



THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TRUST BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS AND CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of social media advertisements on consumer purchase intention, with product trust positioned as mediating mechanism. This empirical study was conducted by using a quantitative survey approach. Primary data was collected from 360 social media users in India. The hypothesis testing for the proposed relationships were tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) with bootstrapping. The results from the data analysis had revealed that social media advertisements (SM) significantly increased purchase intention (PI). Product trust (PT) has significant positive impact on purchase intention. Also, product trust was found to partially mediate the relationship between social media advertisements and purchase intention, indicating that trust formation performed crucial role in boosting social media exposure into behavioral intent. The findings accentuate the significance of building convincing and transparent communication strategies on social media to build up consumer product trust and drive purchase intention, at the same time contributing to theoretical understanding of the psychological mechanisms supporting digital advertising effectiveness.

KEYWORDS : Social media, product trust, purchase intention, online shopping, social media advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid increase of social media platforms has primarily transformed the advertising landscape. Such social media rise had enabled firms to interact with consumers in more personalized, interactive and persuasive ways than conventional media channels, thus reshaping how purchase intentions are formed in modern markets. In this digitally mediated environment, consumers are progressively more exposed to branded content, influencer endorsements and peer-generated reviews, all of which can considerably manipulate their perceptions of products and brands. Social media has, for more than a decade, enabled multifaceted and highly dynamic forms of interaction amid brands and consumers, fundamentally transforming the nature, depth, and strength of their relational engagement across digital platforms (Li et al., 2021; Zeqiri et al., 2025). During past decade, social media usage has caused complex, multifaceted and intensified interactions amid firms and their customers. It had transformed reshaping the traditional boundaries of market communication and engagement. On the one hand, organizations are strategically leveraging social media platforms to enlarge their geographic reach and access a broader and more varied base of buyers across regional and national boundaries (Gao et al., 2018).

The implementation of social media as strategic medium for communicating and encouraging new as well as existing products and services has experienced extensive growth in recent years, mainly attributable to its increasing importance in determining, guiding and influencing consumer purchasing behavior (Park et al., 2021). The appearance and widespread diffusion of online media channels, strongly supported by the proliferation of mobile devices, have considerably diminished consumer interest in conventional media channels, thus altering established patterns of information consumption and media engagement (Chatterjee et al., 2022). Social media platforms has crucial role in promoting interactive environments that ease the exchange of information and reinforce bidirectional communication

between firms and consumers, in that way enhancing engagement, responsiveness and relational connectivity (Fetis et al., 2022).

Research Questions

1. To what extent do social media advertisements influence consumer purchase intention?
2. To what degree does product trust mediate the relationship between social media advertisements and consumer purchase intention?

Research Objectives

1. To examine empirically the direct effect of social media advertisements on consumer purchase intention.
2. To assess the direct influence of product trust on consumer purchase intention.
3. To investigate the mediating role of product trust in the relationship between social media advertisements and consumer purchase intention.

Literature Review

Social media marketing activities persist to display a significant direct effect on both trust and customer satisfaction (Hamid et al., 2024). The use of social media influencer collaborations has grown rapidly and empirical evidence indicates that the informative value, authenticity, and homophily of influencer content enhance parasocial relationships, which in turn positively influence followers' purchase intentions and perceptions of brand credibility (Liu & Zheng, 2024). Brand trust is found to have mediating effect on the relationship between select social media marketing features, particularly interactivity and informativeness, and consumers' purchase decisions.

A meta-analytic investigation by using 20 effect sizes from 19 empirical studies examined the relationship between trust and consumers' purchase intention, with the findings constantly demonstrating that trust exerts a positive and significant influence on consumers' intentions to purchase (Wang et al., 2022). Social motivation has significant positive

effect on both trust and online purchase intentions, and it is observed that that consumers' trust significantly influences their online purchase intentions. Also, product trust partially mediates the relationship between social motivation and online purchase intention, indicating that social motivation shapes purchasing behavior both directly and indirectly through trust (Karunasingha & Abeysekera, 2022).

H1: Social media has an influence purchase intention.

H2: Product trust has an influence on purchase intention.

H3: Product trust mediates the relationship between social media and purchase intention.

Research Methodology

The study used quantitative research design to empirically inspect the relationships among social media advertisements (SM), product trusts (PT), and purchase intention (PI). This investigation had employed a structured survey method to collect primary data from respondents in India. A convenience sampling technique had been utilized to recruit participants who were active social media users, and the sample comprised 360 valid responses. Data analysis had been performed with SPSS software mainly with Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) to test the direct and mediating effects; the model was appraised through regression-based mediation analysis with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to determine the significance of indirect effects. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample characteristics and central tendencies of the variables, while inferential statistics examined the hypothesized paths, allowing the study to test the proposed mediation model meticulously in a cross-sectional framework.

Data Analysis

The demographic profile of the respondents demonstrated relatively balanced gender distribution, with male participants constituting small majority of the sample ($n = 186$, 51.67%), followed by female respondents ($n = 174$, 48.33%). For the variable related to educational qualification, the sample was predominantly composed of graduates ($n = 218$, 60.56%), while a considerable proportion had accomplished postgraduate education ($n = 79$, 21.94%), and the remaining respondents reported other educational qualifications such as professional certifications, diplomas, or higher secondary education ($n = 63$, 17.50%). For the variable related to occupational status, employees represented the largest segment of the sample ($n = 160$, 44.44%), followed by self-employed individuals ($n = 130$, 36.11%), while students ($n = 44$, 12.22%) and respondents with other occupations ($n = 26$, 7.22%) and they constituted smaller proportions. For the variable social media usage, almost half of the respondents reported spending less than two hours per day on social media platforms ($n = 169$, 46.94%), while a considerable segment indicated usage of two to four hours daily ($n = 142$, 39.44%), and smaller proportion reported spending more than four hours per day on social media ($n = 49$, 13.61%), symptomatic of moderate to high levels of social media engagement amongst the surveyed participants. The descriptive statistics for the three variables namely SM, PT and PI had indicated moderate levels. Specifically, social media (SM) recorded a mean of 3.57 with a standard deviation of 1.27, product trust (PT) had a mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 1.26, and purchase intention (PI) showed a mean of 3.55 with a standard deviation of 1.25, signifying comparatively reliable responses across the sample with no intense variability.

Table 1. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Direct effect			Result
	Path	Beta	p-value	Partial mediation

H1	SM → PI	0.39	<.001	Significant
H2	Pt→ PI	0.33	<.001	Significant
Indirect effect				
H3	Path	Beta	BCCI	Relationship
			Lower Bound Upper bound	Significant
	SM PT P	0.11	0.06 0.15	

Notes: SM = Social Media, PT = Product Trust, PI = Purchase intention, Bias-corrected confidence interval, Bootstrap sample size = 5000

Source: Authors own work

Findings

The analysis through used of SPSS and particularly Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4) had indicated that social media had significant direct effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$) supporting H1. This result between SM and PI suggests that exposure to social media advertisements had positively influenced consumers' intention to purchase, representing that social media content and promotional activities were efficient in determining purchase-related decisions among the respondents and consistent with earlier research work (Jamil et al., 2024; Masuda et al., 2022; Onofrei et al., 2022). Product trust has significant influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < .001$), thus supporting H2 and it is consistent with findings from previous works. The mediation analysis depicted that product trust significantly mediated the relationship between social media and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.11$), with bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval ranging from 0.06 to 0.15, which did not include zero, thus supporting H3.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results had indicated that social media advertisements had both direct and indirect influence on consumer purchase intention. The product trust had significant partial mediating effect which means that social media exposure increased consumers' trust in advertised products, and that enhanced trust in turn strengthened purchase intentions while social media retained an independent positive effect. From the perspective of S-O-R lens, the findings from the study had suggested that digital advertising stimuli (social media content) changed internal evaluative states (product trust) that drove behavioral readiness (purchase intention), in that way demonstrating that persuasive digital communications function through cognitive-affective mechanisms rather than exclusively through surface-level exposure. The study therefore advanced understanding of digital advertising effectiveness by empirically validating trust as central mechanism in online contexts and by screening this pattern within an Indian sample, which has implications for theory adaptation and managerial practice.

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