

Examining the Influence of Social Media Engagement Metrics on Consumers' Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether social media engagement metrics are associated with consumers' purchase intention. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected from 260 active social media users through convenience sampling. Engagement was operationalised using likes, comments, shares, and time spent, measured through 12 Likert-type items on a five-point scale, while purchase intention was measured using 10 items. Reliability analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency. These findings indicate that both visible engagement cues and sustained attention are aligned with consumers' reported purchase intention, offering practical insight into which engagement signals may be most informative for social media marketing strategies.

Keywords: Social Media, Consumers' Purchase Intention

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become major spaces for product discovery, evaluation, and brand interaction, leaving observable behavioural traces through reactions, comments, sharing, and time spent engaging with posts. These signals are attractive to marketers and researchers because they can reflect real-time audience response and be measured at scale. However, engagement is not a single behaviour. Likes may indicate quick approval, comments often require deeper involvement, shares can reflect endorsement and diffusion, and longer viewing time may suggest sustained attention and information processing. Treating these metrics as interchangeable can hide meaningful differences in how they relate to purchase-oriented judgments.

Engagement indicators are widely used to assess digital performance, yet their meaning is shaped by context. Low effort actions such as likes may be driven by habit, platform norms, and impression management; while commenting and sharing are more likely to depend on relevance, credibility, and perceived social consequences. Time spent adds a distinct dimension because it captures attention and exposure rather than overt interaction. Therefore, clarifying how specific engagement behaviours align with purchase intention is important for both academic modelling and managerial decision-making.

In this context, the study examines the relationships between four engagement metrics, namely likes, comments, shares, and time spent, and consumers' purchase intention. By analysing multiple engagement behaviours within one framework, the study provides a more granular account than approaches relying on

an overall engagement score, supporting clearer interpretation of which behaviours are most closely linked with purchase intention while avoiding causal claims.

Keywords: Social media engagement, Engagement metrics, Likes, comments, and shares, Time spent (dwell time), Purchase intention

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Wang et al., 2025) analysed how social media involvement relates to consumers' purchase intention, testing self-disclosure as a mediating mechanism. Using a survey-based quantitative design, the study reported that higher involvement aligns with stronger intention to buy, partly because disclosure increases psychological investment and perceived relevance of platform content. This supports the view that engagement intensity can coincide with buying-oriented intentions.

(Huang et al., 2025) investigated social proof in short-form video commerce by focusing on visible engagement counts, particularly likes and comments. Drawing on social proof theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the findings indicated that higher levels of visible approval are associated with stronger buying responses. Although impulse buying was examined rather than purchase intention, the evidence illustrates how engagement signals can translate into purchase-oriented outcomes.

(Gutierrez et al., 2023) examined whether consumer-brand interactions on social media enhance purchase intention while accounting for privacy concerns. Using survey data from UK consumers and structural modelling, the study showed that stronger interactions correspond with higher purchase intention and that privacy management conditions this relationship. The findings suggest that engagement behaviours provide a meaningful route through which social media activity supports intention formation.

(Osei-Frimpong et al., 2023) focused on continuous social media brand engagement and assessed how individual motivations and information quality sustain ongoing engagement practices. Based on an online survey and structural equation modelling, the study reported that lifestyle compatibility and perceived information quality encourage repeated engagement. This explains why sustained interaction and time spent may be relevant when modelling purchase intention.

(Onofrei et al., 2022) linked consumer-to-consumer interactions on Facebook and Instagram with purchase intention and behavioural engagement, operationalised through liking, commenting, and sharing. Using service-dominant logic and the information adoption model, the study demonstrated that source credibility and content quality help explain why interactions translate into both engagement actions and stronger purchase intention.

(Gani et al., 2022) assessed how social media influence shapes consumers' purchase intention for organic beauty products and tested engagement as a mediating mechanism. Using survey data analysed with structural equation modelling, the authors reported positive relationships between social media influence, engagement, and purchase intention. The study reinforces the premise that engagement behaviours are closely connected with intention to buy.

(Cao et al., 2021) explored how social media context influences engagement behaviours by examining media richness and content trustworthiness. Using survey data analysed through PLS-SEM, the study showed that richer media and credible content are associated with stronger engagement behaviours. This supports operationalising engagement through observable behavioural metrics.

(Trunfio and Rossi, 2021) synthesised engagement research through a metrics perspective using a systematic literature review. The authors highlighted engagement as a multidimensional construct and

noted that behavioural indicators are commonly used as practical proxies. This evidence supports measuring engagement through observable actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, and time spent. (Bălăşescu et al., 2020) examined purchase intention in social commerce by modelling trust and perceived risk within online decision-making. Using a quantitative approach, the study showed that intention is shaped by credibility cues and perceived uncertainty. This perspective suggests that engagement signals operate alongside trust judgements when consumers form purchase intentions.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To examine the relationship between social media engagement (likes, comments, shares, and time spent) and consumers’ purchase intention.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional design to examine associations between social media engagement metrics and consumers’ purchase intention. This design was appropriate for the stated objective because it enables empirical assessment of relationships among variables measured at a single point in time.

1.4.2 Research Approach

A quantitative approach was adopted to support variable-based measurement and hypothesis testing. This approach aligned with the use of scale scores derived from Likert items and the application of correlational analysis to evaluate the proposed relationships.

1.4.3 Population and Sample

The target population comprised consumers who use social media and are exposed to product or brand-related content. The study used a sample size of 260 respondents, which was sufficient to support correlational testing of the specified hypotheses within a quantitative design. A convenience sampling technique was applied,

1.4.4 Research Variables

The independent variables were social media engagement metrics, such as likes, comments, shares, and time spent. The dependent variable was consumers’ purchase intention to purchase products influenced by social media content. These variables were aligned with the research objective and the null hypotheses H01 to H04.

1.4.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using the questionnaire administered to the study respondents. The mode and duration of data collection were not specified in the methodological information provided.

1.4.6 Reliability of the Instrument

Table 1.1: Reliability

Construct	Number of Items (k)	Cronbach’s Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Likes	3	0.824	Good
Comments	3	0.775	Acceptable
Shares	3	0.753	Acceptable
Time Spent	3	0.792	Acceptable

Engagement (Overall 12 items)	12	0.751	Acceptable
Purchase Intention	10	0.923	Excellent

The reliability results indicate that the constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, as Cronbach’s Alpha (α) result was more than 0.70 across the measured scales.

1.4.7 Instrument Development and Measurement

Data were captured using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-type statements measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Social media engagement was measured through four sub-constructs, namely likes, comments, shares, and time spent, with three statements per sub-construct, yielding 12 engagement items in total. Purchase intention was measured using 10 items.

Table 1.2: Opinion of the Respondents

Construct	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Likes	I often click the ‘like’ button on social media posts related to products or brands that interest me.	48	55	46	42	69
		18.46%	21.15%	17.69%	16.15%	26.54%
Likes	When I like a brand’s post, it usually reflects a genuine interest in the product or offer.	57	43	44	48	68
		21.92%	16.54%	16.92%	18.46%	26.15%
Likes	I am more likely to like product-related content when it appears relevant to my needs.	55	51	46	42	66
		21.15%	19.62%	17.69%	16.15%	25.38%
Comments	I sometimes leave comments on product- or brand-related posts when I have an opinion to share.	46	64	42	47	61
		17.69%	24.62%	16.15%	18.08%	23.46%
Comments	If I comment on a brand’s content, it usually indicates a higher level of involvement with that content.	51	48	51	51	59
		19.62%	18.46%	19.62%	19.62%	22.69%
Comments	I am more likely to comment on product-related posts that provide useful or persuasive information.	56	49	56	37	62
		21.54%	18.85%	21.54%	14.23%	23.85%
Shares	I sometimes share product- or brand-related posts that I think others may find useful.	44	48	48	53	67
		16.92%	18.46%	18.46%	20.38%	25.77%
Shares	When I share a brand’s content, it generally indicates that I view the content positively.	51	43	38	43	85
		19.62%	16.54%	14.62%	16.54%	32.69%

Construct	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Shares	I am more likely to share product-related posts that appear credible and informative.	45	46	49	57	63
		17.31%	17.69%	18.85%	21.92%	24.23%
Time Spent	I tend to spend more time viewing product-related content that captures my attention.	57	37	43	52	71
		21.92%	14.23%	16.54%	20.00%	27.31%
Time Spent	I read or watch product-related posts for longer when I find them relevant to my interests.	52	52	51	39	66
		20.00%	20.00%	19.62%	15.00%	25.38%
Time Spent	I often spend time comparing information from multiple posts before considering a purchase.	48	55	34	44	79
		18.46%	21.15%	13.08%	16.92%	30.38%
Purchase Intention	Social media content about a product can increase my intention to purchase that product.	48	47	44	49	72
		18.46%	18.08%	16.92%	18.85%	27.69%
Purchase Intention	After engaging with product-related posts, I am more willing to consider buying the product.	53	33	45	46	83
		20.38%	12.69%	17.31%	17.69%	31.92%
Purchase Intention	If I find product information on social media convincing, I am likely to intend to purchase it.	58	45	42	46	69
		22.31%	17.31%	16.15%	17.69%	26.54%
Purchase Intention	Positive impressions formed from social media posts can strengthen my purchase intention.	52	50	35	36	87
		20.00%	19.23%	13.46%	13.85%	33.46%
Purchase Intention	I am likely to intend to buy a product that is promoted effectively on social media.	60	40	39	43	78
		23.08%	15.38%	15.00%	16.54%	30.00%
Purchase Intention	I would consider purchasing a product that receives strong engagement on social media.	53	41	32	50	84
		20.38%	15.77%	12.31%	19.23%	32.31%
Purchase Intention	When a product is frequently discussed on social media, my purchase intention may increase.	58	42	37	41	82
		22.31%	16.15%	14.23%	15.77%	31.54%
Purchase Intention	I am willing to seek more information about a product after seeing it on social media.	54	37	41	48	80
		20.77%	14.23%	15.77%	18.46%	30.77%
		53	38	49	45	75

Construct	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Purchase Intention	Seeing consistent product-related content on social media can increase my purchase intention.	20.38%	14.62%	18.85%	17.31%	28.85%
Purchase Intention	Overall, social media engagement with product-related content can influence my intention to purchase.	62	35	32	40	91
		23.85%	13.46%	12.31%	15.38%	35.00%

1.5 HYPOTHESES TESTING

The following sections deals with the hypothesis testing

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the number of likes and consumers’ purchase intention.

For the purpose of testing the above-mentioned hypothesis, Composite mean scores were calculated and labelled as “Likes Mean” and “Purchase Intention Mean”, and correlation was applied.

Table 1.3: Correlation result

	r	p
Likes Mean and Purchase Intention Mean	0.41	<.001

As depicted in the above table, Pearson correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive association between likes and purchase intention.

Since the p-value was found to be less than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected. The researcher thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between the number of likes and consumers’ purchase intention.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the number of comments and consumers’ purchase intention.

For the purpose of testing the above-mentioned hypothesis, Composite mean scores were calculated and labelled as “Comments Mean ” and “Purchase Intention Mean,” and correlation was applied.

Table 1.4: Correlation

	r	p
Comments Mean and Purchase Intention Mean	0.36	<.001

As depicted in the above table, Pearson correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between comments and purchase intention.

Since the p-value was found to be less than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected, the researcher thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between the number of comments and consumers’ purchase intention.

H03: There is no significant relationship between the number of shares and consumers’ purchase intention.

For the purpose of testing the above-mentioned hypothesis, Composite mean scores were calculated and labelled as “No of Shares Mean ” and “Purchase Intention Mean”, and correlation was applied.

Table 1.5: Correlation

	r	p
No of Shares Mean and Purchase Intention Mean	0.33	<.001

As depicted in the above table, Pearson correlation analysis found a positive association between shares and purchase intention.

Since the p-value was found to be less than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected. The researcher thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between the number of shares and consumers’ purchase intention.

H04: There is no significant relationship between time spent on social media content and consumers’ purchase intention.

For the purpose of testing the above-mentioned hypothesis, Composite mean scores were calculated and labelled as “Time Spent Mean ” and “Purchase Intention Mean”, and correlation was applied.

Table 1.6: Correlation

	r	p
Time Spent Mean and Purchase Intention Mean	0.41	<.001

Pearson correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between time spent and purchase intention.

Since the p-value was found to be less than 0.05, the hypothesis was rejected. The researcher thus concludes that there is a significant relationship between time spent on social media content and consumers’ purchase intention.

1.6 FINDINGS FROM THE LIKERT STATEMENTS

The following were the findings

1. Responses to the Likes items reflected a moderate level of endorsement, with agreement largely concentrated in the low to mid forties. Liking behaviour was more closely associated with expressions of genuine interest, although it was not uniformly practised across respondents.
2. Agreement with the Comments items remained moderate, with the lowest endorsement observed for commenting on content perceived as useful or persuasive. This pattern suggests that many respondents refrain from commenting, which may help explain the comparatively weaker association with purchase intention.

3. The Shares items showed strongest agreement for the view that sharing reflects a positive evaluation of brand content. However, overall responses remained mixed, indicating that sharing is meaningful for certain users but less commonly practised than lower effort engagement actions.
4. Time Spent items displayed relatively stronger agreement, especially for behaviours involving comparison of information across multiple posts before purchase consideration. This highlights the role of attention and evaluation, aligning with the moderate positive association observed between time spent and purchase intention.
5. Purchase intention items attracted the highest levels of endorsement, particularly in relation to products that receive strong engagement and are perceived to influence buying decisions. Nevertheless, ongoing disagreement reflects variation in how social media engagement translates into stated purchase intention.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Social media engagement metrics were found to be significantly associated with consumers' purchase intention within the sample. Greater engagement across likes, comments, shares, and time spent tended to coincide with stronger reported buying intention, thereby supporting the study objective while remaining within the boundaries of correlational interpretation.

Likes demonstrated a meaningful association with purchase intention, indicating that visible approval of product-related content often accompanies stronger buying intention. Comments were also positively related to purchase intention, though the association was weaker, suggesting that commenting reflects a less consistent engagement behaviour. Sharing showed a positive but comparatively weaker relationship with purchase intention. In contrast, time spent on social media content displayed a clear association with purchase intention, highlighting the role of sustained attention and continued exposure in shaping buying intention.

1.8 SUGGESTIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

1. Social media content should be designed to encourage likes, as this low-effort form of engagement showed a consistent association with higher purchase intention and serves as an accessible signal of consumer interest.
2. Marketers should focus on producing clear and relevant content that attracts attention quickly, since liking behaviour appears to reflect initial approval of product-related posts.
3. Greater emphasis should be placed on improving the usefulness and clarity of content to stimulate commenting, recognising that comments were positively related to purchase intention but less frequently practised.
4. Sharing behaviour should be encouraged through credible and value-driven content, as sharing reflects positive evaluation even though it represents a higher-effort and less common form of engagement.
5. Brands should prioritise content formats that sustain attention, such as informative posts or comparative content, because time spent demonstrated a strong association with purchase intention.
6. Social media performance should be evaluated using multiple engagement metrics rather than a single overall score, as different forms of engagement capture different levels of consumer involvement.
7. Marketing strategies should acknowledge that not all users express interest through active interaction, and time spent metrics can help identify latent interest that is not visible through likes or comments alone.

1.9 REFERENCES

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