



# Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing on Youth Buying Decision

*A Primary Research Study*

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## Abstract

Social media has emerged as one of the most powerful communication and marketing tools in the modern digital era. Youth represent the most active and influential demographic on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Snapchat. This study investigates the effectiveness of social media marketing on the buying decisions of young consumers. Using a descriptive research design and a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents, the study finds that social media advertisements, influencer promotions, product reviews, and discount campaigns exert a significant and measurable influence on youth purchasing behavior. The results affirm all four hypotheses, confirming that social media marketing is an effective strategy for businesses targeting the youth segment. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for marketers and identifies avenues for future research.

*Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Youth Buying Decision, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketing, eWOM*

## 1. Introduction

The rapid proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity has fundamentally altered the landscape of modern marketing. Traditional channels such as television, print, and radio are increasingly being supplemented—and in many cases supplanted—by digital platforms that offer real-time, interactive, and highly targeted communication. Among these digital channels, social media stands out as the most transformative force in shaping consumer attitudes and behavior, particularly among the youth.

Social media platforms including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat have become integral to the daily routines of young people. Young consumers use these platforms not merely for entertainment and social



interaction but also as primary sources of product discovery, information gathering, and purchase inspiration. Businesses have recognized this shift and are allocating increasingly large shares of their marketing budgets to social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and sponsored content.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital marketing, a gap exists in research that specifically and quantitatively examines the effectiveness of social media marketing on youth buying decisions in the Indian context, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. This study addresses that gap by collecting primary data from 100 youth respondents and analyzing the influence of key social media marketing components—advertisements, influencer endorsements, product reviews, and promotional offers—on their purchasing behavior.

## 1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the influence of social media platforms on the buying behavior of youth consumers.
- To analyze the effectiveness of social media advertisements in stimulating purchase decisions.
- To evaluate the role of influencer marketing and online product reviews in shaping consumer perceptions.
- To identify the most-used social media platforms and content types among youth for product discovery.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for businesses targeting the youth demographic.

## 2. Review of Literature

A substantial body of scholarship has examined the intersection of social media, digital marketing, and consumer behavior. The foundational work of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) established that social media platforms provide businesses with novel mechanisms for two-way consumer communication and that user-generated content—such as reviews and recommendations—substantially influences purchasing behavior. Their framework remains the cornerstone of social media marketing theory.

Philip Kotler (2017) extended this line of inquiry in the context of Marketing 4.0, observing that consumers in the digital age are no longer passive receivers of marketing messages. Instead, they actively participate in creating and disseminating brand narratives, thereby amplifying the reach and credibility of peer recommendations over traditional advertising.

Hutter et al. (2013) demonstrated that interactive and visually appealing social media content generates significantly higher user engagement, which in turn translates to elevated purchase intentions. Duffett (2015) specifically studied youth consumers and found that this demographic is disproportionately responsive to social media advertisements, influencer promotions, and brand-sponsored content.

In the influencer marketing domain, Misron (2024) found that Generation Z perceives social media influencers as more trustworthy and relatable than conventional celebrities, and that the authenticity and ethical conduct of an influencer are the primary determinants of their persuasive impact on Gen Z purchase decisions. Similarly, Nursansiwati (2024) identified influencer credibility, content type, platform strategy, and follower engagement as the four key factors mediating social media influence on consumer behavior.

Within the Indian context, Siddharth Nair and Dr. B. Mohan Kumar both highlighted that micro- and nano-influencers are gaining traction due to their perceived authenticity and closer community relationships, making them especially effective for youth-targeted marketing in regional markets. Richika Kedia's study in Guwahati found that 91% of student respondents follow influencers, with the influencer's expertise being the single most influential factor on purchase decisions.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in three theoretical perspectives. First, the Consumer Decision-Making Model (Kotler, 2017) posits that purchasing behavior unfolds across five stages—need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation—with social media playing an active role at every stage. Second, the Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) theory (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) explains



how online reviews and peer recommendations disseminated via social media influence purchase intentions. Third, Social Influence Theory holds that individuals calibrate their attitudes and behaviors in line with the opinions of relevant reference groups, including online communities and influencers.

## 2.2 Research Gap

Most existing studies examine the general relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior without isolating the specific mechanisms that drive youth purchasing decisions in smaller Indian cities. Furthermore, limited empirical work exists on the relative effectiveness of influencer marketing versus traditional digital advertising within this demographic. The present study addresses both gaps through primary data collection.

## 3. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to 100 youth respondents using convenience sampling. Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and digital marketing industry reports. The study variables are operationalized as follows:

**Independent Variable – Social Media Marketing:** encompasses social media advertisements, influencer marketing, online product reviews, and brand promotions.

**Dependent Variable – Youth Buying Decision:** refers to the purchase intentions and actual purchasing behavior of youth consumers.

*Table 1: Research Design Summary*

Parameter	Details
Research Design	Descriptive
Data Type	Primary & Secondary
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling (Non-Probability)
Sample Size	100 Respondents
Target Population	Youth (18–26 years) who actively use social media
Data Collection Tool	Structured Questionnaire (20 items)

### 3.1 Hypotheses

- H1: Social media marketing has a significant influence on the buying decisions of youth.
- H2: Social media advertisements significantly affect the purchase intention of youth consumers.
- H3: Influencer marketing on social media has a positive impact on youth buying behaviour.
- H4: Product reviews, ratings, and promotional offers on social media influence youth purchasing decisions.

## 4. Data Analysis and Key Findings

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of respondents. The sample comprised 52% female and 48% male respondents. The dominant age cohort was 21–23 years (45%), consistent with peak social media engagement. Students constituted 62% of the sample, and 40% of respondents reported a monthly income below ₹10,000, making price-sensitive promotional strategies particularly relevant.



**Table 2: Demographic Profile**

Category	Sub-Group	Percentage
Gender	Female	52%
	Male	48%
Age Group	18–20 years	30%
	21–23 years (majority)	45%
	24–26 years	18%
	Above 26 years	7%
Occupation	Student	62%
	Working Professional	20%
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	40%
	₹10,000–₹20,000	32%

**Table 3: Key Marketing Influence Findings**

Indicator	Yes / Agree	No / Disagree
Use social media regularly	92%	8%
Have seen ads on social media	95%	5%
Ads attract attention	68%	32%
Purchased after seeing social media ad	65%	35%
Follow brands on social media	70%	30%
Influenced by influencers (Yes + Sometimes)	80%	20%
Check product reviews before buying	75%	25%
Discounts influence purchase	72%	28%
Social media increases brand awareness	80%	20%
Rate social media marketing as effective	72%	28%
Overall: High influence on buying decision	55%	—

Source: Primary survey data, n = 100.

#### 4.1 Platform Preference

Instagram emerged as the most popular platform (45%), followed by YouTube (30%), Facebook (15%), and Snapchat (10%). The dominance of Instagram and YouTube underscores the primacy of visual and video-based content in youth marketing. Ninety percent of respondents spend one or more hours daily on social media, ensuring substantial exposure to sponsored content.



## 4.2 Hypothesis Testing Results

All four hypotheses are accepted on the basis of the survey findings:

- H1 ACCEPTED: 55% report high influence and 30% report moderate influence of social media on their buying decisions; H0 rejected.
- H2 ACCEPTED: 65% have purchased a product directly after seeing a social media advertisement; H0 rejected.
- H3 ACCEPTED: 80% are influenced by influencers at least sometimes, confirming the persuasive power of influencer marketing; H0 rejected.
- H4 ACCEPTED: 75% check reviews before purchasing and 72% are motivated by promotional discounts; H0 rejected.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with and extend the existing literature. The confirmation that 65% of respondents made a purchase after seeing a social media advertisement demonstrates that the platform's commercial influence extends well beyond mere awareness generation into actual transactional behavior. This aligns with Hutter et al.'s (2013) finding that high-engagement content translates into elevated purchase intentions.

The strong influence of influencers (80% at least sometimes) validates Misron's (2024) and Nursansiwi's (2024) findings regarding Gen Z's reliance on perceived authentic voices over traditional advertising. The slightly lower rate of ad trust (55%) relative to influencer impact (80%) reflects a broader shift in consumer skepticism toward corporate advertising and toward peer and quasi-peer recommendation models.

The high incidence of pre-purchase review checking (75%) underscores the central role of electronic word-of-mouth in the consumer decision-making process. This is particularly noteworthy because it suggests that social media platforms function not just as advertising channels but as research and validation environments in which young consumers verify purchase decisions before committing.

The finding that 40% of respondents earn below ₹10,000 monthly while 72% are motivated by discounts and promotional offers highlights the price sensitivity of the youth segment and the strategic importance of promotional pricing in social media campaigns targeting this group.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are offered for businesses and marketing practitioners:

- Prioritize visual and video content on Instagram and YouTube, which dominate youth platform usage. Short-form video content (Reels, YouTube Shorts) should be central to digital marketing strategies.
- Invest in micro- and nano-influencer partnerships who demonstrate authenticity and genuine audience engagement, as these are more persuasive than celebrity endorsements for this demographic.
- Encourage and actively manage user-generated content and product reviews, as 75% of youth consult reviews before purchasing. A strong review ecosystem directly influences conversion rates.
- Design targeted promotional campaigns with discounts, cashback offers, and limited-time deals, given that 72% of price-sensitive youth respondents cite offers as a key purchasing trigger.
- Invest in transparency and brand credibility to convert the 45% of respondents who currently do not trust social media ads, potentially through clear sponsorship disclosures and authentic storytelling.
- Leverage data analytics and social listening tools to track consumer sentiment, identify trending products, and personalize advertising content to improve relevance and engagement.



## 7. Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence that social media marketing is a highly effective strategy for influencing the buying decisions of young consumers. Across all four hypotheses, the data confirms that social media advertisements, influencer endorsements, online reviews, and promotional offers collectively exert a significant and positive influence on youth purchase behavior.

Instagram and YouTube stand out as the dominant platforms for youth engagement, and the high daily time spent on social media ensures consistent exposure to marketing communications. The study's findings are particularly relevant for businesses operating in smaller Indian cities, where social media has become the primary window through which young consumers discover, evaluate, and ultimately purchase products.

Future research should expand the sample size and geographic scope, explore emerging platforms such as LinkedIn and Pinterest, and investigate the moderating role of income, education, and cultural context on social media marketing effectiveness. Longitudinal studies examining how social media influence evolves with changing platform trends would also be of significant academic and practical value.

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