

The Dynamic Role of Customer Experience in Shaping the Social Media Marketing-Purchase Intention Relationship: An S-O-R Perspective

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore the impact of social media marketing activities on purchase intention on millennials, with a particular focus on how customer experience mediates this relationship. The research applies the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, the research seeking to explicate the mechanisms through which social media marketing influences purchase intention.

Design/methodology/approach: Data were collected from 329 participants in Jharkhand, India who actively engage on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure involvement of relevant respondents. To analyze the data Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4 was used.

Place and duration of Study: The study, conducted between March and May 2024, targeted social media users in Jharkhand, particularly in East Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Ranchi, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Hazaribagh, Khunti, and Deogarh.

Findings: The analysis reveals that Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) has a strong and positive influence on Purchase Intention (PI) and Customer Experience (CE). The link was established as means to both directly and indirectly, through Customer Experiences (CE). Positive customer experiences significantly enhance purchase intention, highlighting the pivotal role of customer experience in the efficacy of social media marketing.

Originality/value: Testing the relationship between customer experience as a mediator between Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) and Purchase Intention (PI). The application of the S-O-R model offers a novel perspective on understanding consumer behavior in the context of social media marketing. The findings underscore the importance for businesses to focus on creating positive customer experiences through their social media marketing strategies to drive purchase intentions in Jharkhand.

Keywords: Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs), Purchase Intention (PI), Customer Experience (CE)

Introduction

In the era of information technology, the pace of business development is swift. Entrepreneurs are actively leveraging social media platforms and the internet for the sale of their products and services. The challenge lies in establishing a distinctive brand image to set one apart from competitors. Recent years have witnessed a surge in online platforms aimed at promoting products and influencing consumer purchasing decisions. These channels sprouted due to technological advancements (Aswani et al., 2018). Recent studies highlighted that forming online connections through social media is an evolving advertising tactic to reach broader audiences (McClure, C & Seock, Y.K. 2020; Wang et al., 2019). The proliferation of diverse social media platforms can be attributed to advancements in communication technology, prompting marketers to engage, connect, and cooperate with their social audience (Mnif et al., 2021). Many companies are integrating social media into their marketing strategies, attracted by its potential benefits like the surging number of internet users and the convenience and speed of online connectivity (Debnath et al., 2021; McCarthy et al., 2023). Marketers are enticed by the realm of social media marketing due to the vast expanse of the internet and the rapid increase in social media users (Reveilhac & Blanchard 2022; Saheb et al., 2021). Studies indicate that social media significantly impacts customer purchasing behavior and the promotion of new products or services. Individuals often turn to social platforms to gather essential information about businesses (Kar & Kushwaha 2023). As social media platforms expand globally, businesses are increasingly focused on improving customer interactions through these digital channels. Customer experience, a strategic initiative aimed at nurturing positive behaviors and fostering customer loyalty, significantly influences how customers perceive and trust a company. Academic sources emphasize the importance of customer experience (CE) in assessing services (Amoako et al., 2021). The perception of a product or service's value by customers is molded by their firsthand encounters. This, in turn, can significantly sway their decision to make a purchase. Customer experiences are often shaped by interactions between businesses and clients, which unfold gradually across various channels (Klaus & 2013). The advancement of social media platforms has significantly changed how customer experience management is approached. These platforms offer a plethora of opportunities to foster positive interactions that lay the foundation for enduring relationships. Tasks such as sharing product information, facilitating purchases, and coordinating deliveries play a pivotal role in this transformative landscape. One plausible explanation for this shift may stem from the limited experience many businesses have in catering to online clientele. Previous studies on social media marketing activities (SMMAAs)

have predominantly focused on unravelling the impact of SMM on consumers' purchase behaviors. Prior studies have focused on exploring the immediate effects of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) on consumer behavior. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of research examining how SMMAs impact purchasing decisions. (Mason et al., 2021). **This study aims to explore the correlation between social media marketing activities (SMMAs) and Purchase Intention (PI) through the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory.** Essentially, this theory explains how external cues can mold individuals' cognitive and emotional states, consequently influencing their behaviors. We hypothesize that the relationship between SMMAs (stimuli) and PI (response) is sequentially and positively influenced by CE (Organism).

Literature Review

Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs)

SMMAs have been categorized into five groups as identified by (Kim & Ko 2010): Entertainment (ENT), Interaction (INT), Customization (CUS), Informativeness (IFT), and electronic word of mouth (e-WoM). An investigation delved into how these elements influence consumer buying choices. Existing literature highlights a research gap concerning these aspects in the Jharkhand region. Companies now leverage various visual mediums like photos, videos, and more to showcase their products and services. Social media acts as a significant platform for customers to share product reviews and engage with brands (Kim et al., 2021). It is recognized as a vital tool for both building relationships and promoting business communication strategies. Through the provision of valuable content, companies can anticipate consumer behavior, enhance brand visibility, attract new clientele, boost revenues, and foster brand loyalty (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Research findings suggest that the impact of SMMAs on consumer's PI is significant (Anas et al., 2023).

Customer Experience (CE)

The notion of customer experience comprises various aspects, including how customers behave, think, feel, perceive, and socially interact in response to marketing influences (Schallehn et al., 2019). Customer experiences represent significant events involving the interactions and relations between customers and a specific business or entity. The intention of customers to make a purchase can be swayed by a delightful sensory experience (Garg et al., 2014). Customer experience encompasses how customers react subjectively and behaviorally to brand-related cues inherent in a brand's design. Marketing integration of

customer experience involves customer satisfaction, equity, and relationship management. The customer experience journey spans from pre-purchase to purchase and post-purchase stages. Throughout various stages of this specific journey, customers interact with different touchpoints that depend on the nature of the product or service. These touchpoints fall into categories of partner-owned, brand-owned, or customer-owned. The emotional aspect plays a critical role in consumers' decision-making processes across different products and services (Nardini & Lutz 2018). Creating a range of customer experiences is a marketing initiative that involves engaging the senses and prioritizing customer satisfaction. Experiences influenced by sensory inputs are shaped by the surroundings (Pei et al., 2020). The primary goal of crafting customer experiences is to deliver top-notch services that meet clients' expectations (Gorgoglione & Panniello 2018).

Purchase Intention (PI)

PI stands for the depth of emotional investment a consumer holds toward obtaining a specific product or service. (Zeithaml et al., 1996); Morrison, D. G. 1979). It is commonly referred to as the probability of a consumer buying a product based on their perceived benefits, emotions, and interactions (Morwitz, V (2012). In the domain of social media marketing, (Edy Yulianto Putra & Tasya 2023) defines PI as the inclination and readiness of a social networking site user to make a purchase based on a product recommendation. PI stands as a critical element in the realm of marketing, assuming a significant role in assessing and predicting consumer behavior. It relies on various factors including one's perception of the product, its price, quality, value, availability, and the overall customer experience (Gad. k, 2023). Social influence and environmental factors play a role in shaping a customer's purchase decisions according to (Halan et al.,2024). According to Schiffman and Kanuk, customers evaluate the possibility of buying a product by considering different factors. They actively seek out relevant information based on their perceptions and immediate environment. Once they accumulate a sufficient amount of knowledge, customers engage in analysis, comparison, and eventually proceed with a purchase.

SMMA, Customer Experience and Purchase Intention

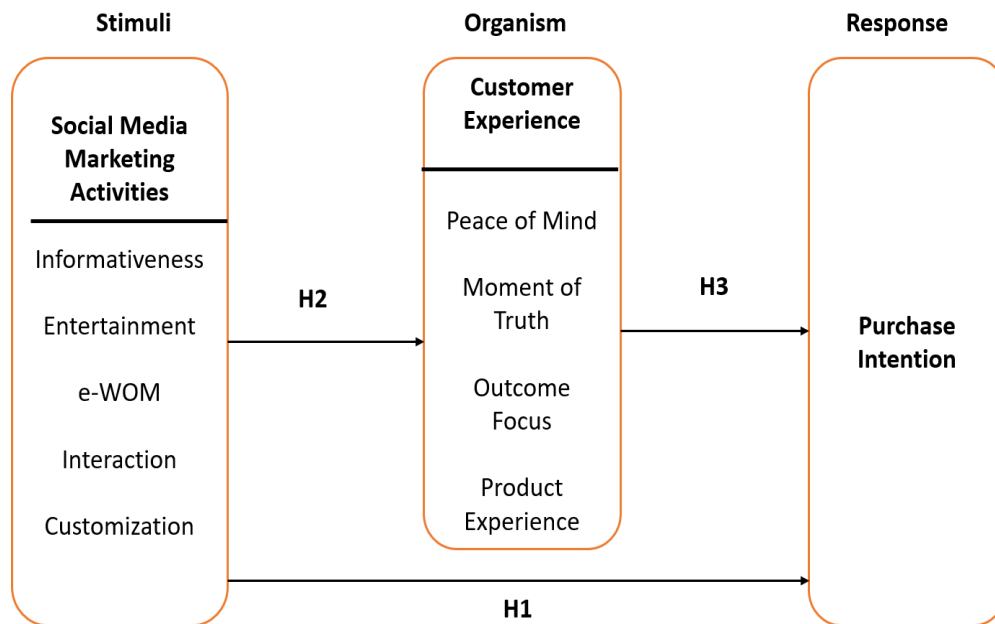
In today's world, social media plays a vital role in people's daily routines. Businesses are increasingly focusing on improving the online customer experience. The key goal is to convert website visitors into customers. Online customer experience includes how customers feel and think when interacting with products or services online. Adding photos, videos, and comparison tools on websites enhances the social and sensory aspects of user experience,

reflecting customer behavior trends. In pursuit of enhancing customer experiences and optimizing online purchasing processes per product, businesses are advised by experts cited in (Nagy & Hajdu 2021) to focus on design elements. The impact of a product's nature and a brand's trustworthiness on various aspects of customer experience, leading to altered purchasing behavior, was emphasized by (Bleier et al., 2018). Marketers, therefore, need to strategically deploy design features to create distinct encounters tailored to each product or brand. It is advisable for sellers to incorporate both educational and entertaining elements into their products, utilizing online design features to influence consumer behavior through personalized experiences specific to each item (Adisu Fanta & Ayman 2022). The way a business shares content on social media platforms greatly affects how customers interact with the brand and its offerings, potentially shaping their overall experience positively or negatively. Social media platforms play a crucial role in gathering data related to customer experience management within the customer interaction landscape.

Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory

The SOR theory, known as the Mehrabian-Russell model, emerged from environmental psychology as detailed in a seminal work (Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A., 1974). This concept posits that external stimuli (S) influence an individual's inner state. This inner state, functioning as an organism (O), guides the person's behavioral reactions (R). Furthermore, (Loureiro et al., 2020) explains that external environmental cues seep into an individual's mind, stirring up emotions that translate into inner feelings, impacts, and perceptions, subsequently shaping behavior. According to a study cited by (Islam & Rahman 2017) the term "organism" encompasses the internal mechanisms deeply rooted in an individual's perceptions and evaluations. These mechanisms transform external inputs into responses. The SOR theory holds wide relevance in the domain of social media. Furthermore, by following the S-O-R framework, the investigation delves into how Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) influence Purchase Intentions (PI) through Customer Experience (CE). This study examines stimuli like Entertainment (ENT), Interaction (INT), Customization (CUS), Informativeness (IFT), and Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WoM) as triggers (S). On the flip side, Peace of mind (POM), Moments of truth (MOT), Outcome Focus (OF), and Product experienced (PE) were utilized as CE, functioning as the organism (O), with PI representing the response (R). By showcasing the organism, these actions are set to enhance the brand experience, thus cultivating consumer-based brand value. This study also applies the SOR theory to support the proposed mediation model, illustrating how SMMAs influence purchasing intentions.

Conceptual framework and Hypothesis Development



Mediation:

H4: Social Media Marketing Activities → Customer Experience → Purchase Intention

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

Instrument development, Data Collection and Sampling

The study employed a 5-point Likert scale, spanning from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," borrowed from prior research. Table 1 outlines the operational definitions that correlate with the conceptual framework. To study the impact of SMMA on PI, researchers used purposive sampling to select participants with relevant knowledge. **Researcher has collected the data from millennials** who have an active social media presence on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or WhatsApp. For this study, questionnaire creation was tailored based on past evaluations. The questionnaire featured two sections: one aimed at gathering personal details from consumers through multiple-choice questions covering gender, age, education, profession, location, income, preferred social platforms, and daily social media usage hours. The second part introduced a user-friendly five-point Likert scale for intuitive responses. The study, conducted between March and May 2024, targeted social media users in Jharkhand, particularly in East Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Ranchi, Ramgarh,

Bokaro, Hazaribagh, Khunti, and Deogarh. Out of the 388 collected responses via Google Form, 59 were deemed invalid due to short completion times and consistent answers, leaving 329 valid submissions.

Table I: operational definitions

Variables	Dimensions	Measurement Scale
Social Media Marketing	Informativeness	Kumar et al., (2022); Gad, K.(2023)
	Entertainment	Kumar et al., (2022); Gad, K.(2023)
	eWOM	Maslim et al.,(2021)
	Trendiness	Anas et al.,(2023)
	Interactive	Moslehpour et al., (2021)
	Customization	Godey et al.,(2016), Klaus, P. P., & Maklan, S. (2013)
Mediator Variable: Customer Experience		Kumar et al., (2022), Klaus, P. 'Phil,' & Maklan, S. (2013)
Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention		Alalwan, A. A. (2018, Han, J. H., & Kim, H. M. (2019)

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Procedure

The research hypotheses were analyzed using SPSS version 25 and SmartPLS 4. Data analysis employed PLS-SEM, with a two-step approach to assess both measurement and structural models.

Respondent Demographic's profile

The dataset in Table 2 offers a detailed overview of a sample population, indicating that 54.71% are female, while 45.29% are male. The majority fall within the 31 to 35 age group (32.52%). A significant portion hold postgraduate degrees (34.04%). Professionally, 33.43% work in private sector roles, with 27.66% in other fields. Income distribution shows that 27.05% earn between 30001 and 40000 monthly, reflecting a predominance in the middle income range. Instagram (28.57%) and Facebook (27.05%) emerge as the most favored social networking platforms. Usage-wise, 33.13% allocate 1 to 3 hours daily to social media, with notable engagement observed in the 3 to 5-hour range (29.18%). This data underscores demographic trends, educational attainment, professional roles, income levels, and social media habits within the sample.

Table II: Respondents' demographic profile.

Profile	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	149	45.29
	Female	180	54.71
	Others	0	0.00
Age	25 to 30	71	21.58
	31 to 35	107	32.52
	36 to 40	88	26.75
	41 to 45	63	19.15
Educational background	<10 th	23	6.98
	Intermediate	68	20.63
	Graduate	94	28.58
	Post Graduate	112	34.04
Profession	>PG	32	9.77
	Student	29	8.81
	Govt. Job	56	17.02
	Private Job	110	33.43
	Entrepreneur / Own Business	43	13.08
Monthly Income	Others	91	27.66
	Less than 10000	34	10.33
	10001 – 20000	56	17.02
	20001 – 30000	61	18.54
	30001 – 40000	89	27.05
	40001 – 50000	41	12.46
Preferred Social Networking Site	More than 50000	48	14.59
	Facebook	89	27.05
	Instagram	94	28.57
	You – tube	77	23.40
Hours spend every day	WhatsApp	69	20.97
	Less than 1 hour	66	20.06
	1 - 3 hours	109	33.13
	3 - 5 hours	96	29.18
	More than 5 hours	58	17.63

Common method bias

Survey research faces a challenge with common method bias (CMB), potentially skewing variable relationships and undermining research validity. To tackle this, a comprehensive full-collinearity test, as recommended by (Kock, N. 2015), was carried out given criticisms of Harman's single-factor test for its limited CMB detection capability (Jordan, P. J., & Troth, A. C., 2020). This test entails regressing a dummy variable against all study variables, ensuring variance inflation factors (VIFs) remain below 3.3. Findings revealed no CMB in this study as all VIFs stayed within the 3.3 threshold.

Measurement Model

To ensure the strength of a measurement model, it should assess internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. These assessments play a vital role in confirming that the constructs accurately represent the underlying theoretical concepts. Internal consistency evaluates the reliability by checking the correlation between items within each construct to ensure they measure the same concept (Dinev & Hart 2004). Table 3 demonstrates that all ten factors exceeded the set benchmarks: factor loads over 0.721, Composite Reliability higher than 0.802, and Average Variance Extracted greater than 0.576 (Hair et al., (2017)). Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha, a gauge of internal consistency, also surpassed 0.789 (Fornell & Larcker 1981). Thus, the constructs' convergent validity was confirmed. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio in Tables 4 and 5. Meeting the Fornell-Larcker criterion requires the square root of the AVE measure on each construct to surpass the correlations with other constructs. Similarly, adhering to the HTMT criterion mandates that the HTMT value stays below 0.9. Consequently, discriminant validity posed no issue in this study, as demonstrated in Tables 3 and 4.

Table III: Measurement model assessment

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Informativeness	IFT1	0.789	0.831	0.876	0.639
	IFT2	0.828			
	IFT3	0.767			
	IFT4	0.813			
Entertainment	ENT1	0.723	0.789	0.802	0.576
	ENT2	0.753			

Electronic	0.534	0.712	0.898							
Word of Mouth										
Interactiveness	0.732	0.671	0.747	0.861						
Customization	0.489	0.529	0.611	0.518	0.916					
Peace of mind	0.661	0.609	0.522	0.671	0.767	0.843				
Moments of truth	0.597	0.486	0.645	0.656	0.615	0.647	0.774			
Outcome focus	0.686	0.589	0.582	0.729	0.626	0.593	0.724	0.804		
Product experience	0.598	0.676	0.676	0.537	0.748	0.682	0.648	0.598	0.767	
Purchase Intention	0.724	0.691	0.759	0.812	0.657	0.742	0.657	0.773	0.691	0.908

Table V: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Informativeness										
Entertainment	0.628									
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.531	0.741								
Interactiveness	0.714	0.628	0.712							
Customization	0.479	0.581	0.629	0.596						
Peace of mind	0.678	0.682	0.564	0.673	0.792					
Moments of truth	0.509	0.474	0.619	0.623	0.657	0.697				
Outcome focus	0.651	0.567	0.542	0.765	0.676	0.594	0.753			
Product experience	0.587	0.639	0.667	0.522	0.748	0.677	0.682	0.583		
Purchase Intention	0.779	0.668	0.764	0.81	0.693	0.762	0.682	0.748	0.633	

Structural Model

The research model's goodness-of-fit was determined through the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), yielding a value of 0.057, below the widely accepted 0.08 threshold (Henseler et al., 2016), indicating a strong fit. For hypothesis validation, a

bootstrapping procedure employing 5000 resamples was executed to derive standard errors and t values. The study's comprehensive model findings are detailed in Table 6. Notably, social media marketing exhibited a significant positive impact on Purchase Intentions ($\beta = 0.351, p < 0.001$), confirming H1. Subsequently, the analysis indicated a favourable link between SMMAs and CE ($\beta = 0.454, p < 0.001$), confirming H2. Additionally, the research supported the strong correlation between CE ($\beta = 0.517, p < 0.001$) and PI, thus confirming H3. This study examined the mediation effects by evaluating relationships directly and indirectly (Hair et al., (2017)). The findings discovered that CE fully mediated the relationships between SMMAs and PI. These in addition, an indirect effect created by social media marketing on purchase intention, mediated by customer experience ($\beta = 0.059, p < 0.001$), thus H4 supported.

Table VI: Structural model results

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Value	p-Value	5.0% CI	95.0% CI	Decision
H1	0.351	0.077	4.55	<0.001	0.21	0.49	Supported
H2	0.454	0.061	7.44	<0.001	0.33	0.57	Supported
H3	0.517	0.082	6.30	<0.001	0.34	0.66	Supported
H4	0.228	0.059	3.86	<0.001	0.12	0.32	Supported

Discussion

This study explores the impact of SMMAs on PI and CE, emphasizing the role of CE as a mediator in linking SMMAs with PI. By employing structural equation modeling (SEM), we verified four crucial hypotheses that shed light on these connections. The research outcomes demonstrate that the use of social media for marketing significantly influences the intention to make a purchase (H1: $\beta=0.35, p<0.001$), indicating that effectively implemented social media strategies have the potential to directly enhance consumer's purchase intent. The robust path coefficient emphasizes the crucial role of social media in shaping consumer behavior, echoing prior studies that emphasize its impact on purchase intention. This finding aligns consistently with existing research citing social media as a potent force driving consumer behavior (Dwivedi, A., & Kushwaha, S., 2023). We identified a notable positive correlation between social media marketing and customer experience (H2: $\beta = 0.45, p < 0.001$). This discovery suggests that effectively executed social media campaigns can enhance customers' overall interaction with a brand. Improved customer experiences often

result in increased satisfaction and loyalty, key factors for maintaining long-term business prosperity. This outcome aligns with research emphasizing the significance of customer engagement via social media in enhancing customer experiences (Malthouse, et al., 2013); (Kaur et al., 2020). The study provides evidence that customer experience has a significant impact on purchase intention (H3: $\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that positive customer experiences boost the likelihood of customers intending to buy from a specific brand. This aligns with previous research suggesting that positive customer experiences play a crucial role in strengthening purchase intentions and actual buying behavior (Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C., 2016). The data underscores the pivotal role of customer experience as a mediator between social media marketing and purchase intention (H4: $\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$). This mediation suggests that social media marketing impacts purchase intention directly and indirectly through its influence on customer experience. The existence of a dual pathway highlights the far-reaching impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer behavior.

Theoretical and Managerial contributions

This research study makes various contributions. Firstly, it explores how SMMAs influence consumer PI through CE in Jharkhand. The research findings emphasize how social media marketing impacts purchase intentions both directly and indirectly by enhancing customer experiences. This underscores the significance of including customer experience as a key mediating factor in the link between marketing initiatives and consumer behavior. Additionally, the study validates the proposed model within the framework of stimulus-organism-response theory (Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A., 1974). The previous research primarily concentrated on factors like brand trust, brand experience, brand love, and purchase inclination in connection to perceived social media marketing activities (Koay et al., 2023). Consequently, our investigation indicates that social media marketing activities, as external stimuli, impact consumers' psychological states (customer experience), ultimately influencing their purchase intent (Jacoby, J., 2002).

The research findings provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to utilize social media effectively in improving consumer purchase intentions and brand experience. Prioritizing the creation of engaging and relevant content is essential. It not only enhances customer experience but also attracts potential customers and fosters a positive brand perception, consequently increasing purchase intentions. Additionally, Engagement and consistent monitoring of social media platforms are essential for the progress.

Addressing customer feedback and inquiries promptly can enhance customer experience, fostering stronger loyalty and encouraging increased purchase intentions. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating customer experience improvements within social media marketing strategies. It is crucial for businesses to view customer experience as a key component of their marketing efforts to achieve better results and maintain a competitive edge in the digital landscape. This holistic approach enables businesses to cultivate lasting relationships with customers, ultimately driving sustained success in the market.

Conclusion, Limitation and Future Prospect

This research delves into how social media marketing impacts millennials' purchase intent and customer experience in Jharkhand. The findings suggest that the impact of social media marketing on purchase intent is significant, influencing it both directly and indirectly through customer experiences. Effective strategies not only draw potential customers but also enhance their brand interaction, boosting purchase intent. Furthermore, customer experience acts as a crucial intermediary in this dynamic, stressing the need for compelling and relevant content to engage users.

Despite offering valuable insights, this study faces several limitations. The sample is confined to millennials in Jharkhand, possibly hindering the applicability of the findings to other demographics or regions. Furthermore, relying on mainstream social networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp further narrows the scope, potentially neglecting the impact of emerging platforms. Future investigations could overcome these constraints by incorporating a more diverse sample that encompasses various age groups, regions, and product categories. Longitudinal studies may delve deeper into the lasting impacts of social media marketing on consumer behavior. Delving into other moderating factors, such as cultural influences or individual traits, may also enhance the comprehension of the interplay between social media marketing, customer experience, and purchasing intent.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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