

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour

MBA dissertation | Introduction and Literature Review

PRACTICE ORDER · NO PAYMENT

This is a practice writing sample, not a completed empirical dissertation. No respondents, results or institutional approvals are invented. Blue-green note boxes identify details the student must supply. APA 7th author-date citations are used; the visual layout is a decorated portfolio style rather than a university submission template.

Student: [Insert name] Registration number: [Insert number]

Institution: [Insert institution] Supervisor: [Insert supervisor]

Study setting, product category and fieldwork period: to be confirmed

What this sample contains

Pages	Content
2–6	Chapter 1: context, problem, objectives, scope and significance
7–14	Chapter 2: theories, thematic evidence, critique, framework and gap
15	References: ten genuine academic sources

The central argument is that exposure to social media is not the same as a purchase. Useful information, trust and social influence may explain why some marketing messages affect intentions, while affordability and practical constraints help explain why intentions do not always become purchases.

Before submission

Confirm the topic boundary and research design with the supervisor. Add a recent, context-specific literature search, apply the institution's formatting rules, and replace every bracketed field. The review below is a selective foundation, not a claim to cover all studies published up to 2026.

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Consumer decisions increasingly take place in settings where commercial messages appear beside conversations, reviews and personal recommendations. A person may notice a product in a short video, ask friends about it, compare comments and then buy from a website or a physical shop. These activities are connected, but they are not identical. A campaign can attract attention without changing a decision, and a recommendation can influence a purchase without producing a visible response to the brand's post.

Appel et al. (2020) describe social media as an interconnected environment involving consumers, firms and other actors, rather than a single advertising channel. This distinction matters for the present study. The consumer encounters both content a company controls and content it does not control. A positive advertisement may be followed by a negative customer account; a useful review may receive less attention than an entertaining but inaccurate post. Marketing therefore operates within an exchange of information whose meaning is partly shaped by users.

Stephen (2016) reviews research on digital consumer culture, advertising, digital environments, mobile settings and online word of mouth. His review shows why a study of buying behaviour should look beyond messages produced by firms. Consumers contribute information, interpret other people's experiences and decide which sources deserve attention. The relevant issue is not simply whether a respondent uses social media, but what the respondent does with product information found there.

For an MBA dissertation, this topic brings together a practical marketing problem and a question about consumer decision-making. Firms need to judge whether content builds confidence, whether interaction answers genuine concerns and whether visible popularity has any connection with buying. This study proposes to examine these relationships at the consumer level. It treats purchase intention and reported purchase behaviour as separate outcomes and avoids assuming that either can be inferred from likes, views or follower counts.

Student research needed

Insert a short description of the selected market and product category, supported by current local evidence. Do not add audience or market-size figures without a dated, traceable source.

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

1.2 Research problem and rationale

The research problem is a mismatch between what social media makes easy to observe and what a marketer needs to understand. Comments and reactions are visible, whereas the consumer's evaluation, budget and eventual purchase may not be. A respondent may enjoy an advertisement but reject the product because it costs too much. Another may trust a recommendation and buy later, without following the brand. Treating engagement as buying behaviour would hide both cases.

Existing research offers several explanations for influence. Kim and Ko (2012) identify dimensions of perceived social media marketing activity in luxury fashion. Erkan and Evans (2016) connect the characteristics and acceptance of electronic word-of-mouth information with purchase intention. Lou and Yuan (2019) examine trust in influencer-generated branded content. These approaches are useful, but they do not describe the same type of communication or the same outcome. Their results should not be combined as if all social media exposure were one uniform treatment.

The proposed dissertation asks how perceived marketing activity relates to consumers' evaluations and buying responses in a clearly defined setting. Its rationale is that the same message may have different value for different consumers. Someone researching an unfamiliar product may use detailed explanations, while an experienced buyer may check only price or availability. A recommendation from a familiar person may be persuasive for one purchase and irrelevant for another. The study should therefore record context rather than treating variation as random noise.

The word "impact" in the title needs careful handling. A one-time questionnaire can identify associations, but it cannot establish that marketing caused a purchase. Consumers already interested in a brand may seek its posts, and platforms may show advertisements to people predicted to buy. Gordon et al. (2019) demonstrate why observational advertising estimates can differ from randomized experimental results. Unless the student adopts a suitable experimental or longitudinal design, the findings should be reported as relationships and respondent perceptions, not proven causal effects.

Design decision

Insert the approved research design and explain what it can establish. If the design is cross-sectional, retain the causal limitation above in the methodology, findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

1.3 Aim, objectives and questions

The aim is to examine the relationship between social media marketing and consumer buying behaviour in the selected study setting, with attention to information usefulness, trust and the difference between intending to buy and reporting a purchase. This aim is deliberately narrower than assessing whether social media marketing is effective in every market. The unit of analysis is the individual consumer, not the brand's campaign dashboard.

Research objective	Matching research question
O1. Describe the forms of product-related social media communication respondents encounter.	RQ1. What types of communication do respondents report encountering and using?
O2. Examine perceived marketing activity in relation to information usefulness and trust.	RQ2. How are perceived marketing activity, usefulness and trust related?
O3. Assess the relationship of usefulness and trust with purchase intention.	RQ3. How do usefulness and trust relate to consumers' purchase intentions?
O4. Distinguish purchase intention from reported purchase behaviour.	RQ4. What differences appear between intentions and reported purchases?
O5. Consider affordability, product involvement and prior brand experience.	RQ5. How do these contextual factors help explain differences in buying responses?

The objectives follow a sequence: identify the communication, examine the consumer's evaluation, and then consider the buying response. This prevents an overly broad question about "social media influence" from becoming a collection of unrelated questionnaire items. Brand posts, peer recommendations and sponsored influencer content should be distinguished because consumers may judge their motives and reliability differently.

The study should also allow for negative or absent relationships. A message may be useful without being persuasive, and distrust may reduce willingness to buy. Objectives that assume a positive effect in advance would make the analysis circular. The questionnaire and interpretation should leave room for consumers who do not rely on social media when choosing products.

Student research needed

Specify the target population and product category in the aim. Keep each question consistent with the approved questionnaire and the analysis that the student can actually conduct.

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

1.4 Scope and key definitions

The proposed scope is adult consumers who use social media and can recall product-related content within a defined period. The final geographical boundary, age range, product category and recruitment method must be agreed before data collection. A focused category is preferable to asking respondents to think about all purchases at once. Buying a low-cost snack and choosing a laptop involve different levels of information search, risk and financial commitment.

Social media marketing is used here to describe firm-related activity communicated through social media, including brand content, paid promotion and sponsored creator content. Electronic word of mouth refers to consumers' online product-related communication. The two can overlap, but they should not be treated as interchangeable. A genuine peer review is not the same source as a sponsored recommendation, even when both appear in the same feed. Cheung and Thadani (2012) provide a useful account of the different elements involved in electronic word-of-mouth influence.

Consumer buying behaviour refers to decision processes and purchase-related actions. Within this study, purchase intention means a stated willingness or plan to buy a specified product within a specified period. Reported purchase behaviour means the respondent's account of having bought within the recall window. Neither is equivalent to verified transaction data. If receipts or transaction records are unavailable, the dissertation must state that the behavioural measure remains self-reported.

Information usefulness is the consumer's assessment that content helps with a buying decision. Trust is confidence in the reliability of a specified source or message, not a general feeling that social media is trustworthy. These definitions help avoid ambiguous questions. A respondent can distrust a platform's data practices while trusting a friend's product review. The survey should identify what or whom the respondent is evaluating.

Boundary to complete

Insert: [location], [eligible ages], [product category], [platforms], [recall period], [sampling frame] and [fieldwork dates]. Do not claim a representative population sample unless the recruitment design supports it.

CHAPTER 1 · INTRODUCTION

1.5 Significance and chapter structure

The study has practical value if it helps a marketer separate attention from decision support. Content that answers a product question may be more useful than content that simply creates a reaction. An account of usefulness and trust can guide decisions about explanations, response quality and disclosure. However, a consumer questionnaire should not be used to calculate campaign return on investment when it does not include credible sales and cost evidence.

The academic contribution is a context-specific examination of how established ideas fit together. The theory of planned behaviour explains intention in relation to attitudes, social expectations and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). Information adoption research explains why a person may use a recommendation (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Combining these perspectives can help distinguish accepting information from being able and willing to act on it. This is a proposed contribution, not a claim that the dissertation has already tested or improved a theory.

There is also an ethical reason to examine influence. Persuasive communication should not depend on hidden sponsorship, misleading reviews or unnecessary collection of personal information. Appel et al. (2020) discuss trust and privacy as important issues in the social media environment. The proposed study should obtain informed consent, avoid collecting account passwords or private messages, and make clear that respondents can decline participation. Institutional ethical requirements must be checked before fieldwork begins.

Chapter	Purpose in the completed dissertation
1. Introduction	Define the problem, purpose and boundaries.
2. Literature review	Compare theories and evidence; justify the framework.
3. Methodology	Explain design, sampling, measures, ethics and analysis.
4. Findings and discussion	Present actual results and compare them with prior research.
5. Conclusion	Answer the research questions, state limits and suggest next steps.

Student research needed

Add the institution's approved chapter sequence and ethics process. Chapters 3–5 are described for orientation only and are not supplied or represented as completed in this sample.

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review approach and organising logic

This chapter is a selective, theory-led review of genuine academic work. It groups studies by the mechanism they propose rather than discussing one author after another. The main themes are perceived marketing activity, information adoption, trust, social influence and the relationship between intention and purchase. The purpose is to decide which ideas can guide a feasible MBA study and where the existing evidence leaves a question open.

The sources include conceptual papers, literature reviews and empirical articles. These provide different kinds of evidence. A conceptual paper can suggest a useful direction without demonstrating an effect; a survey can estimate relationships without settling causality; an experiment can address a specific treatment but may not describe every platform or product. Reading them as interchangeable proof would overstate the review. Each theme therefore considers the outcome measured, the study context and the limits of applying the findings elsewhere.

The reference set is intentionally bounded. It includes established papers that can be verified through publisher records, university repositories or an author's manuscript. It is not a systematic review, and it does not claim that no later work exists. The student should extend it with recent studies from the chosen country, product category and platforms. The search should record databases, dates, search terms and selection rules, rather than adding references merely because their titles resemble the dissertation topic.

A useful inclusion rule is that a study must help explain an identifiable relationship in the framework. Papers about follower growth alone, for example, may be less relevant than papers that separate trust from purchase intention. Studies should also be screened for credible publication details and clear methods. The review should not exclude inconvenient findings: weak effects, null relationships and different results across settings are part of the question, not reasons to remove a paper.

Student literature search needed

Add a dated search log using the institution's databases. Record search strings, inclusion criteria and the number of papers screened. Add recent local evidence before calling the review complete.

2.2 Consumer behaviour: intention is not action

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour proposes that intention is influenced by attitude towards a behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. In buying terms, attitude concerns the evaluation of making the purchase, subjective norm concerns perceived expectations of relevant people, and perceived control concerns the ease or difficulty of carrying out the purchase. This gives the study a more precise vocabulary than the general statement that social media changes opinions.

The theory suggests several possible routes for marketing influence. Product explanations may affect evaluations; peer discussion may alter perceived social expectations; information about price or availability may affect perceived control. These are analytical applications of the theory, not findings already established in this dissertation. The questionnaire would need separate measures for these constructs to test them. A single item asking whether social media is influential would not show which route is involved.

The strongest reason for retaining perceived control is the gap between wanting and buying. A person may intend to purchase but lack money, access or confidence in the seller. A marketing message does not remove every such constraint. Ajzen (1991) distinguishes intention from behaviour and recognises the role of control. The present study should therefore avoid interpreting a high intention score as evidence that a respondent actually bought the product.

The theory also has limits as an explanation of social media experiences. A feed can trigger an unplanned purchase, and repeated exposure may operate without a fully articulated decision. An intention-based model may describe considered purchases more readily than impulsive ones. Rather than adding every possible variable, the dissertation can use the theory to justify a small number of measures and then discuss what those measures leave out. The chosen product category will affect how reasonable this decision is.

Measurement implication

Use the same target, action and time window in intention and behaviour items. For example, ask about buying the selected category in the next month and purchasing it in the stated past-month window, rather than asking about shopping in general.

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3 Social media marketing activities

Kim and Ko (2012) identify entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and word of mouth as dimensions of perceived social media marketing activity in luxury fashion. This framework is useful because it treats marketing as more than advertisement frequency. A consumer may value the enjoyment of content, the opportunity to communicate or the relevance of information. Those perceptions could differ even when consumers encounter the same brand account.

The framework should not be transferred without examining its original context. Luxury fashion relies partly on symbolic value and brand identity, which may make entertainment or trendiness especially relevant. A buyer evaluating an ordinary household product may instead focus on durability, price and practical explanations. The implication is not that the framework is unsuitable; it is that adapted items need a reason for being retained and a pilot test to check that respondents understand them.

There is a further distinction between perceived activity and objective exposure. A respondent's judgement that a brand is interactive could reflect one helpful reply, whereas a brand dashboard may record hundreds of unanswered comments. The consumer-level study can measure perceptions, but it cannot claim to audit the campaign itself. A transparent definition of the construct keeps the level of evidence consistent with the level of the conclusion.

Entertainment can also compete with decision usefulness. Content may be enjoyable without answering a question about the product. Similarly, a current trend can attract attention while making a recommendation seem temporary or commercially opportunistic. The model should therefore leave room for marketing dimensions to have different relationships with usefulness and trust. Combining all dimensions into a single score too early could hide these differences and weaken the practical interpretation.

Dimension	Question the dissertation should preserve
Interaction	Did the exchange help the respondent make a decision?
Customisation	Was the content relevant, and was the targeting acceptable?
Entertainment / trendiness	Did attention translate into useful product information?

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.4 Information adoption and electronic word of mouth

Sussman and Siegal (2003) explain information adoption through the perceived usefulness of advice. Their study examines mediated recommendations among consultants, not consumer purchases. Its value here is therefore theoretical: it explains why receiving information is different from accepting and using it. The organisational setting is a boundary on generalisation, not a reason to ignore the mechanism.

Erkan and Evans (2016) adapt information adoption ideas to social media electronic word of mouth. They develop an information acceptance model that includes information characteristics and consumers' responses to information. Their survey of 384 university students identifies quality, credibility, usefulness, adoption, information needs and attitudes towards information as relevant factors in purchase intention. This is a closer fit to the dissertation topic than organisational advice, but its student population and intention outcome remain important qualifications.

The studies support a distinction between a message being available and a message becoming part of a decision. Consumers may ignore detailed information, regard it as irrelevant or accept it without buying. Quality and credibility should also be kept separate. A clear message can come from an untrustworthy source, while a trustworthy friend may offer incomplete information. Asking separate questions allows the study to consider this difference rather than assuming that clarity automatically creates trust.

Cheung and Thadani (2012) review electronic word-of-mouth research and propose an integrative account of its influence. Their work helps explain why results can differ when studies use different sources, receivers and outcomes. It also cautions against treating all online comments as the same evidence. The dissertation should distinguish peer accounts from sponsored communication and should not use a literature review's broad synthesis as an effect estimate for the student's local sample.

Critical reading

The use of statistical modelling in a published survey does not make its relationships causal. This review uses the articles to justify constructs and plausible relationships, not to guarantee the result of a new study.

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.5 Trust, credibility and influencer content

Trust is a common explanation for why consumers act on social media information, but the object of trust needs to be specified. Hajli (2015) links social commerce constructs with trust and intention to buy. Lou and Yuan (2019) examine trust in influencers' branded posts. A consumer can trust a peer community, a creator or a seller in different ways. Treating these as one general trust score may produce a neat model while losing the distinction that matters to the buying decision.

Lou and Yuan (2019) report relationships between informative content, influencer characteristics and followers' trust in branded content, with subsequent relationships to brand awareness and purchase intentions. The study's follower sample is relevant to people already interested in influencer communication. It does not automatically describe people who avoid influencers or regard sponsored content with suspicion. The dissertation should consider recruitment bias if it samples only enthusiastic followers.

The evidence also raises a practical question about credibility. Expertise may matter when a product is technically difficult to assess, while perceived similarity may matter when the buyer wants to know whether a product fits everyday needs. These are different reasons for considering a recommendation believable. The student should not interpret popularity as proof of either. A large audience is a visible characteristic, not an independent verification of accuracy.

Trust can be damaged as well as built. Appel et al. (2020) discuss privacy concerns and changing relationships between consumers, brands and platforms. Highly personalised content might feel relevant to one person and intrusive to another. For this reason, trust should be examined alongside the respondent's perception of the message and its context. A positive-only model would miss the possibility that marketing exposure increases discomfort or makes commercial motives more noticeable.

Student measure needed

Choose whether trust refers to the message, the source or the seller. If sponsorship disclosure is measured, ask about recognised disclosure rather than assuming the respondent saw or understood it.

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.6 Social influence, engagement and purchase evidence

Social influence is often described through the visibility of other people's reactions. In the theory of planned behaviour, however, subjective norm refers to perceived social pressure rather than a count of likes (Ajzen, 1991). A consumer may see a popular post without feeling that important people expect a purchase. The dissertation should therefore avoid using engagement statistics as a substitute for a psychological measure of social influence.

Appel et al. (2020) describe an environment in which social interaction can appear throughout the consumer's decision process. This helps explain why a linear sequence from advertisement to purchase may be too simple. People can move between reviews, private discussion and shopping, or return to information search after deciding not to buy. The study can ask about a recent decision episode to preserve some of this context, while acknowledging that a recalled episode is not a direct observation of every step.

There is a similar problem in measuring marketing effectiveness. Gordon et al. (2019) compare observational approaches with large randomized advertising experiments at Facebook and find that observational methods often do not recover the experimental effects. Their study concerns advertising measurement, rather than every form of social communication, but its warning is relevant. Targeting and pre-existing interest can create a relationship between exposure and purchasing even when the advertisement is not the sole reason for the purchase.

The proposed dissertation should use modest language about its own evidence. If respondents say they bought after seeing content, the study can report that sequence and their interpretation. It should not state that the purchase would not have occurred otherwise. Where feasible, asking about prior brand familiarity, product need and price comparison may improve interpretation. These controls will not, by themselves, turn a convenience survey into a causal experiment.

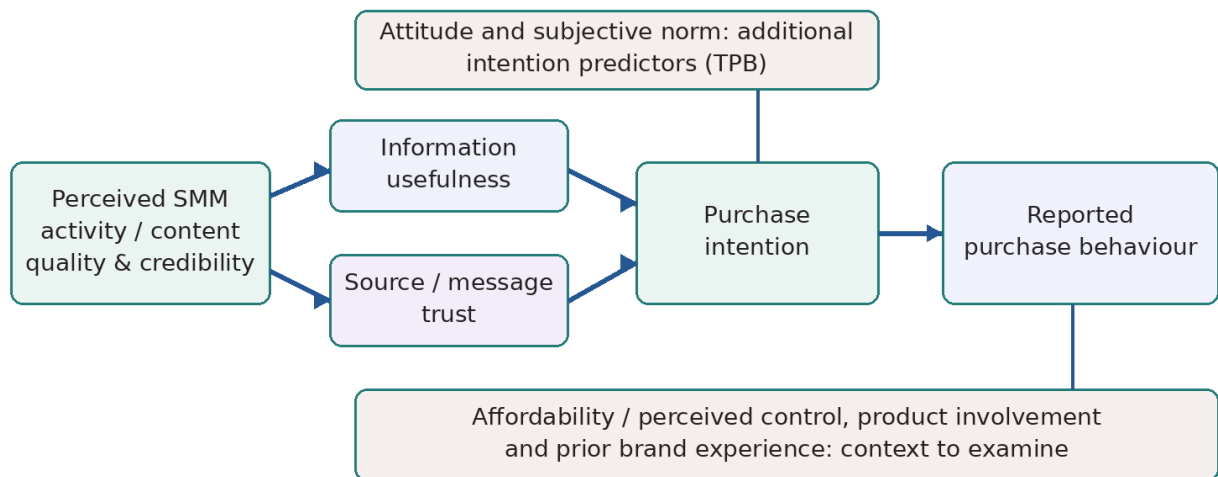
Interpretation rule

Report engagement, intention and reported behaviour separately. Do not attach a financial return to a relationship found in a consumer perception survey.

CHAPTER 2 · LITERATURE REVIEW

2.7 Proposed conceptual framework

The framework below combines a consumer evaluation pathway with the intention-behaviour distinction. It is an original synthesis for this practice proposal, informed by Ajzen (1991), Sussman and Siegal (2003), Kim and Ko (2012), Erkan and Evans (2016), Hajli (2015), and Lou and Yuan (2019). The arrows show proposed relationships for examination, not verified effects or calculated coefficients.



Proposed relationships only. SMM = social media marketing; TPB = theory of planned behaviour.

Figure 2.1. Proposed consumer-level framework. The paths are a research proposal, not an empirical result. Contextual factors may be measured as controls; moderation should be tested only if the approved design and sample support it.

Usefulness and trust are placed between marketing perceptions and intention because the literature offers reasons for examining how consumers evaluate information. The final link separates intending to buy from reporting an actual purchase. Attitude and subjective norm are shown as additional intention predictors, while perceived control is relevant to the possibility of acting. This is a selective model, not the complete reproduction of every source theory.

Student analysis needed

Confirm which paths will be tested. Keep mediation or moderation claims out of the results unless the analysis and design justify them. Insert the final measurement items and sample-size rationale in Chapter 3.

2.8 Research gap and chapter synthesis

The review identifies a bounded research opportunity rather than claiming that social media buying behaviour has never been studied. The selected literature already explains information acceptance, perceived marketing activity and trust in social commerce. What remains useful for the proposed dissertation is a context-specific comparison of these mechanisms while separating intention from reported buying. The exact local gap must be confirmed through the student's extended literature search.

The first issue is outcome choice. Erkan and Evans (2016), Hajli (2015), and Lou and Yuan (2019) examine purchase intention in the sources reviewed here. Intention matters, but it is not a transaction. A study that records both intention and a clearly bounded reported purchase can examine where the two align and where they differ. It would still need to acknowledge recall error and would not claim the same validity as independently verified sales records.

The second issue is context. Sussman and Siegal (2003) examine organisational advice, Kim and Ko (2012) examine luxury fashion, and Erkan and Evans (2016) use university students. These settings provide useful ideas without establishing that the same relationships hold for every category or consumer group. A locally grounded study can assess fit, but it must not present a small convenience sample as evidence about all Indian consumers or all social media platforms.

The third issue is explanation. Useful information and credible communication may support a buying intention, yet affordability and prior experience may change whether it is acted on. The framework gives the student a way to investigate that possibility without assuming that marketing works uniformly. Its main contribution would be a careful account of the selected consumers and purchases, including weak relationships and alternative explanations.

In summary, social media marketing should be examined as part of a decision environment, not as an automatic cause of buying. The literature supports a study of perceived activity, information evaluation and trust, with clear limits on generalisation and causality. The next chapter should explain how the student will measure these ideas, recruit participants and protect their information. Only the resulting data can determine whether the proposed relationships are supported in the chosen setting.

Gap statement to finalise

Replace the provisional context with the actual market. Add recent local studies and state exactly what they do and do not measure. Do not turn the absence of a paper in this selective reference set into proof that no relevant study exists.

APA 7TH · ACADEMIC SOURCES

References

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