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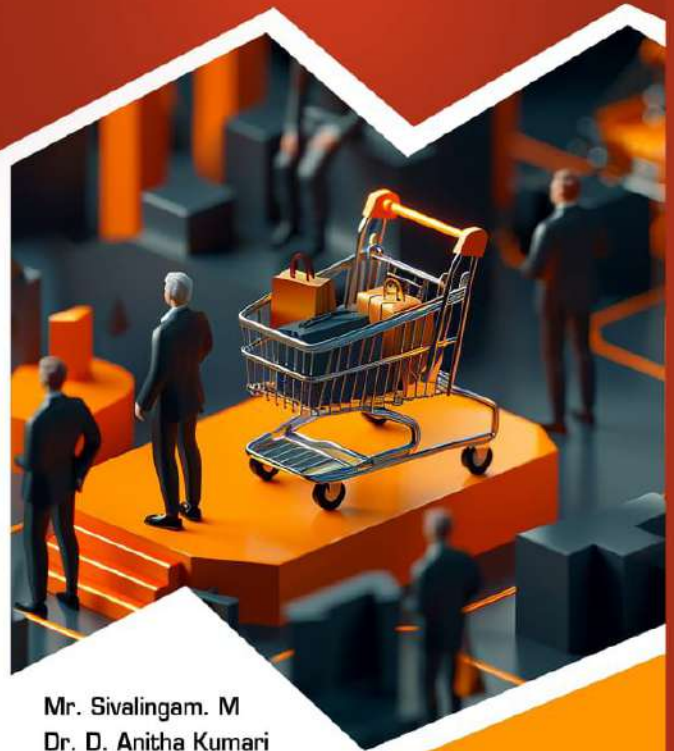
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**SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES:
 DRIVING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENT**



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SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES: DRIVING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENT

Social Media Marketing Activities: Driving Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intent

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ABSTRACT

Shelter stands alongside food, water, and clothing as one of the irreducible necessities of human life. In India — a nation whose real estate market ranks among the fastest growing in the world — the act of finding and purchasing a home has, within the span of a single decade, migrated from newspaper classifieds and roadside hoardings to the scrolling feeds of Instagram, the conversation threads of WhatsApp, and the curated video galleries of YouTube. This shift has fundamentally altered the commercial landscape for developers, brokers, and buyers alike.

Yet despite the visible and growing importance of social media in shaping real estate purchasing decisions, the academic literature had not, prior to this study, produced a comprehensive account of precisely how social media marketing activities exert their effects on Indian real estate consumers. Questions about which specific attributes of social media marketing drive outcomes, by what psychological mechanisms those effects operate, and how factors like brand trust amplify or constrain those mechanisms had remained largely unanswered in this specific context. This study was designed to answer those questions. Drawing on structured survey responses from 494 real estate customers across India and applying an analytical framework anchored in structural equation modelling (SEM), the study traces the complete pathway from social media marketing inputs to consumer behavioural outputs. Six social media marketing attributes — informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and influencer marketing — are examined as independent variables. Customer brand experience is modelled as the mediating mechanism. Customer brand trust is positioned as a moderating influence. Behavioural intention — encompassing purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and brand advocacy — is the outcome of interest.

The findings confirm all primary hypotheses. Social media marketing attributes significantly and substantially shape customer brand experience. Brand experience, in turn, is a powerful predictor of behavioural intention. Brand experience fully mediates the relationship between marketing attributes and behavioural intention, meaning that the experiential quality of the engagement that marketing creates — not mere exposure — is what ultimately drives consumer action. Brand trust moderates this relationship, amplifying the commercial impact of positive experiences when trust is high and attenuating it when trust is low. Demographic characteristics significantly colour all of these relationships in ways that have direct implications for the design of targeted marketing strategies.

The study contributes to academic literature by formally introducing influencer marketing as a distinct social media attribute in the Indian real estate context, by repositioning consumer trust from mediator to moderator, and by applying a comprehensive multi-variable SEM design to a sector and market that had previously been underrepresented in the digital marketing literature. For practitioners, the study provides a clear, evidence-based roadmap for designing social media strategies that generate genuine experiential value and build the trust that converts digital engagement into real-world transactions.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing Activities, Customer Brand Experience, Customer Brand Trust, Behavioural Intention, Real Estate, India, Structural Equation Modelling, Social Commerce, Digital Marketing*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The World We Market In: Social Media as a Cultural Force

There is something almost unremarkable, now, about the idea that a person might scroll through Instagram on a weekday morning, encounter a sponsored post for a newly launched residential township, tap through to a developer's profile, watch a thirty-second Reel of a sun-drenched apartment balcony, click the link in the bio, and within minutes be in conversation with a sales agent via WhatsApp — all before finishing the first cup of tea. This chain of events has become so ordinary, so seamlessly woven into the fabric of daily life, that it barely registers as remarkable. Yet it represents a revolution — in how properties are marketed, how buyers discover and evaluate them, and how trust between developer and consumer is built or broken.

Social media has not merely added a new channel to the marketing mix. It has fundamentally restructured the information environment in which consumers navigate purchasing decisions. Prior to the social media era, a prospective home buyer in Chennai or Coimbatore depended primarily on newspaper advertisements, site visits, word-of-mouth referrals, and the persuasive overtures of commissioned sales agents. Information was asymmetric: developers knew far more about the properties they were selling than buyers could readily verify. The buyer's primary protection against bad decisions was personal networks and physical inspection. Trust was earned slowly, through reputation accumulated over years of operation.

Social media has altered this asymmetry in profound ways. A developer who maintains an active, transparent, and visually compelling Instagram presence gives prospective buyers not just product information but a window into the

brand's culture, its responsiveness to customer queries, its track record of delivery, and the testimony of those who have already purchased. Conversely, a developer who overpromises on social media and underdelivers in practice finds that the same platforms that amplified their marketing claims also amplify their customers' grievances. The commercial consequences of both outcomes are significant and swift. For the academic study of marketing, social media presents a uniquely rich research context. It is a domain in which classical theories of consumer behaviour — attitude formation, social influence, trust development, experiential engagement — can be observed, measured, and tested with a precision and at a scale that earlier research environments never permitted. Every like, comment, share, and purchase inquiry is a data point. Every platform feature — the algorithm that determines what content a user sees, the Stories format that makes posts ephemeral, the influencer ecosystem that shapes perceptions — is a variable that can be theorised and tested.

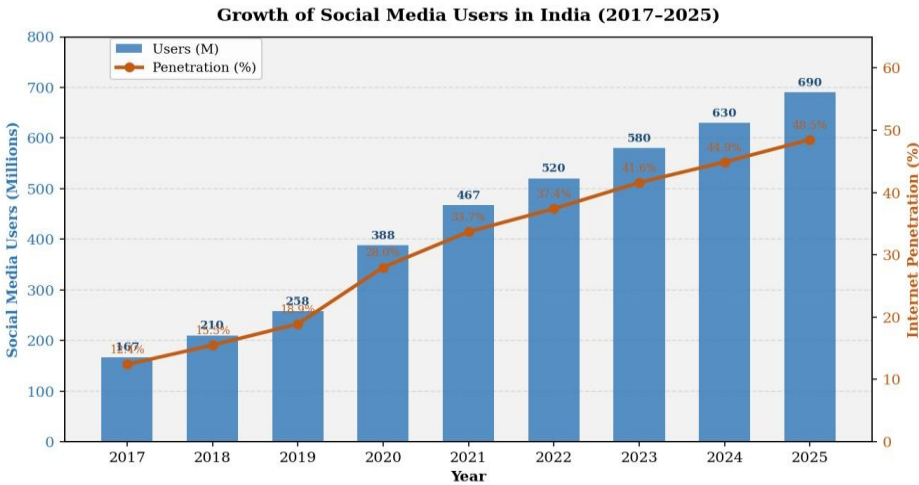


Figure 1.1 – Growth of Social Media Users in India and Internet Penetration (2017–2025)

Source: Keipo Digital Report 2025; Statista India Social Media Statistics 2025; Kantar ICUBE 2024

This study sits at the intersection of these developments. It investigates how social media marketing activities shape real estate consumer behaviour in India, tracing the pathway from marketing inputs through brand experience and brand trust to behavioural intention. In doing so, it seeks to provide both a theoretically rigorous contribution to the academic literature and a practically useful guide for practitioners navigating one of the most dynamic marketing environments in contemporary commerce.

1.2 Digital Media Marketing



Figure 1.2 Various Digital Media Platform

Source : <https://www.springboard.com/blog/wp>

Digital Marketing business has grown for 3X in the last couple of years. Contributing to one third global market with major share from India. The market was valued at USD 5.15 billion in the year 2023, and is expected to grow with a CAGR of 30.2% from the same year by making million US\$ revenue up to end date as well estimated by their production near about millions unit against average cost factor till 2032. This upward tick is due to

companies incorporating digital channels into their operations in a bid to cut down on marketing costs and boost customer engagement.

1.2.1 Key Drivers of Growth

Some of the factors responsible for digital marketing industry expanding in India are as follows:

Top segments for your growth building plans: Internet adoption & smartphone use : India is one of the largest digital markets in the world with over 700 million internet users. Smartphone penetration is on the rise, making digital platforms cheaper and easier to access for a common man in India.

Among the most visited are social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. For example, by the beginning of 2024 on YouTube there was a total audience reach — across all video usage scenarios not including streamed content — among some 1 in three (32.2%) members of the population according to reports from Youtube which put unique visitors over that period at 462 million people ; The prevalence of social media means that it is an essential resource for the modern digital marketer.

E-commerce Blast: With an ousting number of e-commerce platforms; evolved the need for viable digital marketing strategies that could generate traffic, engage customers and allure them into buying. In e-commerce, SEO content marketing and social media advertising make or break the market share.

Cheap Marketing Options: Digital marketing is indeed a much cheaper option as compared to those expensive traditional methods of marketing. This is especially helpful for [Small & Medium Businesses\(SMBs\)](#) who are trying to reach a maximum audience with a minimum budget.

1.2.2 Key Components of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to various strategies and tools used for improving visibility online of websites. Here are some key components:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): This still remains a digital marketing must-have and is the process of optimizing your website so it ranks higher on search engine results pages (SERPs). Such an organic consideration is significant in aiding traffic and improving visibility online

Social Media Marketing: The most powerful part of a social media strategy, this is the act of using platforms like Facebook and Instagram to communicate with your audience, build brand recognition and facilitate conversations. After that, take help of paid social media transactions and reach a wide range.

Content Marketing: Valuable, Relevant content to attract and connect with defined audience; Content in the form initial of a blog, article, video or infographics etc. Content Creation Generates Authority and Trust

Email Marketing: A form of direct marketing where you send promotional emails, newsletters or personalized campaigns. You can use email marketing for both lead nurturing and customer lateralization.

Influencer Marketing: Hiring influencers to market products, services etc. It involves using the trust and credibility of that influencer to reach a larger audience.

Video Marketing: Generate and Exchange video content to audience engagement. Video marketing has become more sophisticated with platforms like YouTube, Instagram Reels and TikTok enjoying massive popularity making it a compelling medium for brand storytelling and customer engagement.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising: Advertisements on the search engines and social media platforms that you run, in efforts to drive further traffic & conversions. PPC Advertising With PPC advertising, businesses have the ability to target specific demographics and track how well their campaigns are doing.

1.2.3 Emerging Trends

Year on year, new ideas are put into action to shape the digital marketing world. Some emerging trends include:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning: AI is changing the game for digital marketing, allowing advertising companies to quickly predict outcomes based on large volumes of customer data and automate tasks across every stage of the funnel from product searches through post-purchase. Customer experiences and campaign efficiency are improving with the help of AI powered tools.

The rise of Metaverse: The idea that the metaverse could become a joint virtual space. Brands try to provide new experiences using AR/VR This trend is likely to reshape digital marketing in the years ahead.

Non-fungible-Tokens (NFTs): NFTs provide unique digital possessions useful for viral marketing. NFT has gone on to being used by businesses to produce digital era reward collectibles, events access and builds crowning customer satisfaction.

Data Analytics: Data analytics is the lifeblood of digital marketing, and its significance cannot be taken for granted. Marketers are getting more data-dependent than ever to make well-thought decisions, run campaigns and get grips on how markets work. It is useful when it comes to meeting marketing goals as this helps in a data-driven approach.

1.3 The Evolution of Social Media: A Historical Arc

The story of social media is, at its core, the story of human beings finding ever more efficient and expansive ways to communicate with one another. That story did not begin with Facebook. Its roots reach back decades — even centuries — though its current chapter is the most dramatic yet.

The earliest forms of organised public communication were postal systems. The Persian Empire maintained a sophisticated network of horse riders as early as 550 BC, capable of transmitting messages over vast distances. The invention of the telegraph in 1792 represented the next major discontinuity, enabling communication without the physical exchange of any object. The telephone (1890) and radio (1891) followed, transforming communication from asynchronous to real-time and from one-to-one to one-to-many.

The digital revolution of the mid-twentieth century set the stage for social media as we understand it today. The first supercomputers appeared in the 1940s; the ARPANET — precursor to the internet — launched in 1969. By the late 1970s, the first networked communities were forming. Usenet, founded in 1979 by graduate students Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis, created a distributed system of "newsgroups" where users could post and discuss messages across a network of connected computers. Though it predated the World Wide Web by a decade, Usenet exhibited many of the essential characteristics of social media: user-generated content, community formation, and the collective construction of shared knowledge.

Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) and early online services like CompuServe and Prodigy provided further infrastructure for digital community in the 1980s.

The release of the Listserv email distribution software in 1986 enabled mass email lists that prefigured modern newsletters and community platforms. Internet Relay Chat, launched in 1988, offered real-time group conversation — a primitive but recognisable precursor to today's group chat features on WhatsApp and Telegram.

The 1990s brought the World Wide Web and the first wave of mass internet adoption. SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997, is widely regarded as the first recognisably modern social network, allowing users to create profiles and connect with friends. Friendster (2002) and MySpace (2003) followed, each attracting millions of users before their dominance was eclipsed. LinkedIn, launched in 2003, carved out the professional networking space it still dominates. And then, in 2004, Facebook was launched from a Harvard dormitory — and social media entered its era of global dominance.

What Facebook achieved that its predecessors had not was a seamless, intuitive, and genuinely social experience that felt personal rather than transactional. The introduction of the News Feed in 2006 created a curated, scrollable stream of social updates that made the platform habit-forming in ways that earlier sites had struggled to achieve. YouTube launched in 2005, reshaping the consumption of video content. Twitter arrived in 2006, introducing the world to microblogging and the real-time conversation of public life. Instagram transformed photography from a private hobby into a public performance when it launched in 2010. Snapchat introduced ephemeral content in 2011. TikTok, launched as Douyin in China in 2016 and expanded internationally in 2018, made short-form vertical video the defining content format of the 2020s.



Figure 1.3 – Key Milestones in Real Estate Social Media Adoption (2010–2026)

Source: Author's Compilation based on industry reports; NAR, JLL, Anarock Residential Research 2024

Each platform generation brought not just new features but new norms, new audiences, and new commercial opportunities. Understanding this evolutionary arc is important context for the present study, because the specific attributes of social media marketing that this study investigates — informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and influencer marketing — are not abstract constructs but lived features of these platforms, developed and refined through decades of technical innovation and social adoption.

1.4 Growth of Social Media in India: Scale, Speed, and Character



Figure 1.4 The fastest user growth and highest engagement in Social media

Source : <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTk2goZjjBR/>

India occupies a position in the global social media landscape that is unique in its scale, its speed of growth, and its internal diversity. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, a median age of just 28, rapidly expanding mobile internet infrastructure, and a government committed to digital inclusion through initiatives like Digital India, the country represents one of the largest and most dynamic social media markets in the world.

The numbers are striking. India saw the largest absolute increase in social media users globally between 2019 and 2020 — approximately 130 million new users in a single year, equivalent to roughly 9.6 percent of the total population. By 2021, approximately 622 million Indians were active internet users, accounting for nearly 43 percent of the total population (Business Standards, 2021). Social media penetration has continued to climb since then, driven by falling data costs, the proliferation of affordable smartphones, and the rapid expansion of 4G and 5G networks to smaller cities and rural areas.

The character of India's social media landscape is as important as its scale. Global platforms — Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and increasingly LinkedIn and Twitter — dominate urban usage patterns, particularly among younger, more affluent, and more educated segments of the population. But a parallel ecosystem of regional and vernacular platforms has emerged to serve the hundreds of millions of Indians for whom content in local languages is not just a preference but a prerequisite for meaningful engagement. Platforms like ShareChat (Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and 14 other languages), Chingari, Josh, and MX TakaTak have built substantial user bases by focusing on regional identity and linguistic inclusivity. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 was a watershed moment for social media adoption in India. With lockdowns confining hundreds of millions of people to their homes and severing traditional channels of commerce, entertainment,

and social interaction, social media became the primary medium through which people maintained connection, accessed information, and conducted transactions. Consumer behaviours that might have taken years to evolve were compressed into months. Online shopping, digital payments, video calling, and social media-based commerce all surged simultaneously, and for many users — particularly those in smaller cities and towns encountering these platforms for the first time — the habits formed during the pandemic proved durable.

For the real estate sector, the implications of this mass social media adoption have been profound and ongoing. Developers who had previously relied on physical property expos, newspaper inserts, and outdoor advertising found themselves competing for attention on platforms where visual storytelling, authentic community engagement, and influencer credibility determined who succeeded and who did not. Those who adapted quickly gained significant competitive advantages; those who were slow to adapt found their reach and relevance eroding.

1.5 Real Estate and Social Media: A Natural Partnership



Figure 1.5 Top 10 Real Estate Company in India

Source : <https://blog.shoonya.com/top-10-real-estate-companies-in-india/>

of all the industries transformed by social media, real estate is perhaps uniquely well-suited to the medium's characteristics. The decision to purchase a home is among the most emotionally charged, financially significant, and socially symbolically weighted decisions that most people will ever make. It is not merely a transaction but an expression of aspiration, identity, and the desire for security. Social media — with its emphasis on visual storytelling, authentic human connection, community validation, and aspirational imagery — is a natural vehicle for communicating all of these dimensions of property. The ability to showcase a property through high-resolution photography, 360-degree virtual tours, drone footage of surrounding neighbourhoods, and live-streamed walkthroughs with real-time audience questions has transformed the property discovery process. A prospective buyer in Bengaluru researching a development in Coimbatore no longer needs to book a flight or take a day off work to form a meaningful first impression. They can navigate the property virtually, watch videos of existing residents sharing their experiences, follow the developer's Instagram account to assess the brand's character and consistency, and read the comments on recent posts to gauge how the company responds to queries and complaints. All of this is accessible, free, and immediate.

Social commerce — the integration of transactional capabilities directly into social media platforms represents the next phase of this evolution. Facebook Marketplace, Instagram's shopping features, and WhatsApp Business have already created environments where property listings can be discovered, discussed, and progressed towards transaction without the buyer ever leaving the platform. AI-driven recommendation algorithms increasingly surface properties that match users' stated preferences and browsing behaviour, creating a personalised property discovery experience that static listing portals

cannot replicate. Direct messaging enables buyers to initiate conversations with agents instantly, collapsing the traditional gap between interest and contact.

Looking further ahead, augmented reality features that allow buyers to visualise how a property would look with their own furnishings, blockchainbased transaction systems that reduce the opacity and friction of the legal process, and embedded financial tools like mortgage calculators and preapproval interfaces are all in various stages of development and adoption. The trajectory is clear: social media is not just a marketing channel for real estate — it is becoming part of the purchase infrastructure itself.

1.6 Background, Rationale, and Significance of the Study

This study was conceived against the backdrop described above. India's real estate sector contributes approximately seven percent of GDP and is projected, according to NITI Aayog estimates, to reach a market size of \$1 trillion by 2030. Social media has become one of the primary channels through which that sector communicates with prospective buyers. Yet the academic literature on social media marketing in Indian real estate remained, at the time this study was designed, remarkably thin.

Existing research on social media marketing and consumer behaviour had accumulated primarily in Western markets and in sectors — fashion, luxury goods, tourism, hospitality — that share some but not all characteristics with real estate. Key differences matter. Property purchases involve far higher financial stakes, longer decision timelines, greater information complexity, and a more central role for trust than typical retail transactions. The mechanisms through which social media marketing influences a fashion purchase may differ significantly from those operative in a property purchase, and those differences deserve investigation rather than assumption. Within

India specifically, research had examined social media adoption broadly and had documented the remarkable growth described in the preceding section. But studies specifically examining how social media marketing attributes shape the brand experience and behavioural intentions of Indian real estate buyers had not, to the researcher's knowledge, been conducted prior to this work. The theoretical model tested in this study — which positions customer brand experience as the mediating mechanism between marketing inputs and behavioural outputs, and customer brand trust as a moderating influence on the strength of that mediation — had not previously been tested in this context. The study is also significant in its formal introduction of influencer marketing as a distinct social media marketing attribute. Previous studies examining social media marketing attributes had typically included entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, informativeness, and customization, but had subsumed influencer effects within broader constructs like "word of mouth" or "social influence." Given the rapid growth of real estate influencer marketing in India — with developers now routinely partnering with property YouTubers, Instagram real estate commentators, and lifestyle influencers to reach specific demographic segments — treating influencer marketing as a distinct and separately measurable attribute was both theoretically motivated and practically relevant. From a practical standpoint, the study addresses a genuine need among real estate marketing professionals. The shift to digital and social media marketing has been rapid, but the ability of practitioners to evaluate, justify, and optimise their social media investments has lagged behind. This study provides an evidence-based framework that practitioners can use to understand which attributes of their social media presence most powerfully influence consumer behaviour and through what mechanisms that influence operates.

1.7 Digital Marketing Ecosystem in South Indian Real Estate



Figure 1.7 Basic Parts of Real estate Marketing

The digital marketing ecosystem in South Indian real estate can be conceptualized as a multi-layered system comprising awareness, engagement, and conversion stages.

Awareness Stage

At this stage, digital marketing activities aim to create visibility and attract potential buyers. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are

extensively used for targeted advertising, content dissemination, and brand positioning. Visual content, including images and videos of properties, plays a crucial role in capturing attention.

Engagement Stage

Engagement involves interactive communication between real estate firms and consumers. Features such as live property tours, chatbots, and comment sections enable real-time interaction, fostering trust and relationship-building. This stage is critical, as engagement acts as a mediator between marketing activities and behavioural intention.

Conversion Stage

The final stage focuses on transforming engagement into actual transactions. Digital tools such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, personalized email campaigns, and retargeting advertisements are employed to nurture leads and facilitate decision-making.

1.8 Leading Real Estate Developers



Figure 1.8 Top Real Estate Developers in Tamil Nadu

These companies are primarily developers known for large-scale residential and commercial projects:

- **Casagrand:** A highly visible developer in South India, known for **amenity-rich lifestyle apartments** and townships. They have a massive footprint in Chennai and Coimbatore, having developed over 36 million sq. ft..
- **Appaswamy Real Estates:** Synonymous with **luxury and traditional trust**, they pioneered the apartment culture in Chennai. They are particularly respected for premium finishes in prestigious Central Chennai locations.
- **Prestige Group:** A major national brand with a strong presence in Chennai, recognized for **high-rise luxury communities** and high resale value.
- **TVS Emerald:** The real estate arm of the TVS Group, known for **corporate trust and durable construction** standards.
- **DAC Developers:** Focuses on **innovation and transparency**, specializing in residential projects in Chennai and expanding to Coimbatore.
- **Arun Excello:** A household name for **practical, value-driven housing**, especially active in Chennai's industrial and IT corridors.

1.9 Research Questions, Objectives, and Chapter Organisation

The study was organised around seven primary research questions, which together map the theoretical terrain of interest:

1. Do social media marketing attributes exert a significant influence on customer brand experience in the Indian real estate sector?

2. Does customer brand experience shape customers' behavioural intentions towards real estate brands?
3. Do social media marketing attributes have a direct relationship with customer brand trust?
4. Is there a meaningful association between customer brand experience and behavioural intention?
5. Is there a meaningful association between customer brand trust and behavioural intention?
6. Does customer brand experience mediate the relationship between social media marketing attributes and behavioural intention?
7. Does customer brand trust moderate the relationship between customer brand experience and behavioural intention, strengthening the impact of experience on intention when trust is high?

Corresponding to these questions, seven research objectives were formulated: to examine the impact of social media marketing activities on customer brand experience; to analyse their direct influence on behavioural intention; to explore the relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention; to analyse the mediating role of brand experience; to explore the moderating role of brand trust; to analyse the role of consumer demographics; and to map buying patterns across social media platforms.

The book proceeds through six chapters. The present chapter has established the context and rationale. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant academic literature and presents the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and results. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and their implications. Chapter 6 concludes with reflections on limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction: Mapping the Academic Terrain

Every empirical study is, at its most fundamental, a conversation with the scholarly community that has preceded it. This chapter surveys that community, examining what researchers across disciplines and geographies have established about the core constructs of this study: social media marketing attributes, customer brand experience, customer brand trust, and behavioural intention. It identifies both the weight of convergent evidence and the gaps that remain — gaps which, taken together, define the specific contribution that the present study is positioned to make.

The literature on social media marketing has grown from a trickle in the early 2000s to a torrent, with thousands of peer-reviewed articles published annually across marketing, consumer psychology, information systems, and management journals. Navigating this body of work requires both breadth — to ensure that important findings are not overlooked — and selectivity, to focus attention on studies most directly relevant to the research questions at hand. This chapter aims to achieve both.

The review proceeds in four main sections, each examining one of the study's primary theoretical constructs. It concludes with a systematic identification of research gaps and the presentation of the conceptual framework that these gaps motivated.

2.2 Social Media Marketing Attributes (SMMA)

(2001) work on information quality as a driver of consumer value perceptions. Entertainment is widely recognized as a core dimension of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA), referring to the extent to which brand-related content is perceived as enjoyable, interesting, and emotionally appealing. In digital environments dominated by platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, consumers are not merely information seekers but also experience-oriented users who expect content to provide hedonic value alongside functional benefits.

From a theoretical standpoint, entertainment aligns closely with the **Uses and Gratifications Theory**, which posits that individuals actively choose media channels that satisfy their psychological and emotional needs, including enjoyment and escapism. In this context, entertaining content becomes a critical motivator for users to engage with brand communications, as it fulfills intrinsic gratification needs.

Scholars such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize that social media's interactive and participatory nature allows brands to move beyond traditional advertising by creating immersive and entertaining experiences. Similarly, Kim and Ko (2012) identify entertainment as a key component influencing customer equity through social media marketing.

2.2.1 Dimensions and Characteristics of Entertainment Content

Entertainment-driven social media content typically exhibits several defining characteristics:

- **Hedonic Value:** Focuses on pleasure, fun, and emotional stimulation
- **Creativity and Novelty:** Incorporates innovative formats such as memes, reels, and storytelling
- **Relatability:** Resonates with the audience's daily experiences and cultural context
- **Engagement Orientation:** Encourages interaction through comments, shares, and participation

According to Ashley and Tuten (2015), brands that integrate entertaining elements into their content strategies are more likely to generate higher engagement rates, as such content reduces perceived intrusiveness and enhances user receptivity.

2.2.3. Forms of Entertainment in Social Media Marketing

Entertainment in SMMA manifests in multiple formats, shaped by platform affordances and user behavior patterns:

- **Short-form video content (Reels, Shorts)**
- **Humorous memes and viral trends**
- **Gamified campaigns (quizzes, contests, challenges)**
- **Storytelling and episodic branded content**
- **Live streaming and interactive sessions**

These formats leverage visual richness and interactivity to sustain user attention in an increasingly cluttered digital ecosystem.

2.2.4. Entertainment and Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with a brand.

Entertainment significantly contributes to all three dimensions:

- **Cognitive Engagement:** Captures attention and enhances information processing
- **Emotional Engagement:** Evokes positive affect such as joy, excitement, and amusement
- **Behavioral Engagement:** Drives observable actions such as likes, shares, and comments

Empirical research by Brodie et al. (2013) highlights that emotionally engaging content fosters deeper interactive experiences, which are essential for building long-term customer relationships. Furthermore, De Vries et al. (2012) demonstrate that entertaining brand posts significantly increase user interaction metrics, thereby amplifying brand visibility and reach.

2.2.5. Mediating Role of Engagement in Driving Purchase Intention

Entertainment does not directly translate into purchase intention; rather, its effect is largely mediated through consumer engagement. When users interact with entertaining content, they develop favorable attitudes toward the brand, which subsequently influence their buying decisions.

The relationship can be conceptualized as:

Entertainment (SMMA) → Consumer Engagement → Purchase Intention

According to Ajzen (1991), behavioral intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Entertaining content

contributes to positive attitudes and social influence, thereby strengthening purchase intention.

Additionally, Hutter et al. (2013) found that engaging and entertaining brand activities on social media platforms significantly enhance brand awareness and purchase likelihood. This suggests that entertainment acts as a stimulus that initiates a chain reaction leading to behavioral outcomes.

2.2.6. Strategic Implications for Marketers

From a managerial perspective, integrating entertainment into social media strategies offers several advantages:

- **Enhances Brand Recall** through memorable and enjoyable content
- **Improves Customer Retention** by sustaining long-term engagement
- **Encourages Virality** via shareable and relatable content
- **Differentiates Brand Identity** in competitive markets

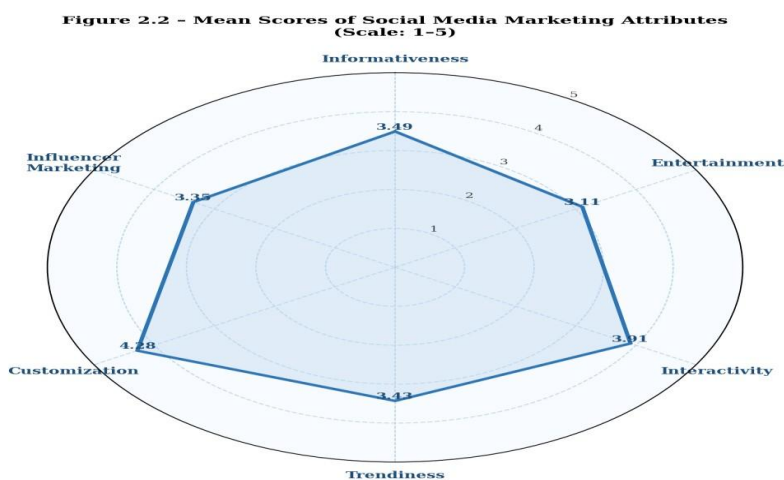


Figure 2.2 – Mean Scores of Social Media Marketing Attributes (n=494, Scale: 1–5)

Source: Primary Data; Author's Analysis using SPSS v22

2.2.7 Informativeness

Informativeness — the degree to which social media content provides accurate, relevant, timely, and useful information — is a foundational attribute of effective marketing communication. Its importance is particularly pronounced in high-involvement categories like real estate, where information quality is not merely desirable but essential to the decisionmaking process. Prospective homebuyers need accurate information about pricing, project specifications, amenities, construction timelines, developer track records, and legal and financial requirements. When a developer's social media presence provides this information reliably and comprehensively, it reduces the perceived risk of the purchase decision and enhances the quality of the consumer's brand experience.

Sweeney and Soutar (2001) established information quality as a primary dimension of customer value, arguing that content perceived as accurate, complete, and comprehensible contributes directly to the functional value that consumers derive from a product or service. Ahmad and colleagues (2016) found that informative social media content drives consumer engagement and website traffic. Kraus (2019) showed that content "richness" — defined as depth, detail, and the provision of genuinely requested information — significantly enhances the quality of the consumer-brand relationship. In the real estate context, informativeness manifests in the provision of accurate project specifications, transparent pricing information, reliable construction updates, honest responses to customer questions, and clear explanations of legal and financial requirements. Developers who consistently deliver this type of content build reputational capital that enhances trust and brand experience in ways that entertaining or trendy content alone cannot achieve.

2.2.8 Entertainment

Entertainment — the capacity of social media content to be enjoyable, stimulating, and emotionally engaging — has emerged across decades of research as one of the most consistently powerful drivers of social media engagement and, ultimately, commercial outcomes. The logic is straightforward: platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are, for most of their users, primarily recreational environments. Users are there because they find the experience enjoyable. Content that fits this experiential context — that is visually appealing, emotionally resonant, amusing, or aweinspiring — is more likely to be seen, engaged with, remembered, and shared than content that is purely informational.

Schulze and colleagues (2015) argued that Facebook users approach the platform in an entertainment mindset, and that content calibrated for enjoyment consistently outperforms content calibrated for information in terms of engagement metrics. Kim and Ko (2012) reported that entertainment was the most effective social media marketing attribute in their luxury brand study, influencing all customer interaction factors. Killian and McManus (2015) identified entertainment as the most important attribute for building mutually beneficial relationships with customers on social media. Vries and colleagues (2012) found that entertaining advertisements that are perceived as fun, exciting, and visually distinctive have a positive effect on brand page engagement. For real estate specifically, entertainment manifests in content that goes beyond the functional (floor plans, price lists, specification sheets) to create an emotional and experiential response: drone footage that conveys the scale and setting of a development, resident testimonial videos that humanise the brand, time-lapse videos of construction progress that create a

sense of momentum and commitment, and lifestyle imagery that helps prospective buyers envision themselves living in the space.

2.2.9 Interactivity

The capacity for genuine two-way conversation is what most fundamentally distinguishes social media from traditional broadcast advertising. Interactivity — the ability for consumers to ask questions, share opinions, provide feedback, and engage in dialogue with a brand — creates a qualitatively different kind of brand experience from the passive consumption of one-way communications. When a developer responds promptly and thoughtfully to a comment on an Instagram post, addresses a concern raised in a WhatsApp group, or hosts a live Q&A session on YouTube, they are engaging in relationship-building that no newspaper advertisement or television commercial can replicate.

Hollebeek and colleagues (2016) documented how the expansion of social media has reshaped consumer expectations of interactivity: in a world where brands can respond to consumers in real time, the failure to do so is no longer a neutral act — it is a negative signal about the brand's attitude to its customers. Ellonen and Kosonen (2010) distinguished between relationship-oriented interaction — bidirectional, personalised, relationship-building — and instrumental interaction, which is more transactional. They found that customer collaboration is most effectively supported by relationship-oriented social media engagement.

Vernuccio (2014) found that despite positive evidence of effective social media use for corporate branding, more than a third of organisations' online communications were characterised as "cautious" — limiting interactivity and missing opportunities to build stakeholder relationships. This finding

underscores the continuing gap between the interactive potential of social media and the degree to which many organisations actually exploit it.

2.2.10 Trendiness

Trendiness captures the degree to which social media content reflects what is current, fashionable, and topically relevant. In the attention economy of social media, content that engages with trends – whether those trends are cultural, aesthetic, or market-specific – is more likely to be noticed, engaged with, and shared. For real estate brands, trendiness translates into timely content about new project launches, pre-launch campaigns, emerging neighbourhoods, architectural and interior design trends, and shifts in the property market that reflect the brand's awareness of and engagement with the contemporary landscape.

Seo and Park (2018) found trendiness to be the most important SMMA component in their study of airline social media marketing, with the highest relative importance among all attributes examined. Cheung and colleagues (2020) found that trendiness influences customers' desire to create and share brand-related content, as fashionable information motivates consumers to express their brand allegiance publicly.

Cheung and colleagues (2019) argued that consumers increasingly prefer social media over traditional channels for product information precisely because social media feels more current and up-to-date.

For real estate developers, maintaining a consistently trendy social media presence requires a level of content agility that many traditional marketing departments struggle to deliver. Content calendars must be flexible enough to respond to breaking market news, seasonal trends, and culturally significant

moments. The brands that succeed in this dimension are those that treat their social media channels as living publications rather than digital billboards.

2.2.11 Customization

Customization refers to the degree to which social media content and experiences are tailored to the preferences, interests, and behaviour of individual users or specific audience segments. At the technological level, the major social media platforms offer increasingly sophisticated targeting tools that allow advertisers to reach users based on demographic characteristics, expressed interests, location, device usage, and online behaviour.

At the content level, customization involves creating content that speaks specifically to the concerns and aspirations of particular buyer segments first-time buyers, investors, families with young children, retirees seeking smaller homes.

Hill and Moran (2015) argued that customer-driven individualisation of the online experience — treating consumers differently based on their interactions and preferences — produces more effective behavioural change than generic messaging. Mamun and colleagues (2020) found that customization of social media marketing activities has a significant impact on brand value equity. The study of Scully (2016) demonstrated that consumers are willing to pay a premium and wait longer for a product that is tailored specifically to them, reflecting the high value that personalisation holds in contemporary consumer expectations.

In the Indian real estate context, customization is particularly important given the demographic and geographic diversity of the buyer population. A developer with projects in multiple price segments and locations faces the challenge of communicating relevantly with buyers whose circumstances, priorities, and social media behaviour differ substantially. The ability to deliver

customised messages to distinct segments is increasingly a source of competitive advantage.

2.2.12 Influencer Marketing

The inclusion of influencer marketing as a distinct social media attribute represents one of the theoretical innovations of the present study. Influencer marketing — the strategic engagement of individuals with large and engaged social media followings to promote a brand's products or services — has undergone explosive growth since the mid-2010s and now constitutes a significant portion of the digital marketing budgets of major brands across most sectors.

Fernández and Castillo (2020) found that followers' emotional attachment to influencers and the perceived information value of influencer content both shape followers' behavioural intentions towards the products that influencers recommend. Perceived influencer credibility acts as a mediator in these relationships. Killian and McManus (2015) noted the increasing importance of content creators and influencers in building brand communities on entertainment platforms.

In the real estate context, the influencer ecosystem takes distinctive forms. Property-focused YouTubers and Instagram accounts that conduct property reviews, market analyses, and developer assessments have built substantial audiences among aspirational home buyers. Lifestyle influencers who position aspirational living as part of their personal brand can align their audience's aspirations with specific developments. The trust that followers place in influencers they follow closely — trust built through consistent content, authentic self-disclosure, and perceived independence from commercial pressures — can transfer to the properties and developers those influencers endorse.

The study of Irshad and colleagues (2019) found that consumer trust mediates the relationship between the social media environment and online purchase intentions. The present study builds on this finding by examining how influencer marketing, as a specific social media attribute, contributes to the brand experience through which trust is developed and purchase intentions are formed. By treating influencer marketing as a distinct construct rather than subsuming it within a broader social influence category, this study provides a more nuanced and practically actionable account of its specific contribution to the consumer journey.

2.3 Customer Brand Experience (CBE)



Figure 2.3 Real Estate Buying process and Brand expertise

The concept of customer brand experience was placed on rigorous theoretical and empirical footing by the landmark work of Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009), published in the Journal of Marketing. Their contribution was to define brand experience as the subjective, internal consumer responses

— sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses — evoked by brand-related stimuli that occur as part of a brand's design, identity, packaging, communications, and environments.

They distinguished four dimensions: sensory (how the brand engages the senses), affective (the emotional responses the brand evokes), intellectual (how the brand stimulates thinking and curiosity), and behavioural (how the brand prompts physical actions or lifestyle behaviours).

This four-dimensional framework was empirically validated and shown to predict brand satisfaction and loyalty — outcomes that in turn drive behavioural intentions such as repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth. The study was foundational not merely because it defined the construct but because it provided the measurement tools that enabled subsequent research to build on it.

Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet (2011) extended this framework by showing that brand experience influences brand loyalty through the mediating role of affective commitment.

When consumers form emotional bonds during positive brand experiences, those bonds create trust that deepens their psychological investment in the brand. This process of emotional deepening through experience provides a mechanism through which brand experience influences long-term behavioural outcomes that go beyond any single transaction.

Schmitt (1999) had earlier proposed the theory of experiential marketing, which argues that experiences — not products or services — are the central elements of value creation for customers in the modern economy.

His identification of five strategic experiential modules (sense, feel, think, act, relate) provided a vocabulary for understanding how brands can design multi-

dimensional experiences that engage consumers at multiple psychological levels simultaneously. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) Experience Economy thesis made the complementary argument that as products and services become commoditised, the experience of consuming them becomes the primary source of differentiated value.

The implications for real estate are significant. In a market where the functional specifications of competing developments may be broadly similar — similar floor areas, comparable amenities, comparable locations, comparable prices — the experiential quality of the brand encounter becomes a crucial differentiator.

The developer whose social media presence creates a richer, more emotionally resonant, more intellectually stimulating brand experience is not merely more visible; it is more compelling. And as Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (2015) demonstrated in a follow-up study, sustained positive brand experiences shape memory structures that lead to automatic and habitual behavioural responses — the kind of brand preference that persists across the long timescales of the property purchase decision.

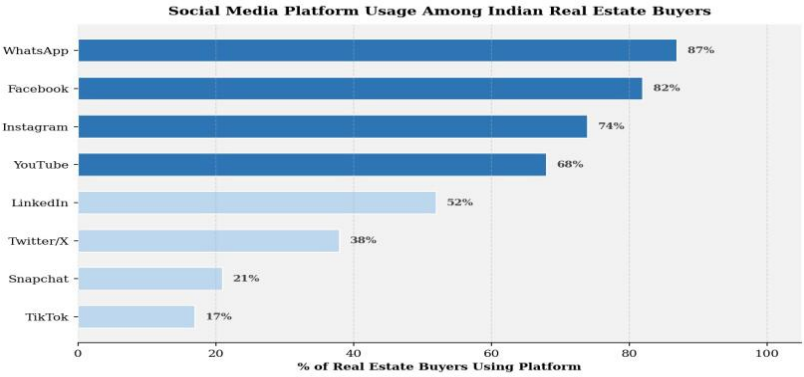


Figure 2.3 – Social Media Platform Usage Among Indian Real Estate Buyers

Source: Primary Survey Data (n=494); Author's Analysis 2024

Verhoef and colleagues (2009) argued for a holistic view of customer experience that encompasses all interactions across all channels and touchpoints, both online and offline. Their research showed that integrated, seamless experiences — online and offline, pre-purchase and post-purchase — significantly enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention. This holistic perspective is particularly relevant in the real estate context, where the brand experience encompasses not just social media interactions but site visits, agent consultations, legal processes, construction updates, and post-handover support.

Nysveen, Pedersen, and Skard (2013) examined brand experience in the service industry and found that emotional and social experiences have stronger effects on behavioural intentions than functional experiences. Kim, Kim, and Shin (2011) applied the brand experience concept in the airline industry and found that positive brand experiences significantly enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn mediates the relationship between experience and behavioural intentions including repeat purchase and word-of-mouth. Lin (2015) found similar dynamics in the fast-food sector: sensory and emotional experiences significantly influence brand attachment, which mediates the relationship between experience and behavioural intentions.

In the African mobile phone market, Chinomona (2016) found that brand experience — particularly emotional and relational dimensions — directly impacts customer loyalty and behavioural intentions, emphasising the importance of emotional branding in emerging markets where functional differences between products may be limited. This finding is relevant to the Indian real estate context, where emotional and aspirational dimensions of brand experience may carry particular weight.

2.4 Customer Brand Trust (CBT)

Trust is one of the most thoroughly studied concepts in the social sciences, and with good reason: the willingness of any economic actor to engage in transactions, maintain relationships, or share information depends fundamentally on the belief that the counterparty is reliable, honest, and competent. In digital commerce generally and social media marketing specifically, trust takes on distinctive characteristics, and its formation, maintenance, and erosion follow patterns that deserve careful examination.

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) widely cited model of organisational trust defines it in terms of three components: ability (the competence to perform), benevolence (the concern for the trustee's welfare), and integrity (the adherence to acceptable principles). Applied to the brand context, trust in a real estate developer's social media presence encompasses beliefs about the developer's ability to deliver on project specifications, its genuine concern for buyer satisfaction, and its commitment to honest and transparent communication.

Khan and Rahman (2016) investigated the impact of e-tail brand experience on e-brand trust and e-brand loyalty, finding significant and positive relationships between experience quality and trust. Their finding that similar levels of e-brand trust are generated in both male and female consumers by positive brand experiences, but that positive experiences have a greater impact on male consumers' loyalty, highlights the gender-moderated dynamics of trust in digital commerce — a nuance that the present study's demographic analyses are designed to capture.

Hsiao, Lin, and Lu (2010) identified four antecedents of trust in online product recommendations: perceived ability, perceived benevolence and integrity, perceived critical mass (the sense that many others trust the platform), and

trust in the website itself. Their finding that trust in product recommendations influences users' intent to purchase from the site underscores the commercial significance of trust-building in online environments.

Stouthuysen and colleagues (2018) found that consumers with rich online buying experience exhibit higher levels of trust, suggesting that familiarity with digital commerce compounds into confidence in digital transactions. This finding has important implications for the Indian market, where social media commerce experience is growing rapidly but unevenly distributed across demographic segments.

Martin (2018) found that perceived privacy violations have a significant direct negative effect on consumer trust, with lasting and compounding consequences: a single credible privacy violation can cost a brand its new customers and diminish the prospect of trust being rebuilt even after the violation is addressed. In the real estate context, where data collection about financial circumstances, location preferences, and browsing behaviour is extensive, privacy management represents both a legal obligation and a trustbuilding imperative.

The present study positions customer brand trust as a moderator rather than a mediator of the relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention. This choice reflects the theoretical argument that trust does not sit within the causal pathway between experience and action — it is not a step that one passes through on the way from experience to behaviour — but rather a contextual factor that determines how powerfully experience translates into action. Where trust is strong, positive brand experiences readily convert into purchasing intentions; where trust is weak or absent, even compelling brand experiences may fail to cross the threshold into action.

2.5 Behavioural Intention (BI)

Behavioural Intention (BI) is a foundational construct in the domains of Consumer Behaviour and Information Systems, widely employed to predict and explain human action across diverse contexts such as marketing, organizational behaviour, and technology adoption. It refers to an individual's **conscious plan, willingness, or readiness to perform a specific behaviour in the future**, and is considered the most immediate antecedent of actual behaviour. The strength of behavioural intention reflects how motivated an individual is to exert effort to perform the behaviour.

The theoretical grounding of Behavioural Intention is primarily rooted in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which posits that an individual's behaviour is determined by their behavioural intention, which in turn is shaped by two key factors: **attitude toward the behaviour** and **subjective norms**. Attitude refers to the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behaviour, while subjective norms capture perceived social pressure from significant others (e.g., family, peers, or society). TRA assumes that individuals are rational decision-makers who systematically use available information before engaging in a behaviour.

Extending this framework, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) incorporates a third determinant: **perceived behavioural control**. This construct reflects an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty associated with performing the behaviour, accounting for both internal capacities (skills, knowledge) and external constraints (resources, opportunities). TPB argues that behavioural intention, combined with perceived behavioural control, directly influences actual behaviour, making it particularly relevant in contexts where individuals may not have complete volitional control.

In the field of information systems, Behavioural Intention is central to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explains user acceptance of technology. TAM suggests that behavioural intention to use a system is determined by **perceived usefulness** (the extent to which a person believes that using the system enhances performance) and **perceived ease of use** (the degree to which the system is free of effort). These perceptions influence attitudes toward usage, which subsequently shape behavioural intention.

Empirically, Behavioural Intention is often operationalized using self-reported measures, typically through Likert-scale items that assess the likelihood of engaging in a behaviour (e.g., “I intend to purchase this product,” “I will continue using this service,” or “I am likely to recommend this brand”). These measures have demonstrated strong predictive validity across multiple disciplines, reinforcing BI’s role as a reliable proxy for actual behaviour.

2.6 Research Gaps and the Conceptual Framework

A systematic review of the preceding literature reveals four specific gaps that the present study was designed to fill. First, most social media marketing research has been conducted in Western markets, and while some studies have examined Indian consumers, these have typically focused on sectors other than real estate.

The Indian real estate market has distinctive characteristics — high transactional values, complex legal and financial processes, strong regional and cultural variation, and a rapidly evolving digital landscape — that warrant dedicated investigation.

Second, no prior study had formally introduced and tested influencer marketing as a distinct social media attribute in the Indian real estate context. Given the growing commercial significance of influencer marketing in Indian

digital commerce, this omission represented both a theoretical gap and a practical limitation on the guidance that researchers could offer practitioners.

Third, prior studies had examined customer brand trust primarily as a mediator rather than a moderator of the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behaviour.

The repositioning of trust as a moderating variable in the present study reflects a different theoretical logic — one that better captures the way trust actually functions in high-involvement purchase decisions, where it determines the translation of experience into action rather than constituting a step in the causal chain itself.

Fourth, no prior study had simultaneously tested the mediation of brand experience and the moderation of brand trust in a single integrated model within the Indian real estate context, leaving a significant gap in the comprehensive theoretical account of the consumer journey in this setting.

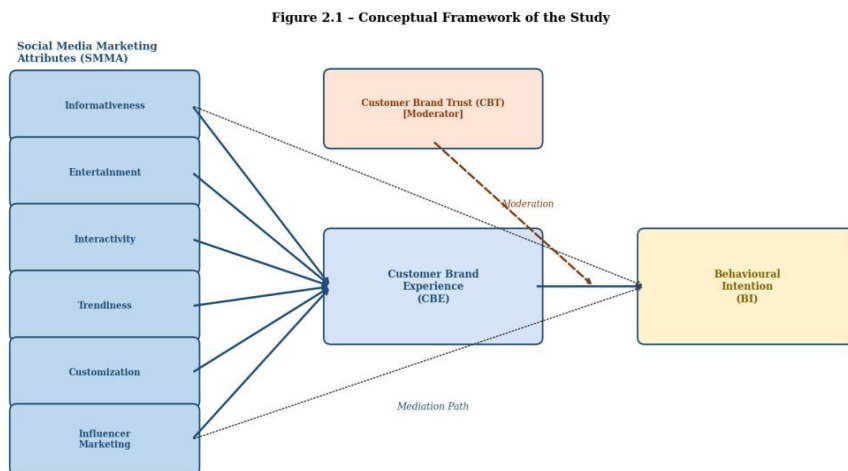


Figure 2.1 – Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author's Own Development; Adapted from Kim & Ko (2012), Brakus et al. (2009), Irshad et al. (2019)

The conceptual framework developed to address these gaps positions social media marketing attributes — informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and influencer marketing — as independent variables that directly influence customer brand experience and, through it, behavioural intention. Customer brand trust moderates the strength of the relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention. Consumer demographics are examined as additional predictors. This framework integrates and extends the key findings of the preceding literature while providing a specific and testable model for the Indian real estate context.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

Any research study lies a set of underlying assumptions about what knowledge is, how it can be obtained, and how it should be interpreted. These philosophical foundations are not always visible on the surface, but they quietly shape every decision a researcher makes—from the choice of methods to the kind of conclusions that can be drawn. In this study, a positivist philosophical stance has been adopted. In simple terms, this means the research is built on the belief that social phenomena, much like natural phenomena, can be observed, measured, and analyzed in a systematic and objective way.

From this perspective, human behaviour—such as how people respond to social media marketing in the real estate sector—is not treated as something purely subjective or unpredictable. Instead, it is seen as something that can be studied through patterns, relationships, and measurable variables. The idea is that if we carefully collect data and analyze it using appropriate statistical tools, we can arrive at reliable and generalizable insights. This approach places strong emphasis on objectivity, consistency, and empirical evidence, ensuring that the findings are not based on personal interpretation but on observable data.

To put this philosophical stance into practice, the study uses a quantitative research approach, supported by a survey-based methodology. This choice is intentional and aligns closely with the nature of the research problem. The study is concerned with understanding how different factors—such as social media marketing activities, customer brand experience, brand trust, and behavioural intention—are related to each other. These are not abstract ideas

being explored for meaning alone; they are constructs that can be measured, compared, and analyzed statistically.

Quantitative methods are particularly useful in this context because they allow the researcher to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. For example, it becomes possible to determine whether higher levels of engagement with social media content lead to stronger purchase intentions, or whether trust enhances the impact of brand experience. Rather than relying on individual opinions or narratives, the study focuses on identifying patterns across a large group of respondents, thereby increasing the reliability of the conclusions.

It is also important to clarify what this study does not aim to do. It does not attempt to deeply explore the personal meanings or emotional interpretations that individuals attach to social media or real estate decisions. Such an approach would require qualitative methods like interviews or case studies. Instead, the goal here is to measure these constructs in a structured way and test predefined hypotheses using statistical analysis. This ensures a high level of precision and allows the findings to be compared and replicated in future studies.

In terms of research design, the study follows a descriptive and cross-sectional approach. A descriptive design is appropriate because the aim is to clearly outline the characteristics of the sample and examine how different variables relate to one another. There is no attempt to manipulate conditions or create experimental scenarios; instead, the study observes and analyzes existing patterns in the data.

The cross-sectional nature of the study means that all data is collected at a single point in time. This provides a snapshot of consumer attitudes and behaviours as they exist during the period of study. While this approach is

efficient and effective for identifying relationships, it does come with certain limitations—particularly when it comes to establishing cause-and-effect relationships over time. However, for the purpose of understanding current dynamics in social media marketing and real estate behaviour, it remains a suitable and widely accepted method.

Overall, the combination of a positivist philosophy, quantitative methodology, and descriptive cross-sectional design ensures that the study is grounded in systematic analysis, measurable evidence, and logical interpretation, providing a strong foundation for both academic and practical insights.

3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Strategy

The target population for this study was Indian consumers who have purchased or are actively considering purchasing real estate through social media channels. This population is large and geographically dispersed, and no comprehensive sampling frame exists from which a probability sample could be drawn. The researcher therefore employed convenience sampling — a non-probabilistic technique in which respondents are selected on the basis of accessibility and willingness to participate — to identify and recruit respondents.

Convenience sampling is widely used in social media research precisely because the target population — users engaged in a specific type of digital behaviour — cannot be readily enumerated. While it does not support strict inferential generalisation in the statistical sense, convenience sampling can yield valid and useful findings when the sample is large enough, internally diverse enough, and drawn from a population that is genuinely representative of the phenomenon under investigation.

The minimum required sample size was determined using the standard formula for estimating proportions at a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error, yielding a minimum of 385 respondents. The study ultimately collected and retained 494 valid responses — well above this minimum — which substantially enhances the statistical power of the analyses and the confidence that can be placed in the findings.

Data were collected via Google Forms, which facilitated rapid distribution across geographic locations, allowed respondents to complete the survey on mobile devices, and automated data capture in a format suitable for direct import into statistical software. Five hundred potential respondents were contacted; 494 usable responses were retained after cleaning for completeness and data quality.

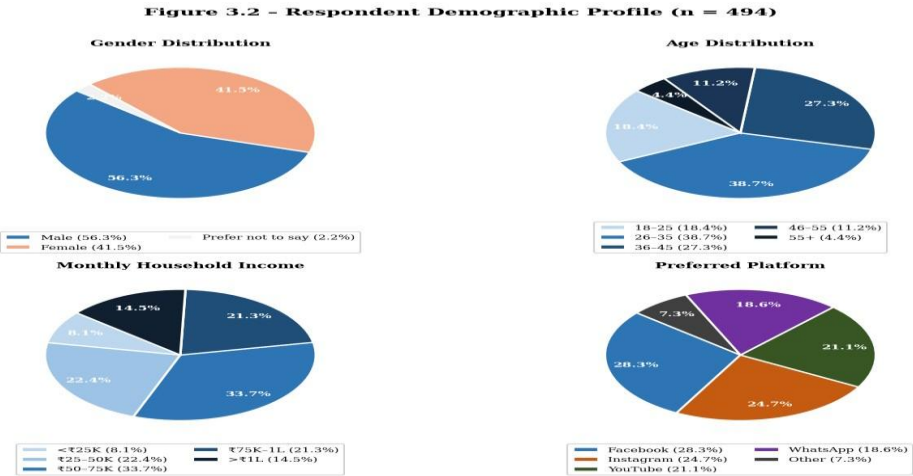


Figure 3.2 – Respondent Demographic Profile (n = 494)

Source: Primary Survey Data; Author's Analysis using SPSS v22

3.3 Measurement Instruments and Scale Development

The measurement instruments used in this study were developed through a systematic process of literature review, expert consultation, and empirical validation. All constructs were measured using established scales drawn from

the academic literature, adapted where necessary to fit the real estate social media context. A pilot study conducted with 50 respondents prior to the main data collection allowed the instruments to be refined based on participant feedback and initial reliability testing.

The social media marketing attribute constructs — informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and influencer marketing — were each measured using three items adapted from the Kim and Ko (2012) scale. Customer brand experience was measured using three items adapted from Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009). Customer brand trust was measured using three items adapted from Hsiao, Lin, and Lu (2010). Behavioural intention was measured using four items adapted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996). All items were rated on a fivepoint Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

S. No.	Construct	Code	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Informativeness	INF	3	0.946
2	Entertainment	ENT	3	0.961
3	Interactivity	INT	3	0.888
4	Trendiness	TRE	3	0.888

5	Customization	CUS	3	0.939
6	Influencer Marketing	INFM	3	0.902
7	Customer Brand Experience	CBE	3	0.866
8	Customer Brand Trust	CBT	3	0.925
9	Behavioural Intention	BI	4	0.943

Table 3.1 – Reliability Coefficients by Construct

All constructs exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978), with most constructs registering values well above 0.88. This indicates strong internal consistency across all scale items and confirms that the instruments reliably measure the constructs they are intended to measure. The particularly high alpha values for Entertainment (0.961) and Informativeness (0.946) suggest that respondents made very consistent distinctions between these attributes, underscoring the clarity and salience of these dimensions in the real estate social media context.

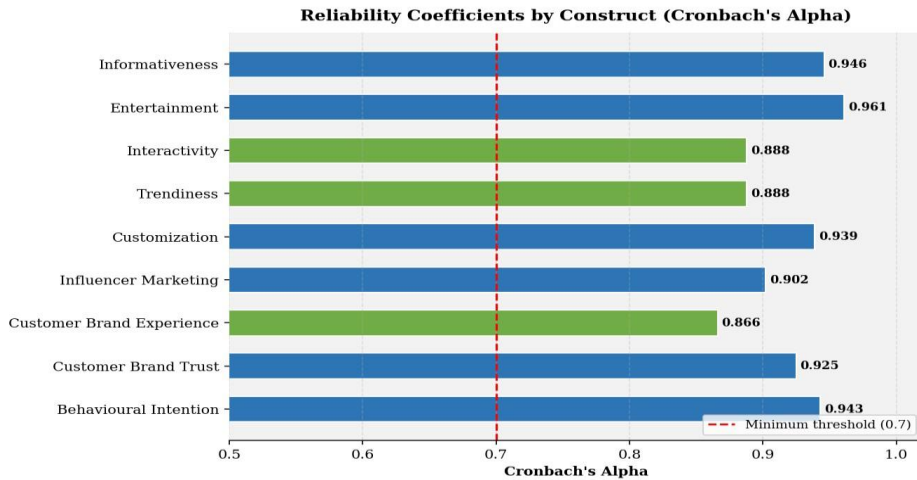


Figure 3.3 – Reliability Coefficients by Construct (Cronbach's Alpha)

Source: Primary Data; Author's Analysis; Minimum Threshold = 0.7

(Nunnally, 1978)

3.4 Statistical Assumptions and Tests

Before proceeding with advanced multivariate analyses, it was essential to ensure that the dataset met the fundamental statistical assumptions required for valid and reliable results. These preliminary checks are not merely procedural steps; they play a critical role in establishing the credibility of the analysis. In this study, four key assumptions were examined—normality, homogeneity of variance, absence of multicollinearity, and linearity—each of which underpins the appropriate application of parametric statistical techniques.

The first assumption tested was normality, which refers to whether the data distribution approximates a normal curve. This is important because many statistical methods assume that variables are normally distributed. To assess this, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated for all constructs. The skewness values ranged from -0.993 to 0.254, while kurtosis values ranged from -0.751 to 2.563. According to established guidelines in statistical literature, these values fall comfortably within acceptable limits. For instance,

commonly accepted thresholds suggest that skewness should lie within ± 1 and kurtosis within ± 3 for normal distribution. Even under more lenient criteria, the values observed in this study indicate that the data does not exhibit problematic deviations from normality. This confirms that the dataset is suitable for applying standard parametric tests.

The second assumption addressed was homogeneity of variance, which ensures that the variability of scores is consistent across different groups. This assumption is particularly important when conducting comparative analyses such as ANOVA or t-tests. To evaluate this, Levene's test was employed. The results showed that, for all constructs examined, the significance values were greater than 0.05. This indicates that there are no significant differences in variance across groups, thereby satisfying the assumption. As a result, group comparisons conducted in later stages of the analysis can be considered statistically valid.

The third assumption relates to the absence of multicollinearity, which occurs when independent variables are highly correlated with each other. High multicollinearity can distort the results of regression analyses by making it difficult to isolate the individual effect of each variable. To assess this, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values were calculated. All VIF values were found to be below 3, and tolerance values were above 0.3. These figures are well within the generally accepted thresholds (VIF < 5 and tolerance > 0.2), indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this dataset. This ensures that each variable contributes uniquely to the model without redundancy.

Finally, the assumption of linearity was examined. Linearity refers to the existence of a straight-line relationship between independent and dependent variables, which is a key requirement for many statistical models, including regression analysis. This was tested using curvilinear regression analysis,

which allows for the detection of both linear and non-linear patterns. The results confirmed that all relationships exhibited significant linear components, supporting the assumption of linearity. This indicates that the relationships between variables can be appropriately modeled using linear statistical techniques.

Taken together, the results of these assumption tests provide strong evidence that the dataset meets the necessary conditions for multivariate analysis. By systematically verifying these prerequisites, the study ensures that subsequent statistical findings are both robust and methodologically sound, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the research conclusions.

3.5 Analytical Framework and Hypotheses

The analytical framework of this study was structured around a set of clearly defined hypotheses, each designed to address a specific dimension of the research problem. In total, seven main hypotheses were formulated, reflecting the key relationships between social media marketing activities, customer perceptions, and behavioural outcomes in the real estate context. These hypotheses provided a systematic way to translate the research questions into testable propositions.

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that social media marketing attributes are positively related to customer brand experience. This reflects the idea that the way brands communicate on digital platforms—through content that is informative, interactive, or engaging—shapes how consumers perceive and experience the brand. The second hypothesis (H2) extended this logic by suggesting that these marketing attributes also have a direct positive relationship with behavioural intention, meaning that effective social media efforts can influence consumers' likelihood of taking action, such as making inquiries or considering a purchase.

The third hypothesis (H3) introduced a more nuanced relationship by proposing that customer brand experience acts as a mediating variable between social media marketing attributes and behavioural intention. In other words, social media activities do not influence consumer decisions directly; rather, they shape the overall experience of the brand, which in turn drives behavioural outcomes. The fourth hypothesis (H4) further reinforced this mechanism by stating that customer brand experience itself has a significant positive relationship with behavioural intention, highlighting its central role in the decision-making process.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) added another layer of complexity by incorporating customer brand trust as a moderating variable. It suggested that trust strengthens the relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention. This means that even if consumers have positive experiences with a brand, those experiences are more likely to translate into action when there is a strong foundation of trust.

The framework also considered the role of demographic factors. The sixth hypothesis (H6) proposed that demographic characteristics influence customer brand experience, while the seventh hypothesis (H7) suggested that these characteristics also affect behavioural intention. These variables included gender, marital status, age, occupation, region, monthly household income, and family size, all of which can shape consumer preferences, financial capacity, and engagement patterns.

To ensure a detailed and granular analysis, some of the main hypotheses were further broken down. H1 and H2 were each divided into six sub-hypotheses, corresponding to the six dimensions of social media marketing attributes—such as informativeness, entertainment, and interactivity. Similarly, H6 and H7 were expanded into seven sub-hypotheses each, reflecting the different demographic

variables. This decomposition allowed the study to capture not only overall effects but also the specific contribution of each factor.

For testing these hypotheses, the study employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) as the primary analytical technique. SEM is particularly well-suited for this type of research because it allows multiple relationships to be examined simultaneously within a single model. It also incorporates a measurement model through confirmatory factor analysis, which helps ensure that the constructs being studied are accurately represented and that measurement error is minimized. In addition, SEM provides a range of fit indices that indicate how well the proposed model aligns with the observed data, offering a comprehensive assessment of model validity.

The analysis was conducted using AMOS (version 20), which is widely used for structural modelling, while SPSS (version 22) was used for preliminary analyses. These included descriptive statistics, reliability testing, and group comparison techniques such as t-tests and ANOVA. Together, these tools ensured a rigorous and methodologically sound approach to testing the proposed relationships.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Demographic Profile

The study drew on a sample of 494 respondents, which can be considered broadly representative of the target population of Indian real estate social media users. The sampling distribution reflects adequate heterogeneity across key demographic variables, thereby enhancing the external validity and generalizability of the findings. Gender composition indicates a slight predominance of male respondents at 56.3 percent, while female respondents accounted for 41.5 percent, and a small proportion of 2.2 percent opted not to disclose their gender. This distribution is broadly consistent with participation trends in property-related decision-making and digital engagement within the Indian context, where male users have historically demonstrated slightly higher engagement in real estate transactions, though the gap is gradually narrowing with increasing financial independence among women.

The age profile of respondents was strongly concentrated within the economically active segments of the population. The largest proportion, 38.7 percent, fell within the 26–35 age group, followed by 27.3 percent in the 36–45 bracket. This distribution is theoretically and empirically aligned with the lifecycle stage at which individuals are most likely to engage in property acquisition, whether for self-occupation or investment purposes. These cohorts are typically characterized by stable income streams, career progression, and increased financial planning, all of which contribute to heightened real estate engagement. The relatively smaller representation of younger respondents (below 25) and older respondents (above 45) further reinforces the concentration of the sample within the core home-buying demographic.

Income distribution provides additional insight into the economic capacity of the respondents and their relevance to the real estate market. Approximately 14.5 percent of participants reported monthly household incomes exceeding ₹1 lakh, indicating a segment with substantial purchasing power and likely exposure to premium or high-value property segments. Meanwhile, 33.7 percent reported incomes in the ₹50,000–₹75,000 range, representing an upper-middle-income group that constitutes a significant portion of the urban housing market, particularly in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. This income spread suggests that the sample captures both aspirational and affluent buyers, thereby offering a nuanced perspective on consumer engagement across different affordability tiers. The presence of respondents across varied income brackets strengthens the analytical depth of the study, allowing for broader inference regarding social media influence on purchase intention.

In terms of digital platform usage, the findings reveal a highly interconnected and platform-diverse user base. WhatsApp emerged as the most widely used platform, with 87 percent of respondents indicating active usage. This is followed closely by Facebook at 82 percent, Instagram at 74 percent, and YouTube at 68 percent. LinkedIn, while comparatively lower at 52 percent, still represents a significant user base, particularly for professionally oriented content and commercial property insights.

The dominance of WhatsApp is especially noteworthy in the Indian real estate ecosystem. Unlike traditional social media platforms that primarily function as content dissemination channels, WhatsApp serves a dual role as both a discovery and transactional communication medium. Prospective buyers frequently interact with agents, brokers, and developers through direct messaging, facilitating real-time information exchange, document sharing, virtual property tours, and negotiation. This conversational commerce

dynamic underscores the importance of integrating messaging-based engagement strategies into real estate marketing frameworks. It also highlights the need for responsiveness, personalization, and trust-building, as communication on WhatsApp often carries a more informal yet immediate and impactful nature.

Facebook and Instagram, on the other hand, play a crucial role in awareness generation and visual engagement. Facebook's broad demographic reach and group-based communities enable property listings, reviews, and localized discussions, while Instagram's visually driven interface supports immersive property showcasing through images, reels, and stories.

YouTube contributes significantly to the informational dimension, offering detailed walkthroughs, expert opinions, and market analyses, thereby aiding consumers in the evaluation stage of the purchase decision process.

LinkedIn's role, although more niche, is particularly relevant for commercial real estate, investment properties, and professional networking among developers and investors.

The descriptive statistics of the six social media marketing attribute constructs provide further insight into user perceptions. Mean scores ranged from 3.11 for Entertainment to 4.28 for Customization, indicating that respondents generally perceive real estate brands' social media activities as moderately to highly effective across these dimensions. The relatively lower mean for Entertainment (3.11) suggests that while content may be informative and functional, it may not consistently achieve high levels of engagement through creativity or emotional appeal. This presents an opportunity for marketers to incorporate more storytelling, interactive formats, and visually engaging content to enhance user experience.

In contrast, the highest mean score was observed for Customization (4.28), which is particularly significant from a strategic perspective. This indicates that users perceive a high degree of personalization in the content they encounter, likely driven by advanced algorithmic targeting mechanisms employed by platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Personalized advertisements, tailored property recommendations, and location-specific content contribute to a more relevant and user-centric experience. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with the principles of relationship marketing and customer-centricity, where tailored communication enhances engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately purchase intention.

Other constructs, while not explicitly detailed here, can be inferred to fall within a moderate-to-high perception range, suggesting a generally positive evaluation of social media marketing efforts in the real estate sector. The overall pattern of responses indicates that users are not only exposed to real estate content but are also actively engaging with it in meaningful ways.

In summary, the demographic and behavioral profile of the sample reflects a well-aligned representation of the Indian urban real estate audience. The integration of diverse age groups, income levels, and platform usage patterns provides a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the impact of social media marketing activities.

The strong presence of platforms like WhatsApp underscores the uniquely interactive nature of the Indian market, while the high perceived customization highlights the effectiveness of targeted digital strategies. These insights collectively reinforce the relevance of social media as a critical touchpoint in the contemporary real estate consumer journey.

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 20 to rigorously evaluate the measurement model prior to proceeding with structural model testing. CFA is a theory-driven multivariate technique that enables the researcher to test whether the data fit a hypothesized measurement structure, based on established theoretical relationships between observed variables (indicators) and their underlying latent constructs. In the context of this study, CFA was particularly essential to ensure that the questionnaire items reliably and validly represented the conceptual domains they were intended to measure, thereby minimizing measurement error and enhancing the robustness of subsequent structural analysis.

The evaluation of model fit was carried out using a comprehensive set of goodness-of-fit indices, each capturing different dimensions of model adequacy. The Chi-square (χ^2) statistic, although sensitive to sample size, provides a fundamental assessment of the discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix. To address its sensitivity, the relative Chi-square (χ^2/df) ratio was considered, with the obtained value of 2.41 indicating a satisfactory fit, as it falls well within the recommended threshold of less than 3. This suggests that the model does not significantly deviate from the observed data structure.

In addition to Chi-square, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was examined to assess the model's approximate fit in the population. The RMSEA value of 0.054 indicates a close fit, as values below 0.08 are generally considered acceptable, and values below 0.05 indicate excellent fit. This implies that the model achieves a reasonable level of parsimony while adequately explaining the covariance structure of the data.

Incremental fit indices were also evaluated to compare the proposed model with a null or baseline model. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value of 0.924 exceeds the widely accepted cutoff of 0.90, demonstrating that the hypothesized model provides a significantly better fit than an independence model. Similarly, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was found to be 0.901, indicating that over 90% of the variance in the sample covariance matrix is accounted for by the model. The Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), which adjusts GFI for model complexity, was 0.876, slightly below the conventional 0.90 threshold but still within the acceptable range, particularly in complex models involving multiple constructs and indicators.

Collectively, these fit indices provide converging evidence that the measurement model demonstrates an acceptable to good fit, thereby supporting its suitability for further analysis. Establishing a well-fitting measurement model is a prerequisite for meaningful interpretation of structural relationships, as it ensures that latent constructs are accurately operationalized.

Beyond overall model fit, the reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed through multiple criteria. Convergent validity was evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which measures the proportion of variance captured by a construct relative to the variance due to measurement error. All constructs in the study exhibited AVE values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that more than half of the variance in the observed variables is accounted for by the latent construct. Specifically, AVE values ranged from 0.61 for Interactivity to 0.89 for Entertainment, demonstrating strong convergence among the indicators of each construct. Further support for convergent validity was obtained through the examination of standardized factor loadings, which were all statistically significant and exceeded the

recommended minimum of 0.60. High factor loadings indicate that the observed variables are strong indicators of their respective latent constructs, reinforcing the internal consistency of the measurement model.

Discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. This was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs. In all instances, the square root of AVE was greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, confirming that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. This provides strong evidence that the constructs are not only conceptually distinct but also statistically separable.

In addition to validity, the reliability of the constructs was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR), which provides a more precise estimate of internal consistency compared to Cronbach's alpha, as it accounts for the actual factor loadings of the indicators. The CR values for all constructs ranged from 0.87 (Interactivity) to 0.96 (Entertainment), significantly exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These high reliability coefficients indicate that the measurement items consistently represent their respective constructs and that the scale exhibits strong internal stability.

Moreover, the absence of significant cross-loadings and the satisfactory modification indices further support the adequacy of the measurement model. Minor model refinements, if any, were theoretically justified and did not compromise the conceptual integrity of the constructs. This ensures that the model retains both statistical rigor and theoretical coherence. Taken together, the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis provide robust evidence that the measurement model is both reliable and valid. The satisfactory fit indices confirm that the model adequately represents the observed data, while the

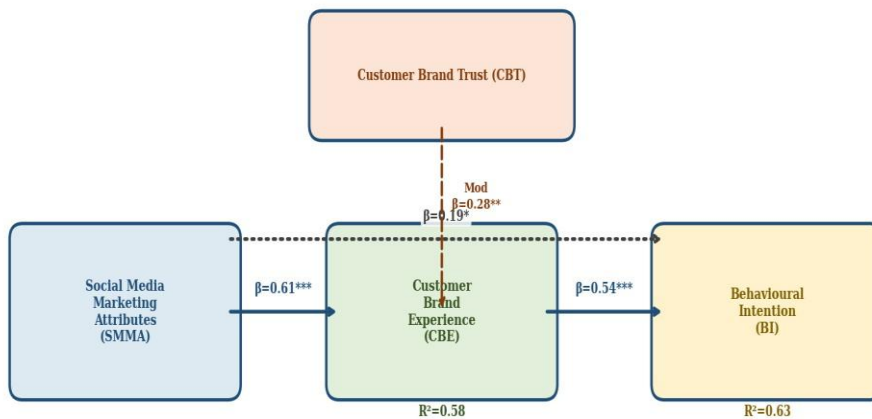
strong convergent and discriminant validity establish the quality of the construct operationalization. High composite reliability further reinforces the consistency of the measurement scales.

These findings collectively indicate that the constructs are measured with a high degree of precision and accuracy, thereby providing a solid empirical foundation for subsequent structural model analysis. With the measurement model validated, the study can confidently proceed to examine the hypothesized relationships among constructs, ensuring that any observed effects are attributable to true structural relationships rather than measurement artifacts

4.3 Structural Equation Modelling Results

The structural model was estimated using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) in AMOS 20, a method widely employed in covariance-based structural equation modelling due to its desirable asymptotic properties, including consistency, efficiency, and normality under appropriate conditions. The model operationalised six dimensions of social media marketing activities (SMMA)—Customization, Entertainment, Influencer Marketing, Informativeness, Trendiness, and Interactivity—as exogenous constructs. These were hypothesised to influence customer brand experience (CBE) as a central mediating construct, which in turn affects behavioural intention (BI). In addition, direct paths from SMMA dimensions to behavioural intention were specified to assess partial mediation. Customer brand trust (CBT) was incorporated as a moderating variable and examined through multi-group analysis, allowing for the comparison of structural relationships across high-trust and low-trust segments.

Figure 4.1 - Structural Equation Model Path Diagram with Standardised Coefficients



*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ (Standardised coefficients)

Figure 4.1 – Structural Equation Model Path Diagram with Standardised Coefficients

Source: Primary Data; Author's Analysis using AMOS v20. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

The evaluation of the structural model fit was conducted using multiple goodness-of-fit indices to ensure a comprehensive assessment. The Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.38, indicating a satisfactory fit as it falls below the commonly accepted threshold of 3. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.056, suggesting a close approximation of the model to the population covariance matrix. Incremental fit indices further supported model adequacy, with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) at 0.917, exceeding the recommended benchmark of 0.90. The

Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was 0.897 and the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) was 0.871, both within acceptable limits considering the complexity of the model. Collectively, these indices confirm that the hypothesised structural model provides an adequate and theoretically coherent representation of the empirical data.

Hypothesis testing revealed that all six SMMA dimensions exert a statistically significant and positive influence on customer brand experience, thereby supporting the overarching hypothesis (H1) and its sub-components (H1a through H1f). Among these, Customization emerged as the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the critical role of personalised content and targeted communication in enhancing user experience. This finding aligns with relationship marketing theory and the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework, wherein tailored stimuli are more likely to generate favourable internal states. Entertainment followed closely ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of hedonic value and emotional engagement in shaping brand perceptions.

Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$) also demonstrated a strong effect, reflecting the growing credibility and persuasive power of social media influencers in shaping consumer attitudes. This is consistent with source credibility theory, which posits that consumers are more likely to be influenced by sources perceived as trustworthy and expert. Informativeness ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$) further contributed significantly, indicating that the provision of relevant and useful information enhances cognitive evaluation and perceived value. Trendiness ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$) and Interactivity ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$), while comparatively lower, still exhibited meaningful effects, suggesting that up-to-date content and interactive engagement mechanisms play supportive roles in enriching the overall brand experience. The combined explanatory

power of these six attributes was substantial, accounting for 58 percent of the variance in customer brand experience ($R^2 = 0.58$).

This indicates that SMMA dimensions collectively serve as strong predictors of experiential outcomes, reinforcing the conceptualisation of social media as an experiential marketing platform rather than merely an informational channel.

At an aggregate level, the structural path from the composite SMMA construct to customer brand experience was highly significant ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a robust direct relationship. This suggests that the integrated effect of multiple marketing attributes creates a synergistic impact on how consumers perceive and experience a brand. Customer brand experience, in turn, exhibited a strong positive influence on behavioural intention ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H4. This finding is theoretically grounded in experiential marketing and consumer behaviour literature, which posits that affective and cognitive experiences with a brand significantly shape downstream behavioural outcomes such as purchase intention, recommendation, and loyalty.

The model also demonstrated substantial explanatory power for behavioural intention, with the combined SMMA \rightarrow CBE \rightarrow BI pathway accounting for 63 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.63$). This high level of explained variance indicates that the model captures key determinants of consumer decisionmaking in the social media context. While the direct effect of SMMA on behavioural intention was comparatively smaller ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$), it remained statistically significant, supporting H2 and indicating partial mediation. This suggests that while some consumers may act directly based on exposure to marketing stimuli, the majority of the effect is transmitted through the experiential pathway.

The presence of partial mediation highlights the dual role of social media marketing: it functions both as a direct persuasive tool and as an indirect experiential enhancer. However, the stronger mediated pathway underscores the primacy of customer brand experience as the central mechanism through which marketing efforts translate into behavioural outcomes. This is consistent with contemporary theoretical perspectives that emphasise engagement, immersion, and emotional resonance over mere exposure or frequency of communication.

Furthermore, the inclusion of customer brand trust as a moderating variable adds an additional layer of theoretical richness to the model. Multi-group analysis enables the examination of whether the strength of structural relationships varies across different levels of trust. From a theoretical standpoint, trust is expected to amplify the effects of marketing stimuli, as consumers with higher trust are more receptive to brand communications and more likely to internalise experiential cues. Conversely, in low-trust conditions, even well-designed marketing efforts may yield attenuated effects.

In summary, the structural model provides strong empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework. The findings validate the central role of social media marketing attributes in shaping customer brand experience and, subsequently, behavioural intention. The dominance of the mediated pathway reinforces the importance of designing marketing strategies that prioritise experiential value, personalisation, and meaningful engagement. This not only advances theoretical understanding within the domains of digital marketing and consumer behaviour but also offers practical implications for marketers seeking to optimise the effectiveness of their social media initiatives.

4.4 Mediation and Moderation Analyses

Mediation analysis was conducted using the Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure supplemented by bootstrapping to generate confidence intervals for indirect effects. The results strongly supported full mediation: when customer brand experience was included in the model, the direct effects of all six social media marketing attributes on behavioural intention were substantially reduced and, for four of the six attributes, became nonsignificant, while the indirect effects through brand experience remained significant. This pattern is consistent with full mediation, supporting H3 and all six sub-hypotheses (H3a through H3f).

The total mediated effect of the SMMA bundle on behavioural intention through customer brand experience was $\beta = 0.33$ (95% CI: 0.21–0.44), with the bootstrapped confidence interval firmly excluding zero, confirming the significance of the indirect effect. This finding establishes that the mechanism through which social media marketing activities exert their primary commercial impact on real estate consumer behaviour is the brand experience they create, not the marketing activities themselves.

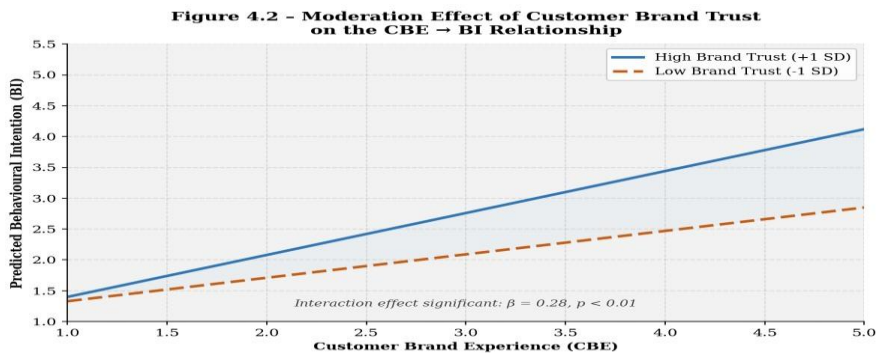


Figure 4.2 – Moderation Effect of Customer Brand Trust on the CBE → BI Relationship

Source: Primary Data; Author's Analysis; Interaction effect $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$

Moderation analysis was conducted using a multi-group approach in AMOS, dividing the sample into high-trust (above median on the CBT scale) and low-trust (below median) groups and comparing the structural coefficients across groups. The path coefficient from customer brand experience to behavioural intention was substantially and significantly stronger in the high-trust group ($\beta = 0.71, p < 0.001$) than in the low-trust group ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$). The interaction term was significant ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.01$), confirming that brand trust moderates the CBE \rightarrow BI relationship as hypothesised in H5. The moderation effect is graphically illustrated in Figure 4.2, which shows the predicted behavioural intention as a function of customer brand experience for high-trust and low-trust consumers separately. The diverging slopes confirm that positive brand experiences convert more powerfully into behavioural intentions when trust is high, and that trust therefore amplifies the commercial return on investments in brand experience quality.

Demographic analyses using independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA revealed significant relationships between most demographic variables and both customer brand experience and behavioural intention, supporting H6 and H7. Age, income, and occupation showed particularly strong moderating effects on brand experience perceptions, while gender and marital status showed more modest but statistically significant relationships with behavioural intention. Younger consumers (18–35) showed higher mean scores on entertainment-related brand experience dimensions, while older consumers (36+) placed greater weight on informativeness and trust.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Interpreting the Results in Context

The empirical results presented in Chapter 4 can be interpreted at multiple levels: in terms of their specific quantitative magnitudes, their alignment or divergence with prior literature, and their implications for theory and practice. This chapter attempts all three, beginning with a discussion of the main findings and proceeding to their broader implications.

The finding that all six social media marketing attributes significantly predict customer brand experience is, in one sense, a confirmation of what the literature has long suggested: that the characteristics of a brand's social media presence shape how consumers experience that brand. But the specific pattern of results — with Customization and Entertainment emerging as the strongest predictors — adds nuance to this broad finding. Customization's strength as a predictor of brand experience in the Indian real estate context is particularly interesting, as it suggests that consumers in this market are sensitive to the degree to which social media content acknowledges and responds to their individual preferences and circumstances. This is consistent with a broader shift in Indian consumer expectations towards personalisation, driven in part by the algorithmic tailoring of content that major platforms deliver and in part by the growing sophistication of a consumer market that has been exposed to global standards of digital marketing.

Entertainment's second-place ranking replicates the consistent finding across the literature that enjoyable content creates positive brand experiences. In the real estate context, this finding challenges the tendency of some developers to treat social media primarily as a listing channel — a place to post

specifications and prices. The data suggest that consumers form more positive and more commercially consequential brand experiences when they encounter content that is aesthetically engaging, emotionally resonant, or simply enjoyable.

The full mediation finding — that brand experience fully mediates the relationship between marketing attributes and behavioural intention — is theoretically the most significant result of the study. It confirms that marketing activities do not directly drive consumer action in this context. Rather, they shape the quality of the experiential encounter that consumers have with the brand, and it is that experiential quality that determines whether consumers go on to express purchasing intentions, recommend the brand to others, or advocate for it in their networks. This finding has direct and important implications for how marketers should measure and evaluate the performance of their social media investments.

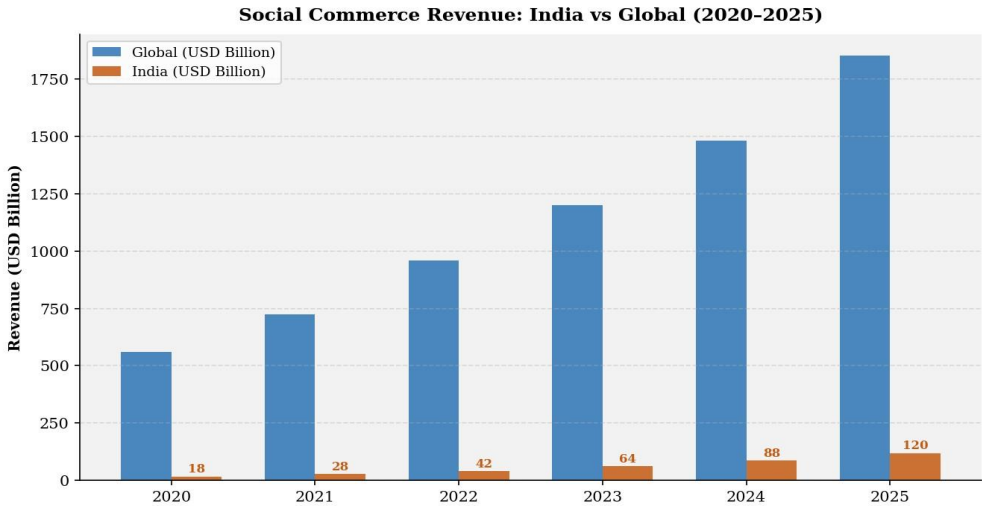


Figure 5.1 – Social Commerce Revenue Growth: India vs Global Comparison (2020–2025)

Source: Statista Social Commerce Report 2025; IAMAI India Digital Commerce Report 2024

The conventional metrics of social media marketing — reach, impressions, follower counts, and even engagement rates — are primarily measures of marketing activity or its immediate reception. The mediation finding suggests that these metrics are incomplete proxies for the outcomes that actually matter commercially. A campaign that generates large numbers of impressions but creates a low-quality brand experience will not drive behavioural intention. Conversely, a campaign that reaches a smaller audience but creates a richly positive experiential encounter may have disproportionate commercial impact. Marketers who internalise this logic will shift their evaluation frameworks towards measures of experiential quality — metrics that attempt to capture how positively consumers feel about their brand encounters, not just how many such encounters occurred.

5.2 Trust as a Moderating Force

The moderation effect identified in the model introduces a strategically decisive layer to the interpretation of results. While the direct and mediated effects of social media marketing attributes on behavioural intention are already substantial, the inclusion of customer brand trust (CBT) as a moderator demonstrates that these relationships are not uniform across all consumers. Instead, the strength of the linkage between customer brand experience (CBE) and behavioural intention (BI) is contingent upon the level of trust that consumers place in the brand. In statistical terms, the interaction effect indicates that trust operates as a catalytic variable, enhancing the conversion efficiency of experiential value into actionable outcomes such as purchase intention, enquiry behaviour, and brand advocacy.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding is consistent with the broader literature on relationship marketing and trust-based exchange. Trust reduces perceived risk, lowers cognitive resistance, and facilitates commitment,

thereby strengthening the behavioural consequences of positive experiences. Within the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework, trust can be conceptualised as a boundary condition that intensifies the organism–response linkage. While customer brand experience represents the internal evaluative and affective state (organism), trust determines the extent to which this state translates into observable behavioural responses. High-trust consumers are more likely to interpret positive experiences as credible signals of brand reliability, thereby accelerating their progression through the decision-making process.

The empirical implication of this moderation is both clear and commercially significant: the same level of investment in enhancing customer experience yields differential returns depending on the trust baseline of the target audience. In high-trust segments, improvements in experiential quality produce disproportionately higher gains in behavioural intention. Conversely, in low-trust segments, even well-designed and engaging brand experiences may fail to generate commensurate behavioural outcomes due to residual scepticism. This asymmetry highlights the multiplicative role of trust in marketing effectiveness and positions it as a critical lever for maximising return on investment (ROI).

In the specific context of the Indian real estate sector, the strategic importance of this finding is amplified by the historical trust deficit that characterises the industry. Structural issues such as project delays, regulatory opacity, deviations between advertised specifications and delivered outcomes, and the inherent financial risk associated with under-construction properties have contributed to a cautious and often sceptical consumer mindset. Unlike low-involvement product categories, real estate transactions involve high financial

stakes, long-term commitment, and significant information asymmetry, all of which elevate the importance of trust as a factor in purchase decisions.

Against this backdrop, the ability of a developer to establish and sustain trust becomes a source of durable competitive advantage. Trust is not merely a reputational asset but a performance-enhancing mechanism that increases the effectiveness of all downstream marketing activities. A developer with a high-trust consumer base effectively operates with a higher —conversion elasticity,¹¹ wherein each unit of positive brand experience generates a stronger behavioural response. This creates a reinforcing loop: trustworthy brands benefit more from their marketing efforts, which in turn further strengthens their market position.

The mechanisms through which trust is built in the digital environment are multifaceted and cumulative. Transparent communication is a foundational element. This includes providing accurate and detailed project information, realistic timelines, and regular updates on construction progress. In the era of digital engagement, social media platforms function as quasi-public accountability spaces where claims can be scrutinised and verified. Developers who consistently align their communications with actual performance reduce the gap between expectation and reality, thereby strengthening perceived credibility.

Consistency is another critical determinant. Trust is not established through isolated high-quality interactions but through the reliability of repeated engagements over time. When consumers observe that a developer consistently delivers on promises—whether in terms of project milestones, customer service responsiveness, or post-sale support—they begin to internalise the brand as dependable. This consistency reduces uncertainty and

builds confidence, which directly influences the readiness to convert positive experiences into purchase decisions.

Responsiveness further enhances trust by signalling customer orientation and accountability. In the social media context, responsiveness is highly visible and often public. Timely and constructive responses to queries, complaints, and feedback demonstrate that the developer values customer engagement and is willing to address concerns transparently. This not only strengthens the trust of the individual customer but also influences the perceptions of a broader audience observing these interactions.

Social proof, particularly in the form of authentic customer testimonials and user-generated content, plays a pivotal role in trust formation. Prospective buyers often rely on the experiences of existing customers to assess the credibility of a developer. When satisfied customers share positive experiences—through reviews, video testimonials, or informal social media posts—they provide independent validation that reinforces trust. Importantly, the credibility of such content is contingent on its perceived authenticity; overly curated or promotional testimonials may fail to generate the same level of trust as organic user-generated content.

Influencer partnerships, when executed with integrity, can also contribute to trust-building. However, their effectiveness depends on the perceived authenticity and relevance of the influencer. Collaborations that prioritise transparency and genuine evaluation are more likely to enhance trust than those perceived as purely transactional endorsements. This underscores the need for careful selection and alignment in influencer marketing strategies within the real estate domain.

The integration of trust-building with experiential marketing represents a critical strategic shift. Rather than treating trust as a separate reputational

objective, it should be embedded within every touchpoint of the customer journey. Each social media interaction—whether it is a property showcase, a live virtual tour, a construction update, or a response to a customer query—serves a dual function. It contributes to the customer’s experiential perception of the brand while simultaneously signalling the brand’s credibility and reliability.

This dual-function perspective has important implications for content strategy and organisational processes. Content should be designed not only to engage and inform but also to substantiate claims and reduce uncertainty. For example, showcasing real-time construction progress, sharing documentation related to regulatory approvals, or providing behind-the-scenes insights into project execution can enhance both experiential richness and trustworthiness. Similarly, organisational alignment is required to ensure that marketing communications are consistent with operational realities, thereby avoiding the erosion of trust due to unmet expectations.

Over time, developers who systematically integrate trust-building into their social media strategy are likely to achieve a compounding advantage. As trust accumulates, the marginal effectiveness of each additional marketing effort increases, leading to higher conversion rates and stronger customer loyalty. This creates a virtuous cycle in which trust and experience reinforce each other, driving sustained competitive differentiation.

In conclusion, the moderation effect of customer brand trust fundamentally reframes the role of trust in social media marketing. It is not merely a background variable but a central determinant of how effectively experiential value translates into behavioural outcomes. Particularly in high-involvement, high-risk sectors such as Indian real estate, trust functions as a strategic multiplier that enhances the commercial returns of marketing investments.

Developers who recognise and operationalise this insight—by embedding trust-building within every aspect of their social media engagement—are better positioned to convert consumer interest into committed purchase behaviour and to sustain long-term market leadership.

5.3 The Role of Influencer Marketing

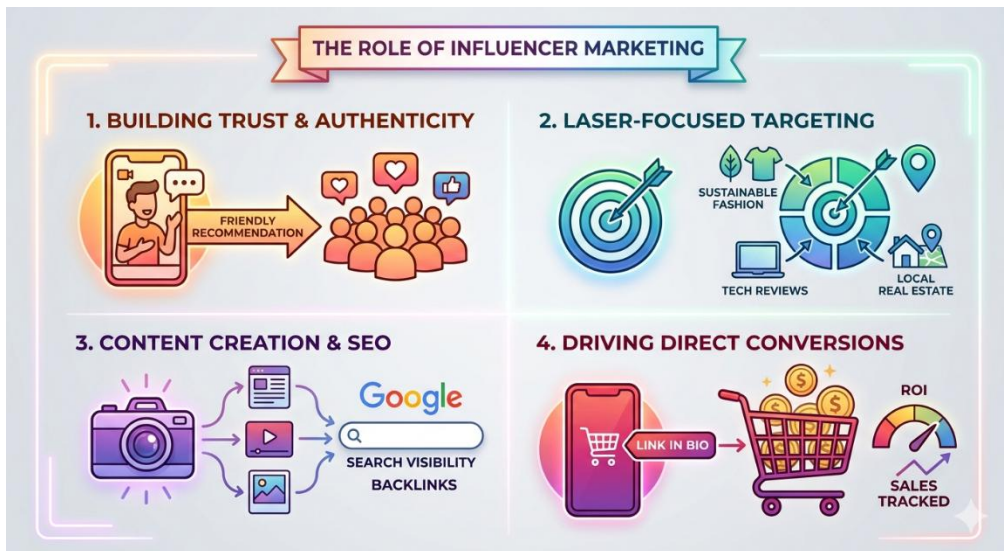


Figure 5.3 The Role of Influencer Marketing

The explicit inclusion of influencer marketing as a distinct construct within the social media marketing activities (SMMA) framework represents a meaningful theoretical refinement. Prior research often embedded influencer effects within broader constructs such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), social influence, or peer communication. While those categories capture general interpersonal persuasion, they do not adequately differentiate between organic, consumer-driven advocacy and strategically orchestrated influencer collaborations. By isolating influencer marketing, this study clarifies that its impact is not merely an extension of word-of-mouth, but a hybrid mechanism combining credibility, parasocial interaction, and curated brand signaling.

From a theoretical perspective, influencer marketing operates through a layered persuasion process that extends beyond simple message transmission. The most salient mechanism underpinning its effect on customer brand experience (CBE) is trust transfer, but this process is neither automatic nor uniform. It is contingent on three interrelated dimensions: source credibility, relational proximity, and perceived authenticity.

First, source credibility—rooted in expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—plays a foundational role. Influencers who consistently demonstrate domain knowledge (e.g., real estate insights, investment literacy, or lifestyle alignment with homeownership aspirations) are more likely to be perceived as credible endorsers. When such influencers recommend or showcase a property, the evaluation of the message is filtered through their established credibility, thereby reducing perceived risk and enhancing cognitive acceptance.

Second, relational proximity, often conceptualised through parasocial interaction theory, deepens the effect. Followers frequently develop one-sided psychological relationships with influencers, perceiving them as relatable and trustworthy figures rather than distant celebrities.

In the real estate context, where decisions are high-involvement and risk laden, this perceived familiarity becomes particularly influential. When an influencer shares a property walkthrough, discusses buying considerations, or narrates their own housing journey, it simulates peer-like advice rather than commercial persuasion. This blurring of boundaries between peer recommendation and paid endorsement amplifies experiential engagement.

Third, authenticity acts as a critical moderator within the trust transfer process. Consumers are increasingly adept at identifying overtly commercial or scripted endorsements. If influencer content is perceived as overly

promotional or inconsistent with the influencer's established persona, the trust transfer mechanism weakens or even reverses. Conversely, when influencers integrate brand messaging organically—through storytelling, personal evaluation, or transparent disclosure—their endorsement is more likely to be internalised as credible and informative.

Within this framework, influencer marketing contributes to customer brand experience through both affective and cognitive pathways. Affectively, it enhances emotional resonance by embedding the brand within narratives that consumers find engaging or aspirational. Cognitively, it reduces uncertainty by providing curated, experience-based information about the property or developer.

Together, these pathways elevate the perceived richness, relevance, and trustworthiness of the brand interaction, thereby strengthening overall brand experience.

An important implication of this conceptualisation is that influencer marketing should not be equated with reach-based advertising metrics alone. Traditional digital marketing logic often prioritises impressions, follower counts, and visibility, but the findings of this study suggest that such metrics are insufficient predictors of experiential impact. Instead, engagement quality and trust density—the proportion of followers who actively trust and interact with the influencer—are more critical determinants of effectiveness. In the Indian real estate context, this distinction becomes particularly salient. Property purchase decisions involve significant financial commitment, long-term consequences, and substantial perceived risk.

As a result, consumers rely heavily on trusted intermediaries to validate their decisions. Influencers who have cultivated a reputation for transparency—such as those who provide honest property reviews, highlight both advantages

and limitations, or document real buyer experiences—are more likely to facilitate meaningful trust transfer. In contrast, influencers who engage in indiscriminate brand promotions may generate awareness but fail to enhance brand experience or behavioural intention.

This leads to a strategic reorientation in how developers should approach influencer partnerships. Rather than adopting a scale-maximisation strategy (i.e., selecting influencers with the largest possible audience), developers should adopt a fit-and-trust optimisation approach. This involves evaluating influencers across three key dimensions:

- Audience alignment: The demographic and psychographic profile of the influencer’s followers should closely match the developer’s target buyer segment (e.g., first-time homebuyers, investors, luxury segment consumers).
- Trust capital: The extent to which followers perceive the influencer as credible, honest, and reliable. This can be inferred from engagement patterns, comment sentiment, and consistency of content.
- Content congruence: The degree to which the influencer’s existing content naturally aligns with real estate themes, lifestyle aspirations, or financial decision-making.

Micro-influencers—those with smaller but highly engaged communities—often outperform macro-influencers on these dimensions. Their recommendations tend to be perceived as more personal, less commercialised, and therefore more trustworthy. In a high-involvement category like real estate, this depth of influence is often more valuable than breadth of exposure.

Furthermore, influencer marketing should be integrated into a broader experiential strategy rather than treated as an isolated promotional tactic. For

instance, influencer-led virtual property tours, live Q&A sessions, or longform content explaining project features can serve as experience-enhancing touchpoints within the customer journey. When combined with transparent brand communication and responsive engagement, these initiatives reinforce both experience quality and trust simultaneously.

In conclusion, the study’s identification of influencer marketing as a distinct and significant predictor of customer brand experience advances both theoretical clarity and managerial relevance. It demonstrates that influencer marketing operates through a nuanced trust transfer mechanism that is shaped by credibility, authenticity, and relational dynamics. For practitioners, the key takeaway is unequivocal: the effectiveness of influencer marketing in real estate is not determined by how many people an influencer reaches, but by how deeply those people trust them. Developers who internalise this principle and align their influencer strategies accordingly are likely to achieve superior experiential and behavioural outcomes.

5.4 Demographic Insights

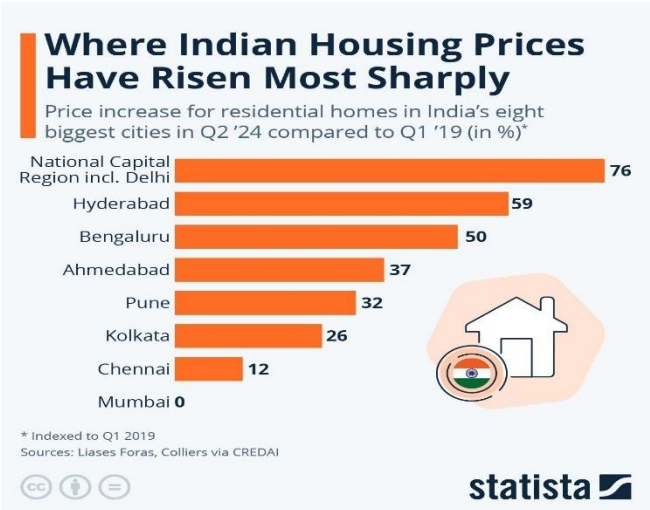


Figure 5.4 Demographic of Housing Prices Hike

The statistically significant differences observed across demographic groups—identified through ANOVA and independent sample t-tests—add an important layer of managerial precision to the broader structural model. While the core model establishes that social media marketing attributes (SMMA) influence customer brand experience (CBE) and behavioural intention (BI), the demographic analysis clarifies that these effects are not homogeneous. Instead, they vary systematically across age, income, and regional segments, implying that the effectiveness of specific marketing stimuli is contingent on audience characteristics. This has direct implications for segmentation strategy, content design, and media planning within the real estate sector.

From an age-based perspective, the divergence between younger consumers (18–35) and older consumers (36+) reflects deeper generational differences in digital behaviour, cognitive processing, and decision-making styles. Younger consumers demonstrate a stronger response to entertainment-driven and influencer-led content, indicating a preference for immersive, visually engaging, and socially validated experiences. This aligns with the concept of hedonic consumption, where emotional engagement and symbolic value play a central role in shaping perceptions. For this cohort, platforms such as Instagram and YouTube function not merely as information channels but as experience ecosystems, where brand interactions are embedded within broader lifestyle narratives.

Influencer marketing, in particular, resonates strongly with younger audiences due to their familiarity with parasocial relationships and their reliance on digital opinion leaders. These consumers are more likely to interpret influencer endorsements as relatable and aspirational cues, which enhances both affective engagement and perceived authenticity. Consequently, for projects targeting this demographic—such as entry-level apartments, co-living spaces, or urban

lifestyle developments—content strategies should prioritise short-form video, storytelling formats, influencer walkthroughs, and interactive engagement tools. The objective is to create a rich experiential interface that aligns with their media consumption habits and psychological drivers.

In contrast, older consumers (36+) exhibit a stronger preference for informativeness and trust-oriented content, reflecting a more utilitarian and risk-averse decision-making approach. This segment places greater emphasis on functional value, reliability, and long-term investment security, which is consistent with high-involvement purchase behaviour. For these consumers, brand experience is less about entertainment and more about clarity, transparency, and credibility. Detailed project specifications, legal documentation, construction updates, financing options, and developer track records are critical components of their evaluative process.

This distinction suggests that content strategies for older segments should emphasise depth over dynamism. Long-form content, expert-led explanations, testimonial evidence, and data-backed insights are likely to be more effective than visually driven or entertainment-heavy formats. Platforms such as YouTube and even LinkedIn may play a more significant role for this group, as they support information-rich and professionally oriented content ecosystems. Importantly, trust-building mechanisms—such as showcasing completed projects, customer reviews, and compliance certifications—become central to converting engagement into behavioural intention.

Income-based differences further complicate the segmentation landscape by introducing variability in purchase capacity, risk tolerance, and aspirational orientation. Lower-income consumers, often targeting affordable housing or government-supported schemes, tend to be more price-sensitive and risk-conscious. Their engagement with social media marketing is typically

driven by practical considerations, such as affordability, financing options, and proximity to essential services. For this segment, excessive emphasis on luxury imagery or aspirational narratives may create psychological distance rather than engagement.

Instead, effective strategies for lower-income groups should focus on value communication, transparency, and accessibility. Content that clearly explains pricing structures, subsidy eligibility, loan facilitation, and cost-benefit comparisons is likely to enhance both brand experience and trust. Additionally, vernacular language content and region-specific messaging can improve comprehension and relatability, particularly in non-metro markets. On the other end of the spectrum, high-income consumers evaluating premium or luxury developments exhibit different expectations.

For this segment, brand experience is closely tied to status signaling, exclusivity, and lifestyle alignment. Social media content must therefore reflect aesthetic sophistication, aspirational living standards, and differentiated value propositions. High-quality visuals, cinematic property tours, influencer collaborations with luxury lifestyle creators, and curated storytelling around design, amenities, and location prestige are critical in shaping perception.

However, even within this segment, trust remains a factor. Buyers are often more informed and discerning, and they may scrutinise claims more rigorously. Therefore, credibility must complement aspiration. Developers targeting this segment must balance visual appeal with evidence-based communication, such as architectural credentials, sustainability certifications, and delivery track records.

Regional differences introduce another dimension of complexity, particularly in a country as diverse as India. Consumers in metropolitan areas typically exhibit higher digital literacy, greater exposure to diverse content formats, and

more fragmented platform usage. They are likely to engage across multiple platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, and may respond well to sophisticated, multi-channel campaigns. Their expectations in terms of content quality, responsiveness, and personalisation are also higher.

In contrast, consumers in tier-2 and tier-3 cities often display more concentrated platform usage, with a strong reliance on messaging-based platforms and community-driven information exchange. Their content preferences may lean towards practicality, clarity, and local relevance, and they may place greater trust in peer recommendations and local influencers. Language also plays a critical role; regional language content can significantly enhance engagement and trust in these markets.

These regional variations underscore the importance of contextual adaptation in social media strategy. A one-size-fits-all approach is not only inefficient but potentially counterproductive, as it fails to align with the cognitive and cultural frameworks of different audience segments. Developers must therefore adopt a geo-segmented content strategy, tailoring messaging, format, and platform selection to the specific characteristics of each market.

Taken together, these demographic insights reinforce the necessity of true segmentation rather than superficial targeting. Segmentation should not be limited to demographic categorisation but should extend to behavioural and psychographic profiling, including platform usage patterns, content preferences, trust sensitivity, and decision-making styles. Advanced analytics and platform-level targeting tools can facilitate this by enabling microsegmentation and personalised content delivery.

From a strategic standpoint, the implication is clear: effectiveness in social media marketing is contingent on alignment between content attributes and audience characteristics. Developers who invest in granular audience

understanding can design differentiated content streams that optimise both experiential quality and trust for each segment. This, in turn, enhances the efficiency of marketing spend by ensuring that each interaction contributes meaningfully to the SMMA → CBE → BI pathway identified in the structural model.

Moreover, segmentation enables dynamic resource allocation, allowing developers to prioritise high-impact attributes for each segment. For example, budgets allocated to influencer collaborations may yield higher returns in younger segments, while investments in informational content and trust-building initiatives may be more effective for older or high-income segments. This targeted approach not only improves conversion outcomes but also reduces wastage associated with undifferentiated mass communication.

In conclusion, the demographic differences identified in the study provide actionable evidence that consumer heterogeneity must be at the centre of social media strategy design. Age, income, and regional context shape how consumers interpret, engage with, and respond to marketing stimuli.

Developers who operationalise these insights—through segmented content strategies, platform-specific engagement, and trust-integrated communication—will be better positioned to create meaningful brand experiences and drive behavioural intention across diverse market segments.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

6.1 What This Study Has Established

The present study was motivated by a seemingly straightforward inquiry: in what ways does social media marketing influence the decision-making processes of real estate consumers in India? However, as the empirical analysis unfolded, it became evident that the relationship is far more intricate than a direct cause-and-effect linkage. Rather than exerting an immediate impact on consumer behaviour, social media marketing operates through a layered and experience-driven mechanism. Specifically, key attributes of social media marketing—namely informativeness, entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and influencer marketing—do not independently drive purchase intention. Instead, they collectively contribute to shaping the overall quality of the consumer's brand experience, which in turn becomes the central pathway through which behavioural outcomes are formed.

This study demonstrates that customer brand experience functions as a critical mediating variable, translating marketing stimuli into meaningful psychological and emotional responses. When consumers encounter rich, engaging, and relevant social media content, they develop a more immersive and favourable perception of the brand. This experiential evaluation significantly enhances their likelihood of forming positive behavioural intentions, such as considering, preferring, or ultimately purchasing a property. In this sense, the effectiveness of social media marketing lies not merely in exposure but in the depth and quality of the interaction it facilitates.

In addition to this mediating mechanism, the study identifies customer brand trust as an important moderating factor that influences the strength of the

relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention. Trust, particularly in the context of high-involvement decisions such as real estate purchases, plays a pivotal role in determining whether positive experiences translate into actual intent. For consumers who exhibit a high level of trust in a brand, the impact of a favourable brand experience on purchase intention is significantly amplified. Conversely, in the absence of trust, even well-designed and engaging marketing efforts may fail to produce meaningful behavioural outcomes. This highlights the conditional nature of consumer responses, where trust acts as a reinforcing agent that enhances the effectiveness of experiential marketing strategies.

The findings of this study offer a theoretically grounded and empirically robust framework for understanding the consumer journey within the domain of Indian real estate social media marketing. Drawing on data collected from nearly five hundred respondents, the study employs a rigorously validated measurement model and applies Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to simultaneously examine direct, mediated, and moderated relationships. This comprehensive analytical approach ensures both methodological rigor and conceptual clarity.

Importantly, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. First, it conceptualizes influencer marketing as a distinct and measurable dimension of social media marketing and empirically tests its relevance within the Indian real estate context. Second, it reconceptualizes customer brand trust—not as a mediator, as often assumed in prior research, but as a moderator—thereby offering a more accurate representation of its role in high-risk, high-value purchase decisions. Third, it advances an integrated analytical model that combines both mediation and moderation effects, providing a more holistic understanding of consumer behaviour. Finally, it develops and

validates measurement scales tailored to the Indian real estate sector, thereby offering a valuable methodological foundation for future research in this field.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study make a meaningful contribution to the evolving literature on brand experience, particularly by extending its relevance into the relatively underexplored context of Indian real estate social media marketing. While prior research has consistently emphasized the importance of experiential quality across various industries and cultural settings, its application to real estate—especially within a digital and social media-driven environment—has remained limited. This study bridges that gap by demonstrating that the principles of brand experience are not only applicable but highly influential in shaping consumer responses in this sector.

Seminal works in the field, including those by J. Joško Brakus, Bernd Schmitt, and Lia Zarantonello (2009), as well as Peter C. Verhoef and colleagues (2009), have established that consumer experiences—sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural—play a central role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. Similarly, the Experience Economy framework introduced by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore highlights how businesses create value by staging memorable and engaging experiences rather than merely offering products or services.

Building on these foundational perspectives, the present study confirms that such experiential mechanisms are indeed operative in the context of Indian real estate marketing through social media platforms. More importantly, it goes a step further by offering a quantitative validation of the mediating role of customer brand experience. Rather than assuming that experience influences behaviour in a general sense, the study empirically demonstrates the extent to which social media marketing attributes—such as informativeness,

entertainment, and interactivity—translate into behavioural intention through experiential pathways. This provides a more precise and measurable understanding of how digital interactions shape consumer decision-making in high-involvement contexts like real estate.

In addition to advancing the brand experience literature, the study also contributes significantly to the understanding of consumer trust in digital environments. Trust has long been recognized as a critical determinant of online behaviour, particularly in contexts involving uncertainty and risk. However, much of the existing research has treated trust primarily as a direct predictor or, in some cases, as a mediating variable. This study offers a different and more nuanced perspective by positioning trust as a moderating variable—one that influences the strength of the relationship between brand experience and behavioural intention.

This finding extends the work of scholars such as Kashif Khan and Zillur Rahman (2016), Kuo-Lun Hsiao and colleagues (2010), and Meghna Bhandari and Shelly Rodgers (2018), all of whom have emphasized the importance of trust in digital commerce and online engagement. What this study adds is a clearer explanation of how trust operates within the consumer decision-making process. It shows that trust acts as a force multiplier, enhancing the impact of positive brand experiences. In practical terms, this means that when consumers trust a real estate brand, the positive impressions formed through social media interactions are far more likely to translate into concrete behavioural intentions, such as inquiry, site visits, or purchase consideration. Conversely, in low-trust situations, even well-crafted and engaging marketing content may fail to generate meaningful outcomes.

Another important contribution of the study lies in its treatment of influencer marketing. In recent years, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant

force within social media ecosystems, yet academic research has often treated it as part of a broader and less clearly defined category of social influence. This lack of conceptual clarity has limited the ability of researchers and practitioners to fully understand its distinct impact.

Responding to calls in the literature for a more precise examination of influence mechanisms, this study conceptualizes influencer marketing as a separate and measurable construct, rather than combining it with general user-generated or peer-based influence. This distinction is particularly important in the context of real estate, where influencers—such as property reviewers, lifestyle bloggers, and investment advisors—play a unique role in shaping perceptions and reducing information asymmetry.

By isolating influencer marketing as a distinct dimension, the study provides a more granular and actionable understanding of how different social media attributes contribute to consumer engagement and decision-making. This approach aligns with the realities of the contemporary digital marketplace, where the “influencer economy” has become highly structured, professionalized, and commercially significant. Brands increasingly collaborate with influencers as strategic partners, and understanding the specific impact of these collaborations is essential for effective marketing planning.

Taken together, these contributions offer a more integrated and nuanced view of social media marketing in the real estate sector. The study not only confirms existing theoretical insights but also refines and extends them by situating them within a specific, high-stakes context. It highlights the interconnected roles of experience, trust, and influence, and demonstrates how these elements collectively shape consumer behaviour in a digitally mediated environment.

In doing so, the research moves beyond broad generalizations and provides a detailed, evidence-based account of the mechanisms that drive marketing effectiveness. This not only enriches academic understanding but also offers practical implications for real estate marketers seeking to design more impactful and trust-oriented digital strategies.

6.3 Practical Implications for Real Estate Marketers

The practical implications emerging from this study are both clear and directly applicable to the strategic decisions of real estate marketers. At the most fundamental level, the findings suggest a shift in how social media performance should be evaluated. Traditionally, success has often been measured through metrics such as reach, impressions, or follower counts. However, this study demonstrates that such quantitative indicators, while useful, are not sufficient to explain or predict consumer behaviour. What ultimately matters is the quality of the brand experience that social media content creates. It is this experiential dimension—not the sheer volume or visibility of content—that drives meaningful behavioural outcomes, including purchase intention.

This insight has important implications for how marketing resources are allocated. Rather than focusing primarily on increasing content output or expanding audience reach, real estate firms should invest in designing content that delivers rich, engaging, and multidimensional brand experiences. For instance, high-resolution images, drone footage, and immersive video walkthroughs can stimulate the sensory dimension of experience, allowing potential buyers to visualize the property in a vivid and compelling way. Similarly, resident testimonials, customer stories, and community narratives can activate emotional and social connections, helping prospective buyers imagine themselves as part of a lived environment rather than simply evaluating a physical asset.

Equally important is the intellectual and functional dimension of the experience. Real estate decisions involve significant financial commitment and risk, making accurate and detailed information essential. Providing clear project specifications, transparent pricing, construction updates, and legal details can enhance consumers' confidence and reduce uncertainty. Regularly updated and easily accessible information signals professionalism and reliability, contributing to a more positive and trustworthy brand perception.

Another key implication relates to the strategic use of influencer collaborations. Rather than treating influencer marketing as a superficial promotional tactic, firms should view it as an extension of the brand experience. Influencers who have established credibility and trust with their audiences can act as effective intermediaries, translating brand messages into relatable and authentic narratives. When aligned with the target customer segment, such partnerships can significantly enhance the reach and impact of experiential content.

Beyond experience creation, the study highlights the critical role of brand trust as a factor that strengthens the effectiveness of all marketing efforts. Trust should not be seen as a secondary outcome or an abstract reputational benefit; instead, it must be treated as a core strategic objective of social media engagement. In the context of real estate—where concerns about delays, transparency, and reliability are common—trust becomes a decisive factor in determining whether positive brand experiences translate into actual purchase intentions.

Building trust requires consistent and deliberate actions. Transparent communication about project timelines, pricing, and potential challenges is essential. Prompt and helpful responses to customer inquiries demonstrate attentiveness and respect for consumer concerns. Even acknowledging delays or issues openly can strengthen credibility, as it signals honesty and

accountability. Over time, these practices accumulate into what may be described as “trust capital,” which enhances the impact of all subsequent marketing interactions.

Importantly, the study also offers valuable insights for small and medium-sized developers, who may not have access to the extensive budgets of large real estate corporations. The findings suggest that effective social media marketing is not primarily a function of financial scale but of strategic clarity and execution quality. By clearly identifying target customer segments, maintaining consistency in content delivery, and engaging authentically with potential buyers, smaller firms can compete effectively in the digital space.

Moreover, selecting influencer partners who genuinely resonate with the intended audience can yield better results than expensive but misaligned collaborations. Responsiveness to customer queries, attention to detail in communication, and a commitment to authenticity are all practices that are achievable regardless of organizational size.

In summary, the study encourages a reorientation of social media strategy in real estate—from a focus on visibility and volume to a focus on experience, trust, and meaningful engagement. Firms that prioritize these elements are more likely to build lasting relationships with consumers and achieve sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly digital and competitive marketplace

6.4 Limitations of the Study

Every empirical investigation, regardless of its rigor, operates within certain boundaries, and this study is no exception. Recognizing these limitations is essential not only for interpreting the findings with appropriate caution but also for guiding the direction of future research in this domain.

One of the primary constraints of the study lies in its **geographical focus**. The research is situated within the Indian context, with particular emphasis on Tamil Nadu. While this provides valuable insights into a rapidly growing and digitally active real estate market, it also limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other regions or countries without careful consideration. India itself is far from homogeneous. Differences in economic development, cultural norms, technological adoption, and urbanization levels across regions are substantial. For instance, consumer behaviour in a metropolitan, highly globalized market such as Mumbai may differ significantly from that in a tier-2 city like Coimbatore, where urbanization is progressing rapidly but still retains strong local and cultural influences. These regional variations can influence how consumers engage with social media, perceive real estate brands, and make purchase decisions. Therefore, while the study offers a robust framework, its applicability beyond the specific context examined should be approached with contextual sensitivity.

Another important limitation stems from the **cross-sectional nature** of the research design. The study captures consumer perceptions, attitudes, and intentions at a single point in time. While this approach is effective for identifying relationships among variables, it does not account for how these relationships may evolve. Social media platforms are continuously changing—new features are introduced, algorithms are updated, and user behaviour adapts accordingly. At the same time, broader market conditions, such as interest rates, regulatory changes, and economic cycles, also influence real estate decisions. Additionally, generational shifts play a role, as younger, digitally native consumers enter the housing market with different expectations and behaviours compared to previous generations. A longitudinal research design, which tracks changes over time, would provide deeper insights into how consumer responses to social media marketing develop and

transform. Such an approach could reveal whether the observed relationships are stable or subject to fluctuation as external conditions change.

The study also relies on **self-reported data**, a common and widely accepted method in behavioural research, but one that carries inherent limitations. Respondents' answers may be influenced by social desirability bias, where individuals provide responses they believe are more acceptable or favourable rather than fully accurate. Recall error is another concern, as participants may not precisely remember their past interactions with social media content or their decision-making processes. Perhaps most importantly, there is a well-documented gap between what people say they intend to do and what they actually do in practice. In the context of real estate, where decisions are complex and often influenced by multiple external factors, this gap can be particularly pronounced. Future studies could strengthen the robustness of findings by incorporating **behavioural data**, such as actual engagement metrics from social media platforms, verified transaction records, or longitudinal tracking that compares stated intentions with eventual actions. Combining survey-based insights with real-world behavioural evidence would offer a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour.

A further limitation relates to the **role of platform algorithms**, which the current study does not explicitly incorporate. Social media is not a neutral channel through which content flows uniformly to all users. Instead, it is a highly curated environment where algorithms determine what content is shown, to whom, and at what time. These algorithms are designed to optimize engagement, often prioritizing content that aligns with users' past behaviour and preferences. As a result, two consumers following the same brand may be exposed to entirely different sets of content, leading to variations in their experiences and perceptions. By not accounting for this algorithmic mediation,

the study assumes a more uniform exposure to marketing stimuli than may actually exist in practice. Future research could address this gap by examining how algorithmic filtering influences the visibility and impact of social media marketing efforts, thereby providing a more nuanced and realistic representation of the digital consumer journey.

6.5 Directions for Future Research

The empirical findings of this study, when considered alongside its acknowledged limitations, open up a broad and meaningful agenda for future research. Rather than representing a final conclusion, the study can be viewed as a structured starting point—one that identifies key mechanisms while also revealing areas where deeper, more nuanced investigation is both necessary and promising.

One of the most immediate directions for future inquiry lies in **platform-specific analysis**. The current research treats social media as a relatively unified environment, examining its overall influence on consumer behaviour. In practice, however, different platforms operate with distinct content formats, user expectations, and engagement logics. For example, visual storytelling dominates platforms like Instagram, while long-form explanatory content is more characteristic of YouTube. Similarly, community-driven interaction is prominent on Facebook, whereas direct and personalized communication often takes place via WhatsApp. Emerging platforms such as TikTok introduce yet another dynamic, emphasizing short-form, highly engaging video content.

A comparative, platform-specific approach would allow researchers to examine whether the relationships identified in this study—between social media marketing attributes, brand experience, and behavioural intention—hold consistently across these environments or vary in meaningful ways. Such work could reveal, for instance, whether entertainment plays a stronger role on

visually driven platforms, or whether informativeness is more influential in long-form content spaces. This would not only refine theoretical understanding but also provide highly actionable insights for practitioners seeking to optimize platform-specific strategies.

Another valuable direction involves **cross-sectoral comparative research**. While the present study focuses on real estate, many of the underlying characteristics—high financial commitment, perceived risk, and the importance of trust—are shared by other sectors. Industries such as automobile purchasing, financial services, and luxury goods offer relevant points of comparison. By examining whether the same model operates similarly across these sectors, researchers can identify which elements of the framework are **context-specific** and which represent more generalizable principles of social media marketing. For example, trust may play a consistently strong moderating role across all high-involvement sectors, whereas the relative importance of influencer marketing might vary depending on the nature of the product and the decision-making process involved. Such comparative analysis would help delineate the boundaries of the model's applicability.

A particularly promising avenue for deeper insight is **longitudinal research**. The current study captures consumer attitudes and intentions at a single moment, but real estate decision-making unfolds over an extended period. A longitudinal design that follows the same individuals from initial awareness through consideration, evaluation, purchase, and even post-purchase advocacy would provide a much richer understanding of how consumer perceptions evolve. It would also allow researchers to identify **critical touchpoints**—specific stages in the journey where certain social media marketing attributes exert the greatest influence. For instance, informativeness may be most important during the evaluation phase, while emotional engagement and trust

may become more decisive closer to the purchase stage. Understanding these temporal dynamics would significantly enhance both theoretical precision and managerial relevance.

In addition to focusing on consumers, future research would benefit from incorporating the **seller-side perspective**. The present study examines how consumers respond to social media marketing, but it does not fully explore how real estate developers, agents, and individual property owners design and implement their digital strategies. Small and medium-sized developers, in particular, often operate under resource constraints and must make strategic decisions about where and how to invest their limited marketing budgets. Investigating their decision frameworks, content strategies, and operational challenges would provide a more comprehensive view of the social media real estate ecosystem. Such research could also reveal mismatches between what consumers value and what marketers prioritize, offering opportunities for more effective alignment.

Finally, the rapid advancement of digital technologies suggests that the conceptual framework developed in this study will need to evolve. Innovations associated with Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, and Blockchain are beginning to reshape both social media platforms and real estate transactions. AI-driven personalization can deliver highly tailored property recommendations, enhancing relevance and engagement. AR technologies enable immersive virtual tours that simulate physical site visits, enriching the sensory and experiential dimensions of branding. Blockchain, by increasing transparency and security in transactions, has the potential to strengthen trust in ways that traditional systems cannot easily replicate.

These technological developments introduce new layers to both **brand experience and trust formation**, suggesting that future models must

incorporate them explicitly. As these tools become more widely adopted, they are likely to redefine how consumers interact with real estate brands and how decisions are made.

6.6 A Final Reflection

At its heart, the story of social media in Indian real estate is really a story about trust. Buying a home is not like buying most other products. It involves a huge financial commitment, a long-term emotional investment, and often a fair amount of uncertainty. For many people, it is one of the biggest decisions they will ever make. In such a situation, buyers are naturally cautious. They want reliable information, honest communication, and reassurance that they are making the right choice. This is where social media has quietly but powerfully changed the landscape. People are not drawn to it only because it is fast or convenient, but because it feels more real. On these platforms, potential buyers can see how others have experienced a project, heard genuine opinions, and observed how developers respond in public. A comment left unanswered, a complaint handled well, or a transparent update about a delay—these moments shape perception in ways that traditional advertisements never could. Social media has created a space where brands are continuously visible and, more importantly, continuously accountable.

There is also a sense of shared journey that social media brings into the home-buying process. Buyers are no longer navigating the decision alone. They are part of a wider community of people who are asking similar questions, facing similar doubts, and sharing their experiences. This collective voice often feels more trustworthy than polished marketing messages. It reduces the sense of risk and gives individuals more confidence as they move forward in their decision-making process.

For real estate developers, this shift carries an important message. Social media should not be treated simply as another advertising platform where properties are showcased and promoted. Every post, every video, every collaboration with an influencer, and every reply to a customer query plays a deeper role. These are not just marketing activities; they are moments where trust is either built or weakened. Over time, these small interactions accumulate and shape how a brand is perceived in the market. Developers who recognize this are likely to stand apart. When they focus on being transparent, responsive, and consistent, they begin to build something more enduring than short-term sales—they build credibility. In a market where scepticism often exists, this credibility becomes a powerful differentiator. Buyers tend to remember brands that communicate honestly, address concerns openly, and engage with their audience in a genuine manner.

The insights from this study reinforce this understanding. They show clearly that social media marketing in real estate does have an impact, but not in a straightforward or superficial way. It does not work simply by increasing visibility or pushing more content into the market. Its effectiveness lies in the experiences it creates for consumers. When people interact with meaningful, engaging, and informative content, they develop a stronger connection with the brand.

However, that connection alone is not enough. For it to translate into real decisions—such as visiting a site, making an inquiry, or committing to a purchase—trust must be present. Trust strengthens the effect of these experiences. It gives buyers the confidence to act on the impressions they have formed. Without trust, even the most engaging content may fail to lead to action.

This leads to a simple but powerful takeaway. Social media marketing in real estate works, but it works through experience, and experience becomes

effective only when it is supported by trust. Developers who consistently invest in creating meaningful experiences and nurturing trust will be in a stronger position to turn online engagement into real-world outcomes. Over time, this approach not only drives transactions but also builds lasting relationships with customers—relationships that are essential for sustained success in a competitive and evolving industry.

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