

A Study on the Influence of Social Media Advertising on Students' Buying Behavior in Alandi–Moshi Region (Pune), Maharashtra

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Abstract: *This research analyses the impact of social media advertising on the purchasing patterns of college students within the Pune region. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate how various digital advertisement formats shape the attitudes, preferences, and final buying decisions of the youth demographic. Employing a quantitative research methodology, primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to a sample of 80 respondents. The analysis focuses on several critical variables, including daily time investment on social platforms, preferred advertisement categories, and the measurable degree of influence these marketing efforts have on consumer behaviour. The findings reveal that a significant majority of students maintain a high level of digital activity and are most effectively reached through visually dynamic and interactive content, particularly on platforms such as Instagram. Ultimately, the study determines that social media advertising has evolved into a pivotal driver of student buying behaviour and serves as a highly efficient marketing instrument for brands targeting the younger segment. While the research highlights the dominance of digital engagement, it also acknowledges limitations regarding the specific geographical focus and sample size. These results provide a foundational understanding of modern digital consumption for both marketers and future academic inquiries.*

Keywords: social media advertising

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, social media has become an essential part of daily life, especially for students. Platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook are widely used by young people to communicate, share ideas, and stay connected with others.

Social media has also emerged as a powerful medium for advertising. Unlike traditional forms of advertising, it enables two-way communication, allowing businesses and consumers to interact directly. This interaction helps brands build stronger relationships with their audience and better understand consumer preferences. A study by Gupta and Kumar (2021) revealed that factors such as informativeness, entertainment, and interactivity positively shape consumer attitudes. It was concluded that a positive attitude towards social media ads increases purchase intention.

Advertisements on social media are commonly used to connect people with brands and encourage collaboration. Many users engage with these platforms not only to communicate with others but also to explore products and services.

Today's social media advertisements are designed to be highly engaging and visually appealing. They play a significant role in influencing consumer buying behavior by attracting attention and maintaining interest. Since a large proportion



of social media users are young individuals, particularly college students, they are more likely to be influenced by such advertisements. These ads shape their perceptions of brands and impact their decision-making process.

Social media also provides businesses, especially new and emerging ones, with an opportunity to reach a wider audience in a cost-effective and targeted manner. Advertisements in the form of videos, images, and influencer promotions are frequently shown to users based on their interests and online behavior.

As students spend a considerable amount of time on social media, they are continuously exposed to advertisements, which can affect their preferences and purchasing decisions. The increasing use of smartphones, internet access, and digital communication has further transformed consumer shopping habits. A study by Javeria Nazeer (2017) revealed that social media advertisements influence students attitude and behavior, and increased exposure to advertisements leads to a stronger impact on students.

Students' buying behavior is influenced by multiple factors such as discounts, product reviews, brand image, and recommendations from influencers they follow. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping these factors by providing easy access to product information and peer opinions. Consequently, many students are more inclined to explore and purchase products after encountering advertisements online.

This study focuses on examining the impact of social media advertising on students' buying behavior in the Moshi-Alandi region. It aims to identify the most commonly used social media platforms among students, analyse the age groups involved, and understand how these advertisements influence their interests and purchasing decisions.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the usage of social media platforms among students in the Alandi–Moshi region.
2. To examine the influence of social media advertising on students' buying
3. To identify the factors that affect students' purchase decisions, such as discounts, influencer recommendations, and online reviews.
4. To analyze the level of awareness and exposure of students towards social media advertisements.
5. To study how frequently students are exposed to social media advertisements.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nazeer (2017) carried out a study to understand how social media advertisements affect university students in Lahore. The main aim was to examine how exposure to these ads influences students' attitudes and behaviors. The researcher used a survey method and collected data through questionnaires from students aged 18 to 35 years. The results showed that frequent exposure to social media ads leads to noticeable changes in users' thinking and actions. It was also found that students in the age group of 26–35 were more influenced compared to younger students, and male participants were slightly more affected than females. Overall, the study highlighted that social media advertising has a strong impact on shaping students' perceptions and buying decisions.

Gupta and Kumar (2021) conducted a study in India to examine how social media advertisements influence consumer buying behavior. The main objective was to identify the factors that affect consumers' attitudes and their intention to purchase products promoted on social media. The researchers collected data from social media users using a structured questionnaire and analyzed it with statistical techniques. The findings showed that elements like informativeness, interactivity, entertainment value, company reputation, and social image play an important role in shaping consumers' attitudes toward these ads. It was also found that a positive attitude towards social media advertisements increases the likelihood of purchasing the advertised products. Overall, the study emphasized that well-designed and engaging social media ads can strongly influence consumer decision-making.

Sarıkaş et al. (2016) studied how social media advertisements influence the purchasing behavior of associate students. The research pointed out that with the growing use of smartphones and easy internet access, social media has become a key source of information for consumers. Data was collected through a survey to understand students' behavior before and after making purchases. The results showed that students frequently search for product details on social media, trust



advertisements, and are influenced by reviews and recommendations shared by other users. It was also found that direct communication between companies and consumers on social media positively impacts buying decisions. Overall, the study concluded that social media advertising plays an important role in shaping students' purchase behavior.

Social media marketing has become a strong tool that influences the attitudes of young consumers, especially Generation Z. Duffett (2017) found that social media marketing has a positive impact on how people think, feel, and behave, although this influence becomes weaker as consumers move closer to making a purchase. Similarly, Labrecque (2014) showed that interacting with brands on social media creates positive thoughts among users. Malthouse et al. (2013) also highlighted that social media helps companies engage better and build strong relationships with consumers. In addition, Tan et al. (2013) found a clear connection between social media advertising and buying behavior. However, most of these studies are based on developed countries and older age groups, which creates a gap in research for developing countries and teenagers, especially in understanding their attitudes towards social media marketing.

Antoniadis et al. (2019) examined how students respond to advertisements on social media. The study found that these ads have a noticeable impact on students' attitudes and their buying decisions. Advertisements that are informative, entertaining, and trustworthy tend to create positive reactions, whereas irritating or repetitive ads lead to negative attitudes. The research also highlighted that interactive social media platforms help in increasing brand awareness among students. Overall, the study concluded that social media advertising plays a significant role in shaping students' purchase intentions.

Otugo et al. (2015) studied the effect of social media advertising on the awareness, attitudes, and responses of Nigerian youth, with a focus on Facebook ads. The research used a survey method and collected data from 400 respondents. The findings showed that although awareness of social media advertisements was quite high, many users struggled to pay attention to them. It was also observed that while young people find these ads useful, their actual interaction and intention to purchase remain low. The study concluded that social media advertisements need to be more engaging, clear, and well-placed to effectively influence consumer behavior.

Dr. Suhail P et al. (2023) conducted a study to examine the impact of social media advertisements on students' purchasing behavior and satisfaction. The research, based on data collected from 187 students, found that social media plays a significant role in influencing buying decisions. It highlighted that higher usage of social media leads to an increase in students' purchasing behavior. The study also showed that the quality of advertisements, especially those enhanced by artificial intelligence, has a strong positive effect on both purchase decisions and customer satisfaction. Well-designed, engaging, and relevant advertisements were found to increase the likelihood of purchase and improve overall satisfaction levels. Overall, the study concluded that social media and high-quality advertisements are key factors in shaping students' buying behavior and their post-purchase satisfaction.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a quantitative research design supported by both primary and secondary data. This study is descriptive and aims to study the influence of social media advertisements on college students.

It is based on two types of data:

Primary data- primary data was collected through respondents via structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms among the students of colleges in Alandi-Moshi region.

Secondary data- secondary data was collected from already published research papers, articles and online academic journals.

Research questions:

What is your age?

What is your course/stream?

Which social media platform do you use the most?

How much time do you spend daily on social media?

Do you frequently notice advertisements on social media?



- Which type of social media advertisements attracts you the most?
- Have you ever purchased a product after seeing its advertisement on social media?
- To what extent do social media advertisements influence your buying decision?
- What factor influences your purchase decision the most?
- Do you trust products advertised on social media platforms?

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age group	Percentage
17-19	33.8%
20-22	57.5%
23-25	15%

(Table 1)

The survey collected responses from 80 individuals. The data shows that the largest group of participants (57.5%) is between 20 and 22 years old. The second-largest group (33.8%) consists of younger students aged 17 to 19, while only 15% of the respondents fall into the 23 to 25 age bracket.

Interpretation: This distribution confirms that the study is perfectly targeted toward college-going youth. Since over 91% of the participants are under the age of 23, the results directly reflect the opinions of "Digital Natives"—a generation that has grown up using the internet as a primary part of their daily lives.

From a research perspective, this is the most important group to study because they spend the most time on social media and are the primary targets for digital advertisers. These students are at a stage in their lives where they are forming their own buying habits, making them highly susceptible to the influence of the ads they see while scrolling through their feeds.

2. Course/ Steam of students

Course/stream	Percentage
Commerce	61.3%
Science	25%
Arts	8.8%
Others	4.9%

(Table 2)

The academic background of the participants shows a heavy concentration in a specific field. A significant majority of the respondents (61.3%) belong to the Commerce stream, followed by Science students who make up 25% of the sample. The remaining participants are from Arts (8.8%) and other miscellaneous streams (4.9%).

Interpretation: This distribution indicates that the study’s findings are largely shaped by the perspectives of students with a background in business and trade. Commerce students, by the nature of their studies, are often more attuned to market trends, brand strategies, and economic value.

When you combine this academic background with the fact that most of these students are hostellers or bachelors, it creates a very specific consumer profile. These students are living independently and managing their own daily expenses. For them, social media isn't just for entertainment; it's a tool they use to stay updated on lifestyle trends and brand deals. Their education in commerce likely makes them more aware of how digital marketing works, yet as young bachelors, they remain a high-priority target for brands looking to influence the spending habits of the next generation of professionals.



3. Most Preferred Social Media Platform

Platform	Percentage
Instagram	72.5%
YouTube	15%
Facebook	7.5%
Other	5%

(Table 3)

The data clearly shows a dominant leader in the social media space among students. Instagram is the most preferred platform for a significant majority (72.5%) of the respondents. YouTube holds the second position with 15%, while Facebook (7.5%) and other platforms (5%) see much lower engagement levels.

Interpretation: The overwhelming preference for Instagram confirms that it is the primary "digital hub" for today's college students. For this demographic, Instagram isn't just a social app; it's where they consume visual content, follow trends, and interact with brands.

This finding is particularly important when considering that most of these students are hostellers or bachelors. Living away from home, they rely heavily on Instagram for "lifestyle inspiration"—from choosing what to wear to deciding where to eat. Since Instagram is built around high-quality visuals and short-form video (Reels), it is the most effective platform for advertisers to reach these independent young consumers. The low usage of Facebook further suggests that traditional social media is losing its grip on the younger generation, who now favor fast-paced, image-driven platforms for their daily digital interactions.

4. Daily Time Spent on Social Media

Time spent	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	10%
1-3 hours	51.2%
3-5 hours	20%
More than 5 hours	18.8%

(Table 4)

The survey data shows a very high level of daily engagement on social media among students. More than half of the participants (51.2%) spend between 1 to 3 hours on these platforms every day. Additionally, nearly 39% of the group is online for more than 3 hours daily, with a notable 18.8% spending over 5 hours on their feeds. Only a small minority of 10% spend less than an hour on social media.

Interpretation: These numbers make it clear that social media is a core part of a student's daily routine rather than just a quick distraction. Since almost 90% of the students are logged in for at least an hour or more every day, they are constantly exposed to a digital environment where brands are always active.

This high "screen time" is a major reason why social media advertising is so effective. Because students spend such long stretches scrolling, they aren't just seeing an ad once; they are likely seeing multiple marketing messages while they browse for entertainment or news. This constant connection to the digital world creates a massive window for advertisers to grab their attention and slowly influence their preferences and buying habits over time.

5. Awareness of Advertisements on social media

Response	Percentage
Yes	85%
No	15%

(Table 5)



Advertisements are almost impossible to miss on social media today. A massive 85% of students reported that they "Frequently" notice ads while scrolling through their feeds. Only 11.3% said they notice them rarely, and a tiny 3.7% claimed to never see them at all.

Interpretation: These numbers prove that social media is no longer just for chatting; it's a massive digital billboard. For most students, seeing an ad isn't a rare event—it's something that happens every time they open an app. This high visibility means that brands are doing a great job of staying in front of their target audience. Since students are seeing these ads so often during their daily 1–3 hours of screen time, the products and brands eventually become familiar to them, which is the first step in getting someone to actually buy something.

6. Types Of Advertisements That Attracts Attention

Types of advertisement	Percentage
Video ads	38.8%
Influencer promotions	33.8%
Image ads	13.8%
Sponsored posts	13.7%

(Table 6)

The data shows a clear preference for certain types of content over others. Video Ads are the most effective at grabbing attention, cited by 38.8% of the students. Influencer Promotions follow closely behind at 33.8%. On the other hand, standard Image Ads (13.8%) and Sponsored Posts (13.7%) are much less likely to get noticed by the respondents.

Interpretation: What these numbers really show is that students are looking for entertainment, even in advertisements. Static images or plain posts are often scrolled past because they don't offer much engagement. However, videos—like Reels or Shorts—are much harder to ignore because they are dynamic and tell a story in a few seconds.

The high interest in influencer promotions is also a major takeaway. It suggests that students trust a person they follow more than they trust a generic brand ad. When a creator they like talks about a product, it feels more like a recommendation from a friend rather than a sales pitch. For any brand, this means that just putting up a picture isn't enough anymore; they need to use video or partner with creators to actually get a student to stop scrolling and pay attention.

7. Impact of social media ads on purchasing decisions

Purchased a product after seeing it on social media	Percentage
Yes	60%
No	40%

(Table 7)

The survey data shows a clear connection between seeing an ad and actually buying a product. A majority of the respondents (60%) confirmed that they have made a purchase after viewing an advertisement on social media. On the other hand, 40% of the students reported that they have not yet been influenced to buy something based on a social media ad.

Interpretation: These results prove that social media isn't just a place where students "hang out"—it's a place where they spend money. The fact that 6 out of 10 students have already bought something because of an ad shows that digital marketing is working very well.

Since most of these students are in their early twenties and managing their own daily expenses, they are exactly the kind of audience brands want. They aren't just looking at products; they are actually trusting what they see on their feeds enough to pay for it. Even though 40% haven't made a purchase yet, the high success rate among the majority suggests that as long as students keep spending hours online, social media will continue to be a massive driver for sales and new trends.



8. Influence of social media ads on buying decisions

Level of influence	Percentage
Strongly agree	16.3%
Agree	31.3%
neutral	41.3%
disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	5%

(Table 8)

When asked if social media ads directly influence what they choose to buy, the feedback from students was quite varied. Nearly half of the participants—47.6% (combining those who Agree and Strongly Agree) —acknowledge that these advertisements do play a role in their purchasing choices. However, the largest single group (41.3%) remained Neutral, while only a small combined total of 11% felt that ads had little to no impact on them.s

Interpretation: What these numbers really show is that while social media is a powerful marketing tool, students aren't necessarily "impulse buyers." Since nearly half of the respondents admit to being influenced, it's clear that seeing an ad on their feed is a strong starting point for a sale.

However, the fact that so many students chose the "Neutral" option suggests that they are cautious. They might see an ad and like the product, but they probably take a moment to check reviews or compare prices before actually spending their money. For a brand, this means that while an ad can get a student's attention, the product still needs to be genuinely good and well-priced to convince this group to move from just "watching" to actually "buying."

9. Factors influencing purchase decision

Factor	Percentage
Discounts/offers	31.3%
Influencer recommendations	12.5%
Attractive content	25%
Reviews and ratings	31.3%

(Table 9)

When it comes to what actually makes a student hit the "buy" button, two things stand out equally. Both Discounts/Offers and Reviews & Ratings tied for the top spot at 31.3%. Attractive Content (like a good video or photo) also plays a big role for 25% of the respondents, while Influencer Recommendations were the main factor for only 12.5%.

Interpretation: This data gives a very clear picture of how students think before they spend. Even though they spend hours on social media, they aren't just buying things because a famous person told them to. Instead, they are looking for value and honesty.

The high score for discounts shows that students are naturally budget-conscious and are always looking for a good deal. At the same time, the fact that "Reviews & Ratings" is just as important proves that they do their homework. They want to make sure a product is actually good before they trust an ad. For a brand, this means that while a cool video (Attractive Content) might get them to stop scrolling, they won't actually buy anything unless there is a solid discount or positive feedback from other real users to back it up.



10. Trust in social media advertisements

Response	Percentage
Yes	22.5%
No	26.3%
Sometimes	51.2%

(Table 10)

The survey results indicate a cautious approach toward the credibility of online marketing. A majority of the respondents (51.2%) stated that they trust social media advertisements only "Sometimes." The remaining participants are almost evenly split, with 26.3% expressing a complete lack of trust and 22.5% confirming that they do trust the ads they see.

Interpretation: The data reflects a significant level of skepticism among the student population. Since more than three-quarters of the respondents (77.5%) do not fully trust these advertisements, it is evident that a flashy or well-designed ad is not enough to win immediate confidence.

This "middle-ground" trust level suggests that students evaluate each advertisement based on external factors, such as brand reputation or peer feedback, rather than taking the ad at face value. For marketers, these findings emphasize that building long-term credibility is more important than simple exposure. Without a foundation of trust, advertisements are likely to be viewed as biased or unreliable by a large portion of the target audience.

V. FINDINGS

The following key findings have been derived from the systematic analysis of the data collected:

Demographic Profile: The vast majority of respondents fall within the 20–22 year age. This indicates that the data primarily reflects the perspectives of young adults who are digitally native and highly active on social platforms.

Academic Background: A significant portion of the participants are from the Commerce stream. This suggests the findings are shaped by a student group that may have a higher-than-average awareness of business, marketing, and commercial trends.

Platform Dominance: Instagram emerged as the most preferred social media platform. Its popularity among students confirms its position as the leading medium for both social interaction and digital brand engagement.

Usage Patterns: Daily engagement levels are remarkably high, with the majority of students spending 1–3 hours online. A substantial number of users exceed the 3-hour mark, providing a large window for advertisement exposure.

Ad Visibility: Digital marketing has achieved high penetration, as a large majority of respondents reported frequently noticing advertisements during their routine social media usage.

Content Preference: Engaging and relatable formats, specifically Video Advertisements and Influencer Promotions, were identified as the most attractive. Static or traditional ad formats were found to be less effective in capturing student attention.

Purchase Conversion: There is a clear link between browsing and buying, as over 60% of respondents have purchased a product after seeing it on social media. This highlights the practical effectiveness of social commerce.

Decision Influence: While ads do impact buying behavior, the influence is moderate. A significant number of students remain neutral, indicating that while ads spark interest, they are not the sole factor in the final decision.

Decision Drivers: Students prioritize value and credibility. "Discounts and Offers" along with "Reviews and Ratings" were cited as the most critical factors, proving that students look for financial incentives and peer validation before spending.

Consumer Skepticism: There is a visible level of caution among users. Most students trust advertisements only "sometimes," suggesting that they cross-verify marketing claims rather than trusting them blindly.

Geographical Scope: The study is primarily focused on the Moshi and Alandi regions. While the data is highly relevant to these areas, the specific local culture and lifestyle of these regions are reflected in the overall results.



VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the influence of social media advertising on students' buying behavior within the Alandi–Moshi region of Pune. The findings clearly indicate that social media has become an integral part of students' daily routines and plays a definitive role in shaping their modern purchasing patterns.

The analysis reveals that platforms such as Instagram dominate student usage, making them the most effective channels for digital marketing. Because students spend a considerable amount of time on these platforms, their exposure to various advertisement formats is high. Consequently, a vast majority of the demographic frequently notices these ads and is influenced by them during the initial stages of the consumer journey.

A key takeaway from this research is the shift in content preference; video advertisements and influencer promotions are significantly more effective at capturing attention than traditional static formats. However, while these advertisements are successful at creating interest, students do not rely on them blindly. The data suggests that students are rational and value-conscious consumers who prioritize practical factors such as discounts, authentic reviews, and peer ratings before committing to a final purchase.

Furthermore, the study highlights a prevailing sense of digital skepticism. Students exhibit only a moderate level of trust toward social media advertisements, often adopting a cautious and evaluative approach. This indicates that while an ad might create "brand awareness," it does not automatically guarantee "brand trust."

Social media advertising has a significant, yet non-absolute, impact on student buying behavior. It is highly effective at generating awareness and desire, but the final conversion depends on credibility, affordability, and social proof. For marketers to be successful with this demographic, they must move beyond mere engagement and focus on building genuine trust and providing clear value to effectively influence the modern student consumer.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present research, while providing significant insights, is subject to certain inherent limitations that should be acknowledged:

Geographical Constraints: The scope of this study is confined to the Moshi and Alandi regions of Pune. Consequently, the findings reflect a localized demographic and may not be universally generalizable to students in diverse urban or rural environments.

Sample Size and Representativeness: The study utilized a relatively restricted sample size. While sufficient for an exploratory analysis, a larger and more varied participant pool would be required to enhance the statistical power and representativeness of the results.

Demographic Specificity: The research focused exclusively on undergraduate college students, predominantly within the 20–22 age group. This excludes the purchasing behaviors of working professionals and other age segments, whose engagement with digital advertising may differ significantly.

Potential for Response Bias: The data is based on self-reported responses from participants. This introduces the possibility of subjective bias or recall inaccuracies, where respondents might provide socially desirable answers rather than reflecting their actual online behavior.

Temporal Limitations: Due to fixed time constraints, the study provides a cross-sectional view of consumer behavior. A longitudinal approach over a more extended period would be necessary to track evolving trends in digital marketing and consumer trust.

SUGGESTIONS

Prioritization of Interactive and Video-Based Content suggests that marketers should focus their creative efforts on short-form video formats. Since traditional static advertisements are increasingly overlooked by the student demographic, using dynamic media like Reels and Shorts is essential for capturing and maintaining consumer attention in a crowded digital space.

Strategic and Authentic Influencer Collaborations implies that companies must be more selective when choosing digital partners. To overcome the skepticism identified in this study, brands should prioritize authenticity and genuine



reliability in their promotions, as students are far more likely to trust creators who align naturally with their own interests and values.

Emphasis on Value-Driven Marketing highlights that advertisements should clearly and prominently feature active discounts and specific product benefits. As the data suggests that students are highly budget-conscious, the inclusion of clear financial incentives remains a primary catalyst for converting simple digital engagement into actual purchase decisions.

Enhancement of Brand Credibility and Transparency requires businesses to move beyond flashy visuals and work toward building long-term trust. Providing accurate product information and integrating genuine customer reviews within campaigns is vital for addressing the cautious and evaluative approach that students currently adopt toward online brand claims.

Data-Driven Personalization of Advertisements allows social media platforms and digital advertisers to leverage advanced analytics for better audience targeting. Tailoring marketing messages to match individual user preferences and past behaviors significantly improves the overall relevance and effectiveness of advertising efforts without appearing intrusive.

Expansion of Academic Research Scope recommends that future studies broaden both the geographical and demographic reach of this inquiry. Incorporating a larger and more diverse sample size across different academic streams and regions would provide a more generalized and comprehensive understanding of student consumer behavior on a broader scale.

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