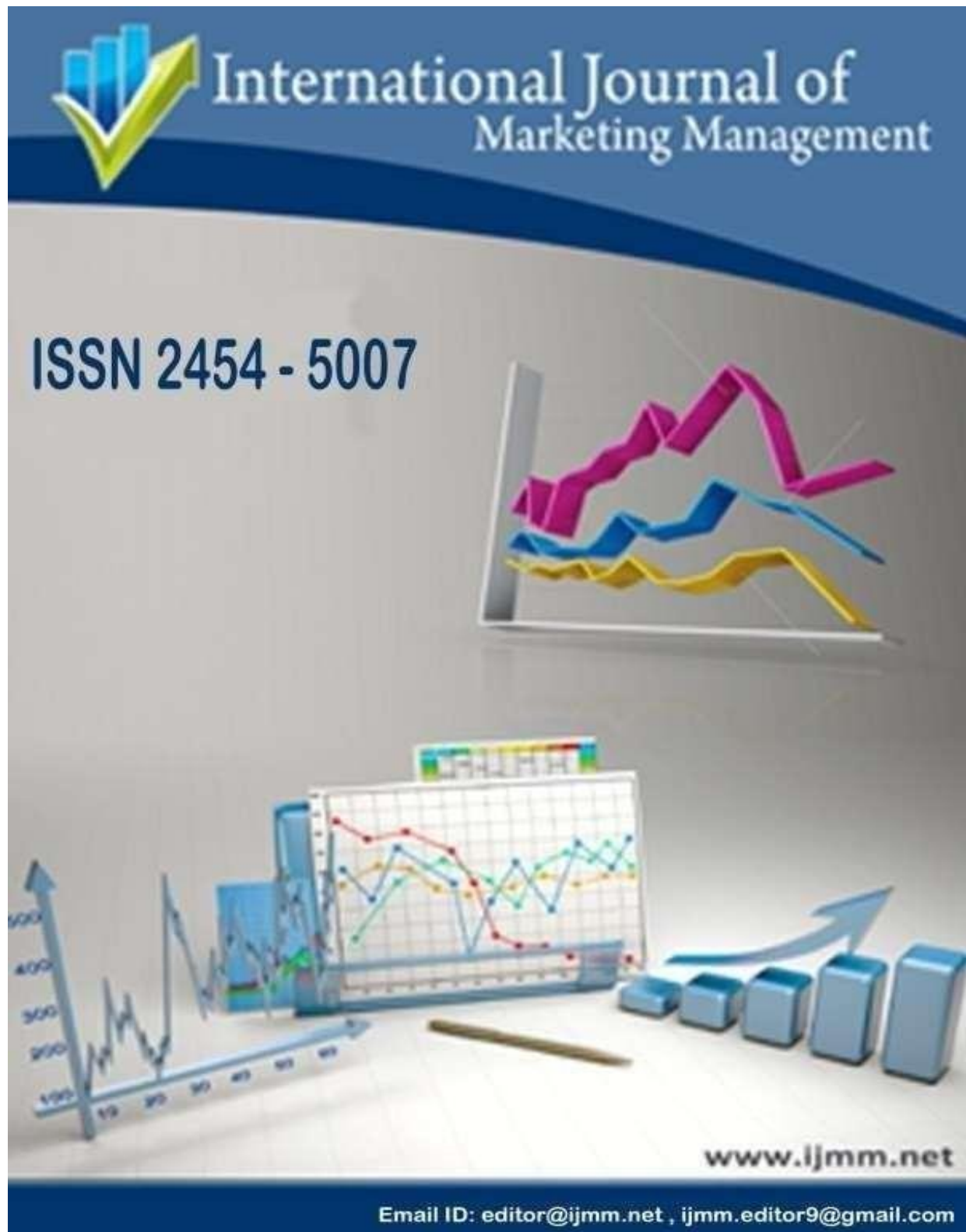




A STUDY ON HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN TODAY'S DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of higher education students in Coimbatore toward social media marketing. Using a sample of 260 respondents, the research applies percentage analysis, chi-square, mean ranking, and ANOVA to assess how demographic factors influence attitudes and preferences. Findings reveal that students value authenticity, interactivity, and peer recommendations, while remaining cautious of intrusive or manipulative ads. The results highlight the role of social media in shaping student behavior and provide insights for marketers to design credible and student-centric strategies.

KEY WORDS

Student Perception, Social Media Practices, Brand Loyalty, Purchasing Decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an Internet-based technology that enables sharing of ideas,

information, and content such as photos, videos, and documents through virtual networks and communities. Accessible via computers, tablets, or smartphones, it connects billions of users worldwide, with countries like Indonesia leading in usage. Initially created for personal interaction, social media has been widely adopted by businesses for marketing, customer engagement, and market research. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Clubhouse continue to evolve, with younger, educated, and higher-earning users being the primary audience. Social media supports diverse activities including networking, blogging, video sharing, gaming, and career development. While it offers benefits such as enhanced communication, promotion, and customer relationship building, overuse can lead to addiction, stress, depression, and the spread of false information.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the digital era, social media has become a key marketing tool, especially for reaching younger audiences. Higher education students, as active digital users, are a crucial demographic for social media marketing. However, there is limited understanding of how these students perceive its effectiveness, credibility, and influence on their decisions. It remains unclear whether they find marketing engaging and informative or intrusive and manipulative. With evolving platforms and new formats like influencer marketing, short videos, and targeted ads, examining students' responses is essential. Understanding their perceptions can help marketers design better campaigns and inform educators and policymakers about the impact of digital media on young consumers.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To study the student's perception towards social media practices used by marketers for creating brand loyalty and in making purchasing decisions

- ❖ To evaluate students' trust and credibility perceptions of brands marketed via social media and preference of marketing content

NEED OF THE STUDY

Social media has become a powerful tool influencing communication, brand engagement, and consumer decision-making, especially among higher education students who are active digital users. This study is important for marketers, educators, and researchers to understand students' perceptions of social media marketing and its impact on behavior and purchasing decisions. Insights from the study can help businesses create relevant, engaging, and effective marketing strategies, fostering brand loyalty. It also contributes academically by addressing gaps in consumer behavior research specific to students. The study highlights both the opportunities and challenges of social media, including its role in empowerment, awareness, and social influence. Its scope includes analyzing the influence and effectiveness of social media marketing techniques among students to guide firms in achieving their marketing objectives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Area of study Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu

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|--------------------|---|
| 2. Sample size | 260 respondents |
| 3. Sampling method | Simple Random Sampling |
| 4. Data collection | Primary data and secondary data |
| 5. Period of study | June 2025 – September 2025 |
| 6. Analysis Tools | Simple Percentage Analysis, Descriptive Analysis, Mean Ranking,
Chi-Square Test, One-Way ANOVA |

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is restricted to Coimbatore district and survey is collected from regular college students. The main limitation is it is considering only few types of social media platforms. The sample size is limited to 260 Respondents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shankar et al. (2011) discussed the Innovation Adoption Process (IAP) as a model that explains how consumers accept and adopt new technology. The process includes five key stages: gaining knowledge about the innovation, forming an attitude toward it, deciding to adopt or reject it, implementing it, and finally confirming the decision. According to Mady (2011), understanding IAP can help marketers design **more effective social media marketing campaigns**. With advancements in technology and digital platforms, social media has evolved beyond personal communication to become a space for consumers to interact with brands, discover products, and make purchases. Marketers now use social media as a key tool to reach target audiences through new digital touchpoints, such as mobile apps, search engines, and online communities.

Chu (2011) conducted a study on Facebook users and found that individuals who are members of brand-related Facebook groups tend to have more favorable attitudes toward social media advertising. The study suggests that user engagement in social media group applications positively affects the effectiveness of advertising, particularly on platforms like

Facebook. College-aged users, identified as the fastest-growing demographic, were found to have the **most positive perception of social media** ads, indicating that social media is a promising platform for companies aiming to target younger consumers.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Social media marketing influence on purchasing decision with their ads

Table 1

Social media marketing influence on purchasing decision with their ads

Demographic factor	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-21	218	83.8
	21-25	15	5.8
	25-30	11	4.2
	ABOVE 30	16	6.2
	Total	260	100.0
Gender	Male	72	27.7
	Female	188	72.3
	Total	260	100.0
Educational level	UG	212	81.5
	PG	37	14.2
	PhD	11	4.2
	Total	260	100.0
Residential Area	Urban	134	51.5
	Semi-Urban	59	22.7
	Rural	56	21.5
	Semi-rural	11	4.2
	Total	260	100.0

Source: (Primary data)

- ❖ 83.8 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group 18 to 21 years.
- ❖ 72.3 per cent of the respondents are female.
- ❖ 81.5 per cent of the respondents were undergraduates.
- ❖ 51.5 percent of respondents reside in urban areas.

CHI SQUARE

Attitude of respondents towards Loyalty, engagement, connections with brand

Table 2

Attitude of respondents towards Loyalty, engagement, connections with brand

Demographic profiles	Groups	Hours spent on social media										Chi. square	Sig.
		P1		P2		P3		P4		Total			
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Age	18-21	91	41.7	77	35.3	34	15.5	16	7.3	218	100	64.255	0.000
	21-25	0	0	15	42.8	20	57.1	0	0	35	100		
	25-30	3	27.2	2	18.2	6	54.5	0	0	11	100		
	Above 30	3	18.7	3	18.7	3	18.7	7	43.7	16	100		
Gender	Male	27	37.5	24	33.3	14	19.4	7	9.7	72	100	1.017	0.797
	Female	70	37.2	73	38.8	29	15.4	16	8.5	188	100		
Educational level	UG	82	38.7	77	36.3	32	15.1	21	9.9	212	100	4.507	0.608
	PG	12	32.4	16	43.2	8	21.6	1	2.7	37	100		
	PhD	3	27.2	4	36.3	3	27.2	1	9.1	11	100		
Residential Area	Urban	53	39.5	47	35.1	21	15.7	13	9.8	134	100	20.380	0.016
	Semi-urban	20	33.9	28	47.4	7	11.9	4	6.8	59	100		
	Rural	20	35.7	18	32.1	12	21.4	6	10.7	56	100		
	Semi-	4	36.3	4	36.3	3	27.3	0	0	11	100		

	Rural												
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DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Attitude of respondents towards Loyalty, engagement, connections with brand

Table 3

Attitude of respondents towards Loyalty, engagement, connections with brand

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Do you believe social media marketing is more engaging than traditional marketing for students?	260	1.00	5.00	2.4192	0.92018
Do you think brand promotions on social media help in creating loyalty among customers?	260	1.00	5.00	3.1615	0.89013
Do you feel more connected when a brand shares user-generated (e.g., customer photos or stories)?	260	1.00	5.00	2.5115	0.92366

(Source: Primary data)

In accordance the mean rating in table 4.2.1, the majority of students, the table presents the descriptive statistics of students' perceptions of social media marketing across three aspects, based on responses from 260 participants. The results show that on a 5-point scale, students moderately agree that brand promotions on social media help in creating loyalty among customers (Mean = 3.16, SD = 0.89). However, they are less convinced that social media marketing is more engaging than traditional marketing (Mean = 2.41, SD = 0.92) or that user-generated content makes them feel more connected to a brand (Mean = 2.51, SD = 0.92). Overall, the findings indicate that while students somewhat recognize the role of social media promotions in fostering customer loyalty, they are comparatively less engaged

by user-generated content and are still not fully convinced that social media marketing surpasses traditional methods in effectiveness.

ANOVA

Agreeability score of the respondents towards the factors affecting their purchase decisions on their brand promotions on social media

Table 4

Agreeability score of the respondents towards the factors affecting their purchase decisions on their brand promotions on social media

(Source: Primary data)

Demographic profiles	Groups	Agreeability score of the respondents towards the factors affecting the trustworthiness of brands					
		N	Mean	SD	Fvalue	Sig. value	S/NS
Age	18-21	218	2.5697	.82674	4.201	.006	S
	21-25	15	2.5600	.81486			
	25-30	11	2.5091	.54673			
	Above 30	16	1.8250	.72250			
Gender	Male	72	2.4667	.93206	.426	.514	NS
	Female	188	2.5415	.78337			
Educational level	UG	212	2.5547	.83378	.976	.378	NS
	PG	37	2.3784	.85086			
	PhD	11	2.3455	.51452			
Residential Area	Urban	134	2.5672	.79668	3.914	.009	S
	Semi-Urban	59	2.5797	.83764			
	Rural	54	2.5071	.86883			
	Semi-Rural	11	1.7091	.48467			

- ❖ ANOVA test has been used to test whether the agreeability scores of the respondents, classified based on their personal profile on necessity for brand promotions, loyalty, credibility. There has been no significant difference in the agreeability score of the respondents towards the factors affecting their purchase decisions on their brand promotions on social media when classified based on their demographic profile viz., age, gender, educational level, residential area of the respondents.

Mean ranking

Factor that influence your customers about the brand

Table 4

Factor that influence your customers about the brand

Particulars	N	Mean	Rank
Behind-the-scenes or brand stories	260	2.3154	V
Product feature videos	260	2.4692	IV
Memes and entertaining content	260	2.8115	III
Informative blog-style posts	260	2.9077	II
Interactive stories or polls	260	3.1692	I

(Source: Primary data)

From the table 4.3.1 - It has been evident from the mean ranking among the factors influencing customers about a brand, interactive stories or polls hold the highest influence (Mean = 3.692, Rank 1), indicating that customers prefer engaging and participative content on social media. This is followed by memes and entertaining content (Mean = 2.811, Rank 2), which highlights the role of humour and entertainment in capturing customer attention. Informative blog-style posts (Mean = 2.977, Rank 3) also have a moderate impact, showing that audiences still value knowledge-based content, though not as much as interactive or entertaining formats. Product feature videos (Mean = 2.492, Rank 4) contribute to brand influence but are less preferred compared to the above factors. Lastly, behind-the-scenes or

brand stories (Mean = 2.154, Rank 5) were ranked lowest, suggesting that customers are relatively less influenced by background narratives of the brand. **Overall, the analysis indicates that interactive and entertaining content is more effective in influencing customers compared to informational or background-oriented content.**

SUGGESTIONS

Marketers should make social media campaigns more interactive and relevant through live sessions, influencer tie-ups, user-generated content, and contests to build stronger engagement. Campaigns need to be personalized and tailored by age group and residential area to increase relatability. Transparency, authenticity, and ethical influencer marketing should be prioritized to strengthen trust and credibility. Visual and short-form content on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok should be the primary focus for outreach. Personalized ads can be effective if delivered ethically with respect for privacy. Finally, workshops and webinars on digital marketing trends can improve students' digital literacy and reduce skepticism toward social media marketing.

CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable insights into how higher education students perceive social media marketing in the digital age. Students acknowledge its role in shaping brand loyalty and purchase decisions, though their agreement remains moderate,

signaling the need for improved strategies. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are the most influential, requiring brands to use visual, interactive, and creative content. Demographic factors such as age and residential area significantly shape perceptions, while gender and education play a lesser role. This shows that digital marketing is effective but not universally applicable, demanding customized approaches. Trust, transparency, and authenticity emerge as critical for student engagement. Personalized marketing is welcomed but must respect privacy and ethics. Despite social media's dominance, skepticism remains when compared with traditional marketing. Brands must therefore focus on making campaigns emotionally engaging and truly valuable. Overall, success depends on platform choice, demographic targeting, and credible, interactive communication.