



**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON AUDIENCE
TRUST AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS**

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A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN

**PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION (HONS) BROADCASTING
FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN**

SEPTEMBER 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intention among university students. While marketing methods have been developing rapidly in the digital era, brands seek to engage consumers through social media. The present research addresses the dual nature of the relationship between trust of social media advertising by consumers and buying behaviour. Quantitative approach was followed, and the survey questionnaire was shared through Google Forms in a group of participants that included 53. The results stated that the content type, for instance, fashion and lifestyle, encourages more interaction that may affect positive purchase intention. It was observed that reviews, comparison shopping, and local customer feedback are considered to be the major drivers in trusting social media advertising. This will also bring marketers closer to working out an optimal strategy in social media by addressing platform-specific features and regional influences that affect consumer behaviour. It also points to transparency, ethical practices, and localization of marketing efforts as cardinal imperatives in audience trust-building and maintenance.

Keywords: Social media advertising, audience trust, purchase intentions, digital marketing, consumer behaviour, reviews, comparison shopping, localized marketing

Subject Area: HF5801-6182 Advertising

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Background Study

Digital and Internet technologies are seen as important driving forces for globalization. The advancement of information technology has made people's communication and communication faster and more convenient, thus maintaining and deepening the connections between social citizens to a greater extent. Social media is a place where communities grow and flourish and where businesses may establish sincere personal relationships with their target audience. It is not a platform for broadcasting (Littleton, 2022).

Social media has evolved from its initial intent as a means of facilitating personal connections to an effective way for businesses to interact with their target consumers in the world of digital communications. Advertising is one of the important means of corporate marketing. Consumers' attitudes and emotions towards advertising will affect their purchasing behaviour. A key element of modern marketing strategies is comprehending the complex dynamics of the influence of social media advertising on audience trust and intentions, as brands increasingly navigate the digital landscape to attract consumers.

Social media advertising appeals because it may break through the obstacles of traditional marketing and provide a dynamic environment in which companies can engage directly with their target audiences. Users come across a multitude of sponsored content on social media that is integrated into the fabric of their online social experience as they browse through their feeds.

Social media advertising and can increase brand awareness and attention; at the same time, a platform that continues to enhance the social media shopping experience can also establish effective communication channels for enterprises and consumers to interact. According to Barysevich (2020), the widespread use of social media, and the accessibility of online shopping

are only a few of the variables that account for the influence of social media on consumer purchasing decisions.

The objective of this research is to examine and evaluate the complex link that exists between audience trust, purchase intentions, and social media advertising. Through the exploration of the world of digital persuasion, we hope to reveal the subtle ways that advertising on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc., either strengthens or undermines a brand's credibility, which in turn influences consumers' tendencies to make purchase.

1.1 Problem Statement

Social media advertising's ascent to prominence in today's digital marketing landscape had completely changed how brands interact with their target audience. Nevertheless, an important concern about the complex relationship between these marketing initiatives and consumer behaviour arises in the middle of the rapid expansion of social media advertising. Determining the degree of which social media advertising affects audience trust in and influence their purchase intentions is the challenging part.

The primary cause of this issue is the lack of clarity surrounding the processes through which social media advertising either promotes or undermines consumer confidence. As brands extensively invest in these platforms to interact with their audience, concerns are raised about how well these tactics work to foster real trust and influence consumer behaviour. Without a thorough grasp of the dynamics at play, consumers must navigate a world where credibility and authenticity are crucial while businesses struggle with the uncertainty of their return on investment.

The diverse nature of social media platforms compounds this issue. Each platform is offering distinct features and content delivery mechanisms. Consequently, it is critical to identify the

problem-specific subtleties that influence consumers' perceptions of and reactions to advertising content. Moreover, there is an increasing need to look at the relationship between audience trust and subsequent purchase intentions and privacy issues and ethical considerations around data usage.

It is critical of consumers to comprehend the subtle elements that either strengthen or weaken trust as they go through a world overflowing with advertising information. This study aims to examine the complex interactions between audiences' trust, purchase intentions and social media advertising to solve these pressing challenges. This study also aims to investigate practical guidance for enterprises attempting to manage the obstacles presented by a constantly changing digital environment by analysing the complexities of consumer decision-making.

1.2 Research objective

To examine and evaluate the complex link that exists between audience trust, purchase intentions, and social media advertising.

Examine the relationships and interdependencies that exist between the trust that audiences develop via social media advertising and their consequent intents to make purchases.

Different social media platforms offer unique features and user experience. We aim to assess how these platforms-specific characteristics moderate link between audience trust and purchase intentions.

1.3 Hypothesis

1. There is a positive relationship between advertising on social media and audience trust
 - Exposure to social media advertising **does not significantly affect** the audience's degree of confidence in the promoted businesses.
 - Exposure to social media advertising **significantly affects** the audience's degree of confidence in the promoted businesses.

Chapter 2 : Literature review

The formation of consumer behaviour is affected by many factors. As mentioned by Belloque and Serralvo (2019), consumer behaviour is the study of the process which involved when individuals or group choose, buy and discard of products, services, or experience which to meet their needs and preferences. Firstly, cultural background may have a very different opinions about the same good or services. Furthermore, social factors such as attitudes and perceptions of family, friends or social groups can also have a profound impact on consumer behaviour. Consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by recommendations from family or friend, even from their colleagues. In addition, personal factors include an individual's personality, traits, attitudes and beliefs. Marketing campaigns and advertising plays a significant role in affecting consumer purchasing behaviour.

Research has been done that looks at the impact of social media advertisement on customers purchase intention. According to Tariq et al. (2023), the article stated as modern society has become more digitally connected, consumer attention has shifted away from traditional purchasing behaviours. As technology advances, people prefer to purchase products and services through online social media platforms. The study also shows that brand preference and brand image impact consumers' intention to purchase when it comes to social media advertising. Consumer engagement and brand image are mediated by brand like. To increase consumer involvement and, ultimately, customer loyalty, marketers should create matching branding strategies (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Gaining credibility and trust from consumers is facilitated by a strong brand image.

Besides that, as stated in Thi et al. (2023), Facebook is one of the most widely used social media sites in Vietnam, and because of its ease of use and extensive usage, many agencies have chosen to utilise it as their main channel for connection and communication inside their units. Two-way communication has several advantages for professionals, such as fostering teamwork, resolving issues, and raising interpersonal involvement (Indeed, 2023). Two-way communication and interactivity enable brands to build trusting relationships with consumers, comprehend their requirements, and produce satisfying experiences. In turn, this interaction is crucial in forming consumers' opinions and influencing their decisions to purchase. In the competitive market, brands that put an emphasis on maximize interactive communication techniques are better positioned to forge connections and produce positive results.

Apart from that, there are many different independent and integrated social media services available in current social media. Social networking services will pose a major obstacle (Yeo et al., 2020). Due to the widespread availability of Internet connection, social media advertising, a type of digital and online network advertisement, has emerged as a successful marketing communication tool. This is the newest and fastest-growing type of advertising on social media. The variety of users and the type of interactions on social media platforms have changed significantly. Technological developments, shifts in user behaviour, and the impact of several stakeholders have all influenced the growth of these platforms.

Moving on, according to Jane Araujo et al. (2022), the three dimensions, which are emotional, entertainment and informative, of TikTok advertisements have a positive impact on the behavior of Generation Z. TikTok advertisements have the power to influence behavior in three areas: engagement, purchase intentions, and audience trust. This is especially true when they

are carefully designed to fit the dynamics of the platform and the tastes of Generation Z. Because of the platform's distinctive features, advertisers have a dynamic area to meaningfully engage with the younger audience, building relationships and influencing their purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the journal stated that purchase intention is positively impacted by the emotional dimension. The findings indicated that TikTok advertisements for goods and services raise Generation Z's propensity to buy. Understanding the power of TikTok's emotional connections can help marketers develop more potent and memorable advertising campaigns as they negotiate the ever-changing world of digital marketing. Besides that, Generation Z likes social media commercials over traditional ads, which contributes to enhanced brand awareness, product perception, brand loyalty, customer-business connection, and purchase intention (Ninan et al., 2020). The paper also emphasizes the need of employing best practices in social media marketing in order to attract and keep consumers, as well as to thrive in the business over time.

Apart from TikTok platform, Instagram is one of the social media platforms that most the users engaged. According to KEMEÇ & YÜKSEL (2021), influencers are highly valued by marketers on social media due to their ability to set trends and persuade followers to buy the goods or services they endorse. Their ability to establish a connection with a sizable and involved audience renders them invaluable resources for companies seeking to advertise their goods or services. Moreover, the journal mentioned that customers' purchase intentions were influenced by the authority of influencers providing content in the beauty sector on YouTube and Instagram. Influencers in the beauty market frequently present themselves as authorities on cosmetics, skincare, and other subjects pertaining to beauty. Customers may be persuaded to regard them as reliable sources of recommendations and guidance due to their expertise in the industry and reputation. Hence, it leads to the consumer to purchase products and services

that are promoted by the influencers, and recommend it to their family, friends and also colleague.

Furthermore, producers in any business do not want to miss the digital buzz surrounding its social media trend as stated by Nurhandayani et al. (2019). Nowadays, companies compete with one another to ride the momentum of campaigns and digital communication. Producers who hold major brands and items will lose prospective customers in the future if they do not engage in digital development. Consumers nowadays rely largely on digital channels for information, entertainment, and retail. Companies must adapt to changing customer behavior in order to remain visible and available to their target audience.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods for this study, specifically how social media advertising will be used to build audience trust and buy intention. This research design uses a quantitative technique to achieve the study's aims, with questionnaires serving as the primary data gathering tool. The methodology chapter shall include sections on research design, research instruments, questionnaire design, sample size, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. In this regard, the study might investigate if social media advertising is related to meaningful consumer behaviors by administering a structured questionnaire to a sample of university students, a highly targeted segment by digital marketing.

3.1 Research Design

This study aims to explore the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions. A quantitative research methodology will be used in this study to measure the correlation between audience trust, purchase intentions, and social media advertising. The study's focus on university students tries to represent a population that is heavily influenced by digital advertising and has a high level of social media activity. To ensure a higher response rate, it was distributed online to make it easier to distribute and collect responses. It is expected that the study will offer insightful information about how audience trust and purchase intentions are influenced by social media advertising among university students. The results may have applications for advertisers and marketers that want to increase the efficacy of their social media initiatives.

3.2 Research Instrument

The purpose of the research is to investigate how Malaysian audiences' intentions to purchase products are influenced by social media advertisements. The majority of the questions on the questionnaire were carried out by multiple choice questions, and they will be created and sent out for participants to answer with Google Form. As a result, participants can choose the response that best fits their preferences with ease and speed. Google Form was selected as the data collection method because it enables to contact a large number of respondents without invest any money. The questionnaire was distributed in University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Sungai Long campus, and also sent to the public to reach the target group. The questions have been carefully designed to explore the ways in which social media advertising affects audience trust and purchase intention.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

To address the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions, this questionnaire will be divided into four sections. Demographic data, such as gender, age, race, educational level and occupation status, will be gathered in the first section. Then, the second section will then concentrate on how the participants use and interact with social media, covering the favourite platforms, preferred content and average amount of time spent on social media. The third section will then look at how customers use social media to interact and purchase behaviour, focusing on how consumers use social media to communicate and make purchases and the factors that affect their likelihood to make a purchase. Lastly, the final section will be the impact of regional differences on social media purchases, including the place of residence and preferences for local brands, affect purchases made on social media.

3.4 Sample Size

The number of participants or observations in a study is referred to as its sample size. This number is commonly represented as n . The sample size affects two statistical properties which are the precision of our estimates, and the study's ability to reach conclusions (Institute for Work & Health, 2008). The study examines at the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions, with a sample size of 53 people, mostly university students aged 18 to 27. The sample size was determined based on the demographic that most active on social media and is frequently exposed to online advertisements. This group is especially relevant considering the study's objectives, which are to investigate trust and buying behaviors influenced by social media marketing.

This study's data was gathered using a Google Form survey distributed via social media channels, with a specific focus on university students. The sampling technique used is a blend of convenience sampling and voluntary response sampling. Convenience sampling is a method of sampling without probability that collects data from a group of people who are easily accessible (Simkus, 2023). Convenience sampling was used because the survey was mostly distributed through accessible networks such as university student clubs and social media communities. This strategy enabled quick and efficient data collection from people who are easily accessible and represent the study's target demographic—students who use social media and are frequently exposed to digital advertising.

Voluntary response bias describes how enabling your sample to self-select skews your data, resulting in results that are not typical of the entire community (Henry, 2024). In addition to convenience sampling, the study included voluntary response sampling, in which individuals

choose to complete the survey depending on their interests and willingness. The study attracted respondents who were motivated to participate by sharing the survey link on platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and Facebook, as is typical of voluntary response sampling. Although this strategy may bring biases, such as drawing participants who are more interested in the research topic, it is nevertheless appropriate for exploratory studies like this one. The combined strategy efficiently captures insights from a relevant population, providing useful perspectives on how social media advertising impacts trust and purchasing intentions among university students.

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering and analysing important information which includes names, email addresses, participants' review and website analytics, from many sources which aims to construct appealing marketing campaign, understand to your consumer and create financial budget (Jotform Editorial Team, 2023). The data for this study were gathered using an online survey accomplished through Google Forms, which was targeted to investigate the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions. This survey consisted of close-ended and Likert-scale questions, was sent via social media sites which are WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. The questionnaire examined participants' trust in brands advertised on social media, purchase habits, and attitudes of online advertising. The questionnaire URL was disseminated in student group conversations and networks to encourage volunteer participation. Data collection took place over two weeks, yielding 53 replies. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and confidentiality procedures. The convenience and flexibility of internet access resulted in better response rates, while Google Forms facilitated response aggregation and analysis.

3.6 Data Processing & Data Analysis

Data processing is the set of processes that are conducted on data to transform, analyse and organize information into a usable format for future use (The Fullstory Team, 2024). The data was gathered using a Google Forms poll intended to investigate how audience trust and purchase intentions are affected by social media advertising. To ensure correctness, dependability, and useful information, the data processing will entail multiple phases, such as data visualization, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics. Likert scale determines were employed for the quantitative examination of audience trust and purchase intentions. Descriptive analytics is a type of data analytics that focuses on describing and evaluating historical data in order to acquire insights and comprehend patterns, trends, and correlations within it (Kanade, 2023). To evaluate general trends in participant replies, descriptive statistics were computed, such as reoccurring themes, open-ended replies were also examined and categorized, offering qualitative insights that supplemented the quantitative results. Correlation is a measure of statistical significance that expresses the degree to which two variables are linearly connected (JMP, n.d.). Correlation was used to investigate between age, gender, and variables which include "How often do you read reviews on social media before making a purchase influenced by an advertisement?" and "When considering a purchase shown in a social media advertisement, do you engage in comparison shopping across different brands or products?", helping to assess whether higher trust levels are related with an increased likelihood of acquiring marketed products. According to (Tableau, n.d.), data visualization refers to the graphical depiction of information and data. Data visualization tools use visual components such as charts, graphs, and maps to make trends, outliers, and patterns in data more visible and understandable. The findings were presented utilizing visualizations such as charts and graphs to emphasize key patterns and linkages, providing a clear understanding of the factors that influence trust and purchase behaviour in response to social media advertising. For example,

bar chart was used to highlight the level of likelihood with statements like “How often do you read review products or services on social media before making a purchase influenced by an advertisement?” and pie chart was used in statements like “When considering a purchase shown in social media advertisement, do you engage in comparison shopping across different brand or products?”, to show the comparison across different statements.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the quantitative data analysis methods used in this study. The total of 53 responses were obtained from the questionnaire intended to gather information on how social media advertising affects audiences trust and purchase intentions. The aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which various aspects of social media advertising impact customer behaviour, specifically concerning their brand trust and intention to purchase.

The questionnaire was divided into several sections that include important topics like how often one interacts with social advertisement, the value of reviews and recommendations, the likelihood of sharing experiences after making a purchase, and the propensity for comparison shopping, through an analysis of these components, the research seeks to offer an in-depth understanding of how social media advertising influences consumer attitudes and behaviour.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

4.1.1 Demographic (Section 1)

4.1.1.1 Gender

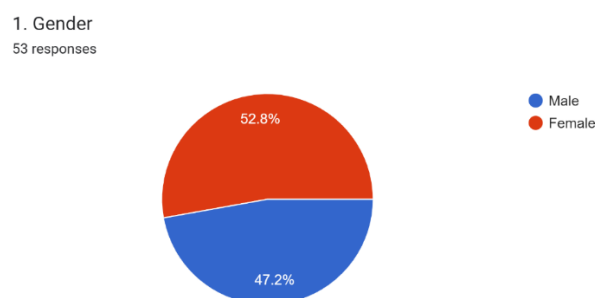


Figure 4.1 Gender

Figure 4.1 shows the respondents' gender. Most respondents are female at 52.8% (28 respondents), while male only accounts for 47.2% (22 respondents). The number of female

respondents is more than male respondents. In this major caregiving role, women must make purchases on behalf of everyone else in their life (Brennan, 2022).

4.1.1.1 Age

2. Age

53 responses

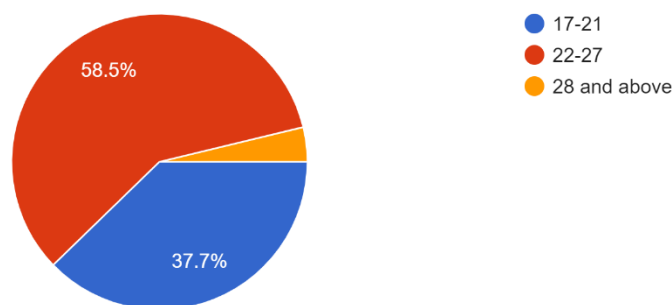


Figure 4.2 Age Group

In Figure 4.2, the age range of 22 to 27 years old has the highest proportion, accounting for 58.5% (31 respondents). Following that, respondents aged 17 to 21 years old accounted for 37.7% (20 responses). Finally, only two respondents aged 28 or older had the lowest percentage of 3.8%.

4.1.1.3 Race

3. Race

53 responses

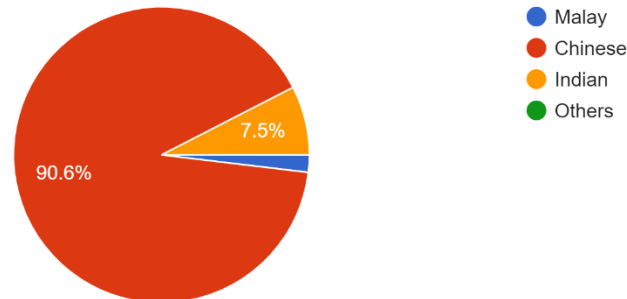


Figure 4.3 Race

Figure 4.3 shows the race of the respondents in this study. The race respondents consist of Chinese at 90.6% (48 respondents), Indian at 7.5% (4 respondents), Malay at 1.9% (1 respondent), and other race is 0% in this report. It could be explained Chinese is the largest proportion in this study while Indian, Malay and other races have a lower proportion in this study.

4.1.1.4 Educational Level

4. Educational Level

53 responses

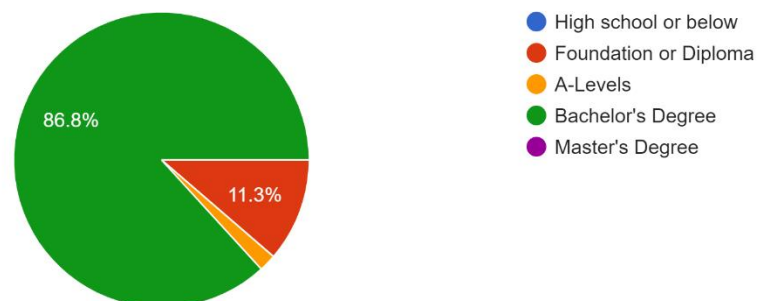


Figure 4.4 Educational Level

Figure 4.4 demonstrates the educational level of the respondents. According to the respondents' educational backgrounds, the majority (86.8%) had a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 11.3% of the respondents (6 participants) are from foundation or diploma program. Notably, just 1.9% of respondents (1 participant) from A-levels, showing a low representation of pre-university students, while no participants reported having merely a high school diploma or a master's degree.

4.1.1.5 Occupation

5. Occupation
53 responses

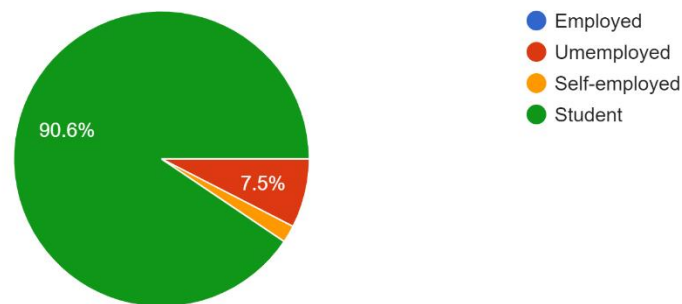


Figure 4.5 Occupation Level

Figure 4.5 shows the occupation level of respondents. The majority of respondents (90.6%, 48) were students. The unemployed account for 7.5% (4 responses). Finally, only 1.9% (1 respondent) is self-employed, while no respondents are employed.

4.1.2 Psychographic (Section 2)

4.1.2.1 Which social media platforms do you use regularly?

6. Which social media platforms do you use regularly?

53 responses

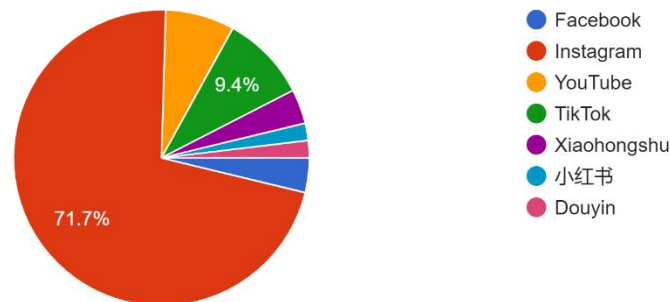


Figure 4.6 Which social media platforms do you use regularly?

In Figure 4.6, Instagram is the most popular social media network among respondents, with 71.7% (38 respondents) using it on regularly. TikTok and YouTube, on the other hand, are used by fewer people, at 9.4% and 7.5%, respectively. Facebook looks to be the least relevant platform, with only 3.8% of users, which is consistent with trends showing that younger viewers prefer alternative platforms. Meanwhile, specialized platform choices such as Xiao Hong Shu (5.7%) and Douyin (1.9%) are minor, reflecting cultural preferences or specific interests among smaller groups of respondents.

4.1.2.2 Preferred Social Media Platform for Direct Purchases

7. Which social media platform do you find most convenient for making purchases directly through the platform?

53 responses

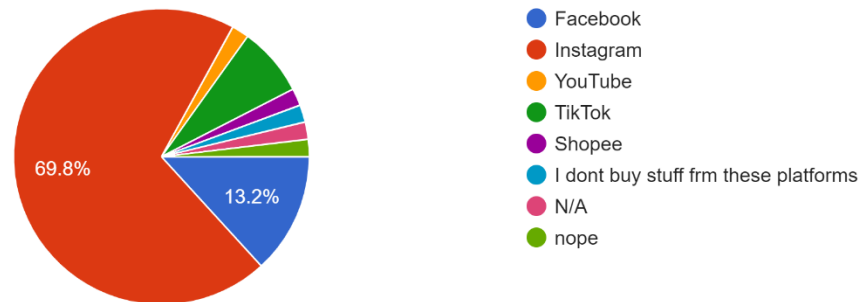


Figure 4.7 Preferred Social Media Platform for Direct Purchases

In Figure 4.7, 69.8% of respondents believe Instagram is the most convenient channel for direct purchases. This shows that Instagram's integrated commerce capabilities, such as in-app stores and shoppable posts, are extremely effective and popular among users. Facebook follows at 13.2%, indicating that some people still trust it for e-commerce, possibly because of its established marketplace. TikTok, despite its growing popularity, accounts for only 7.5%, showing that while it is useful for product discovery, it may not be as efficient for purchases. YouTube and Shopee both have 1.9% share, indicating that both sites are rarely used for direct shopping. Furthermore, 5.7% of respondents do not make online purchases using social media, indicating a small sector that is resistive to this trend.

4.1.2.3 How frequently do you engage with social media content daily?

8. How frequently do you engage with social media content daily?

53 responses

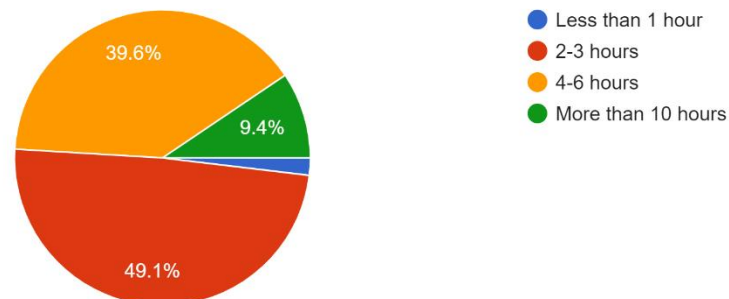


Figure 4.8 How frequently do you engage with social media content daily?

Figure 4.8 shows that the majority of respondents spend a significant time each day engaging with social media platform. Almost half (49.1%) indicate they use social media for 2 to 3 hours every day, indicating a moderate but consistent level of engagement. A significant portion (39.6%) spends 4 to 6 hours daily, indicating considerable engagement and greater participation with online content. Surprisingly, 9.4% of respondents spend more than 10 hours every day on social media, indicating either professional or strong personal commitment. Then, only 1.9% of respondents say they use social media for less than an hour daily, implying that most people are heavily involved in social media habits.

4.1.2.4 Do you follow any brands or products on social media?

9. Do you follow any brands or products on social media?

53 responses

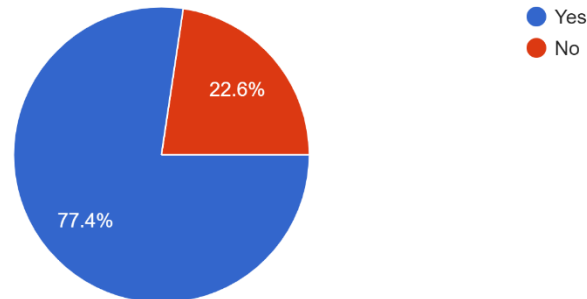


Figure 4.9 Brand Following on Social Media

Figure 4.9 depicts the brand following on social media of the respondents. Majority of respondents (77.4%) follow brands or products on social media. This shows that social media is a useful tool for increasing brand visibility and customer engagement. On the other hand, 22.6% of respondents do not follow any brand and products.

4.1.2.5 Types of Social Media Content that Respondent Typically Engaged With

10. What type of content do you typically engage with social media?

53 responses

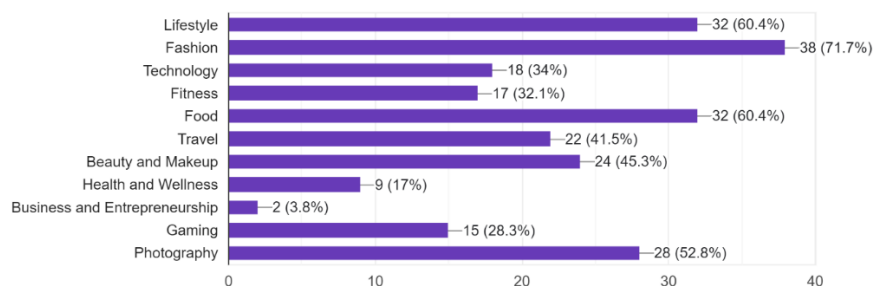


Figure 4.10 Types of Social Media Content that Respondent Typically Engaged With

Figure 4.10 illustrates the type of content that respondents typically engage with social media. The largest proportion of 71.7% of respondents choose Fashion as their top favourable content. Then, there are two same proportion of 60.4% of respondents which choose Lifestyle and Food as their preference content, followed by Photography (52.8%), Beauty and Makeup (45.3%), Travel (41.5%), Technology (34%), Fitness (32.1%), Gaming (28.3), Health and Wellness (17%), and Business and Entrepreneurship (3.8%) respectively.

4.1.3 Behavioural (Section 3)

4.1.3.1 Frequency of Searching for Brands or Products on Social Media

11. How often do you search for brands or products from social media?

53 responses

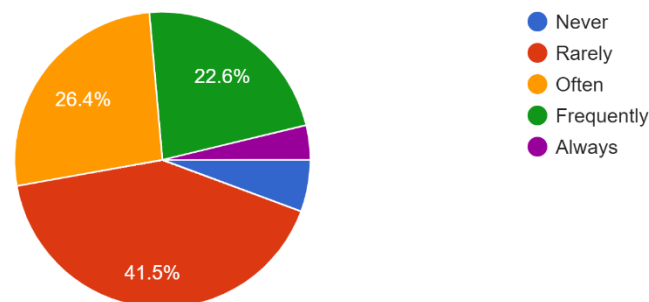


Figure 4.11 Frequency of Searching for Brands or Products on Social Media

Figure 4.11 shows the frequency of searching for brands or products on social media among the respondents. According to the findings, a significant number of respondents (41.5%) seek for brands or products on social media only on rare occasions. This shows that, while some people conduct brand searches on occasion, the majority do so infrequently. On the other hand, 26.4% search for brands or products regularly, while 22.6% do so frequently, demonstrating that a sizable portion actively seeks brand information or product specifics on social media. A

smaller percentage (3.8%) always searches for brands or items, indicating a tiny yet very involved group. Finally, 5.7% never look for brands or items, indicating that there is a demographic that does not utilize social media for this reason.

4.1.3.2 The Likelihood of Purchase Products and Services through Social Media by Audience

12. How likely do you purchase products/ services through social media?

53 responses

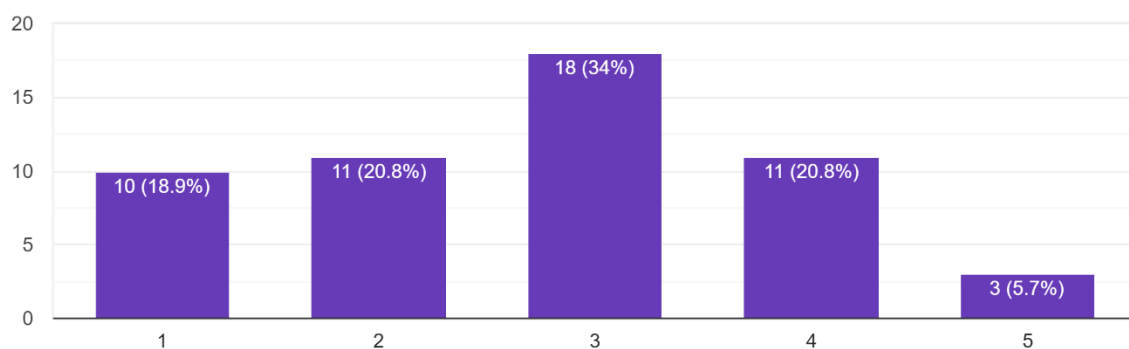


Figure 4.12 The Likelihood of Purchase Products and Services through Social Media by Audience

Figure 4.12 shows a wide variation in the likelihood that customers will use social media to purchase goods and services. A significant proportion of users may be persuaded to act in either direction by particular situations as evidenced by the statistics, which shows that 34% of respondents are remain neutral about making purchases through social media platforms. Conversely, 20.8% of respondents are likely to make a purchase through social media, while 5.7% say they will definitely make a purchase using social media, compared to 20.8% of consumers who are likely to do so. On the other hand, 18.9% of respondents are very unlikely and 20.8% of respondents are unlikely to make purchase using social media platforms.

4.1.3.3 The Likelihood of Engaging with a Brand After a Social Media Purchase

13. After making purchase influenced by social media advertising, how likely are you engage with the brand on social media?

53 responses

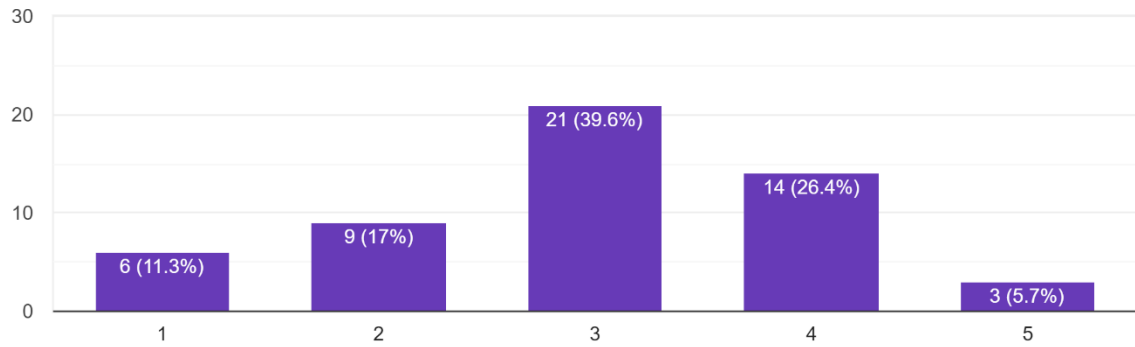


Figure 4.13 The Likelihood of Engaging with a Brand After a Social Media Purchase

Figure 4.13 illustrates the likelihood of engaging with a brand after a social media purchase. The majority of respondents, 39.6%, chose "Neutral", indicating that many are unconcerned about participating with the brand on social media following their purchase. About 26.4% of respondents are "likely" to interact with the brand, indicating a moderate level of interest in keeping a relationship with the company. On the other hand, 11.3% are "Very unlikely", while 17% are "Unlikely" to engage, indicating that a lower proportion of respondents do not intend to contact with the brand further. Lastly, only 5.7% of respondents are "very likely" to engage, indicating that a small fraction is strongly inclined to stay linked with the brand on social media.

4.1.3.4 Reading Reviews Before Purchase

14. How often do you read review products or services on social media before making a purchase influenced by an advertisement?

53 responses

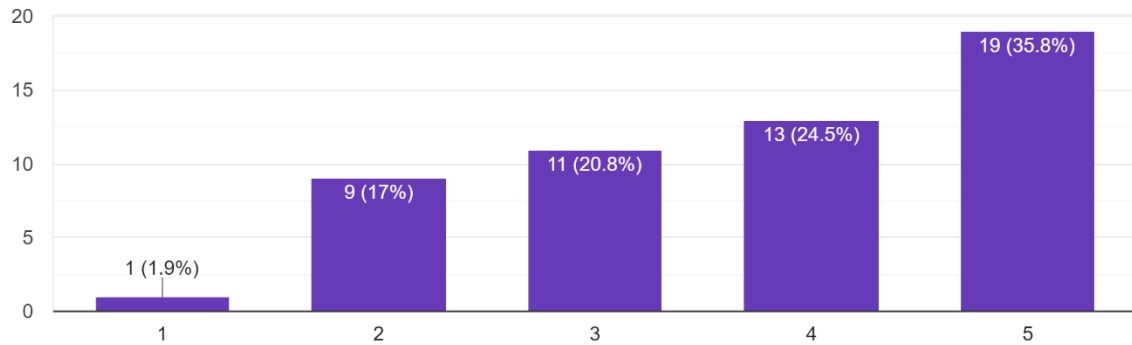


Figure 4.14 Reading Reviews Before Purchase

In Figure 4.14, many consumers show a significant desire to examine product or services evaluations before making purchases that may be impacted by social media advertisements. A proportion of 35.8% indicated that they are very likely to read reviews, highlighting the crucial role that verification from others plays in the process of making decisions. Furthermore, the likelihood of 24.5% of respondents engaging in this behaviour. Notably, 20.8% of respondents express neutral, indicating that other considerations like the kind of product or the credibility of advertisement may influence their choice to read reviews. In comparison, 17% of respondents are unlikely to read reviews before making a purchase, and only 1.9% of respondents are very unlikely to do so.

4.1.3.5 Engaging in Comparison Shopping

15. When considering a purchase shown in social media advertisement, do you engage in comparison shopping across different brand or products?

53 responses

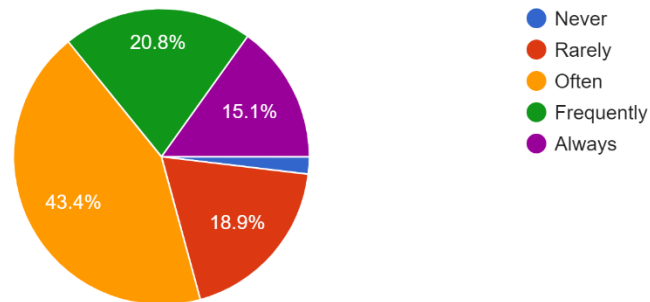


Figure 4.15 Engaging in Comparison Shopping

Figure 4.15 showing the majority of consumers who are contemplating a purchase after seeing an advertisement on social media compare various brands and products. Specifically, 20.8% of respondents compare options often, 15.1% always to compare, and 43.3% of respondents are often to do so. This indicates a great degree of attention to detail and a desire to guarantee value for the money they spent. However, only 1.9% of respondents never compare, and 18.9% of respondent rarely to compare the brands and products.

4.1.3.6 Frequency of Sharing Social Media Ads for Recommendations or Discussion

16. How often do you share social media advertisement with friends or family, either for recommendation or discussion?

53 responses

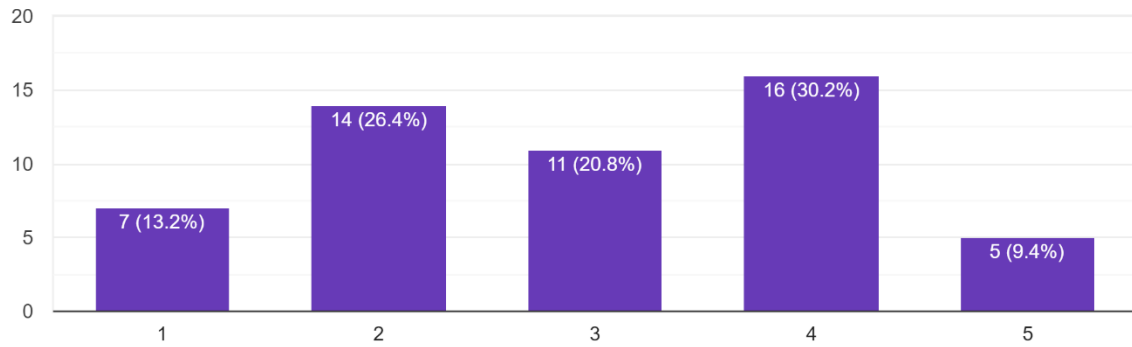


Figure 4.16 Frequency of Sharing Social Media Ads for Recommendations or Discussion

Figure 4.16 presents the frequency of sharing social media ads for recommendations or discussion of respondents. The majority of respondents (30.2%) said they are "Likely" to share social media ads with friends or family for recommendations or discussion. Next, approximately 20.8% are "Neutral," showing moderate involvement with sharing advertising. On the other hand, 13.2% are "Very unlikely," while 26.4% are "Unlikely" to share commercials respectively, indicating that a sizable proportion of participants do not commonly share advertisements. Lastly, only 9.4% of respondents are "very likely" to distribute commercials, indicating that a smaller percentage frequently shares ads with others.

4.1.3.7 Likelihood of Sharing Experiences

17. After making a purchase, how likely are you to share your experience on social media or participate in discussions related to the products/ services? (in Likert scale)

53 responses

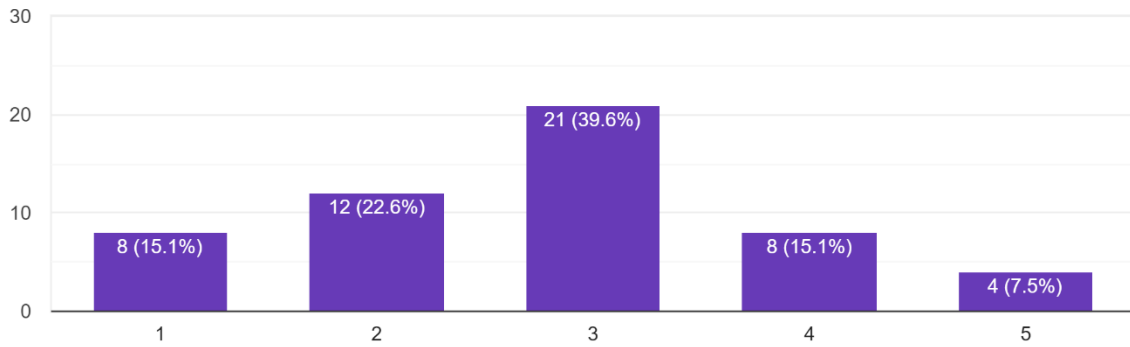


Figure 4.17 Likelihood of Sharing Experiences

According to Figure 4.5, a proportion of 39.6% are remain neutral, suggesting that many consumers might share their experiences depending on specific situations. A smaller percentage of respondents, 15.1% are likely to share their experiences on social media, and 7.5% of respondents are very likely to do so. This shows that some customers are keen to offer comments and participate in conversations. On the other hand, a significant portion of consumers want to keep their shopping experiences private, as shown by 22.6% of respondents are unlikely and the 15.1% of respondents are very unlikely to share their post-purchase experiences.

4.1.3.8 Perception on Social Media Advertisements' Impact on Lifestyle

18. How likely do you believe that products/ services advertised on social media can positively impact your lifestyle?

53 responses

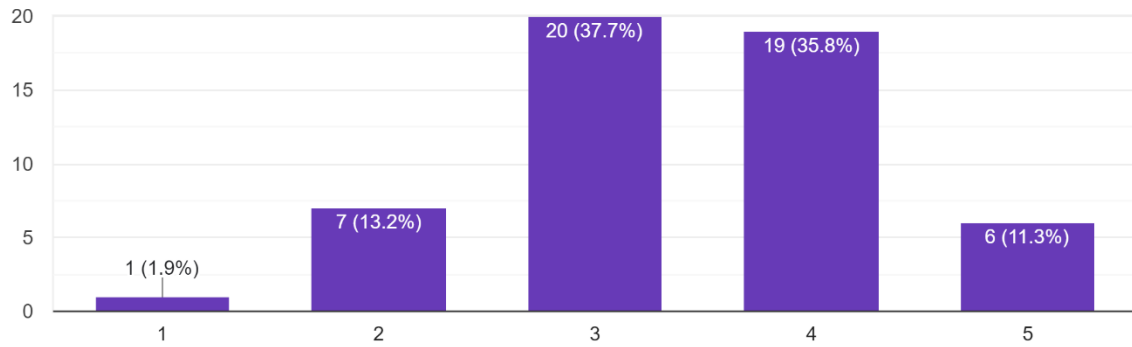


Figure 4.18 Perception on Social Media Advertisements' Impact on Lifestyle

A sizable proportion of respondents, 37.7%, indicated an indifferent attitude toward the positive impact of social media marketing on their lifestyle. However, 35.8% of respondents are "likely" to believe that social media marketing can improve their lifestyle, indicating a strong preference for optimism regarding offered products or services. A smaller fraction, 11.3%, is "very likely" to believe in the positive influence, showing a small but significant number of passionate believers. On the other hand, 13.2% are "Unlikely," while only 1.9% are "Very unlikely" to believe that social media marketing can improve their lifestyle. Overall, most respondents have neutral to positive attitudes on the possible lifestyle benefits of items and services marketed on social media.

4.1.3.9 Participation in Social Media Contests or Giveaways

19. How likely are you to participate in contests or giveaways hosted by brands on social media?

53 responses

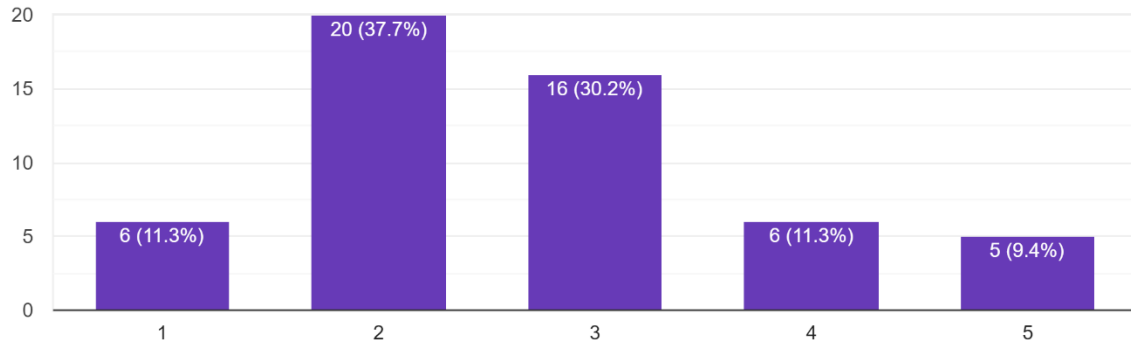


Figure 4.19 Participation in Social Media Contests or Giveaways

A large proportion of respondents, 37.7%, are "Unlikely" to engage in brand-hosted social media competitions or giveaways, demonstrating a lack of enthusiasm in such promotional activities. About 30.2% took a neutral approach, indicating neither strong willingness nor indifference in participation. A smaller percentage, 11.3%, said they are "likely" to participate, while 9.4% said they are "very likely," indicating that a minority of respondents are enthusiastic about participating in contests or giveaways. Overall, the majority of respondents are neutral or unlikely to participate in social media contests, with a smaller percentage expressing active interest.

4.1.3.10 Continued Engagement After Participating in a Contest or Giveaway

20. After participating in a contest or giveaway, how likely are you to continue engaging with the brand on social media?

53 responses

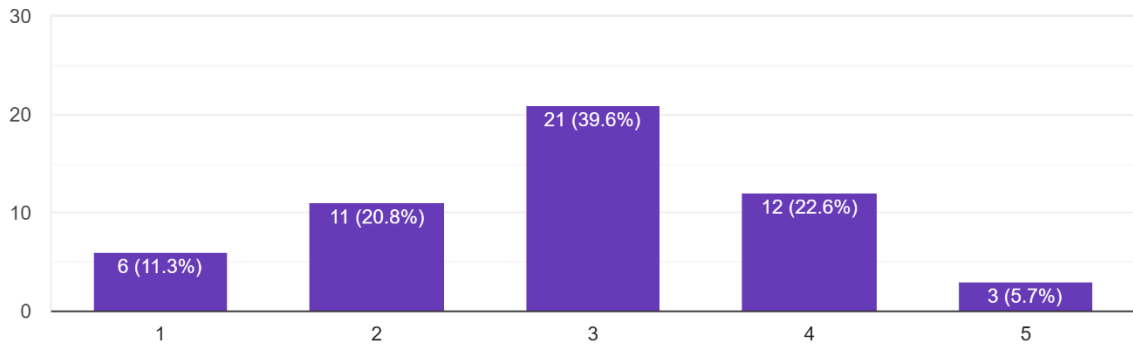


Figure 4.20 Continued Engagement After Participating in a Contest or Giveaway

The majority of respondents, 39.6%, indicated a neutral attitude toward continued engagement with a company after participating in a contest or gift, indicating doubt or disinterest. Approximately 22.6% of respondents are "Likely" to continue connecting with the brand, while 5.7% are "Very likely," indicating that a lesser but significant fraction is motivated to retain interactions. On the other hand, 20.8% are "Unlikely," while 11.3% are "Very unlikely" to continue connecting with the company after the contest.

4.1.4 Geographical (Section 4)

4.1.4.1 Living Area Distribution

21. Do you live in an urban, suburban, or rural area?

53 responses

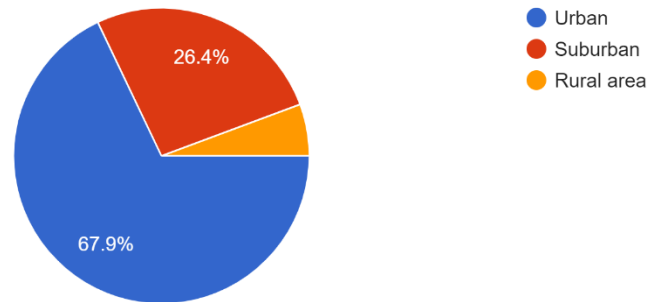


Figure 4.21 Living Area Distribution

More than half of respondents (67.9%) live in cities, indicating that a sizable proportion of the sample comes from heavily populated locations where social media usage and advertising may be more widespread. About 26.4% live in suburbia, representing a modest but significant proportion from less densely populated areas. Only 5.7% of respondents live in rural areas, which is a small proportion of the sample. Overall, the majority of respondents come from metropolitan areas, which may influence their exposure to and involvement with social media advertising.

4.1.4.2 Regional Variations in Purchase Intentions

22. Have you noticed any regional variations in your purchase intentions influenced by social media advertising?

53 responses

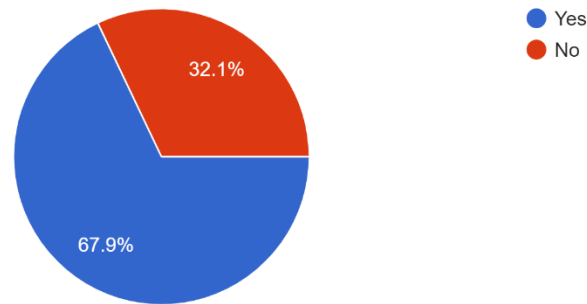


Figure 4.22 Regional Variations in Purchase Intentions

The majority of respondents (67.9%) reported geographical variances in their purchase intentions impacted by social media advertising. This shows that location, culture, and product availability may all have an impact on how advertisements influence consumer decisions. On the other hand, 32.1% of respondents reported no regional differences, showing that for a smaller proportion of the sample, geographic factors may not have a substantial impact on their purchasing decisions.

4.1.4.3 Influence of Local Customer Reviews

23. How likely are local customer reviews and recommendations on social media influential in shaping your purchase intentions?

53 responses

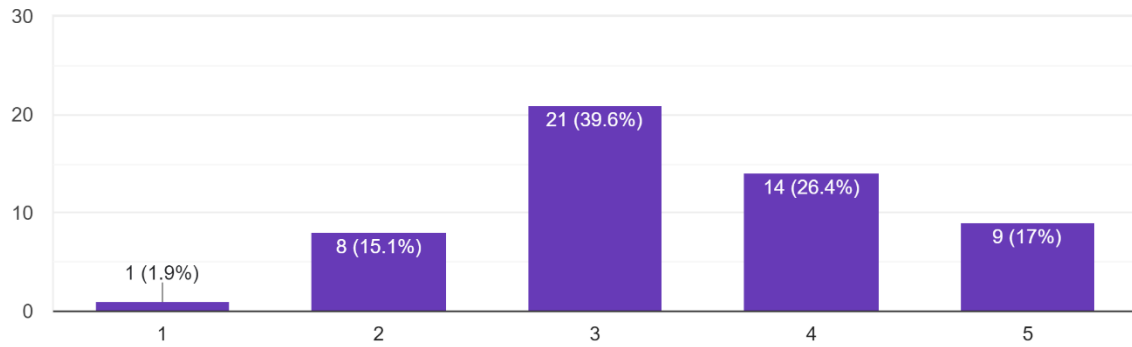


Figure 4.23 Influence of Local Customer Reviews

In Figure 4.18, it shows the influence of local customer reviews. Social media recommendations and evaluation from local customers have a big impact on what people purchase intentions. These reviews have a significant impact on consumers which are 26.4% are likely to be influenced, and 17% are very likely to be. Notably, 39.6% of respondents are remain neutral, 15.1% of respondents are unlikely to be influenced and only 1.9% of respondents are very unlikely to be impacted by them.

4.1.4.4 Importance of Locally Available Products/Services in Purchase Decisions

24. How likely is the availability of locally products/ services is important in your purchase decision-making process?

53 responses

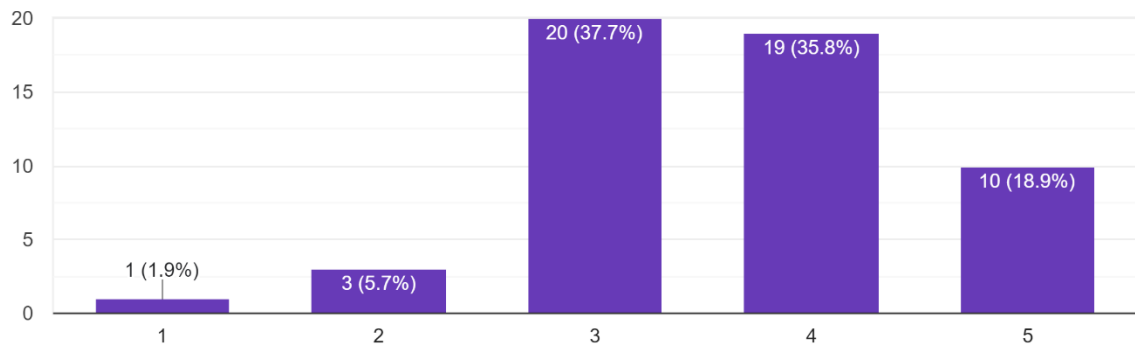


Figure 4.24 Importance of Locally Available Products/Services in Purchase Decisions

A sizable proportion of respondents, 37.7%, are unsure about the significance of locally available items or services in their purchasing decision-making process. However, 35.8% of respondents said the availability of local items is "likely" important, and 18.9% said it is "very likely," implying that more than half of respondents think local availability is an essential consideration. Only 5.7% are "Unlikely," and 1.9% are "Very unlikely" to prioritize local items or services in their purchasing decisions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implication and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of the study's findings about the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions. Drawing on the data studied in Chapter 4, the discussion focuses on major links discovered between social media participation and consumer behaviour, offering light on the critical aspects that influence trust and decision-making in a social media-driven market. This chapter will also discuss the theoretical and practical ramifications of the findings, as well as the study's limits and recommendations for further research. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive knowledge of how social media advertising influences consumer behaviour and what this means for businesses and marketers going forward.

5.1 Summary of Statistical Analysis

5.1.1 Descriptive Analysis

According to the results from Chapter 4, the majority of respondents in this study are female (52.8%) and Chinese (90.6%). The majority of responders are between the ages of 22 and 27 (58.5%), possess a degree (86.8%), and are students (90.6%).

The research found that a significant majority of respondents (71.7%) use Instagram on a regular basis, and it is also the most convenient platform for making direct transactions, with 69.8% preferring it for this reason. When it comes to daily engagement, nearly half of respondents (49.1%) devote 2 to 3 hours to social media. On these sites, most of the respondents (71.7%) engage with fashion-related material.

5.2 Discussion of Major Findings

5.2.1 The Relationship Between Type of Content That Respondents Typically Engage with Social Media and The Likelihood of Purchase Products and Services through Social Media by Audience

Trends in content consumption and purchase behaviour can be identified by analyzing social media activity. Fashion has the highest engagement rate among all content kinds, at 71.7%, followed by Food and Lifestyle, both at 60.4%, and photography at 52.8% respectively. Conversely, content about business and entrepreneurship has the lowest amount of interaction, which is 3.8%. Regarding consumer behaviour, a significant number of users (34%) have no opinion which is staying neutral on purchasing goods or services through social media, but 20.8% are unlikely to purchase, while 5.7% are very likely to purchase. High engagement content categories, such as Fashion has the highest engagement rate at 71.1%, Food and Lifestyle both have engagement rate of 60.4%, which are associated with a higher chance of making a purchase. This implies that people who interact with visually appealing and lifestyle-focused information on a regular basis are more likely to purchase relevant products and services. On the other hand, less engaging content such as Business and Entrepreneurship which only 3.8%, is less likely to encourage purchases made through social media. These findings emphasize how critical it is to focus on content categories with high levels of interaction when using social media platforms for marketing and sales.

5.2.2 The Relationship Between Reading Reviews Before Purchase and Engaging in Comparison Shopping

The frequency of reading reviews and the tendency to engage in comparison shopping shows the different aspects of consumer behaviour related to social media advertisements. The research reveals that a significant proportion of consumers frequently read reviews before making an advertisement-influenced purchase. With regard to social media reviews, 60.3% of respondents said they are either very likely or likely to read them before making purchase. Review consideration is unlikely to be considered by a small proportion of users (18.9%), indicating the crucial significance that reviews play for many users in their decision-making process. However, it is even more common to compare prices when thinking about making purchase after seeing an advertisement on social media. Significantly, 79.3% of consumers are often, frequently and always engaging in comparison shopping. This shows that most buyers have strong desire to make sure they obtain the best value and that they frequently evaluate brands or products or even the services before making final purchase. High levels of consumer diligence prior to making purchase are indicated by both sets responses. While comparing prices, consumers exhibit slightly more cautious behaviour than while reading reviews, indicating that they place a high value on weighing their options. However, a tiny proportion in both cases which do not spend a lot of time conducting pre-purchase research, 18.9% are unlikely to read reviews and 20.8% rarely or never do comparison shopping.

5.2.3 The Relationship Between Likelihood of Sharing Experiences and Influence of Local Customer Reviews

The influence of reviews before making a purchase and the likelihood of sharing experiences after purchase are very different. When making decisions about purchases, consumers are more affected by recommendations and reviews from local customers (43.4% likely or very likely)

than they are by customers sharing their experiences after making purchases (22.6% likely or very likely). A sizable percentage of customers may be situationally driven, as evidenced by the sizeable neutral response to both questions (39.6%). For example, certain items or circumstances may affect their propensity to influence or share. When it comes to sharing experiences after a purchase, the minority of consumers who are extremely unlikely or unlikely to engage in both activities is more evident (37.7%) than when it comes to being affected by reviews (17%). This demonstrates that discussing post-purchase experiences is often less common than the influence that reviews have on decision to purchase the products and services. In short, the responses to these questions show a clear variation in how consumers share their experiences and are impacted by social media evaluations. While many consumers' purchase intentions are greatly influenced by local buyers' reviews and suggestions, sharing post-buy experiences is less common. This suggests that although consumers are highly dependent on recommendations and social proof when making purchases, they are not as involved in the ecosystem afterward. By utilizing this data, marketers may encourage delighted customers to share their positive experiences to increase social proof, while concentrating on creating and emphasizing customer evaluations and recommendations to attract new customers.

5.3 Implications of The Study

The objective of this study is to examine the relationships and interdependencies that exist between the trust that audiences develop via social media advertising and their consequent intents to make purchases. As social media remains a dominant factor in determining consumer behaviour, knowing the subtleties of regional influence is critical for businesses, marketers and lawmakers. Theoretical implications and practical implications of this study provide a sight to the impact of social media advertising on audience trust and purchase intentions.

5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

According to the uses and gratifications theory (UGT), people consume certain sorts of media because they expect specific gratifications as a result of their decisions (Vinney, 2024). The application of Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) to this study increases knowledge of how geographical disparities influence how customers utilize social media for purchasing decisions. UGT proposes that people actively choose and use social media to meet their specific requirements and desires, which include information seeking, entertainment, social engagement, online shopping and etc. Using UGT, this study demonstrates that these requirements and gratifications were not uniform across locations, rather they are influenced by local cultural, social and economic factors.

For instance, those living in areas with limited access to products may use social media more for discovery and comparison shopping; they are also likely to rely on expert opinions via online evaluations before making purchase decisions. The social benefits of brand encounters and playing a role in online debates could have also impacted their purchase intentions anywhere stronger community/social engagement orientation prevailed. The Variability in medias usage of these countries adds more credibility to the fact that Social Media platform advertisers need pay attention and align with local contexts while building their marketing strategy in order for them target various gratification needs customers seeks within different locations.

5.3.2 Practical Implications

Based on the findings, it highlights the necessity of localized marketing methods. Businesses may improve the success of their social media efforts by adapting their content to the special preferences and habits of consumers across different regions. This localization could entail

changing the language, visuals, and messaging to better align with local culture and beliefs, hence enhancing engagement and conversion rates.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of local consumer reviews and suggestions in influencing purchasing behaviours. Organizations could capitalise on this by encouraging delighted consumers to share their experiences and comment on social media, especially in places where such recommendations are highly valued. This boost in trust at the local level can increase overall faith that an AI-enabled card will not penetrate a service against one of its intentions – brand loyalty, which speculation says should provide decent returns. Additionally, having services and products more accessible in locations of high demand can increase customer satisfaction as well as brand loyalty.

At the same time, social media can take advantage of this information to invent new tools that will facilitate better regional targeting which means for marketers and businesses they are able reach a right kind of audience with correct and relevant contents. They might also show area-specific content, thereby creating a better user experience and a more effective advertising ecosystem on their platform.

5.4 Limitations of The Study

The findings of this study do have some limitations also. First, the study is based on the self-reported data which is faulty as the subjects might not recall or even intentionally underreport or over report their usage of social media or their purchasing activities. This imputed response bias may affect the impact and validity of the original findings, as the behaviours reported may be out of the ordinary.

Second, the demographic base and sample size of the study may limit the results to a wider population. For instance, if this research included only students from one or a few age districts or education level or geography, then the findings referred might not be applicable to the wider society. This limitation highlights the importance of the restriction of the generalization of the results obtained in this study to other societies and even regions which have not been covered by the study or which are not represented in the sample.

Third, the cross-sectional nature of the research design of this study also poses other limitations. Since the research gathered information at one given period, this study was unable to explain, for instance, changes in social media purchasing behaviour across regions. Longitudinal research will be required to determine how these habits change over time and what factors contribute to the shift.

Fourth, because this study focuses on specific social media platforms, the findings may be less relevant to other platforms that were not covered in the study. Different platforms are designed to appeal to different user demographics, with varied features; hence, it is only reasonable to expect varied patterns in purchase behaviour. Future studies should be done with an even broader scope by including more varied platforms that could verify whether the findings are somewhat consistent across the different contexts of social media.

Finally, the regional classification used in this study is not enough to describe such complexity of regional differences. Additional explanations, such as urban versus countryside, local economic conditions, or even cultural variety across areas, were not explored in depth and may affect purchase behaviour in many ways not taken into consideration in this research. More

regional analyses can be done that will reveal new layers of complexity and nuanced understanding of how regional differences would affect social media purchases.

5.5 Recommendations of Future Research

This study invites several considerations for future research in order to elucidate the geographical dimensions of social media shopping better. First, longitudinal approaches should be used in the future to capture changes in consumer behaviour. This would give a clearer picture of how geographical a factor is in social media purchases over time, regardless of changing digital marketing techniques, social media, and consumers' behavioural patterns. Longitudinal study may also help in finding some of the bold skims in consumer behaviour based on the changes in culture, economy and technology.

Second, assessing other social media platforms would be a plausible supplemental initiative to this research. Twitter, mister and new local sites with various design, user scope, and marketing provisions are likely to impact consumer behaviour differently. More specific study looking at the way purchase behaviour is shaped by different platforms in different areas would probably provide the marketers and researchers with more in-depth information.

In addition, the additional cultural factors highlighted in the previous findings should also be explored in future research to contextualize the variances of the social media purchases within the region. By exploring, for instance, how aspects of the culture such as social trust, social norms, or local culture affect consumers' behaviour patterns, one would more comprehensively account for the observed behavioural patterns at the regional level. Qualitative methods including but not limited to, focus groups or interviews may yield context-cantered data which is usually lacking in survey data.

Lastly, the role of local opinion leaders and local online communities might be other potential area of interest as it relates to local social context and social media use for purchasing. This should be relevant to investigating the role of local opinion panellists, brand spokespeople, or local opinion leaders and how effective they are in the context of diverse regions. This examination may be of practical advancement to the marketers in efforts to adapt their strategies especially as it concerns regional opinion leaders.

5.6 Conclusion

This study concluded that social media advertising is effective in influencing consumer trust to behave, especially for fashion, food, and lifestyle categories. Reviews, transparency, and comparison shopping are of great importance for consumer trust, while the local reviews and recommendations have played a significant role in the purchasing decisions. Therefore, these considerations that have to be taken into account when businesses and marketers build on their social media strategies with engaging, transparent, locally relevant content that will drive not only engagement but also conversions. Future research will, however, need to overcome some of the limitations of this study and venture down new avenues toward our understanding of how social media continues to evolve as a powerful tool for consumer engagement and commerce.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Data

Section 2 of 5

Section 1: Demographic Data ✕ ⋮

Please respond to the questions by selecting the most appropriate choice from each item described below or by filling in the blanks.

1. Gender ^{*}

Male

Female

2. Age ^{*} ⋮

17-21

22-27

28 and above

4. Educational Level *

- High school or below
- Foundation or Diploma
- A-Levels
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree

5. Occupation *

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Student

Section 2: Psychographic Data

Section 3 of 5

Section 2: Social media usage and engagement × ⋮

Please select the appropriate response to each of the following questions.

6. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? *

Facebook

Instagram

YouTube

TikTok

Other...

7. Which social media platform do you find most convenient for making purchases directly through the platform? *

Facebook

Instagram

YouTube

TikTok

Other...

8. How frequently do you engage with social media content daily? *

- Less than 1 hour
- 2-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- More than 10 hours

9. Do you follow any brands or products on social media? *

- Yes
- No

10. What type of content do you typically engage with social media? *

- Lifestyle
- Fashion
- Technology
- Fitness
- Food
- Travel
- Beauty and Makeup
- Health and Wellness
- Business and Entrepreneurship
- Gaming
- Photography
- Other...

Section 3: Behavioural Data

Section 4 of 5

Section 3: Consumer Engagement and Purchase Behavior on Social Media ⌵ ⋮

This sections contains several questions that use a Likert scale. Please select the most suitable answer that indicates the degree to which you unlikely or likely with the statements.

1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely)

⋮

11. How often do you search for brands or products from social media? *

Never

Rarely

Often

Frequently

Always

12. How likely do you purchase products/ services through social media? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

13. After making purchase influenced by social media advertising, how likely are you engage ^{*} with the brand on social media?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

14. How often do you read review products or services on social media before making a ^{*} purchase influenced by an advertisement?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Likely

15. When considering a purchase shown in social media advertisement, do you engage in ^{*} comparison shopping across different brand or products?

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Frequently
- Always

16. How often do you share social media advertisement with friends or family, either for recommendation or discussion? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

:::

17. After making a purchase, how likely are you to share your experience on social media or participate in discussions related to the products/ services? (in Likert scale) *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

18. How likely do you believe that products/ services advertised on social media can positively impact your lifestyle? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

19. How likely are you to participate in contests or giveaways hosted by brands on social media? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

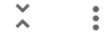
20. After participating in a contest or giveaway, how likely are you to continue engaging with the brand on social media? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

Section 4: Geographical Data

Section 5 of 5

Section 4: The Impact of Regional Differences on Social Media Purchases



Please select the appropriate answer for each of the following questions.

21. Do you live in an urban, suburban, or rural area? *

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural area

22. Have you noticed any regional variations in your purchase intentions influenced by social media advertising? *

- Yes
- No

23. How likely are local customer reviews and recommendations on social media influential in shaping your purchase intentions? *

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Very unlikely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very likely |

24. How likely is the availability of locally products/ services is important in your purchase decision-making process? *

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Very unlikely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Very likely |