

The Role of Social Media in Influencing Consumer Buying Behavior in Pune City: A Quantitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT: *The exponential expansion of social media platforms has brought about a significant transformation in how consumers interact with businesses and make purchasing decisions. This research seeks to elucidate the role of social media in influencing consumer buying behavior within Pune City, India. Employing a quantitative approach, our study aims to delve into the impact of various social media platforms on consumer preferences when it comes to purchases.*

To accomplish our objectives, we conducted a structured questionnaire among a diverse sample of Pune City residents. The survey comprehensively gathered data on participants' social media usage patterns, their engagement with brand content, and the extent to which social media influenced their recent purchasing decisions. Additionally, we carefully considered demographic factors, such as age, gender, and income, to uncover potential variations in how social media impacts different consumer segments.

KEY WORD: *online influence, social media, consumer behavior, purchase decision*

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I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has completely transformed consumer-company interactions and the decision-making process for purchases. As buyers increasingly depend on social media for product or service information, reviews-recommendations, and product insights, businesses and marketers have recognized the impact of social media on consumer buying behavior. Understanding this influence has become a crucial element in implementing effective marketing strategies and improving brand engagement. Pune City is renowned for its dynamic culture and tech-savvy residents, offers an ideal context to explore the interrelation between social media and consumer behavior within a rapidly evolving urban environment.

The main objective of this research paper is to explore the various factors of social media's impact on consumer buying behavior and identify specific factors that influence consumer purchase intentions or preferences. Employing a quantitative approach, we aim to gather data that will facilitate drawing meaningful conclusions and extracting valuable insights. The findings of this research are anticipated to make a significant contribution to the existing knowledge about social media's influence on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the study will provide crucial insights to create targeted social media strategies that foster authentic consumer engagement, ultimately leading to heightened brand loyalty and business success in Pune.

The rise of social media has had a transformative impact on consumer-brand interactions and decision-making processes. In the context of Pune City, India, with its diverse and tech-savvy population, understanding the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior is crucial for businesses and marketers. This literature review aims to explore existing research on social media's role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in relation to purchase decisions, within Pune City's unique urban landscape.

Numerous studies have highlighted the profound impact of social media on consumer behavior. Social media platforms offer consumers an interactive and real-time environment to engage with brands, access product information, and seek peer recommendations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Yang et al., 2021). The ability of social media to facilitate two-way communication between consumers and brands enhances the overall consumer experience and influences their purchase decisions (Yadav et al., 2016; Sharma & Murali, 2021).

The literature also extensively documents social media's influence on consumer purchase decisions. User-generated content, including online reviews, ratings, and testimonials, significantly impacts consumer

perceptions and purchasing intentions (Cheung et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2021). Consumers heavily rely on social media to gather information and evaluate product quality, leading to greater confidence in their purchase choices (Chu & Kim, 2011; Phelan & Krenn, 2017).

Furthermore, social media engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior. Active interactions with branded content, such as liking, sharing, and commenting, foster brand loyalty and increase the likelihood of future purchases (Alalwan et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2020). Brands' ability to create personalized and engaging social media content positively influences consumers' emotional connection to the brand, leading to a favorable impact on purchase decisions (Eisingerich et al., 2015; Kim & Ko, 2021).

Considering Pune City's diverse population and cultural fusion, cross-cultural perspectives are essential when examining social media's influence on consumer behavior. Cultural factors like individualism, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance may interact with social media influence, resulting in varying consumer responses (Trusov et al., 2009; Guo & Wang, 2021). Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial for devising effective social media marketing strategies tailored to Pune City's unique context.

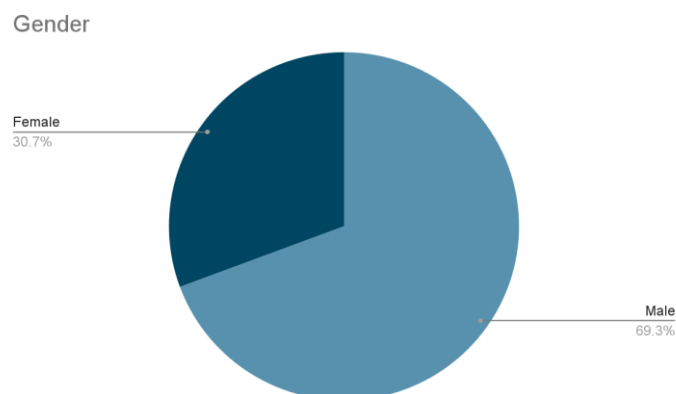
1.2 Research Objectives

1. To explore the demographic variations in the influence of social media on consumer behavior, considering factors such as age.
2. To examine the extent of social media usage among residents of Pune City, including the frequency of engagement with various social media platforms.
3. To identify the factors of social media influence on consumer buying behavior, with a focus on online reviews, testimonials, and influencer endorsements.
4. To analyze the relationship between social media engagement and consumer purchase intentions.
5. To provide statistical analysis that offers insights to businesses and marketers, enabling them to create targeted social media marketing strategies customized to Pune City's dynamic consumer

1.3 Research Methodology and Data Analysis

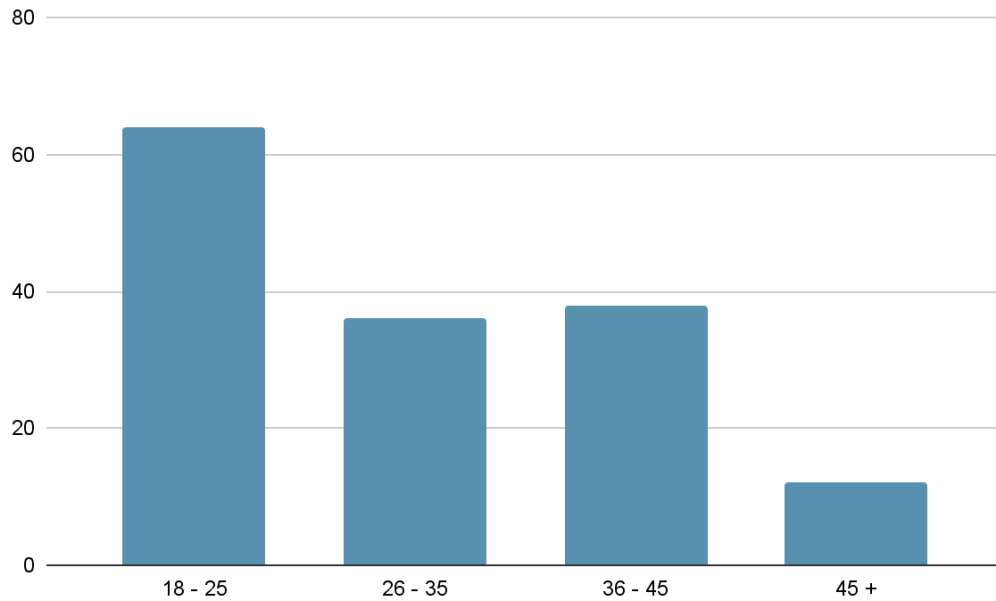
A quantitative research design is employed to examine how social media influences consumer buying behavior in Pune City. To collect primary data, a structured questionnaire will be administered to a sample of 150 Pune City residents. Additionally, secondary data has been obtained from a range of sources, including published study papers, articles in international and national journals. Furthermore, oral discussions with residents have been conducted to complement the data collection process. The primary data analysis will be conducted using the simple percentile method. By combining both primary and secondary data, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in shaping consumer purchasing decisions in Pune City, India

Figure 1: Survey response on Gender



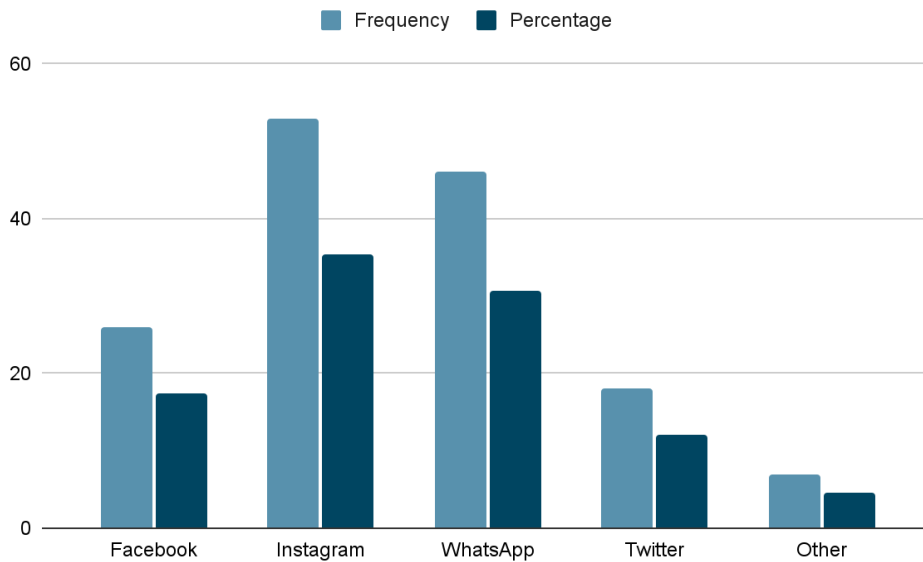
Based on the survey responses on gender living in Pune city, the data indicates that the majority of respondents are male, constituting approximately 69.3% of the total participants. On the other hand, female respondents make up approximately 30.7% of the total.

Figure 2: Survey response on residents age



The majority of respondents surveyed are aged between 18 to 25 years (42.7%), followed by 26 to 35 years (24%), 36 to 45 years (25.3%), and 46 years and above (8%).

Figure 3: Survey response on Social Networking Sites used by residents



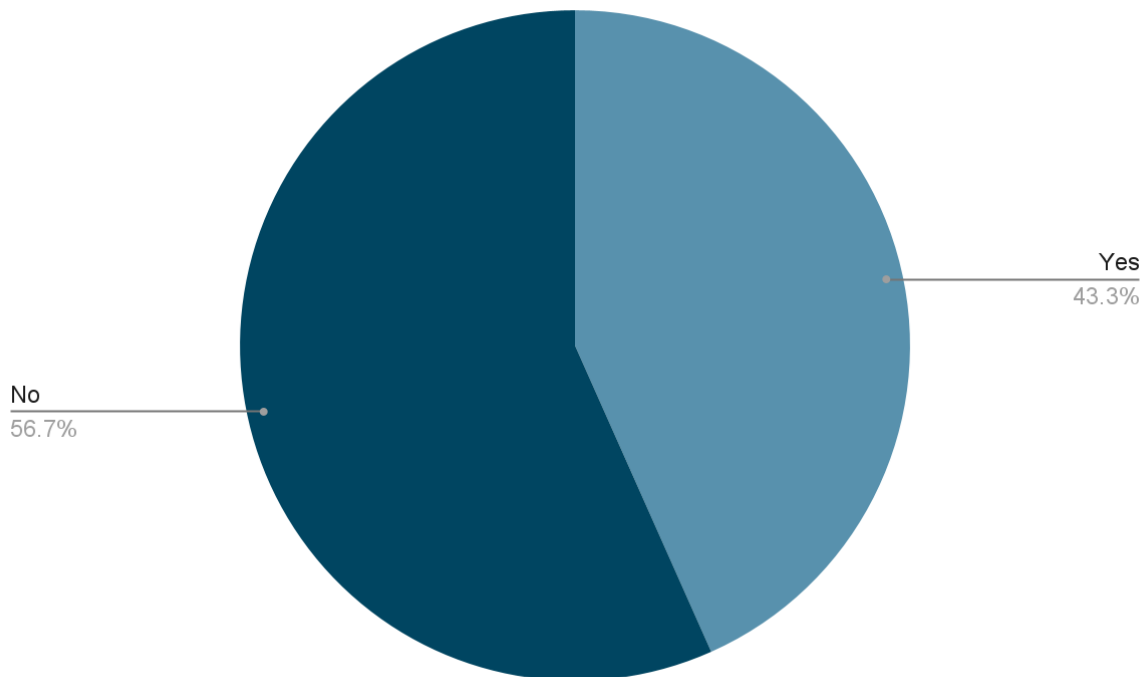
It indicates that Instagram is the most popular platform, with 35.3% of respondents using it. WhatsApp follows closely behind with 30.7% usage. Facebook is used by 17.3% of respondents, and Twitter is used by 12%. Additionally, a small percentage (4.7%) mentioned using other social networking sites not specified in the options provided.

Table 1: Survey response on what residents use Social media for

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Socializing with friends	76	50.67%
To get informative Content	28	18.67%
Shopping Online	14	9.33%
Searching for product information	32	21.33%
Total	150	100%

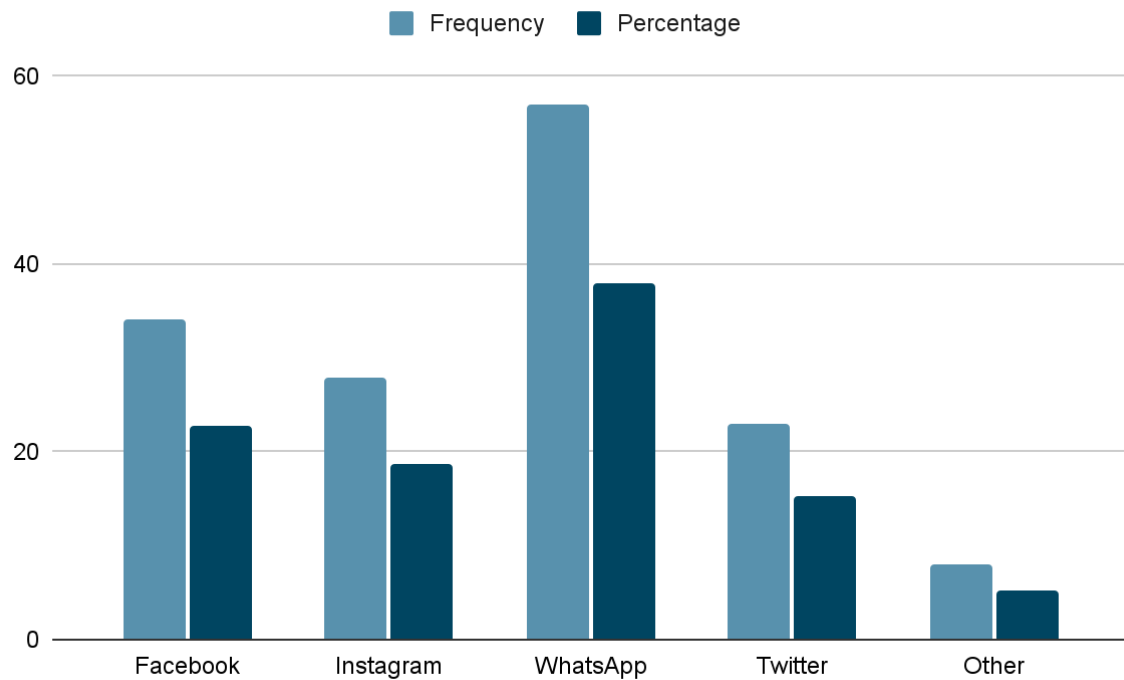
It shows that the majority of respondents (50.67%) use it primarily for socializing with friends. Approximately 18.67% of residents use social media to access informative content, while 9.33% use it for online shopping. Additionally, 21.33% of respondents reported using social media to search for product information, indicating that social media platforms play a significant role in their purchase decision-making process.

Figure 4 : Survey response on respondents use of social media while shopping



The survey responses, approximately 43.3% of respondents in Pune city reported using social media while shopping. On the other hand, the majority of respondents, accounting for 56.7%, stated that they do not use social media while shopping. This finding suggests that while a significant portion of the population incorporates social media into their shopping experience, a majority still prefers other means or does not utilize social media during their shopping activities.

Figure 5 : Survey response on social Media Networking Sites used in buying



It indicates that WhatsApp is the most popular platform, with 38% of respondents using it for buying purposes. Facebook follows with 22.7% usage, and Instagram is used by 18.7% of respondents. Twitter accounts for 15.3% usage in the buying process, and a small percentage (5.3%) mentioned using other social media networking sites for their purchases. This data suggests that WhatsApp is a prominent platform for facilitating buying decisions among respondents, while other platforms also play significant roles in influencing purchasing behavior.

Table 2 : Survey respond on information search on Social networking Sites

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Finding Similar Products	24	16.0%
Price	19	12.7%
Reviews	46	30.7%
Real Images	61	40.7%
Total	150	100%

Around 40.7% of participants search for real images of products, emphasizing the importance of visual content in their decision-making process. Reviews are also vital, with 30.7% relying on social media to read user feedback before making purchases. Moreover, 16% of respondents look for similar products, indicating their interest in exploring alternative options. Additionally, 12.7% of participants seek pricing information on social media. Overall, social networking sites serve as valuable sources of product-related information, guiding consumers in their search for real images, reviews, and price comparisons to make informed buying choices.

Table 3 : Survey respond on benefits of using social media in buying decision

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage %
Quick Access to Product Information	59	39.3%
Consumer Engagement	18	12%
Less Traveling	33	22%
Seller & Buyer Communication	40	26.7%
Total	150	100%

A significant 39.3% appreciate the quick access to product information, allowing them to make informed choices efficiently. Additionally, 12% value the consumer engagement aspect, where they can interact with brands, seek personalized recommendations, and share feedback. Around 22% find the convenience of less traveling appealing, as social media enables them to shop from the comfort of their homes. Moreover, 26.7% benefit from the direct communication between sellers and buyers, facilitating clarification of product queries and negotiation.

Table 4 : Challenges of using Social Media for buying

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage %
Hackers	92	61.3%
Bullying	47	31.3%
Other	11	7.3%
Total	150	100%

The majority, comprising 61.3% of respondents, expressed concerns about hackers and potential security breaches, making them cautious about sharing sensitive information during online transactions. Additionally, 31.3% mentioned the issue of bullying or harassment, indicating that negative interactions on social media platforms could deter them from engaging in buying activities. A smaller percentage (7.3%) reported other challenges, which may encompass issues like misinformation, scams, or privacy concerns. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing security and safety measures to build consumer confidence in using social media for buying decisions.

1.4 Findings and Interpretation

After analysis, the study revealed that 43.3% of residents use social media for shopping, while 56.7% of residents don't use social media for shopping online. Also the most preferred social networking site used by residents was WhatsApp with a percentage of 38%, followed by Facebook representing 22.7%, Instagram with a percentage of 18.7% , and Twitter representing 15.3%. Residents use social media mostly for socializing thus chatting with friends more often than making buying decisions. In addition, the respondents indicated that when social media is used in shopping, it fostered quick access to product information, reduced stress of traveling to physical shops, enhancing customer engagement with companies and improving communication among sellers and buyers. On the other hand, hacking and cyber bullying are major challenges of using social media networks for shopping online. In curbing the challenges associated with the use of social media, companies should develop policies and ensure that these policies are adhered to in their business operations.

- Privacy and easy access to information are the main factors that motivated shopping through social media.
- Distraction from hackers and cyber bullying are the greatest challenges that affect the use of social media for buying decisions.
- Trust, convenience and consistency are the main factors that have influenced the choice of channels.

- Facebook and whatsapp are the most used social networks sites for buying decisions.

Conclusion

1. The study's results indicated that social media holds significant sway over consumer buying behavior in Pune City. A large majority of respondents actively utilized social media platforms, with Facebook and Instagram standing out as the most popular choices. Participants engaged extensively with branded content on social media, showing a preference for activities like liking, sharing, and commenting. This heightened level of engagement underscores social media's effectiveness as a potent marketing tool to connect with and captivate consumers in Pune City.
2. Online reviews, testimonials, and influencer endorsements, emerged as a dominant factor in shaping consumer purchase decisions. Peer recommendations and authentic user-generated content played a critical role in guiding consumers while evaluating products and services. This finding emphasizes the significance of cultivating a positive brand image and nurturing influencer relationships to leverage their influence on consumer behavior.
3. The study revealed demographic variations in the impact of social media on consumer buying behavior. Younger participants exhibited a higher susceptibility to social media influence, reflecting their preference for digital interactions and reliance on online content for purchase decisions. In contrast, older participants took a more cautious approach, relying on a mix of online and offline sources to gather information before making purchasing choices.
4. The study's implications can guide businesses in devising tailored and effective social media marketing strategies aligned with the preferences and behaviors of the diverse consumer base in Pune City. By leveraging the power of social media to engage with consumers, build positive brand perceptions, and tap into the influence of user-generated content and influencers, businesses can pave the way for growth and success in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

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