000 Indian consumers. The study found that social media was an important channel in the consumer journey. **77% of consumers reported discovering new brands through social media**, while **57% reported purchasing products directly through social media**. It also found that influencer and celebrity content could persuade consumers to purchase products.

2. Data Reportal (2024)

Data Reportal reported approximately **462 million social media user identities in India in January 2024**. Social media penetration represented around 32.2% of the total population. This indicates the large potential audience available to businesses through social media marketing.

3. Data Reportal (2025)

The Digital 2025 India report estimated approximately **491 million social media user identities in January 2025**. This represented an increase of approximately 29 million from early 2024. Instagram's potential advertising audience was reported at approximately 414 million, while YouTube's advertising reach was approximately 491 million.

4. Meenu (2025)

A 2025 study published in the *International Journal of Research - GRANTHAALAYAH* examined social media marketing and purchase intention among Indian consumers. The study used data from **286 active social media users** and examined social media marketing activities, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility and brand trust.

5. Joshi, Pokhariya and Jindal (2025)

A 2025 study examining semi-urban India used responses from **100 respondents** and applied descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and hypothesis testing. The authors reported that social-media exposure, influencer marketing and brand engagement significantly influenced consumer purchase decisions in their study.

Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Social media marketing influences consumers through several mechanisms.

- **Brand Awareness:-** Social media enables companies to introduce brands to consumers quickly. Attractive videos, photographs, stories and advertisements can create awareness about new products.
PwC's 2024 research found that **77% of Indian consumers surveyed discovered new brands through social media**.
- **Product Information Search:-** Consumers increasingly use social media to gather information before making purchases. Product demonstrations, reviews, comments, comparison videos and influencer content can reduce uncertainty.
- **Influence of Social Media Advertising:-** Advertising on social media can target consumers according to interests, demographics, online activities and previous interactions.
PwC's 2024 India survey found that **82% of respondents considered social-media advertisements among the personalised digital advertisements most likely to influence them to purchase**.

- **Influencer Marketing:-** Influencer marketing has become an important component of social media marketing. Influencers can demonstrate products and share personal experiences with their followers.
- **Electronic Word-of-Mouth:-** Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) includes online reviews, comments, recommendations, ratings and consumer experiences shared through digital platforms.

PwC reported that **81% of consumers in its 2024 India survey looked for reviews to validate a company before purchasing through social media.**

Analysis of 2024 and 2025 Data

Indicator	2024	2025
Social media user identities in India	462 million	491 million
Social media share of population	32.2%	33.7%
Instagram advertising audience	—	414 million
YouTube advertising audience	—	491 million
Facebook advertising audience	366.9 million	384 million

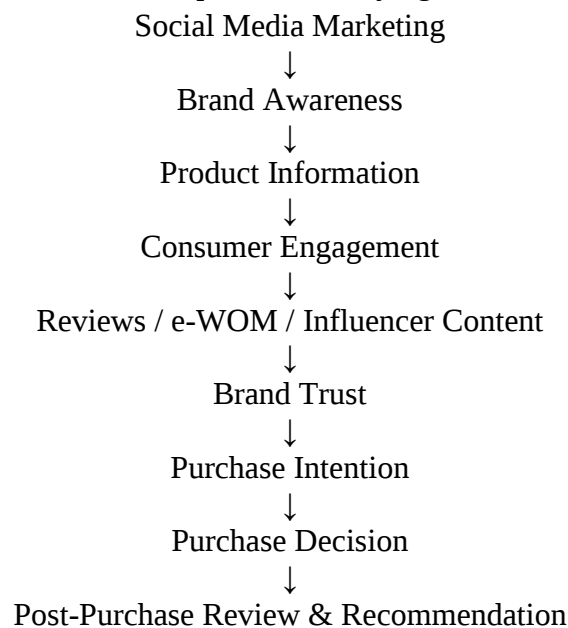
Sources: DataReportal Digital 2024 and Digital 2025: India.

The data show continued expansion of India's social-media environment. Between January 2024 and January 2025, social media user identities increased by approximately **29 million** according to DataReportal's analysis.

Instagram also showed strong growth in potential advertising reach, increasing by approximately **51 million (+14%)** between January 2024 and January 2025.

Social Media and Purchase Decisions

The relationship between social media exposure and buying behaviour can be represented as:



Social media therefore affects not only the initial purchase but also post-purchase behaviour. A satisfied customer can share a positive review, creating additional electronic word-of-mouth and potentially influencing other consumers. PwC's research found that 57% of surveyed Indian consumers had purchased products directly through social media, while 77% had discovered new brands through social media.

Recent 2025 Evidence

Research and industry evidence published during 2025 further demonstrates the growing role of social media in consumer discovery.

A 2025 report cited by IBEF, based on a study commissioned by Meta involving 2,548 Indian internet users aged 16–64, reported that nearly 80% of Indian shoppers discovered new products through social media. The report also highlighted the importance of influencers, short-form videos and promotional messages in product evaluation.

The finding supports the argument that social media is increasingly becoming part of the consumer's product-discovery process.

At the broader advertising-market level, EY reported that search and social media accounted for 69% of India's digital advertising revenues in 2024, while e-commerce advertising reached ₹147 billion.

This indicates that businesses are allocating substantial resources to digital channels that operate close to the consumer's consideration and purchase stages.

Major Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour

The study identifies the following major social-media factors:

- 1. Content Quality:-** Interesting, informative and visually attractive content attracts greater consumer attention.
- 2. Influencer Credibility:-** Consumers are more likely to respond positively when influencers are perceived as authentic and knowledgeable.
- 3. Customer Reviews:-** Positive ratings and reviews can reduce perceived purchase risk.
- 4. Brand Engagement:-** Likes, comments, competitions, polls and direct communication increase interaction between consumers and brands.
- 5. Personalization:-** Relevant advertisements and product recommendations can make marketing communication more useful.
- 6. Discounts and Offers:-** Promotional offers, coupons and limited-period discounts can encourage purchase.
- 7. Trust:-** Trust is particularly important because consumers cannot physically examine products promoted online.
- 8. Short-form Video:-** Reels, Shorts and other short videos provide businesses with a convenient method of demonstrating products.

Challenges of Social Media Marketing

Despite its advantages, social media marketing has several limitations.

Privacy concerns: PwC reported that 76% of consumers surveyed were concerned about privacy and data sharing on social media.

Fake reviews: Consumers may find it difficult to distinguish genuine customer experiences from manipulated reviews.

Misleading advertisements: Exaggerated claims may negatively affect consumer trust.

Influencer credibility: Paid endorsements without adequate disclosure or authentic product experience can reduce credibility.

Information overload: Consumers are exposed to large volumes of promotional content.

Negative electronic word-of-mouth: A single negative customer experience can potentially spread rapidly.

Security concerns: Consumers may hesitate to purchase directly through social platforms because of concerns about payment and personal information.

Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of 2024 and 2025 evidence, the major findings are:

1. Social media has become an important component of the consumer buying process.
2. India's social media user base continued to grow between 2024 and 2025.
3. Social media is particularly important for discovering new brands and products.
4. Social media advertising can influence consumer purchase decisions.
5. Customer reviews and e-WOM play an important role in building or reducing consumer confidence.
6. Influencer marketing has become an important promotional method.
7. Visual and short-form video content has increased opportunities for product demonstration.
8. Social media supports two-way communication between consumers and businesses.
9. Consumer trust remains essential for converting social-media exposure into actual purchases.

Suggestions

1. Businesses should create **informative and authentic content** rather than focusing only on promotional messages.
2. Companies should select influencers based on **credibility and relevance**, not merely follower count.
3. Customer reviews should be encouraged and managed transparently.
4. Businesses should respond quickly to consumer comments and complaints.
5. Social-media advertisements should clearly communicate product benefits, prices and conditions.
6. Companies should protect consumer data and clearly communicate their privacy practices.
7. Short-form videos can be used for product demonstrations and educational content.
8. Businesses should monitor fake reviews and misleading user-generated content.
9. Social-media campaigns should be integrated with websites, e-commerce platforms and physical stores.
10. Marketing performance should be evaluated using engagement, conversion, customer retention and return-on-investment measures rather than follower numbers alone.

Conclusion

Social media marketing has significantly changed the relationship between businesses and consumers. The evidence from 2024 and 2025 demonstrates that social media is no longer simply an entertainment or communication medium; it has become an important part of the consumer decision-making process.

The growth of India's social-media user base from approximately 462 million identities in January 2024 to 491 million in January 2025 indicates a substantial digital audience for businesses.

The 2024 PwC findings further demonstrate the importance of social media in consumer behaviour: 77% of surveyed consumers discovered new brands through social media, 57% reported purchasing products directly through social media, and 82% identified social-media advertising among the personalised digital advertising formats most likely to influence purchases. The overall evidence suggests that social media can influence several stages of consumer behaviour—**awareness, information search, evaluation, purchase intention, purchase and post-purchase communication**. However, social media influence does not automatically lead to purchase. Trust, product quality, price, reviews, authenticity and consumer needs continue to affect final decisions.

Therefore, businesses should adopt a **consumer-centric, transparent and relationship-oriented social media marketing strategy**. Rather than using social media only as an advertising channel, organisations should use it to provide information, build trust, engage customers and create long-term relationships.

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