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Effect of Social Media Marketing Communication on Youth Buying Behaviour

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how social media marketing communication influences the buying behaviour of young consumers. It focuses on the role of peer influence, online communities, and user-generated content in shaping purchase decisions. The research is based on primary data collected from 120 respondents aged between 18–35 years.

The findings indicate a moderately strong relationship between social media influence and buying behaviour. Nearly 45% of consumer decisions are influenced by factors such as reviews, recommendations, and online engagement. The study highlights that young consumers trust peer opinions more than traditional advertisements.

The research suggests that brands should focus on authenticity, engagement, and community building to effectively target youth audiences in the digital era.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Marketing, Youth Buying Behaviour, e-WOM, Influencer Marketing, Multiple Regression, Social Influence, Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing has evolved significantly over time. Earlier, companies relied on traditional platforms like television, newspapers, and radio to reach consumers. Today, the focus has shifted to digital platforms where people spend most of their time—especially social media apps like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Young consumers, particularly those aged between 18–35 years, are highly active on social media. For them, these platforms are not just for entertainment but also for discovering products, sharing opinions, and making purchase decisions. Unlike earlier generations, they rely more on peer recommendations and online reviews than on direct brand advertisements.

Social media marketing communication includes all forms of interaction between brands and consumers on digital platforms. This includes influencer promotions, user reviews, advertisements, and interactive content. What makes it different from traditional marketing is its two-way communication, real-time feedback, and strong influence of peer opinions.

This study aims to understand how these factors—especially social influence and community behaviour—affect the buying decisions of young consumers, particularly in the Indian context.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Social Media as a Marketing Communication Channel

Social media has become an important tool for communication between brands and consumers. It allows users to create, share, and exchange content easily on digital platforms. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media not only helps companies promote their products but also enables direct interaction among users.

Researchers have highlighted that social media holds a unique position in marketing because it combines brand communication with peer-to-peer interaction. While companies can share promotional content, they cannot fully control how consumers respond or interact with it.



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Studies have also shown that social media marketing activities—such as entertainment, interaction, trend-based content, advertising, and personalization—play a significant role in shaping brand perception. Among these, personalized and engaging content has been found to have the strongest impact on attracting and retaining consumers.

2.2 Brand Awareness and Youth Consumers

Brand awareness refers to how well consumers are able to recognize and recall a particular brand. It is considered an important step before making any purchase decision.

With the rise of social media, creating brand awareness has become easier and more cost-effective. Platforms allow brands to connect with young consumers through interactive and engaging content, making the brand more visible and memorable.

Research shows that social media significantly influences brand preference among youth. A large number of young consumers admit that the brands they see frequently on social media are more likely to be considered during purchase decisions.

2.3 Influencer Marketing and Purchase Decisions

Influencer marketing has become a powerful strategy in the digital era. Influencers share content, reviews, and recommendations that can strongly affect how consumers perceive a product.

Studies suggest that when influencer content is informative and appears trustworthy, it builds consumer confidence and increases the likelihood of purchase. Young consumers, in particular, tend to follow influencers not just for information but also for entertainment and inspiration.

Research also shows that there is a strong connection between influencer promotions and consumer buying behaviour. The more engaging and relatable the influencer is, the higher the chances that their audience will be influenced to make a purchase.

2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word of mouth refers to opinions, reviews, and feedback shared by consumers on digital platforms. It has become one of the most influential factors in shaping purchase decisions.

Online reviews help consumers evaluate products before buying them. The quality, credibility, and relevance of this information play a major role in determining whether a consumer finds it useful.

Studies indicate that positive and reliable information shared by other users can strongly influence purchase intention. This shows that peer-generated content is not just supportive but can independently drive consumer decisions.

2.5 Research Gaps

Although many studies confirm that social media influences youth buying behaviour, there are still some important gaps in the research.

Most existing studies focus on individual factors like influencer marketing or brand awareness, without considering how these factors work together. In reality, social media influence is a combination of multiple elements interacting at the same time.

Another gap is that many studies are based on foreign markets, and their findings may not fully apply to the Indian context, where consumer behaviour is shaped by different cultural and social factors.

Additionally, social media is constantly evolving, with new trends and features emerging regularly. As a result, earlier research may not fully capture current consumer behaviour.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing a more integrated and updated understanding of how social media marketing communication influences young consumers.



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III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Social media clearly influences the buying behaviour of young consumers, but there is still limited understanding of how this influence actually works in practice. Most studies focus on individual factors like influencer marketing or online reviews, rather than examining their combined effect. Additionally, social media trends change rapidly, making earlier findings less relevant over time. Another important gap is that much of the existing research is based on foreign markets, which may not reflect the behaviour of Indian youth. Therefore, there is a need to study how social media marketing communication—especially social influence and community behaviour—collectively affects the purchase decisions of young consumers in the Indian context.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To study the impact of social media marketing on youth buying behaviour.
2. To understand the role of peer influence and online communities.
3. To examine the effect of reviews and recommendations on purchase decisions.
4. To analyse how social media engagement affects consumer choices.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design to understand how social media marketing communication affects the buying behaviour of young consumers. The descriptive part helps in identifying patterns in social media usage and purchasing habits, while the analytical part examines the relationship between different influencing factors.

The target population for the study includes young individuals aged 18 to 35 years who actively use social media platforms. A total of 120 respondents were selected using convenience sampling, as it allows easy access to participants within a limited time frame.

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, distributed both online (via Google Forms) and offline. The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections covering demographic details, purchase behaviour, and factors like peer influence, reviews, and community behaviour. All responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

5.1 Statistical Tools Applied

Data was coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. The following statistical tools were employed:

Descriptive analysis were applied to summarize the data, while **multiple regression analysis** was used to examine the impact of social influence variables on buying behaviour. Additionally, **ANOVA** was conducted to test the overall significance of the model.

5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis — SPSS Output and Interpretation

Multiple Regression Analysis was applied to test whether social influence and community behaviour variables collectively and significantly predict youth purchase behaviour.

Table 1: Model Summary — Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.672a	.451	.359	1.009

^a Predictors: (Constant), B2.2 — Social Influence & Community Behaviour (6 items) ^b Dependent Variable: B1.3 — Purchase Behaviour & Impulse Buying



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5.3 Hypothesis

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** Social media influence does not have a significant impact on the buying behaviour of young consumers.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** Social media influence has a significant impact on the buying behaviour of young consumers.
- **H₂₀:** Online reviews do not influence the buying decisions of young consumers.
- **H₂₁:** Online reviews significantly influence the buying decisions of young consumers.

The R-value of 0.672 indicates a moderately strong positive correlation between the social influence predictors and youth purchase behaviour. The R-Square value of 0.451 indicates that 45.1% of total variance in youth purchase behaviour is explained by the six social influence variables. The Adjusted R-Square of 0.359 provides a more conservative estimate, confirming that the model retains meaningful predictive utility after adjustment for the number of predictors and sample size. The Standard Error of 1.009 is acceptable precision for a 5-point Likert-based instrument.

Table 2: ANOVA Results — Regression Model Significance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 — Regression	30.018	6	5.003	4.928	.001b
Residual	36.557	36	1.015		
Total	66.575	42			

^a *Dependent Variable: B1.3* ^b *Predictors: (Constant), B2.2 — Social Influence & Community Behaviour*

The ANOVA result (F = 4.928, df = 6, 36; p = .001) confirms that the regression model is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. The null hypothesis — that social influence on social media does not significantly predict youth purchase behaviour — is firmly rejected.

VI. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

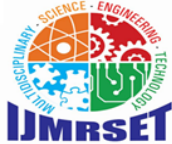
The study clearly shows that social media has a strong influence on the buying behaviour of young consumers. The statistical analysis indicates a moderately strong relationship between social influence factors and purchase decisions.

It was found that nearly **45% of the variation in buying behaviour** can be explained by factors such as peer recommendations, online reviews, and community interactions. This means social media plays a major role in shaping how young consumers decide what to buy.

One of the key findings is that **peer influence is very powerful**. When young consumers see their friends or others using a product on social media, they are more likely to purchase it. Similarly, **positive reviews and feedback** increase trust and encourage buying, while **negative reviews** make consumers more cautious.

Another important observation is that **user-generated content is considered more reliable than brand advertisements**. Young consumers trust real experiences shared by others rather than promotional messages from companies.

Overall, social media acts as both an **influencing and decision-making platform** for youth



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VII. LIMITATIONS

Although the study provides useful insights, it has certain limitations that should be considered.

Firstly, the sample size of **120 respondents** is relatively small, which may limit the general applicability of the findings. A larger sample could provide more accurate and reliable results.

Secondly, the study used **convenience sampling**, which may introduce bias, as the respondents might have similar backgrounds or social media usage patterns.

Another limitation is that the data was collected at a **single point in time**, so it does not capture changes in behaviour over time. Social media trends change quickly, which may affect the relevance of the results in the future.

Additionally, the study is based on **self-reported data**, which may not always reflect actual behaviour, as respondents might give socially desirable answers.

Lastly, the study focuses mainly on one aspect of buying behaviour (impulse purchase), and does not cover other important factors like brand loyalty or long-term preferences.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that social media marketing communication plays a significant role in influencing the buying behaviour of young consumers. Factors such as peer influence, online reviews, and community engagement strongly impact their purchase decisions.

The findings confirm that young consumers rely more on **peer opinions and real user experiences** rather than traditional advertising. Social media has become a powerful platform where consumers not only discover products but also evaluate them before making decisions.

For marketers, this means shifting their focus from just promoting products to **building trust and engagement**. Encouraging user-generated content, responding to feedback, and maintaining a strong online presence can help brands connect better with young audiences.

In the context of India, where social media usage is rapidly growing, understanding these behavioural patterns becomes even more important. Businesses that adapt to these changes will be more successful in attracting and retaining young consumers.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered for marketers and organisations targeting youth consumers through social media:

- Focus on building online communities to increase trust and engagement.
- Encourage user-generated content like reviews and testimonials.
- Actively manage online reviews and respond to negative feedback.
- Collaborate with micro-influencers for better authenticity and reach.
- Create engaging and shareable content to boost interaction.
- Adapt strategies according to the Indian youth market and digital behaviour.

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