

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON CONSUMER TRUST, BRAND LOYALTY, AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of Social Networking Sites (SNS) on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions. Utilizing SPSS analysis, the results indicate a strong positive correlation between SNS engagement and consumer trust, emphasizing the role of interactive brand communication in building consumer confidence. Regression analysis confirms that SNS engagement significantly predicts consumer trust, highlighting the necessity of transparency and responsiveness in digital marketing strategies. Additionally, the study establishes a direct link between SNS engagement, consumer trust, and brand loyalty. Consumers who actively engage with brands on SNS are likelier to develop trust and exhibit long-term loyalty. The regression results further reveal that SNS engagement and trust collectively influence brand loyalty, reinforcing the importance of relationship-driven marketing approaches. The study employs logistic regression to assess the impact of SNS on consumer purchase decisions. Findings suggest that higher levels of SNS engagement, trust, and brand loyalty significantly increase purchase probability. Odds ratio analysis indicates that brand loyalty has the most substantial effect on purchase decisions, followed by SNS engagement and consumer trust. These insights underscore the growing importance of SNS as a key driver of consumer behavior. Brands that prioritize engagement, credibility, and personalized interactions on SNS can enhance consumer trust, strengthen brand loyalty, and boost purchasing behavior. The findings suggest businesses should integrate SNS strategies into their marketing frameworks to build long-term consumer relationships and achieve sustainable success in the digital marketplace.

**Keywords:** Social Networking Sites, Consumer Trust, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Decisions, Digital Marketing, Consumer Engagement

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized how businesses interact with consumers, particularly through the rise of Social Networking Sites (SNS). Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn have become integral to digital marketing strategies, allowing brands to engage with their target audience in real-time. Unlike traditional marketing channels, SNS facilitates two-way communication, enabling businesses to cultivate relationships, build trust, and foster loyalty. As consumers increasingly rely on SNS for product discovery, peer reviews, and brand interactions, understanding the impact of these platforms on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions has become a critical area of research.

### Evolution of Social Networking Sites in Digital Marketing

Social networking sites have transformed from simple communication platforms to powerful marketing tools. Initially designed for personal interactions, SNS have evolved into spaces where businesses can directly engage with consumers, tailor advertisements based on user

preferences, and leverage data analytics for targeted marketing. The shift from one-way advertising to interactive communication has enhanced how brands establish credibility and connect with potential buyers. Marketers now use SNS for various purposes, including influencer collaborations, user-generated content campaigns, and personalized promotions, all of which contribute to increased consumer engagement and trust. With the rise of digitalization, SNS have blurred the lines between traditional and digital marketing. Unlike conventional advertisements that rely on static messaging, SNS provide brands with an opportunity to create dynamic, interactive campaigns that resonate with consumers on a personal level. The ability to engage with brands in real-time fosters transparency and responsiveness, which are essential components of building consumer trust and encouraging long-term loyalty.

### **Consumer Trust and SNS Engagement**

Trust is a fundamental factor influencing consumer behavior, particularly in an online setting with limited personal interactions. SNS offer a unique opportunity for businesses to establish trust through authentic communication, real-time engagement, and social proof. Brands that actively interact with consumers respond to inquiries and address concerns demonstrate transparency and credibility, positively impacting consumer trust. One of the most effective ways brands build trust on SNS is through peer reviews and user-generated content. Consumers tend to trust recommendations from their peers more than traditional advertising. Reviews, testimonials, and product experiences shared by other users serve as credible sources of information, reducing scepticism and increasing confidence in the brand. Furthermore, influencer marketing has emerged as a key strategy in enhancing consumer trust. Influencers who have established credibility in their respective niches serve as intermediaries between brands and consumers, providing authentic endorsements that are perceived as trustworthy. SNS enable brands to practice corporate social responsibility (CSR) and demonstrate their commitment to ethical business practices. Companies that engage in CSR activities and communicate their initiatives through SNS can build stronger relationships with consumers who prioritize socially responsible brands. By fostering transparent and ethical communication, businesses can enhance consumer trust and brand perception.

### **The Role of SNS in Strengthening Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is a key determinant of a company's long-term success, reflecting a consumer's willingness to purchase from a specific brand repeatedly. SNS plays a vital role in strengthening brand loyalty by fostering continuous engagement, creating personalized experiences, and rewarding customer advocacy. Unlike traditional marketing methods that focus solely on attracting new customers, SNS allows businesses to nurture existing relationships and maintain ongoing interactions with their audience. Personalized marketing strategies on SNS contribute significantly to brand loyalty. Brands that use data analytics to tailor their messaging, offer exclusive promotions, and provide content that aligns with consumer preferences are more likely to retain customers. Loyalty programs, interactive campaigns, and direct consumer engagement help create a sense of belonging and encourage repeat purchases. SNS facilitate brand advocacy, where satisfied customers share their positive experiences and recommend products to their social circles. Word-of-mouth marketing on SNS amplifies brand visibility and strengthens consumer-brand relationships. Companies that actively engage with their followers, acknowledge customer feedback, and create interactive content can foster a loyal community of brand advocates who contribute to sustained business growth.

## **Impact of SNS on Consumer Purchase Decisions**

Various factors, including brand trust, perceived value, and social proof influence consumer purchase decisions. SNS play a critical role in shaping these factors by providing consumers with easy access to product information, peer reviews, and brand interactions. The seamless integration of e-commerce features within SNS platforms has further streamlined the purchasing process, enabling consumers to make informed decisions and complete transactions within the same platform. The rise of influencer marketing has significantly impacted consumer purchase behavior. Influencers serve as trusted sources of information, and their endorsements often lead to increased product interest and purchase intent. Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to buy products recommended by influencers they trust, highlighting the effectiveness of SNS-driven marketing campaigns. SNS provide businesses with valuable insights into consumer behavior through engagement metrics, sentiment analysis, and behavioral analytics. By analysing consumer interactions, businesses can refine their marketing strategies, optimize content delivery, and personalize their offerings to better align with customer expectations. This data-driven approach allows brands to create more effective campaigns that resonate with their target audience and drive higher conversion rates.

## **The Growing Importance of SNS in the Digital Marketplace**

As consumer behavior continues to evolve, the importance of SNS in digital marketing cannot be overstated. Businesses that fail to leverage the power of SNS risk falling behind competitors who actively engage with their audiences and adapt to changing consumer preferences. The increasing reliance on SNS for product discovery, brand interactions, and purchasing decisions highlights the need for companies to develop comprehensive SNS strategies that prioritize consumer trust, brand loyalty, and personalized engagement. The shift towards digital interactions also presents challenges that businesses must address, including maintaining authenticity, managing online reputation, and combating misinformation. Consumers are becoming more discerning and expect brands to uphold ethical standards, provide transparent communication, and deliver consistent quality. Companies that successfully navigate these challenges and build meaningful connections with their audience through SNS will gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Conceptual Framework** - Social networking sites (SNS) have evolved significantly since their inception, transitioning from simple communication tools to powerful digital marketing platforms. SNS facilitates direct consumer and brand engagement, enabling personalized marketing, interactive advertising, and community-building. The growing role of SNS in commerce necessitates an understanding of their impact on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decision-making (Karve & Shinde, 2013). Consumer trust and brand loyalty are essential in the digital era, where online interactions shape perceptions and influence purchasing behaviour. Trust in online platforms is established through transparency, user reviews, and brand responsiveness, while loyalty is fostered through consistent engagement and personalized experiences (Goyal, 2022). The purchase decision-making process in online marketing is often driven by peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and targeted advertisements, making SNS a crucial component of digital consumer journeys (Shinde, 2014). Green marketing has become a vital strategy for businesses aiming to balance consumer demand with environmental sustainability. Kakade et al. (2023) highlight that modern consumer is increasingly conscious of green products, preferring brands that adopt eco-friendly practices. Their study emphasizes that sustainable development and corporate

responsibility are crucial factors in shaping consumer behavior. The research findings indicate that companies implementing green marketing strategies gain a competitive advantage by fostering brand loyalty and customer trust. This shift towards sustainability-driven branding underscores the growing role of environmental considerations in influencing purchasing decisions Kakade et al. (2023) Sustainable development in online retailing is becoming increasingly important as e-commerce expands globally. Kakade et al. (2023) emphasize that while digital retail provides convenience, it also contributes to environmental concerns through excessive packaging, transportation emissions, and waste generation. Their study highlights that adopting green practices, such as eco-friendly packaging and optimized logistics, can mitigate these issues. Consumers are also becoming more inclined toward sustainability, influencing brands to incorporate green strategies. The findings suggest that integrating sustainability into online retail can enhance brand reputation, customer loyalty, and long-term profitability (Kakade et al., 2023) Gender differences significantly impact online shopping behavior among Indian consumers. Ashtankar, Kale, and Kakade (2019) highlight that while females exhibit a higher inclination toward online shopping, males tend to research products more before purchasing. The study reveals that trust issues and security concerns deter both genders from online shopping, but females show greater reliance on peer influence and advertising. Additionally, females spend more time shopping online, whereas males prefer in-store purchases. These insights are crucial for e-commerce platforms to design gender-specific marketing strategies and enhance customer engagement (Ashtankar, Kale, & Kakade, 2019) .

**Theoretical Framework** - The impact of SNS on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions can be understood through established theoretical models:

- **Social Exchange Theory (SET):** This theory explains how relationships between consumers and brands are built on reciprocal interactions. SNS facilitate relationship-building by allowing consumers to engage directly with brands, receive timely responses, and participate in brand communities (Blau, 1964; Shinde & Balasubramanian, 2021).
- **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):** This model highlights the factors influencing SNS adoption and consumer behaviour, emphasizing perceived ease of use and usefulness as key determinants of consumer engagement with digital marketing strategies (Davis, 1989; Bapat et al., 2023).
- **Customer Engagement Theory:** This theory focuses on the role of interaction in fostering brand trust. High levels of engagement on SNS, such as active participation in discussions, content sharing, and personalized brand interactions, contribute to stronger consumer-brand relationships and increased trust (Brodie et al., 2011; Bajaj et al., 2023).

Several studies have explored the impact of SNS marketing on brand perception and consumer behaviour. Research by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) highlights how SNS facilitate brand storytelling and consumer engagement, ultimately enhancing brand loyalty. Case studies of SNS-driven consumer behaviour illustrate the effectiveness of influencer marketing and user-generated content in shaping purchasing decisions (Godey et al., 2016). A study by Shinde et al. (2023) further emphasizes how SNS marketing strategies contribute to consumer satisfaction and brand perception, particularly in competitive markets. Comparative analyses between traditional and SNS-driven marketing strategies suggest that SNS marketing is more effective in fostering interactive relationships and increasing brand credibility (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Unlike traditional advertising, which relies on one-way communication, SNS

marketing encourages two-way interactions, reinforcing consumer trust and brand commitment (Deshmukh et al., 2023). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from traditional philanthropy to a strategic tool for sustainable development. Kale, Ashtankar, and Kakade (2019) emphasize that CSR is now legally mandated in India under the Companies Act 2013, driving businesses to integrate social welfare into their core operations. Their study highlights innovative CSR models, such as Piramal e-Swasthya for rural healthcare and Adani Vidya Mandir for education, demonstrating the tangible impact of CSR initiatives. The findings suggest that CSR enhances corporate reputation, fosters consumer trust, and contributes to long-term societal benefits, making it a crucial component of modern business strategies (Kale, Ashtankar, & Kakade, 2019). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has evolved into a strategic business approach rather than just philanthropy. Kakade (2019) highlights that CSR is now an essential component of corporate governance, driven by regulatory mandates under the Companies Act, 2013. The study compares CSR practices across sectors, revealing that companies like Tata, Infosys, and ITC integrate CSR into their business models effectively. Findings indicate that CSR initiatives focusing on community development, healthcare, and education yield the highest social impact. The research underscores that CSR not only enhances brand reputation but also strengthens stakeholder trust and corporate sustainability (Kakade, 2019). Social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, with automated entities like social bots influencing public opinion, brand perception, and purchasing decisions. Mukil et al. (2024) highlight the impact of bots in amplifying messages and manipulating conversations on platforms like Twitter. Their research underscores how bots spread misinformation, influence elections, and shape consumer sentiments through targeted interactions. The study reveals that bots significantly contribute to online discourse, affecting users' attitudes toward brands and advertisements. This insight is critical in understanding digital marketing dynamics, where automated engagement alters consumer trust and brand loyalty (Mukil et al., 2024). Social media and digital advertising significantly influence consumer behavior, shaping preferences, trust, and purchase decisions. Ashtankar et al. (2023) highlight that young consumers are increasingly influenced by online marketing strategies, particularly in the cosmetics industry. Their study on halal cosmetic products in Erbil reveals that digital promotions and social media engagement play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes, especially among younger demographics. The findings suggest that targeted digital campaigns can enhance brand loyalty and drive sales by aligning marketing strategies with consumer values and preferences (Ashtankar et al., 2023). Sensory branding significantly impacts consumer buying intentions, particularly in the personal care and cosmetics industry. Kakade et al. (2023) emphasize that sensory cues such as sight, smell, and touch play a vital role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. Their study on Indian consumers' highlights that appealing to multiple senses enhances brand recall, emotional engagement, and purchase likelihood. The findings suggest that integrating sensory elements into branding strategies can create stronger consumer-brand relationships, ultimately driving sales and brand loyalty in competitive markets Kakade et al. (2023)

### **Research Problem**

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become integral to modern marketing strategies, enabling brands to engage with consumers in real time through interactive content, influencer partnerships, and targeted advertising. Despite the growing reliance on SNS for brand communication, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these platforms influence consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchasing behavior. Consumers are constantly exposed to a vast amount of information on SNS, including brand promotions, peer reviews,

and influencer recommendations, which can significantly shape their perceptions and decision-making processes. However, the degree to which these interactions translate into consumer trust, long-term brand loyalty, and actual purchase behavior remains unclear.

Existing research has explored the general impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, but a more focused examination of SNS engagement and its role in influencing consumer trust and loyalty is needed. Furthermore, as consumer expectations evolve in the digital era, businesses must refine their marketing strategies to build stronger relationships and enhance credibility through SNS platforms. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by analysing the impact of SNS on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchasing behavior, providing valuable insights for businesses looking to optimize their digital marketing efforts.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do social networking sites impact consumer trust in brands?
2. What is the relationship between SNS engagement and brand loyalty?
3. To what extent do SNS affect consumer purchase decisions?

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyze the role of SNS in building consumer trust.
2. To examine the effect of SNS on brand loyalty.
3. To evaluate how SNS influence consumer purchase decisions.

### **Scope & Limitations**

This study will focus on major social networking platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to assess their impact on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions. The research will cover various industries, such as retail, technology, fashion, and consumer goods, to provide a comprehensive understanding of SNS influence. However, the study is limited by factors such as changing algorithms, evolving consumer preferences, and platform-specific variations, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

### **Research Methodology**

This study will adopt a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to understand the impact of SNS on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions. Primary data will be collected through online surveys and structured interviews with consumers from different demographic backgrounds, while secondary data will be gathered from existing literature, case studies, and market research reports on SNS influence. A purposive sampling technique employed to select participants who actively engage with brands on SNS platforms. The sample will include individuals from various age groups, industries, and geographic locations to ensure diverse perspectives, and the sample size is 300 samples from Mumbai City. The study will adhere to ethical research guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality and informed consent. Additionally, data will be anonymized to maintain privacy and reduce potential biases in responses. By employing this methodology, the study aims to provide a well-rounded analysis of how SNS shape consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions across various industries.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The analysis of the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNS) on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions was conducted using SPSS, with a sample size of 300 respondents. Various statistical techniques, including descriptive analysis, correlation

analysis, regression analysis, and logistic regression, were applied to examine the study's objectives. To analyse the role of SNS in building consumer trust, descriptive statistics revealed a mean score of 4.1 on a five-point Likert scale, indicating that most respondents perceive SNS as a trustworthy platform for brand interactions. The standard deviation of 0.85 suggests moderate variation in responses. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between SNS engagement and consumer trust, implying that increased interaction with brands on SNS leads to higher consumer trust. A simple linear regression analysis further confirmed this relationship, with SNS engagement significantly predicting consumer trust ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t = 8.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), explaining 36% ( $R^2 = 0.36$ ) of the variance in trust levels. These findings indicate that brands that actively engage with consumers on SNS can foster greater trust and credibility. The effect of SNS on brand loyalty was examined using correlation and multiple regression analyses. The correlation results indicated a strong positive association ( $r = 0.67$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between SNS engagement and brand loyalty. A multiple regression analysis, including both SNS engagement and consumer trust as predictors, showed that both variables significantly contribute to brand loyalty (SNS Engagement:  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $t = 6.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Consumer Trust:  $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $t = 5.82$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model was statistically significant ( $F(2, 297) = 112.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and accounted for 48% ( $R^2 = 0.48$ ) of the variance in brand loyalty. These results highlight that consumers who trust and engage with a brand on SNS are likelier to remain loyal to i.e. logistic regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of SNS on consumer purchase decisions, with purchase decision (Yes = 1, No = 0) as the dependent variable and SNS engagement, consumer trust, and brand loyalty as predictors. The Chi-Square test for association confirmed a significant relationship between SNS influence and purchase decisions ( $\chi^2 = 35.4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The logistic regression results showed that brand loyalty ( $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 2.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), SNS engagement ( $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and consumer trust ( $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.62$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) significantly influenced purchase likelihood. Consumers with higher brand loyalty were 2.01 times more likely to make a purchase, while SNS engagement and consumer trust also increased purchase probability. The SPSS analysis confirms that SNS play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour by building trust, fostering brand loyalty, and influencing purchase decisions. Brands that effectively engage with consumers on SNS can enhance trust, drive loyalty, and increase conversions. These findings emphasize the importance of leveraging SNS as a strategic tool for digital marketing and consumer relationship management.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of Social Networking Sites (SNS) on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase decisions. The SPSS analysis demonstrated a strong positive correlation between SNS engagement and consumer trust, indicating that active brand interactions on SNS help build consumer confidence. Regression results further confirmed that SNS engagement is a key predictor of trust, explaining a substantial proportion of its variance. These insights suggest that brands that maintain transparency, responsiveness, and consistent engagement on SNS platforms can enhance consumer trust. The study found a strong association between SNS engagement, consumer trust, and brand loyalty. Consumers who actively engage with brands on SNS and develop trust in them are likelier to exhibit brand loyalty. The regression analysis revealed that both SNS engagement and consumer trust significantly contribute to brand loyalty, emphasizing the importance of interactive and trust-building strategies in digital marketing. The impact of SNS on consumer purchase decisions was evident through logistic regression analysis. The study found that consumers with higher levels of SNS engagement, trust, and brand loyalty were likelier to

make purchase decisions. The odds ratio results confirmed that brand loyalty had the highest influence on purchase likelihood, followed closely by SNS engagement and consumer trust. This underscores the importance of relationship-driven marketing strategies, where consistent engagement and credibility-building efforts on SNS can lead to higher consumer conversions' have emerged as powerful tools for digital marketing, significantly shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. Businesses that leverage SNS effectively by fostering engagement, transparency, and personalized interactions can build consumer trust, enhance brand loyalty, and drive purchase decisions. The study emphasizes the need for brands to integrate SNS strategies into their marketing frameworks to strengthen consumer relationships and achieve long-term success in the digital marketplace.

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