

Analyzing the Influence of Social Media Marketing Strategies on Consumer Purchase Intentions Mediated by Trust

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions, emphasizing the mediating role of consumer trust. With the increasing reliance on social media platforms for brand engagement, understanding how marketing efforts shape consumer views has become essential. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing a survey of 100 social media users to gather data on their experiences with various marketing strategies, levels of trust, and purchase intentions of brands. The analysis revealed that social media marketing strategies have a direct effect on consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.21$) but significantly amplify their impact through trust (indirect effect $\beta = 0.34$). The results indicate that higher levels of trust in brands enhance positive consumer purchase intentions, corroborating existing literature that highlights the importance of trust in marketing effectiveness. The study recommends that brands prioritize trust-building initiatives, including transparent communication and authentic engagement, to improve consumer purchase intentions. As social media continues to evolve, the findings suggest that fostering trust will be increasingly crucial for brands aiming to connect with discerning consumers. Future research should explore the impact of emerging technologies on consumer trust within social media marketing contexts.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Purchase intention, Trust, Marketing Strategies, Structural Equation Modeling.

Introduction

Social media has become an essential component of marketing strategies as a result of the rapid advancement of digital technology, which has fundamentally altered the manner in which businesses interact with consumers. Social media marketing (SMM) strategies are now instrumental in the formation of consumer purchase intentions, the influence of decision-making processes, and the cultivation of long-term brand loyalty. Businesses are offered the opportunity to interact with consumers on a more personal and immediate level than traditional media by platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and LinkedIn, which provide access to billions of active users. Nevertheless, the efficacy of social media marketing strategies is not exclusively contingent upon reach or frequency; rather, it is substantially influenced by the trust consumers have in the brand and the content they consume. Trust has become a critical factor in the moderating of the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions, underscoring its significance in modern digital marketing. The manner in which individuals interpret and internalize brand messages has an impact on consumer purchase intentions. In the context of social media, these purchase intentions are influenced by a variety of factors, such as the quality of content, its relevance, and the level of trust that consumers have in the source. In order to communicate brand messages, social media marketing strategies frequently employ a combination of targeted advertising, influencer partnerships, engagement tactics, and content creation. However, as consumers become more cognizant of the commercialization of social media platforms, trust becomes a critical determinant in the success of these strategies in establishing favourable purchase intentions. Recent research has shown that consumers' purchase intentions of a brand's value and authenticity are substantially influenced by their trust in the brand or social media content. Consequently, trust is a critical mediator in the relationship between SMM strategies and consumer purchase intentions (Chen & Zhang, 2023; Rahman et al., 2023).

Trust is a multifaceted factor in consumer behaviour, particularly in the digital realm, where algorithm-driven content and influencer endorsements have supplanted face-to-face interactions. Social media marketing messages are more

likely to be perceived as credible, relevant, and in the best interest of consumers when they have faith in a brand or an influencer. This results in positive purchase intentions of the brand. In contrast, consumers' trust is undermined when they perceive the brand or its marketing strategies as manipulative, disingenuous, or excessively commercial, which can lead to negative purchase intentions and potential disengagement from the brand (Xu & Wang, 2024). Consequently, the trust consumers have in social media marketing strategies directly impacts their purchase intention of the brand and their likelihood to engage with it. Authentic and transparent communication is one of the primary methods by which brands establish trust through social media marketing strategies. Authenticity is essential for the establishment of trust, as it enables consumers to form a genuine connection with the brand. Brands that demonstrate genuine concern for customer feedback, respond to enquiries, and engage in open dialogue with consumers are more likely to establish trust. Consumer trust can be further enhanced by transparent practices, such as the explicit labelling of sponsored posts or advertisements, which reflect a brand's honesty regarding its marketing practices (Kapoor et al., 2023). A recent study demonstrated that consumers are more inclined to trust the content they encounter and perceive brands favorably when they are transparent about their collaborations with influencers or disclose paid partnerships (Chen et al., 2023).

Influencer marketing, a critical element of numerous social media marketing strategies, has a substantial effect on consumer purchase intentions, particularly when trust serves as a mediator in the interaction. Influencers, who are frequently perceived as impartial third parties, provide legitimacy to the brands they promote. The brand is more likely to be trusted by consumers when they have faith in influencers, which can lead to favourable purchase intentions that can influence purchase behaviour and brand loyalty. Nevertheless, consumer trust may be eroded if influencers are perceived as promoting products solely for financial benefit, without genuine endorsement. This can result in negative purchase intentions of both the influencer and the brand. Therefore, the extent to which social media marketing strategies effectively influence consumer purchase intentions is contingent upon the authenticity of influencers (Lim et al., 2024). User-generated content (UGC) is an additional critical component of social media marketing strategies that has a direct impact on consumer purchase intentions and trust. UGC, which includes consumer interactions, testimonials, and reviews, is frequently perceived as more credible than brand-generated content due to the fact that it is generated by fellow consumers rather than the brand. Research has demonstrated that when brands prioritize and promote user-generated content (UGC), it can increase consumer confidence by demonstrating that the brand respects the opinions and experiences of its customers (Goh & Yao, 2023). Positive user-generated content (UGC) has the potential to enhance positive brand purchase intentions, whereas negative UGC can have the opposite influence. Therefore, it is imperative for brands that are seeking to establish trust and influence consumer purchase intentions through social media to manage user-generated content (UGC).

Personalized advertising is a frequently employed approach by brands to target specific consumer segments on social media, in addition to influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC). When executed effectively, personalization can have a substantial impact on consumer purchase intentions and improve the relevance of content. Nevertheless, personalization also raises privacy concerns, which can have an impact on consumer trust. According to a study conducted by Grewal and colleagues (2023), brands that are transparent about their data usage and respectful of their privacy are more likely to be trusted by consumers. A breach of trust can result in negative purchase intentions and a loss of brand credibility when brands misuse consumer data or fail to clearly communicate how it is being utilised. The trust-consumer purchase intention relationship is also moderated by the social media platforms themselves. Consumer trust can be either strengthened or weakened by algorithms that curate content, propose advertisements, and filter information. The platform and the brands that advertise on it are more likely to be trusted by consumers when they perceive that the content they are exposed to is pertinent and consistent with their preferences. Nevertheless, consumer confidence in the platform and the brands that employ it may deteriorate when algorithms are perceived as manipulative or excessively intrusive (Zhu & Kim, 2024). This underscores the necessity for brands to guarantee that their social media marketing strategies are consistent with the ethical utilization of data and algorithms in order to preserve consumer confidence.

Additionally, consumer trust and purchase intentions are influenced by the frequency and consistency of brand interactions on social media platforms. Brands that consistently engage with their audience, provide timely responses, and maintain a consistent brand voice across various social media platforms are more likely to establish enduring trust. A sense of reliability is established through consistent engagement, which in turn reinforces favourable consumer purchase intentions of the brand. Nevertheless, confusion, mistrust, and negative purchase intentions can result from a lack of

responsiveness or inconsistency in messaging (Yang & Kang, 2023). In summary, the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions is significant, but it is significantly influenced by the trust consumers have in brands and the content they encounter on these platforms. Trust is a determining factor in the formation of either positive or negative purchase intentions, and it serves as a critical lens through which consumers evaluate the authenticity, relevance, and credibility of marketing messages. Brands that prioritize transparency, authenticity, and ethical practices in their social media marketing strategies are more likely to cultivate trust, which in turn enhances favourable consumer purchase intentions. In contrast, consumer purchase intentions are likely to be negative when trust is compromised by deceptive practices, irrelevant content, or data misuse, which ultimately impacts brand loyalty and engagement. Building and maintaining consumer trust is essential for the success of any social media marketing strategy in the digital era, where social media is becoming increasingly central to marketing efforts.

Literature Reviews

Lee and Kim (2023) conducted an analysis of the influence of trust on consumer purchase intentions in the context of social media marketing strategies. They discovered that social media strategies that prioritize transparency, such as transparent labelling of sponsored content and open communication, cultivated a higher level of consumer trust, which in turn improved positive consumer purchase intentions of the brand. Their research indicated that trust was a critical factor in the way consumers interpreted and responded to social media marketing initiatives. Skepticism and negative purchase intentions were the result of a lack of trust, even when the content was relevant and engaging. Garcia and Martinez (2022) investigated the efficacy of influencer marketing as an element of broader social media strategies, concluding that consumer purchase intentions of brands were significantly influenced by trust in influencers. Their research demonstrated that influencers positively influenced brand purchase intentions by reinforcing trust when they were perceived as authentic and in alignment with the values of their followers. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies was undermined when influencers were perceived as excessively commercial or disconnected from their audience, resulting in unfavorable consumer purchase intentions of both the influencer and the brand.

Patel and Sharma (2023) concentrated on the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on consumer purchase intentions and its function in social media marketing. According to them, user-generated content (UGC) was an effective method for establishing trust due to its authenticity, which rendered it more credible than brand-generated content. Their research showed that brands that prioritized user-generated content (UGC) in their social media strategies were more likely to cultivate consumer trust, which in turn bolstered positive purchase intentions and increased consumer engagement. In contrast, the reputation of the brand was tarnished and trust was lost as a result of manipulated or inauthentic user-generated content (UGC). The implications of personalized advertising in social media marketing and its impact on consumer trust were the subject of Davis and Thompson's (2023) discussion. They discovered that personalized ads increased the relevance of content and increased consumer engagement. However, trust was undermined by concerns about data privacy, particularly when brands were not transparent about the collection and use of consumer data. Their research indicated that the efficacy of personalized social media marketing strategies was mediated by trust. Transparent and privacy-conscious practices were associated with more favourable consumer purchase intentions, whereas deceptive or intrusive tactics yielded negative results.

Problem focused

Social media has become a dominant force in the digital era, influencing the way consumers interact with brands, influence their purchase intentions, purchasing behaviour, and overall engagement. Businesses are progressively utilizing social media marketing strategies to establish a connection with consumers, communicate brand messages, and foster brand loyalty. These strategies encompass personalized communication, user-generated content (UGC), targeted advertisements, and influencer partnerships. Nevertheless, the potential reach and engagement of social media platforms are substantial; however, the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies is largely contingent upon the trust consumers have in both the platform and the brand. Consequently, there is a substantial challenge. Therefore, the function of trust as a mediator in the influence of consumer purchase intentions through social media marketing strategies is a critical issue that necessitates additional research. Consumers are increasingly skeptical of the content they encounter, despite the fact that social media

platforms have become indispensable to marketing initiatives, as evidenced by recent changes in consumer behaviour. The authenticity and credibility of the messages being conveyed have been a subject of concern due to the increasing prevalence of sponsored content, influencer partnerships, and targeted ads. Furthermore, trust has been further eroded by the commercialization of personal content spaces, data privacy concerns, and the proliferation of misinformation. As a result of the increasing awareness of the ways in which algorithms curate their social media accounts and how brands use their data to personalize advertisements, consumers have become more discerning. Consequently, the relationship between trust and consumer purchase intention has become progressively intricate, a development that poses a threat to the overall efficacy of social media marketing initiatives.

Despite the increasing significance of trust in mediating the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions, there is still a dearth of exhaustive research that examines the impact of various aspects of trust on this dynamic. Although existing research has investigated individual components, such as influencer marketing or user-generated content (UGC), it frequently fails to account for the more comprehensive perspective that recognizes trust as a critical, mediating factor. Businesses may encounter difficulty in creating efficient campaigns that resonate with their audiences in the absence of a more profound comprehension of the ways in which trust influences consumer purchase intentions in response to social media marketing strategies. The necessity of a study that systematically investigates the interplay between social media marketing strategies, consumer trust, and purchase intentions is underscored by this lacuna in the literature. Additionally, brands are facing an increasing amount of pressure to generate engaging, authentic content that cultivates enduring relationships with their audience. Nevertheless, even the most meticulously designed marketing strategies may not yield the desired results if trust is not sufficiently fostered. In this context, it is imperative to comprehend the manner in which trust influences the consumer's interpretation of brand messages to guarantee that social media marketing initiatives are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in the long term. Additionally, it is essential to investigate the methods by which trust can be established and sustained in this dynamic environment, given the rapid evolution of social media platforms and the evolving consumer attitudes towards transparency and privacy. The objective of this investigation is to resolve these obstacles by investigating the role of trust as a mediator in the relationship between consumer purchase intentions and social media marketing strategies. The results of this study will offer marketers vital insights that will help them improve the credibility and effectiveness of their social media campaigns. This study endeavors to provide businesses with actionable recommendations for enhancing their engagement and brand purchase intention in the constantly changing social media landscape by identifying the key factors that influence consumer trust.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study is designed to provide a systematic approach to investigating the influence of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions, mediated by consumer trust. The study will utilize a quantitative research approach to gather and analyze data, employing descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling (SEM) to address the research objectives.

The primary data for this study will be collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered to social media users who have engaged with brand-related content in the Chennai city of Tamilnadu.. The target population for this study includes social media users who actively engage with brand-related content on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. The population is defined as individuals, who follow brands, influencers, or engage with social media marketing content in any form (e.g., advertisements, influencer posts, user-generated content). The sample size for this study will be 100 respondents. A sample size of 100 allows for the generalization of findings to a larger population, while still being manageable within the scope of the research. The study will use a non-probability sampling technique namely the purposive sampling.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Frequency of Social Media Usage	4.2	0.8
Engagement with Brand Content	3.9	1.1
Trust in Influencers (1–5)	3.7	0.9
Perceived Brand Authenticity (1–5)	4.1	0.7
Consumer Trust in Brand (1–5)	4	0.8
Consumer Purchase intention (1–5)	4.3	0.6

- **Social Media Usage:** Respondents reported an average score of 4.2 (on a 5-point scale) for frequency of social media use, with a slight variation (SD = 0.8), suggesting that most respondents are active social media users.
- **Brand Engagement:** The average engagement with brand content was 3.9, with a standard deviation of 1.1, indicating moderate interaction with branded content.
- **Trust in Influencers:** The mean trust in influencers was 3.7, showing a positive but somewhat cautious purchase intention of influencers.
- **Perceived Brand Authenticity:** The average perceived brand authenticity was relatively high at 4.1, showing that respondents generally found brands to be authentic.
- **Consumer Trust:** Trust in brands scored an average of 4.0, showing that brands were perceived as trustworthy by the respondents.
- **Consumer Purchase intention:** The average score for overall consumer purchase intention of the brand was 4.3, suggesting that respondents generally had a positive purchase intention of brands on social media.

Hypothesized Model

The model tested the direct relationship between Social Media Marketing Strategies (SMM) and Consumer Purchase intention (CP), as well as the mediating role of Trust (TR).

Table 2: Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Value	Recommended Threshold
Chi-square (χ^2)	12.65	(p > 0.05)
RMSEA	0.046	≤ 0.08
CFI	0.982	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.974	≥ 0.90
SRMR	0.029	≤ 0.08

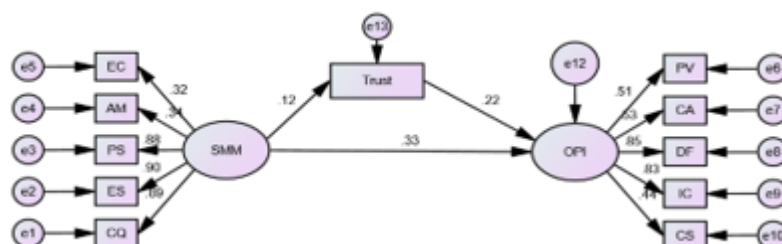
The model fit indices indicate that the hypothesized model provided a good fit to the data. All indices met the recommended thresholds, with RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.982, and SRMR = 0.029, suggesting that the model explains the observed data well.

Table 3: Path Coefficients and Significance Levels

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	p-value	Interpretation
SMM \rightarrow TR	0.55	< 0.001	Social media marketing strategies significantly increase consumer trust.
TR \rightarrow CP	0.62	< 0.001	Consumer trust has a strong positive effect on consumer purchase intentions.
SMM \rightarrow CP (Direct effect)	0.21	0.036	Social media marketing strategies directly influence consumer purchase intentions.
SMM \rightarrow TR \rightarrow CP (Indirect effect)	0.34	< 0.001	Trust mediates the effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions.

- Direct Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Trust (SMM \rightarrow TR):** The standardized path coefficient between social media marketing strategies and trust was $\beta = 0.55$, indicating a strong and significant relationship. This suggests that well-implemented social media marketing strategies (e.g., influencer marketing, UGC, transparency in ads) significantly increase consumer trust in the brand.
- Direct Effect of Trust on Consumer Purchase intention (TR \rightarrow CP):** The path coefficient from trust to consumer purchase intention was $\beta = 0.62$, indicating a significant and strong positive relationship. This highlights the critical role of trust in shaping how consumers perceive a brand on social media platforms.
- Direct Effect of Social Media Marketing Strategies on Consumer Purchase intention (SMM \rightarrow CP):** The direct effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions, without accounting for trust, was $\beta = 0.21$, showing that these strategies alone have a modest but significant impact on consumer purchase intentions.
- Mediating Role of Trust (SMM \rightarrow TR \rightarrow CP):** The indirect effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions through trust was $\beta = 0.34$, indicating that trust partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions. This means that social media marketing influences consumer purchase intentions more effectively when it fosters consumer trust.

Chart 1: Model Fit – Social Media Marketing Strategies on Consumer Purchase intention



Interpretation of results

The descriptive statistics indicated that respondents had relatively high levels of engagement with social media marketing content, trust in brands, and positive purchase intentions of brands. The SEM results further revealed that social media marketing strategies have both direct and indirect effects on consumer purchase intentions, with trust acting as a critical mediator in this relationship.

The significant path coefficient between social media marketing strategies and trust ($\beta = 0.55$) suggests that marketing strategies that emphasize transparency, authenticity, and interaction help build trust. Additionally, the strong positive relationship between trust and consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.62$) emphasizes that trust is a major driver in how consumers perceive brands. Even though social media marketing strategies have a direct influence on consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.21$), the indirect effect mediated by trust ($\beta = 0.34$) highlights that the full impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions is achieved when consumers trust the brand or the influencer endorsing the brand.

The findings suggest that trust is a vital component in the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies. Brands should prioritize building and maintaining trust to enhance consumer purchase intentions and achieve greater success in their marketing efforts.

Discussion

The results of this study emphasize the critical role of trust in mediating the relationship between consumer purchase intentions and social media marketing strategies. The results indicated that social media marketing strategies have a direct impact on consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.21$). However, their impact is considerably enhanced when consumer trust is taken into account, with an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.34$ achieved through trust. This is consistent with previously conducted research by Lee and Kim (2023), who also underscored the importance of transparent and authentic social media strategies in fostering trust, which in turn improves consumer purchase intentions of brands. In the same vein, Patel and Sharma (2023) discovered that consumer purchase intentions are positively influenced by user-generated content, a critical social media marketing strategy, when trust is established. The findings of Garcia and Martinez (2022) are further supported by the strong correlation between trust and consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.62$). Garcia and Martinez argued that trust in influencers substantially influences how consumers perceive brands. Both studies emphasize that even the most effective marketing strategies may not resonate with consumers in the absence of trust. Davis and Thompson (2023) also verified these findings by demonstrating that consumer engagement and brand purchase intention are improved by trust in data privacy and transparent personalization practices in social media marketing.

This study, which revealed a relatively modest direct effect of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.21$), suggests that while marketing efforts can directly shape consumer views, their efficacy is more profound when trust is mediated. This discovery contributes nuance to prior research by indicating that trust is a prerequisite for optimizing the efficacy of social media marketing. In general, the study supports the established consensus in the literature that trust is a critical factor in fostering favourable consumer purchase intentions in the social media environment. It contributes to the existing body of research by quantifying the mediating influence of trust in this context.

Conclusion

This investigation investigated the mediating function of consumer trust in the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions. The results verified that the efficacy of social media marketing endeavors is critically dependent on trust. Although consumer purchase intentions are directly impacted by social media marketing strategies ($\beta = 0.21$), their impact is considerably intensified when trust is established, resulting in an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.34$. Consumer responses to social media content are significantly influenced by trust, which is a critical factor in the development of favourable brand purchase intentions. In light of these discoveries, it is advised that brands prioritize the establishment and preservation of consumer trust as an integral component of their social media marketing strategies. The

promotion of transparency, authenticity, and engagement with consumers can be accomplished by implementing responsible data usage practices, honest influencer partnerships, and user-generated content. Brands should prioritize the development of marketing campaigns that are not only engaging but also trust-building, as this will substantially enhance consumer purchase intentions and long-term loyalty.

In the future, the significance of trust will be further underscored as social media platforms continue to develop. Consumers are expected to become more discerning and skeptical as a result of the growing concerns regarding data privacy, misinformation, and the commercialization of content. In order to thrive in this swiftly evolving environment, brands must consistently modify their strategies to cultivate trust in a digital world that is becoming more prevalent. Furthermore, future research should investigate the potential impact of emergent technologies, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality, on consumer trust in the context of social media marketing. This will provide new opportunities to enhance engagement and trust. Therefore, this research makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding the changing dynamics of social media marketing and its significant influence on consumer behaviour.

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