

The role of social media marketing in shaping consumer buying behavior: A study on fast food chain in vadodara

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Abstract: Social media has significantly changed the way people interact with brands, especially in the fast food industry. This study explores how digital marketing strategies—such as promotions, brand awareness, and online engagement—shape consumer preferences and purchasing decisions in Vadodara. A descriptive research approach is used, gathering insights through surveys and interviews with fast food consumers and marketing professionals, along with supporting data from existing studies. The findings reveal how social media influences consumer trust, decision-making, and brand perception. This research aims to help fast food brands refine their digital marketing efforts to better connect with their target audience.

Keywords: Social media marketing, consumer behavior, fast food industry, brand awareness, digital marketing, consumer engagement, online promotions, purchasing decisions, Vadodara, social

INTRODUCTION

Social media's ascent has revolutionized how companies communicate with their customers, making digital marketing a vital tool for companies in all sectors. Social media marketing is essential for influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the fast food industry, where competition is fierce and tastes change quickly. Fast food brands may now communicate directly with their target audience through promotions, ads, influencer partnerships, and interactive content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which have grown to be important marketing channels. The ultimate goal of these digital tactics is to increase sales by raising consumer involvement and brand exposure.

India's fast food sector has grown rapidly due to urbanization, hectic lifestyles, and shifting consumer preferences. A fascinating environment for researching how social media marketing tactics influence customer preferences and purchasing

decisions is Vadodara, a city with a varied and developing culinary culture. Fast food restaurants in Vadodara have embraced digital platforms to promote their products, run temporary discounts, and engage with customers as a result of the growing number of tech-savvy consumers. Social media has become an essential component of fast food marketing due to its capacity to instantaneously interact with consumers through influencer endorsements, targeted advertisements, and customer feedback.

The growth of culinary influencers and digital content producers is one of the main factors influencing consumer interaction on social media. These days, user-generated content, influencer recommendations, and internet reviews have a big impact on consumers. Purchase decisions can be greatly influenced by a single YouTube review, viral TikTok challenge, or Instagram post showcasing a popular fast food item. Social media marketing, as opposed to traditional advertising, enables companies to give customers a more engaging and customized experience, which boosts sales and fosters customer loyalty.

The influence of digital discounts and promotions on social media-driven customer behavior is another significant factor. In Vadodara, a lot of fast food companies use time-sensitive sales, loyalty plans, and social media-only promotions to draw clients. Brands generate a sense of urgency by utilizing these strategies, which promotes impulsive purchases and repeat business. Furthermore, fostering trust and preserving enduring client relationships depend heavily on customer interaction via direct messages, shares, and comments.

Nevertheless, little is known about how social media marketing directly affects customer purchasing decisions in Vadodara's fast food industry, despite the city's increasing reliance on digital marketing.

Although digital marketing trends have been studied in the past, the precise effects of influencer marketing, brand engagement, and social media promotions on customer decision-making must be examined. By investigating the elements that influence consumer engagement, trust, and buy intent in the fast food business using social media marketing methods, this study seeks to close that gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For marketers who create marketing plans and tactics, consumer behavior is a crucial concern. According to (Hoyer et al., 2012), understanding how customers obtain and make use of various offers (goods, services, and activities) enables the growth of more effective sales strategies.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action, predicting someone's behavior necessitates analyzing both their attitude and the impact of subjective standards, including societal norms that may influence motivation. The theory of planned behavior, which Ajzen created after conducting additional study on the idea of reasoned action, became generally accepted among scholars and practitioners as a means of comprehending the mechanisms underlying consumer behavior, intention, and decision-making.

People's lives are increasingly reliant on social networking. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Twitter have a large user base that is constantly expanding. The rate of social media use is constantly rising on a global scale. 68.3% of internet users in 2016 were active on social media, and these numbers are anticipated to rise. One of the most well-liked online pastimes is social networking, which has growing mobile potential and strong user engagement rates. By 2020, it is anticipated that 2.95 billion people worldwide—roughly one-third of the world's population—will be active social media users (Statista, 2017).

Ziyadin Sayabek (2019) examines how customers interact with and are impacted by the digital world, highlighting social media's significance. Boosting brand loyalty through advertising. The report emphasizes how social media may improve consumer

involvement and facilitate direct communication with potential clients.

According to Winer (2009), there are two categories of online advertising: intrusive and non-intrusive. Pop-ups, banners, and unsolicited emails or texts are examples of intrusive advertising. A customer must activate his or her account in a non-intrusive advertisement. Prior to engaging in such discussion. Email, social network apps, and websites with an online presence are all included.

Prior research defined brand trust as customers' willingness to rely on a company to fulfill its stated or inferred promises (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Thus, it is real. By behaving in the best interests of customers in order to build fruitful connections with them, via the kindness of a company.

On YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, children were exposed to adverse food marketing mostly through well-known social media celebrities. Health Canada found that fast food restaurants dominated promotions and that most brands and items endorsed by kid-friendly social media influencers were less healthful overall. 4.95 billion individuals, or 61.4% of the global population, utilize social media, according to a Statista (2023) research. With a valuation of 21.1 billion USD as of 2023, the global influencer marketing industry has grown by more than three times since 2019. According to Campbell and Grimm (2019), influencers—people who share material on social media platforms in return for payment—also see rapid annual increase.

Customers' dietary choices are greatly influenced by their awareness and expertise, as has been mentioned [16]. Furthermore, customers have expressed the following opinions about the consideration of food while making decisions: "a remark about a particular type of food has a significant impact on consumers' intentions" [17]. Knowledge and family structure impact customers' intents, as do perceived risks, costs, external signals, brand awareness, and financial incentives [18].

Social media is a new way to network via the internet and reach a big number of people. There are no limitations. According to Irbo and Mohammed (2020), social media is a powerful

instrument for communicating business ideas to a large audience.

Social media video marketing affects consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior through cognitive and emotional factors. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status impact the relationship between social media video marketing and impulsive purchasing behavior. (Chawla, 2020).

Social media refers to internet tools and websites where people may communicate and exchange information, ideas, and interests. According to Adomako Kwakye (2017), social media offers organizations the opportunity to reach out to target audiences, take action, and communicate effectively.

Empirical research show that SMM is beneficial in attaining marketing objectives such as brand building, promotion, and client involvement [15].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examines how social media marketing affects customer buying patterns in the fast food sector in Vadodara, with a particular emphasis on influencer marketing, promotions, ads, and interactive content. It looks into how these tactics affect the trust, loyalty, brand perception, and buying decisions among 18–45-year-old social media users. Google Forms surveys and interviews are used to gather data that assesses how well user-generated content, online discounts, and brand involvement drive consumer interactions and sales. In order to improve engagement, retention, and total sales growth, fast food firms should use the data to improve their social media efforts.

Data analysis:-

The chi-square test results indicate no significant correlation between selection decisions and brand preference among active social media users.

Primary data was gathered using Google Forms in order to examine the ways in which social media marketing affects consumer behavior in the fast food sector in Vadodara. Secondary data came from academic literature, industry reports, and earlier research. Based on their accessibility and desire to participate, 315 individuals were chosen using a non-probability convenience selection technique. Targeting social media users in Vadodara who interact with fast food companies, the structured survey was sent using Google Forms and covered topics like as brand identification, trust, engagement, promotions, convenience, and purchase choices. To promote voluntary participation, the survey link was shared via email, messaging applications, and social media. To ensure systematic data collection, answers were measured using a Likert scale. Lastly, in order to ensure appropriate interpretation, the replies were methodically arranged and examined.

The association between the variables was investigated using the Chi-square test. The formula $(R-1) \times (C-1)$ was used to calculate the degree of freedom (DF), where R is the number of rows and C is the number of columns in the contingency table. $DF = (2-1) \times (5-1) = 4$ in this instance. The Chi-square distribution table was used to determine the critical value, which was 9.488 at a 5% significance level. The null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant link between the variables under investigation, was accepted since the computed Chi-square value was less than the crucial value.

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	57	56	33	23	12	181
FEMAL (R2)	42	42	25	19	6	134
TOTAL	99	98	58	42	18	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	57	56.88571429	0.114285714	0.013061224	0.000229605	
C1R2	42	42.11428571	-0.114285714	0.013061224	0.000310138	
C2R1	56	56.31111111	-0.31111111	0.096790123	0.001718846	

C2R2	42	41.68888889	0.311111111	0.096790123	0.002321725	
C3R1	33	33.32698413	-0.326984127	0.106918619	0.00320817	
C3R2	25	24.67301587	0.326984127	0.106918619	0.004333423	
C4R1	23	24.13333333	-1.133333333	1.284444444	0.053222836	
C4R2	19	17.86666667	1.133333333	1.284444444	0.071890547	
C5R1	12	18.57460317	-6.574603175	43.2254069	2.327124111	
C5R2	6	7.657142857	-1.657142857	2.746122449	0.358635394	
					2.822994795	

Interpretation:-

The null hypothesis (H_{06}) is accepted since $2.8229 < 9.488$. This indicates that there is no meaningful correlation between selection decisions and brand preference among active social media users, according to the data gathered. It is more likely that the observed

differences in replies are the result of random chance than a genuine impact of social media presence on selection choices.

The chi-square test confirms a significant correlation between social media advertisements and consumer selection behavior.

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	56	56	30	28	11	181
FEMAL (R2)	35	42	31	14	12	134
TOTAL	91	98	61	42	23	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	56	52.28888889	3.711111111	13.77234568	0.263389526	
C1R2	35	38.71111111	-3.711111111	13.77234568	0.35577242	
C2R1	56	56.31111111	-0.311111111	0.096790123	0.001718846	
C2R2	42	41.68888889	0.311111111	0.096790123	0.002321725	
C3R1	30	35.05079365	-5.050793651	25.5105165	0.72781566	
C3R2	31	25.94920635	5.050793651	25.5105165	0.983094287	
C4R1	28	24.13333333	3.866666667	14.95111111	0.619521179	
C4R2	14	17.86666667	-3.866666667	14.95111111	0.83681592	
C5R1	11	23.57460317	-12.57460317	158.120645	6.707245243	
C5R2	12	9.784126984	2.215873016	4.910093222	0.501842753	
					10.99953756	

Interpretation:-

The null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected because $10.9995 > 9.488$. This indicates that social media advertisements' impact on food preferences and selection behavior is significantly correlated. Social media advertisements do influence customer selection

behavior, as evidenced by the observed changes in responses that are unlikely to be the result of chance.

The chi-square test indicates a significant link between social media marketing and consumer perception of fast food affordability

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	53	51	37	35	5	181
FEMAL (R2)	31	42	30	21	10	134
TOTAL	84	93	67	56	15	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	53	48.26666667	4.733333333	22.40444444	0.464180479	
C1R2	31	35.73333333	-4.733333333	22.40444444	0.62699005	
C2R1	51	53.43809524	-2.438095238	5.94430839	0.111237281	
C2R2	42	39.56190476	2.438095238	5.94430839	0.150253342	

C3R1	37	38.4984127	-1.498412698	2.245240615	0.058320343	
C3R2	30	28.5015873	1.498412698	2.245240615	0.078775985	
C4R1	35	32.17777778	2.822222222	7.964938272	0.247529159	
C4R2	21	23.82222222	-2.822222222	7.964938272	0.334349088	
C5R1	5	15.57460317	-10.57460317	111.8222323	7.179780508	
C5R2	10	6.380952381	3.619047619	13.09750567	2.052594172	
					11.30401041	

Interpretation:-

11.3040 > 9.488 means that the null hypothesis (H₀₂) is not accepted. This data suggests a noticeable correlation between selection intention and the perceived affordability of fast food as a result of social media marketing. Since it is doubtful that the variance in replies is the result of chance, it is likely that social

media marketing that affect affordability have an impact on customer choices.

According to the chi-square test, there is no discernible relationship between fast food choosing behavior and social media trust.

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	57	60	30	25	9	181
FEMAL (R2)	36	39	32	22	5	134
TOTAL	93	99	62	47	14	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	57	53.43809524	3.561904762	12.68716553	0.237417997	
C1R2	36	39.56190476	-3.561904762	12.68716553	0.320691474	
C2R1	60	56.88571429	3.114285714	9.69877551	0.170495803	
C2R2	39	42.11428571	-3.114285714	9.69877551	0.230296569	
C3R1	30	35.62539683	-5.625396825	31.64508944	0.888273318	
C3R2	32	26.37460317	5.625396825	31.64508944	1.19983187	
C4R1	25	27.00634921	-2.006349206	4.025437138	0.149055213	
C4R2	22	19.99365079	2.006349206	4.025437138	0.201335773	
C5R1	9	14.57460317	-5.574603175	31.07620055	2.132215895	
C5R2	5	5.955555556	-0.955555556	0.91308642	0.15331675	
					5.682930661	

Interpretation:-

The null hypothesis (H₀₁) is accepted since 5.6829 < 9.488. This indicates that selection behavior and social media-based confidence in fast food brands are not significantly correlated. The range of answers is probably the result of random variance, indicating that

selecting behavior is not greatly impacted by social media trust.

Social media exposure and sampling new fast food products do not appear to be significantly correlated, according to the chi-square test, suggesting that personal tastes and brand reputation are more important considerations when making decisions.

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	51	53	42	26	9	181
FEMAL (R2)	36	40	31	17	10	134
TOTAL	87	93	73	43	19	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	51	49.99047619	1.00952381	1.019138322	0.02038665	
C1R2	36	37.00952381	-1.00952381	1.019138322	0.027537191	
C2R1	53	53.43809524	-0.438095238	0.191927438	0.003591585	
C2R2	40	39.56190476	0.438095238	0.191927438	0.004851319	
C3R1	42	41.94603175	0.053968254	0.002912572	6.94362E-05	
C3R2	31	31.05396825	-0.053968254	0.002912572	9.37907E-05	
C4R1	26	24.70793651	1.292063492	1.669428068	0.067566471	
C4R2	17	18.29206349	-1.292063492	1.669428068	0.091265158	
C5R1	9	19.57460317	-10.57460317	111.8222323	5.712618095	
C5R2	10	8.082539683	1.917460317	3.676654069	0.454888465	
					6.38286816	

Interpretation:-

The null hypothesis (H_{04}) is accepted since $6.3829 < 9.488$. This indicates that there is no meaningful correlation between selection intention and sampling new foods after viewing them on social media. This suggests that although consumers may come across new products on social media, other elements such as brand reputation, taste preferences, or cost may be

more important when influencing their decision to try new meals.

According to the chi-square test, social media interaction with fast food firms has no discernible impact on customer selections; instead, choices are influenced more by individual tastes and other outside variables.

Interpretation:

The null hypothesis (H_{05}) is accepted since $6.4007 <$

significant role in final purchasing decisions.

Additionally, the research indicates that engagement

PARTICULARS	STRONGLY AGREE (C1)	AGREE (C2)	NEUTRAL(C3)	DISAGREE (C4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (C5)	TOTAL
MALE (R1)	65	56	32	17	11	181
FEMAL (R2)	37	46	27	20	4	134
TOTAL	102	102	59	37	15	315
ELEMENTS	OBSERVED	EXPECTED	DIFFERENCE	SQUARE OF DIFFERENCE	CHI SUARE	
C1R1	65	58.60952381	6.39047619	40.83818594	0.696784128	
C1R2	37	43.39047619	-6.39047619	40.83818594	0.941178561	
C2R1	56	58.60952381	-2.60952381	6.809614512	0.116186143	
C2R2	46	43.39047619	2.60952381	6.809614512	0.156937999	
C3R1	32	33.9015873	-1.901587302	3.616034266	0.106662683	
C3R2	27	25.0984127	1.901587302	3.616034266	0.144074221	
C4R1	17	21.26031746	-4.26031746	18.15030486	0.85371749	
C4R2	20	15.73968254	4.26031746	18.15030486	1.153155714	
C5R1	11	15.57460317	-4.574603175	20.92699421	1.343661471	
C5R2	4	6.380952381	-2.380952381	5.66893424	0.888415068	
					6.400773478	

9.488. This indicates that social media followings for fast food companies and choices are not significantly correlated. Rather than a significant impact of social media involvement on consumer decision-making, the variety in replies seems to be the result of random causes.

CONCLUSION

The expanding importance of digital platforms in customer decision-making is demonstrated by the study on how social media marketing shapes consumer purchasing behavior for Vadodara fast food companies. The results show that social media has a big impact on how people perceive brands, how they interact with them, and how they make purchases. Customers engage with ads, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, which ultimately affects their purchasing decisions.

While social media marketing is a powerful tool for raising brand awareness and recall, other considerations like price, taste, convenience, and word-of-mouth recommendations continue to play a

strategies like interactive content, discounts, and customer reviews further increase consumer loyalty and trust.

Although social media's benefits, issues like information overload, mistrust of sponsored advertisements, and shifting consumer tastes underscore the necessity for firms to embrace more genuine and tailored marketing strategies. Fast food restaurants in Vadodara stand to gain from honing their digital marketing tactics going forward by utilizing data-driven insights, enhancing consumer interaction, and striking a balance between traditional marketing initiatives and online promos.

LIMITATION

Access to precise and trustworthy data remains a difficulty, as the study is based on self-reported survey responses that might be impacted by personal bias, recollection mistakes, or social desirability. The emphasis on social media-active consumers may remove data from individuals who interact with fast food firms via physical channels, restricting a more

comprehensive picture of consumer behavior. Secondary data is similarly scarce, since little study available on the direct influence of social media marketing on fast food consumption in Vadodara. Furthermore, the ever-changing nature of digital marketing trends may limit the findings' long-term usefulness. Access to fast food firms' business strategy is also limited, making in-depth research of industry viewpoints and decision-making processes more difficult.

FUTURE SCOPE

This study offers insightful information on how social media marketing affects Vadodara-specific customer purchasing decisions in the fast food sector. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of room for more study to build on these results. To learn more about how consumer behavior differs in various marketplaces, future research may look at different geographical locations or compare urban and rural areas. As digital trends, platform algorithms, and brand tactics change over time, a longitudinal research may also be able to monitor shifts in customer preferences. Furthermore, because social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer choices, research on how influencer marketing shapes food choices is still crucial.

Future studies can also look at how well chatbot interactions, AI-driven suggestions, and customized social media advertisements increase consumer engagement in light of developments in AI and data-driven marketing. A greater knowledge of customer motives may be possible with further research into behavioral and psychological aspects, such as emotional reactions to social media ads and impulsive purchasing behavior. Furthermore, examining how social media marketing is combined with more conventional marketing strategies like word-of-mouth and in-store promotions may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how customers make decisions. Future research can evaluate the influence of short-form videos on the efficacy of fast food marketing when new platforms and content types appear. Future studies can offer more thorough insights into the changing impact of social media in influencing consumer preferences and purchase decisions in the fast food business by tackling these topics.

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