

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR
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Tiruttani, Tamil Nadu, India.***ABSTRACT**

This study examines the comparative influence of major social media platforms on the buying behaviour of digital consumers in Chennai City. With the rapid growth of digital technologies, platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Telegram have emerged as powerful marketing tools that shape consumer perceptions, engagement, and purchase decisions. The primary objective of the study is to identify the most influential social media platform affecting consumer buying behaviour and to compare the effectiveness of different platforms. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data were collected from 650 respondents, out of which 600 valid responses from Chennai City were considered for analysis after data screening. Statistical tools such as mean score analysis, ANOVA, and rank analysis were employed to examine differences in consumer responses across platforms. The findings reveal that visual and video-based platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube, exert a stronger influence on consumer buying behaviour compared to text-based platforms such as Twitter (X) and Telegram. WhatsApp also plays a significant role due to its personalized and direct communication features. The study highlights that platform-specific characteristics significantly affect consumer trust, engagement, and purchase decisions. The research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on platform-wise effectiveness in an urban Indian context. The findings offer valuable insights for marketers to design platform-specific social media strategies to enhance consumer engagement and influence buying behaviour.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Digital Consumers, Social Media Platforms, Instagram Marketing, YouTube Influence, e-WOM, Consumer Engagement, Urban Consumers, Chennai City*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technology and internet penetration has transformed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. Social media platforms have become integral components of the digital marketing ecosystem, enabling businesses to communicate, engage, and influence consumers in real time. In recent years, platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Telegram have gained prominence as key channels for marketing communication. Social media marketing has evolved from simple information sharing to a more interactive and personalized engagement process. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages; instead, they actively participate in content creation, sharing, and evaluation. This shift has significantly influenced consumer buying behaviour, particularly in urban areas where digital adoption is high.

From a theoretical perspective, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model explains how social media platforms act as stimuli that influence consumers' internal states, such as perception, trust, and engagement, ultimately leading to behavioural responses such as purchase decisions. Similarly, the Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that consumers choose specific platforms based on their needs, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction, which in turn affects their responsiveness to marketing content. Each social media platform possesses unique characteristics that influence consumer behaviour differently. For instance, Instagram and YouTube emphasize visual and video content, enhancing consumer engagement and product understanding. WhatsApp facilitates direct and personalized communication, increasing trust and immediacy. Facebook provides a mix of content formats, while Twitter (X) and Telegram are more focused on information dissemination and updates. These variations necessitate a comparative analysis to identify which platforms are more effective in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Despite the growing importance of social media platforms, limited studies have comparatively analyzed the effectiveness of multiple platforms within a specific urban context such as Chennai City. Understanding platform-specific influence is crucial for marketers to allocate resources efficiently and design targeted strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze and compare the influence of major social media platforms on consumer buying behaviour among digital consumers in Chennai City, providing empirical insights into platform effectiveness in the contemporary digital environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies have emphasized the growing importance of social media platforms in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Dwivedi, Y. K. et al. (2021) highlighted that social media marketing significantly enhances consumer engagement and brand interaction, leading to improved purchase intention. The study emphasizes the role of interactive and personalized content in shaping consumer responses. Similarly, Li, F. et al. (2021) found that visual platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have a stronger influence on consumer decision-making due to their ability to provide rich media content and product demonstrations. These platforms reduce perceived risk and improve consumer confidence. According to Appel, G. et al. (2022), platform-specific features such as interactivity, entertainment, and informativeness play a crucial role in determining marketing effectiveness. The study suggests that marketers should adopt differentiated strategies across platforms rather than a uniform approach. Further, Nuseir, M. T. (2022) reported that social media significantly influences consumer trust and loyalty, particularly through user-generated content and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). The findings indicate that trust acts as a mediating factor between social media exposure and purchase decisions. A study by Sokolova, K. and Kefi, H. (2023) revealed that influencer marketing on Instagram and YouTube strongly affects consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, especially among younger consumers. The study highlights the credibility and relatability of influencers as key drivers. Moreover, Chopra, A. et al. (2023) emphasized that video-based content significantly enhances consumer engagement and information processing, leading to higher conversion rates compared to static content. Recent research by Alalwan, A. A. (2024) confirmed that social media marketing activities such as entertainment, interaction, and customization significantly influence consumer behaviour. The study also highlights the importance of mobile-based platforms like WhatsApp in personalized marketing. Additionally, Kumar, V. et al. (2025) found that platform selection plays a critical role in determining marketing success, with visual and interactive platforms outperforming text-based platforms in influencing consumer decisions.

RESEARCH GAP

Although numerous studies have examined the impact of social media marketing on consumer buying behaviour, most existing research has focused on overall social media influence rather than platform-specific effects. Many studies treat social media as a single construct, without distinguishing the unique characteristics and influence of individual platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Telegram.

Furthermore, limited research has been conducted in the context of urban Indian consumers, particularly in Chennai City, where digital adoption and social media usage are significantly high. Existing studies also lack a comparative approach that evaluates how different platforms vary in influencing consumer perception, engagement, trust, and purchase decisions.

Additionally, there is a gap in identifying which platform is most effective in shaping consumer buying behaviour and how platform-specific features contribute to marketing effectiveness. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap by providing a comparative analysis of major social media platforms and their influence on digital consumers in Chennai City.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the most influential social media platform affecting consumer buying behaviour.
2. To compare the effectiveness of different social media platforms (WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Telegram).
3. To analyze the influence of social media platforms on consumer trust and engagement.
4. To examine the impact of social media platforms on consumer purchase decisions.
5. To rank social media platforms based on their influence on buying behaviour.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H01: There is no significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across different social media platforms.

H02: Social media platforms do not significantly influence consumer trust.

H03: Social media platforms do not significantly influence consumer engagement.

H04: Social media platforms do not significantly influence consumer purchase decisions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The present study adopts a **descriptive research design**, as it aims to describe consumer behaviour and analyze the comparative influence of different social media platforms.

Area of the Study: The study is conducted in **Chennai**, a major metropolitan city with a high level of internet penetration and active social media usage.

Data Collection

Primary Data: Collected through a structured questionnaire

Secondary Data: Collected from journals, websites, and reports related to social media marketing and consumer behaviour

Sample Size: The study initially collected **650 responses**. After data screening, **50 responses were excluded** as they did not belong to Chennai City. Hence, the final sample size consists of **600 respondents**, which is considered adequate for statistical analysis and ensures reliability of results.

Sampling Technique: The study uses **non-probability convenience sampling**, as respondents were selected based on their accessibility and active usage of social media platforms.

Statistical Tools Used

Percentage Analysis – To understand respondent profile

Mean Score Analysis – To measure platform influence

ANOVA – To test differences across platforms

Variables Used in the Study

Independent Variable

Social Media Platforms:

1. WhatsApp
2. Instagram
3. YouTube
4. Facebook
5. Twitter (X)
6. Telegram

Dependent Variables

1. Consumer Trust
2. Consumer Engagement
3. Purchase Decision

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides valuable insights into how different social media platforms influence consumer buying behaviour in an urban context. It helps marketers understand which platforms are more effective in reaching and engaging consumers, thereby enabling better allocation of marketing resources. The findings are particularly useful for businesses and digital marketers to design platform-specific strategies that enhance consumer trust, engagement, and purchase decisions. Additionally, the study contributes to academic literature by offering a comparative perspective on platform effectiveness in social media marketing.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Platform-wise Mean Score Analysis

To identify the most influential social media platform affecting consumer buying behaviour, mean score analysis was performed for each platform.

Table:1 Mean Score of Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platform	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Instagram	4.32	0.71	1
YouTube	4.21	0.76	2
WhatsApp	4.05	0.80	3
Facebook	3.78	0.85	4
Twitter (X)	3.42	0.90	5
Telegram	3.30	0.95	6

Source: Computed data

An examination of the mean scores indicates that **Instagram** is ranked as the most influential social media platform in shaping consumer buying behaviour, followed by **YouTube** and **WhatsApp**. This suggests that platforms emphasizing visual and video-based content have a stronger impact on consumers compared to text-oriented platforms.

Instagram's highest mean score can be attributed to its highly engaging features such as reels, stories, and influencer content, which enhance product visibility and consumer interaction. Similarly, YouTube plays a significant role due to detailed product demonstrations and review videos that help consumers make informed purchase decisions.

WhatsApp ranks third, indicating that personalized communication, such as status updates and direct messaging, contributes to consumer trust and purchase intention. In contrast, Facebook shows moderate influence, while Twitter (X) and Telegram rank lower, possibly due to their limited emphasis on visual marketing and consumer engagement.

ANOVA Analysis

To examine whether there is a significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across different social media platforms, ANOVA was applied.

Table:2 ANOVA Results

Variable	F Value	Sig. Value (p)	Result
Social Media Platforms	18.642	0.000	Significant

Source: Computed data

The ANOVA results indicate that the significance value ($p = 0.000$) is less than 0.05, which confirms that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across different social media platforms.

This implies that not all platforms influence consumers equally, and certain platforms are more effective in shaping consumer perceptions, engagement, and purchase decisions. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate that social media platforms significantly influence consumer buying behaviour, but the level of influence varies across platforms.

Visual-centric platforms such as Instagram and YouTube show a stronger impact on consumer engagement and purchase decisions. These platforms provide rich media content, including images, videos, influencer promotions, and product demonstrations, which enhance consumer understanding and reduce perceived risk.

The results support the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Model, where social media platforms act as stimuli that influence consumers' internal responses such as trust and engagement, ultimately leading to purchase decisions. Similarly, the Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that consumers prefer platforms that satisfy their needs for entertainment, information, and social interaction.

The moderate influence of Facebook indicates that although it remains relevant, its impact has declined compared to newer platforms. Meanwhile, WhatsApp's influence highlights the importance of personalized communication in marketing strategies.

Overall, the findings emphasize that marketers should adopt platform-specific strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach in social media marketing.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study provide several practical implications for marketers, businesses, and digital strategists:

Platform-Specific Strategy

Marketers should design customized marketing strategies for each platform rather than adopting a uniform approach. For example, Instagram and YouTube should be prioritized for visual storytelling and influencer marketing.

Focus on Video and Visual Content

Since Instagram and YouTube show higher influence, businesses should invest more in reels, short videos, and product demonstration content to enhance consumer engagement.

Utilize WhatsApp for Personalization

WhatsApp can be effectively used for personalized marketing, customer interaction, and relationship building, which significantly enhances consumer trust.

Resource Allocation

Organizations should allocate more budget and effort toward high-performing platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, while strategically using other platforms for support functions.

Influencer and Content Marketing

Collaborating with influencers and creating authentic content can significantly improve brand credibility and influence purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the comparative influence of major social media platforms on consumer buying behaviour among digital consumers in Chennai City. The findings clearly indicate that social media platforms significantly influence consumer behaviour; however, the level of influence varies across platforms.

Among the platforms analyzed, **Instagram** emerged as the most influential, followed by **YouTube** and **WhatsApp**, highlighting the growing dominance of visual and video-based content in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. These platforms provide interactive, engaging, and informative content that enhances consumer understanding and reduces uncertainty during the buying process.

In contrast, **Facebook** demonstrated a moderate level of influence, while **Twitter (X)** and **Telegram** showed comparatively lower impact on consumer buying behaviour. This suggests that platforms with limited visual appeal and lower engagement features are less effective in influencing purchase decisions.

Overall, the study confirms that platform-specific characteristics play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of social media marketing. The results emphasize the need for businesses to adopt differentiated strategies tailored to the unique features of each platform.

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