

The Role of Digital and Social Media Marketing in Shaping Consumer Purchasing Decisions

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Abstract

Digital marketing and social media marketing significantly influence consumer buying behaviour. Advances in technology have transformed how consumers and businesses connect through digital platforms such as social media, online marketplaces, and mobile applications. These platforms provide easy access to product information, customer feedback, and price comparisons, which play an important role in shaping purchase decisions. This study aims to analyze the relationship between digital and social media marketing and consumers' online purchasing behaviour. It examines the effects of various online marketing activities, including social media advertising, email marketing, influencer promotions, and online reviews, on consumer decision-making. The study also investigates how social media platforms enhance digital marketing effectiveness and how consumers respond to advertisements on these platforms. The findings will offer valuable insights into digital and social media marketing practices, helping businesses better understand consumer behaviour and develop effective strategies to improve sales and profitability. Additionally, the research contributes to existing literature by expanding knowledge of online consumer purchasing behaviour and the role of digital and social media marketing in consumer decision-making.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Decision-Making, Influencer Marketing, Online Reviews

Introduction

With the rapid development of Internet technology, social media has become an integral part of modern society. From the earliest blogs and forums to today's platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., social media has experienced rapid evolution and popularity in just over a decade. According to the latest statistics, more than 4 billion people worldwide use social media, accounting for more than 50 per cent of the global population. In the traditional purchasing decision-making process, consumers usually rely on adverts, friends' recommendations and product reviews for information. However, the rise of social media has changed this paradigm forever. Consumers can now access richer and more diverse information through social media platforms, such as user reviews, product reviews, and influencer recommendations. At the same time, social media provides a platform for companies to interact directly with consumers, making marketing more precise and personalised. It is of great practical significance to study the impact of social media on consumers' purchasing decisions. Understanding this impact can not only help enterprises optimise their marketing strategies and improve market competitiveness, but also provide consumers with a more convenient and personalised shopping experience. In this paper, we will systematically review the existing research

1National Conference On “Contemporary Issues In Global Business Management Practices”25 &26 February,2026 by University Arts & Science College (Autonomous), Kakatiya University.

results, explore the specific impact of social media in the various stages of consumer purchasing decisions, and analyse the challenges and future development direction of social media marketing.

Definition and classification of social media

Social Media (SM) is an Internet-based application platform that allows users to create, share and exchange content. It encompasses a variety of online platforms and tools designed to facilitate interaction between users and the dissemination of information. The core features of Social Media include User-Generated Content (UGC), interactivity and immediacy. UGC refers to information created and shared by users in the form of text, images, videos, etc.; interactivity emphasises communication and feedback between users; and immediacy reflects the rapid and widespread dissemination of information. Based on their functions and uses, social media can be broadly categorised into social networks, microblogging platforms, photo and video sharing platforms, blogs and content communities, instant messaging applications and interest-based social platforms

Social media plays a variety of roles in modern society, with diverse functions that provide users with rich experiences and interactive opportunities. Information sharing, social media is the main platform for information sharing, users can share their personal life, insights, opinions and interests by posting text, pictures, videos and other forms. Social interaction, one of the core functions of social media is to promote interaction between users. Users can communicate with others by liking, commenting, sharing, private messaging and so on. Entertainment, social media platforms offer a wide range of entertainment content such as funny videos, games, music and live streaming. Users can spend time and relax by browsing and engaging with these contents. Content creation and presentation, social media provides a platform for users to showcase themselves and their creative talents. Whether it is photography, writing, music composition or video production, users can share their work through social media to gain recognition and feedback from others. Online shopping and marketing, social media is increasingly becoming an important e-commerce and marketing tool. Businesses can market on social media through advertisements, promotional campaigns, and product demonstrations, interacting directly with consumers.



Figure 1 Benefits of social media marketing

Impact of social media on purchasing decisions

Impact of the problem identification phase Social media plays a key role in the first stage of a consumer's buying decision - the problem identification stage - significantly influencing the consumer's perception of needs and problems. Below are the key influences of social media at this stage:



Figure 2 Impact of the problem identification phase

(1) Advertising and promotion Targeted advertising, where social media platforms use data analytics and algorithmic recommendations to precisely push ads to users that match their interests and needs[3]. These personalised advertisements can quickly draw consumers' attention and make them aware of potential needs. Brand promotion, companies use social media platforms to carry out various forms of brand promotion activities, such as promotions, coupons and lucky draws, etc. These activities are effective in attracting consumers' interest and prompting them to make purchases.

(2) User Generated Content (UGC) Reviews and testimonials, user reviews and testimonials on social media are important references for other users. Positive experience sharing and testimonials can pique the interest of other consumers and make them realise that they may have the same needs[4]. User stories and lifestyle displays. Users share their lifestyles, hobbies and daily activities through social media, which can subconsciously influence other users' perception of their needs.

(3) Social interaction and influencer marketing The influence of social circles, where users interact with friends, family and colleagues on social media, can significantly influence their problem identification. For example, a friend's shared experience of a newly purchased product or service may make a user realise that he or she has a similar need. Influencer and celebrity effect, influencers and celebrities on social media can quickly attract a lot of attention and inspire fans to buy by showing and recommending products.

Impact of the information-seeking phase

In the information search stage, consumers actively seek relevant information that addresses their needs. Social media provides a wealth of resources and tools at this stage, significantly influencing how consumers obtain information and their decision-making process.

(1) User Generated Content (UGC) Reviews and ratings, consumers on social media often check reviews and ratings of products or services by other users. These real-life experiences and feedbacks provide consumers with valuable

(1) Instant promotions and offers Limited-time discounts and promotions, limited-time discounts, group buys, and promotions commonly found on social media platforms can quickly capture consumers' attention and prompt them to place an immediate order. Coupons and discount codes, brands and retailers often post coupons and discount codes on social media to encourage consumers to make purchases within a specific time frame.

(2) Social authentication and trust Friends and Influencers Recommendations, Consumers often refer to recommendations from friends and influencers on social media when making their final purchase decision. These testimonials add credibility and appeal to the product, giving consumers more confidence to make a purchase. Usergenerated content, in which real users share their purchasing and usage experiences, such as "sunshine" posts and experience videos, can further enhance consumers' trust in the product.

(3) Instant communication and interaction Real-time customer service and online counselling, many brands offer real-time customer service and online counselling services on social media platforms to help consumers answer questions and provide purchase advice. Interaction and feedback. Consumers can interact directly with brands through social media to get instant feedback and support. This interaction not only improves consumer satisfaction, but also increases their confidence in purchasing.

Impact of post-purchase behavioural stages

Social media continues to have a significant impact on consumers' post-purchase behaviour after they have completed their purchase, a stage that typically covers the sharing of product experiences, the building of brand loyalty and the impact on brand word-of-mouth. Below are the key influences of social media in the post-purchase behaviour phase: (1) User feedback and evaluation Product experience sharing, after purchase, consumers tend to share their product experience through social media. Sharing can be shown in the form of text, photos, videos, etc. to convey real product information and personal opinions to other users. Ratings and reviews, posting product ratings and reviews on shopping sites and social platforms has become an important way for consumers to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product. (2) Brand interaction and customer service Social media customer service, brands provide quick response and problem solving customer service on social media, enhancing consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Brand content and updates, brands use social media platforms to continuously provide consumers with information such as product updates, usage tips, and special offers, which enhances consumer attention and engagement with the brand. (3) Social Sharing and Impact Dissemination Through sunshots and usage tips, consumers show their approval of the product and usage scenarios through sunshots and detailed usage tips sharing. This social sharing not only increases product exposure, but also strengthens the trust and interest of other consumers in the product. Word-of-mouth communication and influence, influencers and opinion leaders on social media continue to influence product word-of-mouth and market perceptions through their authority and broad fan base.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, social media has fundamentally reshaped consumer purchasing decision-making processes by influencing every stage, from problem identification to post-purchase behavior. Through targeted advertising, user-generated content, and social interaction, social media effectively stimulates consumer needs and provides rich information for evaluation. Real-time communication and personalized marketing strategies further enhance consumer confidence and convenience. Additionally, post-purchase sharing and online word-of-mouth amplify brand visibility and credibility, reinforcing long-term consumer relationships. As social media continues to evolve, its role in shaping consumer behavior will become increasingly significant. Therefore, businesses must strategically leverage social media platforms to engage consumers effectively, while consumers should remain aware of the influence social media exerts on their purchasing decisions.

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4National Conference On “*Contemporary Issues In Global Business Management Practices*”25 &26 February,2026 by University Arts & Science College (Autonomous), Kakatiya University.

United International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN: 3048-6726(UIJMR)Impact Factor: 6.934 (SJIF)

An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Multidisciplinary Journal

www.ujmr.in Vol-3, SpecialIssue-2,2026

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