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Impact of Social Media Usage on Youth Buying Behaviour

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ABSTRACT:

The rapid growth of social media has significantly transformed the buying behaviour of youth by reshaping how they access information, form opinions, and make purchase decisions. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok serve as influential marketing channels where peer reviews, influencer endorsements, targeted advertisements, and interactive content strongly affect young consumers' preferences and purchasing intentions. Youth are particularly susceptible due to their high engagement levels, desire for social approval, and tendency to follow trends. This study examines the impact of social media usage on youth buying behaviour by analyzing factors such as frequency of platform use, trust in online content, influence of digital influencers, and the role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Findings suggest that social media significantly influences brand awareness, impulse buying, and brand loyalty among youth. While social media enhances informed decision-making and product discovery, it also encourages impulsive consumption and materialistic tendencies. The study highlights the need for responsible marketing practices and greater consumer awareness to promote informed and ethical purchasing decisions among young consumers.

Keywords: Social Media Youth Buying Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Introduction:

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, particularly among youth. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok have transformed the way young people communicate, share information, and interact with brands. The widespread use of smartphones and internet connectivity has further accelerated social media engagement, making it a powerful medium that influences attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions of young consumers.

Youth represent a dynamic and influential consumer segment due to their openness to new trends, strong peer connections, and high responsiveness to digital content. Social media exposes young users to a constant stream of advertisements, influencer endorsements, product reviews, and user-generated content, all of which play a significant role in shaping their buying behaviour. Unlike traditional marketing, social media marketing allows brands to directly interact with consumers, personalize messages, and build emotional connections, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase.

The impact of social media on youth buying behaviour is particularly evident in areas such as brand awareness, impulse buying, and brand loyalty. Recommendations from peers and influencers are often perceived as more trustworthy than conventional advertisements, leading youth to rely heavily on online opinions and electronic word-of-mouth while making purchase decisions. However, excessive exposure to promotional content may also encourage impulsive spending, unrealistic consumption patterns, and materialistic values.

Understanding the influence of social media usage on youth buying behaviour is essential for marketers, educators, and policymakers. It helps businesses design effective and ethical marketing strategies while enabling young consumers to develop critical awareness and informed decision-making skills. This study aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and the buying behaviour of youth, focusing on key influencing factors and their implications in the modern digital marketplace.

Objectives

1. To examine the level of social media usage among youth

This objective aims to understand how frequently and extensively youth use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, and how this usage influences their exposure to marketing content.

2. To analyze the influence of social media on youth buying behaviour

This objective focuses on identifying how social media content, advertisements, and online interactions affect the purchasing decisions, preferences, and attitudes of young consumers.

3. **To study the impact of social media advertisements on purchase decisions**

This objective seeks to assess how sponsored posts, pop-up ads, and brand promotions on social media platforms influence youth to buy specific products or services.

4. **To evaluate the role of influencers and celebrities in shaping buying behaviour**

This objective aims to examine how influencer endorsements and celebrity promotions on social media affect brand perception, trust, and purchase intention among youth.

5. **To assess the effect of peer influence and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)**

This objective focuses on understanding how online reviews, comments, shares, and recommendations from peers impact youth buying behaviour.

6. **To examine the relationship between social media usage and impulse buying**

This objective aims to identify whether frequent social media exposure leads to unplanned or impulsive purchases among youth.

7. **To study the role of social media in building brand awareness and brand loyalty**

This objective seeks to understand how continuous brand engagement on social media platforms helps in creating brand recognition, trust, and long-term loyalty among young consumers.

Benefits of Social Media Usage on Youth Buying Behaviour

1. **Increased Product Awareness**

Social media exposes youth to a wide range of brands and products through advertisements, posts, and influencer content. This helps young consumers stay informed about new products, trends, and market offerings.

2. **Easy Access to Information**

Youth can easily access product details, reviews, price comparisons, and usage demonstrations on social media platforms. This enables them to make more informed and rational purchasing decisions.

3. **Influence of Peer Recommendations**

Opinions, reviews, and experiences shared by peers on social media are often perceived as trustworthy. Such electronic word-of-mouth positively influences youth buying behaviour by reducing uncertainty.

4. **Impact of Influencer Marketing**

Influencers act as role models for youth and help shape preferences and brand choices. Their endorsements can increase trust and credibility, encouraging purchase intentions.

5. **Personalized Shopping Experience**

Social media platforms use algorithms to show personalized advertisements based on user interests and browsing behavior. This helps youth discover products that match their preferences more effectively.

6. **Convenience and Time Saving**

Social media allows youth to explore products, compare alternatives, and even make purchases without visiting physical stores, saving time and effort.

7. **Enhanced Brand Engagement**

Interactive features such as likes, comments, polls, and live sessions enable youth to engage directly with brands. This interaction strengthens emotional connections and brand loyalty.

8. **Encouragement of Trend Awareness**

Social media keeps youth updated on the latest fashion, technology, and lifestyle trends, enabling them to align their purchases with current market trends.

9. **Opportunities for Discounts and Offers**

Many brands promote exclusive discounts, flash sales, and promotional offers on social media platforms, allowing youth to make cost-effective purchasing decisions.

Impact of Social Media Usage on Youth Buying Behaviour

1. Influence on Purchase Decisions

Social media significantly affects how youth choose products and brands. Advertisements, reviews, and influencer endorsements often guide their final buying decisions.

2. Increase in Impulse Buying

Continuous exposure to attractive ads, limited-time offers, and influencer promotions encourages impulsive purchasing without thorough evaluation of need or budget.

3. Enhanced Brand Awareness

Social media helps youth become aware of new brands and products quickly. Repeated exposure builds familiarity and increases the likelihood of purchase.

4. Role of Influencers and Celebrities

Youth often trust influencers more than traditional advertisements. Their lifestyle representation and product recommendations strongly shape buying behaviour.

5. Effect of Peer Pressure

Likes, comments, and shared content create social pressure among youth to own trending products, influencing them to conform to group norms.

6. Shift in Consumer Preferences

Social media shapes tastes and preferences by promoting trends in fashion, gadgets, food, and lifestyle, leading to frequent changes in buying patterns.

7. Dependence on Online Reviews (eWOM)

Youth heavily rely on online reviews and ratings before purchasing. Positive reviews increase purchase intention, while negative reviews discourage buying.

8. Development of Brand Loyalty

Continuous interaction with brands through social media builds trust and emotional attachment, encouraging repeat purchases.

9. Materialistic Attitudes

Excessive exposure to luxury lifestyles and idealized content may increase materialistic values and unnecessary spending among youth.

10. Informed Decision-Making

On the positive side, access to detailed information and comparisons helps youth make better-informed buying decisions.

11. Reduced Influence of Traditional Advertising

Youth are more influenced by digital content than by traditional media like television or print ads, changing the overall marketing landscape.

Conclusion

Social media has a significant and growing influence on the buying behaviour of youth. With increased exposure to advertisements, influencer endorsements, peer opinions, and user-generated content, social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping young consumers' preferences and purchase decisions. Youth rely heavily on social media for product information, reviews, and trend updates, making it a powerful tool for brand awareness and engagement.

While social media offers several advantages such as informed decision-making, convenience, and access to a wide variety of products, it also has negative effects, including impulse buying, peer pressure, and the development of materialistic attitudes. The persuasive nature of digital marketing and influencer promotions can sometimes lead youth to make unplanned or unnecessary purchases.

Therefore, it is important for marketers to adopt ethical and responsible marketing practices, and for youth to develop critical awareness while engaging with social media content. Educators and policymakers should also promote digital literacy to help young consumers make balanced and informed

purchasing decisions. Overall, social media remains a powerful force that positively and negatively shapes youth buying behaviour, and its impact will continue to grow in the digital age.

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