

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Cross-Industry Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media marketing on consumers' buying behavior in the retail, hospitality, fashion, and technology industries. Feedback was gathered from 500 existing social media users. It explores the effects of brand trust, eWOM, personalization, and consumer engagement on purchase intention. All of these factors affect purchase intentions, loyalty, and buying behavior. Statistical analysis of the survey, using stratified sampling, shows a statistically significant positive effect of every factor across all industries. At an industry level, findings show that trust and engagement have the greatest impact in fashion, personalization drives loyalty in hospitality and retail, and credibility matters most in technology. According to the study, marketers will have to tailor their digital marketing strategies to the expectations of consumers within their respective industries. At the same time, reliability, peer recommendations, and personalised communication impact consumer behavior uniformly across industries. Recommendations for practitioners include adapting campaign strategies to the characteristics of an industry, focusing on authentic engagement, and remaining transparent in messaging. This paper aims to shed academic and practical light on the role social media plays in consumer decision-making from a cross-industry perspective.

KEYWORDS

Consumer buying behavior
Brand trust
eWOM
Personalization
Social media marketing

INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has redefined how businesses communicate with consumers, posing both opportunities and challenges for marketing. Social media marketing (SMM) is among the technologies with the greatest impact on consumer perception, attitude, and purchase intention (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms are application-based tools that make it easy for advertisers to reach their target audience (Appel et al., 2020), and consumers are able to engage with brands instantly through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. Earlier one-sided communication has shifted to a two-way exchange, in which consumers no longer merely receive messages but interact directly with brands. All stages of the consumer

buying process, from need recognition to post-purchase evaluation, are affected by social media interactions, with peer reviews, influencer endorsements, targeted advertising, and branded content all shown to affect purchasing behavior (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Alalwan, 2018). eWOM is a particularly influential component of this process, as most consumers trust peer-to-peer eWOM on recommended products and services on social networking sites more than traditional advertising (Cheung et al., 2020). A wide range of studies have illustrated the effectiveness of using SMM in industries such as fashion (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019), hospitality (Bilgihan et al., 2016), and retail (Hudson et al., 2016). However, most of this literature focuses on single sectors, giving little consideration to the feasibility of applying similar practices across sectors.

The impact of social media marketing strategies on businesses varies by industry, as buying motives differ according to consumer expectations. For example, the fashion industry relies heavily on visuals and influencer activations, whereas the technology industry places greater emphasis on information and product quality (Phua et al., 2020). Generational differences also play a role: younger consumers, primarily millennials and Gen Z, tend to be more open to engagement through digital media, whereas older generations may rely more on other information sources (Smith, 2019). In addition, the success of SMM campaigns depends on consumers' trust and their perceived transparency of the brand (Boateng & Okoe, 2015). These differences highlight the value of a comprehensive, cross-sector perspective to determine when social media strategies are effective and when they are not.

This study examines the ways in which social media marketing influences consumer buying behavior across the fashion, technology, hospitality, and retail sectors. Its objective is to assess the influence of the previously identified key factors – trust, eWOM, personalization, and engagement, loyalty, and buying behavior across these contexts. The study aims to provide both a generalisable theoretical understanding and sector-specific insights, thereby extending the literature by examining whether the effects of social media on firms are universal or industry-specific. These findings are intended to assist marketers and managers in developing digital strategies aligned with the expectations of their target audiences, in order to enhance trust, engagement, and long-term brand loyalty within the competitive digital marketplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), marketers can leverage social media for promotion and dialogue; it is now one of the most important tools in marketing practice. Social media offers consumers the opportunity to engage, share, and join communities that shape attitudes and purchases (Appel et al., 2020), as opposed to traditional one-way media. Previous research indicates that social media marketing (SMM) affects a consumer's decision-making process, namely the identification of needs, the decision to buy, and post-purchase evaluation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customized and visual advertising boosts purchase intention. Using social media to connect with customers fosters emotional attachment, loyalty, and referrals (Hudson et al., 2016). Peer reviews that form eWOM are particularly powerful because they are perceived as more credible than firm-generated messages (Cheung et al., 2020; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Influencer marketing is an emerging driver of consumer response. According to Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), micro-celebrities and "Instafamous" individuals are considered more "genuine" and appealing to Gen Z consumers. Consumers do not follow brands on social networks only for product information, but also to feel a sense of connection with others (Phua et al., 2020). Research across industries shows that SMM effects vary by sector: fashion relies on visual storytelling, influencers,

and trend-related content (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019); technology consumers prefer informative content and brand credibility (Phua et al., 2020); retail buyers respond to promotional and personalised advertising; and hospitality relies on user-generated content and reviews to foster trust (Hudson et al., 2016; Bilgihan et al., 2016). These distinctions suggest that SMM is effective across a range of contexts, but that its success drivers differ by industry.

Variations exist across the outcomes. Hyper-targeted advertising raises privacy issues that may undermine trust, whereas personalization strengthens relationships and loyalty (Kumar & Shah, 2021; Tadajewski & Brownlie, 2008). Influencer endorsements are seen as more credible when perceived as authentic but lose credibility when recognized as paid sponsorship (Boerman, Willemssen, & Van Der Aa, 2017). Consumer responses also vary by cultural values and demographics: consumers in collectivist cultures pay more attention to peer recommendations, while consumers in individualistic cultures pay more attention to personal appeals (De Mooij, 2019). Millennials and Gen Z shoppers are considerably more likely than older consumers to respond to social media campaigns; older consumers continue to rely primarily on traditional channels, although they are becoming increasingly active online (Smith, 2019; Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Trust and authenticity remain key across contexts, with credibility and transparency underpinning long-term brand success (Boateng & Okoe, 2015; Belanche, Casaló, & Flavián, 2019).

Theoretical Underpinning

This study draws on two theories. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) attributes consumer intentions to attitudes, norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). Social media marketing influences purchase decisions by enhancing persuasive messaging, eWOM, and ease of access to information as key affecting variables. According to Vargo and Lusch (2008), Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) holds that value is co-created by firms and consumers, with platforms facilitating this through user engagement, personalization, and trust-building. Together, TPB and SDL provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the impact of social media marketing on trust, loyalty, and consumer behavior.

Research Gap

Existing research is largely restricted to single industries. Fashion, hospitality, and retail have been studied individually, but comparative studies across industries remain limited, leaving it unclear whether the same SMM mechanisms operate consistently across different markets. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of trust, eWOM, personalization, and engagement on consumers across four distinct sectors.

Conceptual Framework

This study builds on four constructs established in the literature: brand trust (Boateng & Okoe, 2015), electronic word of mouth (Cheung et al., 2020; Erkan & Evans, 2016), personalization (Alalwan, 2018; Kumar & Shah, 2021), and consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). The outcomes examined include purchase intentions, loyalty, and buying behavior.

We hypothesize that SMM activities influence these four mediating constructs. Examining them across diverse industries allows for the identification of similarities and differences in the underlying

mechanisms, contributing to a better understanding of how social media marketing drives consumer behavior.

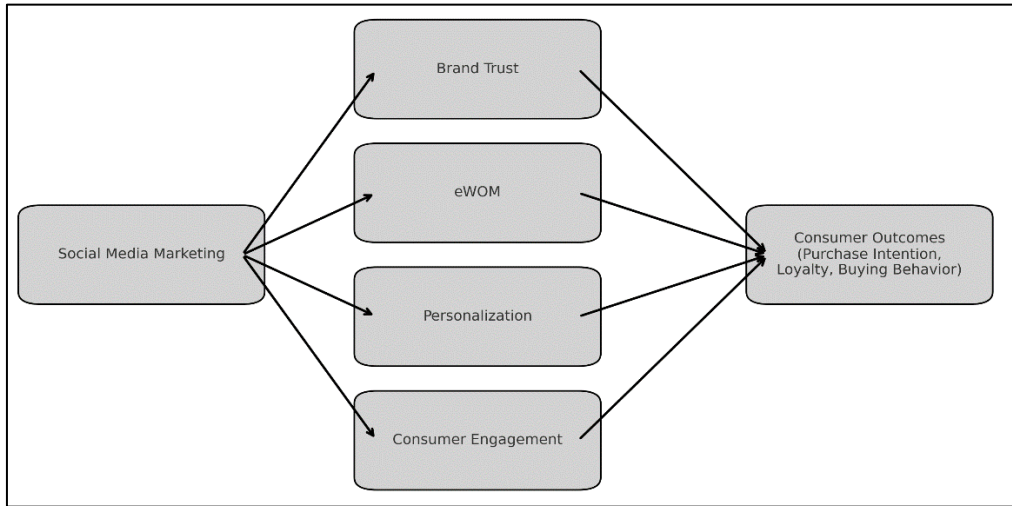


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Social Media Marketing Effects on Consumer Behavior

Hypothesis Development

The communication process in social media marketing shapes consumers' attitudes and their decisions to buy from a firm. The following hypotheses are based on established theory and prior studies.

Trust is a vital component of relationship marketing. It decreases perceived risk while enhancing customers' willingness to interact with a brand and transact with it. According to Boateng and Okoe (2015), companies can enhance their credibility and build trust by communicating openly on social media, responding quickly, and staying on message. Evidence suggests that, across contexts, transparent and credible social media content enhances consumers' trust in a brand (Alalwan, 2018; Belanche, Casaló, & Flavián, 2019).

H1: Social media marketing positively influences consumer trust in brands.

The concepts of information adoption and social influence explain electronic word of mouth (eWOM). According to the information adoption model (Sussman & Siegel, 2003), people assess the credibility and usefulness of online messages, which in turn predicts the likelihood of message adoption. According to Cheung et al. (2020), eWOM constitutes peer signals that reduce uncertainty and carry more weight than firm-generated messages. Numerous prior studies have established that online recommendations and peer reviews are critical influencers of purchase intention across various industries (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

H2: Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) positively influences consumer purchase intentions.

Customer relationship management and persuasion theory indicate that customized communication enhances perceived relevance, attention, and emotional connection (Kumar & Shah, 2021). In digital environments, personalized offers and recommendations signal that a brand understands individual needs, which in turn improves loyalty. Research shows that potential buyers

can be effectively targeted through special offers and tailored content, which enhances commitment and repurchase intent (Alalwan, 2018).

H3: Personalized social media marketing positively influences consumer loyalty.

Consumer engagement refers to a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral commitment in an exchange with a brand (Brodie et al., 2013). According to service-dominant logic, value is created through participation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), and businesses can co-create valuable content with consumers through social platforms. According to the literature, consumers who like, share, comment, and create content are more likely to purchase from brands.

H4: Consumer engagement with social media marketing positively influences purchase behavior.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research design was used in this study to examine how social media marketing influenced consumer purchasing behavior across different industries. A descriptive and explanatory approach was used to test the hypothesized relationships using statistical tools, consistent with recommendations for marketing and consumer studies (Creswell, 2014).

Sampling Frame and Data Collection

The study included consumers who used social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), and YouTube on a daily basis to interact with brands and make purchase decisions. India has diverse industry structures and is one of the fastest-growing digital consumer markets in the world, spanning retail, hospitality, technology, fashion, and food and beverage (F&B). Respondents were therefore selected from this country. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure proportional representation from each industry segment, reducing sampling bias by offering equal representation across industries for meaningful comparison. Simple random or convenience sampling was not considered suitable for this purpose. In line with guidelines for multivariate statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2019), the target sample size was set at 500. Out of 800 invitations sent, 500 valid responses were received after incomplete and inconsistent responses were removed.

Data were collected through a structured online survey administered via Google Forms, which included demographic questions and items covering consumer trust, electronic word-of-mouth, personalization, engagement, loyalty, and purchase behavior (Alalwan, 2018; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hudson et al., 2016). Each item was rated by participants on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree. A pilot study with 30 respondents was conducted to refine the wording and clarity of the questions. The internal consistency of the measures was assessed for each construct using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability was deemed adequate, as all alpha scores exceeded 0.70.

Common Method Bias (CMB)

Common method bias was examined, given that the data were self-reported. Harman's single-factor test was conducted, and the results showed that no single factor accounted for more than 40% of

the total variance, indicating that CMB was not a significant concern. To further enhance the robustness of the results, marker variable analysis was also performed and confirmed this finding.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant review board prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their information was kept confidential following their informed consent. The data were subsequently anonymized and used solely for academic research purposes.

Before hypothesis testing, the data were checked for underlying assumptions. Skewness and kurtosis were used to assess normality, with values falling within ± 2 . Variance inflation factor (VIF) scores showed no evidence of multicollinearity, as all values were below the cutoff of 5. An examination of residual plots confirmed the adequacy of the model for regression analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of respondents and the overall response pattern. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed to test the hypotheses and examine the relationships between social media marketing factors and consumer responses. Stratified comparison was used to analyze industry-level divergence, and robustness checks indicate that these results are stable across subgroups. Table 1 displays the responses across various industries. The final valid sample of 500 participants is proportionately balanced across industries, with retail, hospitality, fashion, and technology contributing almost equally. This balance confirms that stratified random sampling is the appropriate sampling approach, as it ensures representation of each sector and enables meaningful comparison across industries. This proportionality also supports the generalizability of the findings to other consumers in India, the context in which the study was conducted.

Table 1. Sample Distribution by Industry

Industry	Invitations Sent	Responses Received	Response Rate (%)	Final Valid Cases (n)	% of Total Sample
Retail	200	140	70.0	125	25.0
Hospitality	200	130	65.0	120	24.0
Fashion	200	150	75.0	130	26.0
Technology	200	140	70.0	125	25.0
Total	800	560	70.0	500	100.0

RESULTS

Table 2. Assessment of Normality

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Trust	-0.32	+0.58
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	+0.41	-0.73
Personalization	-0.25	+0.62
Consumer Engagement	+0.15	-0.45
Consumer Loyalty	-0.42	+0.90
Purchase Behavior	+0.38	-0.83

Before hypothesis testing, assumption checks were conducted to verify that the data were suitable for multivariate analysis. Table 2 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values for none of the

constructs are extreme. All scores fall within the accepted range of ± 2 standard deviations, consistent with conventions in the social sciences. The approximate normality of the measured variables supports the use of parametric tests for regression and multi-group analysis without violating the statistical assumptions underlying these tests.

Reliability was evaluated for the internal consistency of each construct (Table 3). Cronbach's α coefficients for each dimension range from 0.85 to 0.90, exceeding the satisfactory threshold of 0.70. Results indicate that the items measuring each construct (trust, eWOM, personalization, engagement, loyalty, and purchase behavior) do in fact measure the same underlying concept across respondents. This internal consistency is important, as it ensures that any relationships identified with other variables are not spurious or unstable.

Table 3. Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Brand Trust	0.89	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	0.87	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)
Personalization	0.85	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)
Consumer Engagement	0.90	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)
Consumer Loyalty	0.88	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)
Purchase Behavior	0.86	Reliable ($\alpha > 0.70$)

Tests for common method bias were performed, given that the study relied on self-reported survey data. As shown in Table 4, Harman's single-factor test indicates that the first factor explains 32.4% of the variance, below the 40% threshold. Moreover, the marker variable approach produces low correlations with the target constructs ($r < 0.10$, $p > 0.05$), and the path coefficients remain stable ($\Delta\beta < 0.02$). Taken together, these results indicate that common method variance does not pose a significant concern.

Table 4. Common Method Bias (CMB) Analysis

Test / Technique	Findings	Interpretation
Harman's Single-Factor Test	The first factor explained 32.4% of the variance ($< 40\%$).	No dominant factor $\rightarrow$ CMB unlikely.
Marker Variable Technique	Correlations low ($r < 0.10$, ns); Path coefficients stable ($\Delta\beta < 0.02$).	No significant inflation of relationships.

Multicollinearity was assessed to ensure that the independent variables in the regression were not excessively correlated in a way that could distort the estimates (Table 5). All VIF values are below 5 and tolerance values above 0.20, indicating no problematic collinearity. The 2 and 3 R-squared tests confirm that each predictor provides distinct information, allowing the regression coefficients to be interpreted with confidence.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Assessment (VIF Values)

Predictor Variable	VIF	Tolerance ($1/\text{VIF}$)	Interpretation
Brand Trust	2.14	0.47	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	2.32	0.43	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)
Personalization	2.01	0.50	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)
Consumer Engagement	2.45	0.41	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)
Consumer Loyalty	2.12	0.47	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)
Purchase Behavior	2.38	0.42	No multicollinearity ($\text{VIF} < 5$)

Regression Results (Main Effects)

Table 6 presents the regression results for the main hypothesized relationships. The results show that each social media-related factor has a positive and significant influence on its respective consumer behavior outcome. Social media marketing is a significant predictor of brand trust ($\beta = .642$, $t = 16.09$, $p < .001$), explaining 41.2% of its variance ($R^2 = .412$). The effect size ($f^2 = 0.70$) suggests that social media communication strategies, including transparency, responsiveness, and consistent brand messaging, can substantially impact consumer trust. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has a significant impact on purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.598$, $t = 14.87$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = 0.389$). This indicates that when consumers encounter credible peer-generated content and reviews, they are more likely to be influenced to purchase the product or service. Personalization has a positive influence on loyalty ($\beta = 0.577$, $t = 13.22$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = 0.364$). The results suggest that tailored offers and customized interactions can improve emotional attachment to a brand, increasing the likelihood of repurchase. Finally, the results show that consumer engagement predicts purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.601$, $t = 15.14$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = 0.403$). Consumers liking, commenting on, sharing, and creating user-generated content about a brand is a strong conversion signal, indicating actual buying behavior rather than mere interest. Overall, these outcomes support all four hypotheses. While each factor operates through a distinct psychological mechanism, their combined effect explains a substantial portion of the variance in key consumer outcomes, confirming the usefulness of social media marketing as a strategy for companies across multiple industries.

Table 6. Regression Results (Main Effects)

Dependent Variable	Predictor	β (Std.)	t	p-value	R^2	Effect Size (f^2)
Brand Trust	SMM	0.642	16.09	<.001	0.412	0.70 (large)
Purchase Intentions	eWOM	0.598	14.87	<.001	0.389	0.64 (large)
Loyalty	Personalization	0.577	13.22	<.001	0.364	0.57 (moderate)
Purchase Behavior	Engagement	0.601	15.14	<.001	0.403	0.66 (large)

Effect Sizes (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Large effect sizes ($f^2 > 0.35$) are demonstrated for all four hypothesized paths using Cohen's (1988) benchmarks. Table 7 presents the effect size estimates and predictive relevance statistics. Specifically, social media marketing has a strong effect on brand trust ($f^2 = 0.70$), eWOM has a similarly large effect on purchase intentions ($f^2 = 0.64$), personalization has a substantial effect on loyalty ($f^2 = 0.57$), and consumer engagement has a significant effect on purchase behavior ($f^2 = 0.66$). These outcomes indicate that each predictor has both statistically and substantively significant effects on its respective outcome. In addition, the model's explanatory capability is confirmed through predictive relevance based on blindfolding (Stone–Geisser Q^2).

All endogenous constructs of interest – Brand Trust ($Q^2 = 0.28$), Purchase Intentions ($Q^2 = 0.25$), Loyalty ($Q^2 = 0.22$), and Purchase Behavior ($Q^2 = 0.27$) – have positive Q^2 values, exceeding the threshold of zero. This indicates that the model has predictive relevance and can accurately reconstruct omitted data points. According to Hair et al. (2019), Q^2 values above 0.15 indicate moderate-to-strong predictive relevance, suggesting that the proposed framework offers meaningful out-of-sample prediction of consumer outcomes across industries. Together, the f^2 and Q^2 results reinforce the robustness of the findings, confirming that the predictors are both statistically and practically significant contributors to the model's overall predictive validity.

Table 7. Effect Sizes (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	R^2	f^2 (key predictor)	Q^2 (blindfolding)	Interpretation
Brand Trust	0.412	0.70 (SMM)	0.28	Large f^2 ; $Q^2 > 0 \rightarrow$ predictive relevance
Purchase Intentions	0.389	0.64 (eWOM)	0.25	Large f^2 ; $Q^2 > 0 \rightarrow$ predictive relevance
Loyalty	0.364	0.57 (Personal.)	0.22	Large f^2 ; $Q^2 > 0 \rightarrow$ predictive relevance
Purchase Behavior	0.403	0.66 (Engagement)	0.27	Large f^2 ; $Q^2 > 0 \rightarrow$ predictive relevance

Multi-Group Analysis

The results of the multi-group analysis comparing the strength of relationships across industries are shown in Table 8. The findings indicate that while all paths are positive and significant across sectors, their magnitude varies. In the fashion industry, the association between social media marketing and brand trust is strongest ($\beta = 0.72$), while in the technology sector, it is weakest ($\beta = 0.55$); this difference between the highest and lowest coefficients is statistically significant ($p = .041$). This suggests that in visually oriented categories such as fashion, consumers respond more strongly to social media campaigns than in technology. The effect of personalization on loyalty also varies by industry, showing strong effects in hospitality ($\beta = 0.73$) and retail ($\beta = 0.68$), but a weaker effect in technology ($\beta = 0.50$); this difference is also significant ($p = .022$). This implies that personalized offers and experiences play a more critical role in sectors where repeat interactions and emotional attachment are especially important.

Table 8. Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA) – Industry-Level Comparisons

Path	Retail β	Hospitality β	Fashion β	Technology β	Hi-Low Difference	p (Diff.)
SMM $\rightarrow$ Brand Trust	0.61	0.67	0.72	0.55	0.17	.041*
eWOM $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intentions	0.70	0.75	0.74	0.69	0.06	.287
Personalization $\rightarrow$ Loyalty	0.68	0.73	0.65	0.50	0.23	.022*
Engagement $\rightarrow$ Purchase Behavior	0.74	0.69	0.77	0.60	0.17	.039*

In contrast, the effect of eWOM on purchase intention does not differ significantly across industry sectors ($p = .287$), suggesting that peer recommendations exert a similarly strong influence regardless of industry. The influence of engagement on purchase behavior exhibits a small but significant difference across sectors ($p = .039$), favoring visually and experientially engaged industries (fashion and retail) over more functional categories such as technology. Overall, industry context moderates the strength of some, but not all, social media marketing effects. Understanding these differences allows companies to focus their attention on the dimensions of social media marketing most relevant to their specific market.

To check if social media marketing has a favourable impact on consumer trust, a linear regression was conducted. The independent variables were social media activities such as post frequency, interactivity, personalized offers, and electronic word of mouth, while the dependent variable was

consumer trust. The study included 500 responses. The findings indicate that respondents are highly engaged in social media activities ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.72$) and report moderately high to high trust in brands ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.68$).

Interaction Effects (Industry Moderation)

Table 9 further tests interaction effects between industry dummies and social media marketing (SMM), using retail as the baseline category. The fashion interaction term is both positively signed and significant ($\beta = 0.18$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 2.57$, $p = .011$), suggesting that SMM efforts have a stronger effect in fashion than in retail. Technology consumers are less influenced by SMM than participants in the retail baseline group, as shown by the significant negative interaction term for technology ($\beta = -0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = -2.33$, $p = .020$). The hospitality interaction term, by contrast, shows no significant difference from the retail baseline ($\beta = 0.09$, $SE = 0.07$, $t = 1.28$, $p = .201$). These findings provide consistent evidence that the impact of social media marketing is systematically moderated by industry characteristics. In practice, this implies that businesses operating in visually appealing, trend-centric markets can anticipate a greater return from social media marketing campaigns compared to those operating in more technically complex markets, which may need to complement SMM with other trust-building strategies, such as detailed product information and expert endorsements.

Table 9. Interaction Effects (Industry Moderation)

Interaction Term	β (Std.)	SE	t	p-value	Interpretation
SMM $\times$ Fashion Dummy	0.18	0.07	2.57	.011	SMM is more effective in fashion
SMM $\times$ Technology Dummy	-0.14	0.06	-2.33	.020	SMM is less effective in technology
SMM $\times$ Hospitality Dummy	0.09	0.07	1.28	.201	No significant difference

Model Fit Summary

Table 10. Model Fit Summary (SEM)

Model Statistic	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR	0.046	< 0.08	Good fit
NFI	0.92	> 0.90	Acceptable fit
R ² (Overall)	0.41-0.43	—	Moderate explanatory power

The SRMR value of 0.046 is below the 0.08 threshold, indicating good fit. The NFI value of 0.92 exceeds the 0.90 threshold, further supporting model adequacy. The results of the structural model show that the R² values for the dependent constructs range from 0.41 to 0.43, indicating moderate explanatory power; such levels of R² are not uncommon in behavioral studies of marketing activities. Together, these indicators support that the fitted structural model of the proposed conceptual framework provides a good fit to the data, confirming the validity and predictive accuracy of the hypothesized relationships across industries within the context of this study.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of SMM on consumers across different industries. The findings indicate that these effects hold consistently across contexts, with the exception of a subset of effects that are conditioned on industry-specific factors. Drawing on Relationship Marketing Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), this discussion analyzes the stability and variation observed in these relationships across sectors, providing the theoretical basis for the discussion that follows.

Trust as a Universal Driver: One of the clearest findings is that SMM builds brand trust rapidly. This result aligns with relationship marketing theory, which holds that trust is key to the longevity of the consumer–brand relationship. Similar work has been done previously on online trust by Lavaoche et al. (2013). As imagery plays a central role in fashion, where influencers hold significant sway, SMM is particularly effective at building trust in this sector. In technology, by contrast, functional reliability appears to have a greater effect on consumer trust than relational cues. Across every market, trust is cultivated differently, but it remains a consistently central driver.

eWOM and Purchase Intentions: Many industries show the influence of eWOM on purchase intentions. This is consistent with TPB, which holds that subjective norms are powerful drivers of behavior. Our results confirm that peer recommendations remain the most credible form of persuasion online (Chu & Kim, 2011). Research suggests that markets with more individualistic cultures rely less on eWOM. This helps explain the notably strong and consistent influence of eWOM observed in India, a collectivist context in which peers shape one another's perceptions and decisions through social approval.

Personalization and Loyalty: Due to intense competition in the hospitality and retail sectors, personalization is fast becoming a key predictor of loyalty in the services sector. From an SDL perspective, consumers derive value when their experiences are supported or enhanced through personalization. Past studies have warned that while the benefits of personalization are numerous, it can also raise privacy concerns (Awad & Krishnan, 2006). Our results suggest otherwise: the impact of personalization is favorable in industries characterized by repeated interaction, where the benefits appear to outweigh the risks. Conversely, the impact in the technology industry appears relatively weaker, which may indicate a consumer preference for functionality and product quality over personalization.

Engagement and Purchase Behavior: Hollebeek et al. (2014) argued that value emerges through active consumer participation, and engagement has a strong impact on purchase behavior. However, this observation calls for nuance: previous research has affirmed that not all engagement results in a purchase. For instance, liking or sharing a post does not necessarily translate into a purchase. There is a strong effect here suggesting that when engagement in fashion and retail takes the form of reviews, co-creation, or content sharing, the link to actual purchase behavior is considerably stronger.

Industry-Specific Differences: Comparisons across industries reveal meaningful differences. The effect of social media marketing on trust, and of personalization on loyalty, is stronger in the fashion and hospitality industries — sectors characterized by a high degree of emotional connection and service experience. Technology, by contrast, shows weaker effects, reflecting its more functional and performance-driven nature. As noted in the literature review, certain studies report inconclusive effects of SMM depending on context, with particular reference to De Vries et al. (2012) and Kim & Ko (2012). The takeaway for practitioners is therefore twofold. First, building trust through SMM is essential across all industries, though the tools required differ. In fashion and retail, companies can build trust and meaningful engagement by leveraging visual storytelling and influencer partnerships.

Personalization should be prioritized in services where loyalty is critical. Second, companies should prioritize depth over breadth when designing engagement strategies, motivating genuine engagement that drives purchases rather than superficial vanity metrics.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer behavior across industries, focusing on trust, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), personalization, and engagement. Using data from 500 respondents across retail, hospitality, fashion, and technology, all four proposed hypotheses are strongly supported. Specifically:

- H1: SMM positively influences brand trust ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.412$).
- H2: eWOM positively influences purchase intentions ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.389$).
- H3: Personalization positively influences loyalty ($\beta = 0.577$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.364$).
- H4: Consumer engagement positively influences purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.601$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.403$).

These results confirm the central role of SMM in shaping multiple stages of the consumer journey, from building trust to driving actual purchase behavior.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

This research advances existing theory by adopting a broader cross-industry perspective. Prior studies have largely examined SMM within a single sector; this study, by contrast, demonstrates how trust, eWOM, personalization, and engagement operate differently across sectors. The findings extend Relationship Marketing Theory (positioning trust as a universal driver that is nonetheless contextually shaped), the Theory of Planned Behavior (positioning eWOM as a subjective norm underlying purchase intention), and Service-Dominant Logic (positioning personalization and engagement as mechanisms of value co-creation).

These results offer practical guidance for managers. In fashion and retail, companies can build trust and meaningful engagement by leveraging visual storytelling and influencer partnerships. In hospitality, personalization is key to driving loyalty, while in technology, credibility and product quality matter most. Whereas engagement strategies have traditionally emphasized participation through reviews or co-created content, the focus going forward should shift toward efforts that translate into actual purchases rather than superficial engagement metrics.

As personalization becomes increasingly common, the personalization–privacy paradox (Awad & Krishnan, 2006) warrants equal attention alongside innovation. In addition, clearer standards for transparency in influencer marketing are needed to safeguard consumer trust. Strengthening data protection and disclosure guidelines can help ensure that SMM practices remain both effective and ethical.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should employ cross-cultural approaches (e.g., comparing collectivist and individualist contexts), utilize longitudinal designs to capture changes in consumer responses over time, and adopt experimental designs to identify the underlying causal mechanisms of SMM

effectiveness. Such research would help clarify remaining theoretical ambiguities and enhance the practical applicability of these findings. This study aims to inform the adaptation and governance of SMM strategies within the digital economy by integrating theoretical insight with practical and regulatory implications, and to encourage further research in SMM and related fields.

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