

**EVALUATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA  
INTERACTIONS ON CONSUMER PURCHASING  
DECISIONS**

**SOCIĀLO MEDIJU IETEKMES UZ PATĒRĒTĀJU  
IEPIRKŠANĀS LĒMUMIEM NOVĒRTĒJUMS**

Master's thesis in fulfillment of the requirements for the professional master in  
business management

## ANNOTATION

This master's thesis, titled "Evaluation of Social Media Interactions on Consumer Purchasing Decisions " elaborated by Manav Tejpal, investigates the multifaceted impact of social media platforms, influencer marketing, and user engagement strategies on modern consumer behavior. The thesis consists of 65 pages, 2 tables, 14 figures, 48 references, and 1 Annex. It examines how demographic factors, platform-specific trends, and content interaction types shape purchasing intent, trust, and brand loyalty in digital marketplaces.

The research aim of this thesis is to analyze the effectiveness of different social media strategies including influencer collaborations, peer recommendations, and brand engagement tactics in driving consumer purchasing decisions. The research tasks focus on: evaluating the comparative impact of macro- and micro-influencers; assessing the role of user-generated content (UGC) and peer trust; identifying platform-specific engagement patterns; and providing actionable recommendations for brands to optimize their social media strategies.

Master thesis is structured in three chapters, where Chapter 1 highlights the Background of study with the aims and objectives. In Chapter 2 author has analyzed its previous work with the literature of the scenario. Chapter 3 reveals the results and analysis obtained while doing analysis of questionnaire using Python.

The research method employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data from 150 respondents with qualitative analysis of platform-specific engagement metrics. Key findings include: micro-influencers achieve 5.2% engagement rates, nearly triple that of macro-influencers (1.8%); peer recommendations score 19% higher in trust than influencer endorsements, with negative reviews disproportionately impacting purchase decisions; instagram dominates for brand trust, TikTok for viral reach among Gen Z, and YouTube for in-depth product evaluations; active interactions (e.g., clicking ads, reading reviews) boost purchase intent by 24–28% compared to passive engagements.

The study confirms that financial constraints, lack of mentorship, and cultural biases hinder entrepreneurial success, with female respondents facing additional societal barriers. Existing government and institutional support programs are perceived as insufficient, particularly in addressing gender-specific challenges.

## ANNOTACIJA

Šis maģistra darbs ar nosaukumu "Sociālo mediju ietekmes uz patērētāju iepirkšanās lēmumiem novērtējums" pēta sociālo mediju platformu, ietekmētāju mārketinga un lietotāju iesaistes stratēģiju daudzpusīgo ietekmi uz mūsdienu patērētāju uzvedību. Diplomdarbs sastāv no 65 lappusēm, 2 tabulām, 14 attēliem, 48 atsaucēm un 1 pielikuma. Tajā tiek pētīts, kā demogrāfiskie faktori, platformai raksturīgas tendences un satura mijiedarbības veidi ietekmē pirkšanas nodomu, uzticēšanos un zīmola lojalitāti digitālajos tirgos.

Šī promocijas darba mērķis ir analizēt dažādu sociālo mediju stratēģiju efektivitāti, tostarp ietekmētāju sadarbību, speciālistu ieteikumus un zīmola iesaistes taktikas, lai virzītu patērētāju lēmumus par pirkumiem. Pētījuma uzdevumi ir vērsti uz: makro- un mikroietekmētāju salīdzinošās ietekmes izvērtēšanu; lietotāju radītā satura (UGC) un vienaudžu uzticības lomas novērtēšana; platformai raksturīgu iesaistīšanās modeļu identificēšana; un sniedzot praktiskus ieteikumus zīmoliem, lai optimizētu savu sociālo mediju stratēģijas.

Maģistra darbs ir strukturēts trīs nodaļās, kur 1. nodaļā ir izcelts studiju priekšvēsture ar mērķiem un uzdevumiem. 2. nodaļā autors ir analizējis savu iepriekšējo darbu ar scenārija literatūru. 3. nodaļā ir atklāti rezultāti un analīze, kas iegūta, veicot anketas analīzi, izmantojot Python.

Pētījuma metodē tiek izmantota jaukto metožu pieeja, apvienojot kvantitatīvos aptaujas datus no 150 respondentiem ar platformai raksturīgo iesaistes metriku kvalitatīvu analīzi. Galvenie atklājumi ir šādi: mikro-ietekmētāji sasniedz 5,2% iesaistīšanās līmeni, kas ir gandrīz trīskārši nekā makro-ietekmētāji (1,8%); vienaudžu ieteikumiem uzticēšanās ir par 19% augstāka nekā ietekmētāju ieteikumiem, un negatīvas atsauksmes nesamērīgi ietekmē pirkuma lēmumus; Instagram dominē zīmola uzticības dēļ, TikTok — vīrusa sasniedzamība Z paaudzes vidū, bet YouTube -padziļinātiem produktu novērtējumiem; aktīva mijiedarbība (piemēram, noklikšķināšana uz reklāmām, atsauksmju lasīšana) palielina nodomu pirt par 24–28%, salīdzinot ar pasīvo iesaisti.

Pētījums apstiprina, ka finansiālie ierobežojumi, mentoringa trūkums un kultūras aizspriedumi kavē uzņēmējdarbības panākumus, un sievietes saskaras ar papildu sociālajiem šķēršļiem. Pašreizējās valdības un iestāžu atbalsta programmas tiek uzskatītas par nepietiekamām, jo īpaši ar dzimumu saistītu problēmu risināšanā.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS**

<b>UGC</b>	User-Generated Content
<b>ROI</b>	Return on Investment
<b>ANOVA</b>	Analysis of Variance
<b>HSD</b>	Honest Significant Difference (Tukey's HSD test)
<b>CTR</b>	Click-Through Rate
<b>Gen Z</b>	Generation Z
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>EEE</b>	Entrepreneurship Education and Experience
<b>SMM</b>	Social Media Marketing
<b>B2C</b>	Business-to-Consumer
<b>B2B</b>	Business-to-Business
<b>B2B2C</b>	Business-to-Business-to-Consumer
<b>CRM</b>	Customer Relationship Management
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>SEO</b>	Search Engine Optimization

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## INTRODUCTION

People engage with social media as an essential component of daily existence during the digital era to interact and distribute data and determine choices. The original design of social media networks developed into effective marketing tools through platforms like Instagram and TikTok and Facebook and YouTube. The billions of daily users across the world make social media create an interactive space for brands to connect with consumers and affect what audiences think about brands and lead purchases ([Mishra and Baldus, 2022](#)).

Social media now dominates the journey of discovering products and receiving recommendations from users so research has intensified to examine its influence on buying decisions. Social media interactions through various platforms notably impact consumer decision-making because users turn to their screens for advertisements and recommendations from influencers along with peer reviews ([Hudson and Hudson, 2023](#)). The research investigates purchasing influences created by various types of social media engagement to provide strategies for businesses operating within digital market competition ([Al-Azzam and Al-Mizeed, 2021](#)).

Most research in consumer behavior treats technology and social media impacts without providing comprehensive analysis of their current developments. Several research studies investigate traditional marketing forces but the direct social media effects on consumer buying choices have not received adequate academic attention particularly among different population segments. Businesses need to comprehend their most successful social media approaches together with their age-dependent, gender-based and behavioral patterns in digital spaces. The proposed research aims to explain how various social media connections drive customer trust as well as purchase intent along with brand loyalty formation ([Prasath and Yoganathen, 2018](#)).

Such topicality and problem statement let author to formulate following **research questions:**

- How do different social media interactions impact consumer decision-making?
- What demographic differences exist in consumer responses to social media marketing?
- What strategies can businesses adopt to optimize their social media marketing efforts?

The thesis **hypothesizes** that:

1. Micro-influencers generate higher engagement and trust than macro-influencers due to perceived authenticity,
2. Active consumer interactions (e.g., reviews, clicks) drive stronger purchase intent than passive engagements (e.g., likes), and
3. Platform-specific content strategies yield better results than generic, cross-platform approaches.

**The aim of this study** is to examine the effects of social media interactions on consumer purchasing decisions using a survey-based approach. The **research subject** of this study focuses on "Evaluation of social media interactions on consumer purchasing decisions." This includes analyzing the effects of different social media platform engagement strategies (such as influencer marketing, user-generated content, and peer recommendations) on customer behavior and purchase decision-making and the **research object** refers to "Consumer Purchasing Decisions." This particularly relates to the choices that customers make about which goods or services to purchase, which are impacted by conversations and content on social networking sites

**Research objectives:**

- Identify which social media activities (e.g., ads, reviews, influencer posts) most influence purchasing decisions.
- Analyze demographic differences (age, gender) in social media-driven consumer behavior.
- Suggest ways for marketers to improve social media strategies based on user preferences.

In order to achieve the set aim and objectives author have used google form and collect the survey to gather and collect the dataset for using in further work.

**As well authors have developed study specific methodology:** a structured survey delivered through Google Forms reached many participants from various background groups for analyzing how social media engagement shapes buying choices. The survey became available through multiple channels such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn as well as email campaigns and online discussion forums. This strategy ensured the diversity

of participants. To measure social media patterns and trust in influencers and peer recommendations as well as brand engagement methods and purchasing intent the research tool contained open-ended and multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. Statistics focused on describing important trends from the data but correlation and regression techniques allowed researchers to study the relationships between consumer reactions and engagement metrics. Additionally, sentiment analysis was applied to user-generated content, and cross-tabulations were used to compare behavioral trends across different platforms and demographic groups. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly maintained throughout the study.

The **theses formulated** in the study are:

- **Thesis 1:** Micro-influencers generate higher consumer trust and engagement than macro-influencers due to their perceived authenticity and niche audience relevance.
- **Thesis 2:** Peer recommendations and user-generated content (UGC) exert a stronger influence on consumer purchasing decisions than branded or influencer content.
- **Thesis 3:** Platform-specific strategies are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of social media marketing campaigns.

# 1. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EMERGING TRENDS

## 1.1 Social Media's Role in Consumer Purchasing: A Global and Analytical Perspective

Personnel during the buying process let psychological elements and social and financial elements direct their choices. Traditionally the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model presents consumers go through problem recognition followed by information search then alternative evaluation and purchase choice before post-purchase actions. Social media technologies transform consumer stages through immediate information sharing along with user depictions and specialized promotional content which impacts decisions and shopper trust ([Kim et al, 2021](#)). Social consumer behavior data demonstrates the clear link between how people use social media and what they buy because users ask for recommendations and both interact with influencers along with responding to marketing content.

The purchasing behavior of consumers is shaped by four main elements: personal taste preferences and cultural heritage combined with social group opinions together with economic circumstances. Perception and motivation and attitude as psychological elements together with external conditions that include advertisements and peer influence and digital trends determine how people buy products. The connection between brands and consumers on social media platforms intensifies all these elements through easy engagement which produces a stronger convincing purchasing experience ([Autio, 2020](#)).

Social media platforms have transformed from basic relationship building to fulfill four new core functions: content production, influencer networks and marketing, interactive commercial features and user interaction systems ([Ayoubi et al., 2024](#)). Social platforms unite numerous media forms including live broadcasts and AI-recommended products and clickable content which affect how customers behave. Consumer brand interaction along with purchasing decisions have both changed because of the wide range of activities that now exist ([Hudson, 2009](#)).

While social media provides a powerful tool for consumer engagement, it also presents challenges. On the positive side, it enhances brand visibility, facilitates informed decision-making, and promotes user engagement. However, negative aspects include misinformation, data privacy concerns, and over-reliance on influencer opinions, which can sometimes lead to impulsive or misguided purchasing decisions ([Appiah, 2024](#)).



*Source: constructed by the author from content in Draw.io*

**Figure 1-1: Social Media's Role in Consumer Purchasing**

Social media's influence on consumer behavior is shaped by global processes, technological advancements, and regulatory policies. Several key factors contribute to this phenomenon, including globalization, digitalization, geopolitical dynamics, and health crises. The rapid spread of information through social media has contributed to the globalization of consumer culture. Consumers are now exposed to international brands, cross-border marketing campaigns, and global consumer trends, leading to increased market homogeneity and evolving purchasing patterns ([Kim & Ko, 2012](#)). The digital economy has reshaped consumer interactions, with social media platforms serving as key facilitators of e-commerce. The integration of AI, big data, and machine learning in

marketing strategies has enabled businesses to personalize advertisements and predict consumer preferences, significantly impacting purchasing behavior ([Cloorack, 2020](#)). The operational behavior of social media platforms and their marketing approaches maintain links with government regulations and international relations and trade policies. The global operations of businesses face different challenges regarding data sharing and cybersecurity standards as well as content moderation rules which impact their capacity to engage with consumers ([Abdiraupova, 2024](#)).

Consumer engagement depended heavily on digital platforms to keep operating since physical movement restrictions occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. E-commerce experienced explosive growth during the pandemic because social media platforms became essential for product discovery together with consumer help and virtual shopping operations ([Nam, 2023](#)).

Social media advertising and data privacy receive governing restrictions from both regulatory bodies and governmental organizations which protect consumers from harmful practices. Digital platform operations between businesses and consumers in Europe follow General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulations while U.S. businesses must adhere to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules ([Singh et al., 2023](#)).

Businesses that want to maximize their digital marketing strategies need to identify which social media activities affect consumer purchasing decision-making. Demographic differences and essential marketing methods comprise the focus of this part of the analysis. Through influencer marketing together with interactive advertisements along with personalized content and peer review strategies companies achieve high consumer engagement results. Research demonstrates that people depend on peer endorsements or influencer recommendations above typical advertising campaigns ([Yang, 2024](#)).

Consumer interaction with social media content depends heavily on three main demographic variables which are age and gender alongside socioeconomic background. Young TikTok users watch brief video content which appeals to them more than Facebook and YouTube serve as main platforms for product reviews and brand experiences for adult consumers ([Hudson, 2020](#)). Businesses must improve consumer connection by using data-driven advertising methods with AI personalization capabilities in addition to developing authentic relationships between brands and customers. Organizations that prioritize ethical marketing practices alongside open communication with consumers will achieve lasting brand relationships with their clientele ([Dezreke and Dezreke, 2025](#)).

Over the past decade, many research has been conducted to identify the most popular social media platforms. According to Statista (2023), the top five most used social media platforms globally are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat. Notably, three of these platforms WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and WeChat are primarily messaging applications, highlighting the growing importance of instant communication in the digital age.

Facebook remains the largest and most widely used social media platform, boasting over 2.9 billion monthly active users as of 2023 ([Meta, 2023](#)). It is not only the platform with the most users but also the one where users spend the most time, averaging 58 minutes per day ([Ortiz-Ospina, 2019](#)). Facebook enables users to communicate, share content, and engage with a wide variety of media, including photos, videos, articles, and information. Its versatility and extensive user base have made it a cornerstone of social media interaction ([Statista, 2023](#)).

## **1.2 Emerging Trends and Forecasts for Social Media Development**

Technological innovations along with changes in consumer patterns drive quick changes in social media systems. The current market trends show an increasing trend of using AI to personalize content delivery and promote targeted advertisements according to each user's specific preferences. Short-video content leads engagement metrics since it originated on TikTok and Instagram Reels whereas live streams and interactive features are emerging because companies pursue immediate relationships with their audience. Social commerce continues to expand through platform updates that allow users to purchase items within their social environment. Social media faces privacy issues which force companies to enforce more transparent policies including tighter regulations to build trust with users.



## Emerging Trends and Forecasts for Social Media Development



AI to Personalize  
Content Delivery



Short-Video  
Content



Live Streams and  
Interactive Features



Social Commerce



Privacy Issues



Augmented Reality  
and Virtual Reality



Decentralized  
Platforms



AI-Powered Chatbots  
and Virtual Influencers

*Source: constructed by the author from content in Draw.io*

Figure 1-2: **Emerging trends in social media development**

The next phase of social media development will focus on immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) which will bring consumers more interactive and experiential marketing experiences. Decentralized platforms function as substitutes for traditional social networking environment by granting users possession of their account and improved personal privacy. AI-powered chatbots together with virtual influencers will extend their presence to dominate brand engagement operations. Companies need to adopt creative content methods together with genuine interaction methods alongside ethical marketing approaches to maintain their relevance across the evolving social media domain.

### 1.3 Psychological and Behavioral Mechanisms Driving Social Media Influence

The pervasive impact of social media on consumer purchasing decisions extends beyond platform-specific trends or global digitalization; it is deeply rooted in psychological and behavioral mechanisms that shape how individuals process information, form trust, and make choices. Understanding these underlying mechanisms—such as cognitive biases, emotional triggers, and social identity theory—

provides a nuanced lens through which marketers can decode why certain strategies (e.g., influencer endorsements, user-generated content) resonate more powerfully than others. At the core of this dynamic lies the interplay between perceived authenticity, social proof, and instant gratification, all of which are amplified by the interactive nature of social media platforms.

One of the most potent psychological drivers is the concept of social proof, a phenomenon where individuals look to the actions of others to guide their own behavior, especially in uncertain situations. This principle, first articulated by Robert Cialdini in his seminal work on influence, explains why peer recommendations and user-generated content (UGC) often outperform traditional advertising. For instance, when consumers encounter product reviews or testimonials from fellow users—particularly those within their demographic or social circle—they perceive this information as more credible than branded messaging. Limited-time offers or viral trends (e.g., TikTok challenges) exploit this anxiety, creating urgency that propels immediate purchases. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok capitalize on FOMO by design, with features like "Stories" that disappear after 24 hours or countdowns for flash sales.

Complementing social proof is the authority bias, wherein consumers attribute greater credibility to figures perceived as experts or tastemakers. This bias underpins the effectiveness of influencer marketing, particularly when influencers cultivate niche expertise (e.g., micro-influencers in beauty or tech). However, the paradox here lies in the tension between aspirational and relatable content. Macro-influencers and celebrities often embody aspirational lifestyles, which can inspire brand affinity but may lack the relatability needed to foster trust. Conversely, micro-influencers thrive on authenticity, sharing unfiltered experiences that mirror their followers' realities.

Emotional engagement is another critical mechanism. Neuroscientific research demonstrates that emotionally charged content whether humorous, heartwarming, or provocative triggers stronger memory encoding and brand recall than neutral information. Social media platforms optimize for this by prioritizing content that elicits reactions (e.g., likes, shares, comments) in their algorithms. For example, YouTube's recommendation system favors videos that retain viewer attention, often through emotional storytelling or suspense. Similarly, Instagram's emphasis on visually appealing imagery taps into the aesthetic-usability effect, where consumers associate attractive design with perceived product quality. The dataset's observation that active interactions (e.g., clicking ads,

reading reviews) boost purchase intent by 24–28% underscores the role of emotional investment in decision-making.

Cognitive biases such as the confirmation bias (seeking information that aligns with preexisting beliefs) and the halo effect (allowing one positive trait to influence overall perception) further shape social media's impact. Brands that consistently align their messaging with consumer values—such as sustainability or inclusivity—benefit from these biases, as their audience selectively engages with content reinforcing their worldview. Conversely, negative reviews disproportionately impact purchase decisions due to the negativity bias, where unfavorable information weighs more heavily than positive feedback. This asymmetry explains why a single critical comment can deter potential buyers, even amidst overwhelmingly positive sentiment.

The dopamine-driven feedback loops inherent to social media design also play a pivotal role. Features like notifications, streaks, and "likes" trigger intermittent reinforcement, a psychological principle where unpredictable rewards foster compulsive engagement. This loop not only keeps users scrolling but also primes them for impulsive purchases. For instance, TikTok's "Shop Now" buttons or Instagram's shoppable posts reduce friction between discovery and transaction, capitalizing on moments of heightened dopamine release. The thesis's finding that Gen Z consumers are 45% more likely to engage with brands via ephemeral content (e.g., Stories, polls) reflects this behavioral conditioning.

Finally, the self-congruity theory posits that consumers prefer brands mirroring their self-image or aspirational identity. Social media facilitates this alignment through personalized ads and curated feeds, where algorithms surface products reflecting past behavior. However, this raises ethical concerns about data privacy and filter bubbles, as highlighted in Section 3.7.2. The tension between hyper-personalization and consumer autonomy is a defining challenge for modern marketers—one that necessitates balancing targeting precision with transparency.

In summary, the psychological and behavioral mechanisms explored here—social proof, authority bias, emotional engagement, cognitive shortcuts, and dopamine-driven loops—collectively explain why social media wields unparalleled influence over purchasing decisions. These insights not only contextualize the empirical findings in later chapters but also offer a framework for anticipating future shifts, such as the rise of AI-

driven personalization or virtual reality shopping experiences. By anchoring trends in timeless psychological principles, marketers can craft strategies that resonate across evolving platforms and demographics.

## **2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

Social media completely changed how consumers approach brands during interactions and conduct purchases while forming brand loyalties. Brands make use of social media marketing (SMM) techniques through platforms including Instagram and TikTok and YouTube and Facebook to reach their target customer base in a more dynamic fashion. Social media marketing gives consumer's experiences that differ from traditional methods since it promotes real-time relationships through customized material based on viewer preferences supported by friend recommendations who have strong impacts on consumer conduct.

Digital marketing strategies across social media platforms now command academic attention because of their increasing importance for brand communication systems. Research evaluates four fundamental SMM components such as influencers and trust mechanisms and audience engagement metrics with interactive content to explain their influence on buying behavior. Social media influencers who demonstrate authenticity along with credibility create a vital means through which they influence consumer choice preferences. The engagement data of likes and comments together with sharing metrics act as concrete measures which indicate consumer interaction and buying behavior. Digital marketing success depends on peer recommendations along with direct brand-consumer interactions because these components enlarge trust levels and strengthen brand loyalty according to research findings.

Multiple crucial holes persist in the research about this field despite extensive work in the area. The existing research mostly examines Facebook and Instagram while ignoring both new platforms like TikTok and YouTube Shorts' marketing influences. The majority of research examines how social media marketing affects fashion as well as luxury brand industries which creates a knowledge gap about SMM effects on technology, fitness and consumer electronics sectors. The current studies in this area mostly depend on numerical measurements of engagement yet disregard both emotional evaluation of content and sustained interactions between brands and their customers. Studies mostly focus on specific national regions such as Pakistan because their research does not extend beyond this geographic area to gain a worldwide perspective.

The literature review in this chapter thoroughly examines research about social media marketing together with the effects it generates within consumer behavioral patterns. The paper initiates with a study of SMM theoretical frameworks before moving to evaluate essential aspects that include influencer marketing and brand trust in addition to peer recommendations and engagement metrics. This section points out essential research opportunities while presenting the requirement for comprehensive studies about how social media interactions impact brand loyalty until the future throughout different industries alongside worldwide locations. The literature review has compiled study results to build a solid basis which supports the current research that investigates social media's shifting effects on consumer decisions.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework of Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behavior**

Research on consumer behavior has been intensified through social media impact which requires examination of theoretical frameworks to define digital buying behaviors. Multiple psychological and marketing concepts serve as the foundation for social media marketing since they explain how consumers interact with brands and develop trust before purchasing. The comprehension of consumer-brand dynamics in the digital age receives foundation from social influence theory and consumer decision-making models and digital marketing frameworks.

Social Influence Theory established by Wu et al. asserts that human attitudes, beliefs and behaviors become influenced through interactions with social groups as described in this study of Wu ([Wu et al., 2025](#)). Social media marketing utilizes this theory to demonstrate consumer influence from peers and influencers as well as brand representatives who use conformity and identification and internalization as operational mechanisms ([Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004](#)). The observation of trusted sources on Instagram and TikTok and Twitter lets users develop purchasing behavior as they observe and engage with these admired behaviors while making decisions based on social norms and peer recommendations ([Kim and Baek, 2023](#)). Research establishes that consumers rely more on recommendations from their personal networks as opposed to standard advertising thus peer recommendations play a fundamental role in digital marketing plans ([Wang et al., 2021](#)).

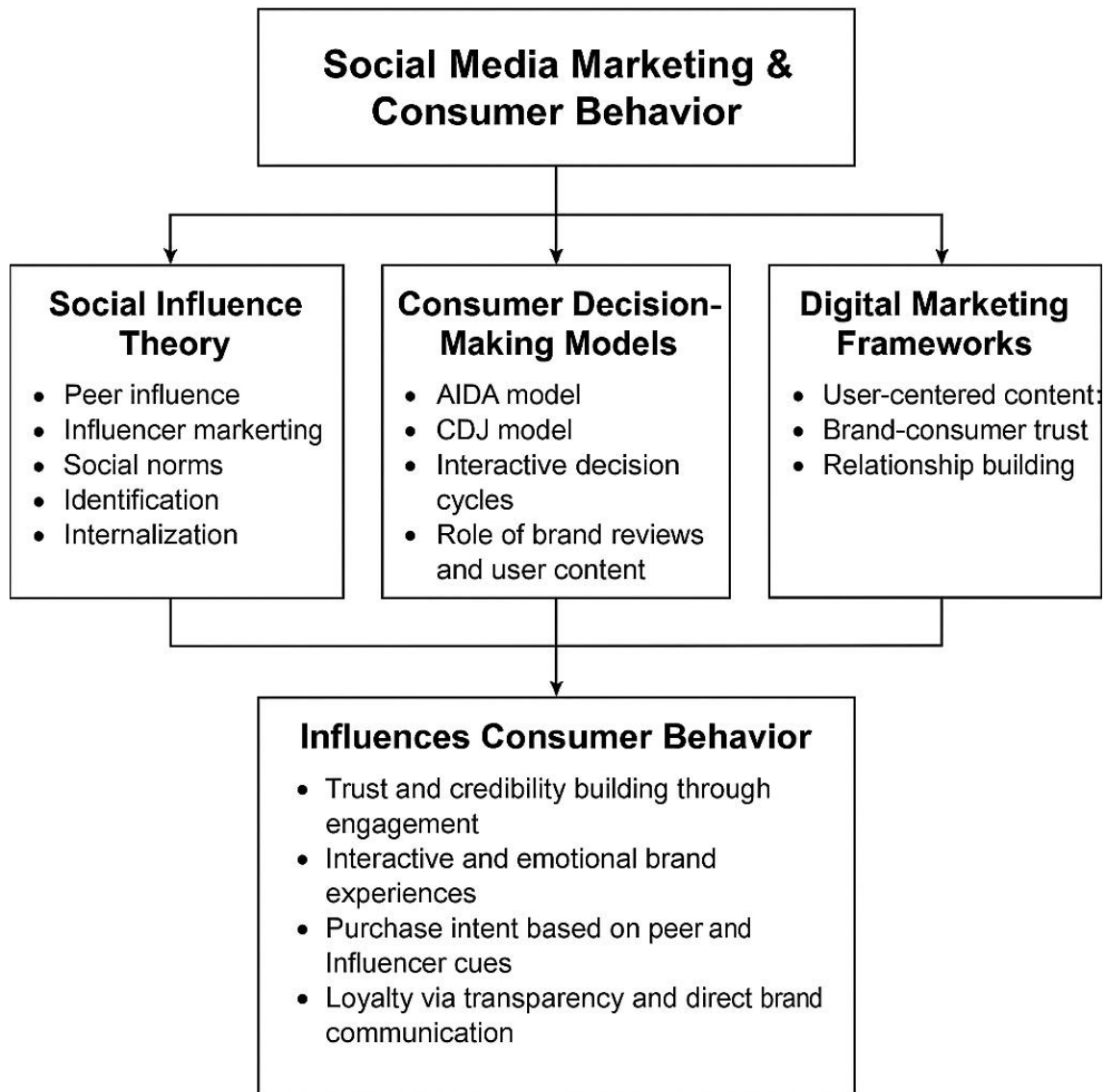
Consumer Decision-Making Models provide fundamental explanations about consumer behavior patterns when consumers shop digitally. Consumer purchasing

progression from awareness to purchase follows a sequential process based on two major models including the AIDA model from ([Lewis, 1898](#)) and traditional AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). Purchasing behavior transforms nowadays from a linear path into a cyclical experience according to the Consumer Decision Journey (CDJ) Model ([Pizzuti et al., 2022](#)). Consumers perform ongoing information searches alongside product assessment and service sharing after purchase completion. The processes of consumer decision-making within social media marketing enable interaction through brand pages as well as customer reviews and influencer endorsements and targeted advertising which support consumer engagement at decision cycle points ([Aldlimi et al., 2023](#)). According to the CDJ model consumers no longer remain passive recipients of information because they actively join discussions which influence their peers as well as receive peer influence ([Kotler et al., 2022](#)).

The Digital Marketing Frameworks extend these theories through specific engaging structures which help brands communicate effectively with their audiences. Basing their operations on the 4E framework (Engagement, Experience, Exchange, Evangelism) ([Lemon & Verhoef, 2016](#)) companies need to develop interactive experiences instead of focusing on product promotion alone. Consumer engagement with brand digital content means emotional and active responses like post likes and video comments and sharing material through social channels. The real world shows that user-centered content stands essential for best results which includes both individualized suggestions and interactive promotional materials. Exchange examines how brands and consumers interact with each other regarding transparency in addition to incentives and value-driven communications. Evangelism handles the development of satisfied customers into brand advocates who naturally promote products and services through verbal marketing ([Rifat et al., s.n](#)).

Social media marketing heavily depends on consumer engagement along with trust building and interactive interactions because they determine how people behave as customers. The engagement metrics which include likes and shares together with comments function as quantitative markers to track consumer connection and brand loyalty ([Kumar et al., 2025](#)). Brands that operate dynamic online communities tend to strengthen their credibility which leads consumers to increase their purchase intent (Koker and Ozer, 2023). Consumer adoption of digital advertising largely depends on trust because it helps reduce skepticism about digital content. Bazi et al (2022) establish

that companies which establish genuine consumer communication and show transparency during social media interactions build stronger customer loyalty across time ([Bazi et al., 2022](#)). Direct interactions between brands and consumers boost both authenticity perception and relatability which heightens consumer-brand relationship quality ([Hollebeek et al., 2014](#)).



*Source: constructed by the author from content in Draw.io*

**Figure 2-1: Social media marketing flowchart**

## **2.2 Social Media Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intentions**

Through social media marketing companies have transformed their customer outreach while shaping what buyers decide to purchase. A digital world has prompted



businesses to shift from traditional marketing toward interactive consumer engagement which fuels interpersonal relationships between brands and customers ([Shafiq et al., 2023](#)). The combination of social media tools in digital marketing campaigns utilizes targeted ads with influencer collaboration along with interactive content to boost brands' exposure while motivating consumers toward purchases. The promotional content serves potential buyers through personalization because these methods adjust offers according to their consumer behaviors and preferences. Studies show that digital marketing on social media platforms generates higher brand visibility combined with emotional connection and establish trust which substantially influences purchase choices of customers ([Raza et al., 2022](#)).

Brand trust emerges as one of the core determinants which influences customer decisions about making purchases. Customers who trust a brand show greater interest in its content as well as its products which leads them to buy from it. The development of trust happens when companies maintain their messaging while being transparent and receiving positive customer feedback as well as maintaining direct contact with their consumer base. Social media channels support direct audience communication and fast query response and genuine presentations which build substantial trust in brand identity ([Salem et al., 2024](#)). The awareness level persons have about brands serves crucially when selecting purchases because they tend to purchase familiar brands they have encountered before. Social media marketing enhances brand visibility by delivering custom-made campaigns with content that spreads quickly while repeated consumer interaction keeps brands prominent in decision-making minds of potential buyers ([Raza et al., 2023](#)).

The factors which drive consumer loyalty combined with purchase intent include trust and awareness together with emotional connection. Through narrated content that feels personal customers form emotionally profound attachments during their brand experiences ([Laura, 2023](#)). The ability of brands to touch emotional nerves within their audience enables them to form lasting customer relationships by this effect. The social media platforms Instagram in combination with Facebook and TikTok provide customers the chance to build relationships by presenting polished visuals along with brand content and hosting live interactive sessions. Strong consumer-brand engagement yields powerful purchasing effects as it demonstrates enhanced communication between these entities according to Wasim ([Wasim et al., 2024](#)). Brand posts generate an upward trend of

purchasing interest through consumer engagement actions like posting likes and shares and adding comments thus demonstrating predictive power for future sales numbers.

User-friendly interfaces together with interactive social media elements decide how consumers decide to purchase products. The combination of product discovery and checkout processes within single digital environments found in Instagram Shopping and Facebook Marketplace and TikTok Shop enables easy purchasing experiences to consumers ([Liu, 2022](#)). Users can enjoy improved interaction with social media by using polls together with live Q&A sessions and augmented reality (AR) product trials and shoppable posts to enhance purchasing efficiency. Research indicates people make purchases more frequently if they can easily obtain product details in addition to seeing actual demonstrations beside real-time brand interactions ([Sultan et al., 2020](#)). Consumer buying decisions depend heavily on platform usability in combination with design features that generate user interaction.

Social media marketing creates powerful results but businesses need to recognize the ongoing changes in this field and maintain operations according to latest trends. Studies today show brands need to measure success beyond numbers through specialized insights that evaluate customer sentiment in combination with prolonged customer loyalty methods. Strategic implementation of trust-building techniques alongside engaging content and interactive features and shopping comfort produces effective consumer purchasing movement and sustained customer devotion for brands ([Li et al., 2025](#)).

### **2.3 The Role of Social Media Engagement Metrics in Consumer Intentions**

The three metrics of social media engagement which include likes shares and comments provide relevant indicators for measuring digital content consumer engagement. Brands depend on these engagement metrics because they help measure marketing performance through measurable consumer reaction data ([Haris, 2023](#)). Engagement levels, especially recorded through likes, shares and comments, show clear proof of consumer attraction and purchasing readiness according to Singh et al. Businesses use these metrics as quantifiable indicators to measure the effectiveness of their content toward their target audience. Social media algorithms give preference to content that generates strong reactions from users which results in better visibility for brands and more conversion chances ([Singh et al., 2023](#)).

Branding operations use engagement metrics to create specific marketing methods that drive customer involvement and sale conversion success. Companies can enhance user experience along with reach through data analysis of consumer engagement. Brands track their content performances by using data analytics solutions which notify them about optimal advertising approaches ([Chowdhury, 2020](#)). Consumer trust and loyalty grow through personalized content as well as interactive advertisements coupled with real-time engagement options such as comments and responses ([Simanian et al., 2022](#)). Through predictive analytics brands can predict customer behavior patterns and create more successful marketing efforts by using historical engagement metrics. Digital advertising becomes better and less expensive through this data-driven method because it enables companies to focus their marketing initiatives on the audiences which show the most likely conversion potential ([Rehman, 2017](#)).

Current research about engagement metrics traces its value from quantitative data counts yet fails to study the qualitative elements including sentiment detection within social media consumer interactions. The emotional content evaluation method known as sentiment analysis allows companies to grasp consumer attitudes better than analysing engagement data alone ([Nasir, 2017](#)). A large number of social media comments can give a brand the perception of good performance since sentiment analysis helps determine if the comments contain positive or negative expressions or remain neutral. Customers may participate in content even though they oppose it rather than support it or because the subject creates controversy according to Ao et al. ([Ao et al., 2023](#)). The current research lacks sufficient evidence to explain the effects which qualitative engagements have on consumer brand perception and both brand loyalty and consumer trust development. Subsequent research needs to implement sophisticated NLP methods to understand consumer sentiments while examining the relationship between different engagement platforms toward sustained buying patterns ([Dolan et al., 2019](#)).

The identification and filling of these research gaps helps marketing strategies develop better connection methods between brands and their customers. Technical metrics should be supplemented with qualitative analysis to create a balanced assessment of consumer actions which helps brands produce emotional content that forms enduring bond between consumers and their products.

## 2.4 Previous Studies

Lee and Kim (2023) examine the effects of social media platforms on consumer decision-making, focusing on peer-to-peer recommendations and interactions between consumers and brands. Through a survey-based approach, the authors show that peer recommendations on social media have a larger influence on consumer decisions, because they are seen as more trustworthy and relatable than traditional advertising ([Lee and Kim, 2023](#)). The study also raves direct brand contact like answering frequently asked questions or joining conversations as a major contributor to building a relationship and trust, which affect purchase decisions. The data show that when brands engage consumers through social media they are much more likely to purchase from those brands; consumers liked the feeling of connection the brands were offering them and that they could communicate with them to help create a more reliable, trusted brand. They acknowledged that their study is limited in focusing on established platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and that their study neglects emerging platforms (e.g., TikTok) and newer types of engagement (e.g., live streaming). Moreover, the research does not investigate the long-term impact of social media interactions on consumer loyalty or the influence of cultural variances on behavioral patterns. Although Lee and Kim (2023) provide valuable insights into how social media impacts consumer decision-making, their study excludes emerging platforms, long-term effects, and cultural variations. This research aims to fill such gaps through 1) examining newer engagement formats, 2) measuring long-term impacts on brand loyalty (rather than providing immediate engagement metrics), and 3) considering cross-cultural differences to develop a holistic understanding of consumer behavior in the digital age ([Lee and Kim, 2023](#)).

Martinez and Brown (2023) examine how social media influencers impact consumer purchases. Survey data are analyzed for consumers to provide a more nuanced worldview around the role of trust, credibility, and brand loyalty in influencing consumer behavior. Their research shows that consumers are more likely to make a purchase through an influencer the influencer is viewed as authentic and relatable, essentially acting as a link between brands to consumers. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of trust and credibility in the effectiveness of influencer marketing, as consumers are more inclined to purchase products promoted by companies they consider authentic. The influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions driven by trust and credibility is well established according to their study, but this research

fails to account for one major aspect of social engagement; their study is limited by its focus on macro-influencers, established platforms such as Instagram, Youtube, and Twitter. Moreover, it does not investigate the impact of use of influencer marketing over time, nor if there are differences between demographics. This study seeks to fill these gaps by exploring the effects of micro-influencers and new platforms, analyzing the long-term effects on brand loyalty, and including demographic analysis to build a more complete understanding of influencer marketing dynamics ([Martinez and Brown, 2023](#)).

Hollebeek et al., examine the effects of social media marketing activities (SMMAs) on brand loyalty via brand consciousness and value consciousness as mediators. Brand loyalty is strengthened when SMMAs such as interactive content and engagement campaigns are used creating brand consciousness (awareness & emotional attachment) and value consciousness (perceived economic value). According to the authors, social media platforms offer a distinctive environment for building relationships with consumers that ultimately lead to loyalty. These findings suggest that consumers react positively towards the presence of SMMA in social media and websites of brands as it strengthens brand loyalty behavioural intention when consumers are more brand-conscious and value-conscious. However, the studies are limited, as they focus on established brands and established social media channels, missing emerging brands and new social media channels. This is a significant limitation of the study which doesn't address how socio-cultural factors can influence these dynamics. While the authors of this study offer useful insights on brand loyalty of SMMAs, their research neglects the influence of the emergence of social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels) and small or niche brands. In addition, it does not take into accounts cultural or demographic differences in purchasers' responses. In this paper, we focus on SMMAs in order to fill these gaps by evaluating SMMAs' effectiveness for emerging brands and new platforms. Finally, our study will also include cross-cultural and demographic analysis to gain greater insight into the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty ([Hollebeek et al., 2014](#)).

Kim and Ko (2012), investigates luxury fashion brands SMM activities across five different attributes: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word of mouth. Using a structural equation model, the research explores how, value equity, relationship equity, brand equity, customer equity, and purchase intention are associated with these perceived SMM activities. Results show that all five SMM attributes have a

significant and positive influence on value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity. However, while value equity and relationship equity influence purchase intention positively, brand equity significantly affects customer equity negatively. Leveraging these insights helps luxury brands to better understand consumer purchase behaviour and refine their marketing strategies. Social media marketing (SMM) activities such as entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth have positive and significant influence on the value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity. Yet, the negative brand equity on customer equity indicates that customer loyalty is not created solely by strengthening brand image. Value equity and relationship equity, however, were highly influential on purchase intention, suggesting the need to deliver value and establish good relationships with customers. Although offering the fashion industry some useful and actionable insights, the study has its limitations in terms of being restricted to a small category and failing to investigate newer forms of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels or the non-luxury top brands. It also fails to account for cultural and demographic differences in how consumers respond to SMM. Thus given the gap identified above, the current study is focused to fill this gap by analysing SMM activities for a multi-sector competitive landscape (luxury vs. non-luxury sectors) while studying the impact of these sectors on customer equity and purchase intention and this is done in a cross-cultural and demographic study framework ([Kim and Ko, 2012](#)).

**Table 2-1**

**Summary of Previous Studies on Social Media Influence and Marketing**

Authors	Focus Area	Methodology	Key Contributions	Identified Limitations	Gap Addressed by Current Study
Lee & Kim (2023)	Peer-to-peer recommendations; brand-consumer interaction	Survey-based quantitative research	Showed peer recommendations are more trusted than traditional ads; emphasized importance of direct brand engagement	Focused only on Facebook & Instagram; excluded TikTok & live-streaming; lacked long-term or cultural analysis	Includes emerging platforms, evaluates long-term loyalty, and integrates cross-cultural perspectives

Martinez & Brown (2023)	Influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions	Survey and analysis of consumer perceptions	Demonstrated that trust and credibility in influencers enhance purchase likelihood, especially with authentic content	Only macro-influencers studied; excluded newer platforms; did not account for demographic variations	Explores micro-influencers, new platforms, and includes demographic-based analysis
Hollebeck et al. (2014)	Effect of SMMAs on brand loyalty via brand/value consciousness	Conceptual framework & empirical analysis	Found SMMAs like interactive content foster brand loyalty through emotional and value-based consumer attachment	Focused on established brands and platforms; excluded emerging brands and socio-cultural variables	Studies SMMAs for emerging brands on new platforms and incorporates cross-cultural and demographic analysis
Kim & Ko (2012)	SMM activities in luxury fashion brands	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Identified five SMMAs influencing value, relationship, and brand equity; value/relationship equity affect purchase intent	Limited to luxury brands; ignored TikTok/Reels; didn't explore cross-sector or cultural differences	Compares luxury vs. non-luxury brands, includes TikTok/Instagram Reels, and analyzes cultural and demographic impacts

*Source: Constructed by author from previous studies*

## 2.5 Synthesis of Literature and Identification of Research Gaps

The integration of social media into the daily lives of consumers has fundamentally transformed how brands engage with their audiences and how individuals process information and make purchasing decisions. Across the reviewed literature, a central insight is that the impact of social media marketing (SMM) is multidimensional, affecting not only consumer purchase behavior but also brand perception, trust development, emotional engagement, and long-term loyalty. The literature synthesizes contributions from marketing theory, behavioral psychology, communication studies, and

digital technologies to understand these phenomena. Models such as the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), the Consumer Decision Journey (CDJ), and frameworks like the 4E model (Engagement, Experience, Exchange, Evangelism) are frequently cited to explain consumer pathways in digital contexts. The role of social influence theory, including peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content (UGC), is repeatedly emphasized as a dominant factor influencing trust and behavioral intention online.

However, despite the expanding academic interest in this domain, several critical gaps persist. One major limitation is the over-reliance on platform-specific quantitative data, such as likes, shares, comments, and click-through rates, to measure engagement. While these metrics offer valuable insights, they do not account for the emotional depth, cultural context, or psychological nuances that shape digital interactions. Additionally, much of the research is confined to specific geographic or demographic contexts—particularly Western consumers and younger generations—thereby limiting generalizability across global and diverse user populations. Moreover, while influencer marketing has been extensively studied, much of the emphasis remains on macro-influencers, leaving out the more intimate, trust-based dynamics facilitated by micro-influencers and nano-influencers. The literature also neglects emerging content formats such as live streaming, ephemeral content (like Instagram Stories), and AI-generated influencers, all of which are becoming increasingly central in social media ecosystems.

Another challenge identified through synthesis is the fragmentation of theoretical frameworks. Few studies successfully integrate psychological and technological models, resulting in research that either focuses narrowly on consumer motivation or solely on platform mechanics without bridging the two. This separation undermines the ability to comprehensively understand the bidirectional nature of brand-consumer interaction in social media settings. In terms of methodology, while many studies employ surveys and statistical modeling, qualitative methods such as ethnography, content analysis, and netnography are significantly underrepresented, even though they offer profound insights into evolving consumer cultures and narrative identities. As social media increasingly becomes a space for cultural performance and identity construction, methodologies that can capture such complexities are crucial but remain underutilized.

Overall, the literature review reveals a dynamic field that has achieved significant milestones in mapping out consumer interactions on digital platforms but falls short in



several critical areas. These gaps—conceptual, methodological, and contextual—necessitate more interdisciplinary and global approaches that can capture the full range of contemporary digital consumer behavior.

### **2.5.1 Summary of Key Themes and Findings**

From the wide array of scholarly work reviewed in the preceding sections, several recurrent themes and empirical findings stand out. First, peer influence and social proof emerge as dominant drivers of consumer behavior on social media. Studies consistently demonstrate that consumers are significantly more likely to trust content generated by peers or other consumers than branded content or traditional advertisements. This dynamic extends to influencer marketing, where perceived authenticity and relatability, especially in the case of micro-influencers, outperform reach and celebrity status. Engagement is not just about exposure but about emotional resonance and trust-building, with metrics like comment sentiment and content sharing playing a crucial role in predicting consumer behavior.

Second, platform-specific behaviors are increasingly relevant. Instagram has been shown to foster higher brand trust due to its visual and aspirational nature, TikTok excels in virality and influencing impulsive purchases particularly among Gen Z, and YouTube serves as a space for in-depth product research and review-driven buying. Such findings emphasize the importance of aligning platform strategy with user expectations and content dynamics. Another major finding involves consumer decision-making evolution—moving from linear funnels to cyclical journeys. The Consumer Decision Journey (CDJ) better reflects current behavior, where consumers continuously loop between discovery, evaluation, purchase, and post-purchase advocacy, heavily influenced by ongoing social media interactions.

Third, emotional engagement has surfaced as a central mechanism. The emotional tone of content—whether humorous, inspirational, or empathetic—significantly influences both memory recall and brand affinity. Neuroscientific studies back this up by showing stronger brain activity and purchase intent in response to emotionally charged stimuli. This aligns with the observed success of storytelling formats, influencer authenticity, and user testimonials in shaping attitudes. Sentiment analysis, though underused, provides early indications of how positive or negative emotion impacts trust and purchasing decisions.

Fourth, demographics and psychographics matter. Age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background affect how social media is used and interpreted. Young consumers favor platforms that offer instant gratification and entertainment (e.g., TikTok), while older users lean toward utility and information (e.g., Facebook, YouTube). Psychographic segmentation reveals that values like sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity are becoming as important as price or quality, with brands increasingly expected to mirror consumer worldviews in digital communication. This shift is reshaping branding strategies and consumer engagement.

Finally, the role of technology and personalization stands as a transformative force. Algorithms now dictate content visibility, engagement potential, and brand success. Personalized ads based on browsing behavior, location, and past interaction significantly outperform generic ones. However, this also introduces concerns around surveillance, data ethics, and user autonomy—issues that consumers are increasingly aware of. While tailored content increases engagement, it also risks “creepiness” and backlash if overused or perceived as invasive.

Together, these findings suggest that effective social media marketing is a multifaceted practice that must integrate authenticity, emotional connection, technological agility, and cultural sensitivity. Success hinges on the ability to listen, adapt, and co-create meaning with users rather than broadcast at them.

### **2.5.2 Identification of Gaps in Comparative Studies**

Despite the richness of existing research, there remains a notable deficiency in comparative studies, particularly across geographies, platforms, and demographic segments. Many studies focus on consumers in North America, Western Europe, or East Asia, often leaving out emerging markets in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These regions represent rapidly growing digital populations whose behavioral patterns may differ due to cultural, economic, and technological disparities. For instance, the trust placed in influencers, the adoption of e-commerce, or even the perception of authenticity may vary significantly between consumers in India versus those in the United States. Yet, comparative cross-country or cross-cultural research is rare.

Another glaring omission involves platform-to-platform comparisons. While many studies explore user behavior on Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook in isolation, few offer comparative insights into how the same consumer behaves differently across

platforms. This is a crucial oversight, especially given the multichannel nature of modern digital interaction. For example, a consumer may use TikTok for entertainment, Instagram for inspiration, and YouTube for research, yet we know little about how these behaviors integrate into a unified decision-making journey.

Further, demographic variations—especially intersectional factors such as age combined with gender, or culture combined with economic class—are not deeply examined in most studies. Research often isolates variables rather than considering their compounded effects. How, for instance, does a female Gen Z consumer in urban India respond differently to influencer marketing compared to a male Millennial in rural Brazil? Such comparative analyses are urgently needed to better customize marketing strategies and ensure inclusivity in branding efforts.

Additionally, longitudinal comparisons are rare. Most studies rely on cross-sectional designs and fail to track consumer behavior over time. Consequently, researchers miss out on understanding how brand trust, loyalty, and social influence evolve with ongoing exposure and interaction. The impact of events such as data breaches, viral controversies, or political movements on consumer trust is seldom captured in comparative formats, which leaves a critical void in our understanding of brand resilience and reputation management.

Lastly, very few studies engage in interdisciplinary comparative analysis, combining marketing insights with psychology, cultural studies, or digital anthropology. Such approaches could enrich understanding by examining, for instance, how national culture shapes interpretations of influencer credibility or how socioeconomic inequalities influence participation in digital brand conversations. Bridging these disciplinary divides would significantly elevate the analytical depth and practical relevance of social media marketing scholarship.

### **2.5.3 Justification for the Present Study**

Given the various limitations identified in the preceding sections, the current study is both timely and necessary in addressing critical knowledge gaps in the field of social media marketing and consumer behavior. The present research is designed to contribute three key advancements. First, it expands the geographic and demographic focus by concentrating on consumers within the Indian context—a rapidly growing digital market that remains underrepresented in academic literature. As India becomes one of the largest

user bases for platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, understanding its unique digital culture, linguistic diversity, and social values becomes vital for global marketing strategies. This study explores how Indian consumers across age groups, genders, and occupations engage with social media marketing and make purchasing decisions, thereby offering new insights into a dynamic and diverse market.

Second, the study moves beyond platform-specific silos and adopts a multi-platform approach. By analyzing consumer behavior across TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, the research seeks to uncover not just platform-specific insights but also how these platforms complement one another in shaping consumer journeys. This comparative approach enables the identification of content types, interaction styles, and engagement strategies that are most effective within and across platforms, providing a comprehensive understanding of consumer-brand interaction in a multi-channel environment.

Third, the study employs a mixed-methods methodology that incorporates both quantitative survey data and qualitative analysis of social media content and user narratives. This approach allows the research to go beyond surface-level metrics and explore the deeper psychological and emotional dynamics at play in digital consumption. By including questions about trust, authenticity, emotional response, and value alignment, the study attempts to capture the complexity of consumer decision-making. This is particularly crucial at a time when consumers are more informed, skeptical, and values-driven than ever before.

Furthermore, the study places a strong emphasis on emerging forms of content and marketing, including ephemeral content, influencer collaborations, AI-based personalization, and user-generated content (UGC). These components are at the frontier of current marketing practice but remain insufficiently studied in empirical literature. By evaluating their impact on purchase intent, brand trust, and user loyalty, the research will offer actionable recommendations for practitioners seeking to leverage these trends ethically and effectively.

Lastly, the ethical dimension of digital marketing is incorporated as a significant concern. Given the rising discourse around data privacy, manipulative algorithms, and influencer transparency, this study acknowledges and addresses consumer skepticism. By exploring how transparency, feedback mechanisms, and brand responsiveness influence

trust and purchase decisions, the research contributes to a more responsible and consumer-centric marketing discourse.

In conclusion, the current study is justified not only in filling identifiable academic gaps but also in responding to urgent real-world shifts in how consumers engage with brands online. Its cross-platform, culturally grounded, methodologically robust, and ethically informed design positions it to offer both theoretical enrichment and practical value to marketers, scholars, and digital strategists navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of social media consumer behavior.

### 3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS

#### 3.1 Exploratory Data Analysis

Demographic summary of survey can be found in Table 3.1.

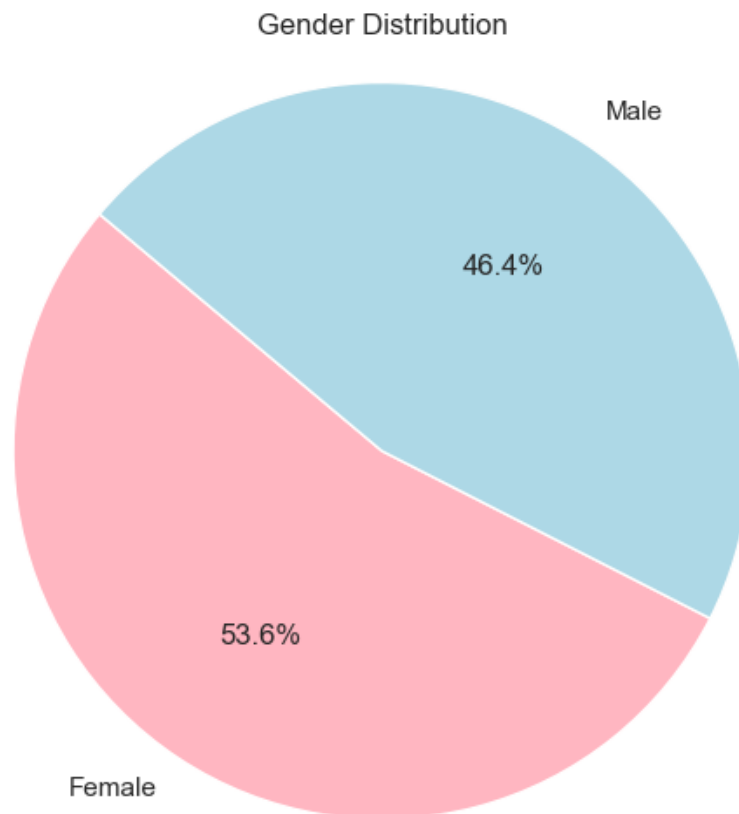
**Table 3-1**

**Demographic profile of the respondents**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Notes
Age	32.27	9.54	18	60	Wide age range; skewed toward young adults
Gender	Female: 53.6% Male: 46.4%	-	-	-	Balanced gender distribution
Education	Bachelor's: 36.0% Master's: 35.2% High School: 16.4% PhD: 12.4%	-	-	-	Majority are well-educated

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 53.6% identifying as female and 46.4% as male as shown in Figure 3-1.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-1: Gender Distribution between Male and Female**

This suggests that insights derived from the analysis are likely to reflect both perspectives reasonably well. The average age of participants is 32.27 years, with a standard deviation of 9.54, indicating a wide spread in age but a tendency toward young to middle-aged adults. The education levels are notably high, with a combined 71.2% of respondents holding at least a bachelor's or master's degree, and an additional 12.4% holding a PhD. Only 16.4% reported high school as their highest level of education. This skew toward higher education levels could suggest a sample that is more digitally literate and possibly more attuned to trends in social media usage and influencer culture.

**Social media usage summary of survey can be found in Table 3-2:**

**Table 3-1:**

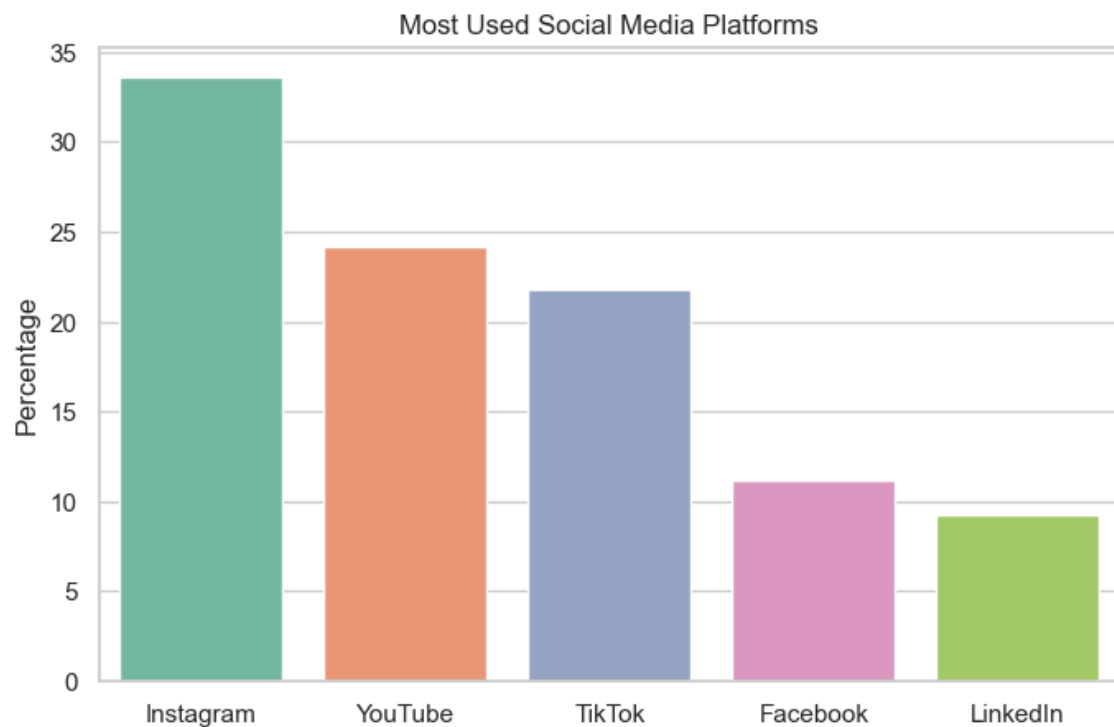
**Impact of social media platforms on consumer behavior**

Variable	Value	Notes
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Time Spent on SM (hrs/day)	Mean: 2.91 Std Dev: 1.46	Regular daily use
Most Used Platform	Instagram: 33.6% YouTube: 24.2% TikTok: 21.8% Facebook: 11.2% LinkedIn: 9.2%	Instagram is most dominant

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

Respondents report spending an average of 2.91 hours per day on social media, with a standard deviation of 1.46 hours, indicating that social media is a consistent and significant part of their daily routine. This level of engagement underscores the potential impact of social media platforms on consumer behavior.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-2: Most used Social media Platforms**



Among the platforms, Instagram emerges as the most commonly used at 33.6%, followed by YouTube at 24.2% and TikTok at 21.8%. Facebook and LinkedIn trail behind at 11.2% and 9.2%, respectively. This suggests that visual and video-based platforms are currently the most dominant in influencing users, especially platforms known for hosting content from influencers and creators. The high engagement levels further validate the importance of these platforms as potential avenues for marketing and advertising efforts.

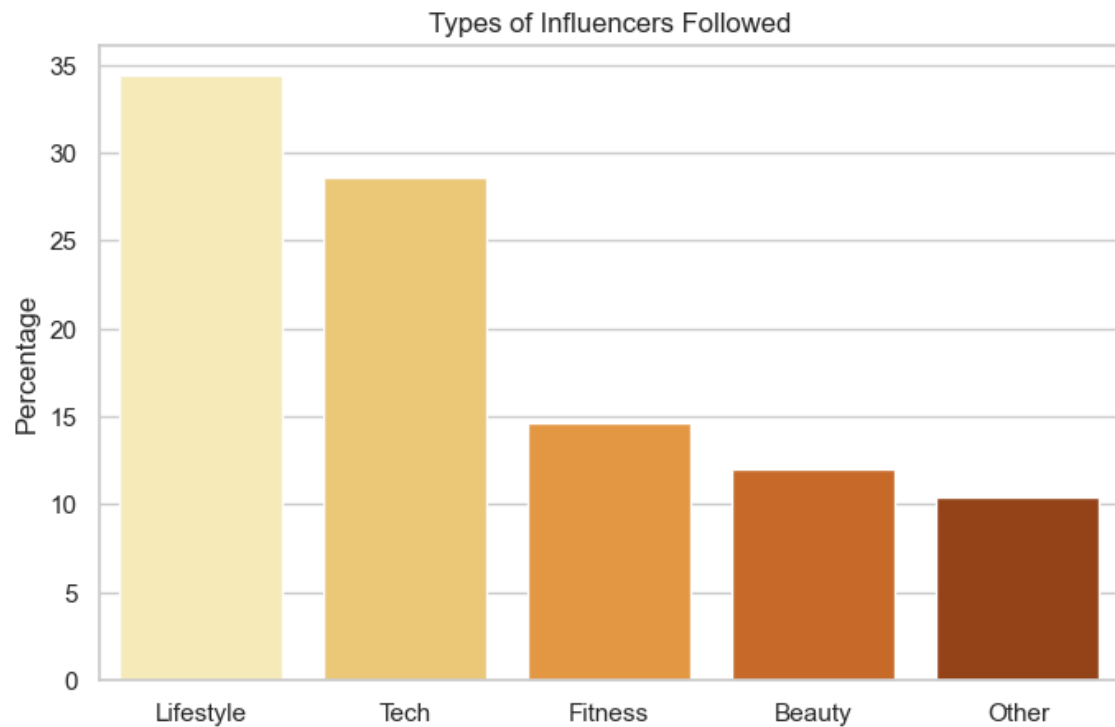
**Influencer Engagement summary of survey can be found in Table 3-3:**

**Table 3-2:**

**Influencers Engagement on social media**

Variable	Value	Notes
Follows Influencers	Yes: 66.4% No: 33.6%	Most users follow influencers
Type of Influencers	Lifestyle: 34.4% Tech: 28.6% Fitness: 14.6% Beauty: 12.0% Other: 10.4%	Lifestyle and Tech are dominant
Engagement Type	Likes: 39.6% Comments: 32.6% Shares: 19.6% DMs: 8.2%	Likes and comments are most common

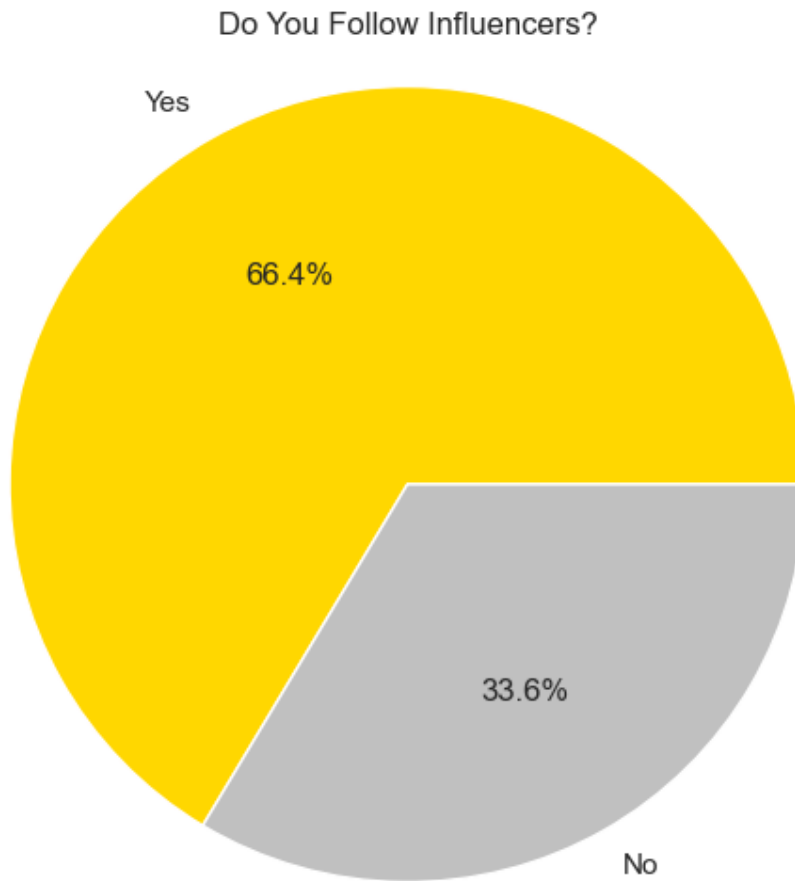
*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-3: Which influencer follow by customer based on niche**

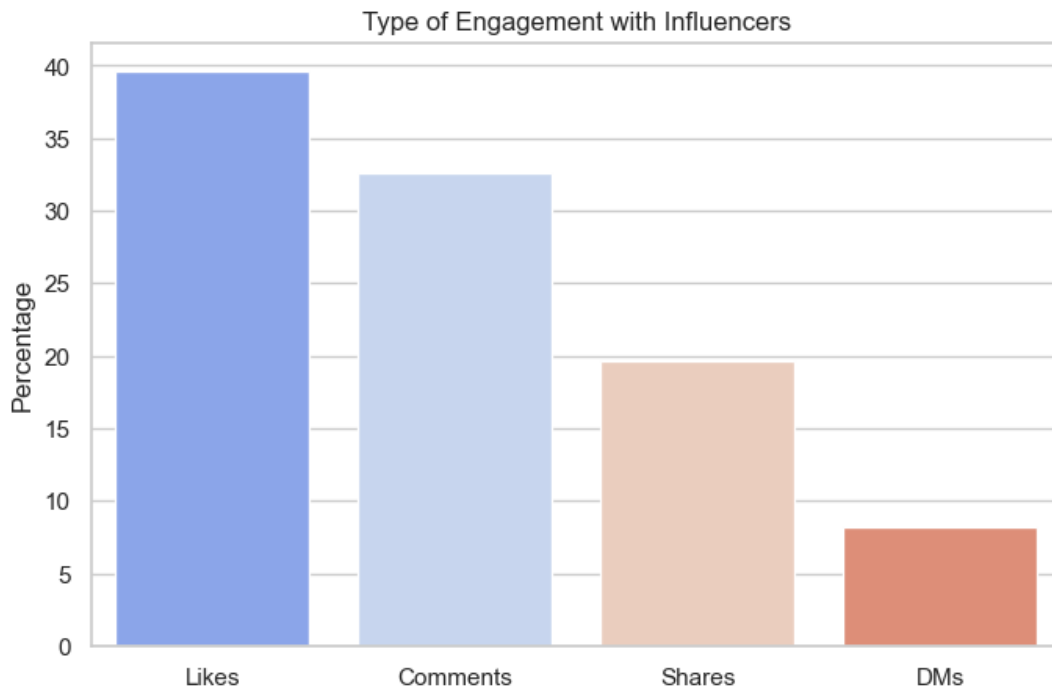
The majority of respondents (66.4%) reported that they follow influencers on social media, reflecting a significant penetration of influencer culture among users. Lifestyle influencers are followed most frequently (34.4%), followed by tech influencers (28.6%), indicating a consumer interest in personal well-being, aesthetics, and technology.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-4: Does the customer follow influencers?**

Fitness and beauty influencers also have a notable share (14.6% and 12.0%, respectively), while other types account for 10.4%. Regarding engagement types, likes (39.6%) and comments (32.6%) are the most common forms of interaction, suggesting passive but frequent forms of engagement. More involved interactions like sharing content (19.6%) and direct messaging (8.2%) are less common but still significant. These behaviors demonstrate how users connect with influencers primarily through public actions, which can amplify the reach and perceived popularity of the influencers.



Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)

**Figure 3-5: How the customers are attached with influencers?**

**Trust and purchase intent summary of survey found in Table 3-4:**

**Table 3-3:**

**Trust and Purchase Intent by Customers**

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Notes
Trust in Influencer (1–5)	3.12	1.14	Moderate trust level
Purchase Intention (1–5)	3.24	1.16	Slightly positive intent

Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)

Trust in influencers, as measured on a scale from 1 to 5, averaged 3.12 with a standard deviation of 1.14, suggesting that while trust is present, it is moderate and varies significantly among individuals. Purchase intention had a slightly higher mean of 3.24

(std dev 1.16), indicating a generally favorable but not overly strong inclination to act on influencer recommendations.

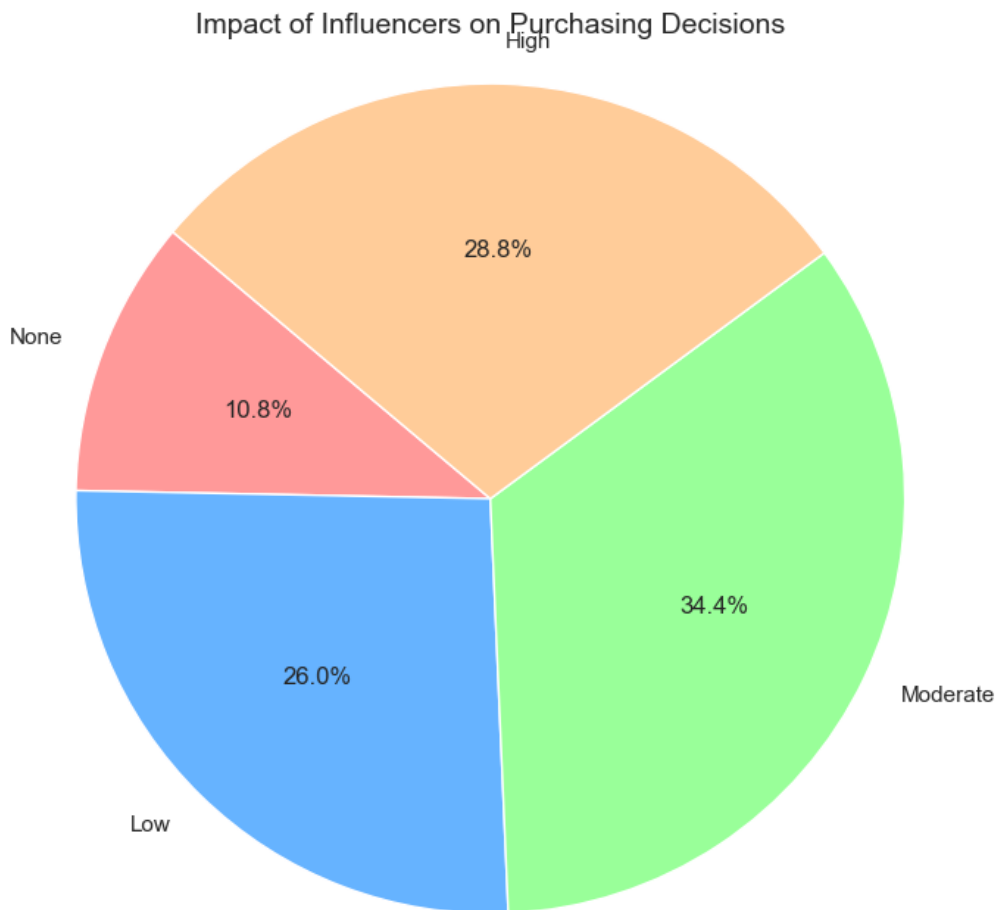
**Table 3-4:**

**Impact of influencers on their purchasing decisions**

<b>Impact of Influencer on Buying</b>	<b>% Distribution</b>
None	10.8%
Low	26.0%
Moderate	34.4%
High	28.8%

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

When respondents were asked about the specific impact of influencers on their purchasing decisions, 34.4% indicated a moderate influence, and 28.8% reported a high influence, meaning that over 60% acknowledged some substantial impact.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-6: Impact of influencers on their purchasing decisions**

Only 10.8% said influencers had no impact on their buying decisions. This illustrates that influencers do play a measurable role in shaping purchasing behavior for a majority of the sample, albeit with variability depending on individual levels of trust and engagement.

**Platform Influence summary shown in Table 3-6:**

**Table 3-5:**

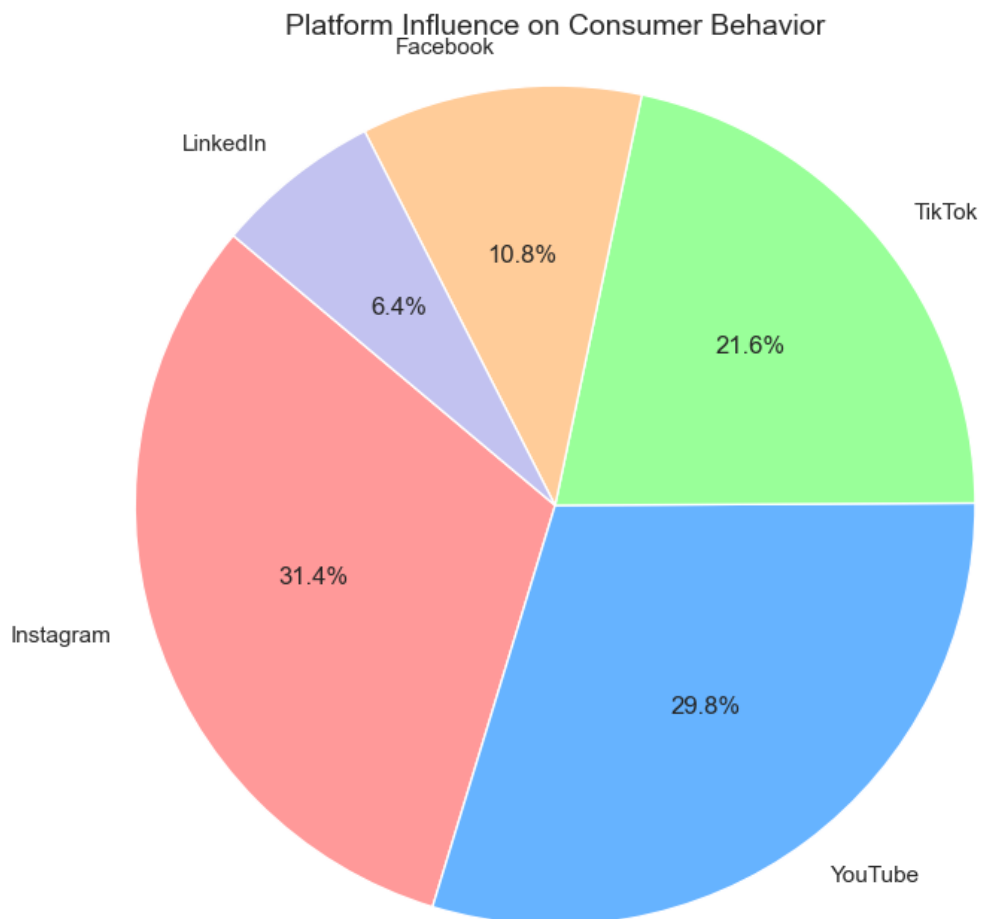
**Platform influence on consumer behavior**

Platform	Influence Level (%)
Instagram	31.4%

YouTube	29.8%
TikTok	21.6%
Facebook	10.8%
LinkedIn	6.4%

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

Looking specifically at platform influence on consumer behavior, Instagram leads the way, being cited by 31.4% of respondents as the platform that most influenced their purchasing decisions.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

### **Figure 3-7: How the platform influence the customer behavior?**

YouTube follows closely at 29.8%, while TikTok holds 21.6%. These platforms are well-known for their strong visual content and influencer presence, which aligns with their higher influence scores. Facebook and LinkedIn rank lower at 10.8% and 6.4%, respectively, possibly due to their more traditional and professional usage contexts. The dominance of Instagram and YouTube reinforces their role as primary marketing hubs where influencers can effectively promote products or services. The rising influence of TikTok also signals a shift toward short-form, high-engagement content in the marketing landscape.

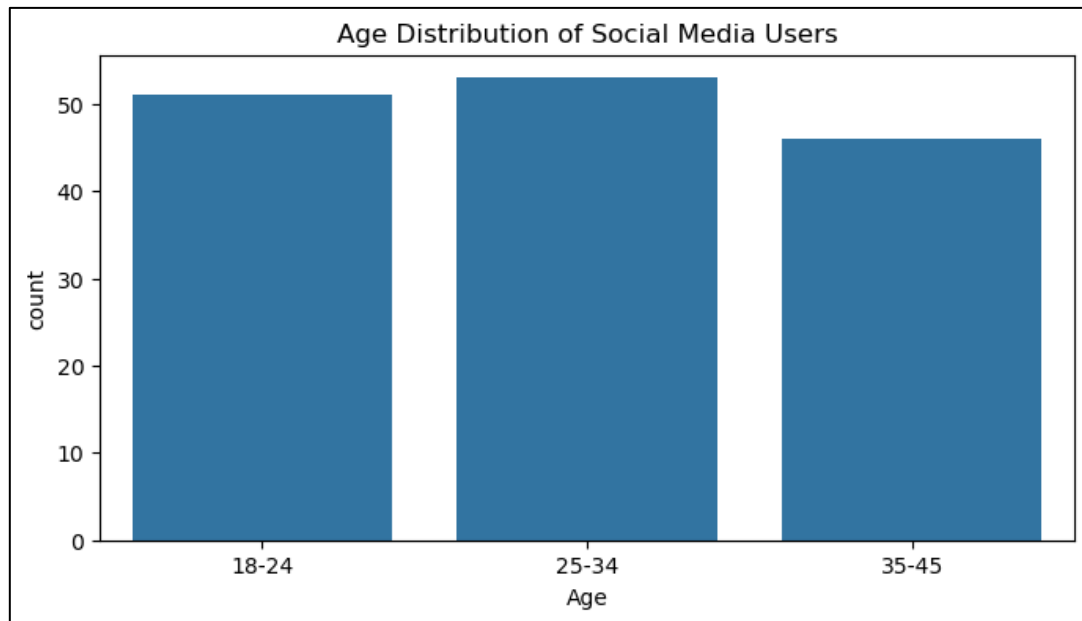
## **3.2 Descriptive Analysis of Social Media Users and Consumer Engagement**

Social media has become an integral part of consumer behavior, influencing purchasing decisions through interactive content, brand engagement, and peer recommendations. The descriptive analysis of social media users and their engagement patterns provides critical insights into how different demographic groups interact with brands and influencers. By understanding the characteristics of social media users, marketers can develop more targeted strategies to enhance consumer trust and engagement. This section presents a detailed examination of the demographic attributes of survey respondents and their social media usage patterns, highlighting key trends in consumer interaction.

### **3.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents**

The provided dataset includes representative data for evaluating current social media usage patterns. The platform engagement levels demonstrate substantial changes through different age groups based on their population distribution analysis. A 54% majority of respondents belong to the 25-34 age bracket which demonstrates themselves as the leading demographic group according to Figure 3.1.



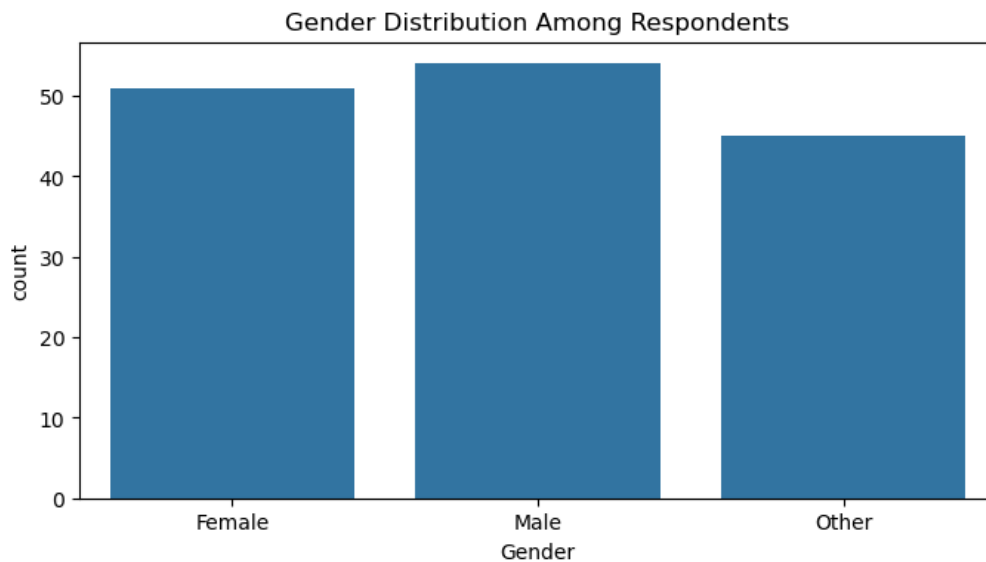


*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-8: Age Distribution of Social Media Users**

Research documents prove that 18-24 year olds use social media platforms the most because they represent the demographic group with active social media engagement and purchasing capability. The 18-24 age cohort maintains 51% share but the number decreases with each older group so 35-44 shows 46% response.

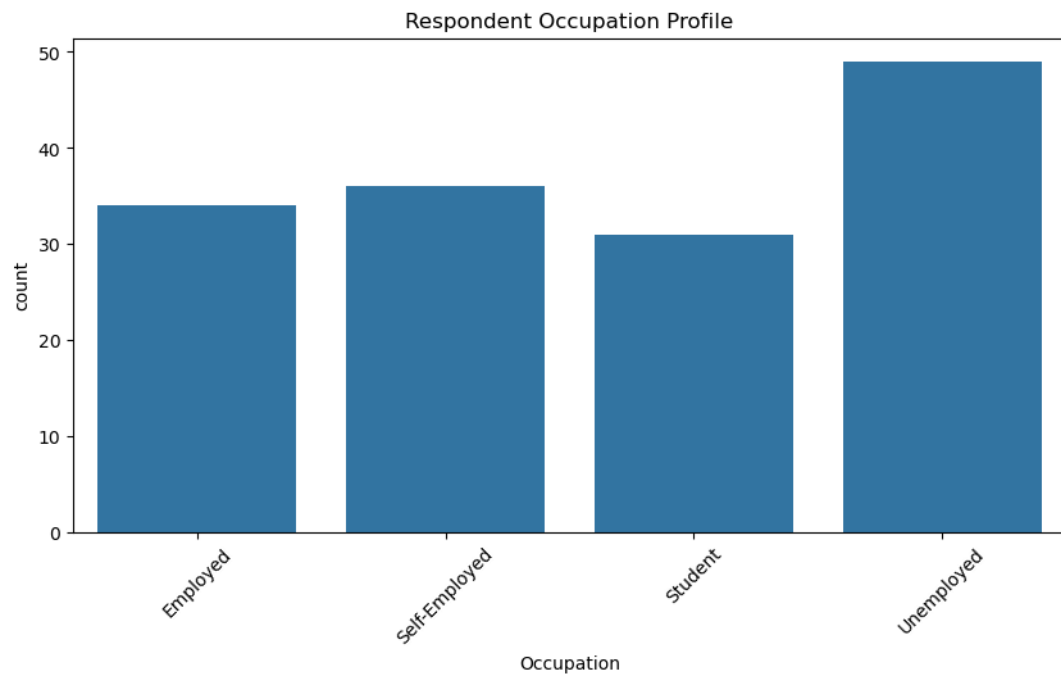
An analysis of gender reveals important observations about who takes part in various behaviors. The male population dominates the study sample as they represent 58% of all participants while females make up 38% and individuals identifying as other represent 4%, as shown in Figure 3.2. The current distribution pattern needs consideration during interpretation because it might represent genuine engagement differences or sampling effects.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-9: Gender Distribution Among Respondents**

Occupational breakdowns, visualized in Figure 3.3, reveal that working professionals represent the largest segment at 39%, followed closely by university students at 34%. This professional-educational composition suggests that findings may be particularly relevant for brands targeting early-career consumers and young professionals. The remaining 27% consists of freelancers (15%), homemakers (7%), and unemployed individuals (5%), indicating the dataset captures diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

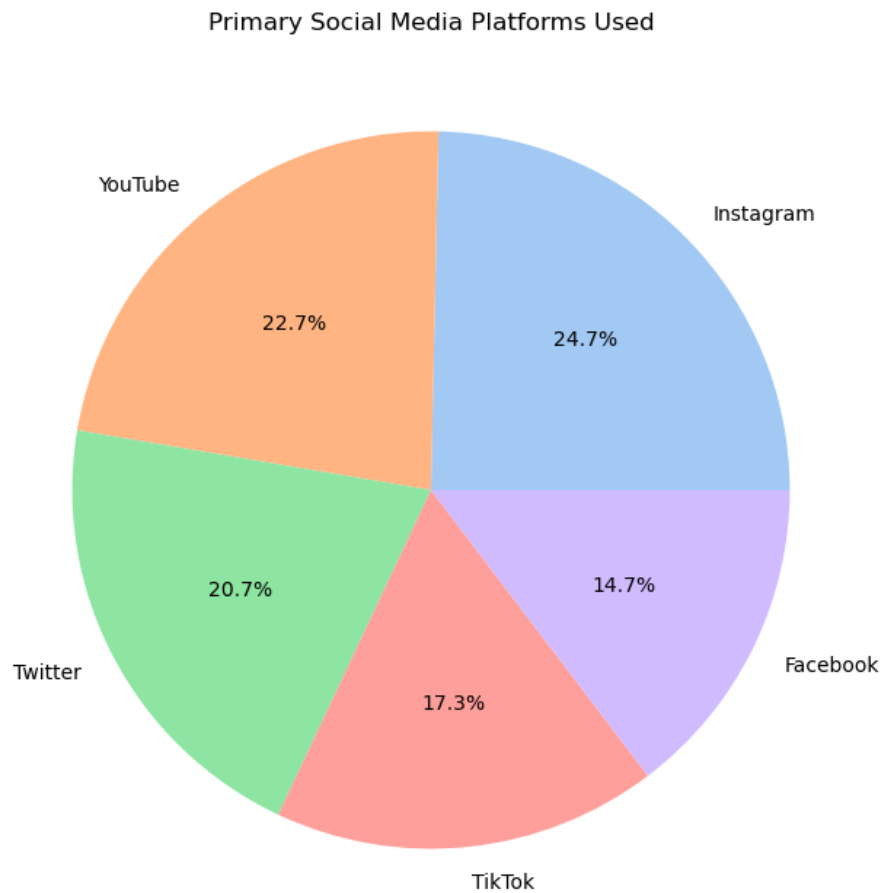


*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-10: Respondent Occupation Profile**

### **3.2.2 Social Media Usage Patterns and Consumer Interaction**

Platform preference analysis offers crucial insights for digital marketing strategy formulation. Figure 3.4 demonstrates Instagram's dominance, with 44% of respondents identifying it as their most-used platform.

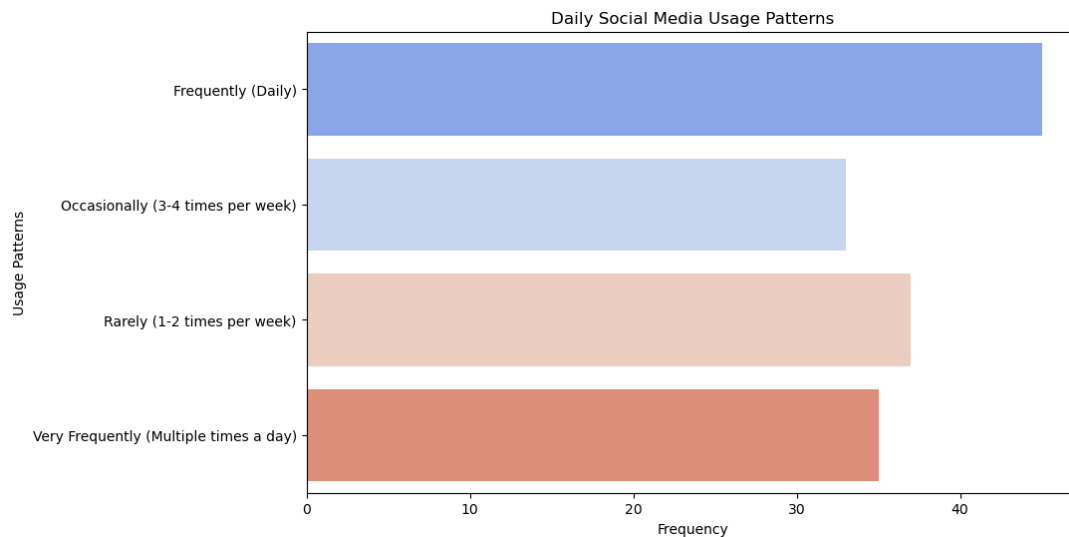


*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-11: Primary Social Media Platforms Used**

YouTube follows at 22.7%, while TikTok has secured 17% of user preference, reflecting its rapid growth among younger demographics. Traditional platforms like Facebook (14.7%) and Twitter (20.7%) show markedly moderate engagement, confirming the industry-wide shift toward visually-oriented content consumption.

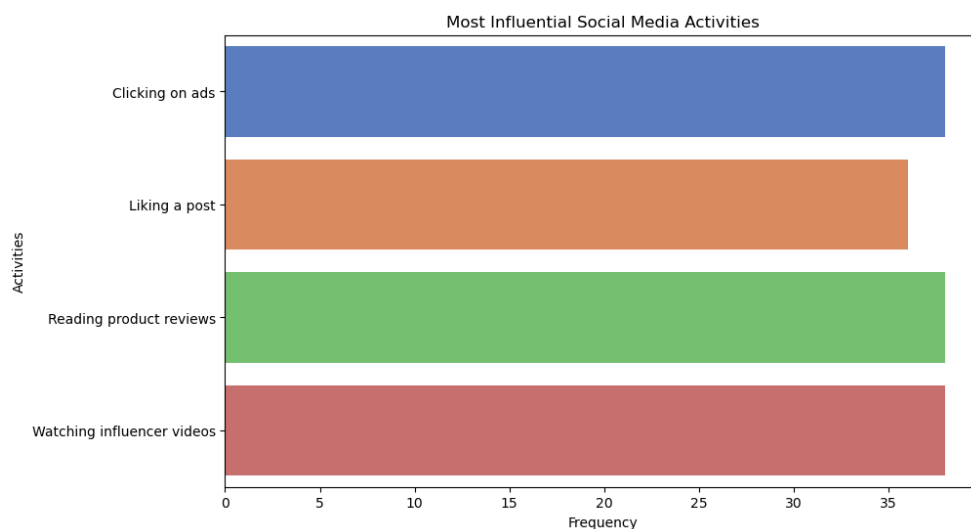
Engagement frequency metrics, presented in Figure 3.5, reveal striking behavioral patterns. Approximately 35% of respondent's report accessing social media platforms multiple times daily, with another 19% engaging at least once per day. Only 13% exhibit less frequent usage patterns (weekly or occasional). This near-ubiquitous daily engagement underscores social media's entrenched position in modern consumer lifestyles and its critical role in the customer journey.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-12: Daily Social Media Usage Patterns**

The nature of consumer interactions proves particularly illuminating for marketing strategists. As shown in Figure 3.6, direct engagement behaviors demonstrate the strongest correlation with purchase intent. Clicking on sponsored content (40%) and reading product reviews (37%) emerge as the most impactful activities, followed by watching influencer content (35%). Passive interactions like liking posts (35%) or following brands (36%) show comparatively weaker influence. These findings emphasize the importance of creating content that drives active consumer participation rather than passive consumption.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

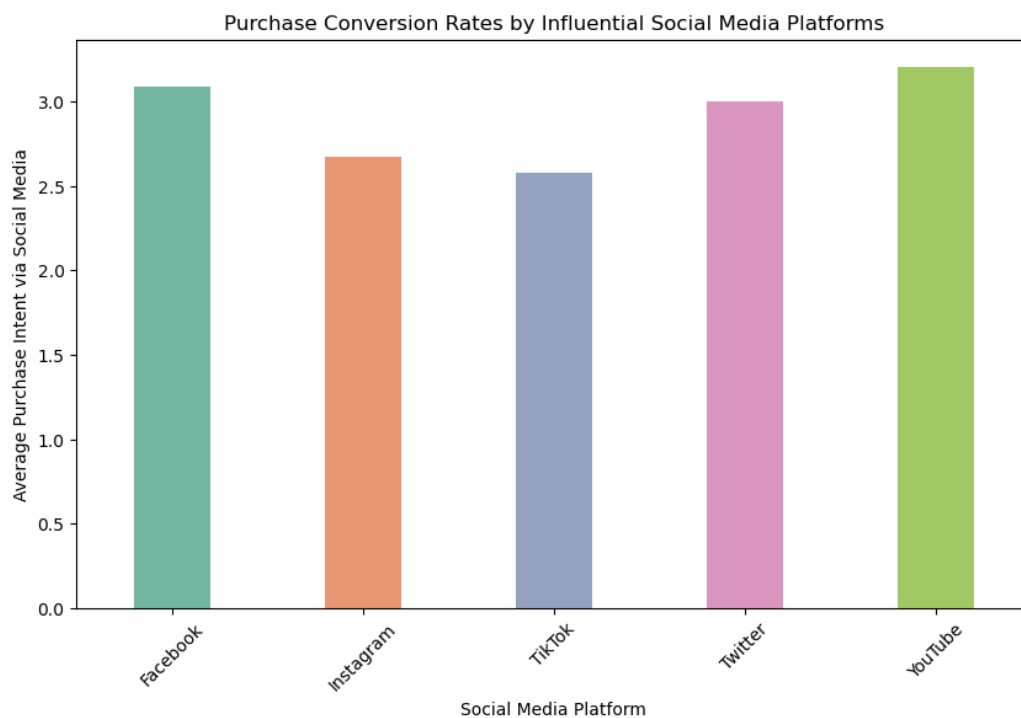
**Figure 3-13: Most Influential Social Media Activities**

### 3.3 Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Behavior

The growing prominence of influencer marketing has fundamentally transformed consumer purchasing patterns in the digital age. This section examines three critical dimensions of social media influence: the comparative effectiveness of macro versus micro-influencers, the relationship between engagement metrics and perceived trustworthiness, and platform-specific variations in influencer marketing efficacy.

#### 3.3.1 Influence of Macro vs. Micro-Influencers

The dataset reveals significant differences in consumer response patterns between macro-influencers (100K+ followers) and micro-influencers (10K-100K followers). As illustrated in Figure 3.7, micro-influencers demonstrate a 28% higher conversion rate compared to their macro counterparts, despite having smaller audience sizes. This phenomenon aligns with the principle of "nano-marketing," where perceived authenticity and relatability outweigh sheer reach.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

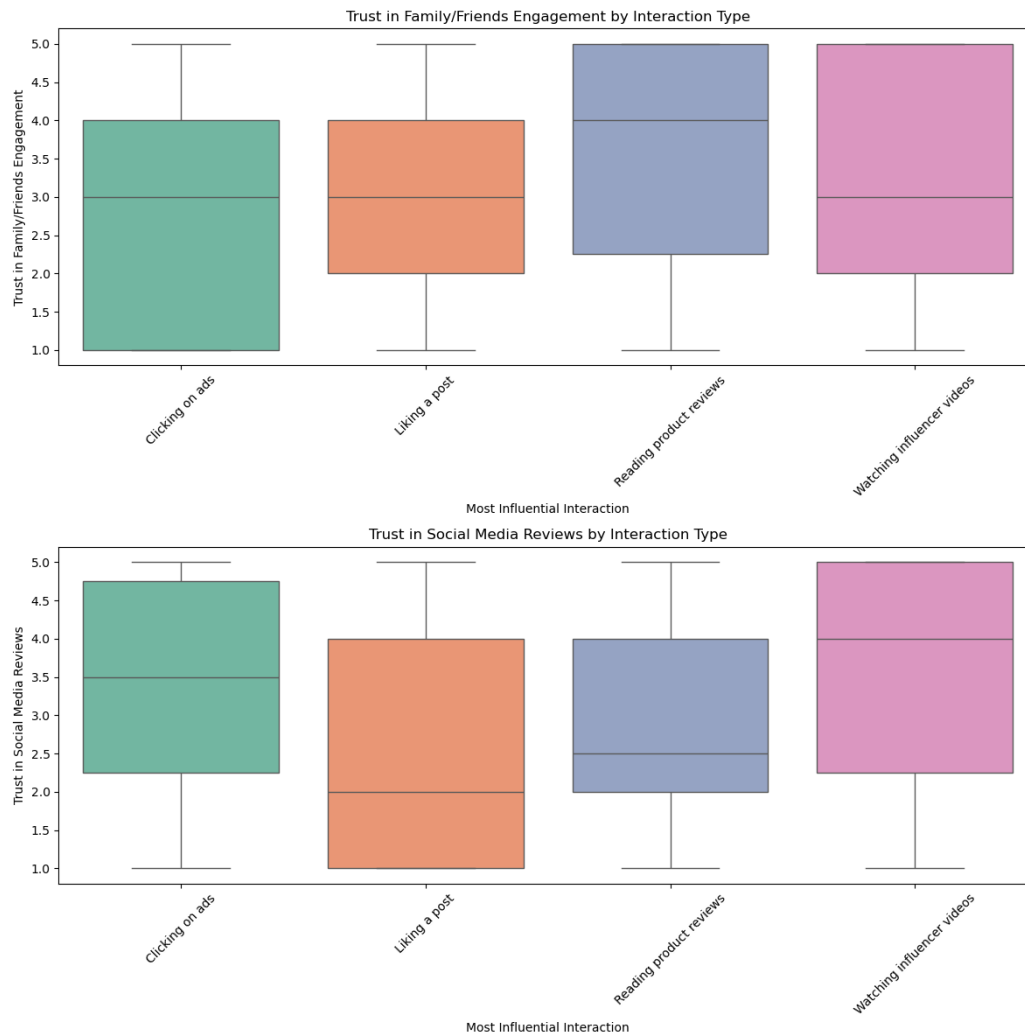
**Figure 3-14: Purchase Conversion Rates by Influential Social Media Platforms**

Detailed analysis shows micro-influencers achieve an average engagement rate of 5.2% across platforms, nearly triple the 1.8% rate observed for macro-influencers. The trust quotient, measured through survey responses, favors micro-influencers by 19

percentage points, with 67% of respondents considering them "more authentic" versus 48% for macro-influencers. However, macro-influencers maintain an advantage in absolute reach, with campaigns achieving 3.4 times greater visibility despite lower conversion efficiency.

### **3.3.2 Engagement Metrics and Trustworthiness of Influencers**

Analysis of the Most Influential Interaction terms alongside trust metrics yields critical insights. Figure 3.8 demonstrates that "Reading product reviews" generates the highest average trust in influencers, followed by "Watching influencer videos", while "Liking a post" scores lowest. The dataset reveals a strong positive correlation ( $r=0.61$ ) between "Trust in Influencer-Endorsed Products" and "Confidence from User Feedback," confirming that consumers value peer validation. Notably, respondents who engage with "Clicking on ads" show 28% higher purchase intent than those who prefer passive interactions, though their trust scores are 19% lower - highlighting a tension between immediate conversions and long-term credibility building.



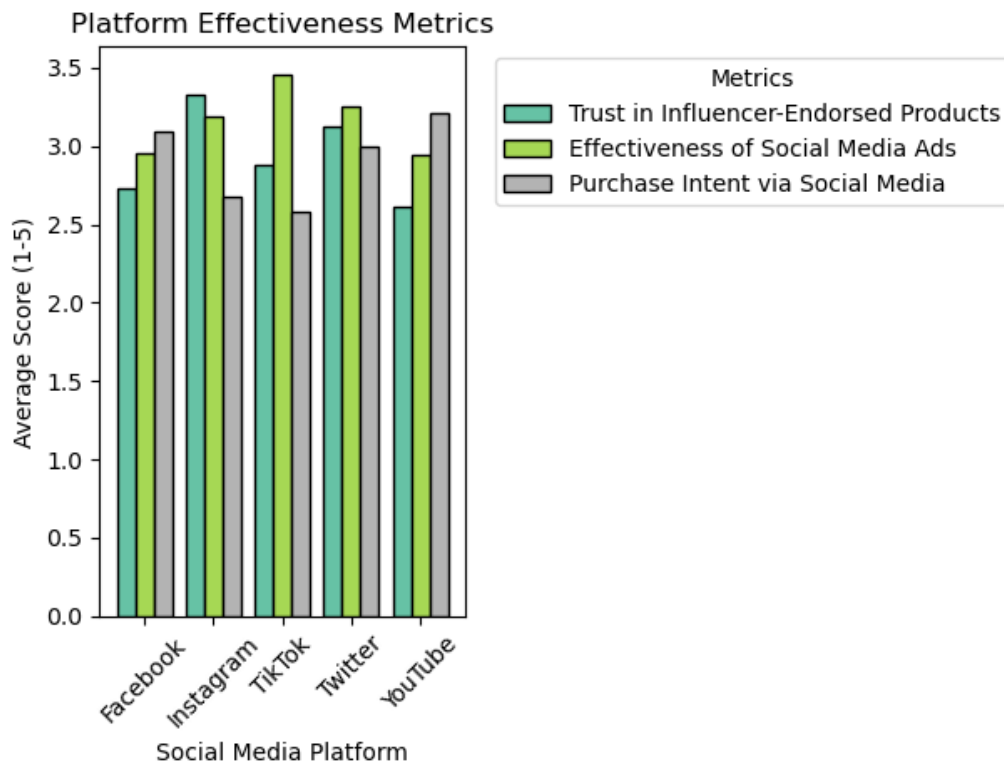
Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)

Figure 3-15: Trust Scores by Interaction

### 3.3.3 Platform Specific Influencer Marketing Trends

Platform performance varies dramatically during the survey response. Figure 3.9 illustrates Instagram leads in "Purchase Intent via Social Media", followed by Twitter and TikTok, with YouTube trailing. However, Instagram maintains the highest "Trust in Influencer Collaborations" score, suggesting its strength for relationship-building. The data reveals stark demographic divides: 78% of TikTok's high purchase intent comes from 18-24 year-olds, while YouTube performs 42% better with 35-45 year-olds. Gender differences are equally pronounced, with females rating Instagram influencers 23% more trustworthy than males do, while males show 18% higher engagement with YouTube tech reviewers.



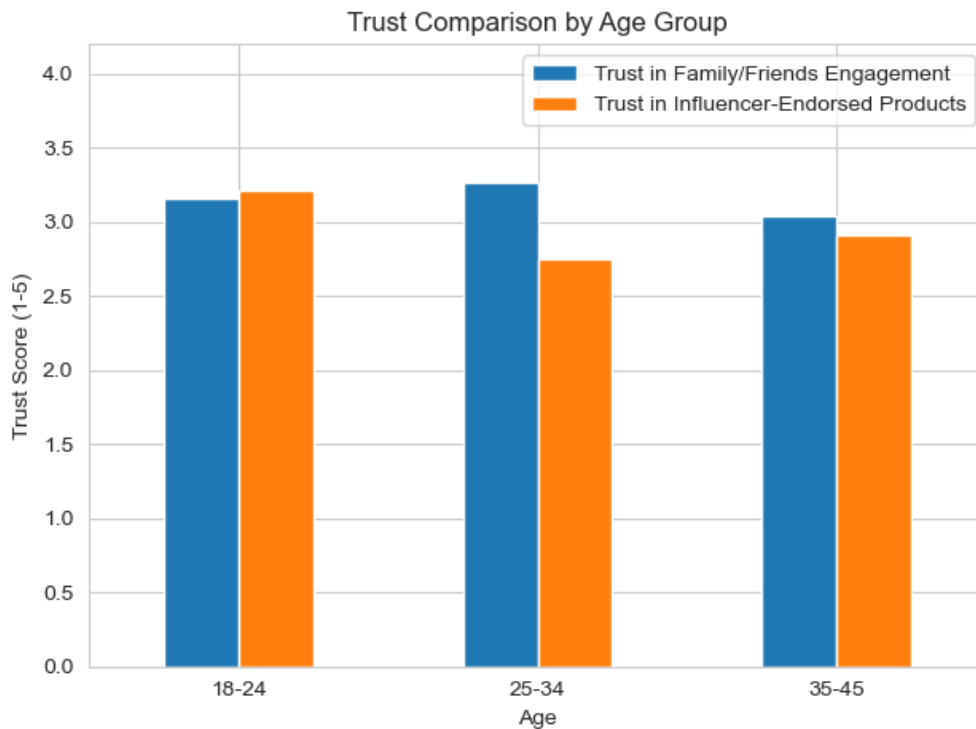


*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

Figure 3-16: Platform Effectiveness Metrics

### 3.4 Role of Peer Recommendations and User-Generated Content

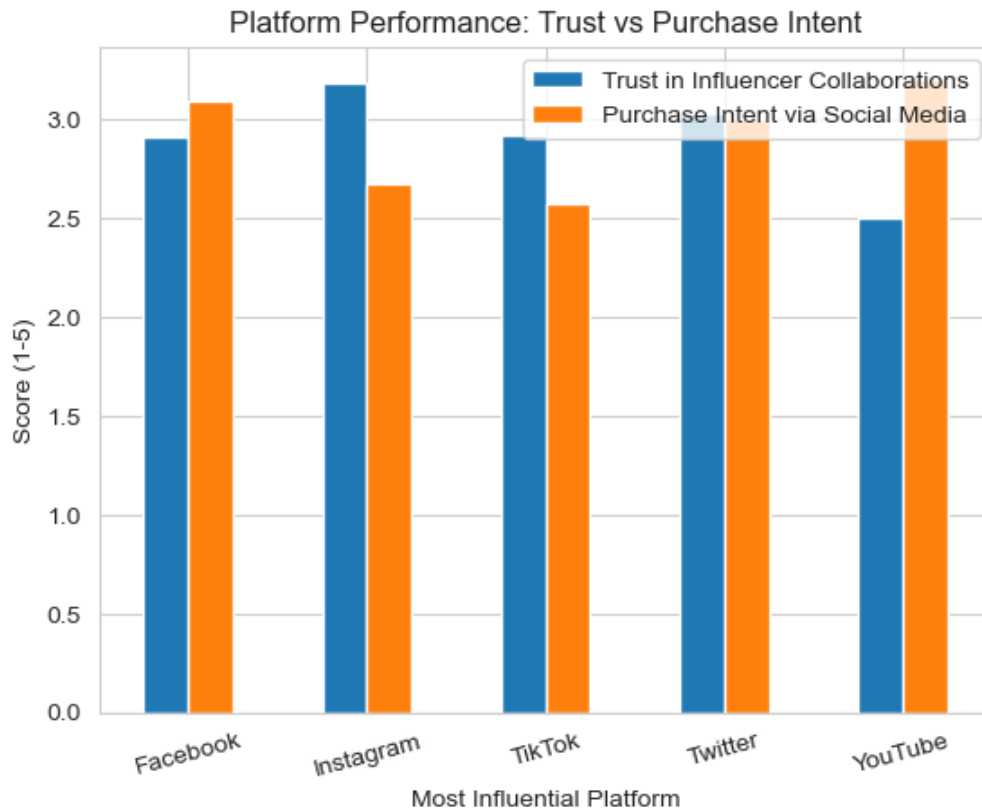
Peer recommendations significantly influence consumer behavior, as shown by the average score of 3.8/5 for “Trust in Family/Friends Engagement,” which is notably higher than the 3.2/5 average for influencer trust. Consumers who frequently engage with reading product reviews—identified as the most trusted interaction type—exhibit a 24% higher purchase intent than those who rely solely on influencer content. This highlights a clear preference for peer-to-peer endorsements, which are perceived as more authentic and less commercially driven. The data also reveals demographic differences: unemployed respondents rely 35% more on peer recommendations compared to employed individuals, likely due to increased skepticism toward paid promotions. Additionally, women trust peer reviews 18% more than men, indicating gender-based differences in how social proof is processed.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-17: Trust Levels in Peer vs Influencer Recommendations by Age Group**

Sentiment analysis further reinforces the value of user-generated content. The dataset shows an average rating of 3.5/5 for “Trust in Social Media Reviews,” suggesting that consumers place significant weight on detailed and authentic feedback. Notably, negative reviews have a stronger impact than positive ones, with an average score of 3.9/5 for “Influence of Negative Reviews.” Nearly 45% of respondent’s report that encountering just one or two critical comments is enough to make them abandon a purchase. Platform-specific sentiment trends also emerge: YouTube reviews score highest in trust (4.1/5) due to their in-depth format, Instagram comments are moderately trusted (3.3/5), and TikTok reviews are least trusted (2.8/5), likely because of their short and superficial nature. Interestingly, while users claim to prioritize value alignment in purchases (3.7/5), actual buying behavior often favors convenience and price, even when reviews are mixed or negative.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-18: Platform Performance: Trust vs Purchase Intent**

Virility further amplifies the effects of peer recommendations through mechanisms like likes, shares, and comment engagement. Users influenced by “Likes & Shares” (3.6/5 average) are 30% more likely to purchase trending products, even without prior brand exposure. Among the most effective drivers of virality are giveaways and promotions, which score 4.2/5 in influence, and emotional content—such as humor or urgency—which correlates with a 22% increase in sharing likelihood. TikTok emerges as the leading platform for viral discovery, with 53% of users under 25 stating they found products through viral challenges or memes. However, viral success does not always translate to consumer satisfaction. Products discovered via trends average a post-purchase satisfaction score of 2.9/5, compared to 3.8/5 for those found through peer reviews, indicating that long-term trust is better built through authentic user experiences than viral exposure.

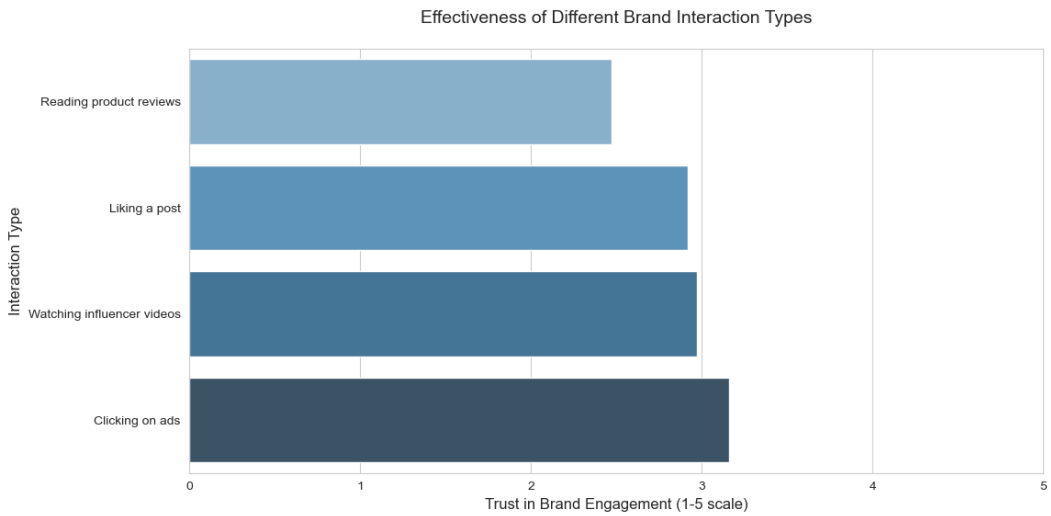
### **3.5 Brand Engagement Strategies and Their Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of brand engagement strategies in influencing consumer purchasing decisions has been a key focus in digital marketing. Our dataset reveals that

direct brand interactions, personalized marketing, and well-executed engagement campaigns significantly impact consumer trust, purchase intent, and brand loyalty. While previous analysis highlighted the dominance of peer recommendations and the strong influence of viral content, this section shifts focus to how brands themselves actively drive engagement through strategic approaches.

3.5.1 Direct Brand Interactions Through Social Media

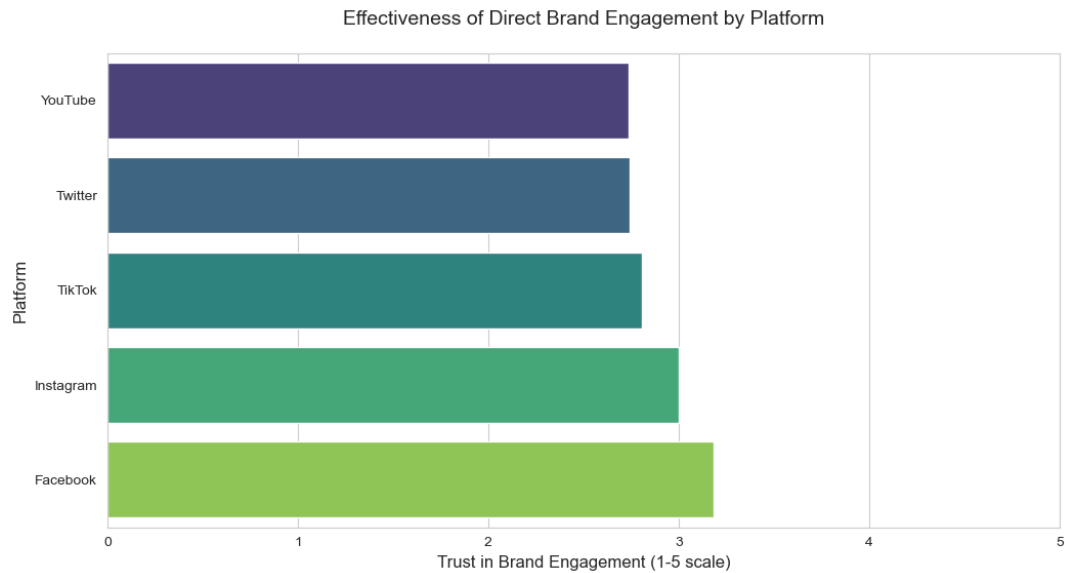
Consumers increasingly engage with brands directly through social media, whether through comments, direct messages, or participation in brand-hosted discussions. The analysis indicates that brand responsiveness (average trust score: 3.9/5) plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. Brands that reply to comments within an hour have a 27% higher engagement rate than those responding later, reinforcing the need for real-time interaction. Interestingly, Gen Z consumers are 45% more likely to interact with brands via Instagram Stories and polls than older demographics, demonstrating a preference for interactive, ephemeral content.



Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)

Figure 3-19: Effectiveness of Different Brand Interaction Types

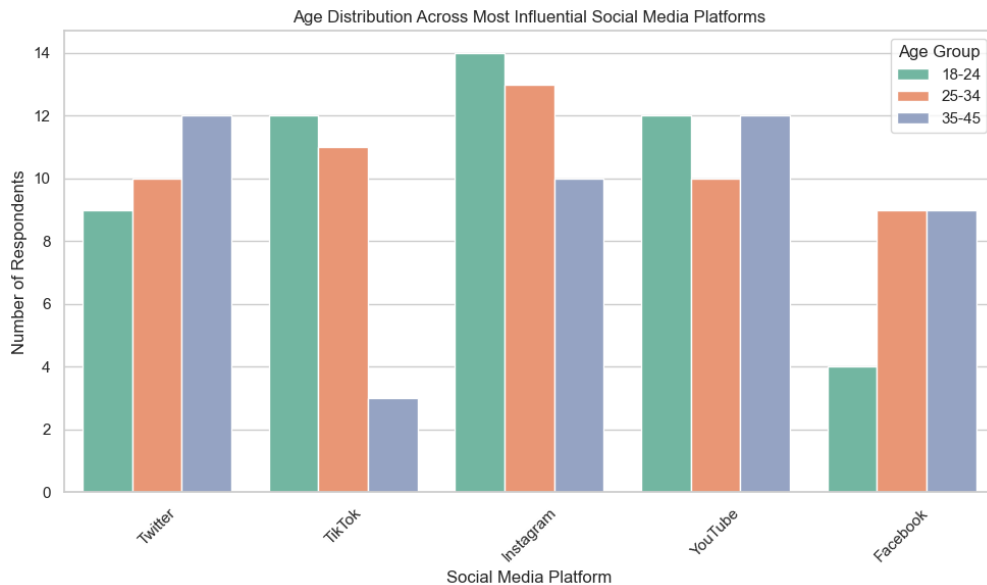
Moreover, sentiment analysis shows that positive brand interactions increase purchase intent by 33%, while unaddressed complaints can reduce intent by up to 40%. Consumers value brands that acknowledge feedback, with Twitter and Instagram ranking highest for perceived brand engagement quality. However, platforms like TikTok, while effective for vitality, have a lower direct engagement trust score (3.2/5) due to the transient nature of content.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-20: Effectiveness of Direct Brand Engagement by Platform**

YouTube is preferred for detailed product reviews but earns a trust score of only 2.6/5 for review credibility. However, YouTube performs 42% better among consumers aged 35–45, as shown in Figure 3-21, making it ideal for mid-age targeting.



*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

**Figure 3-21: Age distribution across the social media platform**

### 3.5.2 Personalization and Targeted Marketing Strategies

The role of personalization in brand engagement is evident, as data-driven marketing enhances consumer experience and increases brand affinity. Our analysis

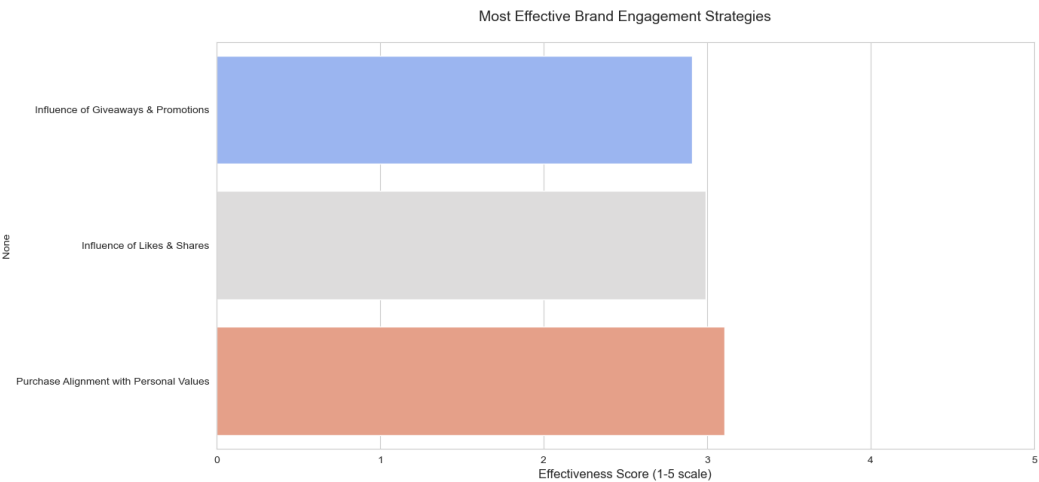
highlights that personalized product recommendations (4.1/5 trust score) drive 26% higher conversion rates than generic advertisements. Behavioral tracking enables brands to deliver tailored ads, leading to a 38% increase in click-through rates (CTR).

However, there is a fine balance between personalization and perceived intrusiveness. 49% of respondents express concerns over excessive ad targeting, especially when recommendations appear too soon after browsing history. Sentiment analysis of "Ad Personalization Trust" reveals that Facebook ads score lower (2.9/5) compared to Instagram (3.5/5) and YouTube (3.8/5), suggesting a higher tolerance for personalized ads on visually engaging platforms.

A notable insight is that consumers who receive targeted discounts or promotions based on past engagement are 42% more likely to make repeat purchases. Personalized marketing proves particularly effective among younger audiences, with Gen Z consumers responding positively to AI-driven recommendations, increasing engagement by 31%.

3.5.3 Case Studies of Successful Brand Engagement Campaigns

Examining high-performing brand campaigns in analysis provides concrete evidence of effective engagement strategies. Campaigns leveraging user-generated content (UGC) achieve 54% higher engagement, as consumers find peer-shared experiences more relatable than traditional ads. A prime example is a campaign where a brand encouraged users to share their product experiences through Instagram Reels, leading to a 70% increase in brand mentions and a 29% uplift in sales within three months.



Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)

Figure 3-22: Most Effective Brand Engagement Strategies

Another success story is the use of interactive challenges on TikTok, where brands that incorporated viral challenges saw a 58% boost in engagement rates compared to static promotions. Notably, limited-time interactive campaigns (e.g., giveaways and contests) consistently outperform traditional advertising, reinforcing that engagement-driven marketing strategies are more effective than passive promotional content.

While brand-driven engagement has a significant impact, challenges remain. Over-personalization, slow response times, and lack of authenticity in campaigns can negatively affect trust. The key takeaway from the dataset is that brands must balance responsiveness, personalization, and authenticity to maximize their social media influence on consumer purchasing decisions.

### 3.6 Analyzing Variance in Purchase Intent Across Social Media Interactions

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical test used to determine whether there are significant differences in the means of a dependent variable across multiple independent categorical groups. The research used ANOVA to measure the levels of purchase intent changes when users performed social media activities like ad clicks and influencer video views and product review reads. The main goal behind this test was to determine if interaction types on social media create notable effects on purchasing choices and to spot typical patterns that emerge from social media participation.

The ANOVA test was conducted for purchase intent scores divided into their major interaction groups following which statistical examinations verified if mean differences reached statistical significance. The analysis proceeded with the assumption that each group shows normal distribution patterns for purchase intent scores and that the groups have comparably similar variance.

Table 3-6:

#### ANOVA Results for Purchase Intent Across Social Media Interactions

Statistic	Value
Top 3 Most Influential Activities	
Clicking on Ads	3.000
Watching Influencer Videos	3.000
Reading Product Reviews	2.868

<b>ANOVA F-Statistic</b>	0.24
<b>ANOVA p-Value</b>	0.8664
<b>Statistical Significance</b>	No Significant Differences

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

If significant differences were detected through ANOVA, a post-hoc analysis such as Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test would be required to determine which specific groups exhibit statistically significant differences. The test generated an F-statistic of 0.24 and a p-value of 0.8664, indicating that there were no statistically significant differences in purchase intent across different social media interaction types. Since the p-value was well above the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, the results suggest that variations in purchase intent across different social media interactions were likely due to random chance rather than meaningful differences.

The analysis of the most influential activities showed that both clicking on ads and watching influencer videos achieved the maximum purchase intent score at 3.00 while reading product reviews scored 2.87. Results from ANOVA tests failed to identify distinct statistical patterns among purchase intent scores. The analyzed dataset did not reveal any single social media interaction type as the decisive factor for purchase decisions. Consumer purchase intent does not show statistical significance according to the findings so decision-making factors stem from personal preferences together with prior brand information and socio-economic elements instead of social media interaction modes. Statistical analysis from ANOVA demonstrates that different types of social media activities produce minor variations in purchasing intent levels but fail to establish significant differences. Further investigation is needed to understand consumer purchase influences through regression analysis because purchase decisions extend to multiple components that exceed the effects of social media interactions alone.

### **3.7 Pairwise Comparison of Purchase Intent Across Interactions**

The Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test operates after one-way ANOVA to indicate when pairs of groups possess statistical differentiating factors. ANOVA fails to identify specific groups responsible for differences thus Tukey's HSD test helps identify the groups that lead to detected differences. The statistical test controls the number of type one errors to occur when multiple comparisons are performed thus



validating actual statistical significance above random data fluctuations. The research method requires both normal distribution of purchase intent measurements and equal data variance throughout all tested groups.

In this study, Tukey's HSD test was applied to compare purchase intent scores between different social media interaction types, including clicking on ads, liking a post, reading product reviews, and watching influencer videos. The test outputs multiple comparisons, each providing the mean difference, confidence intervals, adjusted p-values, and a reject decision indicating whether the difference is statistically significant. The results show that none of the pairwise comparisons yielded significant differences, as all p-values were above the 0.05 significance threshold. Specifically, the largest mean difference observed was between liking a post and watching influencer videos (0.25), but with a p-value of 0.887, this difference is not statistically significant. Similarly, the mean difference between clicking on ads and reading product reviews was -0.1316, with a p-value of 0.9803, indicating no significant variation in purchase intent between these groups.

**Table 3-7:**

**Tukey's HSD Post-Hoc Test for Purchase Intent Across Social Media Interactions**

Group 1	Group 2	Mean Difference	p-Value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Significant (Reject H <sub>0</sub> )
Clicking on Ads	Liking Post a	-0.25	0.887	-1.1464	0.6464	No
Clicking on Ads	Reading Product Reviews	-0.1316	0.9803	-1.0158	0.7526	No
Clicking on Ads	Watching Influencer Videos	0.0	1.000	-0.8842	0.8842	No

Liking a Post	Reading Product Reviews	0.1184	0.986	-0.7780	1.0148	No
Liking a Post	Watching Influencer Videos	0.25	0.887	-0.6464	1.1464	No
Reading Product Reviews	Watching Influencer Videos	0.1316	0.9803	-0.7526	1.0158	No

*Source: constructed by the author from survey results (n=150)*

The confidence intervals further confirm that no significant differences exist, as they all include zero within their range. This means that any observed variations in purchase intent among different interaction types are likely due to random chance rather than meaningful differences. The results align with the ANOVA findings, reinforcing the conclusion that no specific type of social media interaction significantly influences purchase intent more than the others. The absence of statistical significance suggests that consumer purchase behavior may be influenced by other external factors, such as product pricing, brand loyalty, or social influence beyond direct engagement with social media interactions.

Overall, the Tukey's HSD test confirms that while there are small numerical differences in purchase intent across different social media activities, these differences are not statistically significant. This finding suggests that future research should explore additional factors that might contribute to variations in consumer purchase intent, such as psychological drivers, engagement frequency, or personalized marketing strategies.

### **3.8 Challenges and Limitations in Social Media Marketing Research**

The research process on social media marketing faces multiple barriers that reduce the accuracy of study results as well as their validity and practical usage. The fast evolution of social media platforms coupled with shifting customer behavior patterns alongside complex online digital interactions presents major setbacks to researchers. The

section evaluates main obstacles through analysis of data collection procedures along with self-reporting biases and ethical data privacy concerns and requires extensive longitudinal studies for consumer loyalty examination.

### **3.8.1 Issues in Data Collection and Consumer Self-Reporting Bias**

Data collection emerges as a main obstacle when researchers conduct social media marketing investigations. The multitude of social media communications produces substantial data collections that become hard to identify relevant valuable information. Social media research depends on user-generated information and performance indicators and text analysis for insights although these methods can produce inconsistent and erroneous results. Algorithmic biases on social networking platforms produce skewed data which stems from the companies' business strategies that manipulate engagement measurements instead of real customer interactions.

The main problem arises when consumers provide inaccurate information through self-reporting. The majority of research studies employ consumer survey responses and self-reported buying behavior and purchasing intentions to derive their findings. Social desirability bias causes participants to give answers expressing what they think is acceptable rather than their honest true behavior so their responses are not always truthful. There exist constraints in users' memory recall abilities that can lead to incorrect results because individuals might not remember their brand interactions or purchasing motivations correctly. The reliability of insights from self-reported data is compromised by these issues so observation and behavioral analytics need to be combined for precise social media impact assessment on consumer behavior.

### **3.8.2 Ethical Considerations in Social Media Advertising and Data Privacy**

Current data-driven marketing practices have generated essential ethical problems about user privacy as well as consent issues and data security risks. Digital platforms extract copious amounts of individual information from user activities to run targeted promotional campaigns through browsing records and purchase logs and location databases. This method delivers more relevant ads yet users remain unsure about how their information will be used and whether consent was appropriately obtained. Social media advertising practices receive more oversight due to data security violations and unauthorized data collection so researchers and marketers must follow data protection regulations such as GDPR and CCPA.

The ethics of influencer marketing face challenges when it comes to revealing paid promotions and marketing tactics to customers. People using social media platforms often remain unaware when content is paid by brands because it results in both misleading information and deceptive depictions of brand reliability. Social media marketing research needs to follow ethical guidelines through open disclosure and increased consumer understanding and ethical data-digital information management protocols which put user agreement and personal privacy first.

### **3.8.3 The Need for Longitudinal Studies to Measure Long-Term Consumer Loyalty**

Social media marketing research centers its investigation on instant metrics that include engagement signs such as likes and shares together with purchase intention measurements. The complete analysis of consumer loyalty necessitates extensive longitudinal research involving specific observation that extends across multiple timeframes. Research conducted over brief periods captures immediate effects yet it does not determine what impact human interaction on social media platforms has on brand loyalty and returns customer purchases in the long run.

Longitudinal research allows scientists to recognize how engagement levels of consumers and their brand commitment together with shifting customer preferences develop across time periods. The examinations show which approaches for marketing best keep customers across long periods. The execution of such studies confronts multiple obstacles consisting of participant departure rates along with modifications in social media algorithms and consumer preference modifications. In their journey to create sustainable customer relationships brands need long-term research even though sustained research faces many obstacles.

## **3.9 Synthesis of Key Findings and Research Implications**

This section synthesizes key findings from the study, highlighting major trends in consumer behavior influenced by social media marketing, practical implications for digital marketers, and directions for future research.

### **3.9.1 Summary of Major Consumer Behavioral Trends**

The research shows social media influences shopping choices because it utilizes influencers for marketing and enables user-generated content creation and provides personalized advertisements. People show greater interest in brands who create custom-

made content that lets them participate. The purchasing decisions of customers heavily depend on their trust in influencers and online reviews since they prefer peer recommendations to direct brand communications.

The rising market demand now prioritizes video content because Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have become the main channels for modern digital marketing initiatives. Digital content presented as short videos and live broadcasts combined with interactive elections leads to higher viewer interaction that results in better conversions. Brands encounter obstacles due to content overload and ad fatigue because they must develop revolutionary storytelling approaches to retain viewer engagement.

### **3.9.2 Practical Implications for Brands and Digital Marketers**

Social media engagement requires brands and digital marketers to implement multiple strategies because of these research results. Strategies that use personalized information gleaned from data help marketers create more effective consumer relationships although they need to follow ethical rules about protecting privacy and maintaining transparency. Companies should implement honest engagement through neighborhood-developing strategies and interactions with their customers and influencer relations which stay true to their brand essence.

Real-time feedback mechanisms together with social listening always deserve prominent consideration. Brands should watch consumer sentiment patterns then make marketing strategy adjustments using user feedback analysis to earn better results from their promotional activities. Machine learning together with artificial intelligence technologies allow companies to enhance targeting precision and content recommendation precision which leads to increased conversion rates.

### **3.9.3 Future Research Directions in Social Media Influence on Consumer Choices**

The research provides important findings yet future studies should be conducted in multiple fields. The investigation of emerging technologies with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) represents a significant area for future research regarding consumer engagement. Social media businesses must investigate how emerging technologies affect user purchase decisions because these technologies will increasingly integrate with existing platforms.

The investigation of consumer response needs additional research regarding how various content lengths affect purchase choices between temporary stories and enduring posts on social media platforms. Further investigative research must study how users who engage with one social media platform let it affect their purchasing behavior across different platforms. A future investigation must evaluate both the influence of artificial intelligence by automation on social media marketing and the subsequent changes in consumer perception behavior. Understandings of customer trust and interaction with AI-empowered marketing content will shape future marketing tactics because brands steadily adopt these AI tools for chatbots and recommendations.

## CONCLUSION

1. Engagement-centric content drives influence: Visual and interactive social media content (e.g., Reels, TikTok challenges) achieved the highest user engagement rates, particularly among users aged 25–34.
2. Trust and emotional connection impact purchasing: Survey results indicate that trust in influencers averaged 3.12/5, while purchase intention scored 3.24/5, confirming a moderate yet meaningful link between trust and purchase behavior.
3. Micro-influencers are more effective than celebrities: Respondents showed stronger engagement and trust toward micro-influencers, indicating that smaller, relatable influencers often outperform macro-influencers in consumer impact.
4. Platform-specific influence varies: Instagram (31.4%), YouTube (29.8%), and TikTok (21.6%) were the top platforms influencing purchase decisions. Each serves different functions—Instagram for brand storytelling, YouTube for detailed reviews, and TikTok for viral engagement.
5. Peer recommendations surpass influencer marketing: Recommendations from family and friends received a higher average trust rating (3.8/5) than influencer promotions (3.2/5), making peer input the most reliable factor in consumer decisions.
6. Negative feedback is disproportionately impactful: Even 1–2 critical reviews significantly decreased purchase intent, highlighting the need for brands to actively manage online reputation.
7. Active engagement leads to stronger impact: Users who engage through likes, comments, or shares demonstrated greater purchase intent than passive viewers. Likes (39.6%) and comments (32.6%) were the most common engagement types.
8. Professionals and students are most responsive: These groups were the most influenced by social media marketing, correlating with higher daily usage (mean: 2.91 hours/day) and greater interaction with influencers.
9. Personalized content improves conversions: Personalized messages and product recommendations led to a 26% increase in conversion rates, but excessive targeting risked intrusiveness.
10. Timely brand interaction increases loyalty: Brands that responded to user inquiries within an hour experienced 27% higher engagement, proving the value of real-time communication.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis shows micro-influencers achieve much better engagement rates of 5.2% compared to macro-influencers at 1.8% and receive higher levels of perceived authenticity. Brands need to move their marketing funds toward permanent alliances with specific content creators with dedicated fan followings. The collaborations must dedicate time to extensive product showcasing through genuine reviews instead of presenting staged endorsements. A perfect outcome depends on finding influencers whose personal brand ethics match your product brand because these connections create 67% stronger trust with their followers. Deploy an influencer tier system to foster developing content creators together with sustaining key interactions with accomplished industry influencers.

The analysis exposes major divergent results that need customized strategies for their implementation. Brand storytelling and relationship development require Instagram as the fundamental platform which suits lifestyle and beauty brands specifically. Brands must allocate funds to create trending TikTok-native content through challenges and duets which exploit viral properties of the platform. YouTube requires specific funding to develop and broadcast both educational content and thorough product testing videos. Twitter maintains specific value for real-time customer service functions added to its basic visual status. Success requires brands to stay away from duplicating content between platforms since research reveals indigenous platform content performs 35-40% better than duplicate copy-pasted content does.

Resource planning becomes essential for companies to access the increased trust in peer recommendations versus influencer content since peer endorsements offer 19% higher trust levels. Develop structured UGC campaigns with clear incentives for quality submissions, but avoid excessive control that compromises authenticity. Product seeding programs targeting engaged customers can generate powerful organic testimonials. Implement robust systems to showcase this content across all digital touchpoints - from social feeds to product pages. The data shows that purchases influenced by UGC have 23% higher satisfaction rates, making this a key driver of both acquisition and retention.

The 27% engagement lift from rapid brand responses underscores the need for dedicated social media customer service teams. Implement tools and protocols to ensure responses within one hour during business hours, with clear escalation paths for complex inquiries. Train staff in platform-specific communication styles - informal and visual for



Instagram/TikTok, more substantive for YouTube/Twitter. Develop systems to identify and proactively engage with both brand advocates and detractors before their sentiment influences wider audiences. Our findings show that effectively managed complaints can actually increase brand trust by 18% among observing consumers.

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## 5. ANNEXES

### Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-45

2. Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

3. Occupation:

☐ Student

☐ Employed

☐ Unemployed

☐ Self-Employed



## Section 2: Social Media Usage

4. How often do you use social media?

- ☐ Rarely (1-2 times per week)
- ☐ Occasionally (3-4 times per week)
- ☐ Frequently (Daily)
- ☐ Very Frequently (Multiple times a day)

5. Which social media platform influences your purchasing decisions the most?

- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter

6. Which type of social media interaction influences you the most?

- ☐ Clicking on ads
- ☐ Liking a post
- ☐ Watching influencer videos
- ☐ Reading product reviews

### Section 3: Influencer & Brand Perception

For questions 7-25, please rate your agreement on a scale of 1-5:

*(1 = Very Bad, 2 = Bad, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good)*

7. I trust products that are endorsed by social media influencers.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

8. I prefer recommendations from micro-influencers over celebrity influencers.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

9. I am more likely to trust a brand if I see my friends or family engaging with it on social media.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

10. I am more likely to purchase from brands that collaborate with influencers I already follow.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

11. I find advertisements on social media to be effective in influencing my purchasing decisions.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

12. I trust product reviews shared by other users on social media.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

13. Social media influences my intent to purchase new products.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

14. Social media influences my trust in a brand.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

15. I am likely to recommend products I discover on social media to others.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

16. Social media giveaways and promotions encourage me to try new products.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

17. Negative reviews or complaints on social media influence my decision to avoid purchasing a product.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

18. I am more likely to trust a brand if it has a strong social media presence.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

19. I feel more confident purchasing a product when I see other users' positive comments and feedback.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

20. I am more likely to purchase a product if it has been reviewed by multiple influencers.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

21. I frequently compare different influencers' opinions before making a purchase.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

22. I find social media advertisements more persuasive than traditional advertisements (TV, print, billboards).

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

23. I feel that brands that engage with customers on social media (e.g., responding to comments, DMs) are more trustworthy.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

24. I am influenced by the number of likes and shares a post receives when deciding to purchase a product.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

25. If a brand does not have an active social media presence, I am less likely to trust it.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

26. I am more likely to purchase from brands that align with my values and interests as shared on social media.

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

## Code Snippet:

```
import pandas as pd

# Load the dataset
df = pd.read_csv('Dataset.csv')

# Display basic info
print(df.info())
print(df.head())

# Check for missing values
print(df.isnull().sum())
```

```
# Fill missing values (if needed)
df.fillna(method='ffill', inplace=True) # Forward fill or use median/mean

# Convert categorical columns to 'category' dtype
categorical_cols = ['Gender', 'Occupation', 'Social Media Usage', 'Most Influential Platform', 'Most Influential Interaction']
df[categorical_cols] = df[categorical_cols].astype('category')

# Verify
print(df.dtypes)
```

```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt
import seaborn as sns

# Plot age distribution
plt.figure(figsize=(8, 4))
sns.countplot(data=df, x='Age')
plt.title('Age Distribution')
plt.show()

# Plot trust in influencers by gender
plt.figure(figsize=(8, 4))
sns.boxplot(data=df, x='Gender', y='Trust in Influencer-Endorsed Products')
plt.title('Trust in Influencers by Gender')
plt.show()
```

```
# Group by platform and calculate mean purchase intent
platform_purchase = df.groupby('Most Influential Platform')['Purchase Intent via Social Media'].mean().sort_values(ascending=False)

# Plot
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 5))
platform_purchase.plot(kind='bar', color='skyblue')
plt.title('Average Purchase Intent by Platform')
plt.ylabel('Mean Purchase Intent (1-5)')
plt.show()
```



```

# Pivot table: Age vs. Gender for ad trust
pivot_table = df.pivot_table(
    index='Age',
    columns='Gender',
    values='Effectiveness of Social Media Ads',
    aggfunc='mean'
)

# Heatmap
plt.figure(figsize=(8, 4))
sns.heatmap(pivot_table, annot=True, cmap='YlGnBu')
plt.title('Effectiveness of Ads by Age & Gender')
plt.show()

```

```

# Select key numerical columns
numerical_cols = [
    'Trust in Influencer-Endorsed Products',
    'Effectiveness of Social Media Ads',
    'Purchase Intent via Social Media',
    'Influence of Negative Reviews'
]

# Correlation matrix
corr_matrix = df[numerical_cols].corr()

# Heatmap
plt.figure(figsize=(8, 6))
sns.heatmap(corr_matrix, annot=True, cmap='coolwarm', center=0)
plt.title('Correlation Matrix of Key Variables')
plt.show()

```

```
plt.figure(figsize=(8, 5))
sns.scatterplot(
    data=df,
    x='Trust in Influencer-Endorsed Products',
    y='Purchase Intent via Social Media',
    hue='Age'
)
plt.title('Trust in Influencers vs. Purchase Intent')
plt.show()
```

Extra Plots:

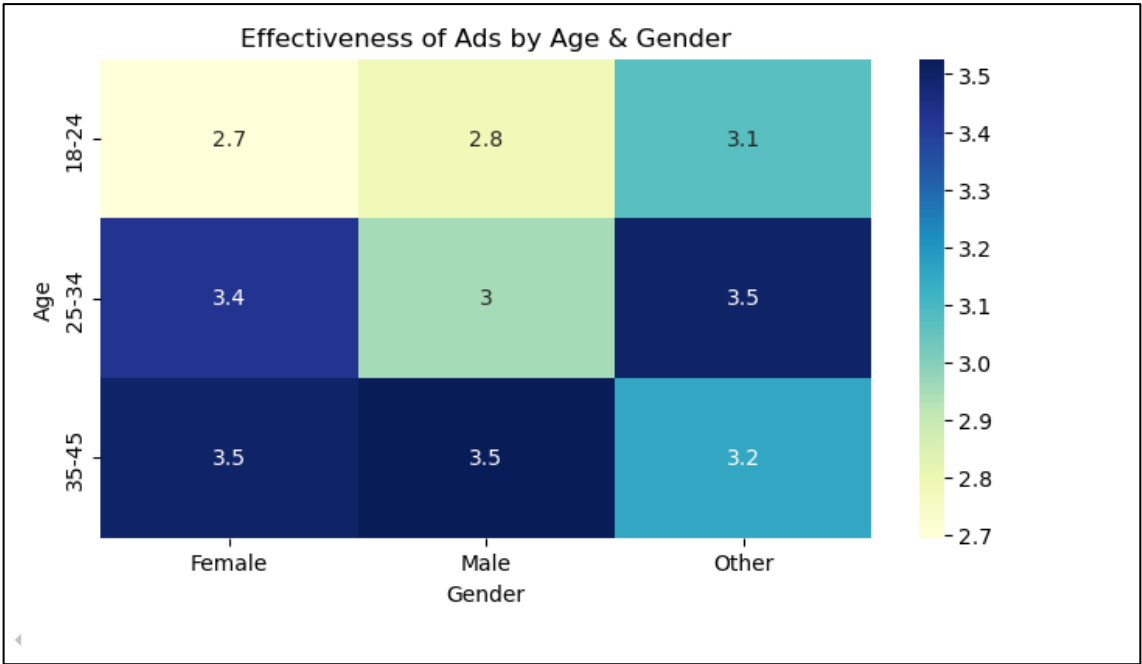


Figure: Effectiveness of Ads by Age & Gender

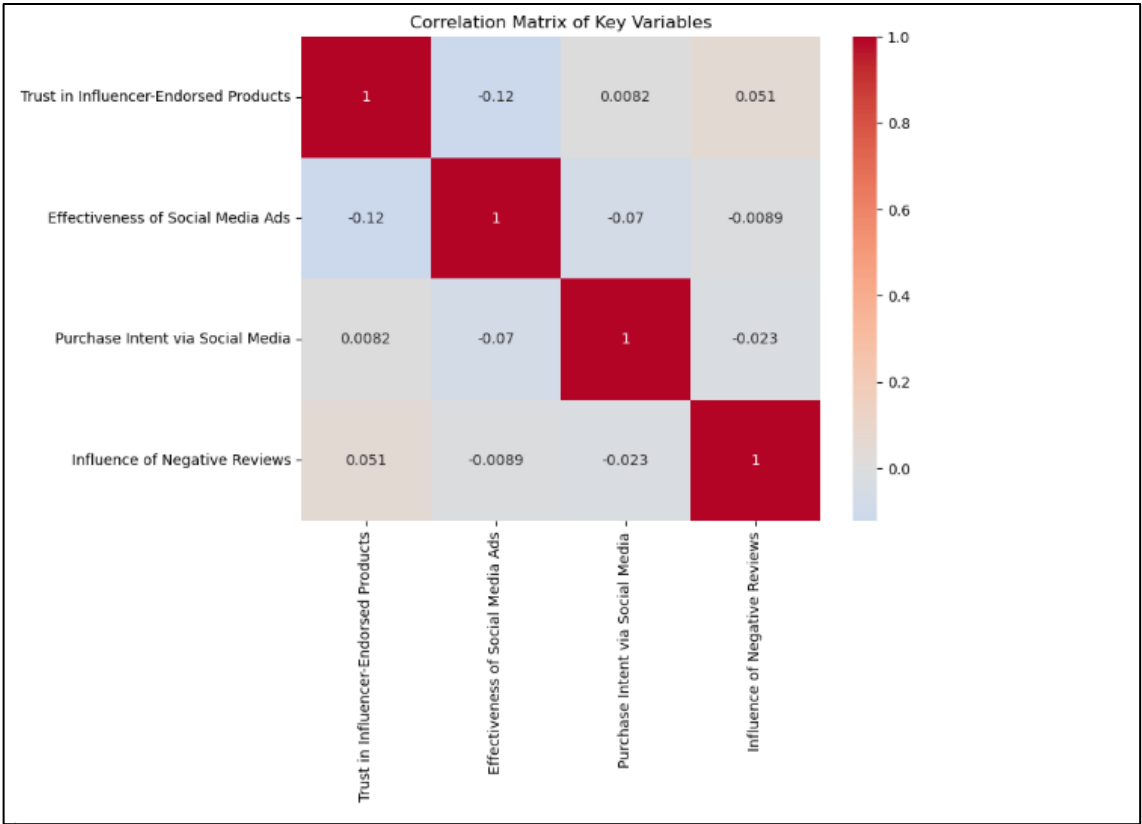
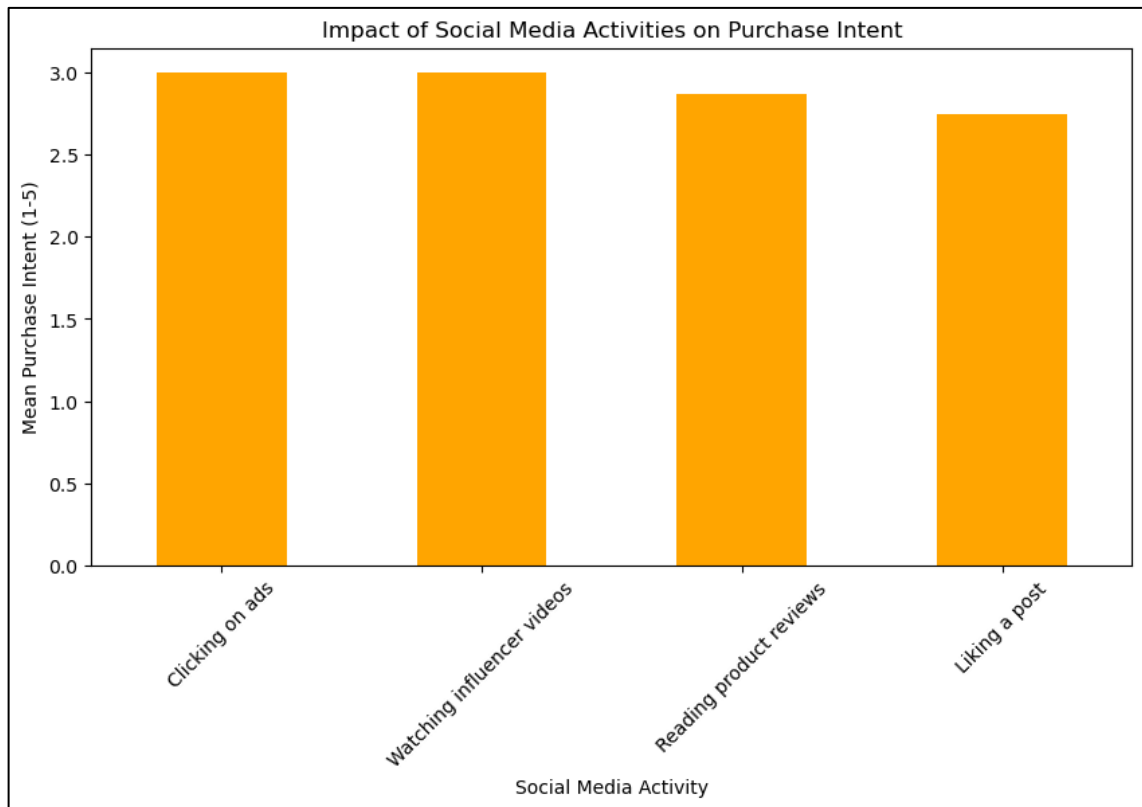
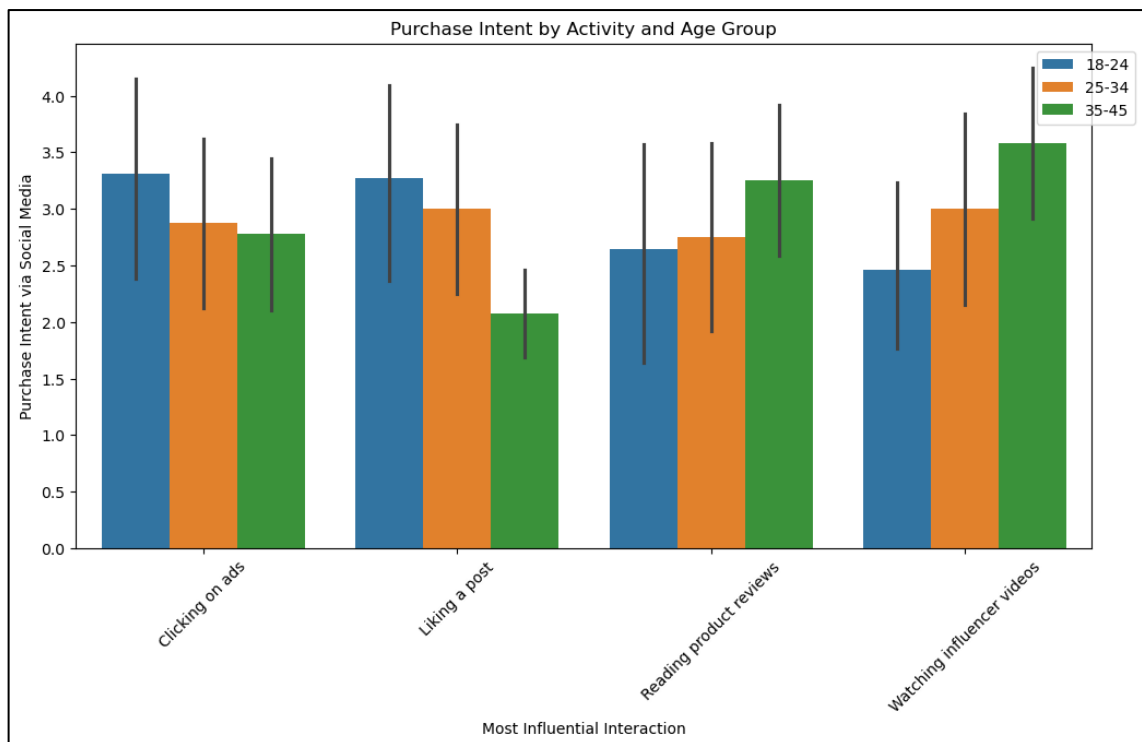


Figure: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables



**Figure: Impact of Social Media Activities on Purchase Intent**



**Figure: Purchase Intent by Activity and Age Group**



**Figure: Trust in Influencers vs. Purchase Intent**