

Impact of Social Media Advertising on Youth Purchasing Decisions: Evidence from Bhopal, India

¹Anjali Thakur, ²Dr. Arun G Pillai, ³Dr. Shivshankar Vishvakarma, ⁴Ananya Pandey

¹PhD Scholar, LNCT University, Bhopal

²Associate Professor, LNCT University, Bhopal

³Associate, Professor, Department of MBA, LNCT, Bhopal

⁴Research Scholar, Bhopal, India

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the impact of social media advertising on the purchasing behaviors of youngsters in Bhopal, India. With the development of digital technologies, social media has become a key driver of marketing activity, influencing the purchasing behaviors of consumers, especially youngsters. This research focuses on a quantitative descriptive research method and relies on primary research based on questionnaire results obtained from 50 respondents belonging to the age group of 15-25 years. The results show that the most influential group consists of those who access social media like Instagram and YouTube. In addition, it has been identified that promotions via influencers and video ads are the most persuasive type of advertisement. It has been recognized that a considerable percentage of the respondents made purchases based on social media ads. However, it has been revealed that the respondents show limited trust levels regarding ads, and social influence, aesthetics, and repetition were vital factors. The research contributes localized empirical evidence from a burgeoning urban city and sheds light on the escalating role of digital advertising in shaping the consumption behavior of youth. The study also offers potential practical implications for marketers aiming to target youth in developing markets worldwide.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Advertising, Youth Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing; Bhopal.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital media has caused a marked shift in marketing trends. Social media sites, initially used as a means of communication, have gained popularity as a marketing tool that affects consumer behavior. Social media sites, including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Snapchat, offer an opportunity for marketers to reach their audience and communicate with consumers through personalization, advertising with influencers, and advertisements on their sites. The most active users of social media sites, across all demographic compositions, comprise the youth.

In the recent past, the popularity of social media advertising has increased due to the ability to send messages depending on the preference of the users. Unlike other forms of advertising, social media advertisements blend in perfectly with the different feeds of the users. This enhances the persuasive nature of the advertising campaign. Models such as the incorporation of videos and the involvement of influential persons through endorsements reinforce the persuasive nature of digital marketing. This has led to a situation whereby the youth utilize social media for purposes other than entertainment.

Even though there have been a number of studies concerning the impact of social media advertising from a metropolitan and global perspective, little has been done so far regarding mid-sized Indian cities such as Bhopal. Consumer behavior can vary from place to place because of cultural, economic, and technological differences. Hence, localized studies are necessary to understand consumer behavior from a local perspective.

The aim of the present study is to understand the extent to which social media advertisement affects the purchase behavior of the youth in Bhopal. It will explore the usage of social media, the mode and pattern of advertisement, the effect of influencers, perceptions of trust, etc. It will contribute to the area of study by presenting evidence from an emerging urban city and thereby adding to the body of knowledge.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing integration of social media into daily life has significantly reshaped consumer decision-making processes, particularly among youth. Existing research consistently highlights that social media advertising influences brand awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions through interactive and personalized communication. Unlike traditional advertising, digital platforms allow targeted content delivery, real-time engagement, and user participation, which enhance persuasive effectiveness.

Several theoretical frameworks explain how social media advertising affects consumer behavior. **The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** suggests that purchasing decisions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of social media, advertisements shape positive attitudes toward products, while peer interactions, likes, shares, and influencer endorsements influence subjective norms. Additionally, the convenience of online purchasing enhances perceived behavioral control, increasing the likelihood of purchase.

It is further explained by **The AIDA model**, which basically constitutes attention, interest, desire, and action, in explaining exactly how digital ads move consumers through a series of steps in the process of persuasion. Attention-grabbing content, short-form videos, and interactive reels create desire for influencing purchases. Social media platforms are effective in accelerating this for repeated exposure and algorithm-driven personalization.

Social Learning Theory highlights that people learn through observation; that is, individuals learn behaviors through observing role models.

Influencers serve as digital opinion leaders, modeling product use and depicting lifestyle benefits for their products. Due to the perceived similarity and trustworthiness of the influencers, youths result in higher imitations and purchase intention. Empirical studies have evidenced that influencer credibility and authenticity enhance advertising effectiveness significantly.

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) categorizes persuasion into central and peripheral routes. Youth on social media often use a peripheral route for ads. In their ad processing, they usually look for their liking, popularity, and beauty. But while making purchasing decisions, especially for high-involvement products, they may use a central route for persuasion.

Relevant empirical studies on global and Indian subject matter have asserted the positive influence of advertising on the purchase intentions of the youth. Visual appeal, personalized approach, emotional engagement, and social validation are core factors affecting the consumer behavior of the youth. Most studies are conducted on a wider population base, including metropolitan cities. Limited studies have been conducted on mid-sized urban areas like Bhopal, where the urban landscape has started to embrace the digital revolution, and their socio-cultural factors might be unique.

Accordingly, this research aims to bridge the research gap by contributing localized research on how social media advertisement shapes the purchasing behaviors of youth in Bhopal. In addition, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital consumer behavior by marrying theory and geography.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research aims to employ a quantitative and descriptive research design to investigate and analyze the impact of advertising through social media on purchasing behavior in youth in Bhopal. The descriptive research design is appropriate to investigate and understand patterns and relationships with behavior in relation to digital advertisements.

Sample and Data Collection

The target population for this study remained individuals between the ages of 15 and 25 residing in Bhopal. The sample size was set at 50 participants based on a targeted convenience sampling technique. The participants were primarily students and young, highly engaged social media users.

To collect primary data, a structured questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms. Using the online tool was beneficial in disseminating the questionnaire and collecting respondents' answers with ease. Also, the respondents were voluntarily requested to answer the questionnaire regarding the academic purpose of the research.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 10 structured questions designed to capture:

Social media usage patterns

Most preferred platforms

Frequency of advertisement exposure

Types of advertisements that attract attention

Influence of influencers

Purchase behavior after advertisement exposure

Level of trust in social media advertisements

The instrument included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions to measure perceptions and behavioral responses.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using simple statistical methods such as percentages and frequency distributions. Results were interpreted to identify the patterns of social media usage and purchase behavior. As the study was more

exploratory and at the conference level, there has been no use of advanced statistical modeling techniques.

Limitations

The limitation is that a small sample size ($n = 50$) has been used, which may create a limitation, as convenience sampling may restrict generalizations. Moreover, the results may also be affected by response bias, as self-reported information has been used. Despite such limitations, localized results regarding youth consumption behavior in an emerging urban context can be derived.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Pattern of Using Social Media

These results of the findings indicate a high rate of social media engagement among youths within Bhopal. While 54% spend over three hours daily on social media platforms, 18% go further to spend more than five hours per day on them. This gross exposure creates a very conducive environment for digital advertising influence.

Among these, Instagram was the most frequently used platform, at 44%, followed by YouTube at 26%. The dominance of visually driven platforms insinuates that image- and video-based content is central in youth engagement. These findings align well with the AIDA model: visually appealing formats, like reels and short-form videos, are really good at securing attention and triggering interest. High frequency of use merely increases repeated exposure, thus reinforcing brand familiarity and recall.

The findings have established the fact that social media is not only a communication tool but also one of the prime media for entertainment, information, and product discovery among youth in Bhopal.

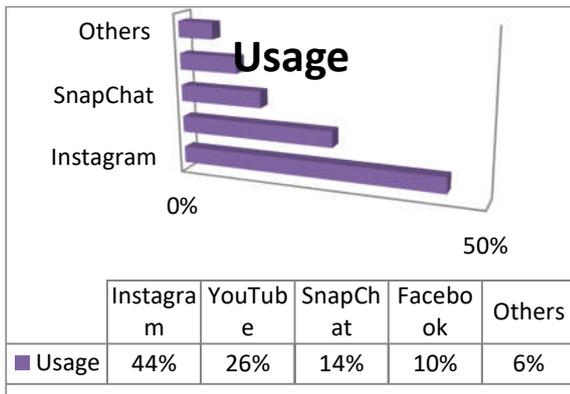


Figure 1. Distribution of Most Used Social Media Platforms

Advertiser Exposure and Engagement

A major number of respondents reported frequently encountering such advertisements on social media, i.e., 62%, followed by occasional encounters at 30%. This confirms that digital ads are embedded in the internet surfing experiences of the people.

With respect to advertisement, it was found that advertisements by influencers (36%) and video advertisements or reels (30%) are the most attractive forms, while traditional image-based advertisements are relatively less attractive (12%). This indicates that young people are more responsive to energetic and personality oriented advertising and not to traditional advertisements.

These results support the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**, which confirmed that youth may use the peripheral route to process ads. Moreover, their visual attraction, music, influence, and storytelling serve as persuasive tactics that influence their attitude without any deeper level of cognitive processing.

Influence on Purchasing Decisions

The findings also reveal that there is a significant behavioral effect of social media advertising. The majority of the respondents, that is, 66%, have said that they have made purchases after seeing ads of the respective products. Additionally, 66% have either agreed or strongly agreed that there is an influence of social media ads on their purchase decisions.

This implies that advertising through social media not only includes generating awareness but is more involved in shaping purchase behavior. Repeated exposure and ease of purchase through online shopping could be factors affecting this shift from intentions to actions.

From the **Theory of Planned Behavior** perspective, advertisements promote positive attitudes toward the product. Furthermore, the visibility of engagement metrics like the number of likes, shares, and comments on social media indirectly generates subjective norms on the effectiveness of the purchasing decisions made. Easy accessibility of online payment systems promotes perceived behavioral control, which aids the execution of the intended action.

These findings indicate that digital advertisement in Bhopal does not just serve as a persuasive media of communication but also influences consumer behavior.

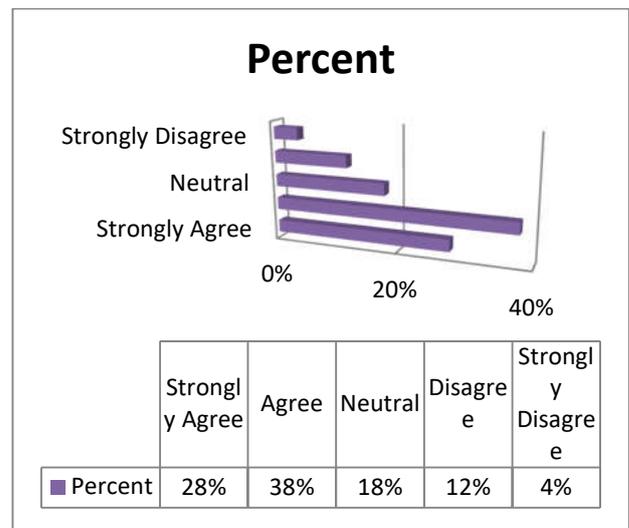


Figure 2. Perceived Influence of Social Media Advertising on Purchasing Decisions

Role of Influencers in Buying Behavior

Influencer impact was identified as an important factor in determining purchasing decisions among youngsters. About 60% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the notion that the

influencer's recommendation has an impact on their purchasing decisions.

This is a strong support for **Social Learning Theory**, which centers on observational learning. The influencers here function as role models that teenagers can easily relate to and see how they use the product. Teenagers are naturally driven to mimic behaviors and actions that other people, who they look up to, have done.

The emphasis on influencer advertising implies a move from branding, or brand-related, advertising towards a more personal form of advertising, focusing on the personality of the influencer. That is, the young consumer does not place sufficient trust in advertising directly, but seeks authenticity and associated relevance. This is a reflection of changes in digital consumerism.

Trust and Perception of Social Media Advertisements

Trust levels in relation to social media advertisements were moderate. Although only 18% of respondents reported high levels of trust, 42% reported moderate trust, and 28% reported slight levels of trust. Only 12% reported a lack of trust in advertisements.

Such findings suggest that youth react to digital advertisements with caution and optimism. Although there is some degree of doubt, the advertisement is quite influential owing to repetition, visuals, and the influencer themselves.

Moderate levels of trust suggest that authenticity and transparency play a vital role in the success of any online marketing campaign. When a customer's level of trust does not fall at the higher end of the scale, as per the **Elaboration Likelihood Model**, cues such as brand familiarity and influencer credibility play a more vital role in building attitudes.

Overall Interpretation

Cumulatively, findings show that the effect of social media advertising on youth purchasing behavior in Bhopal is significantly high. High levels of platform

engagement, preference for influencer-driven and video-based content, and moderately sufficient levels of trust create a strong persuasive environment.

Results confirm that even a mid-sized emerging urban city social media advertising works as an effective marketing mechanism on consumer attitude, intention, and actual buying behavior.

Table 1: Summary of Key Survey Findings (n = 50)

Variable	Key Result	Percentage
Daily Social Media Usage (>3 hrs.)	High Engagement	54%
Most Used Platform	Instagram	44%
Frequent Ad Exposure	Yes	62%
Purchased After Seeing Ad	Yes	66%
Influencer Impact (Agree/Strongly Agree)	Positive Influence	60%
Moderate Trust in Ads	Yes	42%

V. CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed the effect of online advertisements on social media through the buying behavior of youth residing in Bhopal, India. The results reveal that social media platforms, especially Instagram and YouTube, are becoming vital sources influencing young consumers' purchasing habits. High engagement frequency results in day-by-day excessive exposure to digital advertising, thus influencing brand recall and purchase intent.

This suggests that influencer promotions and video-based ads are the most persuasive formats among young people. The majority of the respondents also said that they had purchased something after seeing an ad on social media, demonstrating a direct behavior influence. On the other hand, online advertisement trust is rated as moderate and not absolute; but factors such as visual appeal,

repetition of exposure, credibility of influencers, and social proof strongly enhance persuasive power.

With respect to a theoretical perspective, the results support the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Learning Theory, AIDA, and Elaboration Likelihood Model to describe how youth are affected by digital advertisements. Advertisements are known to affect attitudes, shape subjective norms through peer involvement, and utilize peripheral cues, like aesthetics and popularity of influencers, to impact purchase behaviors.

The study also has direct implications for marketers who target youth groups in urbanizing emerging markets worldwide. In a very practical vein, for marketers aiming to target youth groups in emerging urban markets, the findings highlight the importance of image-driven content, influencer marketing, and personalized ads. However, authenticity is paramount in order to establish trust.

In spite of its contribution, the study is limited in its sample size and convenience sampling method, which may be limiting in its generalizability. Further studies on this research may use a large sample, comparative city research, or sophisticated statistical analysis in exploring the relationship between social media advertising and consumer behavior.

In conclusion, social media advertising is thus found to be a potent factor in shaping the purchasing decisions of the youth in Bhopal in line with the rising trends in the field of digital marketing in evolving economies.

REFERENCES

- [1] I. Ajzen, "The theory of planned behavior," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 179–211, 1991.
- [2] A. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice Hall, 1977.
- [3] A. Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall, 1986.
- [4] A. M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media," *Business Horizons*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 59–68, 2010.
- [5] W. G. Mangold and D. J. Faulds, "Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix," *Business Horizons*, vol. 52, no. 4, pp. 357–365, 2009.
- [6] R. E. Petty and J. T. Cacioppo, *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. New York, NY, USA: Springer-Verlag, 1986.
- [7] M. De Veirman, V. Cauberghe, and L. Hudders, "Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude," *International Journal of Advertising*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 798–828, 2017.
- [8] E. Djafarova and C. Rushworth, "Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 68, pp. 1–7, 2017.
- [9] R. G. Duffett, "Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes," *Young Consumers*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 19–39, 2017.
- [10] C. Lou and S. Yuan, "Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust and purchase intention," *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 58–73, 2019.