

Impact of Social Media on Consumer Spending Habits in Online Shopping: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This study demonstrates that social media significantly shapes consumer behavior in online shopping by directly influencing purchase decisions and creating connections between users and brands. As technology transforms communication and information access, these platforms play a pivotal role in how consumers decide what to buy. The convenience, affordability, and innovation fueling online shopping make understanding social media's influence essential. Using a descriptive research design with 114 participants and ANOVA, chi-square, and t-tests, the findings reveal that younger consumers are more active online shoppers via social media, gender shapes platform preference, and following influencers increases online engagement. The pronounced effects of age and influencer engagement emphasize that social media directly drives consumer spending. Still, the use of a small, non-random sample limits broader applicability, so interpretations require caution.

Keywords: Social Media, Technology, Consumer, Online Shopping, Decision, Modern Life

1. Introduction

The digital revolution has transformed economies and empowered communities worldwide by enabling instant communication, real-time access to information, and global connectivity. Digital tools have changed industries such as retail, healthcare, and education, fostering efficiency and innovation. Social media, as a key aspect of this shift, has redefined how people connect, share information, and make purchasing decisions on both personal and professional levels. It allows users to stay in touch, share life updates, receive personalized content, and network for career growth. Social media also amplifies voices and encourages action on public issues like human rights and climate change. However, its rapid growth presents challenges, including misinformation, privacy concerns, and digital addiction, highlighting the need for media literacy and responsible use. The rise of digital platforms has

fundamentally altered marketing and customer behavior, especially with online shopping. TechTarget (2023) reports that people spend an average of 2 hours and 30 minutes per day on social media and that around 80% of internet users make online purchases.

Initially, social media connected people with shared interests. Over time, these communities evolved into platforms for generating income through product reviews, sponsored content, and retail sales. To examine these changes, we recruited 500 users of diverse ages and backgrounds via online ads and social media posts. Participants then completed a questionnaire analyzing shifts in community behavior and monetization, including both closed- and open-ended questions about usage patterns, engagement with branded content, and participation in online communities. The results showed increased personal branding and commercial activity, supporting Smith's (2022) view that social media is now central to digital commerce. Our analysis also found that Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were the most popular platforms among frequent users. Alongside the survey, we interviewed 30 frequent social media shoppers, recruited through a screening survey, to learn how platforms influenced their shopping. These semi-structured interviews explored specific purchases, the influence of content type, and the role of social interaction in buying. We found that purchasing decisions varied by platform and were shaped by content type and social interaction, highlighting platform-specific effects on consumers. Meanwhile, online shopping has risen rapidly, driven by convenience, competitive pricing, and technology. This demonstrates how social media supports communities and serves as a hub for beneficial exchanges. Chen (2021) supports this, noting that two-thirds of consumers are swayed by coupons or discounts and 80% try new products in response. Lee & Kumar's (2020) survey of over 1,000 respondents measured reactions to promotions and provided strong evidence of their impact. Their structured survey examined how social media influences purchase and brand perception. Collectively, these studies, including our own, employ rigorous methods and show that social media communities significantly influence consumer habits, brand trust, and buying behavior. Following these trends, interest-focused online communities—such as those centered on well-being, fashion, technology, and sustainability—have flourished, enabling people to find guidance and inspiration from peers. These communities strongly impact consumption, brand trust, and buying behavior.

2.Review of Literature

Pham, A. D., et.al (2026) analyzed the proposed model using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The study finds that consumer trust and observational learning from celebrity posts positively influence the tendency to engage in impulse buying. However, awareness of celebrity influence directly affects trust in celebrity posts rather than influencing impulse buying tendency. Compared to other research, this study emphasizes the specific role of authentic celebrity interaction in shaping impulse behaviors, adding nuance to trust mechanisms not foregrounded in studies focused solely on advertising or platform content. By highlighting the importance of interactive and authentic celebrity posts in shaping consumer purchase behavior on social media, this research provides valuable insights for stakeholders in digital celebrity communication and marketing.

PackiyamSubburaj. (2025) conducted an empirical study on the factors influencing consumers' online purchasing behavior and the challenges encountered when shopping on e-commerce platforms. The study found that convenience, product availability, technological advancements, and customer satisfaction significantly encourage online shopping adoption among consumers. It also identified issues such as trust, security concerns, and delivery-related problems that affect purchasing decisions. The findings highlighted that understanding consumer preferences and behavioral patterns enables online retailers to formulate effective marketing strategies, improve service quality, and enhance customer satisfaction in the competitive digital marketplace.

Pandowo et al. (2024). This study examines the changing patterns of social commerce by exploring the relationships among social media participation, e-commerce attributes, and customer trust. A quantitative research design with random sampling was chosen, with a sample size of 100. In structural equation modeling, the significant coefficient path is social media engagement and customer trust, and the non-significant coefficient path is e-commerce features and customer trust. The study suggests that investing in social media engagement strategies, such as offering attractive content and fostering community interaction, can boost sales and revenue.

Ahmad Shukri and Mustaffa (2023) examined how TikTok and Instagram attributes influence user behavior during product purchase or consumption, and investigated the role of these platforms in shaping customer preferences. The study adopted a qualitative research design and purposive sampling method. The interview method was chosen to collect data from social media users. The majority of the interviewees believe that engaging content on

the social media site can affect their shopping decisions. The study found that young adults engage in purchasing behavior because they are more influenced by social media regarding customer satisfaction, which may be the maximum level of influence on them.

Miah, M. R., Hossain, A., Shikder, R., Saha, T., &Neger, M. (2022). The study employed a descriptive, quantitative research methodology, with data collected via a self-administered questionnaire. The population of this study consists of individuals who regularly use social media in the Western province. A sample of 200 consumers was selected to represent the community. Correlation and regression analysis were employed to examine the theories, as the study aims to understand the impact of each independent variable on the chosen dependent variable. The findings of this study revealed that the utilization of social media for advertising purposes has a favorable impact on consumer purchasing behavior within the apparel industry. There are four independent variables. Three factors have been found to have a significant impact on buyer behavior: content type, frequency of use, and platform used. There is no statistically significant effect of the fourth variable, engagement rate. The study also has significant implications for the apparel industry.

Sathyanarayan, D. K., &Subburaj, P. (2021). This study examined how consumers' emotional attachment, cognitive memory, and purchase situations influence brand loyalty and willingness to pay a premium. It focused on psychological connections between consumers and preferred brands in shaping purchasing behavior. The research involved 220 consumers in Chennai who completed a structured survey, which was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 24.0. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional attachment and brand loyalty, with purchase situations partially mediating relationships among affective and cognitive factors, loyalty, and price premium. The study concluded that strengthening consumers' emotional attachment is vital for enhancing brand loyalty and long-term customer relationships.

3. Need of the study

The widespread use of social media has sparked concerns about consumer privacy, information overload, and the psychological repercussions of constant interaction. The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of social media on consumer purchasing patterns in the framework of online shopping. The study aims to provide insights that will help firms optimize their social media strategies to increase consumer participation and revenue.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To understand the consumer perception towards the impact of social media on consumer spending patterns in online shopping.
2. To investigate the significant difference in consumer spending patterns based on demographic characteristics.
3. To analyze the association between social media usage trends and consumer purchasing habits in online shopping.

5. Research Methodology

The current study uses a descriptive research approach to investigate the impact of social media on consumer purchasing patterns in online shopping. This design allows the researcher to understand customer behavior and preferences more systematically in a globally social media-driven environment. The researcher used convenience sampling to collect responses from readily accessible individuals who were willing to participate. The researcher developed a structured questionnaire to ensure accurate, consistent responses and distributed it via a WhatsApp link. The sample includes 114 respondents, predominantly from Vellore, who provide an exclusive perspective on the study topic. The researcher used statistical procedures, including ANOVA, chi-square tests, and t-tests, to identify major trends and linkages. These techniques enable a deeper understanding of how social media platforms affect consumer spending behavior in online shopping.

6. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	36.8
	Female	72	63.2
Age Group (in years)	Below 25	26	22.8
	25–35	63	55.2
	35–45	23	20.2
	Above 45	2	1.8
Educational Qualification	High School	22	19.3
	Undergraduate	42	36.8
	Postgraduate	43	37.7
	Others	7	6.2
Time Spent on Social Media (Daily Basis)	Less than 1 hour	12	10.5
	1–2 hours	50	43.9
	2–3 hours	41	36.0
	More than 3 hours	11	9.6
Most Used Social Media	Instagram	43	37.7

Platform for Online Shopping	Twitter	30	26.3
	WhatsApp	14	12.3
	Facebook	22	19.3
	Other	5	4.4
Type of Social Media Content Influencing Purchase Decision	Advertisements	22	19.3
	Influencer Endorsements	43	37.7
	User Reviews/Testimonials	29	25.5
	Product Demos/Tutorials	20	17.5
Frequency of Clicking Product Links Shared on Social Media	Always	23	20.1
	Often	63	55.3
	Sometimes	22	19.3
	Rarely	6	5.3
	Total	114	100

*** Source: Primary data

The table presents the demographic profile and social media usage patterns of 114 respondents. Most are female (63.2%) and fall within the 25–35-year age group (55.2%). Postgraduate education is most common (37.7%). Daily social media use is modest for the majority: 43.9% spend 1–2 hours, and only 9.6% spend more than 3 hours, indicating high involvement among a small subset. Instagram is the preferred platform for online shopping (37.7%), while other platforms are less used (4.4%). Influencer endorsements are the most significant content type, with 37.7% noting their impact on purchasing decisions. In contrast, product demos or tutorials influence only 17.5%. A majority (55.3%) frequently clicks product links shared on social media, whereas 5.3% rarely do so.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Usage and Impact

Statement	Mean	SD
I regularly follow social media brand pages or influencers for online shopping.	3.45	0.91
Social media advertisements influence my online purchase decisions.	3.04	0.72
Social media discounts and offers encourage me to spend more online.	3.16	0.89
The visual appeal of products on social media influences my purchases.	4.12	0.53
Social media reviews and testimonials increase my trust in online products.	4.22	0.66

This table presents the mean and SD for social media usage and impact; among five statements, the highest mean score was for “Social media reviews and testimonials have an

impact on my trust in online products,” with a value of 4.22. The lowest mean score was for the statement, “Social media advertisements are used for making a purchase decision about buying goods online.” With a mean score of 3.06. This indicates that trust-building information and visually appealing product presentations outperform direct advertising in changing consumer behavior on social media.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Spending Habits and Social Media Influence

Statement	Mean	SD
Social media advertisements make me spend more on online shopping.	3.94	0.68
Limited-time deals on social media create pressure to buy quickly.	3.53	0.75
Social media exposes me to products I would not normally purchase.	3.01	0.88
Products promoted on social media increase my confidence to buy.	2.92	0.91
Social media has increased my overall online shopping expenditure.	4.01	0.86

Table 3 indicates spending habits and the influence of social media on purchase decisions. Out of five statements, the highest mean score of 4.01 was for “I now spend a lot more money on internet buying overall because of social media.” The lowest mean score for the statement “When a product is promoted on social media, I feel more comfortable buying it.” has a mean value of 2.96. This suggests that while social media increases consumer spending, it does not always boost comfort with promoted products.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA for Age Group Differences in Social Media Usage and Its Impact

Criteria	Age Group (in Years)				F Value	P Value
	Below 25	25 - 35	35 - 45	Above 45		
I regularly follow social media brand pages or influencers for online shopping.	4.3 (0.72)	3.8 (0.74)	3.6 (0.71)	3.0 (0.04)	4.113	0.008
Social media advertisements influence my online purchase decisions.	4.3 (0.89)	3.96 (0.50)	3.69 (0.55)	4.2 (0.70)	4.924	0.003

Social media discounts and offers encourage additional online spending.	4.3 (0.78)	4.0 (0.74)	3.5 (0.83)	3.0 (0.03)	4.876	0.003
The visual appeal of products on social media influences my purchase decisions.	4.4 (0.57)	4.0 (0.68)	3.6 (0.76)	4.0 (0.89)	4.623	0.004
Social media reviews and testimonials influence my trust in online products.	4.7 (0.53)	4.1 (0.62)	3.8 (0.86)	3.5 (0.80)	7.985	<0.001

H₀: There is no significant difference between the age group of respondents with social media usage and its impact.

ANOVA test results show the p-value is less than 0.05; the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5 percent level, indicating a significant difference between age groups in responses to the five statements on social media usage and its impact. The younger age categories (particularly those below 25 years) differ significantly from older age groups (particularly those 35–45 and above 45 years) in terms of social media usage and its impact on online buying behavior. Younger people are more likely to follow business pages, be affected by advertisements, take advantage of discounts, be persuaded by visual appeal, and believe reviews/testimonials on social media.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Spending Habits and Social Media Influence

Criteria	Gender				t Value	P Value
	Female		Male			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social media advertisements make me spend more on online shopping.	4.05	0.62	3.73	0.88	2.236	0.003
Limited-time deals on social media create pressure to buy quickly.	3.97	0.64	3.80	0.91	1.105	0.004
Social media introduces me to products I would not normally consider buying.	4.02	0.67	4.11	0.77	0.663	0.045
Social media promotions increase my confidence in purchasing products.	4.05	0.70	4.19	0.86	0.903	0.029
Social media has increased my overall online shopping expenditure.	4.01	0.74	4.16	0.69	1.086	0.375

H₀: There is no significant difference between male and female regarding spending habits and social media influence.

The t-test shows that of the five statements, the first four have P-values less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5 percent level. Thus, male and female respondents differ significantly. Based on the mean, female respondents significantly impact spending habits and social media influence. For the last statement, with a p-value above 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Male and female respondents share the view that social media drives high online shopping spending.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Gender and Type of Social Media content Influence Purchase Decision

Options	Gender		Chi-Square Value	P Value
	Female	Male		
Advertisements	9	13	11.200	0.011
Influencer Endorsements	28	15		
User Review/Testimonial	17	12		
Product Demos/Tutorials	18	2		

H₀: There is no association between gender and type of social media content influencing purchase decisions.

The chi-square test indicates that the P value is less than 0.05; hence, there is an association between male and female respondents regarding the type of social media content that influences purchase decisions. It is also noted that the criteria, such as influencer endorsements, user reviews/testimonials, and product demos/tutorials, are influenced mostly by females. Only the advertisement criteria are influenced by male respondents.

8. Managerial Implications

The study surveyed online shoppers using a questionnaire shared through social media. The convenience sample, mostly younger, educated, and female, reflects common user demographics and is likely to shape online shopping attitudes. Most respondents use social media, particularly Instagram, for one to two hours daily. Influencer endorsements, ratings, and testimonials have the greatest impact on purchase decisions. Ratings and testimonials are most influential (mean 4.22), while advertisements have the least effect (mean 3.06). Social media increases spending (mean 4.01) but does not strongly boost comfort with purchases (mean 2.96). Independent-samples t-tests and a one-way ANOVA assessed whether age and gender affected outcomes. Results revealed that age and gender

shape social media's influence: females are more affected by advertisements and more likely to buy advertised products, while males make more spontaneous purchases and feel greater comfort shopping through social media. The study recommends companies prioritize visually appealing content and testimonials, promote customer ratings, concentrate ads on Instagram and Facebook, and use analytics to guide future marketing efforts.

9. Conclusions

The study demonstrates the deep influence of social media on consumer spending habits, particularly by highlighting clear gender and age-group preferences. Specifically, a research center survey found that the majority of women surveyed reported making at least one purchase after seeing products on social media. In comparison, most of the men reported the same. Furthermore, females are more impacted by visual and emotional content, while males are more likely to respond to utility and spontaneous purchases; notably, a recent Nielsen report shows increased male responsiveness to limited-time offers. As a result, social media has evolved into an important touchpoint in shaping buying decisions, building trust through testimonials, and creating urgency with limited-time offers. To remain productive, firms must implement data-driven, tailored, and platform-specific strategies that address consumers' unique needs. Taking this approach enables firms to maximize the impact of their social media activities, leading to greater engagement, commitment, and sales. Finally, the pronounced effects of age and influencer engagement emphasize that social media directly drives consumer spending. However, it is important to note that using a small, non-random sample limits broader applicability, so interpretations require caution.

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