



Impact of Social Media Marketing on Decision Confidence: The Mediating Role of Social Commerce Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media marketing (SMM) attributes Informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth on consumers' decision confidence in online purchase environments. It further examines the mediating role of social commerce engagement (SCE), conceptualized through learning from forums and communities, learning from ratings and reviews, and learning from social advertisements, particularly within the context of urban India. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, utilizing an online survey administered to 603 respondents from six major metropolitan cities in India. The study employed validated multi-item measurement scales analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships and the mediating role of SCE in the conceptual model. The results confirmed that all five SMM attributes significantly enhance decision confidence, with Personalization and Interactivity exerting the strongest effects. Furthermore, decision confidence was found to significantly predict all three dimensions of SCE. The mediating analysis revealed that SCE plays a pivotal role in linking SMM attributes with consumers' decision confidence, highlighting the importance of peer-generated content and personalized advertisements in digital purchase decisions. Findings offer actionable insights for digital marketers and social commerce platforms. Emphasizing personalization, interactivity, and the visibility of user-generated reviews can strengthen consumer decision confidence and foster meaningful engagement. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook should be prioritized for urban consumer targeting in India.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Decision Confidence, Social Commerce Engagement, Emerging Markets, Consumer Behavior

JEL Classifications: M31, M37, L86, C83

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing integration of social media into everyday life has significantly reshaped how consumers interact with brands, access product information, and make purchasing decisions. In particular, the rise of social commerce the practice of buying and selling products directly through social media platforms has introduced new dynamics into online consumer behavior. Unlike conventional e-commerce environments, social commerce settings are inherently social, interactive, and participatory, where consumer decision-making is influenced not only by brand-generated content but also by peer interactions, user-generated reviews, and personalized advertising. In this rapidly evolving

digital landscape, marketers increasingly rely on social media marketing (SMM) attributes to capture attention, build consumer trust, and drive purchasing behavior (Kothari et al., 2025).

Prior research highlights the importance of several key social media marketing attributes, including informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth (WOM), in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. However, limited empirical attention has been given to how these attributes affect consumers' decision confidence the degree of certainty and assurance individuals feel about their purchase decisions in online contexts. Decision confidence is particularly critical in social commerce environments where consumers face

high information asymmetry, varied peer opinions, and dynamic marketing messages, all of which can either reinforce or undermine their confidence in choosing a product. A significant mechanism through which social media marketing attributes are believed to influence decision confidence is social commerce engagement (SCE) (Ngo et al., 2024). Social commerce engagement encompasses consumers' active participation in activities such as reading online reviews, interacting with brand communities, and responding to social advertisements (Zhou et al., 2013). Specifically, this engagement can be conceptualized through three dimensions: Learning from forums and communities (LFC), learning from ratings and reviews (LRR), and Learning from Social advertisements (LSA). These engagement forms serve as informal decision support systems, allowing consumers to acquire experiential knowledge, verify product claims, and gauge social consensus before finalizing their purchase decisions. Despite its practical relevance, the mediating role of social commerce engagement in the relationship between social media marketing attributes and decision confidence remains underexamined in the literature (Hutter et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2019).

Moreover, much of the existing research in this domain has been predominantly conducted in Western, developed economies. In emerging markets like India characterized by rapid digital adoption, mobile-first consumer behavior, and diverse socio-cultural consumption patterns the dynamics of social media marketing and social commerce engagement warrant focused investigation. Urban Indian consumers, in particular, represent a digitally active demographic segment where social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube increasingly influence purchase behavior. Understanding how marketing attributes on these platforms affect decision confidence, mediated by engagement activities, holds both academic and managerial significance (Ngo et al., 2024). Guided by social influence theory and social learning theory (Bandura, 1991), this study seeks to address this gap by empirically examining the relationships between key social media marketing attributes and consumers' decision confidence, with social commerce engagement as a mediating factor. By integrating these constructs into a unified conceptual model, the research aims to extend current knowledge on online consumer decision-making in social commerce settings and offer actionable insights for digital marketing strategy in emerging markets (Chen et al., 2017). The study contributes to the growing body of social commerce literature by clarifying how informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth influence online consumer confidence, and how engagement with social commerce content mediates these relationships. In doing so, it responds to calls for context-specific, theory-driven research on consumer behavior in digital marketing environments, particularly within the distinctive socio-digital ecosystem of urban India.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behavior

The proliferation of social media platforms has radically transformed how brands engage with consumers and how

consumers gather information, interact with products, and make purchase decisions. Social media marketing (SMM) encompasses a range of strategies that leverage social networking sites for promoting products and services, enhancing brand visibility, and building consumer relationships (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Through mechanisms such as targeted advertisements, influencer endorsements, and interactive brand content, social media platforms offer marketers an unprecedented opportunity to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors in real-time, participatory environments.

Prior studies emphasize the unique capabilities of social media in facilitating informational, interactive, and socially endorsed marketing communications, all of which have been found to significantly shape online purchase intentions (Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016). In particular, the interactive and community-driven nature of social commerce- commerce that occurs within or via social media platforms has led to a new model of consumer decision-making, where information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase decisions occur within socially connected digital spaces (Chen et al., 2017). This shift underscores the importance of identifying specific social media marketing attributes that impact consumer confidence in online purchase decisions.

2.2. Informativeness (INF)

Informativeness is regarded as a fundamental characteristic of effective marketing communication, particularly within digital commerce environments. It refers to the extent to which marketing messages provide consumers with relevant, accurate, and timely information that aids decision-making (Lee et al., 2019). In social media contexts, informativeness is operationalized through product descriptions, consumer reviews, brand-generated content, and advertisements that deliver product knowledge, pricing, promotions, and usage information.

Research by (Yadav and Rahman, 2018) highlights that informativeness in social media advertising enhances consumer trust and reduces perceived risk by equipping consumers with adequate knowledge about products and services. In turn, this contributes to stronger decision confidence by mitigating uncertainty inherent in online purchases. Consequently, this study hypothesized and confirmed that informativeness has a significant positive impact on decision confidence (H_1). The findings are consistent with prior literature, affirming that informative content fosters more confident purchase decisions in digital and social commerce settings.

2.3. Interactivity (INT)

Interactivity is a distinctive attribute of social media marketing that differentiates it from traditional marketing channels. It refers to the degree of two-way communication between consumers and brands, as well as among consumers themselves, within digital platforms (Jeswani, 2023). Social media enables interactive features such as live chats, polls, direct messaging, Q&A sessions, and interactive advertisements, which enhance consumer engagement by facilitating immediate feedback and dialogue.

Scholars have found that interactivity positively influences consumer attitudes, satisfaction, and purchase intentions by fostering a sense of involvement and control over the information exchange process (Gao et al., 2009). In the context of this study, interactivity significantly impacted decision confidence (H_2), corroborating findings from previous research suggesting that interactive digital experiences reduce ambiguity and improve perceived decision quality (Reyes et al., 2025). Interactivity creates opportunities for clarification, personalized responses, and social validation, all of which contribute to consumers' confidence in their purchase decisions.

2.4. Trendiness (T)

The trendiness of marketing content reflects the extent to which information disseminated through social media is perceived as fashionable, contemporary, and up-to-date. Trendy content often capitalizes on viral challenges, current events, or popular culture references to enhance message relevance and appeal (Rani et al., 2022). In social commerce contexts, trendiness signals brand modernity and relevance, which can positively shape consumer perceptions. Empirical studies demonstrate that trendy marketing messages increase consumer engagement by appealing to their desire for social approval and belonging (Ngo et al., 2024). Furthermore, trendiness helps consumers feel informed about the latest market options, which, in turn, enhances decision confidence. Consistent with this theoretical reasoning, the present study found a significant positive relationship between trendiness and decision confidence (H_3), indicating that contemporary and fashionable social media content bolsters consumers' assurance when making online purchases.

2.5. Personalization (P)

Personalization is one of the most influential aspects of digital marketing, allowing brands to tailor content, offers, and recommendations to individual consumer preferences and behaviors (Wibowo et al., 2021). In social media environments, personalization is operationalized through targeted advertisements, customized product suggestions, and curated brand content based on consumers' past browsing or purchase histories. Personalization has been shown to enhance perceived content relevance and consumer satisfaction, thereby strengthening brand relationships and increasing the likelihood of purchase (Chandra et al., 2022). From a psychological perspective, personalized messages foster feelings of being valued and understood, which increase trust and reduce decision-related anxiety. Aligning with these findings, the current study confirmed that personalization has a significant positive impact on decision confidence (H_4). This relationship underscores the importance of delivering tailored social media experiences that resonate with individual consumers' interests and needs.

2.6. Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM) refers to informal, user-generated content such as reviews, comments, recommendations, and discussions shared within social media networks. WOM has long been recognized as a credible and influential source of product information due to its perceived impartiality and authenticity.

Existing research confirms that WOM influences consumer attitudes, perceived value, and purchase intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2016). In social commerce environments, peer recommendations play a crucial role in reducing perceived risk and enhancing decision confidence by providing real-life usage insights and experiences. The study verified that WOM significantly affects decision confidence (H_5), corroborating the established view that consumer-generated content on social media functions as an essential decision support tool.

2.7. Decision Confidence (DC)

Decision confidence represents consumers' cognitive assurance and certainty in their purchase choices, particularly in situations of uncertainty or information overload (Guerra-Tamez et al., 2024). In online and social commerce environments, decision confidence is influenced by the quality and credibility of information available, peer endorsements, and the perceived reliability of marketing content. High decision confidence reduces post-purchase dissonance and increases customer satisfaction and loyalty (Meilatinova, 2021). The study's structural model confirmed that decision confidence is a critical outcome influenced by multiple social media marketing attributes, reinforcing its theoretical centrality in online consumer behavior research. Notably, decision confidence also serves as a predictor of social commerce engagement, highlighting its dual role as both an outcome and a driver within the decision-making process.

2.8. Social Commerce Engagement (SCE)

Social commerce engagement (SCE) is conceptualized as consumers' active participation in social commerce activities, including interacting with product information, reviews, advertisements, and peer discussions on social media platforms (Zhou et al., 2013). The study operationalized SCE through three dimensions:

- **Learning from forums and communities (LFC):** Refers to consumers' engagement in product discussions and interactions within brand communities or interest-based groups (Busalim et al., 2019). Consistent with prior research, this study found that decision confidence positively influences LFC (H_6), suggesting that confident consumers are more likely to participate in community discussions to reinforce their purchase choices or validate information.
- **Learning from ratings and reviews (LRR):** Involves consumers reading and evaluating peer reviews and product ratings. Reviews are known to reduce perceived risk and increase purchase certainty (Chen et al., 2022). The analysis confirmed that decision confidence significantly affects LRR (H_7), highlighting the interplay between personal assurance and the use of peer-generated information in decision validation.
- **Learning from social advertisements (LSA):** Encompasses consumers' engagement with social media advertisements that are interactive, personalized, and socially endorsed. Research suggests that social ads enhance message credibility and purchasing outcomes (Ting et al., 2020). The study verified a positive relationship between decision confidence and LSA (H_8), indicating that confident consumers are more receptive to engaging with targeted advertising content within social commerce environments.

The extant literature consistently identifies informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth as significant drivers of consumer engagement and purchase behavior in digital marketing contexts. While previous studies have independently explored these attributes' effects on consumer attitudes and intentions, few have integrated them into a comprehensive model linking social media marketing attributes to decision confidence via social commerce engagement activities. This study advances the theoretical understanding of online consumer behavior by empirically validating a structural model where social commerce engagement mediates the relationship between key social media marketing attributes and decision confidence. Positioned within the frameworks of social influence theory (Chen et al., 2017) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1991), this research underscores the importance of both informational and normative influences in shaping consumer confidence in digital purchase environments. Furthermore, the study contributes to the relatively underexplored domain of social commerce in emerging markets like India. By capturing data from urban Indian consumers a rapidly growing and digitally active demographic segment the research addresses the contextual gap in global e-commerce literature and offers insights into platform-specific consumer behaviors in India's urban social commerce landscape.

Hypothesis:

- H₁: Informativeness (INF) has a significant impact on decision confidence (DC).
- H₂: Interactivity (INT) has a significant impact on decision confidence (DC).
- H₃: Trendiness (T) has a significant impact on decision confidence (DC).
- H₄: Personalization (P) has a significant impact on decision confidence (DC).
- H₅: Word-of-mouth (WOM) has a significant impact on decision confidence (DC).
- H₆: Decision confidence (DC) has a significant impact on learning from forums and communities (LFC).
- H₇: Decision confidence (DC) has a significant impact on learning from ratings and reviews (LRR).
- HV: Decision confidence (DC) has a significant impact on learning from social advertisements (LSA).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participant

The participants for this study comprised individuals who actively engage in social media platforms and have experience with online shopping and social commerce interactions. The study targeted respondents who regularly use social media not just for networking but also for browsing product-related content, interacting with brand pages, viewing advertisements, participating in product discussions, and making purchase decisions based on social media content. Eligibility criteria included individuals who had made at least one online purchase influenced by social media marketing activities such as online reviews, advertisements, or peer recommendations. This ensured that the participants

could provide relevant and informed responses to the constructs measured in the study.

3.2. Procedure

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed for this study, utilizing an online survey questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was developed based on validated measurement scales from prior research and structured into distinct sections to capture both demographic information and responses to the study variables. Before rolling out the final survey, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, appropriateness, and reliability of the questionnaire items. Minor revisions were made based on feedback to improve readability and coherence. Ethical research protocols were strictly followed, and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their data. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before they proceeded with the survey. The finalized questionnaire was then distributed online via email invitations, social media posts, and digital community groups to reach a wide, demographically varied sample of social media users.

3.3. Instrument

The survey questionnaire consisted of two primary sections. The first section gathered demographic information from the participants, including gender, age, city of residence, educational qualifications, frequency of social media use, and their preferred social media platform for shopping. Gender was recorded as male or female. Age was categorized into five groups: Under 25 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, and 55 years and above. Participants indicated their city of residence by selecting from six major Indian metropolitan areas: Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Kolkata (Haque and Patel, 2018). Education level was classified as Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degrees. Additionally, participants reported the frequency of their social media usage, choosing from options ranging from several times a day to once a week or less, and identified their preferred platform for online shopping from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, or others.

The second section focused on measuring the key constructs of the research framework using established multi-item scales from prior studies. Each construct was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strongly disagree and 7 indicated strongly agree (Churchill Júnior, 1979). The construct decision confidence (DC) was measured using items adapted from (Bennett et al., 2010), capturing consumers' certainty and assurance when making purchase decisions through social media platforms. Social commerce engagement was operationalized through three dimensions: Learning from forums and communities (LFC), learning from ratings and reviews (LRR), and learning from social advertisement (LSA), as adapted from (Riaz et al., 2021). Additionally, the study incorporated several social media marketing attributes, including-informativeness (INF), interactivity (INT), trendiness (T), personalization (P), and word-of-mouth (WOM), measured using scales from (Yadav and Rahman, 2018). These constructs captured participants' perceptions of the value,

relevance, and influence of social media marketing content on their shopping behaviors and decision confidence.

3.4. Sampling

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted for this research. This approach was appropriate as the study sought to gather data specifically from individuals actively involved in social commerce and social media marketing environments. The sampling frame targeted respondents who had prior experience interacting with social commerce content and had made purchase decisions through social media platforms. This purposive selection ensured that only those participants with the necessary exposure and experience in social commerce practices were included in the study, enhancing the relevance and validity of the data collected. The sampling strategy allowed the researchers to gather insights from a population segment capable of offering meaningful evaluations of the social media marketing constructs under investigation.

3.5. Data Collection and Sample

Data were collected through an online survey administered to respondents across six major Indian metropolitan cities, namely Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Kolkata. This geographic selection ensured the inclusion of respondents from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and varying degrees of exposure to social commerce activities. The demographic composition of the sample reflected a balanced representation of male and female participants, spanning across age categories of under 25, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55 years and above. The sample also covered respondents with differing educational qualifications, including Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral degrees.

In addition, participants reported their frequency of social media usage, with options ranging from several times a day to once a week or less, which helped gauge the intensity of their social media engagement. To capture platform preferences for online shopping, respondents identified whether they primarily used Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, or other platforms. This distribution provided a comprehensive overview of social commerce user behaviors and preferences, allowing for a well-rounded analysis of the influence of social media marketing attributes on decision confidence, mediated by social commerce engagement activities.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1, demographic profile of the respondents provides valuable context for understanding the sample composition in this study on the impact of social media marketing on decision confidence, mediated by social commerce engagement. A total of 603 respondents participated in the survey, offering a diverse mix of characteristics across gender, age, city of residence, education level, social media usage frequency, and preferred platforms for online shopping. In terms of gender distribution, the sample was relatively balanced, with female respondents slightly outnumbering males. Females made up 51.41% ($n = 310$) of the participants, while males accounted for 48.59% ($n = 293$). This near-equal representation ensures that the analysis captures

Table 1: Demographic profile

Demographics	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	293	48.59
	Female	310	51.41
Age	Under 25	108	17.91
	25-34 years	126	20.9
	35-44 years	152	25.21
	45-54 years	142	23.55
	55 and above	75	12.44
City of residence	Bengaluru	99	16.42
	Delhi	96	15.92
	Chennai	102	16.92
	Hyderabad	98	16.25
	Mumbai	104	17.24
	Kolkata	104	17.24
Education level	Bachelor's degree	246	40.8
	Master's degree	258	42.78
	Doctoral degree	99	16.42
Social media usage frequency	Several times a day	145	24.04
	Once a day	151	25.04
	A few times a week	161	26.7
	Once a week or less	146	24.21
Preferred social media platform for shopping	Facebook	128	21.23
	Instagram	131	21.72
	YouTube	119	19.74
	WhatsApp	114	18.91
	Other	111	18.4

perspectives across genders effectively, especially significant in consumer behavior studies where decision-making processes can differ based on gender.

When analyzing the age distribution, the majority of participants were between 25 and 44 years old, which collectively represented 46.11% of the sample. Specifically, 25-34-year-olds comprised 20.9% ($n = 126$), while 35-44-year-olds made up 25.21% ($n = 152$). Notably, a smaller segment of respondents was under 25 (17.91%) and over 55 (12.44%). This concentration of participants in the middle age ranges is advantageous since these groups are typically the most active in both social media usage and online purchasing, aligning well with the focus of this study. Regarding city of residence, responses were fairly evenly distributed across six major Indian metros. Mumbai and Kolkata had the highest representation at 17.24% each ($n = 104$), followed closely by Chennai (16.92%), Bengaluru (16.42%), Hyderabad (16.25%), and Delhi (15.92%). This geographical spread indicates good regional coverage, enhancing the generalizability of the findings across urban India.

Examining education levels, the majority of respondents held either a bachelor's degree (40.8%) or a master's degree (42.78%), while 16.42% had a doctoral degree. This highly educated sample suggests that participants are likely well-informed and active in online environments, making them suitable respondents for research on social commerce and digital decision-making.

In terms of social media usage frequency, responses were fairly evenly split. The largest group (26.7%) reported using social media a few times a week, while 25.04% accessed it once a day. Another 24.04% engaged several times a day, and 24.21% used it once a week or less. This balanced distribution ensures insights from both

highly active and moderately active social media users, capturing varying degrees of engagement that are crucial for assessing social commerce behavior. Lastly, when asked about their preferred social media platforms for shopping, Instagram (21.72%) narrowly led the list, followed by Facebook (21.23%), YouTube (19.74%), WhatsApp (18.91%), and other platforms (18.4%). This indicates that while Instagram and Facebook are particularly influential in driving social commerce activities, other platforms still hold significant market share, underscoring the multi-platform nature of modern social commerce.

Table 2, measurement model results provide strong evidence of the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study. The internal consistency reliability of each construct was assessed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values. All constructs demonstrated composite reliability values well above the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.774 to 0.901, indicating that the measurement items are consistently capturing their respective underlying constructs. Similarly, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were satisfactory, ranging from 0.775 to 0.900, further confirming the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Convergent validity, which determines whether items intended to measure the same construct are indeed related, was evaluated through average variance extracted (AVE) values. The AVE values for all constructs exceeded the acceptable benchmark of 0.50, with values ranging from 0.535 to 0.751. This suggests that more than half of the variance in each set of items is

explained by their corresponding latent construct, providing strong support for convergent validity. Additionally, the individual item loadings for all measurement items were found to be above the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, with item loadings ranging between 0.718 and 0.906. This indicates that each item significantly contributes to its associated construct. Finally, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed using variance inflation factor (VIF) values, which assess the degree of correlation among independent variables. The VIF values for all items were comfortably below the recommended threshold of 3.3, ranging from 1.067 to 2.999. These results indicate that there are no serious multicollinearity issues within the measurement model. In summary, the measurement model demonstrates excellent reliability, acceptable convergent validity, and no multicollinearity concerns, confirming that the constructs and their indicators are both statistically sound and theoretically appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis.

The discriminant validity of the constructs in this study was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than the correlations it shares with other constructs in the model. As shown in Table 3, this condition has been met for all constructs. The diagonal elements, representing the square roots of the AVEs, range from 0.812 to 0.931 and consistently exceed the corresponding inter-construct correlations in their respective rows and columns. For instance, the square root

Table 2: Measurement model

Construct	Item code	Construct loadings	Composite reliability	AVE	Cronbach alpha	VIF
DC1	DC	0.733	0.88	0.536	0.875	1.187
DC2		0.733				1.261
DC3		0.759				2.945
DC4		0.718				2.181
DC5		0.772				2.104
DC6		0.778				2.212
DC7		0.782				2.867
DC8		0.751				2.844
DC9		0.745				2.999
DC10		0.762				1.225
INF1	INF	0.815	0.813	0.592	0.813	1.764
INF2		0.747				1.722
INF3		0.744				1.912
INT1	INT	0.774	0.832	0.623	0.832	2.328
INT2		0.807				2.27
INT3		0.787				1.608
LFC1	LFC	0.776	0.858	0.669	0.857	2.23
LFC2		0.775				1.985
LFC3		0.897				2.265
LRR1	LRR	0.806	0.864	0.68	0.864	2.388
LRR2		0.839				2.184
LRR3		0.828				2.149
LSA1	LSA	0.845	0.901	0.751	0.9	2.692
LSA2		0.906				2.314
LSA3		0.848				2.652
P1	P	0.813	0.779	0.676	0.786	1.401
P2		0.756				1.397
P3		0.791				1.067
T1	T	0.778	0.804	0.578	0.803	1.964
T2		0.773				1.898
T3		0.729				1.527
WOM1	WOM	0.798	0.774	0.535	0.775	1.66
WOM2		0.816				1.494
WOM3		0.772				1.678

of AVE for decision confidence (DC) is 0.812, which is higher than its correlations with other constructs such as informativeness (INF) at 0.492, interactivity (INT) at 0.701, and learning from forums and communities (LFC) at 0.600. Similarly, learning from forums and communities (LFC), learning from ratings and reviews (LRR), and learning from social advertisement (LSA) also demonstrated acceptable discriminant validity, as their respective diagonal values were greater than the inter-construct correlations.

Even in cases where certain constructs exhibited relatively high correlations or example, between decision confidence (DC) and personalization (P) at 0.774, or between interactivity (INT) and tendency to purchase (T) at 0.778 these values remained below the square roots of their AVEs, thereby confirming discriminant validity. No correlation value exceeded 0.90, avoiding any concerns of multicollinearity and confirming that each construct maintains its conceptual distinctiveness within the model. In summary, the results of the Fornell-Larcker test confirm that all constructs including informativeness (INF), interactivity (INT), trendiness (T), personalization (P), and word-of-mouth (WOM) possess adequate discriminant validity. This ensures that each construct measures a unique aspect of social media marketing and social commerce engagement, supporting the integrity of the measurement model and justifying progression to structural model analysis.

The discriminant validity of the constructs was further assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, an increasingly recommended method in contemporary structural equation modeling to evaluate construct distinctiveness. As per established guidelines, HTMT values should generally be below 0.85 to confirm acceptable discriminant validity. The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate that all HTMT values among the latent constructs fall well within the acceptable range. For instance, the HTMT value between decision confidence (DC) and personalization (P) is 0.774, while the value between interactivity (INT) and trendiness (T) stands at 0.778, both indicating

relatively strong yet acceptable relationships. Similarly, moderate associations were observed between learning from forums and communities (LFC) and learning from ratings and reviews (LRR) at 0.757, and between decision confidence (DC) and learning from social advertisement (LSA) at 0.811. Despite these moderately high correlations, all remain below the critical threshold of 0.85, confirming discriminant validity across the model's constructs.

Notably, weaker correlations appeared between constructs such as informativeness (INF) and learning from forums and communities (LFC) at 0.181, and between word-of-mouth (WOM) and interactivity (INT) at 0.353, indicating conceptual separation between these dimensions of social media engagement and decision-making behavior. Overall, these results confirm that each construct in the model captures a distinct aspect of the theoretical framework including dimensions such as informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, word-of-mouth, and various forms of social learning thereby ensuring the integrity and validity of the measurement model and supporting its suitability for further structural model evaluation.

Table 5 structural model was evaluated through hypothesis testing by examining the path coefficients, standard deviations, t-statistics, and P-values associated with each proposed relationship. The results indicate that all eight hypotheses were statistically supported, confirming the proposed associations within the conceptual framework. Firstly, decision confidence (DC) was found to have a significant and positive influence on all three dimensions of social commerce learning engagement. Specifically, DC strongly influenced learning from forums and communities (LFC) with a path coefficient of 0.600 ($t = 16.415$, $P < 0.001$), learning from ratings and reviews (LRR) with a coefficient of 0.613 ($t = 17.520$, $P < 0.001$), and learning from social advertisement (LSA) with the highest path coefficient of 0.818 ($t = 31.394$, $P < 0.001$). These results affirm the critical role of decision confidence in shaping consumers' social commerce

Table 3: Discriminant validity of fornell and larker

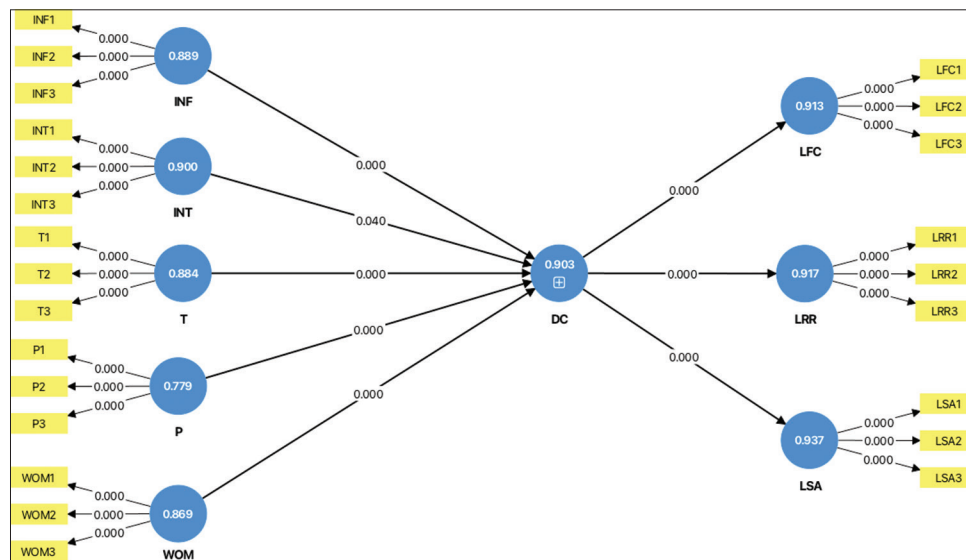
	DC	INF	INT	LFC	LRR	LSA	P	T	WOM
DC	0.812								
INF	0.492	0.878							
INT	0.701	0.549	0.888						
LFC	0.6	0.181	0.456	0.904					
LRR	0.613	0.237	0.512	0.753	0.908				
LSA	0.818	0.362	0.69	0.616	0.699	0.931			
P	0.774	0.362	0.778	0.62	0.725	0.735	0.881		
T	0.732	0.504	0.778	0.439	0.497	0.731	0.801	0.872	
WOM	0.485	0.2	0.355	0.372	0.324	0.397	0.639	0.325	0.855

Table 4: Discriminant validity of the HTMT criterion

	DC	INF	INT	LFC	LRR	LSA	P	T	WOM
DC									
INF	0.511								
INT	0.714	0.548							
LFC	0.59	0.181	0.456						
LRR	0.608	0.237	0.512	0.757					
LSA	0.811	0.36	0.691	0.617	0.7				
P	0.774	0.38	0.804	0.631	0.731	0.724			
T	0.744	0.507	0.778	0.44	0.498	0.632	0.829		
WOM	0.552	0.203	0.353	0.373	0.322	0.397	0.8	0.324	

Table 5: Structural model hypothesis testing and results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Co-efficient	SD	T-statistics	P-values	Result
H ₁	DC->LFC	0.6	0.032	16.415	0	Accepted
H ₂	DC->LRR	0.613	0.031	17.52	0	Accepted
H ₃	DC->LSA	0.818	0.023	31.394	0	Accepted
H ₄	INF->DC	0.254	0.033	5.065	0	Accepted
H ₅	INT->DC	0.525	0.048	2.049	0.04	Accepted
H ₆	P->DC	0.826	0.034	11.144	0	Accepted
H ₇	T->DC	0.477	0.045	4.798	0	Accepted
H ₈	WOM->DC	0.363	0.031	3.719	0	Accepted

Figure 1: SEM model

engagement behaviors. As illustrated in Figure 1, the structural equation model (SEM) outlines the relationships among social media marketing constructs and decision confidence.

Moreover, several factors were found to significantly predict decision confidence (DC) itself. informativeness (INF) had a positive effect on DC, with a path coefficient of 0.254 ($t = 5.065$, $P < 0.001$). Likewise, interactivity (INT) significantly influenced DC, with a path coefficient of 0.525 ($t = 2.049$, $P = 0.040$), and personalization (P) showed a particularly strong effect on DC at 0.826 ($t = 11.144$, $P < 0.001$). Additionally, trendiness (T) contributed positively to DC with a coefficient of 0.477 ($t = 4.798$, $P < 0.001$), while word-of-mouth (WOM) also demonstrated a significant positive impact with a coefficient of 0.363 ($t = 3.719$, $P < 0.001$). In summary, the findings substantiate all hypothesized relationships within the proposed model, highlighting the pivotal mediating role of decision confidence between key social media marketing features and social commerce engagement behaviors. The consistently significant results underscore the importance of factors like informativeness, interactivity, personalization, trendiness, and word-of-mouth in enhancing consumers' confidence in their online purchase decisions, which in turn drives engagement with various forms of social commerce learning.

5. DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore the relationship between social media marketing attributes and consumers' decision confidence in online

purchase environments, with a specific focus on the mediating role of social commerce engagement activities (Chen et al., 2017; Yadav and Rahman, 2018). The results obtained from the data analysis, particularly through structural equation modeling, offer valuable insights into how various attributes of social media marketing contribute to consumers' confidence in making online shopping decisions (Chen et al., 2017). The findings confirm that attributes such as informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth significantly influence consumers' engagement behaviors on social commerce platforms, which subsequently enhance their decision confidence (Chen et al., 2017). The analysis revealed that among the mediating variables, learning from ratings and reviews and learning from social advertisements played particularly influential roles in mediating the relationship between social media marketing attributes and decision confidence. This outcome aligns with existing literature that highlights the growing importance of peer-generated content and targeted advertising in online consumer behavior (Hutter et al., 2013). Ratings and reviews provide prospective buyers with firsthand experiences of other consumers, reducing uncertainty and increasing their confidence in making purchase decisions. Similarly, personalized and engaging advertisements on social media platforms effectively capture consumer interest and convey relevant information, thereby contributing to greater decision assurance.

The study also emphasizes the importance of personalization and interactivity in fostering social commerce engagement.

Personalization, by delivering content and recommendations tailored to individual preferences, enhances the relevance of marketing messages and makes consumers feel valued. Interactivity, through features such as live chats, polls, interactive stories, and Q&A sessions, facilitates two-way communication between consumers and brands, thereby increasing consumer involvement and trust (Puspanathan et al., 2021). These findings are consistent with earlier research suggesting that engaging, personalized digital experiences encourage consumers to actively participate in online communities, which positively affects their confidence in purchasing decisions. In addition to its practical significance, the study contributes to the theoretical understanding of social commerce behavior (Wang and Yu, 2017). By empirically validating a framework that connects social media marketing attributes with decision confidence through social commerce engagement, the research supports the applicability of social influence theory and social learning theory in digital marketing contexts. The significant role of peer-generated content, user interactions, and social learning opportunities in shaping online consumer confidence highlights the importance of informational and normative influences in contemporary consumer decision-making processes (Gu and Duan, 2024).

Furthermore, the demographic distribution of the study's respondents provides valuable contextual insight. The predominance of middle-aged participants, particularly those aged 25-44 years, corresponds with the demographic group most actively engaged in online shopping and social media usage in India's urban centers. The findings also revealed Instagram and Facebook as the most preferred platforms for online shopping-related activities (Thangavel et al., 2021). This preference underscores the strategic importance of these platforms for businesses targeting urban Indian consumers, given their extensive reach and ability to deliver personalized and interactive content. Despite these meaningful contributions, the study is not without limitations. The use of purposive non-probability sampling restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader Indian population, particularly rural and semi-urban consumers who may have different social media usage patterns and online shopping behaviors. Moreover, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality among the variables (Peña-García et al., 2020). Future research could adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how social media engagement and decision confidence evolve over time and in response to changes in marketing strategies or platform features. Another limitation lies in the study's aggregation of consumer behavior across multiple social media platforms without examining platform-specific nuances.

Different platforms may facilitate varying levels of engagement and influence decision confidence in distinct ways. Future studies might benefit from focusing on individual platforms to identify such differences. Additionally, the model could be extended by incorporating other mediating or moderating variables, such as trust, perceived risk, or consumer involvement, which could further elucidate the complex dynamics between social media marketing and consumer decision-making (Hashem et al., 2024). In conclusion, the study reaffirms the critical role of social media marketing attributes in shaping consumers' decision confidence

in online shopping contexts, with social commerce engagement activities acting as significant mediators in this relationship. The findings not only advance theoretical understanding but also offer practical guidance for businesses aiming to enhance consumer confidence through strategically designed social media marketing initiatives. By investing in interactive, personalized, and peer-influenced digital content, businesses can foster meaningful consumer engagement and strengthen their competitive position in the growing social commerce market.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of social media marketing attributes on consumers' decision confidence within online purchasing environments, specifically considering the mediating role of social commerce engagement. By integrating theoretical insights from social influence theory and social learning theory, the research empirically established that key marketing attributes Informativeness, Interactivity, Trendiness, Personalization, and word-of-mouth significantly shape consumer engagement and positively influence decision confidence on social commerce platforms. The analysis demonstrated that decision confidence is not only a critical consumer outcome but also an essential precursor to social commerce engagement behaviors. Among the dimensions of engagement analyzed, Learning from ratings and reviews and learning from social advertisements emerged as particularly impactful in enhancing decision confidence. These findings highlight the central role of peer-generated content and personalized, interactive advertisements in reducing decision uncertainty and fostering more assured purchase decisions within digital commerce settings.

Overall, the study offers valuable empirical evidence affirming the conceptual framework linking social media marketing attributes to decision confidence through social commerce engagement. It provides a nuanced understanding of how interactive, informative, trendy, and peer-influenced marketing strategies can enhance consumer assurance in purchase decisions, particularly within an emerging market context like urban India.

6.1. Implication

6.1.1. Theoretical implications

This study advances existing models of online consumer decision-making by integrating social commerce engagement as a mediating variable between social media marketing attributes and decision confidence. The findings affirm the applicability of social influence theory and social learning theory in explaining consumer behavior within social commerce contexts, where peer interactions, product discussions, and personalized advertisements play a formative role in shaping consumer confidence. By empirically validating a comprehensive structural model, the study adds to the growing literature on digital marketing and online consumer behavior in emerging economies. Moreover, the study highlights how different facets of social commerce engagement contribute uniquely to decision confidence, thereby offering a richer conceptualization of consumer learning and decision-making mechanisms in interactive digital environments.

6.1.2. Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer actionable insights for digital marketers, brand strategists, and e-commerce platforms: Personalization and interactivity should be prioritized in social media marketing campaigns, as these attributes exert the strongest influence on consumer decision confidence. User-generated content, particularly product reviews, ratings, and peer discussions, must be actively encouraged and prominently displayed, as they serve as credible, trusted information sources that directly enhance consumer assurance in their purchase decisions. Marketers should invest in dynamic, socially endorsed advertisements that combine informativeness with trendiness to capture consumer interest and improve decision-making outcomes. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, identified as highly favored by urban consumers in this study, should be central to marketing strategies targeting India's digitally active, middle-income urban segments. By focusing on these strategic levers, brands can reduce consumer decision uncertainty, improve customer satisfaction, and foster sustained engagement within social commerce environments.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

While this study makes meaningful contributions to the understanding of how social media marketing attributes influence consumer decision confidence through social commerce engagement, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the use of purposive, non-probability sampling focused primarily on urban respondents limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader Indian population, particularly rural and semi-urban consumers whose social media usage patterns, engagement behaviors, and online shopping preferences may differ substantially. Future research should consider adopting probability-based sampling techniques and including a more demographically diverse sample to enhance the representativeness and external validity of the results. Secondly, the study's cross-sectional design restricts its ability to establish causality among the variables. Consumer perceptions and decision-making behaviors on social media are dynamic and may evolve over time in response to changes in marketing strategies, digital platform features, or social influence trends. Longitudinal studies tracking consumer behavior over extended periods would offer valuable insights into how decision confidence develops or fluctuates in relation to ongoing social media marketing initiatives.

Additionally, while this research examined social commerce engagement as a mediating construct, it aggregated engagement behaviors across various social media platforms without considering platform-specific differences. Given that each platform offers unique features, user demographics, and engagement mechanics, future studies could benefit from investigating platform-specific effects to determine how engagement and decision confidence are influenced differently on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or emerging channels like WhatsApp Business. Moreover, the current model did not account for potential moderating variables such as consumer trust, perceived risk, privacy concerns, or digital literacy, which may influence the strength or direction of the relationships explored. Incorporating these factors in future research could provide a

more nuanced understanding of the boundary conditions under which social media marketing attributes enhance decision confidence. Lastly, comparative research examining cross-cultural, generational, or regional differences in social commerce engagement and decision-making behaviors would offer valuable perspectives, especially within a culturally diverse and rapidly digitizing market like India. By addressing these limitations, future studies can deepen theoretical insights and inform more targeted, context-sensitive social media marketing strategies for diverse consumer segments.

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