

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions: A Study on Brand Trust and Consumer Loyalty

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the impact of social media on consumers' purchase decisions and to check if there is a relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty. Nowadays, social media has introduced many things through ads, but people buy branded stuff. Consumers trust the brand a lot. For this research, 250 consumers were selected from shopping malls in Lahore and asked questions about brand and brand trust. They followed a five-point checklist. After collecting the data, it was entered into SPSS, and descriptive and regression tests were applied. The results revealed that consumers trust the brand more. People seem to buy mostly branded items. Very few people buy different things by looking at social media ads. It is recommended that brands should increase their quality so that they can meet the needs of consumers.

Keywords: Social Media, Consumer purchase decisions, Brand trust, Consumer loyalty

Introduction

Social media have grown in importance alongside the expansion of the Internet (Bessarab et al., 2021). In over a decade, social media has undergone massive changes and popularity, from humble beginnings as online forums and blogs to massive platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. (Dhingra & Mudgal, 2019). According to recent figures, More than half of the world's population, or over 4 billion individuals, utilize social media (Tuten, 2023). Consumers typically use advertisements, personal recommendations, and product evaluations as part of the conventional buying decision-making process (Chen & Wang, 2017). This paradigm has, however, been irrevocably altered by the advent of social media. Social media has opened up a world of new information for consumers, including product reviews, user reviews, and suggestions from influential people. Marketing may be more targeted and customized with the help of social media since it allows businesses to communicate directly with customers (Evans et al., 2021).

Investigations into how social media influences the choice of buyers at relevant real-world levels can improve firms' marketing strategies and learn the influence to help them better serve customers and improve competitiveness in the market (Palalic et al., 2021). At the same time, customers will enjoy a more convenient and tailor-made purchasing experience. "Social

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media" refers to online societies where individuals communicate by posting user-generated content (Ahmed et al., 2019). Again, it is a broad category comprising internet-based services and tools meant to enhance user communication and support data exchange. Three essential features define social media: user-generated content, interaction, and immediacy. While "UGC" refers to the content the users create and share on the web, "interactivity" shows the significance of the conversation between users and feedback from them. Finally, "immediacy" refers to how fast information is spread and covered (Chung et al., 2015).

Sfetcu (2017) lists many broad categories for social media based on their functions and uses photo sharing, video sharing, social networks, interest-based social platforms, instant messaging, blogs, and content communities. In today's world, social media serves several purposes, each of which enhances the lives of its users through new interactions and experiences (Tess, 2013).

As a primary means of disseminating information, social media allows users to chronicle their daily lives, thoughts, and interests by publishing various media formats such as text, images, and videos (Osatuyi, 2013). Promoting communication and engagement between users is fundamental to social media. People may interact with one another through many means, such as liking, commenting, sharing, private messaging, and more. For amusement and relaxation, users of social networking sites may access many entertaining films, games, songs, and live broadcasts. Users may unwind and enjoy themselves while perusing and interacting with these materials. Content production and display, especially on social media sites, allows users to express their individuality and artistic capabilities. Whether photography, writing, music composition, or video production, sharing one's work on social media is a surefire way to attract recognition and comments. When considering online marketing and buying, it is easy to see that social media will soon become a game-changer. Businesses can use social media to promote their products through advertising, promotional campaigns, and product demos to customers and directly interact with them (Dwivedi et al., 2015).

In most cases, the consumer makes a purchase following five essential steps. At each step, they undergo different thoughts and activities. According to Stankevich, 2017, customers undergo a couple of steps before they can make any purchase. According to Sorina-Raula et al. (2012), the first step in purchasing is becoming aware of the need for or the existence of the problem. Papies et al. (2017) listed internal and exterior factors as potential triggers for this need. Internal factors include hunger and product desires, while external factors include advertisements and word-of-mouth recommendations. Consumers discover solutions to problems through information searches (Grant et al., 2013). It is possible to classify searches for information as either internal or external. Consumers engage in internal search when they rely on their knowledge and experiences to identify answers and external search when they seek advice from others, such as friends, read reviews, or peruse advertisements and websites.

Choice evaluation is the process by which customers, after gathering sufficient information, evaluate several choices. Before making a purchase, consumers consider all of their available options, considering their unique tastes, financial situation, and other relevant factors (Hauser & Urban, 1986). Consumers make their ultimate buying selection after considering all their options (Jessie et al., 2001). The consumer may still be swayed by variables like sales, recommendations from sales associates, or short-term reductions, even when they have

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already decided to alter their ultimate purchasing behavior.

Consumers' reactions and feedback following the purchase and use of the product constitute post-buy behavior, the final step of the purchase decision process (Pizzutti et al., 2022). Evaluations of pleasure, sharing experiences, and after-sales service experiences are all examples of post-purchase behaviors. When customers are happy with their purchases, they are more likely to stick with the brand and spread the word about how great it is; on the other hand, when customers are unhappy, they are more likely to send the product back, make a complaint, or write a bad review (Maxham III, 2001).

Problem Statement

The objective of this research was to study brand trust and consumer loyalty. It was also examined whether social media forces people to buy things. Do people buy things without a brand just based on social media advertising? It was also to see if people's attitudes toward a brand mature through social media. In this research, 250 customers were selected through convenience sampling, selected from Chase Value Lahore, asked questions, and rated on the 5-point rating scale. Then, the data was put into SPSS, and the results were extracted by applying descriptive statistics and Regression analysis. The results of this research will significantly benefit various companies and stakeholders.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty.
2. To examine the impact of social media as influencers on consumer purchase decisions.

Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between brand trust and consumer loyalty?
2. Is there any impact of social media as an influencer on consumer purchase decisions?

Hypothesis

Ho.1 There is no correlation between brand trust and consumer loyalty.

Ho.2 There is no correlation between social media as influencers and consumer purchase decisions.

Literature Review

Personal, social, and psychological aspects all play a role in consumers' decision-making processes to varied degrees when it comes to purchasing (Häubl & Trifts, 2000). Personal Information about the Population: According to Šadić et al. (2018), customers' buying habits may be significantly affected by demographic factors such as age, gender, income, employment, and degree of education. Personal interests, hobbies, and ways of life all play a role in what people buy (Nikmah & Pramesty, 2019). Organic food and exercise goods may appeal more to customers who prioritize a healthy lifestyle. Personality and self-concept, customers' personalities (such as their level of independence and openness to new experiences), and their sense of who they are as individuals may significantly impact the products they choose to buy (Huang & Choi, 2017).

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According to Anisha and Kalaivani (2016), one of the most significant social elements influencing customers' purchase decisions is the family and the opinions and requirements of its members. Decisions to buy may be impacted by family roles and structures, including whether children are present or not and what people in the family do for a living. Never discount the power of people's networks, including friends, family, and coworkers, while attempting to understand consumer behavior. When buying expensive or potentially dangerous goods, consumers are more likely to listen to the advice of those they respect and trust. A consumer's purchasing behavior might be impacted by their social roles and position, such as work. Gherasim (2013) suggests that higher-income consumers may be more likely to buy luxury goods to flaunt their social standing.

Motivation: A consumer's motivation is the inner drive that causes them to behave. Consumers' buying decisions are impacted by several motives, including physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization demands (Tanner, 2019). Individuals' purchase decisions are impacted by their perceptions, encompassing their views of the product's attributes, the brand's reputation, and marketing campaigns. According to Zhao et al. (2022), various perceptual experiences can cause customers to form diverse opinions about identical goods. Learned behavior is when customers shape their future purchases based on what they have learned from experience and new knowledge. Brand loyalty is increased when customers have positive experiences and hear good things about the brand from others and decreases when customers have bad experiences and decide to move to a different brand (Palalic et al., 2021).

The other principal determinant of consumers' purchasing decisions is their attitude and opinion towards companies and their products. According to Mandarić et al. (2022), belief implies consumers' impressions about the characteristics of the product or brand, while attitude refers to the general opinion of consumers towards a product or brand. Social media significantly influences how consumers perceive their needs and issues at the problem-identification stage of the buying process (Palalic et al., 2021).

Social media websites use data analytics in combination with algorithmic recommendations to prompt advertisement messages to users based on their interests and needs; this is what is referred to as targeted advertising (Gao et al., 2021). Such personalized advertisements will promptly arouse customers' awareness and attention to possible demands. Countless companies utilize social media for brand marketing by holding contests, giveaways, or other promotional activities. According to Tinezia, 2023, these actions easily attract customers' attention and influence them to purchase.

Reviews, testimonials, and user experiences shared over social media provide a resourceful platform for other users. Testimonials and positive reviews might inspire other customers to take action because they may have similar demands (Nikolinakou & Phua, 2020): lifestyle displays and user narratives. According to Allman-Farinelli and Nour (2021), when individuals post about their everyday lives, interests, and activities on social media, it might subtly affect how other users view their requirements.

Users' ability to recognize problems is heavily impacted by the social circles in which they participate on social media. A user may understand his or her need for a product or service after hearing about a friend's positive experience with one. According to research (Rao & Kalyani, 2022; Chan, 2022), celebrities and social media influencers have the power to rapidly

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gain a large following and encourage product purchases through product endorsements and visual representation.

At this point, customers are actively looking for answers to their questions by doing an information search. During this phase, social media offers many resources and tools, significantly impacting how consumers gather information and make decisions (Jia et al., 2021).

Social media users often peruse user-generated content, including product and service evaluations and reviews (Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). A product's quality and dependability may be better evaluated using reference material such as real-life experiences and feedback. Unboxing videos and in-depth reviews: Many people share these videos on social media, discussing products and illustrating how they work and the pros and cons (Bhattacharya & Dhingra, 2023).

Social media debates and recommendations, where users may seek the opinions of their friends, family, and coworkers on a wide range of products. According to Bartschat et al. (2021), these suggestions from friends and acquaintances are frequently seen as reliable sources of information: interest groups and forums. Nielsen and Ganter (2022) note that many social media sites provide forums and interest groups where users can discuss and exchange opinions on certain goods and services.

Brand websites and official social media pages. Brands and businesses frequently publish promotional materials, user manuals, product details, and other information on their official websites and social media profiles. They facilitate immediate communication and offer customer assistance (Macarthy, 2021). Many companies now have live chat features on their social media pages where customers can get answers to their inquiries and expert shopping recommendations in a flash. In addition to making information access more efficient, this contact boosts customer trust in the company (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

After collecting relevant data, customers go on to the option assessment stage, where they compare several brands and items before making a final decision (Ecer, 2021).

Consumers may gain first-hand knowledge and in-depth product information via social media reviews, user evaluations, and comparison posts (Liu et al., 2020). Customers may learn more about the benefits and drawbacks of each option by reading reviews and comparisons written by other customers. Social media networks' rating systems and ranking create a visual reference point. Consumers can contrast the ratings and rankings of products with quality and reputation, as prescribed by Styliadis et al. (2020).

Social media, forums, and other user-generated content where customers can discuss and share opinions and experiences about various products (Aydin et al., 2021). In the case of interaction, customers receive a more extensive and source-diverse set of opinions, boosting their abilities to evaluate the offerings. Another factor that might influence a consumer's choice is the opinion of friends and family, considering the impact of social media. People commonly ask their friends and relatives for product recommendations because they trust and value the views of those they know (Choi, 2020).

Brands and businesses that share official comparisons and comprehensive product information on social media give customers access to credible resources (Kington al., 2021). Customers' opinions could be swayed by deals and promotions that businesses share on social media. For instance, customers are likelier to prefer an option that offers limited-time

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discounts, promotions, or freebies (Gardner, 2022).

Customers choose the service or product at the end of the purchase decision stage. At this point, social media significantly impacts the customer's decision-making and purchasing behavior (Palalic et al., 2021). Social media promotions, like time-sensitive sales, group purchases, and discounts, attract customers and make them want to buy immediately (Wu et al., 2021). Discount codes and coupons: Companies and brands frequently use social media to announce sales and urge customers to buy quickly (Nayal & Pandey, 2022).

The opinions of friends and influencers when deciding what to buy, many people look at social media recommendations from people they know and trust (Kwiatek et al., 2021). These testimonies boost customer confidence in the product, which offers legitimacy and attraction. According to Jog (2024), user-generated content (UGC) like "sunshine" posts and experience videos can increase buyers' faith in the product even more.

In order to assist customers with concerns and purchases, several businesses now provide online counseling and real-time customer support using social media platforms (Torous et al., 2021). Conversations and comments. Social media allows companies and consumers to connect directly, providing immediate feedback and assistance. Santos et al. (2022) say this connection boosts customer satisfaction and confidence in purchasing.

Even after customers finish making a purchase, social media significantly influences their actions in the post-buy stage, which includes things like talking about the goods, being loyal to the company, and spreading the word about the brand (Mensah et al., 2021). Sharing one's product experience on social media is common when a customer purchases (Hyun et al., 2021). Users may share their honest thoughts and experiences with products with others using text, images, videos, etc. An increasingly crucial means by which customers convey their happiness or discontent with a product is through ratings and reviews, which they publish on social media and shopping websites (Zhao et al., 2020).

Brands may increase customer satisfaction and loyalty through social media customer care by responding quickly and solving customer problems (Rane et al., 2023). Content and updates from the brand companies use social media to regularly notify customers about new products, how to use them, and any discounts or deals that may be available (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

Sunshots and comprehensive usage instructions allow customers to express their satisfaction with the product and its potential uses (Palmintier et al., 2016). Sharing a product on social media does double duty: it gets the word out about the product and makes others more interested. Perceptions of products and services in the market are shaped by social media influencers and opinion leaders, who have a large following and sway over the public's opinion (Liu et al., 2018).

While there is no shortage of marketing and engagement opportunities on social media, organizations must also be mindful of the many obstacles they face: Brand messages struggle to be seen due to the overwhelming volume of content and information available on social media, which causes consumers to experience information overload (Bawden & Robinson, 2020). The difference is due to the cluttered marketplace, where the brands have to excite customers through innovative content and intelligent advertising. Sreejesh et al. (2020) opined, "Consumers' attention nowadays is more towards entertainment and valuable content rather than advertising and promotional material." This suggests that to amaze and

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retain consumer attention and to create an emotional connection between the brand and consumers, businesses have to constantly raise the bar for content quality and ideation (Mohammad et al., 2020).

It can significantly impact a firm's reputation through social media evaluations and word of mouth. Consumers rely more on opinions and experiences from other real customers rather than believing in marketing remarks by the brand itself (Sharif et al., 2022). Companies should be able to track and respond to customer feedback to attain positive social trust and word of mouth. The more consumers are aware of their individual needs, including information protection and data security, the more they become worried about how their data is used and stored by the social media platform. For brands to gain consumers' trust because of the transparent rules of data usage and protection of personal information, brands are bound to be in line with strict data protection legislation and ethical standards (Jain et al., 2022).

With constant algorithm and functionality changes, social media platforms could impact how brand content is displayed and users interact (Tuten, 2023). With this, brands must be aware of platform changes and change accordingly to ensure they reach target audiences effectively with their marketing strategies and distribution schedules for content. Kim, (2020) says that any brand needs a consistent content strategy and a cohesive voice when promoting and campaigning across social media platforms. For multi-platform operations, according to Srinivasan, 2021, effective and efficient resource allocation and coordination are necessary for the brand to have a consistent image and be optimized on all platforms (Srinivasan, 2021).

Research Methodology

This cross-sectional survey research examined the impact of social media and observed the correlation between brand trust and consumer loyalty. Data was collected from 250 consumers for this research. These consumers were taken to Lahore shopping centers. These consumers were selected using convenience sampling. They were asked short questions, and the answers were ranked on a five-point scale. They were asked about the brand, whether they have your brand reputation, and whether they do not want to change their brand due to the influence of social media. After taking the data, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were applied in SPSS, and the results were extracted.

Results and Findings

Table 1 Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions

Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions				
	<i>f</i>	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Partially disagree	203	81.2	81.2	81.2
Random	31	12.4	12.4	93.6
Partially agree	16	6.4	6.4	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the results of social media as influencers on consumer purchase decisions, and it was found that most consumers partially disagree. This means that social media does not affect changing consumer satisfaction towards brands other than those they trust.

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Table 2 Brand Trust

Brand Trust				
	f	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Random	20	8.0	8.0	8.0
Partially agree	165	66.0	66.0	74.0
Fully agree	65	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 describes the results of brand trust; it was observed that most people agreed that they trust the brand. They cannot change the brand at any cost.

Table 3 Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.043 ^a	.002	-.002	.556

a. Predictors: (Constant) Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions

Table 3 states the results of the model summary, R Square observed -.002. This means social media influence is at -0.2 negatively.

Table 4 ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.141	1	.141	.456	.500 ^b
	Residual	76.759	248	.310		
	Total	76.900	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant) Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions

Table 4 describes the results of the ANOVA analysis. The $p > 0.05$ means there is no significant influence on social media to change any other brand compared to the brand on which consumers trust it.

Table 5 Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	4.275	.145		29.447	.000
1	Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions	-.042	.063	-.043	-.675	.500

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Trust

Table 5 states the results of the coefficients. The beta value was found to be -.043, which means that if social media influences 1 unit, then consumers' purchase decisions will increase by -4.3, which is a negative, not a positive, correlation.

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Conclusion

They found that the majority of consumers partially disagreed. This means that social media does not affect changing consumer satisfaction towards brands other than those they trust. It was observed that most people agreed that they trust the brand. They cannot change the brand at any cost.

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The beta value was found to be -.043, which means that if social media influences 1 unit, then consumers' purchase decisions will increase by -4.3, which is a negative, not a positive, correlation.

In this article, we survey how social media influences consumers' purchase decisions and discuss key concerns and potential avenues for further study in this field. We can better grasp how these platforms may shape consumers' purchasing decisions by looking at the many types of social media, how they are defined, and what they do. Through transmitting knowledge, social authentication, and quick contact, social media dramatically impacts customers' attitudes and behavioral choices throughout the consumer purchase decision process.

In particular, social media accelerates the purchase decision-making process at each stage: problem identification (when demand and problem awareness are triggered), information search and alternatives evaluation (when consumers are presented with a wealth of information and receive real-time feedback), and post-purchase behavior (through user feedback, interactions with brands, and community building). Through user feedback, brand involvement, and community development, social media enhances customers' brand loyalty and word-of-mouth communication at the post-purchase behavior stage.

Brands must constantly develop and enhance their marketing strategies to overcome the numerous obstacles that social media marketing encounters, such as data privacy, social trust, information overload, and poor content quality. We need more studies that use cutting-edge tech like VR and AI to learn more about how social media marketing works and how it could be applied to new fields like social responsibility, content innovation, and cross-platform integration.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that brands maintain their trust; consumers only trust the brand's quality.
2. Only brand trust can influence consumer purchase decisions; quality cannot be compromised by social media advertising.

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