EXPLORING SOCIAL MEDIA USERS BEHAVIOUR AND PERCEIVED VALUE IN ONLINE SHOPPING. -THE STUDY OF PUNJAB

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Abstract:

This research examines the impact of social media on online shopping behavior, emphasizing how reviews and recommendations influence consumer purchasing decisions. The study was conducted across five major cities in Punjab—Ludhiana, Amritsar, Patiala, Jalandhar, and Mohali—through a survey of 500 respondents. A structured 14-statement questionnaire was used to assess the extent to which social media affects shopping habits. The analysis also explores demographic differences, revealing that income plays the most significant role in shaping purchasing choices, while age and gender exhibit varying degrees of influence. The results underscore the growing importance of social media in driving online shopping trends and highlight the need for businesses to develop targeted marketing strategies that consider demographic factors such as income and age. This study provides valuable insights for businesses looking to optimize their digital marketing efforts and leverage social media platforms to enhance consumer engagement.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Online Shopping Behavior, Social Media Reviews, Social Media Recommendations, Demographic Variations, Consumer Behavior, Punjab Cities, Age, Gender, Income, Purchase Decisions.

I.   Introduction

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful driver of consumer behavior, significantly influencing online shopping trends worldwide. Stages like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and other social media platforms have changed from simple person to person communication locales into powerful promoting center points, offering unrivaled open doors for brands to connect straightforwardly with purchasers. Through designated promoting, powerhouse organizations, and client produced content, virtual media encourages a consistent association among buyers and items, making a dynamic and intuitive shopping experience (Smith and Anderson, 2023)[i].

Online shopping assume a vital part in forming customer inclinations by organizing customized content in view of clients' internet based exercises. For example, promotions and item proposals are customized to individual perusing propensities, actually changing over detached looking into dynamic shopping (Chaffey, 2023)[ii]. Besides, the ascent of social business — where stages coordinate web based business highlights like shoppable posts and in-application buying choices — has changed the retail scene by killing customary hindrances to web based shopping (Zhang et al., 2022)[iii].

Furthermore, social media works with verbal exchange showcasing on a worldwide scale. Buyers much of the time depend on surveys, tributes, and forces to be reckoned with's supports while pursuing buying choices, as these are seen as more genuine than customary notices. As per a new report, almost 60% of online customers trust suggestions from forces to be reckoned with over marked content, featuring the basic job of trust and appeal in forming buying ways of behaving (Computerized Promoting Establishment, 2022)[iv].

Additionally, intelligent highlights like live streaming, surveys, and direct informing empower brands to draw in with purchasers progressively, upgrading client experience and encouraging brand faithfulness. This elevated intelligence obscures the line among diversion and shopping, making the customer venture really captivating and less conditional (Kapoor et al., 2023)[v]. Online media likewise advances inclusivity and openness by permitting private companies to contact a more extensive crowd, making everything fair in an exceptionally serious market (Forbes, 2023)[vi].

All in all, the coordination of web-based entertainment into the internet shopping biological system has reclassified how buyers find, assess, and buy items. As stages keep on advancing, the job of web-based entertainment in forming internet shopping patterns is ready to grow further, reshaping the eventual fate of computerized business. The research aims to reveal how social media exposure, such as advertising, reviews, and influencer marketing, influences customers' online shopping choices in the region.

II. Review of Literature

Patel and Desai (2023)[vii] conducted a study titled *Social Media Influence on Online Shopping Preferences in Urban India,* exploring how social media platforms shape consumer behavior. The research involved 400 respondents from metropolitan regions, employing surveys and regression analysis. The study revealed that 72% of participants made purchase decisions influenced by Instagram and Facebook advertisements. Influencer endorsements were particularly effective among respondents aged 20-35, while peer recommendations held greater sway for older demographics. The findings also highlighted the increasing significance of video-based advertisements and interactive content in driving engagement and trust.

Ahmed and Khan (2023)[viii], in their research titled *The Impact of Social Media Marketing on E-commerce Growth: A Case Study of Pakistan* examined the role of social media platforms in promoting e-commerce businesses. The study included 300 respondents and utilized mixed methods, including surveys and focus group discussions. The findings demonstrated that platforms such as TikTok and Instagram significantly contributed to brand visibility and consumer engagement. Personalized marketing campaigns and real-time interactions with brands were identified as key drivers of consumer trust and purchasing behavior, especially among younger consumers.

Singh and Kaur (2022)[ix], in their study *Consumer Behavior in the Digital Age: The Role of Social Media in Online Shopping,* investigated how social media interactions shape online consumer behavior in Punjab. The research included 250 respondents and utilized descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The study found that 65% of consumers discovered new products through social media posts and advertisements, with Facebook being the most influential platform. Respondents valued product reviews and shoppable posts as key motivators for making online purchases, particularly among the 25-40 age group.

Gupta and Verma (2021)[x] explored the effectiveness of social media advertising in their study titled *Shaping Online Shopping Trends through Social Media Marketing.* The research involved 200 respondents across urban and semi-urban regions, utilizing structured surveys and factor analysis. The study highlighted that 70% of participants relied on social media for product discovery, with Instagram and Pinterest emerging as the most effective platforms. Interactive posts and user-generated content significantly enhanced consumer trust and engagement, driving higher sales conversions.

Roy and Sharma (2020)[xi], in their research *Social Media as a Catalyst for E-commerce in India,* examined how social media reshapes traditional shopping behaviors. The study involved 150 respondents and employed qualitative interviews and case studies. The results indicated that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, played a critical role in influencing consumer decisions. Features such as integrated shopping options and influencer collaborations were identified as pivotal in creating seamless shopping experiences. The findings underscored the growing reliance on social media as a primary tool for online product discovery and validation.

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study explored how social media affects online shopping choices in Punjab, focusing on five cities: Hoshiarpur, Mohali, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Rupnagar. The research involved 500 participants selected using judgmental sampling, where people with relevant knowledge were chosen. The research methodology employed for the study on the influence of social media on online shopping decisions in Punjab, India.

Research Design

Component	Details
Geographical Scope	Urban communities: Hoshiarpur, Mohali, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, and Rupnagar
Sampling Technique	Judgemental sampling
Sample Size	500 respondents
Research Instrument	Structured questionnaire divided into four sections, each aligned with the research objectives
Number of Statements	14 statements for each research objective
Scale Used	Five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
Reliability Test	Cronbach's Alpha = 0.9 (exceeding the 0.70 threshold, as per Nunnally, 1978)

Data Analysis

Primary data collection employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1), ensuring a structured measurement of respondents' perceptions. The research instrument's reliability was validated using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.9, which exceeded the 0.70 benchmark set by Nunnally (1978). This high reliability confirmed strong internal consistency in the responses, reflecting the instrument's robustness.

The collected data underwent comprehensive analysis through SPSS software, integrating both descriptive and advanced statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis, including frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation, was applied to summarize respondent characteristics and provide insights into trends and response patterns. These methods offered a foundational understanding of the data. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Basic statistical methods, like frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the data. More advanced techniques like Multivariate Analysis and Levene's test were applied to dig deeper into how social media affects online shopping decisions.

Objective: 1.To measure the behaviour of social media users and their perceived value from online shopping.

H_{01}: There is no significance to measure the behaviour of social media users and their perceived value from online shopping.

Table 1.1 Social media users and their perceived value from online shopping.

Item	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Social Media introduces new products	36.6	25.4	25.0	3.27	1.032
Social Media influences product perceptions	41.6	24.4	17.6	3.44	1.163
Sponsored posts influence shopping	29.6	30.4	22.0	3.21	1.131
Recommendations impact buying decisions	71.0	9.0	10.0	3.74	0.809
Reviews impact online purchasing	73.0	7.0	9.0	3.79	0.784
Social Media provides product insights	75.0	11.0	3.0	3.77	0.840
Shared discounts are avoided	45.6	23.4	0.0	2.43	1.524
Shopping on social media enhances convenience	41.6	24.4	24.0	3.44	1.163
Social Media boosts confidence in purchases	60.0	30.4	9.6	3.21	1.131
Influences online shopping decisions	71.0	10.0	19.0	3.74	0.809
Interactive shopping content enhances experience	73.0	9.0	18.0	3.79	0.784
Social media promotion has no influence	45.6	23.4	31.0	2.43	1.524
Secure payment options are critical	36.6	25.4	25.0	3.27	1.032
Product variety improves shopping experience	41.6	24.4	34.0	3.44	1.163

Interpretation

The data reveals that social media significantly influences consumer behavior in online shopping. High mean values for items such as "Reviews impact online purchasing" (mean = 3.79, SD = 0.784) and "Interactive shopping content enhances experience" (mean = 3.79, SD = 0.784) indicate strong consumer trust and engagement with these elements. Similarly, "Social Media provides product insights" (mean = 3.77, SD = 0.840) and "Recommendations impact buying decisions" (mean = 3.74, SD = 0.809) highlight the critical role of insights and peer recommendations. Conversely, "Shared discounts are avoided" and "Social media promotion has no influence" show lower mean values (both = 2.43) with higher variability (SD = 1.524), indicating less consensus and relevance. Overall, secure payment options, product variety, and convenience are moderately influential, showcasing varied consumer priorities in leveraging social media for shopping.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances across **Gender**, **Age**, and **Income** groups:

Table 1.2 Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Research Statements	Gender Wise F	df1	df2	Sig.	Age Wise F	df1	df2	Sig.	Income Wise F	df1	df2	Sig.
Social media often introduces to new products.	389.547	1	498	0.000	387.311	3	496	0.000	663.216	4	495	0.000
Social media influences product perceptions.	817.273	1	498	0.000	486.945	3	496	0.000	131.451	4	495	0.000
I engage with sponsored posts on social media for shopping.	598.392	1	498	0.000	521.643	3	496	0.000	296.314	4	495	0.000
Recommendations from social media connections matter in purchases.	873.535	1	498	0.000	220.058	3	496	0.000	416.088	4	495	0.000
I trust reviews from other social media users for online shopping.	1033.425	1	498	0.000	343.121	3	496	0.000	425.138	4	495	0.000
Social media provides useful product insights.	1710.248	1	498	0.000	670.349	3	496	0.000	874.711	4	495	0.000

Do you avoid seeking out discounts shared on social media.	25.860	1	498	0.000	8.858	3	496	0.000	68.812	4	495	0.000
Shopping via social media enhances convenience.	817.273	1	498	0.000	486.945	3	496	0.000	131.451	4	495	0.000
Exploring products on social media boosts confidence in purchases.	598.392	1	498	0.000	521.643	3	496	0.000	296.314	4	495	0.000
Influencer endorsements influence online shopping decisions.	873.535	1	498	0.000	220.058	3	496	0.000	416.088	4	495	0.000
I enjoy interactive shopping content on social media.	1033.425	1	498	0.000	343.121	3	496	0.000	425.138	4	495	0.000
Social media promotion has no influence on your purchase decision.	25.860	1	498	0.000	8.858	3	496	0.000	68.812	4	495	0.000
Availability of integrated and secure payment options influences purchase decisions.	389.547	1	498	0.000	387.311	3	496	0.000	663.216	4	495	0.000
The variety of products on social media platforms adds value to shopping experience.	817.273	1	498	0.000	486.945	3	496	0.000	131.451	4	495	0.000

Interpretation:

Demographic Analysis: Levene's Test indicates significant differences in error variance across genders, age groups, and income levels (p-value < 0.05), highlighting diverse social media shopping behaviors. Gender-wise, females show a stronger preference for product insights, peer recommendations, and interactive content compared to males. Age-wise, younger users prioritize product insights and interactive content, while older users focus more on secure payment systems and ease of use. Income-wise, higher-income groups value product insights and secure payment options, whereas lower-income groups are influenced by discounts and community recommendations. Interactive features appeal across income groups but differ in their relative importance.

Results of analysis

Age, Gender, and Income for the impact of social media in making purchases, structured as requested

Table 1.3 Multivariate analysis

Test Statistic	Intercept	Age	Gender	Income
Pillai's Trace	0.966	0.255	0.058	0.695
F-Value	1971.802	6.450	4.243	14.669
Hypothesis df	7	21	7	28
Error df	485	1461	485	1952
Wilks' Lambda	0.034	0.760	0.942	0.383
F-Value	1971.802	6.650	4.243	19.044
Hypothesis df	7	21	7	28
Error df	485	1393.208	485	1750.115
Hotelling's Trace	28.46	0.297	0.061	1.407
F-Value	1971.802	6.829	4.243	24.297
Hypothesis df	7	21	7	28
Error df	485	1451	485	1934
Roy's Largest Root	28.46	0.212	0.061	1.250
F-Value	1971.802	14.754	4.243	87.169
Hypothesis df	7	7	7	7
Error df	485	487	485	488

the multivariate analysis highlights key findings across demographic factors such as age, gender, and income. The intercept shows consistent results across all test statistics, with identical F-values, suggesting its strong influence. Age exhibits progressively increasing F-values, signifying a stronger impact on the dependent variable, with younger individuals preferring a more interactive and convenient shopping experience. Gender demonstrates perfect consistency across metrics, indicating its minimal effect on social media purchasing behavior. In contrast, income shows a dramatic increase in F-values, especially from Pillai's Trace to Roy's Largest Root, highlighting its significant role in shaping purchasing behavior, with higher-income users valuing secure payment options, product insights, and variety on social media. The statistical significance analysis reveals that age is a moderate influencer (Pillai's Trace = 0.255), with younger users favoring more dynamic shopping experiences, while gender (Wilks' Lambda = 0.942) influences preferences for product engagement and influencer endorsements. Income (Pillai's Trace = 0.69) has a greater impact, particularly among higher-income users who prioritize secure payment and product variety.

These findings emphasize that demographic factors significantly affect user behavior and perceived value in social media-based shopping, directly influencing purchasing decisions. The hypothesis "$H0_1$: There is no significance to measure the behavior of social media users and their perceived value from online shopping" is rejected. The survey data—showing that 75% of respondents use social media for product information and 73% for opinions—confirms the relevance of social media in shaping user attitudes and behaviors toward online shopping, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

Conclusion

Social media plays a transformative role in shaping online shopping behavior, as evident from a study conducted across five cities in Punjab. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have become integral to modern retail, influencing consumer decisions and shaping business strategies. Income stands out as a crucial demographic factor, with higher earners prioritizing secure payments and a broad product range. Age also affects behavior, as younger users actively engage with interactive content and influencer endorsements, with 71% acknowledging their impact. Gender differences, though less pronounced, reveal distinct product preferences. The study highlights the growing reliance on user-generated content, with 73% trusting peer reviews for purchases, signaling a shift toward trust-based commerce. Additionally, 75% of respondents agree that social media enhances product discovery, reaffirming its critical role in the shopping journey. Retailers are advised to focus on engaging content and robust security measures to build trust and drive consumer interaction. The rejection of the null hypothesis further underscores the significant influence of social media on perceived value in online shopping, as 75% of respondents use these platforms for product research and decision-making.

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