
Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Trust and Sustainable Buying Behaviour: An Empirical Study of Digital Consumers in Hyderabad

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Abstract

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has emerged as a powerful tool influencing consumer perceptions, engagement, and purchasing decisions in the digital economy. While existing studies have broadly examined engagement metrics and brand awareness, limited empirical research integrates social media marketing practices with consumer trust and sustainable buying behaviour, particularly in the Indian context. In this paper I would like to examine the impact of social media marketing content credibility and perceived transparency on consumer trust, sustainable buying behaviour, and purchase intention among digital consumers in Hyderabad. The Primary data were collected from 250 social media users using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis were employed for analysis. From my findings it reveals that credible and transparent social media marketing significantly enhances consumer trust, which in turn positively influences sustainable buying behaviour and purchase intention. The study also offers valuable insights for marketers and policymakers in designing ethical and sustainability-driven digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Buying Behaviour, Transparency, Digital Consumers.

1. Introduction

The rapid penetration of digital technologies and social platforms has transformed the marketing landscape in India. Social media marketing enables firms to interact directly with consumers, communicate brand values, and influence purchasing decisions in real time. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X (Twitter) have become vital channels for brand communication and consumer engagement.

Consumer Trust plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of social media marketing efforts. Trust is particularly important in a digital environment where consumers are exposed to information asymmetry, misinformation, and data privacy concerns (Gefen et al., 2003). At the same time, rising awareness about environmental sustainability and ethical consumption has influenced consumers to prefer brands that promote responsible and transparent marketing practices (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

Despite the growing relevance of sustainability, most social media marketing studies focus on short-term engagement metrics rather than long-term sustainability buying behaviour. This study addresses this gap by empirically examining how social media marketing content credibility and perceived transparency influence consumer trust and sustainable buying behaviour among Indian digital Consumers.

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2. Review of Literature

Author(s)	Focus of Study	Key Findings
Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	Social media and marketing communication	Social media enables interactive brand–consumer relationships
Gefen et al. (2003)	Trust in online environments	Trust significantly influences online purchase decisions
Mangold & Faulds (2009)	Role of social media in marketing	SMM impacts consumer attitudes and brand perceptions
Kim & Park (2013)	Transparency and trust	Perceived transparency positively affects consumer trust
Testa et al. (2015)	Sustainable consumption behaviour	Ethical communication encourages sustainable buying
Lim et al. (2022)	Digital trust and sustainability	Trust mediates the relationship between digital marketing and sustainable behaviour

Research Gap Identified:

Limited empirical studies integrate SMM credibility, transparency, consumer trust, and sustainable buying behaviour using advanced analytical techniques such as SEM in the Indian urban context.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of social media marketing content credibility on consumer trust.
2. To analyse the influence of perceived transparency in social media marketing on consumer trust.
3. To study the relationship between consumer trust and sustainable buying behaviour.
4. To assess the effect of sustainable buying behaviour on purchase intention.
5. To develop and validate an empirical model linking SMM, trust, and sustainable consumption.

4. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Scope

- Focuses on digital consumers in Hyderabad.
- Examines trust and sustainability dimensions of SMM.
- Provides managerial and policy implications for ethical digital marketing.

Limitations

- Restricted to one metropolitan city.
- Self-reported data may involve response bias.
- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference.

5. Research Methodology

Aspect	Details
Research Design	Descriptive and analytical
Sample Size	250 consumers
Study Area	Hyderabad
Sampling Technique	Convenience sampling
Data Collection Tool	Structured questionnaire
Measurement Scale	5-point Likert scale
Source of Data	Primary and secondary
Analytical Tools	Descriptive statistics, EFA, CFA, Regression, SEM

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6. Hypotheses Formulation

Hypothesis	Statement
H1	SMM content credibility significantly influences consumer trust
H2	Perceived transparency significantly influences consumer trust
H3	Consumer trust significantly influences sustainable buying behaviour
H4	Sustainable buying behaviour significantly influences purchase intention

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table A1: Responses on Social Media Marketing Content Credibility (n = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
A1. Social media marketing content provides accurate product information	12 (4.8%)	18 (7.2%)	40 (16.0%)	110 (44.0%)	70 (28.0%)	250 (100%)	3.83
A2. Influencer endorsements on social media appear trustworthy	15 (6.0%)	25 (10.0%)	45 (18.0%)	100 (40.0%)	65 (26.0%)	250 (100%)	3.70
A3. Brand messages are consistent across different social media platforms	10 (4.0%)	20 (8.0%)	50 (20.0%)	105 (42.0%)	65 (26.0%)	250 (100%)	3.78

Interpretation

From the above table it indicates that a majority of respondents (over 70%) either agreed or strongly agreed that social media marketing content is credible and consistent, Influencer trustworthiness received slightly lower agreement compared to content accuracy, indicating moderate scepticism toward influencers, and the mean values (>3.7) indicate a positive perception of social media marketing content credibility among Hyderabad consumers.

Hypothesis

H1: Social Media Marketing Content Credibility has a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust

Conclusion

From the above results it was concluded that consumers largely perceive social media marketing content as credible and reliable, and this credibility forms a strong foundation for developing consumer trust, supporting the proposed empirical models for further multivariate analysis. (EFA, CFA, and SEM).

Table B1: Perceived Transparency (n = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
B1. Brands clearly disclose sponsored content on social media	15 (6.0%)	25 (10.0%)	45 (18.0%)	105 (42.0%)	60 (24.0%)	250	3.68
B2. Social media brands communicate privacy policies transparently	18 (7.2%)	30 (12.0%)	50 (20.0%)	95 (38.0%)	57 (22.8%)	250	3.57
B3. Environmental and sustainability claims made by brands are clear and reliable	12 (4.8%)	22 (8.8%)	48 (19.2%)	108 (43.2%)	60 (24.0%)	250	3.73

Interpretation

From the above table it reveals that a majority of respondents feels that brands are fairly transparent to social media especially when it comes to labelling sponsored posts and making environmental claims. However, there's a bit more scepticism about how clearly brands explain their privacy policies. In short, consumers see transparency as stronger for marketing disclosures and green messaging than for privacy details.

Table C1: Consumer Trust (n = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
C1. I trust brands that promote products through social media	10 (4.0%)	20 (8.0%)	40 (16.0%)	115 (46.0%)	65 (26.0%)	250	3.82
C2. Information on social media reduces my risk while purchasing	12 (4.8%)	22 (8.8%)	45 (18.0%)	110 (44.0%)	61 (24.4%)	250	3.75
C3. I feel confident purchasing products advertised on social media	14 (5.6%)	26 (10.4%)	50 (20.0%)	100 (40.0%)	60 (24.0%)	250	3.67

Interpretation

From the above table High agreement levels indicate that consumer trust in social media-based marketing is strong, means consumers generally believe in brands that advertise via social media, Risk reduction and Purchase confidence shows that social media information helps but confidence is relatively low, and Neutral & disagreement suggest a segment is sceptical or undecided about the social media Purchases.

Table D1: Sustainable Buying Behaviour (n = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
D1. I prefer buying products from brands promoting eco-friendly practices	8 (3.2%)	18 (7.2%)	42 (16.8%)	115 (46.0%)	67 (26.8%)	250	3.86
D2. Ethical values influence my buying decisions	10 (4.0%)	20 (8.0%)	45 (18.0%)	110 (44.0%)	65 (26.0%)	250	3.80
D3. I support brands actively engaged in social responsibility initiatives	9 (3.6%)	19 (7.6%)	48 (19.2%)	108 (43.2%)	66 (26.4%)	250	3.82

Interpretation

From the above table it indicated that there is a positive relationship between trust and sustainable buying behaviour which means Consumers demonstrate strong inclination towards sustainability-oriented brands.

Table E1: Purchase Intention (n = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
E1. I intend to purchase products promoted on social media platforms	12 (4.8%)	24 (9.6%)	45 (18.0%)	105 (42.0%)	64 (25.6%)	250	3.74
E2. I am likely to recommend social media-promoted brands to others	14 (5.6%)	26 (10.4%)	48 (19.2%)	102 (40.8%)	60 (24.0%)	250	3.67

Interpretation

From the above table it shows that Purchase intention levels are moderately high, suggesting that social media marketing works better when combined with trust and sustainability cues.

Overall Section-wise Conclusion

- Transparency and credibility significantly enhance consumer trust.
- Trust acts as a bridge between social media marketing and sustainable buying behaviour.
- Sustainable buying behaviour positively influence purchase intention, supporting the empirical model.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Test Used	Result	Decision
H1	Regression	$\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$	Accepted
H2	Regression	$\beta = 0.42, p < 0.01$	Accepted

Hypothesis	Test Used	Result	Decision
H3	Regression	$\beta = 0.55, p < 0.01$	Accepted
H4	Regression	$\beta = 0.51, p < 0.01$	Accepted

Interpretation:

From the above table all four hypothesis are supported by the regression analysis. The independent variables associated with H1, H2, H3, and H4 each have a positive impact on the outcome variable (beta values between 0.42 and 0.55), and all effects are highly significant ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that credible and transparent social media marketing significantly enhances consumer trust, which positively influences sustainable buying behaviour and purchase intention,

8. Findings

- Consumer trust is significantly impacted by the credibility of social media content.
- Perceptions of trust are improved by marketing communications that are transparent.
- The relationship between SMM and sustainable purchasing practices is mediated by trust.
- Customers that are concerned about sustainability are more likely to make purchases.

9. Conclusions

I would like to conclude that the efficacy of social media marketing goes beyond engagement metrics and has a major impact on consumer behaviour that is focused on sustainability and trust. Long term consumer trust and sustainable market growth can be fostered by brands using ethical and transparent social media marketing strategies.

10. Recommendations

- Marketers should emphasize transparency in sponsored content.
- Sustainability messaging should be authentic and verifiable.
- Policymakers should strengthen digital advertising disclosure norms.
- Brands should integrate trust-building strategies into SMM campaigns.

11. Future Research Directions

- Comparative studies across Tier-II and Tier-III cities.
- Longitudinal studies to assess behavioural change over time.
- Platform-specific analysis of SMM effectiveness.
- Inclusion of digital security and privacy concerns.

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