



Social Media Marketing and Buying Behaviour among Gen Z Consumers in Karnataka: The Roles of Brand Engagement and Trust

Shilpa Bhat N. H.^a, Ashoka K. G. ^{*b}, Mahendra H. R.^c, Karthik Naik^d

^a Dr. NSAM First Grade Degree College, Nitte, Karnataka, India

^b Assistant Professor, Alva's College, Karnataka, India

^c Research Scholar, Mangalore University, Karnataka, India

^d Assistant Professor, Alva's College Autonomous, Moodubidire, Karnataka, India

*Corresponding author: Ashoka K. G., rch.spt24@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Purpose: This study examines how social media marketing activities affect the buying behaviour of Gen Z consumers. It focuses on two factors, consumer brand engagement and brand trust, that may explain how social media marketing influences purchase intention. The study also examines whether purchase intention leads to actual buying behaviour.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted among 312 Gen Z respondents from Bengaluru and ten selected Tier 2 cities in Karnataka. The proposed model was tested using PLS-SEM with 34 measurement items and 5,000 bootstrap samples. The analysis included frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, common method bias assessment, measurement-model assessment, structural-model assessment, and mediation analysis.

Findings: The measurement model showed acceptable reliability and validity. Social media marketing activities had a positive effect on consumer brand engagement and brand trust. Consumer brand engagement and brand trust, in turn, had positive effects on purchase intention. Purchase intention also had a positive effect on actual buying behaviour. The indirect effect of social media marketing activities on purchase intention through consumer brand engagement was 0.212, while the indirect effect through brand trust was 0.175. Both indirect effects were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Originality/value: Instead of examining only the direct effect of social media marketing on purchase intention, this study explains how social media marketing works through consumer brand engagement and brand trust. It also extends the model by examining actual buying behaviour. The model therefore provides a simple framework for understanding how social media marketing may shape the buying behaviour of Gen Z consumers.

Keywords: social media marketing activities; consumer brand engagement; brand trust; purchase intention; actual buying behaviour; Gen Z

1. Introduction

Social media is part of the buying journey for many young consumers because brands use it to present products, answer questions, share reviews, and maintain contact. Research already shows that social media marketing activities can influence purchase intention and other brand outcomes (Kim & Ko, 2012; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). The main problem is therefore not whether social media marketing matters, but what happens between exposure and the final buying decision.

This problem is important in Gen Z research. Recent work shows that interaction, customisation, advertising, e-WOM, and perceived value can shape Gen Z purchase intention (Deepika & Massand, 2025; An & Ngo, 2025). Yet purchase intention is only a stated readiness to buy. Online studies show that intention is related to actual behaviour, but situational conditions can change that relationship (Le Nguyen Hoang & Le Thanh Tung, 2023; Ong et al., 2024). A model that ends at intention can therefore miss part of consumer behaviour.

A second problem concerns the mechanism. Social media marketing can create active brand involvement and confidence in the brand. These reactions are different. Consumer brand engagement covers thinking, feeling, and acting in relation to a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014), while brand trust reflects confidence that the brand is dependable. Prior studies show that social media marketing can strengthen engagement and trust, and both can shape later responses (Fetais et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2023; Hanaysha, 2022a, 2022b). Treating them as parallel mechanisms allows two routes to purchase intention to be tested.

Karnataka provides the study context, but location is not presented as the main novelty. A recent Bengaluru study already examined Gen Z social media marketing and purchase intention (Deepika & Massand, 2025). The contribution here is the combined process: social media marketing activities influence engagement and trust; both influence purchase intention; and purchase intention influences actual buying behaviour.

The study also addresses a practical research gap. A direct relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention can show whether two variables move together, but it does not explain why the movement occurs. This matters for managers because the same level of social media exposure may produce very different consumer reactions. Some consumers may become more involved with the brand, while others may mainly use the information to decide whether the brand can be trusted. Earlier work has examined engagement and trust in social media settings, but recent Gen Z studies still place strong attention on purchase intention as the main outcome (Deepika & Massand, 2025; An & Ngo, 2025). By testing engagement and trust together and then linking intention with actual buying behaviour, the present model gives a clearer sequence from marketing activity to consumer response. The study therefore focuses on explanation rather than claiming novelty from location alone.

The study therefore asks three connected research questions: first, how do social media marketing activities influence consumer brand engagement and brand trust among Gen Z consumers in Karnataka; second, how do consumer brand engagement and brand trust influence purchase intention; and third, how does purchase intention influence actual buying behaviour, and do consumer brand engagement and brand trust mediate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention? These questions follow the proposed S-O-R sequence and focus the analysis on theoretically justified relationships (Koay et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2022).

1.1 Research Objectives

The study has three objectives:

- (1) to examine how social media marketing activities affect consumer brand engagement and brand trust among Gen Z consumers in Karnataka;
- (2) to assess how consumer brand engagement and brand trust affect purchase intention; and
- (3) to examine how purchase intention affects actual buying behaviour and whether consumer brand engagement and brand trust mediate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

The stimulus-organism-response approach gives the model a simple structure: an external stimulus affects an internal consumer state, which then leads to a response. Social media marketing activities are the stimulus; engagement and trust are internal reactions; and purchase intention and actual buying behaviour are responses. Earlier social media studies use this logic to connect marketing activities with internal states and later outcomes (Koay et al., 2021; Shah & Ali, 2024).

Social media marketing activities are multidimensional. Kim and Ko (2012) used entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation, and word of mouth, while Yadav and Rahman (2017) developed a five-dimensional e-commerce scale. For Gen Z, Deepika and Massand (2025) identified e-WOM, interaction, customisation, and advertisements. The present framework follows these four areas because they fit the target group.

2.1 Social Media Marketing Activities and Consumer Brand Engagement

Consumer brand engagement means an active connection with a brand rather than simple exposure. Hollebeek et al. (2014) describe it through cognitive processing, affection, and activation, covering thought, feeling, and brand-related activity. Social media can support these forms of engagement because consumers can watch, react, comment, share, and communicate with brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Evidence supports this link. Fetais et al. (2023) found that social media marketing activities positively influenced community engagement. Hanaysha (2022a) reported that interactivity, relevance, informativeness, and entertainment increased brand engagement. Shah and Ali (2024) also linked brand social media marketing with internal states that supported engagement. These findings suggest that useful and interactive content can move consumers from exposure to involvement.

H1: Social media marketing activities have a positive influence on consumer brand engagement.

2.2 Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Trust

Brand trust matters in digital buying because consumers often judge a brand without direct physical contact. Clear information, regular interaction, and consistent communication can reduce uncertainty. Koay et al. (2023) found that perceived social media marketing activities positively influenced brand trust, while Hanaysha (2022b) showed that trust helped explain purchase decisions. Ramadhani and Prasasti (2023) also linked social media marketing activities and trust with purchase intention. These studies support a positive SMMA-to-trust relationship.

H2: Social media marketing activities have a positive influence on brand trust.

2.3 Consumer Brand Engagement and Purchase Intention

Engaged consumers give more attention, feeling, and effort to a brand, which can make it more relevant during purchase decisions. Hanaysha (2022a) found a positive engagement-to-purchase-intention relationship, and Hollebeek et al. (2014) identified brand usage intent as an engagement outcome. Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022), however, found no direct effect in their model and showed that trust carried the effect. This difference makes the relationship worth testing.

H3: Consumer brand engagement has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.4 Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Trust can reduce the risk of relying on a brand. Koay et al. (2023) showed that brand trust formed part of the process leading from social media marketing to purchase intention. Ramadhani and Prasasti (2023) found a significant trust-to-intention relationship and a mediating role for trust. Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022) also showed that trust can carry an indirect effect to purchase intention. These findings support H4.

H4: Brand trust has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.5 Purchase Intention and Actual Buying Behaviour

Purchase intention and actual buying behaviour are different outcomes. Intention shows readiness to buy, whereas behaviour shows that buying has occurred. Consumers may change their minds because of price, availability, risk, or timing. Le Nguyen Hoang and Le Thanh Tung (2023) found that

intention remained related to actual online behaviour even when situational context changed its strength. Ong et al. (2024) also found that purchasing intention influenced actual purchase.

H5: Purchase intention has a positive influence on actual buying behaviour.

2.6 Parallel Mediation through Engagement and Trust

A mediator explains how an exogenous construct influences an outcome (Hair et al., 2022). The first proposed route is SMMA to CBE to PI. Earlier studies support SMMA-to-engagement and engagement-to-intention links (Fetais et al., 2023; Hanaysha, 2022a). The second route is SMMA to BT to PI. Koay et al. (2023) linked social media marketing with trust, and Ramadhani and Prasasti (2023) reported trust mediation. The mediators are kept parallel so that involvement and confidence can be compared without assuming a causal order between them.

H6: Consumer brand engagement mediates the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

H7: Brand trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual model. It includes only the paths needed for the seven hypotheses and does not add a direct SMMA-to-PI path or any relationship between the two mediators, which follows the principle of model parsimony discussed by Hair et al. (2022).

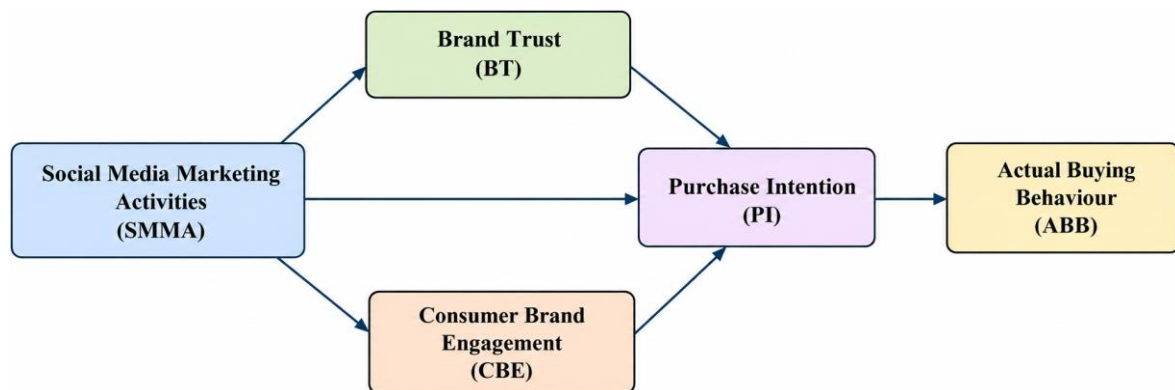


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Source: Author's conceptualisation based on S-O-R applications in Koay et al. (2021), Shah and Ali (2024), and mediation guidance in Hair et al. (2022).

3. Methodology

The study follows a quantitative cross-sectional PLS-SEM design. The analytical file contains 312 cases across Bengaluru and ten selected Tier 2 cities in Karnataka. Bengaluru is coded as Tier 1 and the remaining selected cities as Tier 2. This is an operational classification for the study rather than a universal official city-tier rule.

The sample size of 312 cases is also adequate for demonstrating this model. Hair et al. (2022) caution against relying only on the old ten-times rule and recommend considering statistical power and the smallest effect that the researcher expects to detect. Their inverse square root discussion shows that a sample of 155 can be sufficient when the minimum path coefficient expected to be significant is around 0.20 at the 5% level. The present model contains only five direct structural paths and two parallel indirect effects, so 312 cases provide a comfortable margin for the planned estimation. This statement concerns the technical adequacy of the demonstration file; it does not replace a proper sampling design for a field study. A real survey should still explain the target population, sampling frame, city allocation, inclusion criteria, recruitment process, and response screening before the PLS-SEM analysis begins (Hair et al., 2022).

The file contains 34 indicators. SMMA has 12 indicators covering e-WOM, interaction, customisation, and advertising, consistent with Deepika and Massand (2025). CBE has 10 indicators covering cognitive processing, affection, and activation, following Hollebeek et al. (2014). BT, PI, and ABB each have four coded indicators. A field study should document the exact wording and original scale sources for these three constructs, together with adaptation and pilot testing (Hair et al., 2022).

All indicators use a seven-point scale. Hair et al. (2022) explain that balanced Likert-type scales can be used in SEM when response points are symmetric and reasonably equidistant. Missingness ranged from 1.60% to 2.88% per indicator, below the 5% reasonable limit discussed by Hair et al. (2022). Missing responses were therefore replaced by the arithmetic mean of the relevant indicator.

PLS-SEM was chosen because the framework focuses on variance explanation, prediction, and mediation (Hair et al., 2019, 2022). The analysis covered descriptives, common method checks, the reflective measurement model, the structural model, and the two planned indirect effects. Reliability, AVE, HTMT, path coefficients, R-squared, effect size, collinearity, and predictive relevance were examined using established guidance (Hair et al., 2019, 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

Common method bias was assessed through the full-collinearity VIF procedure using a random-number variable. The resulting VIF values were compared with the 3.3 reference level proposed by Kock (2015). Values below 3.3 indicate that pathological collinearity and common method bias are unlikely. Structural and mediation significance was assessed with 5,000 bootstrap resamples, and only SMMA to CBE to PI and SMMA to BT to PI were tested as indirect paths.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 312 cases by gender, city, city tier, and primary social media platform.

Table 1. Demographic profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	164	52.56
Gender	Male	144	46.15
Gender	Other/Prefer not to say	4	1.28
Gender	Total	312	100.00
City	Bengaluru	80	25.64
City	Mysuru	29	9.29
City	Mangaluru	27	8.65
City	Hubballi-Dharwad	27	8.65
City	Belagavi	24	7.69
City	Kalaburagi	23	7.37
City	Davanagere	22	7.05
City	Ballari	22	7.05
City	Shivamogga	21	6.73
City	Tumakuru	20	6.41
City	Vijayapura	17	5.45
City	Total	312	100.00
City tier	Tier 1	80	25.64
City tier	Tier 2	232	74.36
City tier	Total	312	100.00
Primary platform	Instagram	120	38.46
Primary platform	YouTube	78	25.00
Primary platform	WhatsApp	60	19.23
Primary platform	Snapchat	30	9.62
Primary platform	Facebook	12	3.85
Primary platform	Other	12	3.85
Primary platform	Total	312	100.00

Note. $N = 312$. City tiers are operational study codes.

Source: Author's calculations.

Females account for 52.56% and males 46.15% of the cases. Bengaluru contributes 25.64%, while 74.36% come from the selected Tier 2 cities. Instagram is the largest primary platform at 38.46%, followed by YouTube at 25.00% and WhatsApp at 19.23%. These figures describe the analytical file and are not population estimates for Karnataka.

4.2 Construct Descriptives and Common Method Bias

Table 2 reports the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the five constructs after mean replacement of the small amount of missing data.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
SMMA	4.258	1.272	-0.300	-0.504
CBE	4.325	1.288	-0.196	-0.584
BT	4.347	1.352	-0.216	-0.550
PI	4.374	1.391	-0.211	-0.567
ABB	4.255	1.373	-0.200	-0.648

Note. Construct values are mean scores of their indicators after mean imputation.

Source: Author's calculations from the analytical dataset.

All construct means are slightly above the seven-point midpoint. PI has the highest mean at 4.374 and ABB the lowest at 4.255. Skewness ranges from -0.300 to -0.196 and kurtosis from -0.648 to -0.504, so no extreme distribution problem is visible. PLS-SEM does not require multivariate normality, although outliers and collinearity still require attention (Hair et al., 2022).

The full-collinearity assessment did not indicate a common method bias problem. A random-number variable was used in the diagnostic, and the VIF values ranged from 1.408 to 1.937 across SMMA, CBE, BT, PI, and ABB. Kock (2015) proposes 3.3 as the reference value for full-collinearity assessment. Since every VIF was below 3.3, common method bias was unlikely to be a serious concern in the analytical file.

4.3 Measurement Model

Table 3 presents the reliability, convergent validity, and loading ranges for all five reflective constructs.

Table 3. Construct reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Alpha	CR	AVE	Loading range
SMMA	12	0.956	0.961	0.673	0.747-0.865
CBE	10	0.946	0.954	0.673	0.794-0.863
BT	4	0.886	0.922	0.747	0.828-0.895
PI	4	0.908	0.936	0.784	0.866-0.898
ABB	4	0.876	0.915	0.729	0.843-0.868

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. Recommended checks are indicator loadings around or above .708, reliability above .70, and AVE above .50 (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

Source: Author's PLS-SEM calculations.

All loadings exceed 0.70, with the lowest at 0.747. Alpha ranges from 0.876 to 0.956, CR from 0.915 to 0.961, and AVE from 0.673 to 0.784. These values meet the usual reliability and convergent-validity checks of loading around .708 or higher, reliability above .70, and AVE above .50 (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

Table 4 presents the HTMT values used to assess discriminant validity between the constructs.

Table 4. HTMT discriminant validity matrix

	SMMA	CBE	BT	PI	ABB
SMMA	-	0.607	0.618	0.453	0.333
CBE	0.607	-	0.401	0.515	0.330
BT	0.618	0.401	-	0.487	0.350
PI	0.453	0.515	0.487	-	0.593
ABB	0.333	0.330	0.350	0.593	-

Note. The conservative HTMT reference level is .85, while .90 is also used in less strict settings (Henseler et al., 2015).

Source: Author's PLS-SEM calculations.

The highest HTMT value is 0.618 between SMMA and BT; all others are lower. Every value is below the conservative 0.85 reference suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). The results therefore support discriminant validity between the five constructs.

4.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 reports the five direct paths. It also reports effect sizes, while the table note gives the R-squared, Q-squared, and inner VIF values for the endogenous constructs.

Table 5. Structural model results

H	Path	Beta	t	p	95% CI	f-squared	Decision
H1	SMMA → CBE	0.580	15.800	< .001	0.509, 0.651	0.506	Supported
H2	SMMA → BT	0.571	15.544	< .001	0.497, 0.641	0.484	Supported
H3	CBE → PI	0.365	7.270	< .001	0.266, 0.460	0.167	Supported
H4	BT → PI	0.306	6.235	< .001	0.208, 0.400	0.117	Supported
H5	PI → ABB	0.530	13.118	< .001	0.450, 0.611	0.391	Supported

Note. Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. R-squared/Q-squared: CBE = .336/.334; BT = .326/.318; PI = .310/.303; ABB = .281/.274. Inner VIFs range from 1.000 to 1.157. Confidence intervals that do not include zero support significance; f-squared values near .02, .15, and .35 are commonly read as small, medium, and large effects (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

Source: Author's PLS-SEM calculations.

All direct hypotheses are supported because each confidence interval excludes zero and each p-value is below .001. SMMA has large effects on CBE and BT, CBE has a medium effect on PI, BT has a smaller effect on PI, and PI has a large effect on ABB. Effect size should be read together with path significance rather than p-values alone (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

The model explains 33.6% of CBE, 32.6% of BT, 31.0% of PI, and 28.1% of ABB. Inner VIF values are low, and all Q-squared values are positive. These results show useful explanatory and predictive relevance, although a field study should also report full indicator-level PLSpredict results (Hair et al., 2019).

4.5 Parallel Mediation

Table 6 reports the two planned parallel indirect effects between social media marketing activities and purchase intention.

Table 6. Parallel mediation results

H	Indirect path	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H6	SMMA → CBE → PI	0.212	0.034	6.259	< .001	0.149, 0.280	Supported
H7	SMMA → BT → PI	0.175	0.032	5.515	< .001	0.115, 0.238	Supported

Note. Only the two planned parallel mediations were tested. Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. An indirect effect is significant when its bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero (Hair et al., 2022).

Source: Author's PLS-SEM calculations.

Both indirect effects are significant because neither confidence interval includes zero. The CBE route is 0.212 and the BT route is 0.175, supporting H6 and H7. Because no direct SMMA-to-PI path is included, the analysis does not label the effects as partial or full mediation; it only confirms the two planned indirect routes (Hair et al., 2022). Figure 2 presents the structural model with the standardised path coefficients and R-squared values reported above.

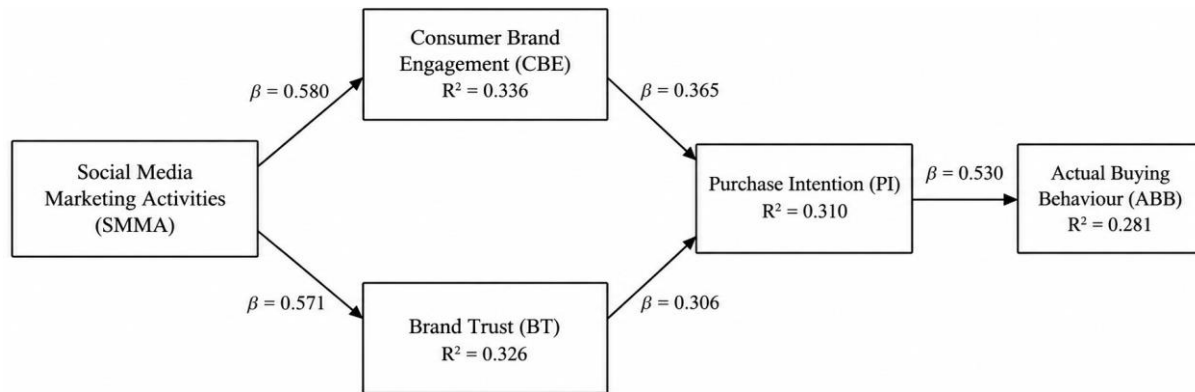


Figure 2. Structural model results

Source: Author's PLS-SEM analysis

5. Discussion

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

RQ1 asked how social media marketing activities influence consumer brand engagement and brand trust. The answer is clear: social media marketing activities positively influenced consumer brand engagement ($\beta = 0.580$, $p < .001$) and brand trust ($\beta = 0.571$, $p < .001$). Stronger social media marketing was therefore associated with greater brand involvement and confidence. The engagement result agrees with Fetais et al. (2023) and Hanaysha (2022a), while the trust result is consistent with Koay et al. (2023) and Hanaysha (2022b). Thus, RQ1 is supported through two separate consumer reactions.

RQ2 asked how consumer brand engagement and brand trust influence purchase intention. Both effects were positive and significant: consumer brand engagement increased purchase intention ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < .001$), and brand trust also increased purchase intention ($\beta = 0.306$, $p < .001$). Thus, both involvement and confidence contribute to purchase intention. This agrees with Hanaysha (2022a) on engagement and with studies showing that trust supports purchase-related responses (Koay et al., 2023; Ramadhani & Prasasti, 2023). RQ2 is therefore supported, while keeping the two mechanisms conceptually separate.

RQ3 asked whether purchase intention influences actual buying behaviour and whether consumer brand engagement and brand trust mediate the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase intention. Both parts are supported. Purchase intention positively influenced actual buying behaviour ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect through consumer brand engagement was significant ($\beta = 0.212$, $p < .001$), and the indirect effect through brand trust was also significant ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < .001$). Thus, RQ3 is answered by one significant behavioural path and two significant parallel mediation routes. This is consistent with evidence that intention can predict actual purchase while remaining conceptually different from behaviour (Le Nguyen Hoang & Le Thanh Tung, 2023; Ong et al., 2024).

The parallel structure is important because it does not assume that engagement must create trust or that trust must create engagement. Earlier findings differ on this ordering. Osei-Frimpong et al. (2022) found that trust carried the engagement-to-intention effect in their setting, whereas Hanaysha (2022a) reported a direct engagement-to-intention relationship. Treating CBE and BT as parallel mediators therefore allows an involvement route and a confidence route to operate at the same time without imposing an additional causal sequence that is not required by the present model.

Keeping purchase intention separate from actual buying behaviour is also important. Social media studies often stop at intention even though a favourable intention may not become a purchase. Situational conditions can change the intention-behaviour relationship (Le Nguyen Hoang & Le Thanh Tung, 2023), while purchasing intention can still predict actual purchase (Ong et al., 2024). Extending the model to ABB therefore gives a clearer behavioural endpoint.

The model explains about one-third of engagement, trust, and purchase intention and 28.1% of actual buying behaviour. Hair et al. (2019, 2022) advise judging R-squared in the research context rather than by one universal cut-off. Buying behaviour also depends on price, risk, quality, income, availability, and other factors, so the present framework should be read as a focused social media explanation rather than a complete buying model.

Overall, the findings fit S-O-R reasoning: SMMA is the external stimulus, engagement and trust are internal reactions, and purchase intention and buying behaviour are responses (Koay et al., 2021; Shah & Ali, 2024). The framework extends this logic by testing two internal routes side by side and carrying the response process beyond intention to actual behaviour.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to social media marketing literature by explaining how marketing activities influence Gen Z purchase decisions through consumer brand engagement and brand trust. Instead of focusing only on a direct relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention, the model shows two separate routes through involvement and trust. It also distinguishes purchase intention from actual buying behaviour, giving a more complete view of the consumer decision process. The findings support the view that engagement, trust, intention, and behaviour are different constructs and should be measured separately. This provides a simple and clearer framework for understanding Gen Z buying behaviour.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings suggest that companies should not judge social media performance only through followers, views, likes, or posting frequency. Social media content should also create engagement and build trust. Firms can improve engagement through interactive posts, short videos, polls, demonstrations, user-generated content, and quick responses to comments. Trust can be strengthened through clear product information, genuine reviews, transparent prices, accurate descriptions, and consistent customer support. Companies should also recognise that purchase intention does not always lead to actual purchase. High prices, delivery charges, stock problems, payment difficulties, and competing products may stop consumers from completing a purchase. Firms should therefore track both intention-related indicators and actual behaviour such as cart completion, purchases, and repeat buying. For Gen Z consumers in Karnataka, social media strategies may also be adapted according to city and platform differences.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, as the data were collected at one point in time. Therefore, although the findings show significant relationships among social media marketing activities, consumer brand engagement, brand trust, purchase intention, and actual buying behaviour, they do not show how these relationships develop over time.

Future research may use a longitudinal design by collecting data from the same respondents at different stages. For example, social media marketing exposure may be measured first, followed by consumer brand engagement and brand trust, then purchase intention, and finally actual buying behaviour. Such a design would provide a clearer understanding of how social media marketing influences Gen Z consumers over time and how purchase intention is converted into actual buying behaviour.

8. Conclusion

This study shows that social media marketing activities influence Gen Z buying behaviour through two important routes: consumer brand engagement and brand trust. Social media marketing had a positive effect on both engagement and trust, and both factors increased purchase intention. Purchase intention, in turn, positively influenced actual buying behaviour. The study also confirms that consumer brand engagement and brand trust act as parallel mediators between social media marketing activities and purchase intention. The main contribution of the study is that it explains how social media marketing influences buying decisions rather than examining only a direct effect on purchase intention. By separating engagement and trust and extending the model to actual buying behaviour, the study provides a clearer understanding of the social media buying process among Gen Z consumers in Karnataka.

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