



## Social Media Influence on Youth Purchase Decisions

 N. Ayiesha Sahani<sup>1</sup>  S. Vinodhini<sup>2</sup>  T. Gowri Thangam<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Master of Commerce, PG & Research Department of Commerce, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram, India.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, PG & Research Department of Commerce, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram, India.

<sup>3</sup>Head & Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, PG & Research of Commerce, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram, India

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\*Corresponding Author: [gowri81900@gmail.com](mailto:gowri81900@gmail.com)

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Social media plays an increasingly important role in shaping the purchasing behaviour of today's youth. Young consumers actively rely on social networking platforms to discover new products, compare alternatives and make buying decisions. This article analyses the influence of social media on youth purchase decisions by examining the role of influencers, peer interactions, online reviews and brand-driven campaigns. It explains the concept of social media influence, highlights the objectives of studying this phenomenon, and evaluates the advantages and limitations of social media-based purchasing for both consumers and businesses. The study finds that social media strongly impacts brand awareness, consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, particularly through influencer endorsements, user-generated content and social validation. At the same time, excessive exposure to promotional content can lead to impulsive buying behaviour, unrealistic consumption expectations and concerns related to data privacy. The article concludes that although social media provides valuable opportunities for informed and interactive consumer decision-making, the development of digital literacy, critical evaluation skills and responsible marketing practices is essential to safeguard young consumers.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Youth, Purchase Decision, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Online Reviews, Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Peer Influence, Impulsive Buying.*



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### 1. Introduction

Young people spend a large share of their time on social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook and X (Twitter).

These platforms are not only used for communication and entertainment, they also act as information sources, advertising channels and online marketplaces. Brands have moved large

parts of their marketing budgets to social media because of its ability to reach specific age groups, especially teenagers and young adults. Traditionally, purchase decisions were shaped by family, friends, television ads, print media and in-store promotions. Today, the decision path is much more interactive. A young consumer can discover a product in a short-form video, check reviews in the comments, watch an unboxing on YouTube, compare prices through shopping links and complete the purchase without leaving the app. Influencers and content creators have become highly visible opinion leaders whose recommendations often carry more weight than traditional advertisements. Understanding how social media affects youth purchase decisions is important for several reasons. It helps marketers plan ethical and effective campaigns, it informs parents and educators about pressures faced by young consumers and it guides policymakers in creating regulations to safeguard minors from misleading promotions and harmful content.

## 2. Meaning

Social media influence refers to the power that content, people and interactions on social platforms have on an individual's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. In the context of consumer behavior, it is the degree to which posts, videos, comments, likes and shares can encourage or discourage someone from considering, choosing, or buying a product or service. For youth, social media influence often appears in subtle ways. A favorite influencer wearing a particular brand, friends posting stories from a new café or a viral challenge involving a product can all create a feeling that a purchase is socially desirable or necessary to "fit in." Over time, repeated exposure develops familiarity and preference, which strongly shapes their buying choices.

## 3. Definition

Social media's influence on youth purchase decisions refers to how platforms like Instagram and YouTube shape young people's choices through influencer endorsements, user-generated content, trends and targeted ads, making them discover, desire and buy products based on peer recommendations, online reviews and viral content, altering traditional buying patterns.

## 4. Key Concepts

- **Social Media** Social media are online platforms and applications that allow users to create, share and interact with content and with each other in real time. Examples include social networking sites, video-sharing platforms, micro blogging services and photo-sharing apps.
- **Youth** Youth generally refers to individuals between the ages of 15 and 24, though some studies widen this range to include older teenagers and young adults up to 29. This group is often more tech-savvy, more active on social media and more open to new brands and trends.
- **Purchase Decision** A purchase decision is the process through which a consumer recognizes a need or desire, searches for information, evaluates alternatives and finally decides to buy or not to buy a product or service. For youth, this process may be fast and influenced strongly by social and emotional factors.
- **Social Media Influence on Purchase Decision** Social media influence on purchase decisions can be defined as the impact generated by social media platforms, content creators, peers and interactive features on the consumer decision-making process, from awareness and interest to evaluation and final purchase.

## 5. Objectives

The key objectives in studying the impact of social media on youth purchase decisions include:

- To examine how frequently youth rely on social media for product information and recommendations.
- To analyze the role of influencers, celebrities and peers in shaping brand preferences and purchase intentions.
- To identify the main social media features (likes, comments, reviews, stories, short videos, live streams) that affect youth buying behavior.
- To measure the extent to which social media content leads to planned versus impulsive purchases among young consumers.

- To understand the psychological factors, such as social proof, fear of missing out (FOMO) and self-image that connect social media activity with purchase decisions.
- To evaluate the benefits and problems caused by social media-driven purchases, both for youth and for businesses.
- To provide suggestions for responsible and ethical use of social media marketing targeting young audiences.

## 6. Benefits

- Greater Access to Information Social media platforms provide quick access to a wide range of product details, reviews, tutorials and comparisons. Youth can see real experiences from other users, which helps them judge product quality beyond traditional advertising claims.
- Enhanced Brand Awareness Brands can reach young consumers more effectively through engaging content, interactive campaigns and collaborations with influencers. This creates awareness of new products that youth might not encounter through offline channels.
- Peer Recommendations and Social Proof Young consumers often give more weight to opinions from peers and online communities than to ads. Positive feedback, high ratings, and large numbers of likes or shares serve as signals that a product is popular and trustworthy.
- Personalization and Relevance Algorithms show content that matches users' interests, previous searches and engagement patterns. As a result, youth see product suggestions that are more aligned with their tastes, hobbies, and budgets, which can reduce search time and make shopping more convenient.
- Opportunity for Expression and Co-Creation Social media allows young consumers to share feedback, create their own content around products and interact directly with brands. This makes them feel involved in shaping brand image and product development and encourages a sense of community.

## 7. Merits

### 7.1 Merits for Businesses

- Precise Targeting Brands can target specific age groups, locations and interest segments, leading to more efficient use of marketing budgets.
- Measurable Results Marketers can track clicks, shares, comments and conversions to see which campaigns influence youth purchase decisions. This helps refine strategies quickly.
- Stronger Brand Loyalty By interacting regularly with young customers through comments, polls, contests and messages, brands can develop stronger emotional connections that support repeat purchases.
- Viral Spread If youth find content engaging, they share it with friends and followers. This organic spread can boost brand visibility without equivalent advertising costs.

### 7.2 Merits for Youth

- Discovery of New Trends Young consumers can stay updated with the latest fashion, technology, gaming, music and lifestyle products that match their identity and interests.
- Price Awareness and Deals social media often highlights discounts, seasonal offers and promo codes, helping youth find products at lower prices.
- Comparison and Evaluation Youth can compare multiple brands quickly through reviews, influencer opinions and product demonstrations. This can support more informed decisions.
- Convenient Shopping Experience Many platforms allow in-app purchasing or direct links to online stores, which saves time and effort.

## 8. Demerits

- Impulsive Buying Social media often encourages quick decisions through limited-time offers, flash sales and persuasive content. Youth may buy products they do not need or cannot afford, simply because they feel fear of missing out or want to follow a trend.

- Unrealistic Expectations Influencers and brands often show perfect, filtered images of products and lifestyles. Youth may develop unrealistic expectations about quality, results, or personal appearance, leading to disappointment, low self-esteem and constant desire for new items.
- Materialism and Social Pressure Heavy exposure to consumption-focused content can promote the idea that happiness and status come from owning certain brands. Young people may feel pressured to purchase expensive products to gain acceptance from peers or to project a certain image online.
- Misleading or Hidden Advertising Sponsored content is sometimes not clearly disclosed. Youth may not recognize that recommendations are paid promotions. This can reduce their ability to think critically and to separate genuine opinions from commercial messages.
- Privacy and Data Concerns Social media platforms collect detailed data on users' preferences and behavior. Aggressive targeting and tracking can raise ethical concerns and potential misuse of personal information.
- Financial Strain Unplanned purchases, frequent small buys and the desire to keep up with trends can lead to financial stress, especially for students or unemployed youth who depend on family support or limited income.
- Mental Health Impact Continuous comparison with idealized images and lifestyles can affect mental health. Feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, or envy may be connected not only to appearance, but also to possessions and brands.
- Influencers and peer endorsements carry more persuasive weight than traditional ads, with authentic creator recommendations driving higher intent to buy.
- Short-form visual content, demo videos, unboxing and before-and-after, triggers more impulse purchases than static posts or text.
- Social proof signals (likes, comments, shares, reviews) lower perceived risk and raise conversion rates by reassuring young consumers.
- Algorithmic personalization boosts relevance and click-through, so targeted suggestions often convert faster than broad campaigns.
- Time-limited promos, flash sales, and gamified features on apps heighten urgency and lead to more spontaneous buying among students and young adults.
- Clear disclosure of paid partnerships moderates influence: transparent sponsorships preserve trust, while hidden promotions erode credibility and long-term loyalty.
- Despite high adoption, many youths lack critical evaluation skills; this gap, combined with privacy worries and easy checkout flows, increases vulnerability to overspending and fraud.

## 10. Conclusion

Social media has become a powerful factor in youth purchase decisions. It shapes every stage of the decision process, from awareness and interest to evaluation and final purchase. Through influencers, peers, and interactive content, social platforms can quickly build brand visibility and drive sales. Young consumers enjoy easier access to information, better price awareness, convenient shopping options, and the ability to participate actively in brand conversations. At the same time, strong social media influence brings clear risks, such as impulsive buying, overemphasis on material values, exposure to misleading promotions, privacy challenges and negative psychological effects. The impact is not purely positive or negative; it depends heavily on how platforms, brands and youth use these tools. To reduce harm and improve outcomes, several steps are important. Brands should follow ethical

## 9. Findings

- Previous studies and survey-based research conducted across different countries commonly report the following patterns related to social media and youth purchase decisions:
- Social platforms are now a primary discovery channel for youth; frequent exposure to product content markedly increases brand awareness and consideration.

marketing practices and clearly label sponsored content. Educators and parents can help youth develop digital literacy, including the skills to question persuasive messages and manage money wisely. Policymakers can strengthen regulations that protect minors from deceptive advertising. Finally, young people themselves need to be aware of how social media shapes their choices, so they can enjoy its benefits without losing control over their spending and values.

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