

A Study on Impact of Social Media in Buying Behaviour with Special Reference to Madurai City

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Abstract

In today's digital era, social media has completely transformed the way consumers interact with brands and making purchase decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become powerful tools for product discovery, peer influence and brand engagement. This study aims to empirically examine the impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour, with specific focus to brand awareness, peer recommendation, influencer content, and promotional strategies. Primary data was collected through questionnaire. On analysing the responses, the result showed that consumer buying decisions are strongly influenced by social media, especially during the awareness and evaluation stages of the buying process. Notably, Instagram was identified as the most influential platform by 62% of respondents, followed by YouTube 24%, Facebook 13% and others 1%.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Customer satisfaction, Online Purchasing decision, social media Advertising

INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool in recent years, influencing not only communication but also consumer behaviour. It plays a vital role in the marketing strategies of businesses by helping brands reach a large number of potential customers in a short span of time. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are widely used by consumers for discovering new products, reading reviews, and interacting with brands.

In cities like Madurai, where both traditional and modern shopping habits coexist, social media has started to shape the way people make their buying decisions. Consumers are now more informed and influenced by peer reviews, influencer marketing, and online promotions. While urban consumers are actively using these platforms, the extent of their influence on actual buying decisions, trust in online content, and satisfaction with purchases is still a matter of study. Hence, the present research was undertaken to understand the impact of social media on the buying behaviour of consumers in Madurai City, focusing on factors such as brand awareness, product discovery, peer influence, and purchase decisions.

Statement of the Problem

Social media has become a major influence on consumer buying behaviour, shaping how people

discover products, compare options, and make purchase decisions. With the growing penetration of smartphones and internet access, consumers are increasingly relying on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube for product discovery, reviews, brand updates, and peer opinions before making purchases.

In Madurai City, increasing use of platforms like Instagram and Facebook is changing traditional shopping habits. However, the exact impact of social media on consumer preferences and purchase decisions in this region is not clearly known. This study aims to understand how social media affects the buying behaviour of consumers in Madurai.

Objective of the study

The study is focused to know the

- Level of awareness about social media as a shopping tool.
- Role of social media in discovering new products and brands.
- Extent of peer influence on social media in shaping buying choices.
- Influence of social media advertisements on final purchase decisions.
- Consumer perception and trust in product information shared on social media.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the extent to which social media influences consumer buying behaviour in Madurai City, focusing on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. It explores how various forms of online content—including advertisements, customer reviews, and influencer endorsements—shape purchase decisions across diverse demographic and psychographic profiles. The research further investigates the relationship between social media engagement patterns (frequency, duration, and platform preference) and the level of trust consumers place in online information. By providing actionable insights, this study aims to assist businesses and marketers in designing data-driven, targeted social media strategies to effectively capture and convert urban consumers in emerging markets like Madurai.

Review of Literature

(Gaffoor, 2017)¹ conducted a study to explore the impact of social media on online shopping behavior among Indian consumers. Their research emphasized that platforms such as Facebook and YouTube play a pivotal role in influencing purchase intentions, particularly through peer recommendations, product reviews, and targeted advertisements. The study found that consumers, especially younger demographics, are increasingly relying on social media for pre-purchase information, emotional validation, and brand engagement. Moreover, the researchers highlighted how social media's interactive features foster trust and product awareness, ultimately driving online purchases. These findings reinforce the growing importance of digital ecosystems in shaping consumer behavior and underscore the need for brands to invest in strategic social media engagement.

(Sony Varghese, 2021)² emphasized the growing influence of social media on consumer behavior,

¹ Jothi, C. Arul, and A. Mohmadraj Gaffoor. "Impact of social media in online shopping." *Journal on Management Studies* 3.3 (2017): 576-586.

² Varghese, Sony, and Mansi Agrawal. "Impact of Social Media on Consumer Buying Behavior." *Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2021, pp. 51-55.

particularly concerning high-involvement purchases. Their research revealed that 64.5% of respondents accept that social media provides more information with easier access, 52.5% says that they can trust more on social media advertisements and reviews, highlighting a significant shift toward digital trust mechanisms. They find social media more beneficial than the traditional media. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook were reported to dominate user engagement, particularly among women's. Additionally, the research revealed that discount-driven promotions could lead to spending nearly four times higher than usual, indicating the strong role of impulse buying influenced by digital stimuli.

(Majeed, 2021)³ investigated the influence of social media on consumer purchase intention, focusing on the **mediating role of brand equity**. Their study revealed that social media content—particularly interactive and engaging posts—significantly enhances **brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand loyalty**, which in turn strengthens purchase intention. The researchers emphasized that the credibility and consistency of brand communication on platforms like Instagram and Facebook contribute heavily to building consumer trust. Importantly, the study positioned **brand equity as a central mediator**, illustrating that social media alone doesn't directly drive purchases but does so effectively by first enhancing brand perception. These insights highlight the strategic value of cultivating strong brand equity in social media marketing to convert engagement into actionable consumer behavior.

(Tirpude, 2022)⁴ examined the impact of social media content, particularly user-generated feedback and ratings—on consumer buying behavior and purchase intention. The study highlighted that 81.3% of respondents believe that social media influences consumers buying behaviour and purchase intention. The information search and evaluation of alternatives stages were identified as the most affected in the consumer decision-making process. These findings emphasize the increasing reliance on peer opinions and digital content during pre-purchase activities. Tirpude's research aligns with broader patterns in digital consumerism, reinforcing the role of social validation and digital engagement in shaping not only consumer trust but also final purchase intent. The study adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the strategic value of interactive, consumer-centric content in modern marketing frameworks.

Research Design

Type of Study: Both Descriptive and Analytical study

Methods of Data Collection: The primary data of the study is individuals, primarily students and young adults, who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for product discovery or shopping-related decisions, collected through a structured questionnaire in Google forms. Such framed questionnaires covered the awareness, influence, preference and buying behaviour of the customers. Various articles published in websites are referred to as secondary data.

Sampling Size and Area: A total of 141 samples were collected. The sample primarily includes students and young adults residing in and around Madurai City. The respondents were selected based on their active usage of social media platforms and their exposure to online product promotions and advertisements.

Sample Method: Convenient Sampling technique was adopted by the researcher.

Statistical Tool: Statistical tools used are Simple Percentage analysis and Correlation.

³ Majeed, Mohammed, Martin Owusu-Ansah, and Adu-Ansere Ashmond. "The influence of social media on purchase intention: The mediating role of brand equity." *Cogent Business & Management* 8.1 (2021): 1944008.

⁴ Tirpude, Mr Raman R. "Impact of social media content on consumer buying behavior and purchase intention." *Mukt Shabd Journal* 11.9 (2022).

Analysis

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

S.no	Particulars		No. of Respondents	%
1.	Gender	Male	75	53
		Female	66	47
2.	Age	Under 18	49	35
		19–20	37	26
		21–22	15	11
		23–25	11	8
		26–27	8	6
		28–30	4	3
		Above 30	17	12
3.	Status of the Respondent	Student	102	72
		Employed	26	18
		Freelancer	5	3
		Homemaker	6	4
		Unemployed	2	1
	Total		141	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2: Product Comparison Frequency by Platform

S.no	Buying Behavior Online	No. of Respondents	%
1.	I buy it without comparison	27	19
2.	I sometimes compare it with e-commerce platforms	52	37
3.	I always compare before deciding	35	25
4.	I save it for later but rarely buy	19	14
5.	I ignore it completely	8	6
	Total	141	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3: Consumer opinion After Viewing a Product on social media

S.no	Consumer opinion After Viewing a Product on social media	No. of Respondents	%
1.	Ignore it completely	16	11
2.	Just like/save it, no action taken	37	26
3.	Visit the website but don't buy	31	22
4.	Add it to cart but delay purchase	39	28
5.	Buy it immediately or within a few days	18	13
	Total	141	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4: Extent of Social Media's Influence on Consumer Buying Decisions

S.no	Social Media Influence on Buying Choices	No. of Respondents	%
1.	Very High	51	36
2.	High	34	24
3.	Moderate	50	36
4.	No Influence	6	4
	Total	141	100

Source: Primary Data

Correlation Analysis

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

There is no significant correlation between trust in product reviews on social media and the habit of reading reviews before making a purchase.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

There is a significant correlation between trust in product reviews on social media and the habit of reading

reviews before making a purchase.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Particulars		Do you trust product reviews and feedback shared on social media?	Do you read reviews before making a purchase?
Do you trust product reviews and feedback shared on social media?	Pearson Correlation	1	0.337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	141	141
Do you read reviews before making a purchase?	Pearson Correlation	0.337**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	141	141

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Computed data

Interpretation

The analysis reveals a statistically significant moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.337$, $p < 0.01$) between trust in social media product reviews and the tendency to read reviews before purchasing. This implies that higher trust in social media feedback meaningfully increases the likelihood of consumers engaging in review-reading behaviour prior to making buying decisions. The rejection of the null hypothesis confirms that trust in online reviews plays a pivotal role in shaping informed purchasing choices, highlighting its importance as a driver of consumer decision-making in the digital era.

Limitations of the study

- The study is limited to Madurai City and may not reflect buying behaviour in other regions.
- The study may not cover all social media platforms equally.
- Social media trends change quickly, so findings may not stay relevant for long.
- Only active social media users were considered, leaving out those who shop but don't use social media.
- The study relies primarily on quantitative methods, potentially overlooking deeper qualitative insights.
- The study may not consider the role of offline marketing or word-of-mouth in buying decisions.

Findings

Demographic Profile:

- **Gender Distribution:** Out of 141 respondents, 53% were male and 47% were female.
- **Age Group:** 35% were under 18, followed by 26% in the 18–20 range, indicating a predominantly young audience.
- **Occupation:** 72% were students, 18% were employed, and the remaining respondents were freelancers, homemakers, or unemployed.

Platform Influence:

- **Instagram was the most influential platform** for buying decisions, selected by **62%** of respondents.

- This was followed by **YouTube (24%)** and **Facebook (13%)**, while platforms like WhatsApp, Amazon, and TV had minimal influence (**1%**).

Post-Exposure Behaviour:

After seeing a product on social media:

- **28% added it to their cart but delayed the purchase.**
- **26% just liked or saved it with no action taken.**
- **22% visited the website but didn't buy**, and only **13% made an immediate purchase or within a few days.**
- **11% ignored it completely.**

Social Media Features That Influence Buying

- **Product Reviews** had the **strongest influence**, with most respondents rating it a **5 (Strong Influence)**.
- **Influencer Recommendations** and **Advertisements/Sponsored Posts** were also rated highly, mostly in the 4 and 5 categories.
- **User-Generated Content** (e.g., reels/stories) and **Brand's Own Social Media Posts** received moderate influence ratings.
- Overall, **user-generated and peer content** seems to have more impact than direct brand messaging.

Degree of Influence Social Media Exerts on Buying Choices

Out of 141 respondents:

- **51 respondents (36%)** stated that social media has a **Very High** influence on their buying choices.
- **34 respondents (24%)** said the influence is **High**.
- **50 respondents (36%)** reported a **Moderate** level of influence.
- Only **6 respondents (4%)** indicated **No Influence** from social media.
- This data clearly reflects that a **vast majority (96%)** of consumers experience some level of influence from social media when making purchase decisions.
- The results highlight the **growing importance of social media as a persuasive tool** in shaping consumer behaviour and preferences in the Madurai region.

Challenges Faced During Social Media Shopping

Respondents reported multiple concerns while shopping through social media platforms:

- The **biggest challenge** was **lack of return/refund policies (40%)**.
- This was followed by **fear of scams or fake sellers (28%)**, highlighting trust issues in online transactions.
- **Delivery delays (14%)**, **products not matching descriptions (9%)**, and **payment issues (9%)** were also notable problems.

These insights point to a **demand for safer, more transparent shopping experiences** on social media.

Practical Elements Considered Before Purchase

When evaluating a product seen on social media, several practical elements were highly prioritized:

- **Clear delivery details** and **return/exchange policies** were rated with **strong influence (rating 5)** by a large portion of respondents.
- **Presence of customer support/contact information** and **multiple payment options** were also seen as crucial factors.
- **Customer feedback or replies** on posts added further credibility, showing that **trust-building**

features significantly affect buying confidence.

Suggestions

- Be cautious when shopping on social media; verify product authenticity and page trustworthiness before ordering.
- Avoid quick or emotional purchases from ads or influencers; compare products across sites before buying.
- Social media users must be alert about fake advertisements or scams and should avoid clicking on unknown links or offers that seem too good to be true.
- Businesses should share creative, useful content like videos, reviews, and tutorials to engage customers and promote their brand.
- More awareness campaigns should be conducted, especially for students and young people, about safe online buying habits and identifying fake products or scams.
- Encourage local language content and support on social media to help small-town users shop confidently.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of social media on consumer buying behavior in Madurai City, particularly among young adults. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become essential for product discovery, with brand advertisements, influencer reviews, and peer recommendations playing a major role in shaping purchase decisions.

While social media has made shopping more accessible and engaging, it also presents challenges such as scams, delivery issues, and unclear return policies. Therefore, consumers must remain cautious, and businesses should prioritize transparency, trust-building, and delivering reliable content.

In conclusion, social media is a powerful tool that shapes consumer choices, but both users and marketers must act responsibly to create a safe and informed shopping experience.

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