The Dynamics of Social Media Marketing Effect on Consumer Buying Patterns

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Abstract: This study investigates the dynamics of social media marketing and its effect on consumer buying patterns, focusing on how digital engagement influences purchasing decisions across different demographic groups. As social media platforms continue to expand, they have become powerful channels shaping consumer preferences, driving brand visibility, and guiding decision-making. Using a descriptive, correlational, and quantitative research design, data were collected from 202 social media users in Kathmandu through a convenience sampling method. The findings reveal that Instagram and Facebook are the most actively used platforms, with 91.1% of respondents acknowledging that social media helps them discover new products and services. Furthermore, 98.5% of participants follow brands online, primarily for product updates (23.8%) and exclusive discounts (36.1%). A majority (61.9%) also believes that social media marketing will continue to evolve in the years to come. Chi-square analyses indicate no statistically significant association ($p > 0.05$) between demographic factors—age, gender, and employment—and consumer buying behavior, suggesting that social media marketing exerts a similar influence across consumer segments. The study enhances the understanding of how social media marketing strategies drive consumer buying patterns and offers valuable insights for marketers aiming to optimize digital engagement. Future research may explore longitudinal changes and qualitative dimensions to better capture the evolving landscape of social media marketing.

Keywords: Social media, marketing, consumer behavior, buying patterns, digital engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has reshaped the landscape of modern marketing, fundamentally altering how consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. As platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok attract billions of active users worldwide, social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a critical tool for influencing buying patterns and strengthening brand–consumer relationships. These platforms enable businesses to promote products, enhance visibility, and create personalized experiences that directly impact consumer behavior. The dynamics of social media marketing operate across multiple dimensions, including information search, brand perception, and purchase intention. Through reviews, influencer recommendations, advertisements, and user-generated content, consumers are continuously exposed to persuasive cues that shape attitudes and guide buying decisions. Social media also facilitates two-way communication, enabling brands to engage with audiences in real time. This interactive digital environment fosters trust, community building, and long-term loyalty, significantly influencing how consumers form preferences and ultimately make purchases (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Alalwan, 2022). Influencer marketing has further transformed consumer buying patterns. Endorsements by content creators, lifestyle bloggers, and digital celebrities are often perceived as authentic and relatable, making them highly persuasive in shaping consumer choices (Lou & Yuan, 2022; Hudders & De Jans, 2022). As a result, influencers now play a central role in bridging the gap between brands and consumers, increasing the visibility and credibility of marketing messages. Despite these advantages, the dynamics of social media marketing also present challenges. Oversaturation of promotional content, misinformation, privacy concerns, and the spread of fake news can negatively affect consumer trust and brand credibility (Muntinga et al., 2023; Huang & Benyoucef, 2023). These complexities highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how social media marketing shapes buying patterns in both positive and negative ways.

This study examines the evolving dynamics of social media marketing and its effect on consumer buying patterns by exploring key factors that shape digital engagement and influence purchasing behavior. By analyzing demographic interactions and marketing variables, the research seeks to provide insights into the mechanisms through which social media drives consumer decisions in an increasingly digital marketplace (Voorveld, 2023; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2023).

1. **Regional Growth Trends of the Global Social Media Market**

The chart illustrates the projected growth of the social media analytics market size, segmented by region, from 2018 through 2030, measured in billions of US dollars. Over this period, the global market exhibits strong and consistent growth, with the total market size expanding from a modest level in 2018 to an anticipated $43.2 billion by 2030. North America leads the market throughout the period, represented by the darkest segment, showing steady and substantial growth, indicating its dominant role in the adoption and advancement of social media analytics technologies. The Asia Pacific region follows as the second-largest contributor, with its market size expanding rapidly, particularly after 2024, reflecting increasing digital transformation and social media adoption in countries within this region. Europe also shows significant growth, steadily increasing its share across the years. Latin America and the Middle East & Africa (MEA) markets are smaller in comparison but demonstrate gradual upward trends, signaling emerging opportunities in these regions. Notably, the market size experiences accelerated growth from 2023 onwards, reaching $10.2 billion in 2023 and rapidly increasing to $43.2 billion by 2030. This surge underscores the growing importance of social media analytics as organizations worldwide invest heavily in data-driven marketing, customer insights, and competitive intelligence.

Figure: 1 Regional Growth Trends of the Global Social Media Analytics Market (2018–2030)

2. Objective of the Study

- To examine the dynamics of social media marketing and its effect on consumer buying patterns.
- To analyze the association between demographic variables—age, gender, and employment status—and variations in consumer buying patterns influenced by social media marketing.

3. Conceptual Frameworks

A conceptual framework illustrates the expected relationships between the key variables examined in a study. For research on the dynamics of social media marketing and its effect on consumer buying patterns, the framework helps clarify how marketing elements influence consumer responses. It is developed based on insights from existing literature and outlines how independent variables—such as advertising strategies, engagement metrics, psychographic factors, and influencer impact—are expected to shape the dependent variable, namely consumer buying patterns. The framework serves as a guide for understanding how various components of social media marketing interact to affect consumer decision-making behaviour.

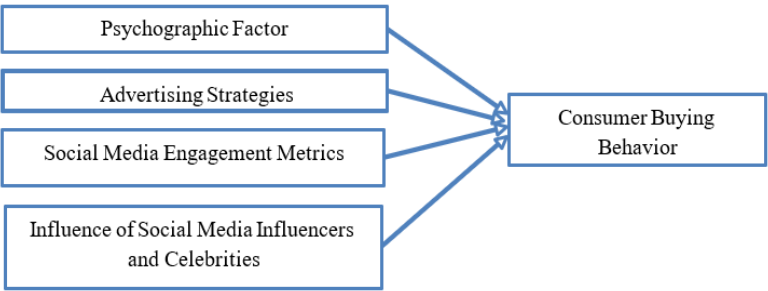**Independent Variables Dependent Variable**

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive, correlational, and quantitative research design to examine the dynamics of social media marketing and its effect on consumer buying patterns in Kathmandu. To capture diverse viewpoints, the research engaged participants from different demographic backgrounds, acknowledging that individuals vary in their willingness and ability to share their experiences regarding social media–driven purchases. A total of 202 respondents were selected using a convenient sampling technique, based on criteria such as active use of social media platforms, prior purchases influenced by social media, representation across age groups (below 20, 20–30, and above 30), and inclusion of all gender identities to ensure an inclusive analysis. Only individuals who voluntarily consented were included in the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered via online forms, designed to gather relevant information on social media usage patterns and their influence on consumer buying decisions. The survey required approximately 5–10 minutes to complete, enabling efficient and systematic data collection from a broad segment of the population.

5. Data Analysis and Results Outcomes
6.1 Demographic Profile
In this section, the collected data were systematically analyzed to understand how social media marketing influences consumer buying patternsacross different demographic groups. Using quantitative techniques such as descriptive statistics and Chi-Square tests, the study examined relationships between variables like age, gender, employment status, and consumer responses to social media marketing efforts. The results reveal significant insights into the dynamics of social media marketing—highlighting which platforms consumers frequent, how much time they spend engaging with digital content, and the extent to which social media affects their product discovery and purchasing decisions. The analysis also tested the association between demographic factors and buying patterns, uncovering that while demographic variables have limited impact individually, overall social media engagement strongly shapes consumer behavior.

Table 1: Demographic information

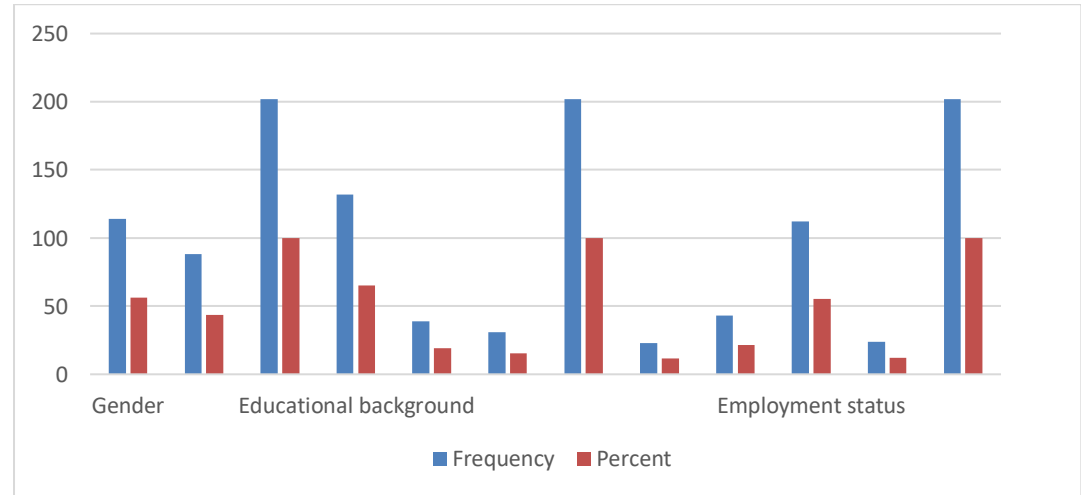| Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	114	56.4
	Male	88	43.6
	Total	202	100.0
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree	132	65.3
	High school or below	39	19.3
	Master's Degree	31	15.3
	Total	202	100.0
Employment status	Employed full-time	23	11.4
	Employed part-time	43	21.3
	Student	112	55.4
	Unemployed	24	11.9
	Total	202	100.0

Figure 3 Demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 202 respondents included in the study. The gender distribution shows that 56.4% are female and 43.6% are male, indicating a slightly higher participation from women. In terms of educational background, the majority of participants, 65.3%, hold a Bachelor's degree, followed by 19.3% with high school education or below, and 15.3% with a Master's degree, suggesting that the sample is relatively well-educated and likely familiar with digital platforms. Employment status data shows that 55.4% of the respondents are students, making them the largest group in the sample. This is followed by 21.3% employed part-time, 11.4% employed full-time, and 11.9% unemployed. The dominance of students indicates that younger and more digitally active individuals are strongly represented, which is relevant given the study's

focus on social media marketing and consumer behavior. This demographic structure reflects a population that is highly exposed to online content and therefore likely influenced by digital marketing strategies.

Table 2: Social Media Platform

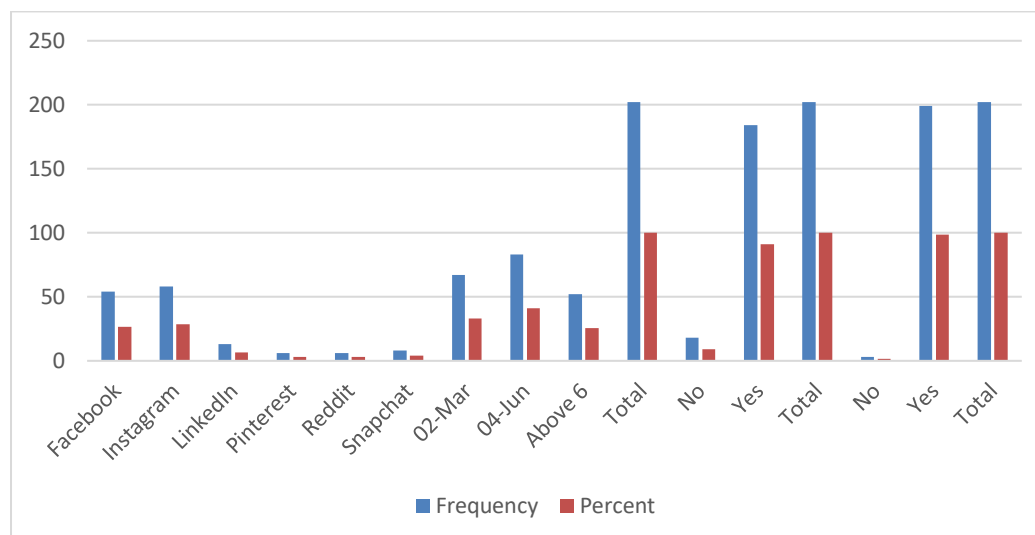| Variable		Frequency	Percent
Social media Platform	Facebook	54	26.7
	Instagram	58	28.7
	LinkedIn	13	6.4
	Pinterest	6	3.0
	Reddit	6	3.0
	Snapchat	8	4.0
Average hours spent on social media platforms	2-3	67	33.2
	4-6	83	41.1
	Above 6	52	25.7
	Total	202	100.0
Discover products or services	No	18	8.9
	Yes	184	91.1
	Total	202	100.0
brands or companies on Social media	No	3	1.5
	Yes	199	98.5
	Total	202	100.0

Figure 4 Participants' social media habits

Table 2 provides insights into participants' social media habits, which are central to understanding how social media marketing affects consumer buying patterns. Among the platforms used, Instagram (28.7%) and Facebook (26.7%) are the most popular, highlighting their strong presence in shaping consumer perceptions. Other platforms such as LinkedIn (6.4%), Snapchat (4%), Pinterest (3%), and Reddit (3%) are used less frequently. This suggests that marketers targeting this demographic may achieve more impact through visually oriented platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Regarding time spent on social media, 41.1% of respondents spend 4–6 hours daily, followed by 33.2% who spend 2–3 hours, and 25.7% who spend more than 6 hours per day. These findings indicate a high level of digital engagement, which increases exposure to online advertisements, influencer content, and brand promotions—key factors in shaping modern consumer buying patterns. A significant 91.1% of respondents reported discovering products or services through social media, reflecting the strong role of digital platforms in product awareness and initial interest. Similarly, 98.5% follow brands or companies on social media, demonstrating high consumer interaction with brand content. This high level of brand-following patterns indicates that social media serves not only as an entertainment medium but also as a crucial channel for marketing communication, brand loyalty development, and purchase decision-making.

6.2 Association Between Age and Social Media Marketing
Table 3: Chi-Square Tests between age and consumer buying behavior

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	615.196[a]	620	.547
Likelihood Ratio	363.278	620	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.704	1	.054

N of Valid Cases	202		

Table 3 presents the Chi-Square test results examining the association between age and consumer buying patterns influenced by social media marketing. The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 615.196$, df = 620, p = 0.547) indicates that the relationship is not statistically significant. The Likelihood Ratio (p = 1.000) also supports this conclusion. Although the Linear-by-Linear Association shows a slight trend (p = 0.054), this value is above the 0.05 threshold and therefore not significant. Additionally, the reliability of these results may be affected because many cells have expected counts less than 5, which violates Chi-Square assumptions.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests between Gender and Consumer Behavior

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.391[a]	31	1.000
Likelihood Ratio	6.643	31	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.710	1	.100
N of Valid Cases	201		

Table 4 shows the Chi-Square results assessing the association between gender and consumer behavior. The Pearson Chi-Square ($\chi^2 = 8.391$, df = 31, p = 1.000) and Likelihood Ratio (p = 1.000) both indicate no significant relationship between gender identity and consumer buying patterns. The Linear-by-Linear Association value (p = 0.100) suggests a weak, non-significant trend. However, the test's validity is limited due to low expected cell frequencies—78.1% of the cells have expected counts below 5—indicating that the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test between employment test and consumer behavior

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	106.233[a]	93	.165
Likelihood Ratio	110.506	93	.104
Linear-by-Linear Association	.065	1	.798
N of Valid Cases	202		

Table 5 displays the results of the Chi-Square test between employment status and consumer buying behavior. The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 106.233$, df = 93, p = 0.165) shows no statistically significant association. The Likelihood Ratio (p = 0.104) and Linear-by-Linear Association (p = 0.798) reinforce this result. Notably, 96.1% of the cells have expected counts less than 5, with a minimum expected count of just 0.11. Such low expected frequencies compromise the validity of the test and indicate that the results should be interpreted carefully.

6. Major Findings

The study reveals that respondents are predominantly young, well-educated, and digitally active, with a majority being female (56.4%), holding a Bachelor's degree (65.3%), and comprising a large student population (55.4%). Instagram and Facebook emerged as the most frequently used social media platforms, and high daily usage levels were observed, with over 41% spending 4–6 hours per day online. A striking 91.1% of participants discover products or services through social media, and 98.5% follow brands, highlighting the strong influence of digital platforms on brand visibility and consumer engagement. However, the Chi-Square analyses indicate no significant associations between consumer buying patterns and demographic variables such as age, gender, or employment status, suggesting that social media marketing impacts consumers similarly across different demographic groups, likely due to the widespread and uniform nature of digital exposure.

7. Suggestions

Based on these findings, companies should strengthen their presence on high-engagement platforms like Instagram and Facebook by using visually appealing content, influencer collaborations, and interactive posts to maximize consumer reach. Since demographic factors do not significantly influence buying behavior, marketers should shift toward psychographic and behavioral segmentation, focusing on users' interests, preferences, and online activities rather than age or gender. High daily engagement levels also indicate the importance of consistent and timely posting, personalized recommendations, and loyalty-driven content such as exclusive offers and user-generated material. Additionally, businesses should adopt data-driven marketing tools to track consumer interactions and refine their strategies, while future research should consider larger and more demographically balanced samples to enhance statistical validity and explore deeper behavioral or psychological predictors of social media–driven purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of social media marketing on consumer buying behavior, with particular attention to demographic variables such as age, gender, and employment status. The findings underscore the pivotal role social media plays in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions, as most respondents reported discovering products and services through these platforms. A significant proportion of participants actively follow brands or companies on social media, motivated by updates, exclusive offers, and engaging content. The demographic profile reveals a predominance of students and individuals

holding bachelor's degrees, reflecting a young and educated sample highly engaged with digital media. Social media usage is extensive, with many respondents spending several hours daily on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Although demographic factors showed limited direct influence, age demonstrated a notable association with responsiveness to social media marketing, highlighting the importance of digital engagement among younger consumers. Moreover, the majority of respondents anticipate that social media marketing will continue to evolve, signaling the necessity for businesses to adapt to shifting consumer behaviors. In conclusion, brands aiming to effectively influence consumer buying patterns in today's digital landscape should prioritize targeted marketing strategies, personalized content, and sustained strategic engagement to foster loyalty and drive purchase decisions.

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