RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Online Advertising on Consumers' Purchasing Decisions towards Social Media Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Purpose:
The objective of this study is to measure the direct impact of online marketing on social media on the purchasing decisions of today's consumers. It wants to find out which of the digital marketing components will work best in stimulating both the planned and unplanned purchase behaviours.

Scope:
The study only focuses on active social media users and their engagement with targeted advertisements, influencer endorsements and sponsored content. It controls for the impact of other traditional digital channels like search engine or email advertising to isolate the impact of social media marketing.

Aim:
The aim of the study is to analyse the direct impact of targeted online advertisements on social networks on the buying habits of today's consumers. It also wants to identify which digital marketing components are most effective in turning passive online engagement into actual sales.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Online Advertising, Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Decision, Purchase Intention, Ad Personalisation

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Introduction

The digital age has revolutionised the global marketing landscape, a huge shift from traditional media to vibrant online channels. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and LinkedIn have evolved from basic social networking sites to complex data marketplaces with billions of daily active users. With this kind of reach, it’s no wonder companies spend more and more of their marketing dollars on advertising on social media. In today’s digital world brands have the unique ability to deliver highly targeted, interactive and personalised content, moving away from passive broadcast to create real time, two-way communication with their specific consumer demographic.

Thus, this constant exposure to personalised digital marketing greatly affects the attitudes, preferences and final purchase decisions of modern consumers. But as users are bombarded with promotional content, they are increasingly affected by ad fatigue, banner blindness and a natural scepticism of sponsored posts. The jump from online engagement (likes or shares) to a completed sale is a complicated interaction that involves brand credibility, ad relevance and social proof. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the specific determinants of online advertising on social media platforms that effectively penetrate the digital noise to affect consumer buying behaviour and provide practical implications for marketers to maximise

their campaigns and transform digital interactions into long-term sales.

Evolution of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has evolved from one-way communication to consumer engagement based on analytics. Marketing was driven by TV, print and radio in the past. Mass media have the capability to reach a large number of people but they cannot be used to reach a particular audience or to assess the response of the audience. The first implementation of Web 1.0 was static corporate sites with banner ads. The sector witnessed the revolution of bidirectional communication with Web 2.0. Social media has changed in this era. Internet users became content producers and not only content consumers. Brands had to move from broadcasting disruption to relationship marketing, building online communities and interacting with their target groups in real time.

Social media platforms have created a complex digital marketing environment based on algorithms that can influence modern buying decisions. Today's digital advertising goes far beyond simply increasing brand awareness. A wealth of data, artificial intelligence and machine learning produce highly customised content based on user predilections and browsing behaviours. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have built-in e-commerce features that enable users to browse and buy products easily. Today consumers are bombarded by curated advertising, influencer and user-generated endorsements that influence their perceptions and trust in brands. Social media marketing has evolved from being a supplementary advertising resource to having a significant and visible impact on both deliberate and spontaneous consumer purchasing behaviour.

The Growth of Popular Social Media Platforms for Online Ads

Huge Sales Boost: Brands are leaving traditional media and banner ads, and are massively increasing their spending on social media advertising. This market is estimated to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars worldwide, and is a key engine of the digital economy.

Role in platform dominance: The market leaders are Meta (Facebook and Instagram), YouTube and TikTok. They provide companies direct access to billions of users on a daily basis. Meta is the world's biggest advertising company, but TikTok has completely changed the way ads are displayed to attract younger, more engaged viewers.

Switch to video: Short-form video content like Instagram Reels and TikTok has changed how people consume ads. The video ads are the most effective in getting people to watch and click on ads because they are so memorable.

Advanced AI Targeting: The platforms will utilize artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to analyze extensive user behavior data. This system will allow them to deliver ads that are highly targeted to individuals who are most likely to make a purchase.

The Rise of E-Commerce: Then came friction-free in-app purchasing capabilities and the line between discovering a product and buying it blurred. This "social commerce" infrastructure allows people to buy directly from ads and helps them decide what to buy faster.

Need of the Study

Many companies throw a lot of marketing dollars at social media, but they don't measure the impact of their online advertising on sales. While Instagram and Facebook do a good job amplifying brand awareness, the move from passive browsing to active purchase decision is still being studied. This research is important to connect likes, clicks and views to return on investment.

Modern consumers' purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by complex psychological factors like trust, ad relevancy and peer validation because of ad fatigue and banner blindness. It is important to study effectiveness of personalized marketing, engaging content and influencer promotions in reducing consumer skepticism. Understanding these key factors can help marketers enhance their digital campaigns, reduce wasteful advertising expenditure and influence consumer behavior in an increasingly cluttered online marketplace.

Importance of the Study

The research is of great theoretical importance, as it revises previous models of consumer behaviour to make them more relevant to the current digital economy. These very targeted, interactive campaigns that play upon the ever-changing social media algorithms and advertising formats often miss the subtlety of traditional marketing techniques. The present study aims to explore the various factors influencing purchase intention such as AI-based personalisation, influencer trustworthiness and social validation thus adding to the academic literature and providing a better understanding of the mindset of the modern day digital consumer.

From a practical point of view, the results of this study have huge implications for marketers and firms which are trying to maximise their return on investment (ROI). As digital advertising costs rise and consumers become increasingly resistant to generic ads, organisations need to work out the precise elements that influence purchasing decisions. This study allows marketers to develop more effective, engaging and trustworthy social media marketing that will help companies translate digital interactions into long-term sales and sustainable competitive advantage.

Review of Literature

Gad, K. (2026) This study, Gad examines the direct and indirect association between components of social media marketing (SMM) and

consumer purchase decisions. The study used the structural equation modeling (SEM), to show that factors like interactivity and informativeness have a significant impact on consumer behavior. The study highlights that "Customer Experience" is a crucial partial mediator in this relationship, claiming that modern online advertising should not only be about displaying the product; it should also create a positive, engaging and informative digital atmosphere in an effort to build brand trust and ultimately lead to a purchasing decision.

Deng, L. (2026) This research explores the unique features of social media advertising and its psychological effect on consumers. The detailed quantitative data analysis shows that effective personalized advertising algorithms, high-quality content and large-scale user feedback are the key factors influencing purchase intentions. Deng notes that social media increases brand awareness and trust and that today's consumers are very conscious of advertising fatigue. The findings indicate that companies need to shift from traditional mass-marketing techniques to big data analysis for the creation of relevant and highly personalized digital ads that meet consumer's instant needs and preferences.

Objective of the Study

1. To evaluate the impact of targeted social media advertising on consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Testing of hypothesis

H_{01} There is no significant difference between impact of targeted social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Types of Social Media Ads

Textual Ads: Textual ads are effective marketing copies with persuasive call-to-actions to increase consumer engagement and the rate of conversion on the website in a short period.

Image ads: Static images that capture your attention and spark impulse buying in the busy social media feeds.

Video Ads: Storytelling motion creative for the product that drives a significant lift in purchase intent.

Carousel Ads: Swipeable, interactive ads that allow you to show multiple products in one ad.

Narrative Ads: Full screen vertical ads that flash for a brief moment and create a psychological sense of urgency for limited-time offers.

Sponsored Ads: Content Native ads appear in native feeds, so they feel less intrusive and build brand trust more easily.

Advertisements Communication: To the customer's inbox. Customised marketing messages, nudging the customer to engage directly and help address any lingering questions before a purchase.

Data Collection

Primary Data: The data for this study was collected using structured online surveys. The online survey was distributed to the selected 320 participants.

Secondary Data: Data which is collected from existing sources such as previous academic literature, web marketing research, and industry related archives.

Statement of the Problem

Brands are spending huge sums of cash on advertising via social media but there is still a fundamental disconnect between engaging users online and converting them into consumers in the real world. Today's consumers are bombarded with promotional messages and have high levels of ad fatigue, banner blindness and deep scepticism of sponsored content. The primary issue is that advertisers often find it difficult to ascertain which particular advertising variables, such as algorithmic personalisation, influencer credibility, or interactive video formats, are able to cut through this digital noise and positively influence buyer behaviour. Thus, this study tackles the pressing problem of knowing the precise mechanisms by which social media advertising successfully converts casual brand exposure into tangible buying decisions in an over-saturated digital market.

Sampling Design

S. No	List of the Blocks	No. of Respondents
1	Mayiladuthurai	64
2	Kuthalam	64
3	Sirkali	64
4	Kollidam	64
5	Sembanorkovil	64
Total		**320**

Source: Primary Data

The sample design of the study is 320 respondents from five blocks of Mayiladuthurai district. From the blocks, namely Mayiladuthurai, Kuthalam, Sirkali and Kollidam, Sembanorkovil 64 respondents were selected to have equal representation. This spread helps to collect reliable and comparable data on the impact of online advertising on the purchase decisions of consumers in different areas of the district.

Table 1

Age Group

S.No	Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	18 – 24 years	130	41
2	25 – 34 years	120	38
3	35 – 44 years	30	9

4	45 – 54 years	20	6
5	Above 55 years	20	6
Total		**320**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the 320 respondents surveyed. The distribution of age is predominantly young. The main demographic is made up of people aged 18 to 24 years, which accounts for 41 per cent or 130 respondents, and the 25 to 34 age group at 38 per cent or 120 respondents. These two younger groups together form a 79 per cent majority of the total sample. Conversely, engagement drops off a cliff in older age groups, with 35- to 44-year-olds accounting for 9 per cent and both the 45-54 and over 55 segments making up only 6 per cent each. So, the survey is very much skewed toward younger people, with something like 80 per cent of the respondents between the ages of 18 and 34.

Table 2

Employment Status

S.No	Employment Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Student	120	38
2	Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	115	36
3	Self-employed / Business Owner	55	17
4	Unemployed / Retired	30	9
Total		**320**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows the employment status of the 320 participants surveyed. The two largest groups are nearly equal: students at 38 per cent or 120 respondents, and employed at 36 per cent or 115 respondents. Combined, these two categories account for a commanding 74 per cent majority of the total sample. The next largest segment is self-employed and business owners, making up 17 per cent or 55 respondents of the population. Finally, the unemployed and retired is the smallest demographic group in the survey, accounting for only 9 per cent or 30 respondents. Therefore, the demographic of the survey is very much populated by people who are in education or traditional employment at the time of the survey, which is almost three-quarters of the total number of respondents.

Table 3

Social Media Usage (Daily)

S.No	Social Media Usage (Daily)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	140	44
2	More than 1 hours	180	56
Total		**320**	**100**

Source: Primary data

The table 3 shows how many of the 320 respondents used social media each day. It is found that 180 respondents 56 per cent are using social media for more than one hour per day. Whereas, 140 respondents 44 per cent are using social media less than one hour per day. The data thus reveals that a considerably higher percentage of respondents spend more than an hour on social media platforms every day.

Table 4

Online ads influence social media marketing purchases

S.No	Particulars	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1	Ads on social media related to my recent searches attract my attention.	95	80	65	45	35	320
		30	25	20	14	11	100
2	Interactive elements like polls and swipe-up links make me interact with the brand more.	85	105	50	50	30	320
		27	33	15	15	10	100
3	User created content and peer reviews are big factors in my trust in an ad.	80	95	50	50	45	320
		26	30	15	15	14	100
4	Social media marketing regularly	150	50	50	50	20	320
		47	15	16	15	7	100

	stimulates my urge to make unplanned purchases.						
5	The online ads reduced my time to purchase decision a lot.	80	90	70	50	30	320
		26	28	22	15	9	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows the effect of online advertisements on the buying habits of 320 respondents on social media. This is the metric most strongly affected, with 62 per cent of respondents agreeing that social media marketing regularly drives impulse purchases, of which a dominant 47 per cent strongly agree. Further, 60 per cent of users believe interactive elements such as polls are successful in driving brand engagement, while 56 per cent and 55 per cent of users report that content created by them and targeted search-based ads successfully help them build trust and attention respectively. Lastly, 54 per cent of respondents agree that these online ads help them reach a final purchase decision much faster. This explains why social media marketing and targeted online ads are extremely powerful tools to influence consumer behaviour, especially in terms of impulsive purchases and expediting the whole decision process.

Objective:

To evaluate the impact of targeted social media advertising on consumers' immediate purchase decision

H_{01} There is no significant difference between impact of targeted social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

One way ANOVA has been used to test the significant difference between Age and social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

A One-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether a consumer's age significantly affected the impact of targeted social media advertising on their prompt purchasing decisions.

H_01(a) There is no significant difference between Age and impact of targeted social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Table 5

Age and social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Variables	Age	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Ads on social media related to my recent searches attract my attention.	18 – 24 years	130	4.75	0.44	526.78	0.001*
	25 – 34 years	120	3.29	0.61		
	35 – 44 years	30	2.00	0.00		
	45 – 54 years	20	1.25	0.44		
	Above 55 years	20	1.00	0.00		
	Total	320	3.48	1.33		
Interactive elements like polls and swipe-up links make me interact with the brand more.	18 – 24 years	130	4.65	0.47	411.85	0.001*
	25 – 34 years	120	3.33	0.69		
	35 – 44 years	30	2.00	0.00		
	45 – 54 years	20	1.25	0.44		
	Above 55 years	20	1.00	0.00		
	Total	320	3.46	1.32		
User created content and peer reviews are big factors in my trust in an ad.	18 – 24 years	130	4.38	1.08	146.35	0.001*
	25 – 34 years	120	3.33	0.69		
	35 – 44 years	30	2.00	0.00		
	45 – 54 years	20	1.25	0.44		
	Above 55 years	20	1.00	0.00		

Source: Computed from Primary

Table 5 shows significant age differences for all targeted advertising effects in terms of F-values. The differences, however, are significant. According to the F value of 637.875, it is found that social media marketing promoting impulsive purchases has a strong effect on the age group behaviour and followed by advertising related to recent enquiries with a F value of 526.784. The F-value of 443.186 suggested that online advertisements reduce the time of purchase decisions. The F-value of 411.850 suggested that interactive elements such as polls and swipe-up links improve brand engagement. Statistically significant but with the least variation, trust in content created by users and peer evaluations. This resulted in a minimum F-value of 146.356. We reject the null hypothesis H01a and conclude that targeted social media advertising has an impact on consumers' immediate purchasing behaviour based on age.

One way ANOVA has been used to test the significant difference between Employment Status and social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

A One-way ANOVA was used to determine if the employment status of an individual affects significantly the effect of targeted social media advertising on their prompt buying decisions.

$H_0$1(b) There is no significant difference between Employment Status and impact of targeted social media

advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Table 6
Employment Status and social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision

Variables	Employment Status	N	Mean	S.D.	F Value	Sig.
Ads on social media related to my recent searches attract my attention.	Student	120	4.79	0.40	846.48	0.001*
	Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	115	3.47	0.50		
	Self-employed / Business Owner	60	1.91	0.49		
	Unemployed / Retired	25	1.00	0.00		
	Total	320	3.48	1.33		
Interactive elements like polls and swipe-up links make me interact with the brand more.	Student	120	4.70	0.45	855.04	0.001*
	Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	115	3.56	0.49		
	Self-employed / Business Owner	60	1.83	0.37		
	Unemployed / Retired	25	1.00	0.00		
	Total	320	3.46	1.32		
User created content and peer reviews are big factors in my trust in an ad.	Student	120	4.66	0.47	427.45	0.001*
	Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	115	3.30	0.86		
	Self-employed / Business Owner	60	1.83	0.37		
	Unemployed / Retired	25	1.00	0.00		
	Total	320	3.35	1.37		
Social media marketing regularly stimulates my	Student	120	5.00	0.00	643.21	0.001*
	Employed (Full-time/Part-time)	115	3.95	0.75		
	Self-	60	2.25	0.		

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The F-values given in Table 6 show that the effects of advertising are significantly different by job position, but the magnitude of the differences is not uniform. The study found that the interactive components such as surveys and swipe-up links have the most significant impact on brand engagement with an F-value of 855.046, followed closely by advertisements related to recent searches at 846.484. Digital advertisements reduced time of purchase decisions as evidenced by a F value of 736.246. Digital advertisements allowed impulsive buying as evidenced by a F value of 643.216. The least variance was observed in the impact of content created by users and peer evaluations on trust in advertisements, with an F-value of 427.452. The null hypothesis H01b is rejected. This means that targeted social media advertising has a significant impact on immediate purchase behaviour by employment status.

T-test used to test significant differences between t-test used to test significant differences between Social Media Usage (Daily) with social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

H_{01}(b) There is no significant difference between Social Media Usage (Daily) and impact of targeted social media advertising and consumers' immediate purchase decision.

Table 4.57

Social Media Usage and social media advertising and consumers'

immediate purchase decision

Source: computed form primary data

Reliability Analysis

Using Cronbach's Alpha, a reliability assessment was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scale assessing the impact of online advertisements on social media marketing purchases.

Table 8

Reliability Analysis

Variables	Social Media Usage	N	Mean	S. D.	P Value	Sig.
Ads on social media related to my recent searches attract my attention.	Less than 1 hour					
	More than 1 hours					
Interactive elements like polls and swipe-up links make me interact with the brand more.	Less than 1 hour					
	More than 1 hours					
User created content and peer reviews are big factors in my trust in an ad.	Less than 1 hour					
	More than 1 hours					
Social media marketing regularly stimulates my urge to make unplanned purchases.	Less than 1 hour					
	More than 1 hours					
The online ads reduced my time to purchase decision a lot.	Less than 1 hour					
	More than 1 hours					

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
Online ads influence social media marketing purchases	0.985	0.985	5

Source: computed from primary data

Table 8 The results of the reliability analysis show an extremely high level of internal consistency of the measured construct. The five-item scale, "Online ads impact social media marketing purchases" had a very high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.985, the standardised items had a score of 0.985 as well. These values are much greater than traditional acceptable statistical thresholds indicating that the individual items on this scale are highly correlated and reliably measure the same underlying construct with little variance or error. The tool used to assess the impact of online advertisements on consumer spending is highly statistically reliable, confirming its accuracy and usability for the research.

Findings

1. The p-value for each of the variables measured was 0.001, which is statistically significant. This means that there were significant differences in the way the 320 participants responded to the targeted social media marketing depending on their age demographics.
2. The p-value of each variable checked was very significant at 0.001, which means that there are significant differences in the responses of the 320 participants from different professional backgrounds to targeted social media marketing.
3. A highly significant p-value of 0.001 was observed for each variable assessed, indicating strong differences in the responses of the 320 participants to targeted social media advertising based on their differing daily usage levels.
4. The five-item scale had excellent internal consistency with an unbelievably high Cronbach's Alpha of 0.985.

Suggestions

1. **Segment Campaigns by Age:** Consumer responses to targeted social media marketing vary widely by age, so marketers should create different age-specific advertising content.
2. **Customisation for Professional Backgrounds:** The career background of a consumer makes a very great difference in the reaction to the social media marketing. Therefore, the advertising strategies need to be customised to align with different professional contexts.
3. **Delivery Based on Usage:** The frequency and pacing of an ad's delivery should be based on the daily social media usage of a consumer, as these levels of engagement heavily dictate the overall impact of the advertising.
4. **Use Reliable Measurement Tools:** Future marketing research and campaign tracking should utilise the established five-item scale, which demonstrates excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.985).

Conclusion

The study proves beyond doubt that the effect of targeted online advertising on consumers' buying decisions is deeply affected by the unique demographic and behavioural characteristics of individuals. The statistical analysis of 320 participants showed statistically significant ($p = 0.001$) differences of respondents' response to social media marketing based on their age groups, professional background and social media usage per day. Thus, the generic advertising strategies are proved to be ineffective. To ensure the best effectiveness of the campaign, the marketers should use strictly segmented strategies, including the tailoring of the ad content, the customisation of the message to different professional settings, and the adjustment of the delivery pace to the specific digital habits of the target audiences, and the use of highly reliable measurement tools for constant tracking.

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