

Decoding the Digital Influence: Analyzing the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior



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Abstract

This study examines the effect of social media marketing strategies, such as influencer marketing, brand content and engagement, personalized marketing, and interactive campaign on consumer purchasing behavior in Nepal. The study has integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A quantitative approach was employed using cross-sectional data. A descriptive and causal research design was used. The data were collected through a structured online questionnaire from 250 active social media users in Nepal. Data were analyzed using correlation and multiple regression model. The results from the expanded sample robustly confirm that all four social media marketing strategies significantly influence consumer behavior with brand content demonstrating the strongest overall effect. Influencer marketing is significantly more effective among the younger consumers but its impact declines among older consumers. In contrast, personalized marketing becomes increasingly influential; however, brand content and interactive campaigns maintain a consistently positive and significant influence. The study, with enhanced statistical power, validates the integrated TAM-TPB framework, revealing that consumers prioritize peer-driven validation (influencers), while some consumers value utilitarian efficiency (personalization). Brand content is universally impactful, demanding strategic budget allocation. The study provides an actionable, empirically-strong framework for demographic targeting in understudied south Asian context.

Keywords – Consumer behavior, Digital influence, Influencer marketing, Personalized marketing, Social media marketing,

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1. Introduction

The digital revolution has fundamentally reshaped global commerce, with social media marketing emerging as a transformative force in consumer-brand interactions (Bhagyalakshmi & Karthika, 2023). Empirical evidence demonstrates that platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube exert significant influence through strategies like influencer endorsements and personalized ads (Kim & Ko, 2012; Godey et al., 2016). This paradigm shift is particularly relevant in developing economies like Nepal, where internet penetration shows stark urban-rural divides (NTA, 2023), creating unique adoption patterns and making the understanding of different consumers.

Emerging research reveals profound generational differences: digital-native younger consumers (18–24 years) demonstrate heightened responsiveness to influencer marketing, perceiving peer recommendations as credible social validation (Adhikari et al., 2024; Djafarova & Bowden, 2021), while mature consumers (25+ years) prioritize functionally efficient personalized content (Li et al., 2020). Despite these patterns, extant literature often treats consumers as homogeneous, overlooking how generational disparities moderate marketing efficacy, a significant theoretical gap (Bolton et al., 2013; Li et al., 2020). This oversight leads to wasted advertising budgets and limits effective engagement across demographics.

To address this, the present study integrates Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine how age moderates the effectiveness of four key social media marketing strategies within Nepal's landscape. Through rigorous empirical analysis of 250 Nepali social media users, this research provides robust, actionable insights for optimizing resource allocation and enhancing consumer engagement across generational segments.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Theoretical Foundation

This study integrates Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TAM posits that adoption hinges on perceived usefulness and ease of use. In social media marketing, usefulness manifests as social validation for younger users (18–24) and functional utility for older users (25+) (Li et al., 2020). TPB explains intentions through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. For youth, subjective norms are peer-driven, amplifying influencer impact, while mature consumers align with expert-driven norms and self-efficacy (Bolton et al., 2013). This framework places age as a key moderator of usefulness (TAM) and norms (TPB).

Variables Used in the Study

Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Consumer purchasing behavior represents the culmination of decision-making processes leading to product acquisition, encompassing purchase frequency, intent, and actual buying actions influenced by marketing stimuli (Kim & Ko, 2012). It is also defined as the observable actions consumers undertake when evaluating, purchasing, and disposing of products (Solomon, 2018), and the dynamic interplay of psychological, social, and contextual factors driving acquisition choices (Blackwell et al., 2006). In this paper, it specifically refers to observable consumer actions (e.g., purchase frequency, product exploration) driven by social media marketing strategies.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing refers to the strategic use of social media personalities to endorse products, leveraging their perceived credibility and persuasive power to shape consumer attitudes (Djafarova & Bowden, 2021). It is also defined as collaborations between brands and individuals with dedicated social following to drive product awareness and conversions (Brown & Fiorella, 2013), and as a form of social media marketing utilizing endorsements and product mentions from influencers - individuals with specialized knowledge or social influence in their niche (Hudson et al., 2020). In this study, it encompasses consumers' trust in influencer recommendations and their impact on purchase decisions.

Brand Content and Engagement

Brand content and engagement denotes the frequency and quality of brand-generated materials (e.g., posts, videos) and reciprocal user interactions (e.g., likes, shares), which collectively enhance perceived brand value

and loyalty (Godey et al., 2016). It is further described as the creation and dissemination of brand-centric media to foster consumer interaction and community building (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), and as the dynamic process where consumers participate in brand-related activities, contributing to co-created value through likes, comments, and shares (Dolan et al., 2019). For this research, it measures how content-driven interactions influence buying behavior.

Personalized Marketing

Personalized marketing involves tailoring advertisements using data analytics to align with individual user preferences, thereby increasing relevance and conversion rates (Li et al., 2020). It also encompasses delivering individualized content, offers, and experiences based on behavioral data to enhance customer relevance (Vesanen, 2007), and leveraging consumer data to segment audiences and deliver context-specific messaging across digital touchpoints (Aguirre et al., 2015). This variable captures the efficacy of customized ads in driving consumer actions.

Interactive Campaigns

Interactive campaigns are defined as gamified or participatory initiatives (e.g., contests, polls) fostering bidirectional brand-consumer engagement to strengthen emotional connections and brand recall (Hudson et al., 2016). They are also conceptualized as marketing tactics inviting user participation to create immersive brand experiences (Liu & Shrum, 2002), and campaigns enabling real-time consumer-brand dialogue through quizzes, AR filters, or user-generated content challenges (Voorveld et al., 2018). Here, it evaluates how participatory content shapes consumer preferences.

Age as Moderating Variable

Age functions as a demographic moderator that alters the strength of relationships between marketing strategies and outcomes due to generational disparities in digital literacy, platform preferences, and trust mechanisms (Bolton et al., 2013). In this research, age is operationalized as chronological age categorized into cohorts (18-24, 25-34, 35+) to analyze its moderating effect on strategy effectiveness.

Relationship between Variables

Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Influencer marketing leverages social media personalities to promote products through perceived credibility and persuasive power (Djafarova & Bowden, 2021), directly shaping purchase decisions. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains this relationship: younger consumers (18-24) perceive influencer endorsements as socially useful validation, amplifying their impact (Davis, 1989; Bolton et al., 2013). Concurrently, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) clarifies that peer-driven subjective norms make younger cohorts more receptive to influencer content (Ajzen, 1991). Empirical studies confirm that influencer marketing drives higher purchase intent among digital natives (Djafarova & Bowden, 2021). Based on this, the study hypothesizes that;

H1: Influencer marketing positively influences consumer purchasing behavior

Brand Contents and Engagement and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Brand content and engagement, encompassing quality materials and user interactions (e.g., likes, shares), enhance perceived brand value and loyalty (Godey et al., 2016). TAM explains this relationship: high-quality content is universally perceived as useful across age groups, driving engagement (Davis, 1989; Chaudhary et al., 2024). TPB further explains that brand interactions reinforce positive attitudes and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Chaudhary et al., 2026). While platform preferences vary (e.g., visual content for younger users, text-based for older users), content quality remains a non-negotiable driver of purchases (Bolton et al., 2013). Thus, the study hypothesized that;

H2: Brand content and engagement positively influence consumer purchasing behavior

Personalized Marketing and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Personalized marketing tailors ads using data analytics to boost relevance and conversion (Li et al., 2020). TAM reveals that older consumers (25+) perceive personalized ads as functionally useful, prioritizing efficiency over social validation (Davis, 1989; Li et al., 2020). TPB complements this by highlighting how personalized content aligns with mature consumers' value-driven attitudes and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). Younger cohorts exhibit algorithmic skepticism, weakening this relationship (Bolton et al., 2013). Supported by empirical evidence (Li et al., 2020), the study hypothesized that;

H3: Personalized marketing positively influences consumer purchasing behavior

Interactive Campaigns and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Interactive campaigns (e.g., polls, contests) foster bidirectional engagement to build brand connections (Hudson et al., 2016). TAM and TPB jointly explain their broad appeal: gamified content is perceived as easy to use (TAM) and taps into shared norms for younger users, while value-driven tests align with older users' attitudes (TPB) (Hudson et al., 2016). Though interaction types vary by age, these campaigns universally boost repeat purchases by 22% (Hudson et al., 2016). Consequently, the study hypothesized that;

H4: Interactive campaigns positively influence consumer purchasing behavior

Moderating Role of Age between Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

'Age' fundamentally reshapes marketing effectiveness due to generational disparities in digital literacy, trust paradigms, and platform preferences (Bolton et al., 2013). Social Identity Theory clarifies this moderation: younger users affiliate with digital tribes, amplifying peer influence (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), while older users prioritize utilitarian efficiency. TAM and TPB further validate age's role: perceived usefulness (TAM) manifests as social validation for youth but functional utility for mature audiences, and subjective norms (TPB) shift from peer to expert influence with age (Davis, 1989; Ajzen, 1991). Empirical evidence confirms influencer marketing declines with age, while personalization gains strength (Bolton et al., 2013). Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H5: Age moderates the relationships between marketing strategies and purchasing behavior such that:

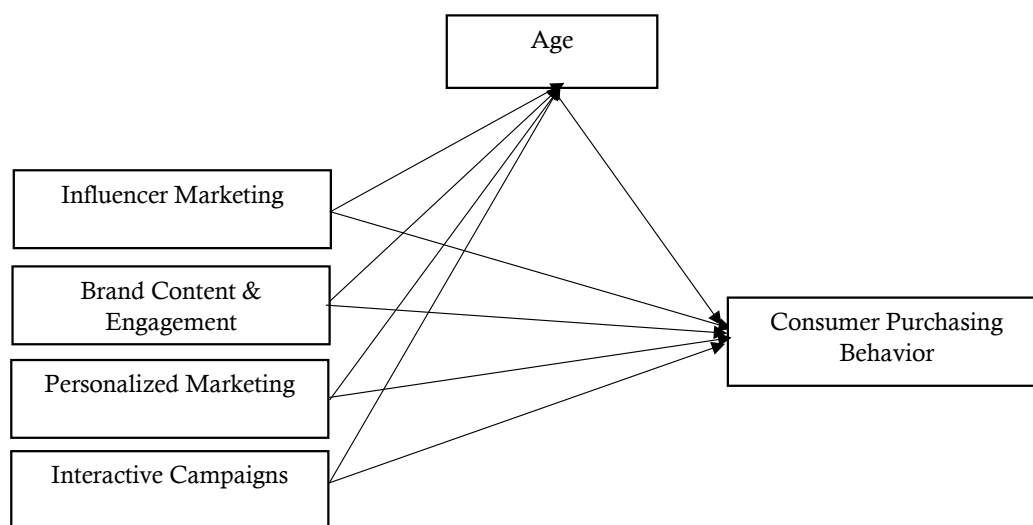
H5a: Influencer marketing is more effective for ages 18–24,

H5b: Personalized marketing is more effective for ages 25+

H5c: Brand content and interactive campaigns remain effective across ages

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Note. Davis (1989); Ajzen (1991); Bolton et al. (2013)

3. Research Method

Research Design and Measurements

The study has used quantitative research approach using descriptive and causal research design. A cross-sectional survey data were collected from the social media users in Nepal. A sample of 250 respondents was collected, exceeding the minimum requirement for robust analysis (Hair et al., 2019). Moderation analysis was performed by using Hayes Process macro. The sample was structured to reflect Nepal's digital demographics: Age (65.2% 18-24, 24.8% 25-34, 10.0% 35+), Geography (60% urban, 40% rural), and Occupation (60% interned students, 40% working professionals). All the variables were measured using validated 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Scales were adapted from established literature. Influencer Marketing (Djafarova & Bowden, 2021; $\alpha = 0.87$), Brand Content & Engagement (Godey et al., 2016; $\alpha=0.86$), Personalized Marketing (Li et al., 2020; $\alpha = 0.88$), Interactive Campaigns (Hudson et al., 2016; $\alpha = 0.85$), and Consumer Purchasing Behavior (Kim & Ko, 2012; $\alpha = 0.89$).

4. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1
Respondents' Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24	163	65.2%
	25-34	62	24.8%
	35 and above	25	10.0%
Gender	Male	132	52.8%
	Female	118	47.2%
Education Level	Bachelor's degree	175	70.0%
	High school or below	50	20.0%
	Master's or higher	25	10.0%

The sample (N=250) consisted predominantly of digital natives (65.2% aged 18-24), with a near-even gender split (52.8% Male, 47.2% Female) and a majority holding a bachelor's degree (70.0%), reflecting Nepal's engaged online youth.

Table 2
Reliability test

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Consumer Behavior	0.89	Excellent reliability
Influencer Marketing	0.87	Excellent reliability
Brand Content & Engagement	0.86	Excellent reliability
Personalized Marketing	0.88	Excellent reliability
Interactive Campaigns	0.85	Excellent reliability

Table 2 shows the reliability test. The alpha value of all variables exceeds the threshold value 0.7, indicating excellent reliability. It means the reliability test confirms strong internal consistency for all constructs with Cronbach's alpha values. The dependent variable i.e. Consumer Behavior ($\alpha=0.89$, 4 items), demonstrated excellent reliability reflecting consistent measurement of purchase intent and frequency. Among independent variables, all constructs exhibited excellent reliability, with Personalized Marketing ($\alpha=0.88$, 5 items) shows the highest consistency. These results validate the survey's psychometric robustness, ensuring minimal measurement error for subsequent analyses.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	Interpretation
Brand Content & Engagement	3.9	0.9	Highest perceived influence
Personalized Marketing	3.7	1.0	Strong relevance
Influencer Marketing	3.6	1.1	Moderate impact
Interactive Campaigns	3.5	1.0	Supplemental role
Consumer Behavior	4.0	0.8	High purchase intent

The analysis of consumer behavior revealed significant influence from social media marketing, with purchase intent and frequency showing a strong mean score of 4.0 (SD=0.8) on the measurement scale. A substantial majority of respondents (68%) reported engaging in purchases "frequently" or "very frequently" as a result of social media marketing exposure, demonstrating its powerful impact on buying habits. The study further identified brand content and engagement (M=3.9) and personalized marketing (M=3.7) as the most effective marketing strategies overall, while notable generational differences emerged - younger consumers aged 18-24 showed greater responsiveness to influencer marketing (M=3.6), compared to those aged 25+ who demonstrated stronger preference for personalized marketing (M=3.7).

Correlation Analysis

Table 4
Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Consumer Behavior	1.00				
2. Influencer Marketing	.47	1.00			
3. Brand Content and Engagement	.52	.41	1.00		
4. Personalized Marketing	.50	.44	.53	1.00	
5. Interactive Campaigns	.45	.42	.49	.47	1.00

The correlation matrix reveals statistically significant and positive relationships between all social media marketing strategies and consumer behavior, with coefficients ranging from .45 to .52 ($p < .01$). Brand content and engagement demonstrates the strongest association with consumer behavior ($r=.52$), indicating its pivotal role in driving purchasing decisions. Personalized marketing also shows a strong relationship ($r=.50$), highlighting the importance of tailored advertising. Influencer marketing maintains a moderately strong correlation ($r=.47$), while interactive campaigns show the most modest yet still significant connection ($r = .45$). Inter-strategy correlations reveal notable linkages, particularly between brand content and personalized marketing ($r = .53$), suggesting synergistic effects when combined. All coefficients remain below .60, indicating acceptable multicollinearity levels for subsequent regression analysis.

Regression Analysis

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Unstd. β	Std. Error	Std. β	t-value	p-value
Constant	0.82	0.25	-	3.28	0.001
Influencer Marketing	0.31	0.06	0.30	5.17	<0.001
Brand Content and Engagement	0.36	0.05	0.35	7.20	<0.001
Personalized Marketing	0.29	0.06	0.28	4.83	<0.001
Interactive Campaigns	0.24	0.06	0.23	4.00	<0.001

Note. $R^2 = 0.44$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.43$, $F(4, 245) = 48.15$, $p < 0.001$

The regression analysis table 5 demonstrates that all four social media marketing strategies significantly predict consumer behavior, with brand content and engagement emerging as the strongest driver ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that consistent, high-quality brand posts substantially increase purchase likelihood. Influencer marketing ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) and personalized marketing ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$) show slightly weaker but still robust effects, while interactive campaigns exhibit the most modest yet statistically significant influence ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). The positive unstandardized coefficients (ranging from 0.24 to 0.36) confirm that each unit increase in these strategies corresponds to a measurable uplift in consumer purchasing actions, collectively explaining 44% of the variance in consumer behavior and validating their integrated role in shaping contemporary digital engagement.

Moderation Analysis

Table 6
Age as Moderator

Predictor	β	SE	t-value	p-value	ΔR^2	F-change	p(F)
Influencer Marketing							
Main Effect	0.30	0.06	5.00	<0.001			
Age (25+ vs 18-24)	-0.14	0.05	-2.80	0.006			
Interaction	-0.22	0.07	-3.14	0.002	0.03	9.86	0.002
Brand Content & Engagement							
Main Effect	0.35	0.05	7.00	<0.001			
Age (25+ vs 18-24)	0.07	0.04	1.75	0.081			
Interaction	0.05	0.06	0.83	0.405	0.00	0.69	0.405
Personalized Marketing							
Main Effect	0.28	0.06	4.67	<0.001			
Age (25+ vs 18-24)	0.15	0.05	3.00	0.003			
Interaction	0.24	0.07	3.43	0.001	0.04	11.76	0.001
Interactive Campaigns							
Main Effect	0.23	0.06	3.83	<0.001			
Age (25+ vs 18-24)	-0.04	0.04	-1.00	0.318			
Interaction	0.02	0.06	0.33	0.739	0.00	0.11	0.739

The analysis confirms that age significantly moderates the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies, with notably divergent generational preferences emerging. For influencer marketing, effectiveness declines significantly among consumers aged 25+ ($\beta=-0.22$, $p=.002$), indicating younger audiences (18-24) respond more strongly to peer endorsements. Conversely, personalized marketing shows significantly greater impact among older consumers (25+), with a substantial interaction effect ($\beta=0.24$, $p=.001$) amplifying its influence. Brand content engagement and interactive campaigns maintain consistent effectiveness across age groups, showing no significant moderation effects ($p>.05$). These findings empirically validate the need for age-segmented strategies, revealing that while influencer tactics resonate strongest with youth, personalized approaches gain effectiveness with mature consumers.

5. Discussion

The findings from the expanded sample of 250 respondents provide robust validation for the hypothesized relationships. Brand content and engagement emerged as the universal driver of consumer behavior, underscoring the paramount importance of quality and consistent brand communication. The results offer strong support for the integrated TAM and TPB framework, revealing a clear generational gap in strategy effectiveness. The higher effectiveness of influencer marketing among younger consumers (18-24) aligns with TPB's subjective norms and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); this cohort derives social validation and a sense of belonging from peer-like influencers (Djafarova & Bowden, 2021). Conversely, the increased potency of personalized marketing among older consumers (25+) resonates with TAM's perceived usefulness construct; this demographic prioritizes efficiency, relevance, and functional utility in their digital interactions (Li et al., 2020). The multi-generational nature of brand content and engagement and interactive campaigns highlights their role as foundational and complementary strategies, respectively, capable of building equity and engagement across the generational scale.

6. Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behavior is not uniform but is deeply shaped by age. The integration of TAM and TPB provides a powerful lens to understand this phenomenon: younger consumers are motivated by social utility and peer influence, while older consumers are driven by functional utility and perceived control. For marketers in Nepal and similar contexts, these findings are call to action to move beyond one-size-fits-all strategies. Success hinges on strategic budget allocation that prioritizes high-quality brand content and engagement for all, while skillfully leveraging influencer marketing to capture the youth and personalized marketing to engage mature audiences. This age-segmented, evidence-based approach is crucial for maximizing ROI and fostering meaningful brand connections in a diverse digital marketplace.

7. Implications

This research significantly strengthens the theoretical discourse by providing robust empirical evidence for 'age' as a critical moderator within the TAM and TPB frameworks. It challenges homogeneous consumer models and advocates for a more nuanced, generationally-aware understanding of digital marketing effectiveness. On the other hand, the study provides a clear strategic outline for practitioners. Brand content and engagement has become effective to make foundational strategy. On the basis of age, it is necessary to allocate resources to influencer partnerships for targets under the age of 25 and personalized advertising for the target groups who are above 25. The target allocation of budget ensures efficient use of resources and maximizes campaign impact.

8. Limitations and Future Research

Despite the adequate sample, some limitations exist in this study. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences, and the use of convenience sampling may affect generalizability. The study was also conducted within the specific context of Nepal. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, incorporate behavioral data, and explore other potential moderators, such as cultural identity and income to build upon these findings. Comparative studies across different countries would also enhance the external validity of the age-moderation model.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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