

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN VELLORE CITY

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Abstract—Social media has changed how consumers search for, evaluate and buy products. This study examines the effect of social media on consumer buying behaviour in Vellore city, an emerging urban centre that has received little research attention. A descriptive research design was used, and primary data were collected from 115 respondents through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. The data were analysed with SPSS using percentages, mean scores and the Chi-square test. The results show that most respondents use social media daily, that YouTube is the preferred platform for shopping-related activities, and that video content is the most influential form of social media marketing. Product quality is the strongest factor in purchase decisions, whereas influencer recommendations rank lowest. Damaged products and inaccurate product descriptions are the main concerns. Gender shows no significant association with awareness of advertisement influence or platform preference. The study recommends video-led, review-driven and transparent marketing strategies for businesses in Vellore.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Consumer buying behaviour, Purchase decision, Influencer marketing, Vellore.

INTRODUCTION

The spread of internet technologies and smartphones has changed the way people communicate and make purchasing decisions. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube, along with influencers on TikTok and Snapchat, have become part of daily life and now shape what people buy. Unlike traditional media, social media creates two-way communication between companies and consumers, allowing real-time feedback, product reviews, demonstrations and personalised advertisements.

India has seen rapid growth in social media adoption owing to higher smartphone penetration, cheaper data and improved digital literacy, and the trend is now strong in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Vellore, a historically significant and fast-growing city in Tamil Nadu, has recorded a marked rise in social media users. This raises an important question: how does social media affect the buying decisions of consumers in this region?

Benefits of social media marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) uses social platforms to promote products, services or brands. Its main benefits are:

- **Cost-effective** – even small businesses can run targeted campaigns on limited budgets.
- **Direct customer engagement** – real-time, two-way communication builds trust and loyalty.
- **Brand awareness** – consistent content and social sharing widen reach.
- **Influencer collaborations** – influencers sway opinions and raise engagement and conversions.
- **Targeted advertising** – audiences can be selected by age, interest and behaviour.
- **Better search visibility and competitive advantage** – higher traffic, backlinks and brand mentions.

Need for the study and statement of the problem

Many studies have examined metropolitan cities such as Chennai, Bangalore and Delhi, but few have explored emerging urban centres like Vellore. The impact of social media on buying patterns in this socio-economically diverse city is not well understood, which limits the ability of businesses to design targeted social media strategies. This study aims to bridge that gap. Its scope is limited to Vellore, covering students, working professionals and homemakers, and examining how age, gender, income and education relate to social media engagement and buying behaviour.

Review of literature

Earlier studies report a positive link between social media and consumer buying behaviour, covering customer patronage and loyalty in Nigeria (Ukonu and Agu, 2022), consumer behaviour in Chennai (Prakash, 2022), purchase intention among Gen Z (Ninan et al., 2020) and the influence of visually appealing advertisements on fashion purchases (Alamsyah et al., 2023). Perceived usefulness and value raise purchase intention while perceived risk lowers it (Sharma and Bhatt, 2018). Some studies add a caution: Ali and Shabbir (2016) found door-to-door marketing to be more effective than social media in shaping consumer perception.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess consumers' awareness of social media marketing strategies and their influence on buying behaviour.
2. To examine how social media advertisements, influencer endorsements and reviews affect consumer preference and brand perception.
3. To investigate how social media usage affects consumer satisfaction with the overall shopping experience in Vellore city.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It covers the research design, sampling procedure, data collection method and analysis procedure used to reach valid conclusions.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted, since the major purpose is to describe the state of affairs as it exists at present. A deductive approach was followed, in which a hypothesis is framed and tested.

Data Collection Method

Primary data: Data collected afresh and for the first time were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered by survey. The questionnaire had 28 items in four parts: demographic profile, factors affecting purchase decisions through social media, issues faced during social media shopping, and factors affecting customer satisfaction. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree; Highly Satisfied to Highly Dissatisfied).

Secondary data: Secondary data were drawn from published journals and research articles for the review of literature.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was used. Of 120 questionnaires distributed, 118 were received and 115 were suitable for analysis. Data were analysed with SPSS (version 25) using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and the Chi-square test.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The sample of 115 respondents was 56.5% female, with 33.9% aged 26–35 years. Undergraduates formed 60.0% of the sample, 43.5% were employed and 36.5% earned Rs. 30,000–50,000 a month. The main results are summarised below.

Variable	Leading response	Share
Frequency of social media use	Daily	37.4%
Platform preferred for shopping	YouTube	39.1%
Time spent per day	1–3 hours	37.4%

Awareness of ad influence	Neutral	27.8%
Most influential marketing form	Video content (YouTube, Reels)	30.0%
Products bought via social media	Clothing & fashion accessories	25.1%
Importance of brand reputation	Somewhat important	33.0%
Desired improvement	More user reviews & real experiences	35.7%

Source: Primary data

Mean scores show the relative weight of each factor (maximum 5.00):

Factor group	Highest-rated item (mean)	Lowest-rated item (mean)	Overall mean
Purchase decision factors	Product quality (4.05)	Influencer recommendations (3.15)	3.65
Issues faced in shopping	Damaged products (3.97)	Scams / fraudulent sellers (3.13)	3.60
Customer satisfaction factors	Product quality (3.90)	Accuracy of product description (2.88)	3.56

Chi-square analysis

Gender and awareness of social media advertisements gave a Chi-square value of 7.909 ($p = 0.095$), and gender and preferred shopping platform gave 2.928 ($p = 0.403$). Both p -values exceed 0.05, so the null hypotheses are not rejected: there is no significant association between gender and either awareness of advertisement influence or the choice of platform.

SUGGESTIONS

Audience factors

- Design content and promotions around women's fashion and personal care, using female influencers and testimonials from female customers.
- Target the 26–35 age group with campaigns on lifestyle, career goals, convenience and value, supported by peer success stories.

Content and platform factors

- Post on a consistent schedule using stories, reels and short videos, and offer limited-time deals to daily users.
- Invest in YouTube video marketing: how-to videos, unboxings and product reviews, with local-language SEO for Vellore users.
- Encourage customers to post photos and reviews, feature user-generated content and offer small incentives for honest reviews.

Trust and service factors

- Communicate brand values clearly, respond openly to negative feedback and highlight service responsiveness.
- Provide accurate product descriptions with real images, simplify return and refund policies, and offer support through chat or WhatsApp.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample of 115 respondents was chosen by convenience sampling, so the results may not be generalised to the whole population.
- The study is confined to Vellore city, and consumer attitudes change over time, so the results may not hold in the long run.

- Only gender-based Chi-square tests were applied; other demographic variables were not tested.

FINDINGS

1. Most respondents are female (56.52%), aged 26–35 years (33.91%), undergraduates, employed (43.48%) and earning Rs. 30,000–50,000 a month (36.52%).
2. Most respondents use social media daily, and spend 1–3 hours a day on it.
3. YouTube is the preferred platform for shopping-related activities (39.13%).
4. Most respondents are neutral about the influence of social media advertisements on their purchases (27.83%).
5. Video content (YouTube, Instagram Reels) is the most influential form of social media marketing (29.96%).
6. Clothing and fashion accessories (25.08%) and beauty and personal care (24.07%) are the products most bought under social media influence.
7. Most respondents consider brand reputation somewhat important (33.04%), and most want more user reviews and real experiences (35.65%).
8. Product quality is the strongest factor in purchase decisions (mean 4.05), while influencer recommendations rank lowest (3.15).
9. Damaged products are the most commonly reported problem (mean 3.97); dissatisfaction is greatest on accuracy of product description (mean 2.88).
10. There is no significant association between gender and awareness of advertisement influence ($p = 0.095$) or preferred platform ($p = 0.403$).

CONCLUSION

Social media has a significant yet nuanced impact on consumer buying behaviour in Vellore city. Video-based platforms such as YouTube and Instagram are powerful influences, particularly among young, working consumers. Consumers are only moderately influenced by advertisements but respond more strongly to user reviews, brand reputation and video content, and they remain cautious about product quality, accurate descriptions and after-sales service. Businesses targeting the Vellore market should therefore adopt a localised, consumer-centric social media strategy built on authentic reviews, transparent communication and reliable service, which will raise customer satisfaction and support the growth of the city's digital economy.

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