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## A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMERGING TRENDS ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA

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### Abstract

Many regional factors also have an impact on it. Social media marketing is one of the most important tools and strategies in the world of advertising. Increasing the quantity of articles sold is the main objective of every businessman, and a variety of marketing strategies and technologies can support this. It can undoubtedly boost a range of businesses' profits. This study's primary objective is to ascertain the anticipated connections between different social media marketing initiatives, consumer behavior, and customer actions. Additionally, it seeks to ascertain how social media marketing will impact consumers' ultimate purchasing decisions among those who use social media platforms on a regular basis. Social media has completely changed how Indian customers find things, get information, weigh their options, engage with marketers, and make judgments about what to buy. A highly participatory digital marketplace has been produced by the quick growth of social networking platforms, influencer marketing, short-form films, social commerce, user-generated content, electronic word-of-mouth, artificial intelligence, and personalized digital advertising. Customers now actively create, share, and assess information about brands and products rather than being passive recipients of marketing messaging. According to the December 2024 Ipsos State of Digital Marketing in India 2024–25 research, India spent ₹40,800 crore on digital media, with television accounting for 33% and digital media for 41% of all advertising expenditures. Thirty percent of the money spent on digital advertising went toward social media. Consumer decision-making is becoming more rapid and social thanks to emerging trends including short-form video, influencer marketing, social commerce, user-generated content, artificial intelligence, and tailored marketing. However, there are a lot of obstacles, including false information, covert advertising, impulsive purchases, privacy issues, and dark patterns. In India's developing digital marketplace, the report finds that sustainable consumer-brand interactions depend on authenticity, openness, consumer awareness, and responsible digital marketing.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Social Commerce, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, User-Generated Content, Short-Form Video, Artificial Intelligence, India.

### Introduction

Consumer behavior has significantly changed as a result of social media's expansion. Consumers in the conventional marketplace typically got information from newspapers, retailers, salespeople, family, friends, and television commercials. These sources have been greatly increased by the digital environment. Nowadays, instead of relying on a typical physical shopping setting, customers can find a product through an Instagram post, watch an influencer showcase it, read comments from other customers, evaluate alternatives, visit an online site, and make a buy. As a result, social media is becoming more than just a means of communication. It has grown to be a significant component of the environment in which consumers make decisions. The December 2024 Ipsos research, The State of Digital Marketing in India 2024–25, illustrates the evolving significance of digital media in India. According to the survey, India spent ₹40,800 crore on digital media, surpassing television in terms of advertising expenditures in FY2024. 41% of all advertising spending went toward digital media, while just 33% went toward television.

### Social Media and the Changing Indian Consumer

The way Indian consumers find, assess, and buy goods and services has changed significantly as a result of their growing connectivity to digital platforms. Throughout the consumer purchasing process, social media has become a vital source of communication and information. Social media allows for ongoing communication between brands and customers, in contrast to traditional media, which only transmits information from companies to consumers.



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Influencer recommendations, Facebook content, YouTube videos, Instagram posts and Reels, online reviews, user-generated videos, social media ads, live streaming, online communities, and viral trends are some of the ways that consumers may come across a product these days. These many types of digital material can affect consumer views and raise product awareness. After seeing a brief video about a product, a customer may look for reviews, weigh their options, read comments, and ultimately decide to buy it.

Social media has also changed the traditional communication model. Traditionally, marketing communication followed a relatively simple structure:

#### **Brand → Advertisement → Consumer**

This approach involves the brand crafting an advertisement and delivering it to the customer. In most cases, the consumer is the information's recipient. After the purchase or through traditional customer-service channels, feedback is frequently infrequent.

The social-media communication model is considerably more interactive:

#### **Brand → Content → Consumer → Interaction → Sharing → Other Consumers → Brand**

Customers are more than just recipients of marketing messages under this strategy. They can share material, write reviews, upload product videos, leave comments on posts, suggest products, and tell other customers about their experiences. As a result, the purchasing decisions of several other customers can be influenced by the experience of one customer. This change has been reinforced by internet groups and influencers. Customers are increasingly looking for advice from somebody they believe to be informed, relatable, or reliable. As a result, reviews, ratings, and user-generated content may become crucial considerations when assessing products before to purchase.

Social media's expansion has also prompted companies to switch from one-way advertising to relationship-based communication. Customers may express their expectations right away, and brands are able to instantly address queries, grievances, and criticism. As a result, compared to the traditional consumer, the evolving Indian consumer is better informed, connected, and involved. Social media has changed consumer behavior from a mostly one-way process to an ongoing, interactive cycle where customers influence brands, consumers influence one another, and consumers simultaneously contribute to marketing communication.

#### **Marketing through social media networking**

It is a strategy for using social media platforms to capture people's attention. These programs' main goal is to produce content that will grab readers' attention on social media and motivate them to share it on their networks. Any comment that is disseminated via social media, including succinct messages and information about a company, product, service, or brand, is referred to as electronic word of mouth. When someone posts information about a company on social media, many people repost it on other social networks, and when the information comes from a trustworthy source, it is more effective in promoting the product than paid ads. The idea of consumer socialization holds that contacts with consumers have a big influence on their psychological traits. It also has an impact on the customer's thinking because social media networking sites provide a platform for online communication, which has a big impact on the notion of consumer socializing.

#### **Growth of Digital Marketing in India**

Social media is become much more important in the advertising and consumer marketplace due to the expansion of digital marketing in India. Businesses have switched a larger percentage of their marketing efforts to digital media as consumers use cellphones, social networking sites, and internet services more frequently. As a result, social media has grown in importance as a means of reaching, interacting with, and influencing consumers. In India, digital media spending hit



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₹40,800 crore, a 29% increase. 41% of all advertising spending went toward digital media, while just 33% went toward television. Thirty percent of the money spent on digital advertising went toward social media. These numbers show how crucial digital platforms are becoming to India's advertising environment.

According to the Ipsos measure, digital media has emerged as the leading advertising medium, with a 41% share compared to television's 33%. The significance of social media platforms in the context of digital marketing is further demonstrated by the 30% share of social media in digital advertising. Changes in consumer media consumption are directly linked to the expansion of digital advertising. Smartphones and digital platforms are being used by consumers more and more for shopping, communication, entertainment, and information. Thus, companies use influencer marketing, social media advertising, online campaigns, short-form films, and personalized content to follow customers into these digital spaces.

### **Influence of Social Media on Consumer Awareness**

Because social media introduces people to brands and goods that they might not have actively searched for, it has grown to be a significant source of consumer awareness. Social media sites constantly show users tailored material based on their interests, activities, and online behavior, in contrast to traditional advertising. As a result, customers can find new products while watching entertainment or perusing social media feeds.

For instance, through Instagram, YouTube, or other digital channels, a customer interested in fashion can unintentionally come across a new clothing brand, a certain fashion style, a cosmetic product, a footwear trend, or a lifestyle product. Short films, user-generated content, influencer recommendations, and eye-catching photos can pique consumers' curiosity and motivate them to look for more information.

This procedure is an example of unexpected product awareness, in which customers learn about things without initially planning to look for them. Thus, buyers are influenced by social media even before they realize they need to make a particular purchase.

As a result, search-driven consumption is increasingly giving way to a mix of search-driven and discovery-driven consumption. Nowadays, consumers may use social media to find a product initially and only explore further once they become interested. As a result, social media is now a crucial tool for raising awareness, igniting interest, and influencing Indian consumers' preferences.

### **Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour**

Because influencers can interact directly with followers and mold their opinions of brands and products, influencer marketing has grown in importance as a social media marketing strategy. Influencers are frequently regarded by consumers as knowledgeable and relatable, which can boost the legitimacy of product recommendations.

Through product suggestions, product demonstrations, reviews, lessons, personal experiences, comparisons, discount codes, and sponsored material, influencers have an impact on customer behavior. While product reviews and firsthand accounts offer information that may lessen doubt prior to purchase, product demonstrations assist customers in understanding how a product operates. While discount coupons can provide an extra incentive to purchase, comparisons can assist customers in assessing rival offerings.

Additionally, when delivered in an interesting and pertinent way, sponsored content can raise brand awareness. However, the influencer's legitimacy, sincerity, and rapport with followers all play a major role in how successful influencer marketing is. When promotional material seems deceptive or too commercial, consumers may lose faith in it.



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## Influencer Credibility

The quantity of followers an influencer has is not the only factor that determines how successful influencer marketing is. Customer reactions are impacted by a number of traits that establish the influencer's perceived credibility and persuasiveness. Consumer views and purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by expertise, reliability, authenticity, relevance, and involvement.

The influencer's knowledge and experience in a specific product category is referred to as expertise. When addressing technological features, for instance, a technology critic who routinely assesses smartphones might be seen as more reliable than a general lifestyle influencer.

Another crucial element is trustworthiness. Customers are more likely to accept recommendations if they think the influencer is sincere and does not intentionally deceive followers.

Additionally, authenticity increases the efficacy of influencers. Sincere firsthand accounts, fair evaluations, and realistic product demos can enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of recommendations.

The relationship between the influencer's content, audience, and advertised product is referred to as relevance. A certain consumer group can be reached more successfully by a related influencer.

Lastly, comments, replies, conversations, and other types of participation show how influencers and followers interact. A sense of community and connection can be fostered by active participation.

## Consumer Decision-Making Through Social Media

Consumer decision-making is now an ongoing, participatory process thanks to social media. While engaging with brands, influencers, and other customers, consumers can progress through several phases of the purchasing process.

**Stage 1: Awareness:** Exposure to social media raises brand and product recognition. Even when they were not actively looking for things, consumers can find them through recommendations, postings, Reels, videos, or ads.

**Stage 2: Interest:** Influencer recommendations, appealing content, and product demos can pique consumers' curiosity and motivate them to find out more about a product.

**Stage 3: Information Search:** Customers use user-generated content, reviews, comments, and videos to find more information. This aids in their comprehension of the features, performance, and quality of the product.

**Stage 4: Evaluation:** Consumers can assess several options with the aid of ratings, suggestions, and product comparisons. Social proof can boost trust in a specific product and lessen doubt.

**Stage 5: Purchase:** The customer may be persuaded to finish the transaction by trust, ease of use, sales, discounts, and favorable social media comments.

**Stage 6: Post-Purchase:** Following a purchase, customers can use electronic word-of-mouth or user-generated content such as photos, videos, and reviews to communicate their experiences.

**Stage 7: Influence on Others:** By influencing new customers, content produced by current customers can perpetuate the cycle.

Thus, social media creates a continuous digital consumer cycle in which consumers are simultaneously buyers, information seekers, reviewers and influencers. This makes consumer decision-making more interactive and socially connected than traditional purchasing behaviour.



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## Social Media, Trust and Brand Loyalty

Long-term connections between consumers and brands are mostly dependent on trust, which is a crucial component of consumer behavior. Consumers can develop trust via social media through regular company communication, favorable reviews, reliable influencer recommendations, clear product information, excellent customer support, and satisfying shopping experiences.

Customers are more inclined to stick with a brand, suggest it to others, and make repeat purchases when they have faith in it. Social media may increase this loyalty by giving customers the chance to communicate with brands on a regular basis and engage with them directly.

However, dishonest reviews, deceptive advertising, subpar customer service, unreported sponsorships, and privacy violations can also quickly erode trust. Unfavorable encounters can quickly proliferate on social media and affect other customers.

Social media can therefore increase brand loyalty when companies communicate openly and consistently, but it can also hasten reputational harm when customers' expectations are not fulfilled.

## Emerging Consumer Behaviour in India

India's consumer behavior has changed dramatically as a result of the quick growth of digital technologies. Customers are shifting away from traditional shopping methods and toward digital and socially driven buying habits. Product discovery, information search, decision-making, and purchasing behavior all exhibit these shifts.

**From physical to digital discovery:** Instead of exclusively using physical stores to find things, consumers are increasingly using social media platforms, websites, online marketplaces, and digital ads.

**From recommendations to ads:** Influencers, content producers, online communities, and personal recommendations are the main ways that consumers come across things. Compared to traditional marketing, these suggestions might seem more relatable.

Consumer decisions are influenced by comments, ratings, reviews, shares, and other types of social evidence. Before making a purchase, consumers frequently take other users' experiences and opinions into account.

**Planned versus impulsive shopping:** One-click shopping, limited-time deals, viral trends, and easy access to internet retailers can all drive customers to make impulsive purchases.

**From brand-created content to consumer-created content:** Through reviews, images, videos, testimonials, and social media posts, consumers now actively participate in brand communication. Other customers' opinions may be influenced by their content.

Artificial intelligence and digital technology enable businesses to offer more focused ads and product recommendations based on consumer interests and online behavior, moving from broad advertising to personalized advertising.

Thus, the Indian consumer is becoming more digitally connected, socially influenced, informed and participative. These emerging patterns demonstrate that technology is reshaping not only how consumers purchase products but also how they discover, evaluate and communicate about brands.

## Benefits of social media marketing

**Increased Media Coverage:** The value of social media marketing has grown recently. Both consumers and marketers use social networking sites excessively. These days, there is a 92% rise in exposure.



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**Increased Freeways:** The number of users has increased steadily since the advent of web-based marketing. According to the study, social networking sites are being used excessively by customers and even advertisers, and as a result, daily traffic to these sites has surged by up to 80.

**Introduction of the Concept of Loyal Fans:** The second and most significant benefit of social networking platforms is brand loyalty. As an illustration, if a customer is happy with a product, they won't ever purchase it from another company. This fosters loyalty to a brand.

**Marketplace Insights:** Social networking sites make product information readily accessible. This refers to its Features, Functions, Price, and so forth. Only websites may provide buyers with comprehensive product information; they are not required to visit any physical locations. The findings indicate that 72% of consumers concur that social networking sites offer marketing insights.

**Generated Leads:** There are numerous techniques to generate leads. The majority of social networking platforms produce leads for goods and services. For instance, a blog serves as a focal point for client engagement. Without a doubt, Facebook is a significant source as well, thus in essence, it generates leads.

## Conclusion

In India, social networking is now a major factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The consumer journey is now an interactive, socially driven, and constantly changing digital one rather than a comparatively sequential one.

When it comes to finding new products, social networking is nearly as popular as word-of-mouth and radio and television commercials. Three out of ten consumers said they would like to learn about brands in this way in the future. Nonetheless, consumers are increasingly researching brands and making purchases from them utilizing social media. Social media is a dynamic source of social evidence, which is an important consideration when making purchases. Before making a purchase, more than half (51%) of customers read reviews on social media or forums to assess a product or service. A potential customer may be turned off by just one or two negative reviews. Social media has added a new dimension to a business's engagement with its customers. An thing is no longer a brand if it has no name, is far away from us, and we only learn about it via books or Google. By analyzing a brand's network, you may evaluate its values, current news and products, and relationship with its target market.

Short-form video, influencer marketing, social commerce, user-generated content, e-WOM, artificial intelligence, and targeted advertising are examples of emerging trends that are further fusing social interaction with business.

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