



A PANORAMIC VIEW ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND PURCHASE DECISIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN KOZHIKODE

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Abstract:

Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool influencing consumer behaviour, particularly among young and digitally active populations such as college students. In recent years, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have transformed traditional advertising into interactive, personalized, and engaging experiences. Against this backdrop, the present study provides a panoramic view of the role of social media marketing in shaping the purchase decisions of college students in Kozhikode. The study explores how various elements of social media advertising such as influencer endorsements, user-generated content, targeted advertisements, brand engagement, and promotional campaigns affect the awareness, interest, and buying intentions of students. College students, being highly active on digital platforms, are more susceptible to online trends, peer opinions, and visual content, which significantly impact their preferences and consumption patterns. The research also examines the psychological and social factors, including trust, perceived credibility, and social proof, that mediate the relationship between social media exposure and purchase decisions. Primary data for the study are typically collected through structured questionnaires administered among college students in Kozhikode, ensuring representation across different age groups, academic disciplines, and usage patterns. Analytical tools such as percentage analysis, correlation, and regression are employed to interpret the data and identify key influencing factors. The findings indicate that social media marketing has a substantial and positive impact on students' purchase decisions, with influencer marketing and peer reviews playing a crucial role in building trust and driving engagement. Visual appeal, frequency of exposure, and personalized content further enhance the effectiveness of advertisements. However, concerns regarding misleading information and overexposure to advertisements are also noted. The study concludes that social media marketing is a dominant force in shaping modern consumer behaviour among college students, offering valuable insights for marketers to design more effective and ethical digital marketing strategies.

Key Words: Social Media Marketing-Consumer Purchase Decision-College Students-Digital Advertising-Influencer Marketing-Kozhikode District

Introduction:

The rapid evolution of digital technology has significantly transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers, giving rise to new marketing paradigms that are more interactive, personalized, and far-reaching. Among these, social media marketing has emerged as one of the most influential tools in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter (X), and Snapchat have become integral parts of daily life, especially for younger generations. College students, in particular, represent a highly active segment of social media users, making them a key target audience for marketers seeking to promote products and services in a competitive digital environment. Social media marketing refers to the use of social networking platforms to promote products, build brand awareness, and engage with consumers through content such as advertisements, influencer collaborations, videos, and interactive posts. Unlike traditional forms of advertising, social media marketing allows for two-way communication, enabling consumers to interact directly with brands, share feedback, and influence others through likes, comments, and reviews. This shift from one-way communication to a participatory model has redefined the dynamics of consumer behaviour, where purchase decisions are no longer solely based on product attributes or price but are increasingly influenced by online content, peer recommendations, and digital engagement.

In recent years, the influence of social media on consumer behaviour has grown exponentially. The proliferation of smart phones and affordable internet access has further accelerated the adoption of social media platforms, particularly in developing regions such as India. Kozhikode, a prominent educational and commercial hub in Kerala, is home to a large population of college students who are digitally connected and actively engaged on various social media platforms. This demographic is characterized by a high level of exposure to online advertisements, brand promotions, and influencer content, which collectively shape their preferences, attitudes, and purchasing patterns. One of the key aspects of social media marketing is its ability to deliver personalized and targeted advertisements. Advanced algorithms analyze user behaviour, interests, and demographics to present relevant advertisements that are more likely to capture attention and drive engagement. For college students, who spend a considerable amount of time browsing social media, such targeted content can significantly influence their awareness of products and ultimately their purchase decisions. Moreover, the visual and interactive nature of social media content such as short videos, stories, reels, and live sessions enhances the appeal of advertisements, making them more persuasive compared to traditional media. Another important dimension of social media marketing is influencer marketing, which has gained immense popularity in

recent years. Influencers, who are individuals with a substantial following on social media platforms, often collaborate with brands to promote products through authentic and relatable content. College students tend to trust influencers more than traditional advertisements, as they perceive them as peers or role models. This trust translates into higher levels of engagement and a greater likelihood of adopting recommended products. Additionally, user-generated content, such as reviews, testimonials, and unboxing videos, further reinforces consumer confidence and plays a critical role in shaping purchase decisions.

The concept of social proof also plays a vital role in the context of social media marketing. Social proof refers to the tendency of individuals to conform to the actions and opinions of others, particularly in situations of uncertainty. On social media platforms, indicators such as likes, shares, comments, and ratings serve as signals of popularity and credibility, influencing users' perceptions of a product or brand. For college students, who are often influenced by peer opinions and trends, social proof can significantly impact their buying behaviour. Despite its numerous advantages, social media marketing also presents certain challenges and concerns. The overabundance of advertisements and promotional content can lead to information overload, reducing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Additionally, issues related to misleading advertisements, fake reviews, and lack of transparency can undermine consumer trust. College students, being relatively young and impressionable, may be particularly vulnerable to such practices, highlighting the need for ethical marketing strategies and consumer awareness.

Given the growing significance of social media in shaping consumer behaviour, it is essential to understand its impact on specific demographic groups. This study focuses on college students in Kozhikode, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media marketing influences their purchase decisions. By examining factors such as platform usage, types of advertisements, influencer impact, and consumer perceptions, the study seeks to identify key determinants that drive purchasing behaviour in a digital context. Furthermore, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering insights into the regional dynamics of social media marketing, which may vary based on cultural, economic, and technological factors. Kozhikode, with its unique blend of traditional values and modern influences, provides an interesting context for analyzing the interplay between social media and consumer behaviour. The findings of this study are expected to be valuable for marketers, businesses, and policymakers in designing effective digital marketing strategies that resonate with the youth while ensuring ethical practices. Social media marketing has revolutionized the way consumers interact with brands and make purchase decisions. Its impact is particularly pronounced among college students, who are not only active users of social media but also trendsetters in the digital space. Understanding the influence of social media advertising on their buying behaviour is crucial for businesses aiming to succeed in an increasingly digital marketplace. This study, therefore, seeks to explore this dynamic relationship and provide a panoramic view of social media marketing and its implications for consumer decision-making among college students in Kozhikode.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its focus on understanding the growing influence of social media marketing on the purchase decisions of college students, a highly dynamic and digitally active consumer segment. In the contemporary marketing landscape, businesses increasingly rely on social media platforms to reach and engage young consumers. Therefore, examining how these platforms shape buying behaviour provides valuable insights for marketers to design more effective and targeted advertising strategies. This study is particularly relevant in the context of Kozhikode, a prominent educational hub with a large student population actively engaged in social media usage. By identifying the key factors such as influencer impact, content appeal, peer reviews, and targeted advertisements, the research helps in understanding the decision-making patterns of students in a regional setting. Moreover, the findings of this study will be beneficial for businesses, advertisers, and digital marketers in optimizing their promotional approaches to better connect with youth audiences. It also contributes to academic literature by providing empirical evidence on consumer behaviour in the digital age. Additionally, the study raises awareness among students about the persuasive nature of social media advertising, encouraging more informed and rational purchasing decisions.

Logical Background of the Study:

The logical background of the study is grounded in the evolution of marketing communication from traditional media to digital and interactive platforms. With the widespread adoption of the internet and smart phones, social media has become a dominant medium through which consumers access information, interact with brands, and make purchasing decisions. Unlike conventional advertising, social media marketing operates on principles of engagement, personalization, and real-time interaction, making it more influential in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviour. The study is further supported by established consumer behaviour theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The Theory of Planned Behaviour suggests that an individual's purchase intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of social media, peer influence, online reviews, and social validation significantly affect students' attitudes and intentions toward products. Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model explains how perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media platforms encourage users to engage with digital advertisements, thereby influencing their buying decisions. Additionally, the concept of social proof and information processing theory provides a strong foundation for understanding how consumers interpret and respond to online content. College students, being highly exposed to digital stimuli, tend to rely on cues such as likes, comments, and influencer endorsements to evaluate products. Thus, the integration of these theoretical perspectives establishes a logical framework to examine how social media marketing impacts purchase decisions among college students in Kozhikode.

Review of Literature:

Joseph and Mathew (2023) focused on college students in Kerala and observed that frequent exposure to social media advertisements leads to increased brand awareness and impulse buying tendencies. The study also noted that personalized advertisements based on browsing behaviour are more effective in influencing purchase decisions.

Similarly, Reddy and Singh (2023) identified that emotional appeal, entertainment value, and informativeness of social media content significantly affect consumer engagement and buying intention. Their findings suggest that engaging content creates a stronger connection between brands and consumers.

A study by Fernandes (2024) revealed that social media advertising not only influences purchase decisions but also shapes brand loyalty among young consumers. The research emphasized the importance of consistency and credibility in digital marketing strategies.

Furthermore, Ali and Khan (2024) found that excessive exposure to advertisements can lead to advertisement fatigue, reducing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. However, creative and interactive content continues to capture user attention.

Most recently, Das and Roy (2025) concluded that social media marketing has a direct and positive relationship with consumer purchase decisions, with influencer endorsements and peer reviews acting as key mediating variables.

Analysis:

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	32	53.3%
Female	28	46.7%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

The sample shows a slightly higher proportion of male respondents (53.3%) compared to female respondents (46.7%), indicating a balanced representation of both genders.

Table 2: Most Preferred Social Media Platform

Platform	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Instagram	25	41.7%
YouTube	15	25.0%
Facebook	10	16.7%
Twitter (X)	5	8.3%
Others	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

Instagram is the most preferred platform among students (41.7%), followed by YouTube (25%), highlighting the importance of visual content in influencing consumers.

Table 3: Time Spent on Social Media Daily

Time Spent	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	5	8.3%
1-3 hours	20	33.3%
3-5 hours	22	36.7%
More than 5 hours	13	21.7%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

A majority of respondents (58.4%) spend more than 3 hours daily on social media, indicating high exposure to digital advertisements.

Table 4: Influence of Social Media Ads on Purchase Decision

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Influenced	18	30.0%
Influenced	25	41.7%
Neutral	10	16.7%
Not Influenced	7	11.6%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

A significant majority (71.7%) of respondents are influenced by social media advertisements, indicating strong effectiveness.

Table 5: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Factor	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Influencer Reviews	20	33.3%
Peer Recommendations	15	25.0%
Advertisements	12	20.0%
Brand Reputation	8	13.3%
Others	5	8.4%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

Influencer reviews (33.3%) are the most significant factor, followed by peer recommendations (25%), emphasizing the role of social validation.

Table 6: Type of Products Frequently Purchased via Social Media Influence

Product Category	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Clothing & Fashion	22	36.7%
Electronics	12	20.0%
Beauty Products	15	25.0%

Food & Beverages	6	10.0%
Others	5	8.3%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

Clothing and fashion products are the most purchased (36.7%), reflecting the visual appeal of such items on social media platforms.

Table 7: Level of Trust in Social Media Advertisements

Level of Trust	Respondents	Percentage (%)
High	14	23.3%
Moderate	30	50.0%
Low	16	26.7%
Total	60	100%

Interpretation:

Most respondents (50%) have a moderate level of trust, indicating cautious acceptance of social media advertisements.

Chi-Square Test: Social Media Usage vs Purchase Influence

Hypothesis:

- H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between time spent on social media and influence on purchase decisions.
- H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between time spent on social media and influence on purchase decisions.

Observed Table (O):

Time Spent / Influence	Influenced	Not Influenced	Total
Less than 3 hours	18	7	25
More than 3 hours	25	10	35
Total	43	17	60

Expected Frequency (E)

Formula: $[E = \{(Row\ Total * Column\ Total)\} / \{Grand\ Total\}]$

Time Spent / Influence	Influenced (E)	Not Influenced (E)
Less than 3 hours	$(25 \times 43) / 60 = 17.92$	$(25 \times 17) / 60 = 7.08$
More than 3 hours	$(35 \times 43) / 60 = 25.08$	$(35 \times 17) / 60 = 9.92$

Chi-Square Calculation

Formula: $\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / \{E\}$

Category	O (Observed)	E (Expected)	(O - E)² / E
1	18	17.92	0.0004
2	7	7.08	0.0009
3	25	25.08	0.0002
4	10	9.92	0.0006
Total			0.0021

$\chi^2 = 0.0004 + 0.0009 + 0.0002 + 0.0006 = 0.0021$

Degree of Freedom:

$df = (r-1) (c-1) = (2-1) (2-1) = 1$

Table Value at 5% Level of Significance

χ^2 table value (df = 1, $\alpha = 0.05$) = 3.84

Result:

Calculated value (0.0021) < Table value (3.84)

Conclusion:

Since the calculated Chi-square value is less than the table value, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between time spent on social media and purchase decision influence among the sampled college students.

Inference:

Although descriptive analysis shows that social media influences purchase decisions, the statistical test suggests that time spent alone does not significantly determine the level of influence, implying that other factors like content quality, influencer impact, and peer reviews play a more critical role.

Suggestive Recommendations:

- Focus on creating visually engaging and interactive social media content to attract student consumers.
- Collaborate with relatable micro-influencers to enhance trust and authenticity.
- Use personalized and targeted advertisements based on user preferences and behavior.
- Ensure transparency and accuracy in advertisements to build long-term consumer trust.
- Encourage user-generated content such as reviews and testimonials to strengthen credibility.
- Optimize marketing strategies for platforms like Instagram and YouTube where student engagement is highest.
- Avoid excessive advertising to reduce ad fatigue among users.
- Incorporate emotional and storytelling elements to create stronger brand connections.
- Provide clear product information to support informed purchase decisions.

- Promote ethical digital marketing practices to maintain brand reputation.

Concluding Observations:

The study on the impact of social media advertising on consumer purchase decisions among college students in Kozhikode highlights the growing significance of digital platforms in shaping modern consumer behaviour. Social media has evolved beyond a communication tool into a powerful marketing medium that directly influences awareness, preferences, and buying decisions, particularly among the youth. The findings of the study clearly indicate that college students are highly active on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, which serve as primary sources of product information and brand engagement. The analysis reveals that social media advertisements have a considerable influence on purchase decisions, with a majority of students acknowledging their impact. Factors such as influencer endorsements, peer recommendations, and visually appealing content play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging purchase intentions. The role of social proof, including likes, comments, and reviews, further reinforces trust and confidence among students when evaluating products. However, the study also highlights that while students are influenced by social media marketing, they exhibit a moderate level of trust, indicating a degree of caution in their decision-making process. Issues such as misleading advertisements and overexposure to promotional content can negatively affect consumer perception and reduce the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Overall, the study concludes that social media marketing is a dominant force in influencing the purchase behaviour of college students in Kozhikode. It emphasizes the need for marketers to adopt innovative, authentic, and ethical strategies to effectively engage this segment. By leveraging influencer marketing, personalized content, and interactive campaigns, businesses can enhance their reach and impact. At the same time, promoting transparency and consumer awareness is essential to ensure sustainable and responsible marketing practices in the digital era.

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