

From Engagement to Purchase: The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies in Shaping Consumer Intentions in Social Commerce

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions within the social commerce environment. We adopt a quantitative cross-sectional design, collecting structured questionnaire data from 1,200 consumers across ten metropolitan cities; after data cleaning, 1,176 valid responses were retained. The sample comprised 48.7% male and 51.3% female participants, with 92.4% reporting daily social media usage. Statistical analyses—including multiple linear regression, Pearson correlation, and structural equation modeling (SEM)—revealed that consumer trust (standardized $\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$), influencer marketing ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$), online reviews ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), and personalized advertising ($\beta = 0.31$, $p = 0.002$) are significant predictors of purchase intention, collectively explaining 73.8% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.738$). The SEM analysis demonstrated excellent model fit: Chi-square/df = 2.11, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.045. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation emerged between digital marketing effectiveness and purchase intention ($r = 0.81$, $p < 0.001$). Highly engaged consumers showed a 27.6% higher purchase intention, 30.2% stronger brand engagement, and 21.4% greater repurchase intention compared to those with low digital marketing exposure. Consequently, this research advances the theoretical understanding of how trust and interactive digital elements jointly drive consumer decisions in social commerce. The practical significance lies in providing evidence-based guidance for marketers aiming to build long-term customer relationships. Our findings underscore that organizations should prioritize credible influencer partnerships and data-driven personalization to improve marketing effectiveness and foster sustained consumer loyalty.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Social Commerce, Consumer Purchase Intention, Customer Engagement, Online Consumer Behavior

Introduction

Commerce has undergone a significant shift with digital technologies that have paved the way for a dominant paradigm of 'social commerce', combining social networking activity online with online commerce activity. This shift breaks the traditional ecommerce business model, by conditioning commercial activities within a field of interaction among communities that serve as a social environment. The social media-focused platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have fostered a highly interactive space that lets brands engage with its audience live, and produce an abundance of user-generated content, recommendation and influencer endorsement content to impact consumer decisions. Thus, the most relevant issue as regards the academics and the application of the digital marketing in practice is how digital marketing strategies behave in this ecosystem. Thus, the comprehension of the functioning of digital marketing strategies in this ecosystem is a crucial issue to get attention from academics and the practitioner community. Social media and e-commerce have created a synergy that results in a multi-faceted relationship of trust, engagement and perceived value - all of which can affect a customer's decision to buy. The present work fits into this developing context, and builds on a significant amount of research that has covered different aspects of S.C. Previous research has investigated the influence of online communities and social networking platform on consumer behavior, explaining the significance of trust and social interaction to ensure transactions (Patwa et al., 2025). For instance, previous studies have shown that social commerce constructs like forums and ratings can have a big influence on purchasing intentions via cognitive and affective pathways, especially in the realm of digital marketing management (Malik et al., 2023). Furthermore, it was pointed out that digital communication reinforcement drivers is an important factor type that impacts the purchase behavior in social commerce (Selem et al., 2023): Therefore, it is noted that these drivers can play an important role in influencing consumers' purchasing decision when reinforced with digital communication messages. The other important foundations are trust in social networks websites and the lack thereof, in which, without it, the transfer of influence from the social interaction to the intentions to purchase is not done effectively (Hajli et al., 2017).

Other constructs such as perceived risk, value, have also been much studied. Our research has revealed that product risk and privacy risk have negative influence on purchase intention; therefore, there is a need for marketers to implement the most effective strategies available that will be able to protect consumers' fears around time risk. (Ali et al., 2020). But there are some positives: perceived value, social awareness, suggesting consumers are willing to purchase when they see the benefits and social proof of what they are buying (Chen et al., 2018). Moreover, the effect of social interaction and consumer involvement has been studied regarding the mediator Trust, which leads them in turn to purchase intent (Dabbous et al., 2020). Although product, price and promotion are important components of the marketing mix, today they become more difficult to be effective, following the dynamics in social commerce platforms and the ease of access of the internet (Aimé et al., 2022). Finally, this context will be provided by the more general expectations of possible changes linked to the consumption behavior of the Internet age (Pradgna et al., 2025) (Yu, 2017) and that of the gig economy, one of the transformations highlighted in this work, as well as the sustainability issue.

Despite such valuable pieces of knowledge that still did not appear in the literature, there is a gap in the literature about the concurrent impact and compounding effect of various digital marketing tactics (consumer trust, influencer marketing, online reviews and personalized ads) on purchase intention behavior. These aspects have been explored individually, but the interactions of these factors in a single solid model has not been investigated as much. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to investigate that the targeted digital marketing interventions will significantly influence the consumers trust,

engagement level and purchase intention due to social commerce context. We propose that the consumer engagement serves as an immediate predictor and the mediating variable is the degree of trust, which is influenced by the three immediate predictors being proposed: influencers marketing, online reviews, and personalized ads. The primary aim of this research is to establish the relative impact of these components to evaluate their entire impact on customer buying decision and customer loyalty.

This research has two aspects to it. Theoretically it gives the impetus to cross-fertilization, on the one hand interacting with research contribution related to the important interactive elements built in digital elements and their effect on consumer decision making, and on the other hand to research contribution examining this interaction in an empirical way using structural equation modelling. In terms of hands-on tips, it has some helpful, fact-based guidance for marketers to apply in a world of socially-connected commerce. That's what we've found, and it's an evidence-based approach that organisations can implement to get their marketing to cut through, and create enduring loyal customer relationships. This study looks at a large, varied population of 1200 consumers across ten metropolitan cities and provides comparisons for generalizable insights, that can be applied to strategic decisions, in a business landscape that is rapidly changing in the digital economy.

Literature reviews are discussed in this section where it builds on the theories that would be studied, section 2 of this paper follows. The quantitative methodology is explained in section 3 and it involves sampling design, instruments and methodology for analysis. Results of the empirical analysis (descriptions, regression analyses and structural equation modeling) are presented in Section 4. This discussion on implications of these findings in relation to the research reported as well as practical recommendations for the implications of findings are presented in Section 5. In conclusion, Section 6 showcases the key findings of the paper, and outlines potential avenues for further research.

Literature Review

However, as social commerce emerged to be a force to be reckoned with, there has been considerable interest and research in the interplay between digital marketing and consumer behaviour. Model theory has been a popular approach to understanding consumer usage and acceptance of online platforms for online purchasing; namely, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). In this context, trust has always been a key construct since it often conveys meanings in cognitive shorthand in order to narrow down the perceived risk and facilitate plan making for transactions (Patwa et al., 2025). Empirical research has shown that trust in the platform and the seller is essential when one is considering making a purchase, particularly in the context of intangible products, and in which information may be asymmetric. One of the other giant factors that digital strategies affect when consumers make decisions is influencer marketing. Parasocial interaction theory suggests that the followers develop admiration towards the influencers and feel only one-sided feelings towards them, which strengthens the expression of product endorsement by influencers. It has been observed that a positive suggestion by the influencer can certainly impact on buying decision and when there is a positive suggestion, almost everything the influencer does can moderate the actuality of the suggestion and its mastery of the topic may further make a difference (Selem, et al., 2023). The frequency of the content posted and the quality of the message in it can also contribute to the brand's messaging, and this can add up to consumer buying behaviour and attitudes.

Online reviews are the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that it provides for social proof and uncertainty reduction. The valence and volume of the reviews are determined key attributes: Positive reviews influencing the likelihood of purchasing a product, sufficient number of reviews as an indicator of product popularity and market acceptance (Chen et al., 2018). But its credibility relies on who they're

being reviewed for, and if the person is not the kind of folk that will be telling an honest review, or if they are getting paid if the reviews are cash or pieces of cake then that enrages them. This essence of a two-way coin also suggests that reviews can be beneficial, but perhaps not if they feel reviews are being developed maliciously.

Advertisers are now more inclined to provide customized advertisements to customers via data analysis and algorithmic targeting. Personalized ads will travel to consumers' attention more effectively than mass ads which do not meet their needs and interests as they browse. Research shows that personalization leads to improved relevance in the users' eyes and lower ad fatigue, which results in higher click through rates and conversions (Malik et al., 2023). But, when the consumers are concerned about regarding their privacy and security of the data they share with the brand, they may be negative to that brand.

Today, for digital marketing engagement is an important starting point and a vital end point, especially when you look at the various events and activities that lead to consumer engagement, such as likes, shares, comments, time spent on the brand page, and so on. Yet, engaged customers are more likely to be trusted, to feel that they have more valuable in a company's products and services and are more loyal to the company (Hajli et al., 2017). The positive interactions which develop trust lead to deeper interaction and more purchases in turn which leads to a further sense of trust, and so on - a positive feedback loop takes place. This can be accentuated by the notion of 'brand community' that indicates that consumers perceive themselves as part of a given community and enjoy a pretty similar identity with each other.

Numerous studies have examined these variables so far, but they have approached them individually and with various combinations which have limited usefulness in describing a comprehensive pattern of possible interrelationships. While some have explored the relationships between trust and its antecedents (Dabbous et al., 2020), others have focused on influencer marketing without considering the interdependent of reviews and/or personalisation. Moreover, the research methods employed have remained somewhat varied across studies, some of which rely on smaller and more homogenous populations and/or more experimental designs or techniques that may be lacking in sufficient extent to capture the complexity of the "real world" social commerce environment. The current study aims to fill these gaps by creating a holistic model of consumer trust, taking into account the influence of both marketing and online reviews, personalization of their advertising and engagement with them, which was then tested with a large and representative sample size applying data-driven statistical methods such as structural equation modeling. The comprehensive approach allows us to clarify how much influence each has on the phenomenon of purchase intention and understand the relationship between the action of each and the interaction between them, as well as create more detailed and concrete explanations and theories about the phenomenon of purchase intention.

Methodology

Research Design and Sampling Strategy

We used quantitative cross-sectional research design in analysing the impact of digital marketing strategies in the context of consumer purchase intention in the era of social commerce. Based on this it was decided to choose this design in order to get a depiction of consumers attitude and behaviour at one moment of time and in order to estimate simultaneously a number of predictor variables and at the same time the relationship of each of the variables with the variable measured in the dependent variable (purchase intention). The study sample consisted of 10 major metros and users who frequently used

social commerce applications, such as Facebook Marketplace, Instagram Shopping and TikTok Shop. To ensure that they were able to make an online purchasing decision, the participants were required to be at least 18 years-old. The age restriction was to ensure that they are legally competent (age 18 or older), thus allowing them to make an online purchasing decision. To maintain the representation based on consumer's demographic profile a random sampling method is used based on age, gender and geographic area. Population distribution from the national census and other previous research on the adoption of social commerce were the stratification criteria used.

Data Collection Instruments and Variable Operationalization

The data collected was primary data which was obtained through the use of a structured online questionnaire that was distributed through social media advertisement and by use of email list. The three point of development of the questionnaire were the demographic questions (age, gender, educational qualification, monthly income), behavioural questions (frequency of use of social media, frequency of use of social commerce platform, quantity of exposure to influencer marketing, quantity of exposure to personalized advertisements, frequency of using online reviews;), and psychometric scales (per item scores of brand engagement, consumers' trust, desire to purchase, consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention). Adapted from the validated instruments used in previous studies (Hajli et al., 2017) (Chen et al., 2018), all psychometric constructs were measured using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Consumer trust, for example, was measured by three items such as: "I trust the information provided by brands on social commerce platforms". Items measured in the purchase intention scale, for example, were: "I am likely to purchase a product that is recommended by an influencer I follow". Further, secondary information was collected from eCommerce industry reports, digital marketing analytics platforms which have supported the primary data result analysis with context, but were not incorporated into primary statistical modelling. To test for clarity, some minor changes in wording in the questionnaire were made after a pilot test of the items with 50 participants.

Data Preprocessing and Quality Assurance

Multi-stage data pre-processing was conducted in order to ensure that the final analytical sample (FAS) was appropriate. More than 20% of the items were left blank in the incomplete responses (N = 24) and these were excluded. Except for the other responses which were filled-in with the median of the response variable, as this was an acceptable procedure when dealing with the common distributions of responses for Likert-scale questions. All of the categorical variables were dummy coded and there was reverse coding of the negative worded items for data coding. Values below were classified as outlier for which was replaced by the nearest non-outlier value and values above were defined as outlier and winsorised by replacing them with the nearest non-outlier value and less than 2% was concluded to be outliers and replaced using this method. The scores on each continuous variable were placed on the range of 0–1 via a min–max normalization to ensure that differences in the relative ranking were maintained across the various constructs, but not differences in absolute scores between the constructs. Internal consistency was established by reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in internal consistency coefficient values exceeding 0.80 for all composite scales, which indicate high internal consistency (consumer trust, brand engagement and purchase intention scales).

Analytical Framework and Statistical Procedures

This analytical technique employed was comprehensive to assess the hypotheses of the study. The descriptive statistics were first obtained to describe the sample and to provide an overview of some of the important distributions of the sample's variables. To evaluate the bivariate relationships, the all the

Continuous variables have been checked with the Pearson correlation method; particularly between digital marketing effectiveness and purchase intention. Multiple linear regression was then used to look at independent predictors of purchase intention, with the following individual variables being used as predictors: consumer trust, exposure to influencer marketing, reliance on online reviews, exposure to personalized advertising, and brand engagement. The Model was therefore set up as:

$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times Trust + \beta_2 \times InfMarketing + \beta_3 \times Reviews + \beta_4 \times PersAd + \beta_5 \times Engagement + \varepsilon$$

The purchase intention is represented as where is consumer trust, is consumer exposure to influencer marketing, is reliance on online reviews, represents consumer exposure to personalized advertising, is brand engagement, and is the error term. Standardized beta coefficients were presented because they were used to compare the strength of the predictors and collinearity diagnostics (variance inflation factor, VIF) were checked for with all values being < 2.5, suggesting no issues with multicollinearity.

The overall theoretical model is used together measurement model and structural model, therefore, structural equation modelling (SEM) process with AMOS software is decided to do this process. Initially, the latent factor structure of the psychometric scales was validated using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) approach with the following results: a factor loading of ≥ 0.70 for all factors, a scale fit index of Chi-square/df < 3.0, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.95; a Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) > 0.95; and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06 (Dabbous et al., 2020). In turn, the SEM estimated the direct and indirect pathologies of the digital marketing variables to purchase intention and set consumer trust and brand engagement as the variables that mediate between the variables. In addition, one-wayANOVA was used to investigate any differences in the level of exposure between the low and high exposure group consumers (with a digital marketing index score at or below the median being the low exposure group consumers, and score above the median being the high exposure group consumers). All Analysis was done using SPSS 29, AMOS, R (Version 4.3) and M S EXCEL and the level of significance was followed at %.

Results

The result of this study is presented by systematizing the findings of the analyzed data obtained from the respondents who completed answers with 1176 respondents. It begins with a summary of the demographics and behaviours of all the participants, followed by an analysis of what each participant has said forms the patterns in the adoption of digital marketing in their business and the outcome of the purchases it has resulted in. Finally, the present data of regression, correlation and SEM will be presented and results will be compared between the different groups of consumers that are exposed.

Participant Characteristics

The Finally number of valid responses after carrying out data cleaning procedure mentioned in Section 3.3 was 1176. This study had a numbers of participants sufficient for statistical analysis, and for the multivariate analyses to be planned (structural equation modeling). The gender breakup of the participants seemed to be fairly even – 51.3% were Female and 48.7% were Male. As per the ages of the consumers, the age group 18-30 (58.6%) had the highest number of consumers followed by age group 31-45 (29.8%) and over 45 years of age (11.6%). The age bias is in line with the average age of social media users, which indicates that younger age groups tend to be more active on social media platforms than older ones, following a similar trend (Patwa et al., 2025).

The behavioral characteristics confirmed the seamless integration of the use of social media in habits, too. Most participants (92.4%) used social media at an average frequency of once per day and many of them interacted with the social media several times in a day. This finding is consistent with studies conducted earlier which have proven the existence of social network sites in the current consumer context (Hajli, et al., 2017). Based on the level of education of the sample, the sample was also diverse, in the light of the sampling procedure undertaken by sampling the urban Internet savvy population. Economic backgrounds also varied, so income of the individual varied from month to month, to account for the purchasing behavior. To ensure that the behavior for the urban social commerce consumer during the following analysis was representative of the rest of the category, a demographic and behavior profile of the sample was available and shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics of the Sample (N = 1,176)

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	48.7%
Gender	Female	51.3%
Age	18–30 years	58.6%
Age	31–45 years	29.8%
Age	Above 45 years	11.6%
Daily Social Media Usage	Yes	92.4%
Daily Social Media Usage	No	7.6%

Digital Marketing Adoption

The analysis then examined the extent to which a number of digital marketing touchpoints are now part of consumers' social commerce behaviours, taking into account the participants' characteristics detailed above. The findings show the speed of digital marketing adoption on a number of fronts and reveal that consumers do not simply consume marketing information, they are engaging with marketing tools that the brands use to affect their buying decisions. As shown in the Table 2, many more people accept social platforms as a means for browsing (87.9%) and purchasing (86.7%) products. This prevalence is an indicator of the worldwide trends toward an e-commerce merger with social media, which are now more than just social connection platforms; they're also complete options for the marketplace.

Table 2. Adoption Rates of Key Digital Marketing Components

Digital Marketing Component	Percentage of Respondents Adopting
Frequent use of social commerce platforms	87.9%
Reliance on online product reviews before purchasing	82.6%
Following influencer recommendations	78.4%
Positive response to personalized digital advertisements	75.9%
Active interaction with brands through social media	80.2%

Looking online for product reviews prior to purchasing them was listed as a critical behavior with 82.6% of participants stating that they did search on-line for product reviews before purchasing. The results

support the already proven online shopping environment de-risking process of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Yu, 2017). Nearly ubiquitous use of the review indicates that consumers may more believe in peer-generated content than brand-generated content—a fact that brands need to take into consideration when developing their marketing plans.

Responses to confederate vs. influencer recommendations are in the same ballpark as the percentages following “influencer” recommendations (78.4%) of the sample. This has been driven by the growing trustworthiness and influence of digital influencers as brands and communication connectivity brokers for consumers (Selem et al., 2023). Consumer/ influencer relationships can also work well together, resulting in a greater acceptance of the influencers' promotions, making influencer marketing a strong tool to promote higher purchase intent.

The Digital ads tagged to be personal and seen by their specific person also garnered an amazing response with 75.9% noting that they were responsive to these Personal Ads. Overall, the outcomes are consistent with the findings of the previous studies that suggest that personalization enhances ad relevance and reduces the mental effort of information processing (Malik et al., 2023). This more moderate uptake can, however, be interpreted as continued consumer doubt or lack of trust around Data privacy which may cast aside any consumer's enthusiasm to Data driven targeting even amongst heavy users of social media.

To conclude, 80.2% of the sample said they were engaged via social media in the past. This behavior ranges from likes, shares, comments on red posts, as well as into online communities for brands. Active engagement is an essential prerequisite to developing more profound consumer-brand relationships, and helps to involve consumer feeling like part of the brand and part of a co-creative process (Chen et al., 2018). In the study, high engagement was seen which indicates that consumers are not just consuming the marketing content pieces, but they're also interacting with the brands and co-creating value using the interactive capabilities of social commerce. All these adoption patterns add to a picture of consumers who are extremely "entrenched" in the sociology of commerce--which is a great place to start when thinking about these strategies in relation to "buy intent."

Consumer Purchase Outcomes

The analysis focused on the outcome of what consumers were buying as the analysis was driven by the choices within the analysis and the two groups were defined based on the median split of the composite Digital Marketing Effectiveness Index, with consumers with a high exposure to digital marketing (coded as 1) compared with consumers with a low exposure to digital marketing (coded as 0). The comparative approach was useful to carry out this behavioural and attitudinal analysis, allowing a simple calculation of the real impact digital marketing had on these selected variables. The results showed significant differences between mean scores with the high exposure group therefore provided good evidence of the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategies integrated.

More specifically, it was found that the consumers in the high digital marketing exposure showed a 27.6% higher purchase intention as compared to the consumers in the low digital marketing exposure. The high difference between the groups corresponds to the theoretical frame on which an increase in perceived value derived from customized interactions and social processes should cause uncertainty to be reduced for both parties and thus increase the behavioral intention to buy a product, as predicted by Selem et al. (2023). This variance highlights the significance of a seamless and captivating online presentation that will be available on a number of interaction points.

Highly engaged consumers were 30.2% more likely to be engaging with brands through likes, comments, shares and brand communities. This discovery is in line with the reciprocal cause-and-effect between exposure and engagement; consumers who see and hear interesting and engaging digital material are more inclined to invest time into engaging with brands, which consequently boosts their bonding with the brand (Chen et al., 2018). This is in stark contrast to the other outcomes where the largest difference was for active involvement (+30.2%) sending a strong message that digital marketing interventions have a strong impact on getting consumers not only to watch but to take part.

The increase in consumer trust was 24.5% among the high exposure group, while it was the concept that trusted to act as a mediator between the concept and behaviour. Trust is built by using trustworthy influencers endorsements, the reliable reviews that keep coming and the personalised ads that can seem a lot more successful to the client, as they are deemed to know their customers' needs (Hajli et al., 2017). The lift seen is likely due to the confidence they had in the brand and due to their consistent digital engagement with the brand, if sustained will add to their confidence in the brand they are on, hopefully reducing the perceived risk of doing transactions with the brand, and therefore support their transaction intent.

The satisfaction level of the customer – which indicates the overall opinion of the consumer from the purchase and brand interaction – was found to be 22.7% higher in the high-exposure group. This increase can be attributed to the personalization and information of this expectation that is provided by digital marketing, therefore ensuring or even surpassing the expectation after buying the product (Aimé et al., 2022). This vicious circle is matched by the virtuous one of satisfied customers, and if they're satisfied, they'll have more chances to provide positive word of mouth and make repeat purchases.

Finally, repurchase intention (probability the consumers will engage with the brand in the future) was 21.4% higher among the very engaged consumers group. An important measure to assess the value of the customer (LTV); looking at the uplift, it is clear that the effects of a proper implementation of a full digital marketing strategy do not end with the sale itself but can extend into creating customer loyalty (Patwa et al., 2025). Overall, the measure of all five outcomes is positive indicating the effectiveness of the digital marketing intervention for the primary dimension, 'Gort' the hypothesis that digital marketing interventions have a strong positive effect on customer trust, brand engagement and – crucially – intention to purchase, and in customer loyalty for the social commerce scenario.

Regression Analysis

To measure independent effects of individual Digital marketing activities and intention to buy of the consumers, the Multiple linear regression model was used. These predictor variables were included in the model: consumer trust, influencer marketing, online reviews, personalized advertising, and brand engagement. Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis of the five predictors, four of which were statistically significant.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Results Predicting Consumer Purchase Intention

Predictor Variable	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Consumer Trust	0.44	12.37	< 0.001
Influencer Marketing	0.39	10.94	< 0.001

Predictor Variable	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Online Reviews	0.35	9.86	< 0.001
Personalized Advertising	0.31	3.14	0.002
Brand Engagement	0.08	1.76	0.078

The number of consumer trust has the greatest influence with a standardized β coefficient of 0.44 ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the one standard deviation increase in consumer trust will lead to the 0.44 increase in the purchase intention, when all other factors are held constant. This finding has implications for the importance of trust as a pathfinder for minimizing uncertainty in transactions, and for its role in the purchasing process (Hajli et al., 2017). Such a tremendous effect is in line with the earlier study that validated trust as the primary variable that influences the social e-commerce effectiveness since there is information asymmetry and the physical product in most social shopping is invisible, thus further emphasizing the significance of perceived reliability.

The second most influential factor was influencer marketing with a standardized beta of 0.39 (). This discovery has proven to be a reliable proof in the real world to support endorsement messages generated by influencers and therefore in influencing consumers' purchase choices. This can be attributed to consumers' parasocial interactions with the influencers and the effect these interactions have on making the feed appear real and legitimate, which is what conventional advertisements were unable to achieve the same effect (Salem et al., 2023). Brands have an opportunity to learn from the best practices and tactics of the influencers to utilize their strategy as a major force right in their own Buyer journeys especially for the younger generation who feel a strong attachment with their digital content creators; there may be a possibility to integrate this strategy directly as a part of their purchase strategy in the future.

Online reviews were also found to be of great importance as shown from their significant positive effect, a continued trend in the social commerce environment. Reviews as a form of social proof, lowers the risk of online buying by offering peer approved information on product quality and performance (Chen et al., 2018). This effect does not corroborate the idea that reviews add to other mechanisms that affect purchasing, since it remained after controlling for influences of trust and influences of “influencer marketing.”

Finally for personalized advertising, the impact was somewhere between the two opposite extremes: there was a moderate but significant effect, meaning the consumer was attuned to ads created based on his taste and the ad recipient was generally more likely to recall the ad and feel it was relevant. This discovery aligns with those found in literature, which reveal that personalization creates less ad fatigue and generates higher conversion rates due to more targeted marketing messages being delivered—those that match with the individual consumer's preferences (Malik et al., 2023). But the lower impact among the society media heavy users, when compared to trust and influencer marketing, could more likely have been due to a common concern of privacy that dampen the openness of consumers to targeting methods based on data, even the trustworthy ones.

What is interesting is that while, in Kano's bivariate analysis, the brand engagement was a strong predictor of purchase intention, it was not an important one in multivariate analysis. Given that brand engagement is not likely to be a significant determinant of the regression's model, the effect of brand engagement on purchase intention may be more indirect, in that it influences other constructs on the nomological network that could also influence the purchase intention, including trust and satisfaction

(Patwa et al., 2025). It may also be that this correlation of engagement to behaviours, with trust and information sources is redundant.

Global regression model was very explanatory with adjusted R² of 0,738 which indicated that the presentation of the regression model was able to make 73,8 % of the explanation of the purchase intention of consumers. This accounts for a fairly large percentage of the variance explained, indicating that the digital marketing components selected give the most essential antecedence to the purchase behavior in a social commerce context. All the VIF values were below 2.5 indicating that there was no undue influence due to multicollinearity among the scores used in estimating the regression. In total, these regressions show that consumer trust, influencer marketing, online reviews and personalised ads are all shown to have a strong direct relationship with consumer purchase intent, with consumer trust having the largest relationship.

Correlation Analysis

To try to gain some understanding of the relationships between digital marketing variables and the consumers' outcomes before performing the multivariate modeling, various bivariate relationships among variables of interest to the researchers in the study were investigated using the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient. As was established, the impact of digital marketing of consumers' intention to buy was positively correlated ($r = .0565$), strong and statistically reliable. So the stronger the perception of the digital marketing is to be relevant, more trustworthy and engaging, the stronger is the chance for consumers to say it contributes to their being more likely to make purchases. The importance of this correlation is aligned with theoretical models which suggest that integrated digital marketing strategies have the potential to be a strong influence on consumer behaviours in the social commerce landscape, with a positive correlation believed to exist between the quality of marketing communication and consumer behaviours (Lingley and Cullers, 1995; Vredenburg et al., 1998; Birta and Cotsaftis, 2021). This discovery also validates the concurrent (convergent) convergence of the composite Digital Marketing Effectiveness Index employed in this research with the dependent measure that this is designed to predict.

As well as the primary theme of the paper, inter-relational relationships between other important consumer response measures were also analyzed. The results reveal that the brand engagement correlates positively with the level of satisfaction with the brand which is (+). The findings showed that the overall satisfaction with the brand by the customer could increase if they communicate with the brands in the social media platforms including liked, shared, commented and join the online community of brands. This correlation is compatible with the past research which found that people who are engaged in the creation process are more likely to perceive the results of the creation as their own, and more satisfied with the evaluations they provide (Chen et al., 2018). Additionally, the engagement-satisfaction link might be bi-directional, with the recommending motorists tending to get engaged within the brand, and this can develop the link between motorists and the brand over time, to motorists' satisfaction and delight.

Similarly, a positive correlation between the brand's engagement and repurchase intention (r) was also found. This finding showed that not only would engaged consumers be more satisfied, they also would be more likely to state their intent to make future purchases from their brand. Theoretically, this means that the behavioural and affective dimensions of engagement effects go past one transaction to lead to loyalty pertinent outcomes (Hajli et al., 2017). The relationships between engagement and the intention to repurchase were much higher and statistically significant, but not as high as satisfaction, which

further highlights the importance of sustaining ongoing, two-way communication with consumers in order to keep them "hooked."

The correlational matrix did reveal other notabilities associations which would be discussed, but for space reasons are not discussed here. Levels of trust, for instance, appeared to be positively associated with levels of influencer marketing, and online reviews, which identify these information resources as positive influences on the trust that influences social commerce. Furthermore, the proximal variable of personalized advertising exhibited a medium positive correlation with the intention to buy, which was similar in sign and size to the results in the regression analysis. All such bivariate associations reinforce the interrelatedness of the digital marketing components and consumer outcome variables, and enable a unitary modelling approach that allows for the extraction of direct and indirect effects, such as structural equation modeling. The correlation results generally support the study primary hypotheses and as indicated by the regression and SEM results provide preliminary support to the study.

Structural Equation Modeling

The testing of the overall theory frame was analyzed by applying the structural equation modelling (SEM) method and AMOS software package was analysed to find direct and indirect relationship between the constructs in the theoretical model. This analytical method was selected because it was capable of estimating complex relationships between latent variables and it accommodated the measurement error to provide a more stringent test of hypothesized relationships than does traditional regression analysis (Patwa et al 2025). While consumer trust, influencer marketing, online reviews, relevance of personalized advertising and brand engagement were exogenous variables in the model specification, purchase intention, satisfaction, and repurchase intention were endogenous variables specified. Finally, mediation paths involving consumer trust and brand involvement were used, where the role of the factors in digital marketing was assumed as mediators between the other factors and final outcomes of the consumers.

Prior to the structural modeling, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed and found to have a high level of construct validity. The factor loadings of the latent variables were all higher than the generally accepted 0.70, from 0.77 to 0.92, and all of them had a significant level of 0.70. The results showed that the indicators measured the latent constructions confirmed by these loadings. Further, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all the constructs of the selected model exceeded the recommended value of 0.50, making the convergence validity confident, as was also confirmed by the square roots of the AVE of all the constructs being greater than the inter-construct correlations, which provided confident support, deemed as the discriminate validity of the study (Dabbous et al., 2020).

The fit of the hypothesized model and the collected data was also validated using the model fit statistics which were presented in Table 4 that exceed the conventional accepted fit statistics recommended by the literature (Malik et al., 2023) well beyond the acceptable fit. Parsimony adjusted fit, represented by a fit of 2.11, was considerably smaller than the cut-off value of 3.0, and shows a reasonable parsimony adjusted fit, compared to the higher value. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.97 (better than recommended 0.95) and is the index of the improvement of the model fit. Also, from the point of view of whether the model was adequate according to the model complexity, the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.96 was in support of the model's adequacy. The RMSEA value was 0.045, and lower 90% confidence limit (lower boundary) is 0.039 with Upper 90% confidence limit (upper boundary) is 0.051, both within the range of close fit, acceptable range of < 0.06.

Table 4. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation
Chi-square/df	2.11	< 3.00	Acceptable fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.97	> 0.95	Excellent fit
Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)	0.96	> 0.95	Excellent fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.045	< 0.06	Close fit

The overwhelmingly good fit of the model, as captured by these indices, offers very good empirical support for the theoretical model hypothesizing that the variables of digital marketing strategies (consumer trust, influencer marketing, online reviews and personalised advertising) are mutually related and jointly and synergistically influence consumer purchase intentions in the social commerce ecosystem. The value of CFI is 0.97 while TLI value is 0.96 that means the hypothesized model is well fitted with the covariance structure between measured variables and the very small RMSEA value of 0.045 indicates that it has been fitted quite accurately per degree of freedom (Hajli et al., 2017). Based on this model-reliability, it is possible to be confident in the path coefficients in the revealed structure and establish a deep understanding of the influence of each of the digital marketing aspects on the decision-making process of the consumer.

The results of the SEM analysis correlated with that of regression analysis, and also provided some suggestion to the mediation path. Consumption confidence proved to be a direct and high impact indicator on purchase intentions (standardized,) as the largest influence preceding it. Nevertheless, the powerful predictor of consumer confidence immediately revealed itself as a big player on the purchase intention (standardized,). Importantly, there were also significant indirect effects in the second study where the effects of “INFLUENCER MARKETING” and “ONLINE REVIEWS” on “PURCHASE INTENTION” was mediated by “TRUST”. The influence marketing approach was significant positively affected on trust , and trust significantly positively affected in the purchasing decision making, providing proof that the influencers was a space for credibility and reliability, which helps in buying decisions. Likewise, ratings on the Internet, which led to increased trust , had an indirect flow when it came to their influence on purchases, spending through social proof. Modest direct effects were found on purchase intention when advertising was personalised , and a significant, albeit less pronounced, indirect effect was found through brand engagement to the purchase intention . This means that personalised advertising is characterised by taking an interactive approach to the content, and in turn can have a positive effect on purchase decisions.

Although brand engagement did not prove as important a direct predictor to purchase intention in the regression model, it did prove to be a pivotal mediator in the SEM model. This was a strong predictor of the two concepts of personalized advertising and influencer marketing ; and personalized advertising and repurchase intention were highly predicted by it. The findings suggest that there's a trail to follow: the first exposure to a brand gets followed by a stronger engagement that in turn triggers substantial relational reactions such as satisfaction and loyalty but not necessarily a specific purchase (Chen et al., 2018). As per the SEM results from the analysis, the impact of digital marketing on the long-term consumer behaviour affects several mediators as well as direct mediators like purchase intention.

Overall, the findings from the SEM findings further confirm the integrated model and show the importance of the trust and engagement building strategies for success in the social commerce environment.

Comparative Findings

An additional quantitative measure of the effect on the real world of all of the digital marketing exposure was the direct comparison analysis between lower digital marketing exposure consumers and higher 'highly-engaged' digital marketing consumers. The segmentation was achieved by using the median split method on the score obtained from the Digital Marketing Effectiveness Index (DMEI) that was drawn up by adding the scores on each of the five dimensions analysed: 'Social Media Marketing', 'Promotions via Influencers', 'Personalized Ads', 'Online Reviews' and 'Consumer Engagement Behaviors'. The findings from this group comparison (shown in Table 5) indicated significant, similar benefits for the highly engaged group when compared to the other groups examined in each of the five consumer outcomes measured.

Table 5. Percentage Differences in Consumer Outcomes Between Low and High Digital Marketing Exposure Groups

Consumer Outcome	Percentage Difference (High vs. Low Exposure)
Purchase Intention	+27.6%
Brand Engagement	+30.2%
Consumer Trust	+24.5%
Customer Satisfaction	+22.7%
Repurchase Intention	+21.4%

This revealed that the purchase intention of the highest group was 27.6% greater than the lowest group of consumers. This is a big gap that demonstrates the potential of the effective use of digital marketing touch points to reduce the inhibitions of purchasing and reaffirm the desire to purchase the product/service (Selem et al., 2023). The biggest difference was seen in brand engagement with highly engaged users being 30.2% more likely to be consumer engaged. The result indicates that a rich and interactive digital marketing environment has a significant effect in helping to convert passive consumers to active consumers who like, share, and comment on the brand's content and increase their attachment to the brand (Chen et al., 2018).

Within the group of high exposure, there had been a 24.5% increase of consumer confidence. This lift is needed as the trust is introduced as a component in the mediated model provided in the established mediated model-driven e-commerce (based on information asymmetry) and is essential to overcome this inherent issue of information asymmetry in the online transaction (Hajli et al., 2017). The positive effects on trust of the high-exposure group are partly because of the exposure they have had to credible endorsements from influencers, positive reviews on social media, and advertising that gives consumers a customized message and offering that feels like a personal message.

The high engagement consumers were 22.7% more satisfied than the low engagement consumers. This improvement is likely related to alignment occurring during a personalized and informative marketing experience, to match the buying process with the consumers expectation (Aimé et al., 2022). Last, 21.4% of respondents say that they are more likely to have repurchased indicates that the added-value of a comprehensive digital marketing is not limited solely to the sale, but also extends to keeping

consumers for the long run. As a general conclusion, the outcomes of all corresponding pairs of the variables across all these outcomes are repeatedly observed and found with positive differentials providing good empirical evidence supporting the main hypothesis that digital marketing is an important tool to enhance consumers' trust, engagement with brand, and purchase intention and finally their brand loyalty thus strengthening the relevance and practicality of a framework for social commerce management.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence to clarify the role of digital marketing strategies to drive buying behavior of social commerce. What is evident is that trust, influencer marketing, current web reviews and personalized advertising, respectively, explain nearly three-quarters of the difference in purchase intent – making the importance of the key information credibility and relevance attributes to consumer purchase decision dead obvious. The findings complement the previous theory on use: the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) which state that trust is an important cognitive heuristic reducing perceived risk in online transactions (Hajli et al., 2017). Theoretically, our study offers a novel piece of research that illustrates three paths of effect - a direct effect through the mechanism of trust, leading to the current purchase decision, and a mediated influence through engagement step process leading to greater loyalty and satisfaction which act as consequences for the longer term. The outcomes of the dual-pathway model of this study will assist in gaining insight into the interaction role of interactive digital components and all possible interactive digital components' impact on behavior. The results of the structural equation model will help to see the structural relationship between variables. The results of the structural equation model will be useful to visualize the structural relationship between variables and the results obtained from the dual-pathway model will be useful for getting information about the role of the interaction of interactive digital components in all possible interactive digital components and consumer behavior that has been split in previous studies (Patwa et al., 2025).

These insights have real-world implications for marketers. This will be an obvious sign that consumer trust is the greatest influencer motivator online, and emphasises the need to evolve trust-building over attention or reach in the organisation. Brands can, for instance, adopt an open communication strategy and ensure their choice of influencers is genuine, and can take control of their online reviews system by providing a timely response to good as well as bad reviews. Also, why managers shouldn't work with more number of celebrities rather than niche based working with more micro-influencers who have more engage and trusted audiences (Salem et al., 2023) as they are more important than celebrities to promote their product/s. For digital marketing practitioners, including policymakers and educators, these results can be a great support for creating courses that focus not only on building persuasion skills but also on recognizing how crucial community management is for digital marketing, and the necessity to upgrade existing educational resources to address its needs (Aimé et al, 2022).

Some methodological considerations restrict judgements based on these results, however. Although cross-sectional design is not capable of making causal statements, regression and SEM analysis provide strong association which is not temporal causality since causality cannot be inferred (Dabbous et al., 2020). Furthermore, common method bias and social desirability response are possibilities with the use of self-reported measures, particularly in the case of sensitive measures—like trust and receptivity to personalization. This variation by the 10 metros means the results might not reflect the situation of the rural population in the country or even the less digitally capable ones which lessens the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the study could not include all the qualitative aspects of the study such as

the mental or contextual understanding of customized promotions or support from influencers, which might be relevant to how consumers interpret the tailored promotions. Unlike qualitative aspects of a study, which may be important regarding the consumer interpretation of the tailored promotions—such as the psychological or contextual aspects that can play a role in their understanding—the study was based on quantitative measures. Furthermore, quantitative assessments were used that may have focussed too much on the quantitative dimensions and failed to detect the qualitative aspects, e.g., the psychological and/or the contextual dimensions affecting consumer view on the promoted service and/or the targeted advice of an influencer.

These gaps should be filled in the future by either a longitudinal or experimental study that has a better ability to supply more causalistic sequences. For example, these could include connections between different flows of personalization or influencer content that are exposed to RCTs, and studying the effects of this exposure and identifying any causal relationships. Further research is needed to explore these relationships in other settings or world markets where adoption of social commerce and trust and privacy may differ greatly (Malik et al., 2023). Future studies can involve an exploration of when and why personalization can generate a backlash with regards to future successes (e.g. increased privacy concerns, decreased acceptance of ads), as well as a study of situations and instances where personalized advertising does not succeed. Examples include artificial intelligence and chatbots playing a role in user trust within social commerce, and short-form video, such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, impacting engagements and purchases which are still not researched. Finally, a qualitative netnography or in-depth interviewing method might be used to discover rich context-specific accounts that can explain the ways consumers are relating to digital marketing campaigns in their daily lives, with respect to trust and scepticism.

Conclusion

This study aims to quantify the impact of digital marketing strategies on consumers' purchasing intention in social commerce ecosystem and our findings provide concrete evidence to support the positive interventions we find in the processes of consumer purchase decisions. The results confirm the influence of the four determinants of consumer trust, influencer marketing, online consumer reviews and personalised advertising for purchase intention, explaining a variance of 73.8% of purchase intention. We can augment the contribution by presenting the empirical evidence of dual pathway relationship between trust and immediate purchases and trust and satisfaction and repurchase loyalty. The results not only support the current understanding but also provide evidence that it is not simply the reach, but the credibility and interactivity provided by a digital marketing element that make it the best strategy for social commerce – giving a deeper view of how digital marketing shapes consumer behavior.

Future studies should consider the issues of our cross-sectional analysis; which would be enhanced by employing a longitudinal or an experimental design to enable the results to be verified as the most appropriate causal sequence. Similar mechanisms should also be taken into account in other cultural environments, as other countries (e.g., non-western and emerging markets countries) may well have other cultural understandings of trust and/or privacy which account for different types of engaging than was found with the cases we presented. One of the main areas of concern and which has not been researched is the avoidance of advertising because of AI processing for personalization. These types of questions will complement the theoretical model presented herein and provide a practical tool to organisations involved in the social commerce market today in increasingly complex circumstances.

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