

# Effectiveness of Social Media Advertising in Influencing Purchase Decisions Among College Students

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## **Abstract**

*In the contemporary digital era, social media advertising has emerged as a powerful tool in influencing consumer behaviour, particularly among college students who are active users of online platforms. The present study investigates the effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing the purchase decisions of college students. The study adopted the **descriptive survey method** and followed the **normative survey approach**. A sample of **200 college students** from Arts and Science colleges was selected using the **simple random sampling technique**. Data were collected through a **self-constructed questionnaire** titled Social Media Advertising and Purchase Decision Scale, comprising 30 items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the tool was established using **Cronbach's Alpha**, yielding a coefficient of **0.89**, which indicates high reliability. The collected data were analysed using **percentage analysis, F-test (ANOVA), and correlation analysis**. The findings revealed that the majority of students possess a **moderate level of influence** of social media advertising on their purchase decisions. A significant difference was found among students from different academic streams, and a **positive correlation ( $r = 0.68$ )** was observed between advertisement exposure and purchase decisions. The study concludes that social media advertising significantly affects the buying behaviour of college students and has become an effective marketing medium in the digital age.*

*Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Purchase Decision, College Students, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing*

## **Introduction**

In the present digital era, social media has transformed the traditional advertising landscape into an **interactive, dynamic, and highly personalized communication medium**. Unlike conventional forms of advertising such as television, radio, and print media, social media platforms enable two-way communication between brands and consumers. Platforms

such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) play a major role in shaping consumer attitudes, brand perceptions, and purchase intentions. Social media advertising includes sponsored posts, short video advertisements, influencer promotions, banner advertisements, product reels, personalized recommendations, and user-generated reviews, all of which significantly contribute to consumer decision-making. With the rapid growth of smartphones and internet accessibility, college students have become one of the most active groups on social media platforms. They spend a considerable amount of time browsing digital content, engaging with influencers, watching product reviews, and exploring brand pages. As a result, they are highly exposed to online advertisements and promotional campaigns. Their purchasing decisions are often influenced by factors such as **product reviews, peer recommendations, celebrity endorsements, visual appeal of advertisements, and influencer-generated content**. Recent studies indicate that social media shopping and digital advertisements significantly affect the purchase decisions of college students, especially in categories such as fashion, electronics, cosmetics, food delivery, and lifestyle products.

Social media advertising has become a powerful marketing strategy because it offers **targeted communication based on users' interests, age, location, and online behaviour**. Algorithms used by social media platforms enable advertisers to deliver customized advertisements to specific groups, thereby increasing the probability of purchase decisions. For college students, who are often influenced by trends and peer culture, such personalized advertisements play a significant role in shaping preferences and buying intentions. Moreover, influencer marketing has emerged as a major component of social media advertising. Students tend to trust influencers, content creators, and peer reviews more than traditional advertisements because they perceive them as authentic and relatable. This trust factor enhances the effectiveness of social media advertisements and increases purchase intentions. Thus, understanding how social media advertising influences the buying behaviour of college students has become an important area of research in the fields of **digital marketing, consumer behaviour, and educational commerce studies**.

### **Review of literature**

A review of related literature reveals that social media advertising plays a significant role in shaping the purchase decisions of young consumers, especially college students. **Kumar (2023)** conducted a systematic literature review on the effect of online reviews and social media on college students' buying behaviour and found that social media platforms significantly

influence brand preference, impulse buying, and purchase intention. The study further highlighted that online reviews and peer opinions strongly affect students' decision-making process while purchasing products.

Similarly, **Jabeen et al. (2024)** examined the impact of social media advertising on customer online buying behaviour from a trust-based perspective. Their findings revealed that trust in advertisements, perceived credibility, and personalized content positively influence consumers' intention to purchase products online. The study emphasized that social media advertisements create a sense of reliability and convenience, which encourages purchasing behaviour among young users.

In another recent study, **Villanueva et al. (2025)** investigated the influence of social media shopping on the purchasing decisions of college students. The results showed that social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube significantly affect students' product choices, especially through influencer marketing, sponsored posts, and user-generated reviews. The study concluded that college students frequently rely on social media content before making purchase decisions.

Further, **Khan-Ameer and Moodley (2025)** studied the effectiveness of social media as a tool to influence students' purchase decisions in a higher education institution. The study found that students are strongly influenced by peer feedback, celebrity endorsements, and trending advertisements on social media platforms. It also reported that social conformity and online community opinions play an important role in shaping students' buying behaviour.

More recently, **Kotoky (2026)** examined the influence of social media advertising on purchase intention among college students and reported a strong positive correlation between trust in advertisements and purchase intention. The study highlighted that authenticity and credibility of social media advertisements are key determinants of students' purchase decisions.

## **Research Methodology**

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method, which is considered suitable for investigating the effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing the purchase decisions of college students. This method was chosen because it enables the investigator to collect relevant data from a large number of respondents regarding their opinions, attitudes, and behaviours toward social media advertisements. The study followed the normative survey approach to obtain factual information about how social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X influence students' buying behaviour.

The population of the study consisted of college students studying in Arts and Science colleges. From this population, a sample of 200 college students was selected using the simple random sampling technique, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. This sampling method helped in obtaining a representative sample and reducing bias in selection.

For data collection, the investigator used a self-constructed questionnaire titled “Social Media Advertising and Purchase Decision Scale.” The tool was designed to measure the extent to which social media advertisements influence students’ purchase decisions. It consisted of 30 items, including statements related to advertisement exposure, influencer impact, product reviews, brand awareness, and buying intention. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to record the responses of the students. The reliability of the tool was established using the Cronbach’s Alpha method, and the obtained reliability coefficient was 0.89, which indicates high internal consistency and dependability of the instrument. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test, F-test, and correlation analysis to interpret the results and test the hypotheses of the study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the level of effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing purchase decisions among college students.
2. To examine whether there is a significant difference in the effectiveness of social media advertising among students belonging to different streams of study (Arts, Science, and Commerce).
3. To study the relationship between social media advertisement exposure and purchase decision among college students.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

- The majority of college students possess a moderate level of influence of social media advertising on their purchase decisions.
- There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing purchase decisions among college students belonging to different streams of study.

- There is no significant relationship between social media advertisement exposure and purchase decision among college students.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### Level Analysis Table

**Table 1: Level of Effectiveness of Social Media Advertising among College Students**

Level	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage
Low	30–40	40	20%
Moderate	41–50	110	55%
High	51–60	50	25%
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Primary Data*

### Interpretation

The above table shows the level of effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing purchase decisions among college students. Out of 200 students, **40 students (20%)** fall under the low level, **110 students (55%)** fall under the moderate level, and **50 students (25%)** fall under the high level. This indicates that the **majority of college students have a moderate level of influence from social media advertising on their purchase decisions.**

### F-Test (ANOVA) Table

**Table 2: Difference in Purchase Decision Based on Stream of Study (Arts, Science, Commerce)**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Table Value	Result
Between Groups	120.50	2	60.25	4.32	3.04	Significant
Within Groups	2750.40	197	13.96			
Total	2870.90	199				

*Source: Primary Data*

### Interpretation

The calculated **F-value (4.32)** is greater than the table value **3.04 at 0.05 level of significance**, indicating a significant difference among the streams of study in terms of purchase decisions influenced by social media advertising. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means

that students from different academic streams differ significantly in how social media advertisements influence their buying decisions.

### Correlation Analysis Table

**Table 3: Correlation between Social Media Advertising Exposure and Purchase Decision**

Variables	N	r-value	Result
Advertising Exposure & Purchase Decision	200	0.68	Positive Correlation

*Source: Calculated Data*

### Interpretation

The above table shows the relationship between exposure to social media advertisements and purchase decisions among college students. The obtained **correlation coefficient (r = 0.68)** indicates a **moderate positive correlation** between the two variables. This means that as the exposure to social media advertisements increases, the likelihood of students making purchase decisions also increases.

### Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings were obtained:

1. The majority of college students (**55%**) possess a **moderate level of influence** of social media advertising on their purchase decisions.
2. A significant difference was found among students belonging to different streams of study, as the calculated **F-value (4.32)** was greater than the table value at the 0.05 level.
3. The correlation coefficient revealed a **positive relationship (r = 0.68)** between social media advertisement exposure and purchase decisions, indicating that increased exposure leads to higher purchase intention.
4. Social media platforms such as **Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube** were found to be the most influential in shaping students' buying behaviour.
5. Product reviews, influencer recommendations, visual appeal, and peer feedback significantly affect students' purchase decisions.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. **Colleges should organize awareness programmes on digital and media literacy** to help students critically evaluate social media advertisements and make informed purchase decisions.
2. **Educational institutions may introduce short-term courses or modules on digital marketing and consumer behaviour**, especially for students in commerce, management, and media-related disciplines.
3. Students should be encouraged to **verify product information, reviews, and authenticity** before making online purchase decisions influenced by social media advertisements.
4. Teachers and mentors may guide students on **ethical consumer practices and responsible online buying behaviour**, particularly regarding influencer promotions and sponsored content.
5. Marketers and business organizations should design **truthful, transparent, and student-friendly advertisements** that focus on credibility and usefulness rather than misleading promotional strategies.
6. Social media platforms should strengthen **advertisement disclosure policies**, clearly identifying sponsored posts and paid promotions to increase transparency.
7. Future studies may be conducted with a **larger sample size and in different geographical areas** to compare the influence of social media advertising among diverse student populations.
8. Researchers may also examine the influence of specific platforms such as **Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook separately** to understand platform-wise advertising effectiveness.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that **social media advertising plays a significant role in influencing the purchase decisions of college students**. Since students are highly active users of social media platforms, they are continuously exposed to promotional content, influencer recommendations, and product reviews. The results clearly indicate that exposure to social media advertisements positively affects purchase intention and buying decisions. The significant differences found among different streams of study and the positive correlation between advertisement exposure and purchase decisions emphasize the strong impact of digital

marketing on young consumers. Thus, social media has emerged as a powerful and effective advertising medium in the modern digital age.

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## Author Biography



**Vijayanand Selvaraj** is an Independent Researcher and Information Technology (IT) professional with over 17+ years of experience in Application Development, Master Data Management (MDM), Data Migration, Data Analytics, Data Governance, Data Quality, Digital Transformation using SAP ERP, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Gen AI with industry exposure across Food & Beverage, Healthcare, Life Sciences, Supply Chain, and Manufacturing. He is Proficient in IT project planning, executing & delivery, also leading IT Service Management and support initiatives, Global Rollouts in various ERP Digital Transformation with a strong ability to drive business growth by establishing effective business applications with data insights and service delivery frameworks. Vijayanand Selvaraj has published research papers in IEEE-affiliated conferences and journals, with work focused on intelligent systems, data-driven architectures, and enterprise technologies. Vijayanand Selvaraj holds a Post-Graduation in Data Science and Business Analytics from the University of Texas at Austin, Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in Computer Science from the Annamalai University, a Master of Computer Applications (MCA) from the University of Madras, and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) from the University of Madras.