

The Role of Social Media Advertising in Shaping Consumer Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to ascertain the level of influence of advertising on the purchase decision of social media users in the Chennai metropolitan area. The sample size was calculated and a total of 151 respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The data were collected using a questionnaire comprising multiple-choice questions and statements to be rated on a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis involved percentage calculation, chi-square, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression analysis. This study found out that 67% of the respondents purchase products online after seeing an advertisement on social media, whereas 70% like to read reviews before buying merchandise. Moreover, 35% of the respondents identified brand image as the vital component in buying decisions, and 32% selected product quality as the essential element. In addition, 36% of the respondents said that they are influenced by influencer promotions to purchase products. The overall mean score for the respondents' perception about advertisement was 2.79 on a five-point Likert scale, whereas respondents' attitude towards the purchase decision, was 2.99. The overall perception about advertisement significantly predicted the frequency of purchases, $\chi^2(4)=11.55$, $p=.021$, and was moderately correlated with the purchase decision ($r=.585$, $p<.001$). Similarly, a simple linear regression analysis demonstrated that advertising perception significantly predicted the impact on purchase decisions as described by a 34.2% variance ($R\text{-squared}=.342$, $p<.001$). The study found out that the influence of advertisement on purchase decisions was moderate. However, the study recommends that social media marketers should try to make advertisements catchy and engaging by considering customers' preferences and utilizing testimonial ads.

Keywords: Social media advertising; consumer purchase decisions; influencer marketing; consumer behaviour; Chennai.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized the way organizations communicate with customers and how customers seek, assess and purchase products. Social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn have become crucial sources of advertising with a considerable audience. Advertisements can come in various forms, ranging from image ads to video content, influencer marketing, consumer reviews and special offers. Each advertisement type has different effects based on its appeal, content, brand image, influencer position, personalization, and many other factors. Understanding what exactly influences the consumer in the context of social media can help companies turn their social media content into successful marketing campaigns that build trust and attract customers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the reviewed articles, consumers are now increasingly relying on word-of-mouth information and are less susceptible to traditional forms of marketing communication (Mangold & Faulds; Erkan & Evans; Chu & Kim). At the same time, social media advertising has been found to have a considerable effect on the target audience, depending on the consumer's age, the content of the ad, and the platform used (Duffett; Voorveld, Araujo, Bernritter & Rietberg). For example, informative and entertaining content tends to have a more significant effect on the consumer (Dehghani & Tumer; Alalwan; Godey et al.; Yadav & Rahman), while individualization of the advertisement increases purchase intention due to the perceived relevance of the ad (Lee & Hong). Moreover, engagement with the brand's content can increase brand awareness and purchase intention (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Fuller), and the perceived credibility and expertise of an influencer has a substantial effect on the advertising campaign (Belanche, Cenfor & Perez-Rueda). Other reviewed articles and books also highlight the importance of social influence, engagement, and trust in the context of influencing consumer behavior and turning them into brand advocates (Solomon; Kotler & Keller).

Based on the research and published works on the topic, it can be concluded that social media advertising has a considerable effect on the consumer. The current research aims to explore the correlation between perceived advertisements and the intention to purchase among social media users in one regional market. Unlike previous studies mentioned in the reviewed articles, this research analyzes the impact of advertisements within one local market and uses the AIDA model (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action) as a basis for investigation. Therefore, the current study is descriptive and focuses on the general perception of advertising among local consumers.

Objectives of The Study

The study aimed to analyze consumer usage patterns of social media platforms and their perception of the same; identify factors, such as influencer marketing, product reviews, discounts and personalization, that influence purchase decisions; test the relationship between advertising perception and purchase decision influence; and suggest measures for improving the effectiveness of social media advertising.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and sample. A descriptive empirical design was used with primary data being collected from 151 social media users in mainly Chennai metropolitan region and its surrounding areas between 6 July - 3 August 2026. Convenience sampling was carried out by contacting people who were easily available and willing to participate through online distribution of the questionnaire. The findings should therefore be read with the understanding that the respondents described are not necessarily representative of all social media users.

Instrument and analysis. The data were collected using a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms) that had three sections: those involving demographic details; statements and categorical questions on social media usage, advertisement perception and purchase decision influence, which were mainly measured using a five-point Likert scale; and open-ended questions on suggestions. Statements related to advertising perception were averaged to give an indication of discovery, usefulness, attractiveness, creativity and brand awareness, while those associated with purchase decision influence were also averaged to reflect trust, reviews, influencer marketing, comparison, discounts, personalization and time-saving. The study used percentage analysis for a summary of responses received, chi-square analysis to establish associations, Pearson correlation to determine relationship strength and finally a simple linear regression to estimate the predictive association of advertising perception with purchase decision influence. The level of significance was evaluated at the .05 level and secondary data were mainly obtained from textbooks, journals and online databases.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study contained 151 respondents. The biggest amount of respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35, which comprised 26%. The pool of participants consisted of 44% females and 18% preferred not to disclose their gender. Employees and business owners comprised each 35%, and 34% of respondents got a salary between Rs. 50,000-1,00,000.

Variable	Category	Respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 18 years	28	19%
	18-25 years	33	22%
	26-35 years	39	26%
	36-45 years	25	17%
	Above 45 years	26	17%
Gender	Male	58	38%
	Female	66	44%
	Prefer not to say	27	18%
Occupation	Student	28	19%
	Employee	53	35%
	Business	53	35%
	Other	17	11%
Monthly income	Below Rs. 20,000	34	23%
	Rs. 20,000-50,000	47	31%
	Rs. 50,000-1,00,000	52	34%
	Above Rs. 1,00,000	18	12%

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n=151).

Social Media Usage and Advertisement Exposure

YouTube (24%) and Facebook (21%) were the most popular platforms, and 71% of respondents spend one to five hours per day on social media. Only 32% of respondents said they see ads often or very often. The most engaging types of content were stories and reels (28%), and 64% of respondents follow brands or companies.

Measure	Response category	Respondents	Percentage
Most used platform	YouTube	36	24%
	Facebook	32	21%
	Instagram	28	19%
	WhatsApp	27	18%
	LinkedIn	17	11%
	Other	11	7%
Daily time on social media	Less than 1 hour	25	17%
	1-3 hours	57	38%
	3-5 hours	50	33%
	More than 5 hours	19	13%

Frequency of seeing ads	Never	25	17%
	Rarely	32	21%
	Sometimes	46	30%
	Often	27	18%
	Very often	21	14%
Content engaged with most	Stories/Reels	43	28%
	Reviews	35	23%
	Photos	34	23%
	Videos	25	17%
	Live sessions	14	9%
Follows brands	Yes	97	64%
	No	54	36%

Table 2. Social media usage and advertisement exposure (n=151)

Purchase Drivers and Behaviour

The most popular platforms are YouTube (24%) and Facebook (21%), while 71% of respondents spend one to five hours per day on social media. Only 32% of respondents said they see ads often or very often, while stories and reels are the most engaging type of content (28%). 64% of respondents follow brands or companies.

Measure	Response category	Respondents	Percentage
Main purchase factor	Brand image	53	35%
	Product quality	48	32%
	Price	25	17%
	Reviews	17	11%
	Offers	8	5%
Most influential ad format	Influencer promotions	55	36%
	Customer testimonials	39	26%
	Image ads	31	21%
	Video ads	13	9%
	Discount ads	12	8%
Purchase after seeing ads	Never	11	7%
	Rarely	39	26%
	Sometimes	45	30%
	Often	38	25%
	Always	18	12%
Checks reviews before buying	Yes	45	30%
	Sometimes	60	40%
	No	46	30%

Table 3. Purchase drivers and behaviour (n=151).

Overall Advertising Perception and Purchase Decision Influence

The composite advertising perception score had a mean of 2.79 out of 5 with 27% having a high or very high perception, 38% having a moderate perception and 35% having a low or very low perception. The composite purchase decision influence score had a mean of 2.99 out of 5 with 30% having high or very high influence, 42% having a moderate influence and 28% having low or very low influence. Perception of social media advertising is therefore moderate rather than strongly positive and its influence on purchase decisions is moderate to positive.

Measure	Level	Respondents	Percentage
Advertising perception	Very high	7	5%
	High	33	22%
	Moderate	58	38%
	Low	41	27%
	Very low	12	8%
Purchase decision influence	Very high	5	3%
	High	41	27%
	Moderate	63	42%
	Low	31	21%
	Very low	11	7%

Table 4. Overall advertising perception and purchase decision influence (n=151).

Statistical Tests

Chi-Square Test: Advertising Perception and Purchase Frequency

H0: There is no significant association between advertising perception and purchase frequency.

Test	Value	df	Significance
Pearson chi-square	11.55	4	0.021
Valid cases	151		

Table 5. Chi-square test results.

Interpretation: The Pearson chi-square significance value (.021) is below .05. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant association between respondents' advertising perception level and their purchase frequency in the respondent group.

Correlation Analysis

H0: There is no significant relationship between advertising perception and purchase decision influence.

Variables	Pearson correlation	Significance	N
Advertising perception and purchase decision influence	0.585	<.001	151

Table 6. Pearson correlation between advertising perception and purchase decision influence.

Interpretation: The coefficient indicates a moderately strong positive relationship. Respondents with a more favourable perception of social media advertising tended to report a higher level of purchase decision influence. The reported significance is below .05; the null hypothesis of no relationship is rejected.

Regression Analysis: Advertising Perception as a Predictor of Purchase Decision Influence

H0: Advertising perception has no significant impact on purchase decision influence.

Model statistic	Value
R	0.585
R-squared	0.342
Model significance	<.001

Table 7. Regression model summary; dependent variable: purchase decision influence.

Interpretation: The regression model is statistically significant. The R-squared value indicates that advertising perception accounts for 34.2% of the variation in purchase decision influence scores in this sample, while the remaining 65.8% may be explained by other factors not included in the model. As the data are observational and drawn from a convenience sample, this predictive association should not be interpreted as proof of causation.

DISCUSSION

The results are mixed but overall show a moderately positive attitude of the respondents towards social media advertising. While the mean score for general perception was only 2.79 out of 5, two-thirds reported buying at least something after seeing an ad, and the majority would study reviews first. Moreover, the majority would buy products based on a positive image, product quality and endorsements by influencers and testimonials. Price and offers had less influence. Notably, the positive association between the respondents' perception and attitude aligns with the article's literature review and demonstrates that informative, creative and personalized, and reliable content increases purchase intention.

Thus, it should be noted that the link between the two variables was identified within the framework of a convenience sample at a single moment. Consequently, the study cannot establish a causal or directional link or association between the variables and control for other potential influences. However, the findings still provide a useful insight into the current level of awareness and attitude towards social media advertising.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Businesses may build upon the positives discovered and focus on the areas that showed a lower reaction. The research suggests that they should optimize targeting and frequency to ensure that all customers get enough information without being annoyed by the advertising campaign. Moreover, it should be invested in high-quality and informative content, collaborate with influential people and utilize short videos, such as Reels, and make sure to include testimonials and reviews. It may also individualize the audience and concentrate on cultivating long-term relationships based on trust and loyalty through consistent and reliable messages to customers. Additionally, businesses should provide discounts and promote the benefits of their products and consistently analyze their perception among consumers.

LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to 151 social media users, primarily in the Chennai metropolitan region and surrounding areas, and uses convenience sampling, self-reported questionnaire responses and a short collection period. Results may reflect personal bias or perception and may not generalize beyond this setting. The article relies

on the analyses provided in the final project report; respondent-level data were not available for independent reanalysis. Future studies could use a larger, more representative sample, repeat measurement over time and include qualitative interviews.

CONCLUSION

Among the 151 social media users who participated in the survey, the general perception of advertising was moderate, but statistically significant associations and a moderate positive correlation were found between advertising perception and influence on purchase decisions; the regression model also demonstrated a significant predictive relationship within the sample. Consumers showed a high degree of trust in brand image, product quality, influencer promotion and peer reviews, and price and discounts played a lesser role. Advertisement visibility, content creativity, personalization and the strategic use of influencers and testimonials became practical areas for continued attention. Regular measurement of consumer perception can help businesses turn advertising exposure into stronger purchase intent and long-term brand loyalty.

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