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## Impact of Social Media on Online Shopping: A Study of Consumer Behavior in India

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### ABSTRACT :

The evolution of social media platforms has significantly reshaped how consumers interact with brands and make online purchases. This study explores the multifaceted impact of social media on online shopping, with a particular focus on Indian consumers. It analyzes user behavior across platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. Key objectives include examining the relationship between social media use and shopping behavior, evaluating the role of social media advertisements, and understanding how fashion trends and peer feedback influence purchase decisions. Using a structured questionnaire and chi-square statistical analysis, the research identifies that Instagram is the most influential platform, especially among the 15–25 age group. The results reveal statistically significant differences in how age and Instagram's fashion trends affect shopping behavior. While social media fosters engagement and convenience, issues like privacy and trust remain barriers. The study contributes valuable insights for marketers and digital strategists aiming to optimize social media-driven e-commerce strategies.

**Keywords:** Social media, online shopping, consumer behavior, Instagram, e-commerce, influencer marketing, digital trust.

### Introduction

Social media has revolutionized the way consumers shop online by turning platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter into powerful tools for product discovery and brand interaction. In India, where digital adoption is growing rapidly, these platforms are not only used for entertainment and communication but also play a major role in influencing purchase decisions. Features such as Instagram Shopping and WhatsApp Business have enabled businesses to directly engage with consumers, while influencer marketing and peer recommendations have emerged as strong drivers of buying behavior.

This study explores the impact of social media on online shopping among Indian consumers, focusing on factors like age group influence, fashion trends, peer feedback, and digital trust. It aims to understand how these elements shape consumer preferences and the challenges associated with online privacy, trust, and payment methods. As social commerce continues to rise, this research provides insights into how businesses can effectively leverage social media to enhance customer engagement and drive e-commerce success.

### Objectives of the Study

- To examine the connection between social media use and internet buying habits.
- To investigate how advertising on social media platforms affects traffic to e-commerce businesses.
- To determine the prospects and any obstacles that come with integrating social media into online buying.

### Literature Review

The literature reveals that social media significantly impacts consumer behavior by facilitating direct interaction, enabling peer influence, and enhancing product discovery. Chang et al. (2004) emphasized that online shopping behavior is influenced by customer characteristics, perceived risk, and service quality. Rehmani (2011) highlighted how social platforms offer access to product information and reviews, aiding decision-making. Sundström (2013) and Shafiqul et al. (2014) found that emotional triggers and peer inspiration from platforms like Instagram can drive impulsive buying behavior, reinforcing the power of influencer marketing and visual content.

Priti S. et al. (2013) demonstrated that online reviews and social media conversations influence consumer choices during the pre-purchase phase. Monika Sharma (2011) noted that the younger generation responds actively to brand interaction on social networks. Yoldaş (2012) emphasized that while engagement in social commerce is rising, concerns around privacy and security remain significant. These studies collectively suggest that while social media enhances engagement and conversions, trust and platform credibility are crucial for sustained impact.

### Research Methodology

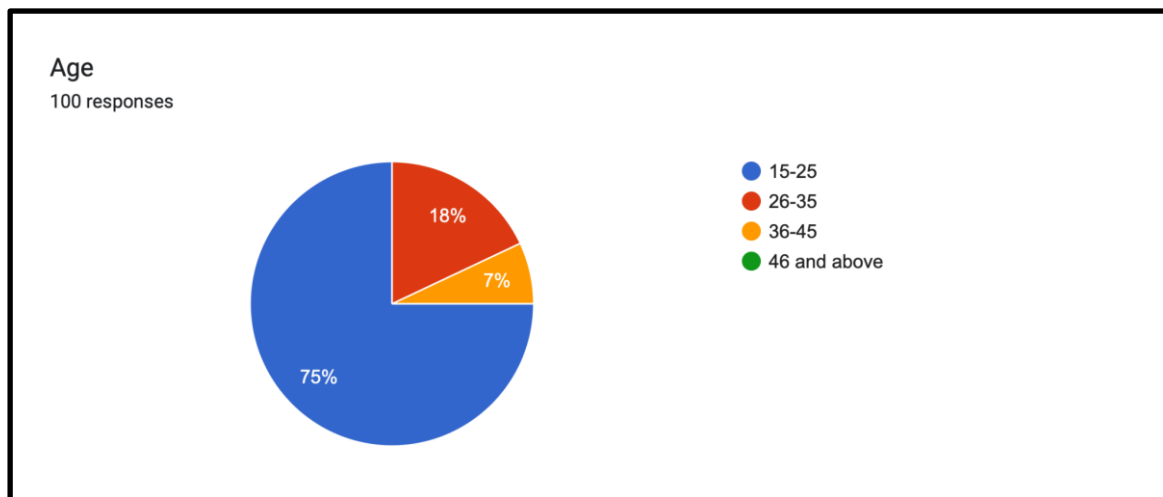
- **Sample Size:** 100 respondents
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience sampling
- **Respondent Profile:** Active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter
- **Data Collection:** Google Forms (Primary); Journals and Articles (Secondary)
- **Tools for Analysis:** Chi-square statistical test

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

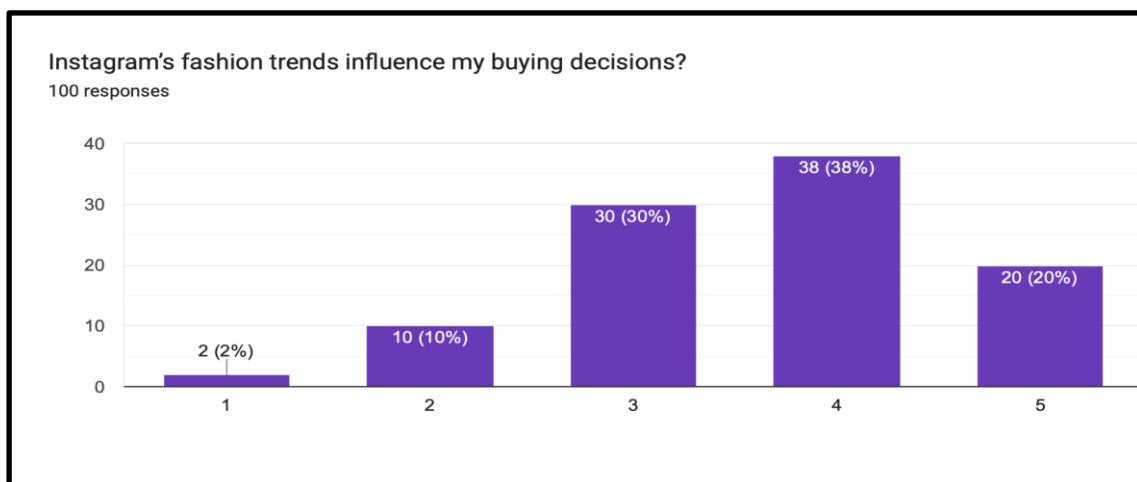
Descriptive statistics indicate that 75% of users prefer Instagram. A large proportion use social media for entertainment and information, with 88% having shopped online via these platforms at least once.

#### Key highlights include:

- 100% of respondents use social media.
- 72% prefer Cash on Delivery, though trust in digital payments is growing.
- 57% are motivated by discounts, followed by 24/7 availability and convenience.
- Privacy concerns and trust issues remain key barriers to adoption.



**Fig 1:** This shows that the majority of respondents (75%) fall within the 15–25 age group, followed by 18% in the 26–35 age group, 7% in the 36–45 age group. There are no respondents in the 46 and above category.



**Fig 2:** The majority of respondents (38%) agreed that Instagram's fashion trends influence their buying decisions, followed by 30% who were neutral. Only 12% disagreed to any extent. This suggests that Instagram has a considerable impact on fashion-related purchasing behavior for many users, though the degree of influence varies.

### Hypothesis Testing

Two hypotheses were tested using the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Goodness of Fit test:

#### HYPOTHESIS 1:

**OBJECTIVE:** To determine if there is a significant difference in the impact of social media on online shopping behavior across different age groups.

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no significant difference in the impact of social media on online shopping behavior across different age groups.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a significant difference in the impact of social media on online shopping behavior across different age groups.

**Table 1: Chi-square test**

**Proportions- Instagram's fashion trends influence my buying decision?**

Level	Count	Proportion
1	75	0.7500
2	18	0.1800
3	7	0.0700

**$\chi^2$  Goodness of Fit**

$\chi^2$	df	p
79.9	2	<0.001

The Chi-Square test yielded a result of  $\chi^2(2) = 79.9$ , with a p-value less than 0.001. Since the p-value is less than the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

**Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted.**

**Conclusion:** There is a statistically significant difference in the impact of social media on online shopping behavior across different age groups. This suggests that age may play a major role in how social media influences online purchasing decisions.

#### HYPOTHESIS 2:

**OBJECTIVE:** To assess whether there is a significant difference in the level of influence that Instagram's fashion trends have on online shopping behavior.

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no significant difference in the level of influence that Instagram's fashion trends have on online shopping behavior.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a significant difference in the level of influence that Instagram's fashion trends have on online shopping behavior.

**Table 2: Chi-square test**

**Proportions- Instagram's fashion trends influence my buying decision?**

Level	Count	Proportion
1	2	0.0200
2	10	0.1000
3	30	0.3000
4	38	0.3800

5	20	0.2000
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 **$\chi^2$  Goodness of Fit**

$\chi^2$	df	p
42.4	4	<0.001

The Chi-Square test resulted in  $\chi^2(4) = 42.4$ , with a p-value less than 0.001. As the p-value is much smaller than the standard significance level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ).

**Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted.**

**Conclusion: There is a statistically significant difference in the level of influence that Instagram's fashion trends have on online shopping behavior.**

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**Findings**

- Instagram and WhatsApp are dominant platforms for online shopping, with Instagram significantly influencing fashion-related purchases.
- The age group 15–25 is the most responsive to social media's impact on shopping behavior, with statistically significant variation across age brackets.
- Chi-square analysis shows Instagram's fashion trends have a significant influence on user purchasing behavior, confirming that peer trends and influencer content strongly shape buying decisions.
- Discounts, 24/7 availability, and convenience continue to drive online purchases.
- Privacy concerns and payment trust issues remain persistent barriers for consumers.

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**Recommendations**

- Collaborate with influencers for broader reach.
- Enhance data protection to improve trust.
- Optimize content for platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp.
- Leverage user-generated content to boost credibility.

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**Limitations**

- Sample limited to 100 respondents from primarily urban settings.
- Self-reported data may include bias.
- Findings are time-bound and may not reflect future platform changes.

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**Conclusion**

Social media has redefined online shopping by enhancing convenience, discovery, and engagement. Platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp play a central role in influencing purchase decisions, particularly through fashion trends and influencer content. Chi-square analysis confirms that age significantly moderates the impact of social media on shopping behavior, with the 15–25 demographic being the most affected. Additionally, Instagram's fashion trends have a notable influence on consumer decisions, reinforcing the role of visual content and social proof in e-commerce. Despite continued concerns about privacy and trust, social media's influence on shopping behavior is undeniable and growing.

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**Future Scope**

- Comparative studies across urban and rural demographics.
- Sector-wise research into social commerce (e.g., fashion vs. electronics).
- Longitudinal tracking of platform usage and shopping trends.
- Study of emerging platforms like Threads and TikTok.

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