

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior

Dr. Indranil Debgupta

Associate Professor, SMIT, Techno India Group (TIG), Kolkata, West Bengal, India, PIN-700091,
E-mail: indranildebgupta2009@gmail.com.

Abstract

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have emerged as powerful avenues for consumers to engage in social interactions on the internet. This shift has led consumers to increasingly rely on social media for information and updates about various brands. Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a pivotal component for businesses seeking to connect with their target audience efficiently and promptly. In the face of globalization and intense competition, traditional marketing practices alone are no longer sufficient. To thrive in the market, businesses must embrace social media marketing strategies. This study explores the transformative impact of social media on consumer behavior, particularly focusing on the younger demographic. As the dynamics of buying and selling goods undergo a paradigm shift towards online platforms equipped with diverse marketing tools, it is imperative to understand the evolving landscape. The research employs a descriptive approach, utilizing random sampling methods to select respondents for a comprehensive study. The findings of this research shed light on how consumers are adapting to online marketing, with a specific emphasis on the influential role of social media in shaping their buying behavior. The paper aims to contribute valuable insights into the intricacies of this evolving consumer landscape.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing (SMM), Consumer Buying Behavior, Online Marketing, Digital Landscape, Young Consumer Influence.*

1. Introduction

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social media are online platforms that allow users to create and share content such as photos, videos, and status updates as well as information about themselves, their interests, and their careers. By allowing users to connect with

one another's accounts, these services are vital to the growth of online social networks. Obar et al. (2015) note that a full description is difficult to establish due to the ever-changing nature of social media platforms, both integrated and standalone. The way people, groups, and organisations communicate has changed drastically and ubiquitously due to social media platforms.

According to Mirza (2014), social media app functionality is influenced by user knowledge and individual use behaviours. Using data from a variety of age groups and educational backgrounds, Chen et al. (2011) determined that social media platforms have a substantial effect on consumers' propensity to make purchases. According to Brown (2009), online communities are stronger, people engage in more meaningful conversations, and more collaborative initiatives are launched. Furthermore, Voramontri and Klieb (2018) found that social media usage affects consumer satisfaction at every stage of the buying process, from searching for information to evaluating alternatives. As consumers approach the final decision-making stage and evaluate their purchase, their satisfaction levels are highest on social media. Marketers are very interested in monitoring social media activity, but we still don't fully comprehend the complex ways in which these platforms impact customers' decision-making. There has to be more investigation into the complex ways social media influences buying habits and decision-making processes.

Because of its widely held belief in its ability to reach customers, the usage of social media for marketing purposes has skyrocketed. This upsurge is due to the fact that organisations are reevaluating their digital marketing strategies in light of the significant technological improvements. Consumers are increasingly drawn to online marketing due to the convenience of online buying, the proliferation of

high-speed internet, and other technological advancements. Various online ad formats that centre on social networking services are together referred to as social network advertising or social media targeting. One major perk of this kind of advertising is that it lets marketers use users' demographic data to make more targeted adverts. A study conducted by Kour and Kaur (2020) investigated the effects of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour. The results showed that trust, perceived value, and favourable reviews have a beneficial effect on social media purchasing decisions.

Buying decisions made by modern consumers are frequently influenced by recommendations or views shared by social media friends and coworkers (Forbes and Forbes, 2013). Customers now have the capacity to start, drive, and change every step of the purchasing process thanks to the revolutionary impact of social media on marketing. In addition to raising companies' profiles in the eyes of consumers, this low-cost strategy boosts customer happiness and loyalty to the brand by revealing previously unknown market trends. More and more conversations are taking place in the virtual spaces provided by social media as users devote more and more time to these sites. Therefore, social media is where most people engage with brands and see their marketing campaigns. Thanks to a change in the mechanics of communication, customers are no longer seen as mere recipients of marketing messages but as creators and influencers in their own right (Kozinets et al., 2008). A social media marketing industry research found that 83% of marketers recognise the high value of social media for their organisations, proving that it is still relevant and not just a fleeting trend (Stelzner, 2012). Social media, particularly peer reviews, social networks, and blogs, increasingly significantly impacts consumer purchasing behaviour, displacing traditional channels as the only arbiters of consumer sentiments towards brands.

1 (I). Social Media Marketing Activities

Blogger endorsements, social media ads, and user-generated content management are some of the online marketing tactics that many companies utilise to build customer awareness of their brand (Wang and Kim, 2017). Online tools that let users make and share their

own content are what make up social media, which is based on the ideological and technical ideas of Web 2.0. Social media is a crucial channel for communicating brand information because of its interactive character, which promotes knowledge sharing, cooperation, and engagement on a larger scale than traditional media forms such as print, radio, and television. All of the following are included in this category: online journals, discussion boards, wikis, social media sites (Twitter, Blogger, LinkedIn, Facebook), and consumer review sites (Arrigo, 2018).

A wide variety of forms, including social bookmarking, rating, videos, photos, podcasts, wikis, microblogging, social blogs, and weblogs, are presented on social media platforms, which facilitate content sharing, collaboration, and engagement. Networkers, government agencies, and corporations have all contributed to the meteoric rise in social media usage (Cheung et al., 2021). Businesses and government agencies advertise and promote themselves on social media, taking advantage of the efficient and cost-effective integrated marketing activities made possible by the easy flow of information among digital services, retailers, events, media, and consumer partners (Tafesse and Wien, 2018).

1 (II). Social Identification of Brand

A great deal of research on brand communities has focused on members' social identities because of how profoundly important they are to the community as a whole. Social identity theory explains how individuals develop a sense of self-worth and self-affirmation through making comparisons to others, coming up with their own distinct identity, and putting oneself into categories, as stated by Chen and Lin (2019). Without a clear understanding of the brand community or the organisation that owns the brand, it is difficult to foster relationships among community members or build rapport between the brand and community participants. People in the community are grouped in this way based on factors including their work, housing situation, and degree of education. People in social networks sort one other into similar or distinct groups based on their social status, like Salem and Salem (2021).

Finding groups centered on brands and discovering brands themselves follow a common path. Through users' open interactions, members build bonds with each other and share thoughts about the community, which helps to establish a sense of belonging. User values and social community principles can be seen as the essence of a brand community's identity (Wibowo et al., 2021).

1 (III). Consumer Satisfaction vis-à-vis Community involvement

A customer's level of satisfaction is measured after a service has been provided by comparing their expectations with their past experiences. Consumers are said to be satisfied when their expectations are met by the services they receive, according to the implementation confirmation hypothesis. Customers often gauge their degree of pleasure by comparing their present experience to previous ones (Pang, 2021).

According to recent studies, consumer loyalty and community involvement are strongly impacted by community satisfaction. The opinions of a community's members determine the degree of pleasure (Jarman et al., 2021). This assessment of the neighbourhood is influenced by conversations that have taken place in the past. Members of the community exhibit more positive feelings and actions when they are satisfied with their experiences. According to Shujaat et al. (2021), when people are happy, they are more likely to get involved and stay loyal to the brand.

2. Review of Literature

In his research on the impact of social media on buyers, Hajli (2014) found that users are able to build communities online and contribute information such as reviews and recommendations. Users who are able to access social media platforms are helping to build confidence in those platforms by providing online social assistance to their peers. Trust in information, privacy concerns, perceptions of trustworthiness, social media security, and real social media usage were the five critical elements identified by Farook and Abeysekera (2016), who studied the effect of social media marketing on consumer involvement. The

results showed that people interacted more positively when they felt more trustworthy and secure.

Schiffman et al. (2008) classified reference groups into various types, with virtual communities standing out as particularly significant. The exchange of knowledge, experiences, and opinions within these groups can profoundly influence the success or failure of a product or service. Different social network groups provide valuable information to aid consumers in making informed purchasing decisions. Sharma and Asad (2012) highlighted the substantial impact of brand or product on sales, image, and consumer purchasing behavior. Similarly, Wang et al. (2012) explored the impact of online buyer socialization through chat groups, finding that it influences buying decisions through direct recommendations from friends and involvement in the product. Customer equity drivers, brand equity, and social media collectively influence customer equity negatively. Social media platforms offer companies an opportunity to engage with potential and existing consumers, fostering a heightened sense of intimacy in customer relationships and cultivating meaningful connections (Mersey et al., 2010). According to research by Voramontri and Klieb (2018), which looked at how social media affected consumer behaviour, using these platforms makes people happier when they're just starting to look for information and weigh their options. On the other hand, it failed to significantly enhance satisfaction during the evaluation phase following a purchase or when making a final decision. Despite the convenience of internet research, many customers prefer to do business the old-fashioned way.

Elisabeta and Ivona (2014) investigated the impact of social media on consumer behavior, uncovering that income plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes before making specific product purchases. The study also highlighted the influence of social networks, particularly in the virtual environment, where factors such as message exposure and the relationship between information variety and the consumer play a crucial role in shaping behavior.

Phusalux et al. (2020) explored the influence of social media on the buying behavior of youth in Malaysia. The study identified word-of-mouth (WoM) in social

media marketing as the most impactful factor, positively affecting brand preference, loyalty, and the willingness to pay a premium price. Other determinants, including interaction, entertainment, and customization, also significantly influenced various aspects of consumer behavior. Notably, the variable trendiness was excluded due to its high discriminant validity with other variables. Brand equity was found to moderate the effects of entertainment on brand loyalty and the willingness to pay a premium price.

Al Jahwari et al. (2020) investigated the impact of social media on online buying behavior in Oman, revealing a positive influence on consumer purchasing decisions. The study further suggested that celebrity endorsements and recommendations from friends played a positive role in shaping consumer buying behavior.

In the context of Nepal, Neupane (2019) found that both males and females prefer online services (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) for social connections. To improve the online shopping experience, Parajuli et al. (2021) found that authorities and online businesses should handle customer complaints. Consumers' spending habits are positively correlated with their social media networking activity, according to Gaudel (2019).

3. Significance of the Study

The study "The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior" holds paramount significance in the contemporary business landscape. In an era dominated by digital interactions, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior and shaping purchasing decisions. Understanding the intricate dynamics between social media marketing strategies and consumer responses is crucial for businesses seeking to thrive in the competitive market. This research not only provides insights into the ways in which social media impacts consumer attitudes and preferences but also sheds light on the effectiveness of various marketing techniques employed in the virtual realm. By unraveling the complexities of this relationship, the study contributes valuable knowledge that can guide businesses in

tailoring their marketing approaches to resonate effectively with their target audience. Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to inform strategic decisions, enabling businesses to harness the full potential of social media in shaping and enhancing consumer behavior.

4. Objectives of the study

1. Assess consumer engagement with diverse social media strategies to understand their impact on perception.
2. Analyze how social media marketing influences consumer buying behavior, focusing on user-generated content and recommendations.
3. Explore demographic variations in the effectiveness of social media marketing, considering age, gender, and socio-economic factors.
4. Evaluate the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction, measuring success in increasing both.

5. Methodology

The study topics are addressed in a research design, which includes the timeframe, sampling technique, measurement procedures, and analysis framework. A research design can be one of three primary kinds:

1. When the problem is not well-defined, researchers may use an exploratory research strategy, which involves qualitative study, to better understand the problem situation.
2. A descriptive research design can be employed in a longitudinal study or a cross-sectional study to provide a thorough and full explanation of the study problem.
3. The third type of research design is known as causal research. This type of study helps researchers establish a probabilistic cause-

and-effect link by manipulating one or more causal variables and then assessing their impact on the dependent variable.

To understand how social media influences consumer purchasing behavior, this article employs an exploratory research approach based on survey data and pertinent information culled from previously published papers.

5 (I). Data Collection Method

The data collection for this study incorporates both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was gathered through surveys conducted on the Google Forms platform, a web-based application for free surveying. In order to compile secondary data, we reviewed previous research publications on the same subjects and had casual conversations with people about their purchasing decisions. Exploratory research, employed in this study, is characterized as an investigation aimed at understanding a complex issue that lacks a clear definition. While providing a deeper understanding of the existing problem, exploratory research may not yield definitive results and is typically conducted in the early stages of addressing an issue.

5 (II). Sampling Design

Sample Universe: The demographic scope of this study encompasses individuals residing in the New Delhi region.

- **Age Distribution**

The pie chart reveals that a significant proportion of respondents falls within the 15-30 age group, comprising 44.30% of the total. The subsequent age groups show varying degrees of participation, with the 36-45 and 46-55 age brackets being notably substantial. On the other hand, individuals aged 65 and above represent the smallest percentage among the surveyed age groups.

Sample Size: A total of 138 participants were included in the sample for this study.

6. Scope of the study

To achieve its aims, the study looks at how social media influences consumers' purchasing decisions from their perspective. The study's overarching goal is to provide social media users with the information they need to better understand what variables impact their purchase decisions. Data obtained through the questionnaire is purposefully acquired from the consumer's viewpoint, enabling the extraction of new insights, since marketing is centered around understanding consumer demands. Prospective readers will also be informed about the role that social media plays in consumers' final purchasing decisions. Consumers' actions to social media are the main subjects of investigation.

7. Data Analysis

The forthcoming section details the analysis derived from the data gathered through the questionnaire completed by 138 participants. This survey was distributed to individuals presently residing in New Delhi, India. Despite being sent to 150 individuals, the actual number of respondents amounted to 138, resulting in a response rate of 92.34%. The questionnaire encompassed a total of 13 questions.

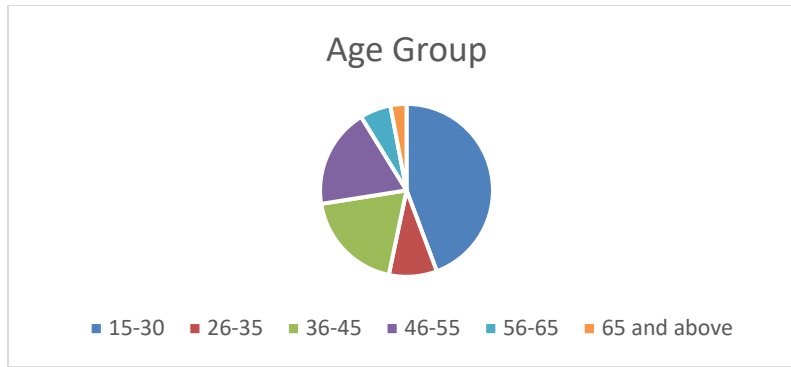


Figure 1: Age Distribution

- **Gender Distribution:**

The subsequent pie chart demonstrates the distribution of genders among the respondents.

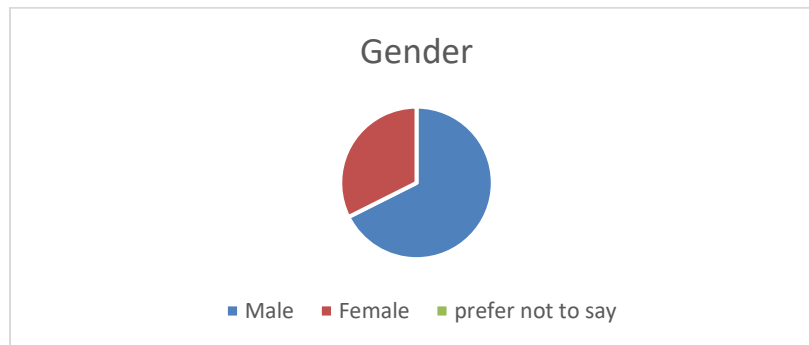


Figure 2: Gender Distribution

The provided pie chart illustrates the gender distribution among respondents who participated in the survey. From the available data, it is evident that a majority of the respondents identify as male, constituting 67.60% of the surveyed population. In contrast, females make up a smaller portion, representing 32.40%.

- **Frequency of online shopping done by people**

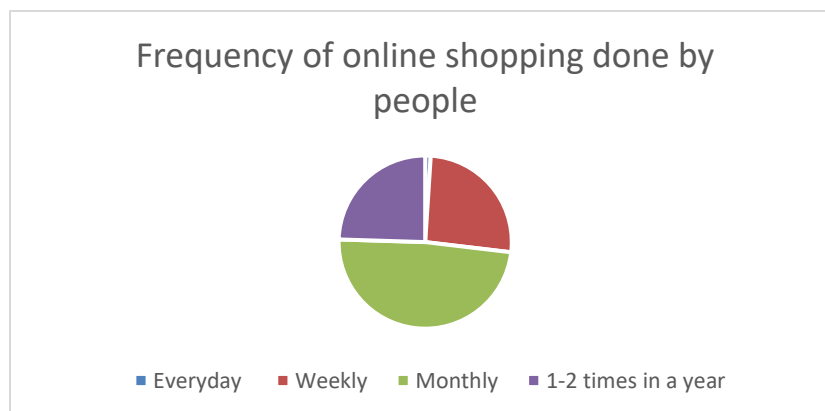


Figure 3: Frequency of online shopping done by people

The pie chart depicts the frequency of online shopping activities conducted by individuals. It can be inferred that the majority of respondents engage in online shopping every month, constituting a substantial portion at 47.20%. Following closely, a noteworthy 25.10% participate in weekly online shopping activities. Meanwhile, a smaller but significant proportion, 23.80%, reported shopping online 1-2 times in a year. Interestingly, a minimal percentage of individuals, at 1%, indicated engaging in online shopping daily. Overall, the pie chart provides insights into the diverse frequencies with which people partake in online shopping.

- **Average Duration Spent on Social Media Platforms in a Typical Day**

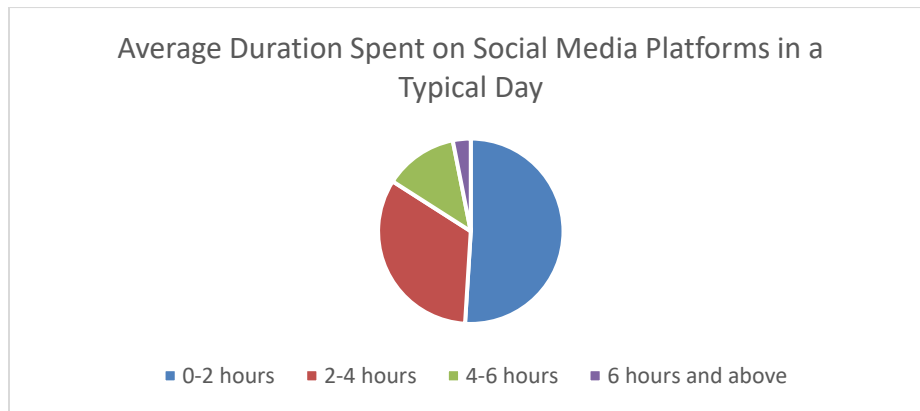


Figure 4: Average Duration Spent on Social Media Platforms in a Typical Day

The pie chart outlines the average duration individuals spend on social media platforms in a typical day. The data indicates that the majority of respondents, at 48.90%, spend 0-2 hours on social media daily. A significant portion, 31.70%, allocates 2-4 hours to social media engagement. A smaller percentage, 12.30%, extends their daily social media use to 4-6 hours. Only 3% of individuals reported spending six hours or more on social media platforms in a typical day. Overall, the chart provides a snapshot of the diverse time allocations people have for social media activities.

The rise and widespread use of social media platforms have significantly facilitated real-time communication among individuals. This convenience allows individuals to expand their network of online connections extensively through the utilization of social media platforms.

- **Most Utilized Applications and Websites for Online Purchases**

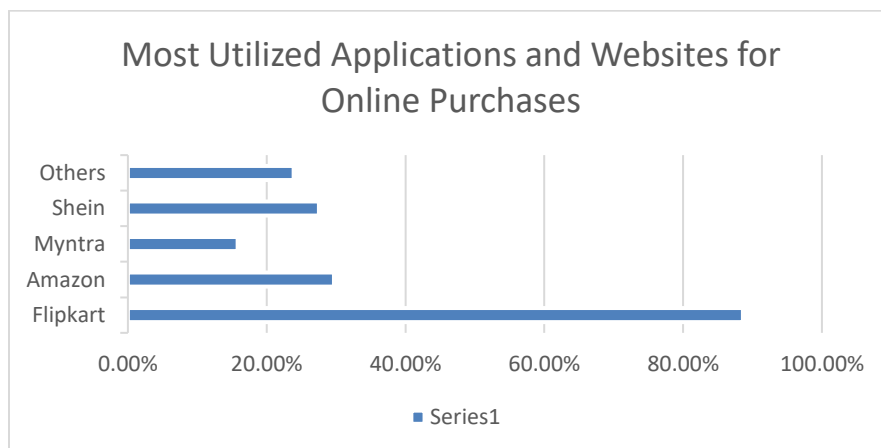


Figure 5: Most Utilized Applications and Websites for Online Purchases

The bar diagram illustrates the popularity of various applications and websites for online purchases. Notably, Flipkart emerges as the most utilized platform, with a significant dominance at 88.60%. Amazon follows, although with a considerably lower percentage of 29.70%. Myntra and Shein capture 15.80% and 27.50% of respondents, respectively. Meanwhile, other platforms collectively account for 23.90%. The data underscores Flipkart's predominant position as the preferred choice for online shopping among the surveyed individuals, surpassing other notable platforms.

Do individuals actively engage with and track brands on social media platforms?

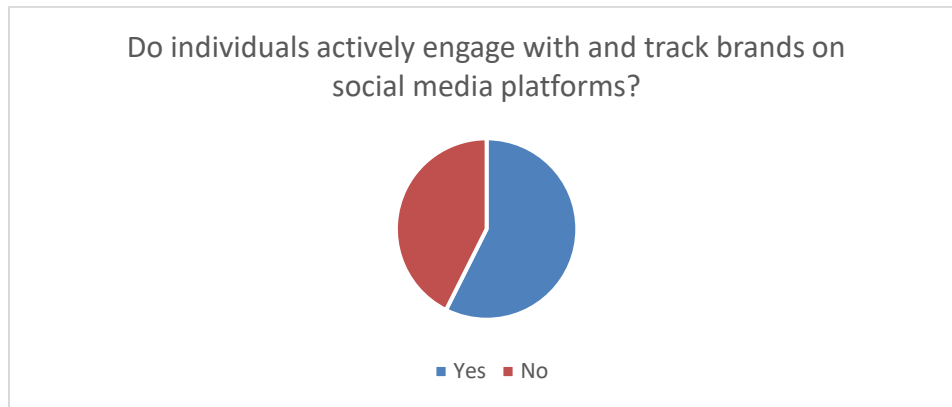


Figure 6: Do individuals actively engage with and track brands on social media platforms?

Information regarding different brands, promotions, discounts, and offers is regularly shared on social media platforms. Social media and websites serve as convenient means to access a wide range of information effortlessly. The pie chart depicts the level of individual engagement with and tracking of brands on social media platforms. The summary of responses indicates that a majority, constituting 57.40%, actively engage with brands on social media. In contrast, 42.60% of individuals do not participate in such brand-related interactions on social media platforms. This information suggests a significant portion of individuals are actively involved in following and engaging with brands through social media channels, while a notable portion opts not to do so.

- Does your perception of a brand get influenced by social media?

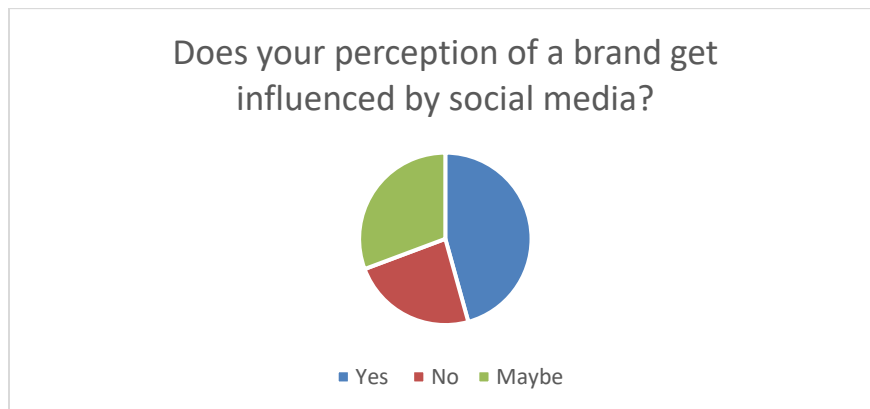


Figure 7: Does your perception of a brand get influenced by social media?

Social media functions as a powerful amplifier for disseminating information about brands to consumers. Brands can leverage this platform to shine and gain a competitive edge by promoting positive details about their products and services. The pie chart explores the impact of social media on individuals' brand perceptions. Summarily, 45.70% of respondents acknowledge that their perception of a brand is influenced by social media. Conversely, 23.60% express that social media has no impact on their brand perceptions. A notable 30.70% fall into the "Maybe" category, suggesting a degree of uncertainty or variability in the influence of social media on their brand perceptions. This data highlights the varied ways in which social media can or cannot shape individuals' perspectives of brands.

8. Findings

The research provides insights from a questionnaire completed by 138 participants residing in New Delhi, India, yielding a response rate of 92.34%. The age distribution reveals a significant representation of individuals aged 15-30, comprising 44.30%, with varying degrees of participation in subsequent age groups. The gender distribution indicates 67.60% male respondents and 32.40% female respondents.

The frequency of online shopping highlights that 47.20% of respondents engage in online shopping monthly, 25.10% weekly, 23.80% 1-2 times a year, and 1% daily. Regarding social media use, the majority (48.90%) spends 0-2 hours daily, 31.70% allocates 2-4 hours, 12.30% spends 4-6 hours, and 3% spends six hours or more.

In terms of online shopping platforms, Flipkart dominates at 88.60%, followed by Amazon (29.70%), Shein (27.50%), and Myntra (15.80%), while other platforms collectively account for 23.90%.

The engagement with brands on social media platforms indicates that 57.40% actively engage, while 42.60% do not. Finally, the impact of social media on brand perception shows that 45.70% acknowledge influence, 23.60% claim no impact, and 30.70% fall into the "Maybe" category, showcasing the diverse ways social media can shape individuals' brand perspectives.

9. Conclusion

This study's findings suggest that social media is an important tool for New Delhi, India consumers to use when deciding what to buy. Almost everyone who took the survey sees social media as just another way people spread the news online. Prospective buyers rely heavily on the opinions and experiences of previous buyers expressed on these forums.

The decision-making process was described as more comfortable and enjoyable by social media users compared to those who rely on alternative information sources. Individuals reported greater levels of content satisfaction when they felt the quantity and quality of the material they received on social media exceeded their expectations. It is clear from the results that social media has a major effect on how consumers make their final decisions.

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Dr. Indranil Debgupta, PhD (2021), M.Com (1998), MBA (2010), M.phil (2005), Total publication:2, Senior lecturer in CRTI, a college under University of Burdwan from 2008 to 2022, Associate Professor in Saroj Mohan Institute of Technology and Management (Till today). Research Interest: Marketing, HRM and Strategic Management.