

Influence of Social Media Strategies on Consumer Decision- Making Process: A Mediating Role of Consumer Engagement

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Abstract

Social Media has become a substantial component in the marketing communication of modern organizations. Social media marketing encompasses both firm-generated and user-generated content, effectively fostering consumer connectivity with brands and companies, thereby influencing their preferences for products and services. Consumer engagement serves as a prominent factor, leading consumers to launch meaningful interactive brand-related conversations and experiences, primarily in online settings. This research ascertains the mediating role of consumer engagement in the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process for Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). A descriptive research design and multi-stage sampling were employed to get the responses from the users of FMCG products in selected states of North India. Baron and Kenny's Model for mediation analysis in regression has been conducted to test the hypothesis. The results of the study reflected the partial mediation of consumer engagement in the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process for FMCG products. This study provides marketers with a novel approach, suggesting that they can foster consumer engagement on social media platforms related to products or brands, enabling consumers to actively influence the decision-making process for FMCG products. This framework offers them an opportunity to expand their customer base, enhance product offerings, and ultimately boost sales of FMCG products by influencing prospective consumer behavior.

1. Introduction

Social media is an emerging concept in marketing, now considered an essential communication method for promoting goods and services to a vast audience. It is gradually becoming more prevalent, reshaping how companies interact with individuals. The global growth of social media platforms has motivated industries to establish a presence there and incorporate it into their marketing communication strategies (Hanna et al., 2011; Sema, 2013; Banerjee, 2017; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This integration of social media into marketing methods has significantly impacted consumer purchase decisions (Bond et al., 2010). With access to firm-generated and user-generated content, consumers now possess a wealth of information influencing their choices regarding products and services. Consequently, modern organizations are facing challenges in devising effective social media strategies to influence their target customers and their decision-making process for products.

Organizations must recognize that social media is more than just a means of disseminating information; it should be considered a fundamental component. Consequently, it becomes imperative for companies to grasp the strategic significance of social media, encompassing its effectiveness and breadth (Bottles and Sherlock, 2011). Marketers have continuously sought ways to engage consumers on social media, but academic guidance on strategic approaches for increasing consumer engagement is still incomplete (Dolan & Shahbaznezhad, 2017). Understanding consumer engagement is crucial as it helps identify consumer interests on various platforms, aiding them in making informed purchase decisions. Companies are employing diverse strategies and tactics to define how social media can enhance and transform customer interactions, as well as improve overall business performance. Despite continuous efforts to develop methods to address social media, creating a comprehensive strategy remains an ongoing challenge. Although it cannot be ignored there can be certain negative effects due to the poor management of social media activities, and unclear strategies and objectives used by the companies (Pachitanu, 2016). Managers need guidance to effectively engage consumers through social media content. Organizations are faced with the challenge of reevaluating their marketing strategies to integrate social media and prioritize building consumer engagement (Effing et al., 2016; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

To maximize the benefits of social media, organizations should consider establishing a strong theoretical foundation for a better understanding of social media implementation and careful planning. (Effing et al., 2016; Wilson, Guinan, Parise, & Weinberg, 2011) and also about their influence on the changing process of consumer decision-making regarding the various products or brands. To address this issue and provide a practical framework for managers to use brand posts effectively on social media, to engage the audiences, and to influence them in their purchase decisions. Therefore, the objective of this

research is to study the mediating role of consumer engagement in the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process for FMCG products.

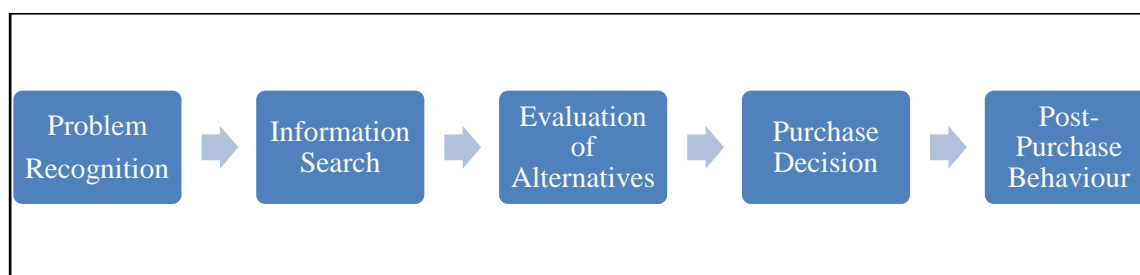
2. Review Of Literature & Hypothesis Formation

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, researchers approached the process of decision-making through a viewpoint of processing information where the consumers gather the maximum possible information that they can gather and then carefully analyze the benefits and pitfalls of all the alternatives before deciding with the utmost discretion. Once the marketing managers come to know about such decision-making plans of the consumers they should study all the steps of buying decisions to understand the perspective of the consumers concerning the information available and how they make their ultimate choice. Because of this information, marketing managers can plan product and promotional marketing strategies which are meant to produce specific content (Solomon, 2015). However, decision-making from a traditional viewpoint considers consumers as “cognitive misers” that simplify their choice. Thus, till the process does not consume much time, the consumers continue to collect information (Solomon, 2015), and that is why the consumers always try to gather maximum information in a short duration which is possible nowadays through social media.

A. Consumer Decision-Making Process

The model of the Consumer decision-making process has been defined as, “a simplified version which represents a road map of the consumers’ mind that marketers and managers can use to help guide product mix, communication mix and sales strategies” (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2008). This model has also been represented as a “cognitive purchase decision which is the outcome of a series of stages that result in the selection of one product over competing options.” (Solomon, 2015). This process comprises fundamentally of five stages i.e. recognition of the need or problem, searching for information and evaluating the alternatives, choice of product and results these were originally given in 1968 by *Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (EKB)*. This model attempts to cover all the essential points of consumers’ consumption behavior and further segregate the behavior into five different stages i.e. 1) Problem recognition, 2) Information search, 3) Evaluation of alternatives, 4) Purchase decision making, and 5) Post-purchase behavior (Lee, 2013; Mihart, 2012).



Source: (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2008; Lee, 2013; Teo & Yeong, 2003)

B. Social Media Strategies

Marketers are increasingly using social media as a means to connect with their customer base. This allows marketers to expand their outreach to both current and potential customers, as well as facilitate direct communication. Additionally, they can leverage customer feedback and opinions to influence others positively (Tafesse & Wien, 2017). “Message strategy is a guiding principle that defines the domain of a branded content” (Puto & Wells, 1984). Taylor (1999) defined message strategy as “a guiding approach to a firm’s or institution’s promotional communication efforts for its products, its services or itself.” Brand posts on social media encompass a range of media formats, such as text, photos, videos, and website links. Furthermore, marketers have the flexibility to convey unique messages through each of these mediums (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegthart, 2015; Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012; Tafesse & Wien, 2018; Vohra & Bharadwaj, 2016).

The concept of shaping the strategy for the messages was based on plentiful ways in the prior research. Frazer (1983) planned seven marketing strategies that were unique selling proposition, positioning, brand image, generic, preemptive, resonance and

affective in an organized manner. Taylor (1999) also identified two basic strategies of advertising, transmission view (similar to the informational strategies) and ritual view (similar to the transformational strategies) which was further divided into six-segment model as ration, acute need and routine under transmission view and ego, social, sensory under ritual view. The earlier research studies exhibited simple typologies consisting of entertainment, information and transactional messages (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; de Vriesa, Gensler, & Leeftanga, 2012). Another study proposed relatively refined typologies that show the difference between the brands' related, informational and emotional messages (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Additionally, Coursaris, Osch, & Balogh, (2013), in their study has categorized a brand's Facebook page and its marketing messages into seven distinct levels, which include product awareness, seasonal content, corporate social responsibility initiatives, engagement strategies, brand awareness campaigns, customer service efforts, and promotional activities. Furthermore, these levels comprise an additional 23 sub-categories.

Message typology that has extensively been used in the advertising literature (Laskey, Day & Crask, 1989; Puto & Wells, 1984) was ignored earlier. Tafesse & Wien, (2018) have adopted a typology based on the study conducted by (Puto & Wells, 1984; Laskey et al., 1989) and (Taylor, 1999) which reflects three message strategies used in outlining content for a brand on social media platforms i.e. interactional, informational and transformational. Dolan & Shahbaznezhad, (2017) have also conceptualized this typology to study social media strategy in the service sector. Expanding upon existing social media literature, the current study has adopted three primary message strategies commonly employed on social media platforms (Laskey et al., 1989; Puto & Wells, 1984; Tafesse & Wien, 2017; Tafesse & Wein, 2018; Shahbaznezhad & Dolan, 2017) that have emerged as the theoretical foundation of social media message typology named as informational strategies, transformational strategies, and interactional strategies.

C. Typology for Social Media Message Strategy

"Informational strategy" entails presenting factual information in an organized manner, particularly regarding products and services. It empowers consumers to assess products based on their applications, functional features, and benefits (Laskey et al., 1989; Puto & Wells, 1984). Furthermore, informational messages shared via social media content focus on educational, functional, promotional information, or employee-centric cues (Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Following the informational strategy, the next is the "transformational strategy" which emphasizes showcasing product features through vivid and hedonically appealing information. The primary objective of this strategy is to create an impact through content that conveys symbolic, emotional, and hedonic elements, thereby allowing consumers to experience the brand in a truly magnificent way (Puto & Wells, 1984). The brand is seen as a reflection of rich, symbolic, experimental, and emotional experiences (Taylor, 1999; Laskey et al., 1989). This strategy encompasses the use of social causes, brand resonance, and emotional and experiential social media content (Tafesse & Wien, 2017).

The Interactional message strategy did not appear in the originated advertising typology. Messaging through traditional mass media lacks the capacity for two-way interactions, but it is an inherent component of social media's attributes (Berthon et al., 2012). The interactional content strategy gives support to active customer interactions on a personal level through one-to-one conversations. Furthermore, it amplifies the sense of community identification by promoting customer-to-customer interactions. Additionally, the brand must engage with customers by fostering an interactive culture within the realm of social media (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Therefore, this strategy enclosed social media content related to customer relationships, current events, and personal content and efforts to build brand relationships (Dolan & Shahbaznezhad, 2017; Tafesse & Wien, 2017).

D. Consumer Engagement

The idea of consumer engagement underscores the possibilities unlocked by Internet services, particularly the tools and technologies of Web 2.0, which have fundamentally reshaped the dynamic between customers and marketers (Sashi, 2012). Furthermore, consumers perceive that social media has enhanced their ability to connect with brands effectively. This is due to the heightened level of consumer engagement, which fosters conversations and the exchange of ideas (Banerjee, 2015). Consumer engagement serves as an inspiring factor, leading consumers to establish meaningful connections through interactive brand-related activities and experiences, predominantly in online settings, although not limited to them. (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). In the above context, the Uses and Gratifications Theory offers insights into why and how people actively seek and use specific media to fulfill specific needs (Katz & Foulkes, 1962). Uses and Gratifications theory explains why individuals choose media that aligns with their needs, enabling them to fulfill desires such as gaining knowledge, finding entertainment, relaxing, and engaging in social interactions (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). The application

of the UGT theory to social media aligns with its application to other forms of media. Consumer engagement, in this context, refers to "the number of messages shared by a member on a forum regarding a particular brand's products." (Cheung, Xiao, & Liu, 2014).

"Consumer engagement is a uni-dimensional concept which consists of the consumers' actions of liking, sharing and commenting on brand posts as a typical manifestation of consumer engagement"(Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Gummerus et al. (2012), emphasize the significance of pertinent website metrics such as the quantity of Facebook "likes" or "comments" as indicators for gauging consumer engagement is crucial in the endeavor to nurture and cultivate robust consumer connections. The consumer engagement process is inherently immersive and interactive, encompassing various sub-processes, including sharing, co-developing, learning, socializing, and advocating. (Brodie et al., 2013). The common element in most definitions is the behavioral perspective of consumer engagement which emphasizes the growing active role that the consumer is playing in the consumption process (Javornik & Mandelli, 2012). "Consumer Engagement includes a vast array of behaviors, including word-of-mouth (WOM) activities, recommendations, blogging, writing reviews, helping other consumers, which also includes consumer actions of liking, sharing and commenting on a brand's post and making a voluntary resource contribution to a brand or a firm" (van Doorn et al.2010; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

2.2. Hypothesis Formation

Audiences in media have the desire to actively engage and to become both the producers and the consumers of information (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Consumer adoption of Web 2.0, which includes activities like leaving comments, writing reviews, tagging content, posting, and sharing popular videos on social media platforms, represents crucial community-driven interactions that significantly influence purchase decisions (Riegner, 2007). Consumer preferences and decision-making processes are primarily influenced by contributions from various groups, including peer reviews, referrals, blogs, social networks, and other forms of user-generated content that are beyond the control of marketers (Khatib, 2016). Research has shown that Consumer-Engagement Behavior (CEB), especially positive hotel reviews, piques customers' interest in a hotel and is perceived as a valuable support in their decision-making process. (Weia et al., 2013). Reviews on social media platforms have the potential to impact decision-making for a wide range of products, both expensive and affordable, such as cosmetics, books, and even nail polishes. These reviews can serve as sources of inspiration for purchases and provide valuable assistance to consumers in their decision-making process (Chen, Nguyen, Klaus, & Wu, 2015; Sema, 2013).

Bijmoli et al.(2010), have claimed that the demonstrations of consumer engagement are word-of-mouth, co-creation, and complaining behavior, and further, eWOM is regarded as a critical source for consumers in making a buying decision. Consumer behavioral engagement like the consumer's input and reviews plays a significant role in an online environment and is considered as capable of influencing the final purchasing decision (Dessart et al., 2015; Zailskaite- Jakste, Kuvykaite, 2012). In addition to this, Information about a brand from social sources is more likely to stimulate consumer purchasing behavior compared to traditional media (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). Engaging with consumers on social media provides companies with an advantage in raising brand awareness (Shirase, 2016). When faced with challenges in processing product-related information, unfamiliar tourists tend to rely on the opinions of friends and family (Brucks, 1985). The search for information on social networking services (SNS) plays a crucial role in the consumer decision-making process (Bansal & Bharti, 2014), creating value for others in the social network (Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011).

Informative reviews serve as vital supplementary information, aiding consumers in reducing uncertainty and enhancing their purchase decisions (Zhang, Zhao, Cheung, & Lee, 2014). Consumers, due to limitations in comprehending product-related facts, face difficulty in understanding and evaluating such information (Anderson & Jolson, 1980). To confirm information reliability and product performance, consumers establish criteria for evaluating choices, often seeking the experiences of other users (Silverman, Bachann, & Akharas, 2001). Online reviews by customers regarding hotels or cruise lines play a significant role during the evaluation stage (Hudson & Thal, 2013).

At the evaluation stage, social media's influence, particularly through behavioral engagement like "Likes," is crucial. Respondents indicate that they switch from one brand to another based on the number of "Likes" on a brand (Xie & Lee, 2015). Information from earned social sources can be more influential in shaping consumer opinions and triggering purchasing behavior (Xie & Lee, 2015). Consumers engage with friends to discuss product quality, variety, and price, comparing alternative opinions from positive and negative product reviews before making purchase decisions (Wang & Yu, 2017). Consumer purchasing decisions rely on engagement, as online comments contribute to consumer confidence in their decisions (Jansen et al., 2009). Logical, clear, and persuasive comments, grounded in factual product information, positively

impact purchase intentions (Lin et al., 2013). Research indicates that users following a luxury brand's activity on social media signal their interest in receiving information, responding to advertising messages, and ultimately making a purchase (Chu et al., 2013).

Data from previous research indicates that over 60% of individuals prefer online purchasing because they value diverse comments. Another motivating factor is the influence of friends sharing their experiences on social media, where positive remarks can inspire others to make informed purchase decisions (Memon et al., 2016). Attributes such as electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), positive online experiences, peer recommendations, and the quality of product and brand information play crucial roles in shaping purchasing decisions (Cheung et al., 2014). Furthermore, the number of "likes" and "replies" to posts is considered a significant measure of success in advertisements, with higher counts indicating increased attention and enhanced purchase intention (Jeon et al., 2016; Wang & Yu, 2017). Consumer engagement with brand messages on platforms like Facebook is shown to increase the likelihood of purchasing products from fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies (Xie & Lee, 2015). Additionally, users posting content on fashion brand pages tend to exhibit loyalty towards those brands, as evidenced by their willingness to purchase the products (Ublova, 2014).

Previous research findings highlight that consumers engage positively on social media platforms by sharing their experiences, and influencing decision-making (Weia et al., 2013). User-generated content on social media platforms helps create experiential data for potential customers. After a purchase, deeper brand connections develop as consumers interact with the product, leading to an increased propensity to recommend the brand (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Brands are encouraged to engage with consumers in communication to foster active and loyal consumer relationships (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). Consumers tend to associate with a company after reading various reviews and comments from other customers who have purchased the company's products. This gives them the power to influence other buyers through reviews (Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). The degree of behavioral engagement, such as commenting, clicking, liking, sharing, and viewing photos or videos, exhibited by users, has implications for future purchase intentions or behaviors (Dolan et al., 2017). Therefore, it can be suggested that:

***H1:** Consumer engagement through social media strategies significantly mediates the relationship between Social media strategies and the Consumer decision-making process.*

3. Methodology

A quantitative approach has been followed in this study by using an online survey method. The objective of this research is to study the mediating role of consumer engagement in the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process for FMCG products.

3.1 Scope Of The Study

In the current research, Facebook and YouTube have been chosen as the social media platforms for gathering responses from users in select states of North India. The northern region of India has the highest population of 43.5 crore people having the highest GDP contribution i.e. 26.3 lakh crores in comparison to the eastern, western, southern and central region as per the statistics of 2017-18 (Times of India, 2020). According to STATISTA, a statistics portal, it was estimated that in 2019, there were approximately 258.27 million social network users in India. Among these, the most popular social networks in India are YouTube and Facebook, with WhatsApp, a social app, following closely behind. According to global statistics from Statcounter, Facebook held the highest market share among social media platforms, accounting for 92.78% from January 2017 to December 2017. In the subsequent year, from January 2018 to December 2018, Facebook remained the most visited social media platform with a market share of 89.77%.

3.2 Description Of Sampling

The study's target population comprised individuals aged 18 and above who were users of social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube, as well as consumers of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) products in the North India region. The study employed multi-stage sampling inclusive of purposive sampling and data collection was conducted through an online survey among users of social media and FMCG products. North India has been selected due to its defined industrial area in every state to improve industrial growth that is capable and suitable for the FMCG sector as well. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Northern Zonal Council Administrative division comprises the states of Haryana, Himachal

Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan, and the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Delhi. The above given states and union territories including NCR have been selected for the present study. As per the guidelines of Census 2011, and the notion of Urban Agglomeration, the cities have been selected from the states and UTs based on the highest literacy rate. This selection makes it more justified as education has a lot of relevance in the use of social media. The National Book Trust and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCEAR) conducted a survey aimed at understanding the reading habits of the Indian youth. The National Youth Readership Survey 2009 unearthed intriguing insights into Indian youth demographics and media consumption patterns. The survey estimated that the Indian youth population stood at 459 million, constituting nearly 38% of the total Indian population and falling within the age range of 13 to 35 years. Notably, the survey revealed that the Internet was the second most engaging medium for Indian youth, with individuals spending an average of 70 minutes online. The study's inclusion criteria specified a minimum age of 18 years, aligning with the legal age for social media usage and falling within the Indian youth demographic category.

4. Analysis And Findings

The Data was collected through an online survey from selected states of North India. Data was analyzed with the use of SPSS-21.

4.1 Description Of Data And Profile Of Sample

The study saw a higher percentage of female respondents compared to male respondents. The majority of respondents fell within the age group of 18 to 27 years. A significant proportion of the respondents were well-educated, with a majority holding graduate and post-graduate degrees, both in general and professional fields. Among the respondents, the largest group consisted of professionals, followed by students and those in various service-related occupations.

4.2 Data Analysis

To study the mediating effect of consumer engagement on the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process, Baron and Kenny's Model (1986) for mediation analysis in regression has been conducted. The following Table 1 shows the regression analysis on the mediating effect of Consumer engagement on the relationship between Social media strategies and the Consumer decision-making process.

Table 1: Regression Analysis on Mediation effect of Consumer Engagement on the relationship of Social Media Strategies and Consumer Decision Making Process

S. No.	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta	R square	t value	Sig T	F value	Sig F
1	Consumer Decision Making Process	Social Media Strategies	0.766	0.587	25.414*	0.000	645.859*	0.000
2.	Consumer Engagement	Social Media Strategies	0.918	0.843	49.278*	0.000	2448.036*	0.000
3.	Consumer Decision Making Process	Social Media Strategies	0.349	0.804	16.365*	0.000	624.831*	0.000
		Consumer Engagement	0.454		22.369*	0.000		0.000

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 has shown the regression analysis for testing the mediating role of Consumer engagement in the relationship between Social media strategies and Consumer decision-making process.

First step: The first step in testing for mediation is to show the independent variable (Social media strategies) correlated with the dependent variable (Consumer decision-making process). A significant relationship has existed between Social media strategies and the Consumer decision-making process where $R = 0.766$, $p < 0.05$. The independent variable, Social media strategies has been statistically significantly predicted, Consumer decision-making process $F(1,455) = 645.859$, $p < .000$, $R^2 = 0.587$, Independent variable added statistically significant to the prediction, $p < 0.05$.

Second step: The second step in testing for mediation is to show the independent variable (Social media strategies) correlated with the mediator (Consumer engagement). A significant relationship has existed between Social media strategies and Consumer engagement where $R = 0.918$, $p < 0.05$. The independent variable, Social media strategies has been statistically significantly predicted, Consumer engagement $F(1,455) = 2448.036$, $p < .000$, $R^2 = 0.843$, Independent variable added statistically significant to the prediction, $p < 0.05$.

Third step: The third step in testing mediation is to show how the mediator affects the dependent variable. This is not sufficient just to correlate the mediating variable with the dependent variable because the mediating and dependent variables may be correlated because they are caused by the independent variable. Thus, in this step independent variable (Social media strategies) must be controlled in establishing the effect of the mediating variable (Consumer engagement) on the dependent variable (Consumer decision-making process). The independent variable, Social media strategies, and mediating variable, Consumer engagement have been statistically significantly predicted, Consumer decision-making process $F(2,454) = 624.831$, $p < .000$, $R^2 = 0.804$, Independent and Mediating variables added statistically significant to the prediction, $p < 0.05$.

It can be seen in the above Table that high variation has been explained in the third equation, it can be concluded that the mediating variable holds a positive impact. Although the mediating variable (consumer engagement) has influenced the consumer decision-making process in the third equation, the independent variable (social media strategies) is significant in the same equation. However, the beta value of social media strategies in the third equation has been reduced by 0.417 (0.766 - 0.349). This means that the addition of consumer engagement in the third equation has reduced the effect of social media strategies on the consumer decision-making process. It is also observed that R^2 has been changed from 0.587 to 0.804 by including consumer engagement in the third equation, which simply means that 80.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (Consumer decision-making process) is explained by the mediating variable (Consumer Engagement) and independent variable (Social media strategies). It has been observed that consumer engagement partially mediates the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process as the standardized beta coefficient of social media strategies remains significant but decreases in value. The high value of the R square shows more variation explained by the independent variable and mediating variable in the dependent variable. Hence, it can be concluded that consumer engagement partially mediates the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process concerning select FMCG products.

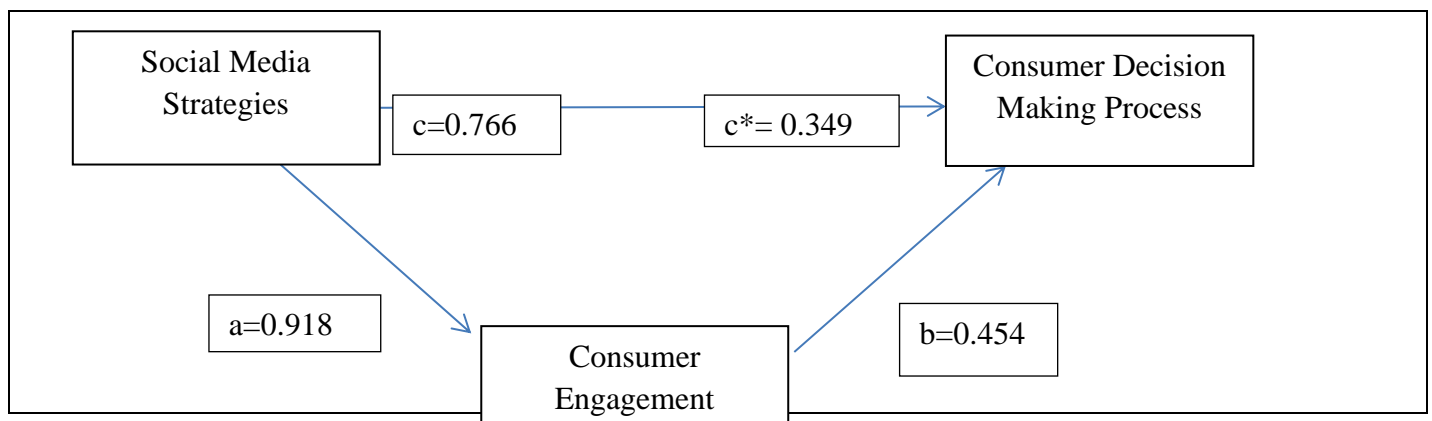


Figure 1: Mediating effect of Consumer Engagement on the relationship between Social Media Strategies and Consumer Decision-Making Process

Where, C = Total Effect, C^* = Direct Effect, ab = Indirect Effect/Mediating effect

Mediating effect of Consumer engagement (ab) = 0.417

$C-C^* = ab$

$0.766 - 0.349 = 0.417$

Therefore, *H1: Consumer engagement through social media strategies significantly mediates the relationship between social media strategies and consumer decision-making process, has been supported.*

It can be inferred that the substantial engagement of consumers through the social media strategies employed by FMCG companies significantly impacts consumers in their decision-making process when choosing FMCG products. The interaction facilitated by FMCG companies' brand posts on social media plays a more influential role, aiding consumers in their decision-making journey regarding the selection of FMCG products. This discovery further builds upon the results of a prior study, indicating that consumer engagement acts as a partial mediator in the correlation between social network marketing and consumer purchase intention (Toor et al., 2017).

5. Discussion On Findings

The findings indicate that consumer engagement via social media strategies serves as a mediator in the relationship between social media strategies and the consumer decision-making process concerning selected FMCG products. It was demonstrated that the use of informational and interactional messages, along with transformational messages in brand posts on social media, resulted in a higher level of behavioral engagement from consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). It was also reflected previously that consumer engagements influenced the relationship between informativeness (full mediation) and advertising creativity (partial mediation) in social media advertising and consumer decision-making (Dankwa, 2021). Previously it was established that external factors such as referrals, blogs, peer reviews, social networks, and other user-generated content beyond marketers' control influence consumer preferences and decision-making (Khatib, 2016). Similarly, previous research revealed that positive consumer engagement behaviors, such as reviews, significantly influenced customer interest and were perceived as supportive in the decision-making process, particularly in the selection of hotels (Wei et al., 2013). This parallel notion applies to the consumer decision-making process regarding selected FMCG products in the current study. Consumer engagement through social media strategies, as used in brand posts on social media, captures the interest of consumers, motivating them to engage in behavioral manifestations like watching videos, liking, commenting, reading reviews, making recommendations, and even sharing images or videos related to the companies' products. These behavioral manifestations play a crucial role in guiding consumers through their decision-making process concerning the selected FMCG products. It was also shown in previous research that customer engagement in social media advertising mediated the effects of two social media advertising features (entertainment and promotional rewards) and one feature of social media advertising viewers (social media dependency) on consumption intention (Ji, Mierio & Huand, 2022). It has been depicted customer engagement has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention and the purchasing intention of consumers is mediated positively and significantly by consumer engagement with CSR activities on social media. In addition, consumer engagement with CSR activities on social media has a positive impact on purchase intention (Al-Haddad, Sharabati, Al-Khasawneh, Maraqa, & Hashem, 2022). Additionally, the influence on consumers can be delineated into five progressive stages. The current results align with previous findings that attributes such as informativeness, entertainment value, and mutual interactions through social media advertising initially spark consumer interest. This heightened interest leads to increased consumer engagement, resulting in satisfaction and a stronger connection with brands and products, ultimately, this positive connection cultivates an influence on consumers' purchasing behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Chiang, Lo, & Wang, 2017; van Asperen, de Rooij, & Dijkmans, 2017).

6. Implications And Direction For Future Studies

This study focuses on social media platform users and their engagement with FMCG products, offering valuable managerial implications for managers and advertisers. It underscores the significance of social media as a crucial component of the marketing communication mix, playing an essential role in showcasing companies' communication strategies for promotion and fostering two-way communication with consumers to promote brands, products, and services. The study findings emphasize that marketers can leverage various social media posts and diverse strategies to engage consumers and influence their behavior at different stages of the decision-making process for low-involvement FMCG products. The results suggest that companies should carefully consider the role of consumer engagement on social media platforms in shaping decision-making regarding FMCG products. A key recommendation for FMCG companies is to prioritize consumer engagement with diligence, promptly encouraging behavioral engagement activities such as likes, comments, shares, and posting content on

brand posts. Actively responding to consumer comments, queries, or doubts can foster interest in brands or products, leading to increased product purchases. Understanding the interactive nature of social media, companies can use it to listen to and engage consumers in brand communications, forming brand communities perceived as non-commercial sources of information. Consistent engagement and diverse content on social media can highlight the strength and durability of a brand, benefiting both consumers and companies. By incorporating texts, images, or videos in social media posts, companies can capture the attention of both existing and potential consumers, encouraging them to engage with the companies on brand pages or official channels. Such engagement can provide firms with the advantage of understanding customers' requirements and needs throughout the purchase process and even after the purchase. The study acknowledges the geographical limitation of North India and suggests future research extending the scope to other regions for comparative insights. It proposes exploring various FMCG product categories, including additional social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Comparative studies between platforms like Facebook and YouTube could reveal variations in user perception and consumer engagement levels. Future research could also delve into factors like message type and appeal to understand consumer engagement on different social media platforms, contributing to a better understanding of the influence of social media strategies on consumer decision-making in the FMCG sector. The cumulative outcomes of such research can guide FMCG companies in formulating effective communication strategies and enhancing engagement on social media, aiding customers in making more informed decisions about FMCG products.

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