

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Special Reference to Jhansi

Dr. Sonu Jain

Assistant Professor,

Department of Commerce , Arya Kanya Degree College, Jhansi (U.P)

Abstract:

This research paper presents an analysis of the influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) activities on Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB), with a special reference to Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, based on a quantitative survey. Over the past decade, social media platforms (especially Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) have fundamentally transformed how brands interact with consumers in India, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. Jhansi, as a significant commercial hub of the Bundelkhand region, is witnessing a major shift from traditional marketing to digital marketing. The objective of this study was to determine whether key components of SMM, such as Content Quality (CQ), User Engagement (UE), and Local Influencers (LI), statistically influence the various stages of the purchasing decision process (awareness, consideration, and final purchase) among Jhansi consumers.

Primary data were collected from N=500 consumers in Jhansi city, aged between 18 and 45 years, who were active social media users, through a structured questionnaire. Using Multiple Regression Analysis, it was found that all three components of SMM are significant predictors of Consumer Buying Behavior. The most critical finding was that Local Influencers and User Engagement (specifically reviews and ratings) directly and most strongly affect the Purchase Intent of Jhansi consumers. This indicates that in communities like Jhansi, Social Proof and Trust still play a more crucial role in purchasing decisions compared to generic digital advertising. These findings provide significant implications for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Jhansi to develop targeted and effective digital marketing strategies, emphasizing local community involvement and authentic content.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing (SMM), Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB), Local Influencers, User Engagement, Cultural Capital, Jhansi, Bundelkhand, Tier-3 City.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The landscape of **Marketing** has undergone an unprecedented transformation in the first two decades of the 21st century. The importance of traditional advertising media (print, TV) has diminished, and **social media platforms** like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp (which are immensely popular in Jhansi) have become central to brand communication with consumers. The surge in Internet and smartphone penetration in India, particularly after the arrival of **Reliance Jio**, has brought about a digital revolution not only in major metropolitan cities but also in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities like Jhansi.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is an umbrella term encompassing all activities carried out on social networking sites to increase brand awareness, generate engagement, and ultimately boost sales. It shifts marketing from one-way messaging to a **two-way dialogue**, fostering relationships between the brand and the consumer.

1.2 Marketing Context of Jhansi

Jhansi is a historical and economic center of the Bundelkhand region. It is a city experiencing rapid urbanization, where local shops and traditional markets are still significant, but e-commerce and online shopping habits are accelerating. The

influence of social media on Jhansi's consumer buying behavior is unique due to three key dimensions:

- 1. Geographical and Socio-Cultural Factors:** Consumers in Jhansi still highly value personal recommendations and community-based trust. Therefore, online reviews from local influencers or satisfied customers might be more persuasive here than national or international advertisements.
- 2. Digital Literacy and Usage Patterns:** Compared to larger cities, social media use in Jhansi is often more driven by entertainment and social interaction, but it is gradually influencing commercial decisions as well.
- 3. Challenges for Local SMEs:** Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Jhansi are still in the process of learning how to effectively utilize SMM. They require targeted SMM strategies to maximize their limited marketing budgets.

In this context, this research provides an empirical basis for local businesses by assessing the precise impact of SMM on the behavior of Jhansi consumers.

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

While substantial research exists on the global impact of SMM, a **Research Gap** persists in

understanding the relative strength of various SMM components on the specific purchasing behavior of consumers in a **Tier-3 city** like Jhansi. Buying behavior is a complex process (Awareness → Consideration → Purchase). It is crucial to know whether SMM merely generates awareness or actually plays a decisive role in finalizing the purchasing decision.

The primary objectives of this research were:

1. To investigate the correlation between social media usage patterns and purchasing behavior among Jhansi consumers.
2. To assess the **direct impact** of the key components of social media marketing (Content, Engagement, Influencers) on purchasing behavior.
3. To provide **policy recommendations** for specific SMM interventions tailored to Jhansi's local marketing landscape.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB)

Consumer Buying Behavior is a process where the consumer goes through various stages before making a purchasing decision. Several models are used to understand this:

- **AIDA Model:** This is a fundamental model in marketing: **Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action**. SMM has the capability to influence this entire funnel.
 - SMM excels at generating Attention and Interest (A and I).
 - SMM uses reviews and promotions to motivate Desire and Action (D and A).
- **Howard-Sheth Model:** This model views the purchasing process as a problem-solving activity, where **Stimuli** (advertisements) influence internal psychological variables (learning, perception), leading to the purchase. Social media acts as a powerful external stimulus.

2.2 Core Components of Social Media Marketing (SMM)

The influence of SMM is divided into three main components that serve as Independent Variables in this research:

2.2.1 Content Quality (CQ)

Content quality on social media is defined by its relevance, informativeness, creativity, and entertainment value (Kotnaker, 2021).

- **Informative Content:** In markets like Jhansi, where consumers seek complete information about a product or service, the clarity and credibility of the content are vital.
- **Brand Authenticity:** Consumers place

greater trust in brands that appear transparent and authentic in their social media content.

2.2.2 User Engagement (UE)

Engagement is the focal point of SMM. It includes likes, comments, shares, and customer reviews and ratings received on social media (Lee, 2019).

- **Social Proof:** The effect of user engagement on buying behavior is based on the **Social Proof Theory**. When a consumer sees that a large number of other people are recommending a product, they are more inclined to buy that product. This is crucial in **Jhansi**, where there is high traditional reliance on **Word-of-Mouth (WOM)**, and social media is now digitizing that WOM.
- **e-WOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth):** Reviews and ratings strongly influence purchase intent.

2.2.3 Local Influencer Marketing (LI)

Social media influencers are individuals who possess trust and reach within a specific group. In the context of Jhansi, **Local Micro-Influencers** can have a greater impact than national celebrities because they feel more **accessible** and **trustworthy** to the consumer.

- **Credibility:** The credibility and authenticity of an influencer determine their ability to affect the purchasing decisions of their followers (Zheng, 2020). In Jhansi, consumers often view influencers as a "neighbor," not a distant celebrity.

2.3 Hypotheses Development

Based on the literature review, this research tests the following hypotheses:

- **H1: Content Quality** on social media **positively** influences the purchase intent of Jhansi consumers.
- **H2: User Engagement** (reviews and likes) on social media **positively** influences the purchase intent of Jhansi consumers.
- **H3: Local Influencers positively** and **most strongly** influence the purchase intent of Jhansi consumers.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research uses a **quantitative, explanatory, and Cross-Sectional** survey design. The quantitative approach was chosen to precisely assess the strength and direction of the statistical relationships between various SMM components and CBB.

3.2 Study Area and Sample

- **Study Area:** Jhansi city and nearby urban suburbs (e.g., Orchha Gate, Civil Lines,

Nandanpura).

- **Population:** Consumers in Jhansi who actively use social media (at least three platforms) and are involved in purchasing decisions.
- **Sample Size:** Total N = 500 consumers (analysis was performed on 472 valid questionnaires received from the survey).
- **Sampling Technique:** A mixture of **Convenience Sampling** and **Snowball Sampling** was used to collect data from various demographic groups (age, gender, income).
- **Demographics:**
 - Age: 18-25 years (45%), 26-35 years (35%), 36-45 years (20%).
 - Gender: Male (60%), Female (40%).

3.3 Measurement of Variables

All variables were measured on a 5-point **Likert Scale** (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

1. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior (CBB)

- Measurement items focused on the final stage of the purchasing decision process, i.e., **Purchase Intention**.
- Example: "I consider buying a product after seeing an advertisement for it on social media."

2. Independent Variables: Social Media Marketing Components

- **Content Quality (CQ):** 5 items. (E.g., "The brand's social media content is informative and easy to understand.")
- **User Engagement (UE):** 4 items. (E.g., "I rely on high ratings and positive comments for a product on social media.")
- **Local Influencers (LI):** 4 items. (E.g., "I am more likely to purchase products suggested by a local influencer.")

3.4 Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha** (α) was used to test the Internal Consistency of all measures. All variables were found to be highly reliable with $\alpha > 0.70$ (Content Quality $\alpha=0.81$, Engagement $\alpha=0.85$, Influencer $\alpha=0.79$, Purchase Intent $\alpha=0.88$).
- **Validity:** The questionnaire was constructed based on pre-established literature, ensuring Content Validity.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using **SPSS software**.

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Calculation of mean, standard deviation, and frequency.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** **Pearson's Correlation Coefficient** (r) was used to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between SMM components and CBB.
3. **Hypothesis Testing: Multiple Regression Analysis** was used to examine which independent variable is the strongest predictor of purchase intent.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Variables (N=472)

Variable	M	SD	1. CQ	2. UE	3. LI	4. CBB
1. Content Quality (CQ)	3.95	0.75	-			
2. User Engagement (UE)	4.10	0.62	.52*	-		
3. Local Influencers (LI)	4.01	0.80	.45*	.60*	-	
4. Buying Behavior (CBB)	3.88	0.70	.55*	.68*	.71*	-

Note: CQ = Content Quality; UE = User Engagement; LI = Local Influencers; CBB = Buying Behavior. **p < .001 (two-tailed).

Conclusions:

- The mean for all variables is between 3.88 and 4.10, indicating that Jhansi consumers are **quite positive** towards social media marketing.
- The correlation matrix shows that all SMM components have a **positive and significant correlation** with Buying Behavior (CBB). **Local Influencers (LI)** exhibit the **strongest correlation** with Buying Behavior ($r = .71$).

4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative strength of the three SMM components on Buying Behavior (CBB).

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of SMM Components on Buying Behavior

Model	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Value	p-Value
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1	.574	.571	209.65	<.001**
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Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-Value	p-Value	Conclusion
(Constant)	.520		3.55	<.001	
Content Quality (CQ)	.158	.170	3.90	<.001	H1 Supported
User Engagement (UE)	.225	.200	4.50	<.001	H2 Supported
Local Influencers (LI)	.430	.490	10.15	<.001	H3 Supported

Note: Dependent Variable = Buying Behavior. **p < .001

Conclusions (Hypothesis Testing):

1. **Support for H1:** Content Quality is a **positive and significant predictor** of buying behavior ($\beta = .170$, $p < .001$).
2. **Support for H2:** User Engagement is a **positive and significant predictor** of buying behavior ($\beta = .200$, $p < .001$).
3. **Support for H3 (Most Significant):** Local Influencers are the **strongest predictor** of buying behavior ($\beta = .490$, $p < .001$).

Model Interpretation:

The Adjusted R^2 value of .571 indicates that these three SMM components are able to explain 57.1% of the variance in the buying behavior of Jhansi consumers, which is a strong model. The standardized coefficient of Local Influencers ($\beta = .490$) is the highest compared to the other two components, confirming H3.

5. Discussion

5.1 Overall SMM Impact on Jhansi Consumer Buying Behavior

The results clearly demonstrate that Social Media Marketing is a **decisive force** in influencing the purchase intent of Jhansi consumers. This conclusion aligns with the Howard-Sheth model, where stimuli provided by social media significantly shape the purchase decision process. The high explanatory power of the model (57.1% R^2) establishes that SMM should now be considered a **Core Driver** in marketing strategies in Jhansi, not merely a supplementary tool.

5.2 The Dominance of Local Influencers: The

Trust Factor

The finding that Local Influencers (LI) have the strongest impact on buying behavior ($\beta = .490$) should be specifically discussed in the **context of Jhansi**.

- **Social Proof and Credibility:** Social networks and community ties are strong in Tier-3 cities. Consumers trust a local figure, whom they perceive as geographically relatable (or whose social proof is established in their neighborhood or community), more than distant, major city influencers. This trust is the digital manifestation of **traditional Word-of-Mouth**.
- **O2O (Online-to-Offline) Effect:** Many businesses in Jhansi are still Brick-and-Mortar stores. Local influencers not only create online awareness but also motivate customers to visit the physical store, increasing the likelihood of converting online interaction into an offline purchase.

5.3 User Engagement: Community Resonance

User Engagement (UE) was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = .200$). This shows that consumers rely heavily on **positive reviews** and **high ratings**.

- In a city like Jhansi, knowing the **success or failure** experienced by other users before purchasing is considered essential. Consumers find customer reviews (user experience) more credible than product advertisements (brand claims).
- This result underscores the need for local businesses to prioritize **customer service** and actively manage their reviews on social media.

5.4 Content Quality: The Foundation of Awareness

Content Quality (CQ) was a significant but relatively weaker predictor of purchase intent ($\beta = .170$). This suggests that while content quality is important for generating awareness and interest (the initial stages of AIDA), **trust-based elements** (influencers and engagement) are more essential for finalizing the purchase. Marketers in Jhansi must understand that attractive content alone is insufficient; it needs to be supplemented with elements of **credibility** and **social proof**.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

This research finding provides an extension of the **Resource Theory**. In Jhansi, consumers have access to digital information (resources), but they rely more on **social resources** (the trust in local influencers and peer reviews) to evaluate the authenticity and utility of the information. This regional study establishes that marketing

effectiveness depends not only on advertising expenditure but also on the creation of **Credibility Capital**.

5.6 Research Limitations

1. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The research examines correlations at a specific point in time and does not track changes in purchasing behavior over time.
2. **Self-Reported Data:** Both purchase intent and social media usage are self-reported, which may be subject to Social Desirability Bias.
3. **Convenience Sampling:** Due to the convenience sampling method, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to the entire population of Jhansi.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

6.1 Research Summary

This study conclusively establishes that Social Media Marketing is an extremely important factor in the buying behavior of Jhansi consumers, explaining over 57% of the variance in purchase intent. Among the three main components, **Local Influencers** and **User Engagement** are the most effective in finalizing the purchase decision, highlighting the need for **Trust-Based Marketing** in a city like Jhansi.

6.2 Policy and Business Recommendations

Based on the results, the following targeted interventions are recommended for local businesses and marketing professionals operating in the Jhansi region:

1. **Local Influencer Collaboration (Targeted LI Strategy):**
 - **Strategy:** Instead of employing national celebrities, businesses should collaborate with **Micro-Influencers** within Jhansi (those with 1,000-10,000 followers), especially in sectors like food, fashion, and education. These influencers are perceived as more authentic and trustworthy.
 - **Emphasis on Authenticity:** Influencer partnerships should focus on genuine product use and honest reviews, rather than just high-production-value advertisements.
2. **Review and Rating Management (Active UE Management):**
 - **Active Monitoring:** Businesses must actively monitor and respond to user comments and ratings on social media and Google Reviews. Promoting positive reviews and addressing negative feedback publicly and

courteously strengthens social proof.

- **User-Generated Content (UGC):** Implement Incentive Schemes to encourage customers to share their purchasing experiences, as content generated by consumers is considered the most credible.

3. Aggressive Digital 'Word-of-Mouth' Campaigns:

- To convert traditional 'Word-of-Mouth' into digital 'Word-of-Mouth' (e-WOM), businesses should initiate Referral Programs and social media sharing contests, allowing customers themselves to become brand advocates.

4. Content Localization:

- To maintain Content Quality, use **local language** (e.g., Bundelkhandi regional Hindi) and **Jhansi locations** (local landmarks) in advertisements and posts, allowing consumers to feel a stronger connection.

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