

Influence of Viral Marketing on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Social Commerce Platforms

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Abstract: *This research investigates the influence of viral marketing on consumer buying behavior, demonstrating a considerable positive correlation. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs play a key role in spreading marketing messages. A sample of 636 respondents was analysed using various statistical tools. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure and Bartlett's test confirmed the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis. Descriptive statistics highlighted differences across demographic groups. Factor analysis identified key influences such as convenience, satisfaction, trust, and security. These factors significantly shape online consumer behavior. Viral marketing enhances engagement and influences buying decisions. Trustworthy and user-friendly platforms are essential. Overall, the study emphasizes improving customer experience in social commerce.*

Keywords: Viral Marketing, Social Media, Customer Purchase Decisions, Trust and Influence, social commerce.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital age has revolutionized marketing, introducing viral marketing as a key strategy. It spreads promotional messages rapidly through social networks like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram. These digital platforms facilitate extensive content dissemination, augmenting campaign visibility and impact. Social media's interactive nature supports real-time engagement and brand-consumer relationships. Viral marketing thrives on personal recommendations and social influence. It's now seen as more trustworthy than traditional advertising methods.

The fusion of social media and e-commerce, known as social commerce, has substantially amplified the influence of viral marketing on consumer conduct. Platforms now enable users to explore, discuss, and acquire products within a unified ecosystem, enhancing convenience and the overall customer experience. Features like shoppable posts, integrated payments, and peer reviews simplify purchase decisions through trusted social connections. Advances in technology, including AI, machine learning, and analytics, help marketers optimize campaigns and predict trends. TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube foster viral content through shareable, engaging formats. Influencer marketing serves a vital function by harnessing trust and wide-ranging influence to promote products. These developments allow businesses to engage customers directly within social networks. Social commerce strengthens customer interaction, drives brand loyalty, and increases revenue. This fusion of social media and e-commerce has redefined how consumers connect with brands.

Viral marketing boosts brand awareness by rapidly spreading promotional content to wide audiences. Peer and influencer endorsements build trust and credibility, increasing purchase likelihood. Trusted recommendations are especially persuasive for consumers. Emotional and entertaining content fosters positive brand associations and engagement. Memorable, shareable campaigns enhance customer loyalty.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marketing experts have driven innovation through investigations into new approaches, with viral marketing gaining prominence in recent years. Trivedi (2017) highlights viral marketing, particularly viral advertising, as a well-established strategy. Mohr (2017) defines viral marketing as a strategy that uses digital networks and technologies to drive word-of-mouth engagement, significantly expanding the reach and influence of a message. This approach is a powerful tool for businesses in the digital landscape.

Sin Wei and Tunku Abdul Rahman (2014) note that viral marketing can leverage various communication channels, including social media, email, forums, blogs, and

websites, along with digital platforms like mobile apps and online communities. Berger and Menon (2014) suggest that factors like social status, emotional state, and perceived content usefulness impact viral marketing effectiveness. Liu and Wang (2019) found that passive exposure to viral marketing can harm brand equity and purchase intentions, while active engagement with the message positively affects brand equity, promoting greater involvement.

The study by Fitriani et al. (2022) revealed that consumer behavior serves as a mediating factor in the association between viral marketing strategies and consumer purchase intentions, with viral marketing influencing purchasing decisions by shaping behavior. Rosyihuddin et al. (2022) studied Indonesia's MSME sector and found that viral marketing and product innovation, mediated by purchase choices, drive repurchase intentions and customer loyalty. Sawaftah et al. (2020) explored E-WOM, purchase intention, and viral marketing in Northern Cyprus' smartphone market, revealing that eWOM amplified by viral marketing strongly influences consumer purchasing decisions. Hamade (2021) observed that E-WOM on social media, especially through influencers, has replaced traditional word-of-mouth as a key driver of consumer behavior in Lebanon.

Greeshma and Chandru (2021) reported that viral marketing significantly shapes consumer behavior and proves cost-effective across industries in Coimbatore. Bin Ismail et al. (2022) emphasized factors like informativeness, entertainment, irritation, credibility, and incentives as key drivers of purchase intent. Rupalee (2022) underscored the role of social media viral strategies, including buzz and pass-along marketing. Bhowmik and Chowdhury (2024) linked viral marketing to brand loyalty and buying intent in Agartala's cosmetic industry. Razali et al. (2023) highlighted Instagram's role in influencing purchase decisions through viral content.

Existing research on viral marketing mainly focuses on its effects on consumer behavior, brand equity, and purchase intentions. However, the emotional impact of viral content on sustained brand loyalty remains underexplored. The role of customized viral strategies for niche markets and the mediating roles of consumer trust and social identity are also insufficiently studied. Further research is needed to explore viral marketing's long-term impact on customer engagement, retention, and its interaction with traditional marketing tactics to foster brand loyalty across diverse consumer segments.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study explores the factors contributing to the effectiveness of viral marketing and evaluates its influence on consumer purchasing behavior within the context of social commerce.

4. STUDY DESIGN

4.1. Data Gathering and Sample Overview

This study utilized a structured methodology that combined descriptive and analytical approaches with a survey-based design. Data was collected from 636 individuals aged 18 and above who actively engage with social commerce platforms. The data collection process involved a carefully constructed questionnaire featuring yes/no questions, multiple-choice items, and Likert scale statements. The primary aim of the research was to investigate the influence of viral marketing on consumer purchasing behavior.

4.2. Survey Respondent Overview

This section provides a comprehensive understanding of the respondent demographics, examining the socioeconomic characteristics of the study participants. Key factors considered include age, gender, educational level, occupation, monthly income, and household size. The analysis that follows explores how viral marketing strategies impact purchasing behaviors across these diverse demographic groups.

4.3. Socio-Demographic Profile

The study assessed key demographic variables to develop a comprehensive profile of the participants. These characteristics were analysed using frequency distribution to illustrate the composition of the sample. The demographic breakdown offers meaningful insights into the relationship between viral marketing and consumer purchasing behavior within the context of social commerce.

Gender: The data shows that 48.0% of respondents identify as male, while 52.0% identify as female.

Age: Analysis indicates that 36.2% of respondents are aged 18-30, 48.0% are between 31-40, 8.2% are aged 41-50, and 7.7% are over 50 years old.

Educational Attainment: Among the respondents, 2.5% have completed only school-level education, 5.3% hold a diploma, 13.8% have a bachelor's degree, 51.6% possess a master's degree, and 26.7% have a professional degree.

Occupation: The data reveals that 21.9% of respondents are students, 20.4% are professionals, 10.8% are business owners, 10.4% are government employees, 17.1% are non-government employees, and 8.6% fall into other categories.

Marital Status: The information indicates that 66.2% of participants are married, while 33.8% are unmarried.

Nature of Occupation: The data shows that 63.4% of participants are salaried, while 36.6% are not.

Income Level: A majority of participants fall into distinct income categories, with 28.8% receiving less than 10,000, 26.3% receiving between 10,000 and 20,000, 7.4% receiving between 20,001 and 30,000, 3.6% receiving between 30,001 and 40,000, and 34% receiving over 40,000 per month.

Family Members: Data shows that 7.4% of respondents live in households with fewer than 3 members, 81.6% live in households with 3-5 members, and 11% have more than 5 family members.

Residential Location: Among the participants, 54.4% live in urban areas, 10.7% in semi-urban areas, and 34.9% in rural areas.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. To Investigate the Factors that Drive Viral Marketing

The study used factor and reliability analysis to identify key factors and ensure consistency in consumer perception data. It revealed major influences on online shopping, including satisfaction, trust, security, and purchase decisions. These findings highlight key drivers of consumer behavior in social commerce.

5.2. KMO and Bartlett's Test:

The KMO Measure assessed sampling adequacy, with values near 1 indicating suitability for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity checked if variables were significantly correlated. Together, these tests confirmed the data's appropriateness for factor analysis.

Table No. 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.861
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15014.83
	Df	300
	Sig.	.000

Source: Original Data

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the 5% significance threshold, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.861, surpassing the recommended value of 0.70, implying that there are adequate items for each factor.

Table No. 3. Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Comprehensive Information at Single Window	1.000	.514
Frequent Ads Changed My Opinion	1.000	.681
Appealing Advertisements	1.000	.733
Impact of Product Images	1.000	.542
Ease of Understanding Product Use	1.000	.729
Recommendations from Acquaintances	1.000	.629
Encourages Repeat Purchases	1.000	.726
Product Trustworthiness	1.000	.696
Guaranteed Purchases	1.000	.574
Easily Identifiable Fake Products	1.000	.732
Familiarity with the Product	1.000	.732
Comfortable Shopping Experience	1.000	.731
Extensive Product Selection	1.000	.665
Hassle-Free Return Policy	1.000	.527
Convenient Product Comparison	1.000	.749
Received Valid Coupon Code	1.000	.785
Timely Offers	1.000	.660
Attractive Festival Offers	1.000	.610
High-Quality Offered Products	1.000	.702
Offer Duration	1.000	.577
Multiple Payment Options	1.000	.600
Credit Facility (EMI)	1.000	.648
Secure Payment System	1.000	.705
Personal Information Privacy	1.000	.753
Fast Transactions	1.000	.590

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Source: Original Data

In the above table, communalities above 0.5 indicate that the items share substantial common variance, meaning they are well-aligned with the underlying factors. This suggests the statements are meaningful, reliable, and valid for the analysis context. Items meeting this threshold contribute effectively to the construct, ensuring clear and trustworthy insights.

5.3. Cumulative Variance Explained

The analysis reveals key components along with their eigenvalues, explained variance, and cumulative variance. The 1st component is the most influential, accounting for 47.545% of the total variance. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th components explain 8.184%, 5.520%, and 5.122% of the variance, respectively. Remaining components have minimal impact, indicating limited statistical significance.

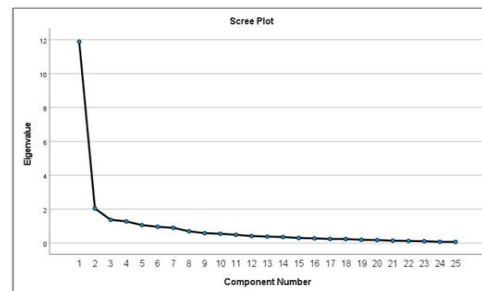
Table No.4. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.886	47.545	47.545	11.886	47.545	47.545	4.820	19.279	19.279
2	2.046	8.184	55.729	2.046	8.184	55.729	4.184	16.738	36.017
3	1.380	5.520	61.249	1.380	5.520	61.249	4.149	16.596	52.613
4	1.281	5.122	66.371	1.281	5.122	66.371	3.439	13.758	66.371
5	1.064	4.256	70.627						
6	.963	3.852	74.479						
7	.904	3.618	78.097						
8	.699	2.795	80.892						
9	.589	2.355	83.247						
10	.553	2.212	85.458						
11	.491	1.962	87.421						
12	.418	1.670	89.091						
13	.386	1.546	90.637						
14	.359	1.437	92.073						
15	.305	1.221	93.294						
16	.281	1.122	94.417						
17	.246	.983	95.400						
18	.241	.962	96.362						
19	.198	.792	97.154						
20	.180	.720	97.874						
21	.144	.575	98.449						
22	.127	.506	98.956						
23	.111	.445	99.400						
24	.078	.314	99.714						
25	.071	.286	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis (Source: Original Data)

5.4. Scree Plot

The scree plot visually represents eigenvalues to help determine the optimal number of factors to retain. The key is identifying the point where the curve flattens, known as the "elbow," which suggests the most meaningful factors to extract from the data.



Source: Original Data

5.5. Eigenvalue:

This metric reflects the proportion of total variance each component explains. While all items contribute equally to overall variance, eigenvalues represent how much variance each component captures, which may vary. Thus, eigenvalues indicate the importance of each principal component in explaining the data's overall variability. The table presents the rotated component matrix derived from a principal component analysis (PCA) using Varimax rotation, finalized after 12 iterations. This analysis highlights four key components, uncovering the underlying structure of the dataset.

Component 1: Shopping Experience This includes convenient product comparison (.783), ease of understanding product use (.700), extensive product selection (.692), pleasant shopping experience (.684), fast transactions (.668), and comprehensive info at a single window (.574). These enhance convenience, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

Component 2: Customer Satisfaction Key factors are valid coupon codes (.784), timely offers (.701), flexible credit options like EMI (.666), avoiding fake products (.629),

product reliability (.601), and a hassle-free return policy (.500), all contributing to satisfaction and loyalty.

Component 3: Purchase Decisions This includes the effect of frequent ads (.805), repeat purchase encouragement (.778), ad appeal (.775), product visuals (.648), and recommendations from trusted sources (.593), which shape customer decision-making.

Component 4: Trust and Security It covers personal info privacy (.807), product familiarity (.722), product trustworthiness (.594), and secure payments (.508), crucial for building customer confidence. These components reflect consistent response patterns, offering insights into shopping behaviors and guiding strategic improvements.

Table No. 5. Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Shopping Experience				
Convenient Product Comparison	.783			
Ease of Understanding Product Use	.700			
Extensive Product Selection	.692			
Comfortable Shopping Experience	.684			
Fast Transactions	.668			
Comprehensive Information at Single Window	.574			
Customer Satisfaction				
Received Valid Coupon Code		.784		
Timely Offers		.701		
Credit facility (EMI)		.666		
Easily Identifiable Fake Products		.629		
High-Quality Offered Products		.601		
Hassle-Free Return Policy		.500		
Purchase Decisions				
Frequent Ads Changed My Opinion			.805	
Encourages Repeat Purchases			.778	
Appealing Advertisements			.775	
Impact of Product Images			.648	
Recommendations from Acquaintances			.593	
Trust and Security				
Personal Information Privacy				.807
Familiarity with the Product				.722
Product Trustworthiness				.594
Secure Payment System				.508
<i>Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.</i>				
<i>a. Rotation converged in 12 iterations. (Source: Original Data)</i>				

The table presents the rotated component matrix derived from a principal component analysis (PCA) using Varimax rotation, finalized after 12 iterations. This analysis highlights four key components, uncovering the underlying structure of the dataset.

6. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Viral marketing on social commerce platforms is an effective strategy, but consumer responses vary based on several factors. Educational attainment influences how critically individuals assess campaigns, with those having higher education being more discerning. Age plays a role, as younger consumers are more responsive to viral trends. Residential locale also affects exposure, with urban dwellers being more susceptible to viral marketing. Gender differences further shape preferences and purchasing patterns, impacting the effectiveness of viral marketing strategies. These demographic and socioeconomic factors significantly influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions.

Research shows that viral marketing positively influences online shopping behavior by boosting customer interest and purchase attitudes due to its low cost, speed, and global reach. However, challenges arise from fake messages spread by dishonest marketers, which can damage trust and hinder product promotion. To combat this, businesses must ensure transparency, monitor their online presence, and correct false information. Engaging with

customers and using strong content moderation can help maintain credibility. A proactive, trustworthy approach enables businesses to benefit from viral marketing while minimizing risks.

The study identified a significant positive correlation between viral marketing and consumer buying behavior. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs drive word-of-mouth sharing, influencing consumer behavior. People trust recommendations from friends, family, and colleagues, making personal endorsements highly impactful. Social media amplifies this trust, boosting the effectiveness of viral marketing and helping businesses increase engagement and sales.

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