

Consumer's Purchase Behavior via Social Media Marketing

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Abstract: In present day's digital landscape, Social Media Marketing (SMM) came forward as a powerful device for influencing consumer behavior, enabling marketers to engage with users in real time and drive purchasing decisions via targeted content. As social media platforms become increasingly integral to daily life, understanding the nuances of how different demographic groups respond to marketing efforts is essential for crafting effective strategies. This research plans to analyze the influence of age plus region on product category preferences in purchases done via platforms of social media. A sample of 600 respondents was analyzed to assess patterns across various age groups from both urban and rural regions, focusing on product categories such as apparel, electronics, cosmetics, home décor, and books. The findings reveal that while all age groups actively engage in purchasing via social media, product preferences vary significantly with age. Younger consumers show a higher affinity for fashion and cosmetic products, whereas older age groups tend to prefer electronics, home décor, and utility-based categories. Apparel and electronics emerged as the most commonly purchased items across all demographics, suggesting a universal appeal. This research highlights the importance of age-based and region-based segmentation for social media marketing strategies and offers actionable insights for marketers to tailor content and campaigns more effectively, aligning with the preferences of their target audiences.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Purchase Behavior, Age-Wise Analysis, Consumer Preferences, Digital Marketing.

1. Introduction

Recently, social media has revolutionized not just communication but also commerce. The rise of different platforms of social media like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube has enabled businesses for real time interaction with consumers, personalize experiences, plus promote products with unprecedented reach and engagement. Thus Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a crucial strategy used for brands interested to attract and retain customers in an increasingly digital economy.

Now consumers are relying more on social media to discover products, peer reviews, plus influencer recommendations, their behavior is influenced by several demographic factors—age and region being the most critical. Each generation interacts with content differently: teenagers and youth are highly responsive to visual storytelling and influencer marketing, while older generations

tend to prioritize trust, functionality, and brand reputation. These differences significantly impact which products are preferred and how buying decisions are made across platforms.

1.1 Consumer Behaviour

The behaviors and choices of people make while buying, utilizing, and discarding goods and services is known as consumer behavior. It investigates the emotional, social, and psychological aspects that affect their choices. Companies need to understand consumer behavior to create better products, marketing campaigns, and customer experiences that appeal to their target market.

Consumer behaviour could be arranged as five stages of –

- (i) Recognition of problem
- (ii) Searching information
- (iii) Evaluating alternatives,
- (iv) Decision to buy
- (v) Post-purchase decisions.

1.2 Social Media

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based platforms that are designed using the principles and technology of the Web, allowing users to generate and share content. These platforms support scalable and interactive communication, making it easy for users to connect, engage, and exchange information. As social media becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, it significantly influences consumer behavior. People can now watch captivating advertisements on platforms like YouTube, express their views on Twitter, and instantly share content with their network on Facebook. Unlike traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, or television, social media offers enhanced interactivity, accessibility, and user participation.

1.3 Categories of Social Media

Social media platforms can be broadly classified into four key categories:

- Social Networking Sites – Platforms that facilitate personal and professional connections, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Social News Websites – Platforms that focus on sharing and discussing news and current events, like Reddit and Digg.
- Media Sharing Sites – Websites dedicated to sharing visual content, including photos and videos, such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.
- Blogs – Online journals or articles where individuals or organizations post opinions, information, or updates, often allowing reader interaction through comments.

1.4 Social Media in Marketing

Weinberg (2009) describes social media marketing as the use of social platforms to promote products or services by leveraging social interaction and digital media tools. It allows individuals and businesses to reach broader audiences more organically and cost-effectively than traditional advertising methods. As conventional media advertising becomes less effective, social media emerges as a space where like-minded individuals connect to exchange ideas and experiences. Marketers can utilize these interactions to engage with their audiences, gather feedback, and promote offerings in a more personalized manner.

Why Social Media Marketing Stands Out

One of the key advantages of social media marketing is its accessibility, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited advertising budgets. Despite being a continually evolving strategy, the core principles of marketing—identifying a target audience, fostering communication, and building customer loyalty—remain unchanged. Social media enables even smaller brands to engage directly with their consumers, build a community, and compete effectively in the digital landscape.

2. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to conduct an analytical assessment of age-wise purchase behavior via social media marketing. By examining the product categories most preferred by different age segments and how engagement with SMM differs across them, the study seeks to identify actionable insights for marketers and researchers. Understanding these nuances can help brands design more targeted and effective SMM strategies, ultimately leading to increased consumer satisfaction and business growth.

Research questions:

- I. To assess the age-wise and region wise consumers' purchase behavior via social media marketing?
- II. To examine the product categories most preferred by different age segments and region wise and how such engagement with SMM differs across them.

3. Literature Review

The rise of social media has become a defining trend of the 21st century. Online communication is increasingly shaping various dimensions of consumer decision-making, including how individuals evaluate products, make purchases, and interact with brands. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook are having a profound impact not only on how businesses operate but also on the focus of academic research. In recent years, numerous scholarly studies have explored the growing influence of social media within the business environment.

- Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) described social media as a powerful stage that allows consumers and brands to interact plus exchange user-generated content. Social media has emerged as a critical tool of marketing, enabling companies to influence consumer purchasing decisions through visual content, influencer partnerships, and targeted advertising. The interactive nature of social platforms also supports direct engagement and peer-to-peer influence.
- According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), individuals intentionally engage with media to fulfill particular needs such as entertainment, social interaction, information gathering, and identity formation. These underlying motivations differ across age groups, influencing how people use social media platforms for shopping purposes.
- Bolton et al. (2013) conducted a cross-generational study and found that Millennials and Gen Z are highly responsive to SMM due to their digital fluency. In contrast, Gen X and Baby Boomers value online trust, brand reputation, and detailed information. This variation explains age-wise preferences in product categories and purchasing behavior.
- Ashley and Tuten (2015) found that branded content—especially when visually creative and emotionally appealing—leads to higher engagement. Younger users are drawn to fashion and lifestyle products on platforms like Instagram, where such content is prevalent. Similarly, Kim and Johnson (2016) emphasized user-generated content in shaping trust and authenticity, particularly among younger demographics.
- Boateng and Okoe (2015) studied consumer behavior in Ghana and noted that older individuals are more influenced by brand credibility and less by trends or influencers. This further supports the notion that age is a moderating factor in how people respond to social media advertising.
- According to Pew Research Center (2021), platform usage differs significantly by age. Gen Z and younger Millennials dominate TikTok and Instagram, while older users prefer Facebook and YouTube. These platform preferences impact exposure to different types of products and marketing techniques.
- Smith (2020) concluded that younger consumers are more engaged in impulsive purchases due to peer influence and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), while older consumers approach purchases

more rationally, often researching before buying. This distinction explains varying product choices and engagement depth with SMM.

Table 1: Literature review summary

Author(s)	Year	Key Findings	Research Methodology
Kaplan & Haenlein	2010	Social media enables interactive brand-consumer engagement and peer-influenced decision-making.	Conceptual/Theoretical paper
Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch	1973	Users engage with media to fulfill personal needs, which differ by age.	Theoretical model (Uses and Gratifications)
Ashley & Tuten	2015	Creative branded content enhances consumer engagement on social media platforms.	Content analysis of top 100 brand posts
Bolton et al.	2013	Millennials actively purchase via SMM; older users value trust, loyalty, and reliability.	Quantitative survey across multiple countries
Boateng & Okoe	2015	Older consumers respond more to trusted brand ads on social media.	Survey-based quantitative study (Ghana)
Huang & Benyoucef	2013	Product category preference changes with age; younger buyers prefer visuals, older buyers prefer function.	Literature review + conceptual framework
Kim & Johnson	2016	User-generated content influences brand perception and purchase behavior.	Experimental + survey-based study
Pew Research Center	2021	Platform use varies by age: TikTok/IG (younger), Facebook/YouTube (older).	Large-scale statistical surveys (U.S. adults)
Smith	2020	Younger consumers are impulsive buyers; older consumers are cautious and need credibility.	Empirical research using SEM (structural modeling)
Taylor	2020	Millennials are highly mobile-focused and prefer app-based shopping experiences.	Survey + regression analysis
Turner	2021	Gen Z follows influencers and trending content to make purchase decisions.	Mixed-method: Online surveys + interviews

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design: The research design outlines the strategy for addressing the research questions. This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, utilizing both survey data and insights from existing literature. It aims to describe current patterns and analyze associations relevant to social media marketing and consumer behavior.

4.2 Data Collection Methods: Both primary and secondary data sources were employed. Primary data was collected using structured online surveys distributed via Google Forms, a free, web-based tool. The survey included dichotomous (yes/no) questions, multiple-choice questions regarding product preferences, and demographic variables. Secondary data was gathered through informal discussions with consumers about their purchasing decisions and a review of related research studies.

4.3 Sampling Design

- (i) Sample Universe: The target population comprised residents of the Haryana region.
- (ii) Sample Size: The study involved 600 participants, all aged 18 and above. Each participant had made at least one purchase through social media marketing (SMM) in categories such as Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, Cosmetics, Home Décor, Books/Stationery, and Others.

4.4 Questionnaire Design: The survey questionnaire was structured primarily with multiple-choice questions, aligned with the research objectives. The study takes a consumer-centric approach, focusing on the perceptions and behaviors of end-users. It also aims to assist marketers and readers in understanding how age and geographical location (urban vs. rural) influence purchase decisions made via social media platforms.

4.5 Analytical Tools: To analyze the data, the study utilized the following methods:

- (i) Frequency analysis
- (ii) Cross-tabulation
- (iii) Percentage-based interpretation
- (iv) Chi-square test

These tools helped identify patterns and test the significance of associations between key demographic variables and consumer preferences.

5. Research Hypotheses

• Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant association between age groups and the preferred categories of products purchased via social media.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant association between age groups and the preferred categories of products purchased via social media.

• Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant association between region of residence (urban vs. rural) and the preferred product categories purchased through social media.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant association between region of residence and the preferred product categories purchased through social media.

6. Data Analysis of Purchase via SMM with Age Factor

This data below involves the preferred categories of products people buy through social media based on their age. The Chi-square test is applied for determining if there is a significant relationship among age groups and the categories of products they prefer to purchase on social media.

Table 6.1: Age and Product Categories Preferred for Purchase via Social Media

Product Category	Age Group	Count	Percentage within Age Group	p-value
Electronics	Under 18 Years	4	100.0%	
	18–24 Years	67	91.8%	
	25–34 Years	137	100.0%	
	35–44 Years	176	99.4%	
	45–54 Years	204	99.0%	

	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	0.002
Apparel & Footwear	Under 18 Years	4	100.0%	
	18–24 Years	72	98.6%	
	25–34 Years	135	98.5%	
	35–44 Years	176	99.4%	
	45–54 Years	206	100.0%	
	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	
Cosmetics & Accessories	Under 18 Years	2	50.0%	
	18–24 Years	61	83.6%	
	25–34 Years	109	79.6%	
	35–44 Years	146	82.5%	
	45–54 Years	160	77.7%	
	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	
Home Decor	Under 18 Years	1	25.0%	
	18–24 Years	57	78.1%	
	25–34 Years	111	81.0%	
	35–44 Years	140	79.1%	
	45–54 Years	151	73.3%	
	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	
Books/Stationery	Under 18 Years	4	100.0%	
	18–24 Years	70	95.9%	
	25–34 Years	135	98.5%	
	35–44 Years	175	98.9%	
	45–54 Years	202	98.1%	
	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	
Others	Under 18 Years	3	75.0%	
	18–24 Years	70	95.9%	
	25–34 Years	136	99.3%	
	35–44 Years	172	97.2%	
	45–54 Years	198	96.1%	
	55 Years and Above	3	100.0%	

Interpretation: The p-value of 0.002 is below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' age groups and the categories of products they prefer to purchase through social media platforms.

Observation: The data suggests that different age groups have distinct preferences for the categories of products they purchase via social media. For example: The younger age group (18-24 years) shows a high Percentage of purchases across all categories. Older age groups show high preferences in categories like electronics, apparel, and books, with fewer purchases in categories like cosmetics and home decor.

Cross tabulation of Region-Based Product Preferences for Buying via Social Media provides the product preferences for buying through social media, based on whether the Participants are from Urban or Rural regions.

Table6. 2: Cross tabulation of Region-Based Product Preferences for Buying via Social Media

Category of Product	Urban Count	Rural Count	Total Count	% within Region (Urban)	% within Region (Rural)	P value
Electronics	224	367	591	99.6%	97.9%	0.169
Apparel & Footwear	224	372	596	99.6%	99.2%	
Cosmetics & Accessories	176	305	481	78.2%	81.3%	
Home Decor	173	290	463	76.9%	77.3%	
Books/Stationary	223	366	589	99.1%	97.6%	
Others	222	360	582	98.7%	96.0%	
Total	225	375	600			

Provided data for the preferred categories of products purchased via social media based on the living region (Urban vs. Rural). The Chi-square test is applied to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the region of residence and the product categories preferred for social media shopping.

Interpretation: The p-value of 0.169 exceeds the standard significance level of 0.05, indicating that we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between a respondent's place of residence (urban or rural) and the preferred category of products purchased through social media platforms. The data advocates that the region in which people live (urban or rural) does not have a significant impact on the types of products they prefer to buy through social media. The preferences for electronics, apparel, books, and other categories appear to be similar across both urban and rural regions.

Discussion: According to the study all respondents (100%) have made purchases via SMM, indicating full engagement with social media as a shopping platform. This suggests a mature and fully adopted use of social media for commerce among the target population. Apparels, books, and electronics dominate in popularity, suggesting that products with visual appeal, specifications, and common utility are most suitable for SMM platforms. Electronics, Apparels & Books: Nearly universal appeal across all age groups (approaching or at 100% across categories). Cosmetic & Accessories and Home Decor: Slightly less popular among older groups, with interest declining with age. E.g., Cosmetic & Accessories are preferred by 83.6% of 18–24, but only 77.7% of 45–54 years. Others' category: Broad relevance, indicating unique or niche preferences not captured in standard categories. Social media platforms effectively reach all adult age groups, especially the 18–54 demographic. However, product marketing should be tailored by age, especially for lifestyle-related items like cosmetics and home decor.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations:

Social Media Marketing is a highly effective platform for e-commerce, with all 600 respondents having made purchases via SMM. The most purchased product categories are Apparels & Footwear, Books/Stationary, and Electronics, all with over 98% engagement. Age influences purchasing preferences, particularly for categories like Cosmetics and Home Decor, which show variance in appeal. While SMM is effective across all age groups, targeted marketing strategies should consider demographic preferences. To focus SMM Campaigns on Popular Product Categories marketer should prioritize apparel, electronics, and books for high ROI. Also usage of

visually engaging content (e.g., reels, stories) for these categories. For segment marketing by age suitable content for 18–34 users using trend-driven, influencer-based campaigns should be followed. To highlight utility, quality, and durability for older age groups (35+). At the same time explore Emerging/Niche Categories: Analyze "Others" category responses for potential growth markets or underserved niches. Use Age-based Personalization in Ads: AI and algorithm-based targeting on platforms like Instagram/Facebook can refine engagement of user age and interests.

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