

# Influence of Social Media Experience on Students' Buying Behavior

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## ABSTRACT

Each consumer purchase is unique due to varying buying behaviors and influences. Studies reflect changes in society, economics, and technology, which impact consumer behavior. A systematic analysis of knowledge in this area is crucial for future growth. Hence, the study is driven to investigate whether social media marketing experience positively influences students' buying behavior. Data from 354 randomly selected college students enrolled in a faith-based institution were analyzed. Results proved that social media marketing experiences positively influence students' buying behavior. It re-affirmed the validity of the stated theories that social media marketing is a tool which shape the behavior of the subject. Results also showed that majority of the students received a positive experience in social media marketing. It implied that social media platforms are one of the best way for businesses to use as a medium for reaching out their target customers in the context of students. Thus, it was recommended to include the kind of product and platform, as social media marketing experience and student buying behavior can change depending on the application the user is engaged on or depending on the kind of product advertised in the platform. By doing so, future studies can identify the specific behavior or experience of customers.

**Keywords:** *Social media marketing experience, social media marketing, students' buying behavior, variety-seeking buying behavior, habitual buying behavior, complex buying behavior, dissonance reducing buying behavior*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business environment, organizations must continuously adapt their strategies to foster growth and sustainability. As consumers become more informed, influencing their purchasing decisions has become increasingly challenging. Consumer behavior, shaped by factors like culture, peer influence, occupation, and pricing, significantly impacts business outcomes (White, 2020; Arnaud, 2022).

Each purchase is influenced by individual preferences and external factors, necessitating tailored marketing strategies (Radu, 2023). As consumer behavior evolves with societal, economic, and technological changes, businesses need systematic analysis to ensure continued success (Peighambari et al., 2016). Kavitha (2017) highlights the importance of

using diverse media channels for effective advertising. The rise of digital marketing, especially through social media, has revolutionized how businesses engage with consumers, enhancing brand promotion and customer service (Singh, 2020; Ku, 2023). Despite its benefits, challenges remain in effectively targeting and engaging consumers (Darji, 2018; OneUpWeb, 2023).

Research in the Philippines shows significant effects of social media marketing on consumer behavior, particularly in online shopping and rural areas (Sumague & Briones, 2022; Braza et al., 2022). However, there are still gaps in understanding its impact on various buying behaviors—Variety-Seeking, Complex, Habitual, and Dissonance-Reducing. Arellano et al. (2022) have called for further quantitative analysis to explore these effects, prompting this study to investigate how social media marketing influences students' purchasing decisions (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Thus, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of social media marketing experience of the students in terms of:
  - a. Entertainment
  - b. Stimulation
  - c. Practical use
2. What is the level of the student's buying behavior in terms of:
  - a. Variety-seeking buying behavior
  - b. Complex buying behavior
  - c. Habitual buying behavior
  - d. Dissonance reducing buying behavior
3. Is there a significant relationship of social media marketing experience and students' buying behavior?
4. Is there a significant difference in the buying behavior considering sex.

## **METHODS**

The study is correlational research which involved the collection, use, and analysis of numerical data to make predictions. It further observes patterns and averages, to test relationships among variables, to arrive at concrete results (Curtis et al., 2016).

The respondents of the study were students enrolled in a faith-based institution in the Silang, Cavite, Philippines. Respondents have ages, ranging from 18 to 25 years.

Sample size was obtained through stratified random sampling (Alvi, 2016). The sample was 354 out of the 3,040 students who were enrolled during the first term for the Academic Year 2023-2024. The sample size was considered to be a good number in relation to the strength of the data, according to Rehman et al. (2019).

This study utilized an adapted survey questionnaires (Social Media Marketing Experience and buying behavior) from Voorveld et al., 2018, Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 1996, Bolia et al., 2016, and Foroughi et al., 2013

Mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression were used to address the research questions of the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Media Experience**

Social media marketing made a positive impact on the consumers' social media experiences (Sumague, 2022). The internet and social media platforms have changed how individuals shop and decide on what to purchase (Alves et al., 2016). These developments influenced a marketer's ability to create strategies to meet the diverse needs of consumers (Constantinides, 2014).

### **Social Media Experience and Dimensions**

Tuten and Solomon (2018) described social media users as falling into four categories based on the social consumption/creation matrix. Specifically, Entertainment chasers are passive users with short attention spans who engage with content primarily if it entertains them. MacMillan (2022) highlighted that immersive and interactive experiences are crucial for effective entertainment marketing. By focusing on entertainment, businesses can enhance their marketing strategy, retain current customers, and attract new ones.

Stimulation involves influencing behavior to drive buying decisions for excitement and pleasure, leading to more shopping opportunities and customer loyalty (Xu et al., 2020). Lina and Ahluwalia (2021) found that marketing stimuli, including social media marketing, prompt impulse purchases. Li et al. (2020) noted that social media helps businesses boost brand awareness, web traffic, and sales, and encourages shareable content and customer interaction. Arrigo (2018) highlighted that social media accelerates community engagement through promotions and deals, while Tafesse and Wien (2018) advised businesses to use social media to enhance consumer engagement. Overall, stimulation is a key factor in measuring social media marketing effectiveness, helping firms track and drive growth (Wibowo et al., 2020).

“Practical” refers to real-world experience and actions rather than just ideas (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Henderson (2020) noted that social media marketing helps businesses reach their audiences, understand buying patterns, and promote products effectively. It enables businesses to create engaging content and build customer relationships (Ku, 2023). Social media enhances user interaction, making it a crucial platform for advertising despite challenges in capturing consumer attention (Sreejesh et al., 2020). Understanding the consumer experience is vital for businesses (Lemon & Veroeff, 2016), and social media aids this by offering valuable insights and improving customer experience (Startek Editorial, 2022; Voorveld et al., 2018).

### **Buying Behavior and Dimensions**

Habitual Buying Behavior involves frequent purchases of inexpensive items with low consumer involvement and minimal brand differentiation (Oxford Reference, n.d.). Mina and Campos, Jr. (2018) note that such consumers lack awareness of brand differences. Igani and Aseminachin (2022) suggest that effective advertising can foster this behavior by creating

brand familiarity and social image. Additionally, Pujari et al. (2017) found that long-term brand relationships strengthen habitual buying and reduce brand switching. Overall, habitual buying occurs when consumers show little interest in alternative brands (Dey, 2017).

Variety-seeking behavior occurs when consumers are not highly involved in their purchases but perceive significant brand differences (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Such consumers often switch products to avoid repetition and seek new options (Zhang, 2022; Shaddy et al., 2021). Murray et al. (2022) highlight that this behavior is key to understanding consumer choices, driven by the desire for freshness and diversity. Hyde et al. (2017) note that variety-seeking involves a risk and is linked to low brand involvement, with consumers researching alternatives before making a decision (Assael, 1995).

Complex buying behavior occurs when consumers are highly involved in their purchases and perceive significant brand differences (Varghese & Agrawal, 2021). This behavior is typical for expensive, unique, or self-expressive purchases (Nguyen, 2021). Voramontri and Klieb (2019) note that it involves higher risk, making information gathering crucial, often facilitated by social networks where users share opinions and updates. Xhema (2019) highlights that understanding the impact of digital marketing and social media is vital for businesses, as consumers with complex buying behavior extensively use social media to check product ratings and reviews before purchasing.

Dissonance-reducing Buying Behavior occurs when consumers are highly involved but struggle to differentiate between brands. They seek information to justify their purchases, often buying based on availability, income, and budget without thorough consideration (Radlovic, 2021). Panwar and Saxena (2020) note this behavior can result from high prices and infrequent purchases, leading to limited choices. Consumers may experience regret or worry about their purchase, seeking confirmation of their choice (Kumaran & Navin, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive results of the social media marketing experience

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Marketing Experience*

	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Entertainment	354	3.32	0.997	Moderately Positive
Stimulation	354	3.60	0.752	Positive
Practical Use	354	3.5	0.794	Positive

.00 – 1.49 (Very Negative), 1.50 – 2.49 (Negative), 2.50 – 3.49 (Moderately Positive), 3.50 – 4.49 (Positive), 4.50 – 5.00 (Very Positive)

The results indicate that the college students perceived their social media experience in terms of entertainment (3.32, SD=.997) , stimulation (M=3.60, SD=.752), and practical use (M=3.50, SD=.794) were moderately positive and positive respectively. This suggests students generally enjoy engaging with social media marketing, particularly through online events and activities, aligning with Tuten and Solomon's (2018) idea of "Social Entertainment." Students are persuaded by marketing materials, which supports the notion that stimulating content can drive consumer interest (Xu (2020). Furthermore, students find social media marketing practical. This supports Henderson’s (2020) view that social media marketing helps businesses effectively reach audiences and understand buying patterns, enhancing the overall consumer experience.

The overall experience that was felt by the students when they encountered social media marketing is positive. Moreover, these “experiences” from social media marketing was emphasized by Voorveld et al. (2018) as a form of social media interactions, where students felt positive emotional experiences or perceptions that they have undergone when they used the platform.

**Table 2**  
Level of Student’s Buying Behavior

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Habitual Buying Behavior	354	3.24	3.25	0.477	Moderate Extent
Variety-Seeking Buying Behavior	354	3.19	3.25	0.73	Moderate Extent
Complex Buying Behavior	354	3.9	4	0.62	Significant Extent
Dissonance-reducing Buying Behavior	354	3.12	3	0.492	Moderate Extent

The results in Table 2 show that students exhibit habitual buying behavior moderately (M=3.24). They tend to stick with familiar brands rather than trying new ones, as indicated by the highest mean on the statement about preferring known brands (M = 3.95) and the lowest mean on purchasing uncertain products (M = 2.42). This behavior reflects a tendency to repeat past choices with little consideration of new options, aligning with the habitual buying behavior theory (Wood & Neal, 2009).

Students also display moderate variety-seeking behavior, with a mean score of 3.19. They occasionally seek new products, as shown by the highest mean on enjoying online shopping for new releases (M = 3.81) and the lowest on impulsively buying products without consideration (M = 2.90). This suggests a preference for varying their purchases to avoid monotony (Zhang, 2022).

Complex buying behavior is the most dominant (M=3.90). Students frequently gather extensive information before purchasing, as evidenced by the highest mean on researching products (M = 4.13) and the lowest on being drawn to self-expressive products (M = 3.36). This indicates a high level of involvement and careful decision-making, consistent with Nguyen's (2021) research on complex buying behavior. Lastly, students show moderate dissonance-reducing buying behavior (M=3.12). They occasionally feel confident about their purchases (M = 3.62) but sometimes regret their decisions (M = 2.74), reflecting an effort to reduce post-purchase dissonance.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Matrix of Social Media Marketing Experience and Students' Buying Behavior*

		Entertainment	Stimulation	Practical Use
Habitual Buying Behavior	Pearson's r	0.02	0.013	0.048
	p-value	0.706	0.813	0.364
Variety-Seeking Buying Behavior	Pearson's r	0.284***	0.371***	0.468***
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001
Complex Buying Behavior	Pearson's r	0.171***	0.284***	0.270***
	p-value	0.001	< .001	< .001
Dissonance-reducing Buying Behavior	Pearson's r	0.187***	0.209***	0.259***
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The data reveals no correlation between habitual buying behavior and social media marketing experience, indicating that habitual buying habits are unaffected by social media marketing. This is likely because habitual behaviors are ingrained and not easily influenced by new marketing stimuli (Verplanken & Orbell, 2022).

In contrast, there is a significant correlation between variety-seeking buying behavior and social media marketing experience. Social media marketing positively influences individuals who seek variety in their purchases, aligning with the notion that diverse marketing experiences appeal to those who prefer varied products (Murray et al., 2022; Zhang, 2022).

Similarly, Complex buying behavior shows a significant correlation with social media marketing experience. Individuals with complex buying behavior spend more time researching on social media before purchasing, reflecting the importance of digital marketing in shaping their buying decisions (Xhema, 2019).

Dissonance-reducing buying behavior also correlates significantly with social media marketing experience. This supports the Medium Theory by McLuhan and Chaffey's Marketing theory, suggesting that even if consumers experience post-purchase dissonance, social media still positively impacts their buying behavior (Staunton, 2016; Chaffey, 2002).

Overall, social media marketing positively affects students' buying behavior. Increased social media usage leads to greater influence on buying habits, confirming that social media marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior among students (Arellano et al., 2022; Mason et al., 2020; Johnson, 2022; Panwar & Saxena, 2020; Bista et al., 2022).

**Table 4**  
Analysis of Differences in Students' Buying Behavior by Sex

	Sex	Mean	SD	Statistic	Df	P
Variety-Seeking Buying Behavior	Male	3.07	0.8	-2.482	267	0.014
	Female	3.27	0.667			
Habitual Buying Behavior	Male	3.25	0.456	0.499	319	0.618
	Female	3.23	0.491			
Complex Buying Behavior	Male	3.82	0.647	-1.857	288	0.064
	Female	3.95	0.597			
Dissonance-reducing Buying Behavior	Male	3.1	0.525	-0.552	282	0.582
	Female	3.13	0.469			

Results showed that there are no significant differences between males and females in habitual buying behavior ( $t(319) = .499, p = .618$ ), Complex buying behavior ( $t(288) = -1.857, p = .064$ ), and dissonance reducing buying behavior ( $t(282) = -.552, p = .582$ ). However, significant differences can be found in variety-seeking buying behavior ( $t(267) = -2.482, p = .014$ ) as it primarily deals with choices, variation of products, and trying new preferences when shopping.

Results from the study of Chen (2020) revealed that both sexes have different choices when purchasing the same set of products, and thus affect consumer buying behavior.

Moreover, according to Mehta (2019), sex has an important role in identifying purchase motives.

It was also cited by the same author that consumer buying behavior is positively influenced by the gender-based consumer targeting, where males are more into buying the products on the basis of immediate need and females are considered as long-term planners (Mehta, 2019). However, Sarwar et al. (2014) mentioned that sex is not so much important and does not affect consumer buying behavior. Consequently, it opposes the study of Maria et al. (2021) where they found that men and women have different buying behavior since both sexes have varying perceptions, level of website interactivity, and different intentions and attitudes.

## CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

This study demonstrates that social media marketing significantly influences students' buying behavior, supporting existing theories on the platform's role in shaping consumer habits. Survey results show that most students have a positive experience with social media marketing, making it an effective tool for businesses targeting this demographic. The findings align with Henry Assael's Buying Behavior theory and Marshall McLuhan's Medium Theory, both emphasizing media's impact on societal behavior. Notably, the research identifies complex buying behavior as prevalent among students at Adventist University of the Philippines, highlighting their thoughtful and deliberate purchasing decisions.

This study provides valuable insights, although it has limitations for further study. It does not account for the type of product or social media platform, which may influence students' buying behavior.

Future research should include these variables for a more nuanced understanding. Additionally, incorporating marketing strategies as moderating variables could validate the study's findings and identify effective approaches. Expanding the respondent pool beyond students would also enhance the generalizability of the results.

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