

The Influence of Instagram Marketing on Purchase Decisions among College Students in Gorakhpur District: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms among college students. The platform has evolved beyond photo-sharing into a powerful marketing communication tool that influences consumer perceptions, brand awareness, and purchase decisions. In this paper, the researchers have attempted to study the acceptance of Instagram marketing among college students in Gorakhpur district and examine its influence on their purchase decisions. The study is descriptive and empirical in nature. Primary data was collected from college students belonging to Generation Z through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as mean analysis, Chi-Square test, and regression analysis were used to interpret the data. The findings reveal that Instagram marketing enjoys high acceptance among college students and significantly influences their purchase decisions.

Keywords: Instagram Marketing, Generation Z, College Students, Purchase Decision, Social Media Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technology and internet accessibility has transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. Among various social media applications, Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular platforms among Generation Z. Instagram allows users to share photographs, short videos, reels, stories, and live sessions, making it a highly engaging platform for marketers.

College students spend a considerable amount of time scrolling through Instagram feeds, watching influencer content, interacting with advertisements, and exploring new brands. Marketers increasingly rely on Instagram because of its visual appeal, influencer ecosystem, and targeted advertising capabilities. Features such as reels, hashtags, influencer collaborations, sponsored advertisements, and user-generated content have made Instagram an effective medium for shaping consumer attitudes and buying behaviour.

Generation Z consumers are highly technology-oriented and heavily dependent on social media for information, entertainment, and shopping-related decisions. Instagram not only helps consumers discover new products but also affects their perceptions regarding product quality, brand value, and social acceptance. Businesses are therefore investing heavily in Instagram marketing strategies to influence young consumers.

The present study focuses specifically on college students in Gorakhpur district, who represent a significant portion of Generation Z users. The study attempts to analyse the acceptance of Instagram as a marketing communication tool and its influence on purchase decisions among college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Shahpasandi et al., 2020) studied consumers' impulse buying behaviour on Instagram and examined the influence of hedonic browsing and flow experience on impulsive purchases. The researchers found that visually engaging Instagram content and interactive browsing experiences significantly encourage impulse buying behaviour among users. The study highlighted Instagram's ability to emotionally engage consumers and stimulate spontaneous purchasing decisions.

(Lou & Yuan, 2020) analysed the role of trust cues in Instagram posts and found that visually appealing posts, popularity indicators, and high-quality arguments increase users' trust toward products promoted on Instagram. The study concluded that trust developed through Instagram content positively influences consumer attitudes and purchase responses.

(Jin et al., 2020) conducted a study titled "I'll buy what she's #wearing" to examine the role of Instagram influencers and celebrity endorsements in shaping consumer behaviour. The study revealed that parasocial interaction and emotional attachment with influencers significantly affect consumers' purchase intentions and brand engagement on Instagram.

(Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2020) explored influencer marketing and identified various factors affecting consumer behaviour among millennials. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Learning Theory, the study concluded that influencer credibility, content relatability, and social media engagement significantly influence consumers' buying decisions.

(Djafarova & Bowes, 2021) investigated the influence of Instagram on Generation Z's impulse buying behaviour in the fashion industry. The study found that advertisements, influencer recommendations, and user-generated content on Instagram trigger positive emotions among young consumers, particularly females, which ultimately results in impulse purchasing behaviour.

(Janadio & Mujiasih, 2020) studied customer engagement through Instagram and purchase intention among university students. The researchers found a strong positive relationship between customer engagement on Instagram and students' intention to purchase products.

The study concluded that greater interaction with Instagram marketing content leads to higher purchase intentions among students.

(Hinterstein, 2020) examined the effects of social media on the online consumer behaviour of university students. The study revealed that Instagram was among the most influential social media platforms affecting students' online buying decisions due to its high engagement levels and visually attractive content.

(Ibrohim et al., 2020) studied the effect of Instagram as a social media marketing platform on students' consumptive behaviour at the University of Jember. Using regression analysis, the study concluded that Instagram marketing significantly affects students' purchasing and consumptive behaviour.

The reviewed studies clearly indicate that social media platforms significantly influence consumer behaviour. However, limited research has focused specifically on Instagram marketing among college students in smaller cities like Gorakhpur. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this research gap.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Instagram has become one of the most preferred social media platforms among college students. Businesses increasingly use Instagram marketing strategies such as influencer marketing, reels, sponsored posts, and targeted advertisements to engage young consumers. However, the effectiveness of Instagram marketing may differ according to local demographics and consumer preferences. By focusing on college students in Gorakhpur district, this study provides localized insights regarding the acceptance and effectiveness of Instagram marketing. The findings may help marketers, businesses, and researchers understand how Instagram influences the purchase behaviour of young consumers in semi-urban regions.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between gender and the acceptance of Instagram as a marketing communication tool.

H02: Instagram marketing does not have a significant impact on the purchase decisions of college students.

Objectives Of The Study

- To analyse the acceptance of Instagram as a marketing communication tool among college students.
- To study the influence of Instagram marketing on the purchase decisions of Generation Z college students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and empirical in nature. Primary data was collected from 248 respondents, mainly college students in Gorakhpur district. A structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was circulated through WhatsApp and email.

Students were selected because they are among the most active Instagram users and are more aware of digital trends and online marketing practices. The respondents belonged to different genders, educational backgrounds, and social classes.

The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics, Chi-Square test, and regression analysis to examine the relationship between Instagram marketing and purchase decisions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Acceptance of Instagram as a Marketing Communication Tool among College Students

Respondents were asked various questions regarding their acceptance of Instagram marketing on a 5-point Likert scale.

Criteria for Mean Score Interpretation

- 1.00–1.79 = Strongly Disagree
- 1.80–2.59 = Disagree
- 2.60–3.39 = Neutral
- 3.40–4.19 = Agree
- 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree

Table 1: Level of Acceptance of Instagram Marketing

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
Instagram is an effective tool for marketing communication.	4.15	.994	Agree
Instagram marketing is more influential than traditional media.	4.03	.964	Agree
Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
I like to interact (like, share, comment) with sponsored posts or reels related to products I need.	3.42	1.050	Agree
I rely on information available on Instagram while purchasing products.	3.77	1.110	Agree
Instagram encourages me to share my purchase experiences.	3.60	.959	Agree
Instagram is a major source of information about new products.	3.78	.807	Agree
I am concerned about the security of my personal data while clicking Instagram advertisements.	3.81	1.272	Agree
I prefer Instagram over other channels for brand information.	3.89	.987	Agree
Advertisements on Instagram effectively capture my attention.	3.92	1.000	Agree

The findings indicate that college students perceive Instagram as an effective marketing communication platform. Respondents particularly agreed that Instagram helps in discovering new products and influences their understanding of brands.

Although respondents expressed concerns regarding personal data security, they still demonstrated a positive attitude towards Instagram marketing. The results also reveal that students prefer engaging and value-added content over direct sponsored advertisements.

Influence of Instagram Marketing on Purchase Decisions

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with statements related to the impact of Instagram marketing on their purchase decisions.

Table 2: Impact of Instagram Marketing on Purchase Decisions

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
Instagram advertisements and reviews increase my likelihood of purchasing a product.	3.62	1.003	Agree
Statements	Mean	Std.	Level of

		Deviation	Agreement
Marketing through Instagram affects my purchase decisions.	3.57	1.039	Agree
A product's presence on Instagram increases its brand value for me.	3.56	1.020	Agree
Instagram marketing convinces me to buy products I like.	3.77	1.038	Agree
I feel influenced to buy products randomly after seeing Instagram advertisements or influencer recommendations.	3.71	1.137	Agree
Instagram advertisements are capable of leading consumers toward final purchase decisions.	3.50	1.087	Agree
I feel more confident in purchasing products after seeing Instagram content related to them.	3.71	.950	Agree
I can recall Instagram advertisements while finalising my purchases.	3.54	1.029	Agree

The results indicate that Instagram marketing positively influences purchase decisions among college students. Students reported that Instagram advertisements, influencer recommendations, and branded content increase their purchase confidence and brand awareness.

The findings also suggest that Instagram advertisements leave a lasting impression on consumers, influencing them during final purchase decisions.

Hypotheses Testing

H01: There is no significant relationship between gender and the acceptance of Instagram marketing as a communication tool.

Chi-Square Test

Test	Value	df	Significance
Pearson Chi-Square	4.170	3	.244

Table 3: Gender of Respondent × Level of Acceptance

Level of Acceptance	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	0	15	57	40	112
Female	1	19	82	34	136
Total	1	34	139	74	248

Since the p-value (.244) is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between gender and acceptance of Instagram marketing. Both male and female college students equally accept Instagram as a marketing communication platform.

H02: Instagram marketing does not have a significant impact on purchase decisions among college students.

To measure exposure to Instagram marketing, respondents were asked the following:

- Time spent daily on Instagram
- Interaction with sponsored posts and reels
- Number of Instagram pages followed
- Reliance on Instagram for product-related information

Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.230	.053	.049	.704

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.824	1	6.824	13.761	.000
Residual	121.979	246	.496		
Total	128.802	247			

Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	3.090	.191		16.181	.000
Exposure to Instagram Marketing	.239	.064	.230	3.710	.000

Since the p-value is less than 0.001, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, Instagram marketing has a significant impact on the purchase decisions of Generation Z college students.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that college students in Gorakhpur district possess a positive attitude towards Instagram marketing and consider Instagram an effective modern marketing communication platform. Respondents generally agreed that Instagram plays an important role in discovering new products, gathering brand information, and accessing reviews before making purchase decisions, reflecting the growing dependence of Generation Z on digital and visually driven platforms.

The findings further indicate that Instagram advertisements, influencer promotions, sponsored posts, and reel content significantly influence students' buying behaviour. Respondents admitted that repeated exposure to products on Instagram increases their interest in brands and positively affects their purchase intentions. Influencer recommendations and visually appealing content also remain in consumers' memory and influence their final purchase decisions.

The study additionally found that Instagram marketing affects both planned and impulsive buying behaviour among college students. Attractive advertisements, product presentations, discounts, and influencer endorsements often encourage spontaneous purchases. However, despite actively engaging with Instagram marketing content, respondents also expressed concerns regarding personal data security and privacy while interacting with advertisements and promotional links on the platform.

Further analysis showed that both male and female respondents demonstrate similar levels of acceptance towards Instagram marketing. The statistical findings indicate that gender does not significantly affect the acceptance of Instagram as a marketing communication tool among college students in Gorakhpur district.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Instagram marketing significantly influences the purchase decisions of college students belonging to Generation Z in Gorakhpur district. Instagram has become more than just a social networking platform; it is now an important source of brand communication, product discovery, and consumer engagement. The findings reveal that students positively perceive Instagram marketing and are influenced by advertisements, reels, influencer promotions, and branded content available on the platform. Although concerns regarding privacy and personal data security exist, Instagram marketing continues to shape consumer buying behaviour effectively. Businesses targeting young consumers should therefore invest in creative Instagram marketing strategies, influencer collaborations, interactive content, and authentic brand communication to effectively engage Generation Z consumers.

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