

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION WITH REFERENCE TO START-UPS

* *Hrittika Krishna Yadav*, ** *Ainesh Balaji Iyer*, *** *Dip Nirmal Dutta*, **** *Aniket Mayuresh Teli*
& ***** *Dr. Lakshita Bhagwan Soni*

* *Students*

Abstract:

In the digital era, social media marketing has emerged as a powerful promotional tool for start-ups seeking rapid growth and customer engagement. Indian start-ups increasingly rely on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to build brand awareness and influence consumer behaviour. But in this oversaturated environment it is difficult to recognize what works and what is of utmost importance when starting with a new start-up's marketing. Through this study we try to navigate the best practices for the social media marketing of Indian start-ups. The data analysed using methods and parameters like ANOVA, correlation and Chi square. At the conclusion of the study suggestions include a standard basic model for assessment of the effectiveness of a social media campaign.

Keywords: *social media marketing, purchase intention, Indian start-ups, content quality, influencer marketing, brand engagement, consumer trust.*

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Introduction:

Marketing has always been essential for business success as it bridges products/services with customer needs, driving revenue, awareness, and loyalty across eras. Just a few years ago marketing a product meant spending a hefty amount ranging from thousands to lakhs on T.V commercials, billboards, radio, print media, etc. to launch a product, rebrand it or simply reach out to new audiences. Be it big brands like Pepsi signing megastars like Michael Jackson or AMUL running their adorable, animated campaigns it was levels impossible for a start-up to touch in their early stage. But influencing people into buying your products or services has always been the topmost priority of every enterprise, be it an established business or a fresh start-up and continues to be so. But the methods of marketing have now changed. India's total advertising expenditure crossed over 1,11,000 crores in FY2025, with digital channels now the dominant share at around 46% of total ad spend ((IBEF), 2025). A product launch that gets you visibility took lakhs and months and now it happens over a single post, that too for free. Being discovered by new audiences took years of hard work and consistency and now it comes for 3 relatable posts a day for 12 weeks in a row.

Social media contributes 40-45% of digital marketing's ROI boost in India by enabling hyper- targeted ads, viral short-form videos, and influencer partnerships. Marketing may not be easier today but is for sure more affordable

now. But with billions of internet-connected devices worldwide, 1.5% of the world population being an influencer, and a single user coming across more than 5000 ads per day, what is to be done to sustain? With 200000+ start-ups in India with a social media account does a customer actually purchase over a post? Does the algorithm actually reward good content with the right audience? are a few important questions to ask. Through this research we try to find the answers to these questions and look for a solution that is a one stop guide to a start-up's dream to be discovered.

Statement of the Problem:

In the era of digitization, there is a visible increase in the dependency of start-ups on social media for marketing but there is a lack of a structured framework and certainty around the audience reaction to the efforts initiated. Almost all platforms for social media marketing are over saturated with content. Humongous number of users and tough competition makes visibility difficult.

Significance of the Study:

Through this study we attempt to fill the gap of lack of insights about the relationship between social media marketing and customer purchase intention. This study is of utmost importance with respect to start-ups especially in the Indian diaspora and contributes academically and practically as it presents an assessment model based on the findings in the later half of the paper.

Limitations of the Study:

- Most of what we know about social media marketing comes from studies rooted in the USA and Europe, while the Indian start-up ecosystem operates in a completely different rhythm and different consumers, with different price sensitivities, different digital behaviours, and a scale that shifts overnight.
- The sample size of the study is limited to 109 individuals because of the convenience sampling. It also leads to convenience sampling bias.
- There is a lack of cross-sectional data limitation, and the sample is student heavy.

Objectives of The Study:

1. To measure the impact of social media content quality on customer purchase intention among Indian start-up consumers within the study period.
2. To evaluate the influence of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention in Indian start-ups.
3. To analyse the effect of online customer engagement on purchase intention.
4. To develop a data-driven social media marketing framework for Indian start-ups based on empirical findings.

Hypothesis of The Study:

H0: Social media content quality has no significant impact on customer purchase intention

H1: Social media content quality has a significant positive impact on customer purchase intention. H0: Influencer marketing has no significant positive impact on customer purchase intention

H2: Influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on customer purchase intention. H0: Online customer engagement has no significant impact on customer purchase intention

H3: Online customer engagement has a significant positive impact on customer purchase intention.

Review of Literature:

1. As per author Omar Mohmmad Ali Al-Qudah's study on the effect of brands' social network content quality and interactivity on purchase intention it is clearly visible that content quality has a significant positive impact on purchase intention, meaning that better and more informative, interactive social media content helps in improving brand awareness and eventually increasing the customer purchase intention, directly and indirectly both. (Al-Qudah, 2020)
2. In the power of social media by Wenjia Huang it is made clear that a strong storytelling through your social media is necessary to strengthen connections with your customers along with user interactions. It also stresses on the importance of ethical issues in social media marketing to ensure respect and safety of consumer autonomy. It supports the assertion that quality content improves a brands relationship with its consumers. (Huang, 2024)
3. High quality social media content characterized by informativeness, visual appeal, authenticity and entertainment value enhances perceived value and trust, thereby positively influencing consumers' buying decisions. Short form video content, influencer collaborations, user generated content, live streaming are strong digital engagement strategies. It is important to maintain consumer confidence and sustainability. Together, these factors contribute to a data driven framework in which content quality, influencer partnerships and engagement activities enhance trust and brand attitude, ultimately increasing customer purchase intention. (Sheng, Ali, Ali, Razali, & Nordin, 2025)
4. In Dr. Dipika Bharti's paper on the Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention we learn how in order to stay relevant in the age of social media it is extremely important for brands to keep adapting to changes and make improvements in their strategies to stay connected with the audiences and maintain their brand presence. It is important to take negative feedback and make necessary improvements in this constantly evolving environment (Bharti, 2024)
5. AL Hadeed, A. Y. in his study stated that due the numerous options, humongous number of users and large competition due to easy entry in marketing through social media it becomes difficult for corporates to figure out the right way to promote through social media to optimise performance instead of blindly following existing patterns. Suggesting how there is a need of a standard initial model for start-ups as wells as corporates just starting with their socials (Alhadeed & Y., 2017)
6. Digitals platforms facilitate information seeking through communities, groups, posts etc. and information seeking develops product and brand familiarity which eventually develops customer purchase intention. The more brand or vendor is trusted by their customers the more is their engagement with the product related content and interaction with the brand. Thus, trust is an important factor in taking customer purchase intention to actual buying. Continuous information seeking enhances the feeling of social presence and this sense of social presence with active participation and brand familiarity inspires purchases. (Hajli, Zadeh, Sims, & Richard, 2017)

7. Consumer trust plays a very important part in the process of choosing which product to buy, i.e. it is an important factor in determining customer purchase intentions. It helps with gaining an edge in the market and further opportunities to grow, and this makes the product/service a sustainable deliverable. (J X. Palin Jeromina, 2024)
8. Social media positively impacts customer purchase intention by attractive media and simplified purchase patterns. Creativity and respectfulness towards consumer preferences are important factors for the same. (Mu, 2023)
9. Engagement is higher when influencers post about specific topics that match the audience's interests, rather than just broadcasting to a generic mass. For an Indian startup to drive purchase intention, it is often more effective to use a moderate-sized influencer who is seen as an expert, rather than a "mega-celebrity" who might inadvertently signal that the product is "too common." (Marijke De Veirman, 2017)

Research Methodology:

1. Research Design

This study follows a Descriptive Research Design. This approach is used because our goal here is to describe the current habits, opinions, and purchase intentions of a specific group concerning social media marketing. It focuses on "what" is happening in the start-up market rather than "why."

2. Sources of Data

The research relies on two types of information:

- a. Primary Data: This is the core of the study. It was collected directly from people using a structured Google Form questionnaire consisting of 20 specific marketing-related questions.
- b. Secondary Data: This includes background information gathered from academic journals, digital marketing articles, and previous studies on start-up growth to build a strong theoretical foundation.

3. Sampling Method

- Target Population: The study focuses on young consumers, specifically students, who are the most active users of social media.
- Sampling Technique: Convenience Sampling was used. This means participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to respond, allowing for a quick and efficient collection of 109 responses.
- Sample Size: The final analysis is based on 109 valid responses.

4. Data Collection Tool

The primary tool used was a Structured Questionnaire.

Format: The survey used a 5-point Likert Scale, where 1 represents "Strongly a. Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree."

Categories: The questions were divided into three main areas: Content Quality, Influencer Credibility, and Brand Engagement.

1. Data Analysis Techniques:

To make sense of the 109 responses, the following statistical tests were applied:

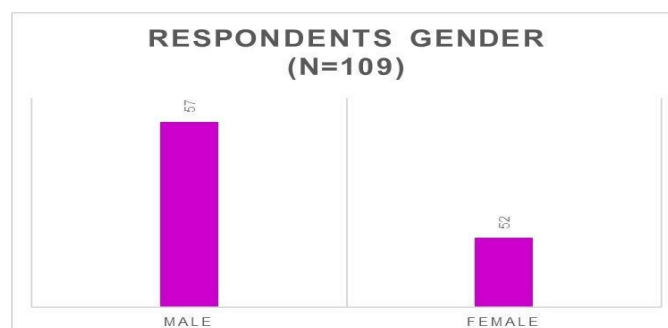
- ANOVA: Used to determine whether significant differences exist between different marketing factors.
- Correlation Analysis: Used to measure the strength and direction of relationships between variables and test their significance.
- Chi-Square Test: Used to examine whether demographic factors (e.g., gender, occupation) influence responses to marketing.
- Descriptive Statistics: Used to summarize data and identify which marketing tactics received the highest average scores.

2. Data Processing

The raw data from Google Forms was exported to Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). These programs were used to calculate the F-values, P-values, and Crosstabs necessary to prove or disprove the research hypotheses.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

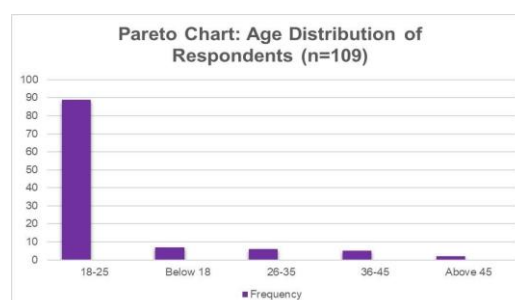
1. GENDER DISTRIBUTION



(Source – Primary Data)

Out of 109 respondents, 57 are male and 52 are female, showing nearly equal representation. This balanced gender distribution ensures reliable insights into how social media marketing influences customer purchase intention toward start-ups.

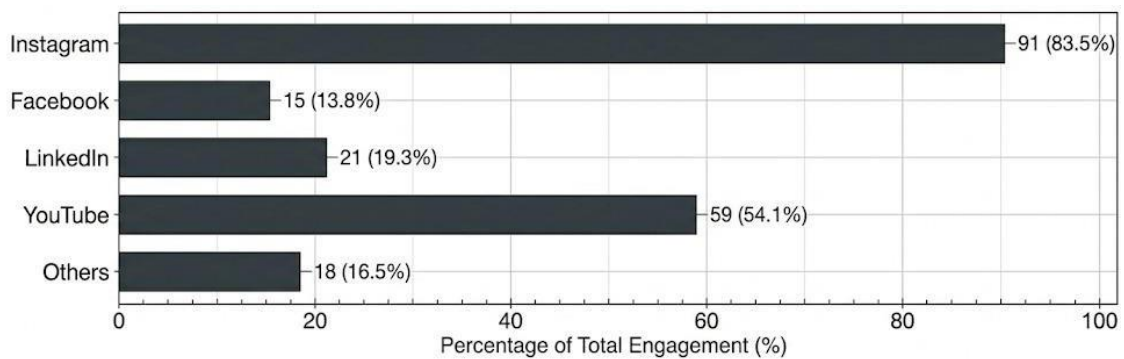
2. AGE GROUP



(Source- Primary Data)

The chart indicates that most respondents are aged 18–25, with minimal representation from other age groups. This suggests social media marketing primarily influences young consumers’ purchase intention toward start-ups in the study.

3. APPLICATION USAGE



(Source – Primary Data)

The data shows Instagram has the highest engagement (83.5%), followed by YouTube (54.1%). LinkedIn (19.3%), Others (16.5%), and Facebook (13.8%) have significantly lower engagement among respondents overall.

4. Content and Trust (Hypothesis 1)

DENOTATION:

V1: Do you think the content clearly explains product benefits?

V2: Do you feel the content appears professional and well-designed?

Do you think the product information shared is transparent and detailed? V4: Do you find the content relevant to your needs?

V5: Do you feel that quality content increases your trust in the start-up? V6: Do you think the content differentiates the brand from competitors?

V7: Do you feel high-quality content increases your intention to purchase?

ANOVA

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V1	109	395	3.623853211	0.699796126
V2	109	400	3.669724771	0.575093442
V3	109	324	2.972477064	0.564050289
V4	109	405	3.71559633	0.631328576
V5	109	420	3.853211009	0.570846075
V6	109	426	3.908256881	0.732246007
V7	109	428	3.926605505	0.679748556

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	70.508519	6	11.75141983	18.47247339	4.244E-20	2.1105546
Within Groups	480.93578	756	0.636158439			
Total	551.444299	762				

(Source – Primary Data)

Variables V1-V7: The F-statistic (18.47) is much higher than the F crit (2.11), and the P-value (4.24×10^{-20}) is near zero. This indicates a highly significant difference between group means that is not due to chance.

CORRELATION

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V1	109	395	3.6238532	0.6997961
V2	109	400	3.6697248	0.5750934
V3	109	324	2.9724771	0.5640503
V4	109	405	3.7155963	0.6313286
V5	109	420	3.853211	0.5708461
V6	109	426	3.9082569	0.732246
V7	109	428	3.9266055	0.6797486

CORRELATION							
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
V1	1						
V2	0.4007758	1					
V3	0.4844533	0.390324	1				
V4	0.3808487	0.303668	0.3126047	1			
V5	0.1315792	0.302448	-0.039821	0.2845605	1		
V6	0.1583038	0.195439	0.0104421	0.0429786	0.107871	1	
V7	0.1475525	0.242247	-0.0332	0.1374528	0.473065	0.357846	1

(Source – Primary Data)

With a sample size of 109, coefficients of 0.484, 0.473, and 0.401 ($p < 0.001$) and around 0.30 ($p < 0.01$) are significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, coefficients of 0.15 and -0.039 have $p > 0.05$ and are not significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

5. Influencer Impact (Hypothesis 2)

DENOTATION:

V8: Do you trust recommendations made by influencers?

V9: Do you feel influencers make startup brands appear credible? V10: Do influencer reviews influence your buying decisions?

V11: Do you feel more likely to try a product endorsed by influencers? V12: Do influencer discount codes encourage you to purchase?

V13: Do influencer promotions increase your awareness of startups?

V14: Do you feel influencer marketing increases your purchase intention?

ANOVA

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V8	109	346	3.174311927	0.811926606
V9	109	383	3.513761468	0.659531091
V10	109	373	3.422018349	0.894325518
V11	109	363	3.330275229	0.926945294
V12	109	345	3.165137615	1.083588175
V13	109	416	3.816513761	0.540095141
V14	109	371	3.403669725	0.817023445

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	32.4587156	6	5.409785933	6.604853765	8.1E-07	2.110555
Within Groups	619.2110092	756	0.819062181			
Total	651.6697248	762				

(Source – Primary Data)

Variables V8-V14: With an F-statistic of 6.60 exceeding the F crit of 2.11 and a P-value (8.1×10^{-7}) well below 0.05, the results are statistically significant.

CORRELATION

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V8	109	346	3.174312	0.811927
V9	109	383	3.513761	0.659531
V10	109	373	3.422018	0.894326
V11	109	363	3.330275	0.926945
V12	109	345	3.165138	1.083588
V13	109	416	3.816514	0.540095
V14	109	371	3.40367	0.817023

CORRELATION							
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7
V8	1						
V9	0.342048	1					
V10	0.477627	0.374856	1				
V11	0.380033	0.235587	0.438784	1			
V12	0.324403	0.204325	0.585083	0.322742	1		
V13	0.146623	0.200287	0.357647	0.472743	0.427285	1	
V14	0.333439	0.383088	0.507372	0.399662	0.341807	0.377369	1

(Source – Primary Data)

With a sample size of 109 (V8–V14), coefficients of 0.586, 0.507, 0.478, 0.473, and 0.439 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.32–0.38 ($p < 0.01$) are significant at the 5% level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, coefficients of 0.146 and 0.200 have $p > 0.05$ and are not significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

6. Engagement and Loyalty (Hypothesis 3)

DENOTATION:

V15: Do you trust brands with high engagement (likes/shares)? V16: Do positive comments influence your buying decision?

V17: Do quick responses by brands improve your perception? V18: Do you find actively engaging brands more trustworthy? V19: Do live sessions or webinars increase your interest?

V20: Do you feel engagement improves your loyalty to the brand?

ANOVA

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V15	109	400	3.669724771	0.72324159
V16	109	423	3.880733945	0.828236493
V17	109	423	3.880733945	0.698606864
V18	109	406	3.724770642	0.664288141
V19	109	366	3.357798165	0.917091403
V20	109	417	3.825688073	0.719334013

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	21.4204893	5	4.284097859	5.648368551	4.1519E-05	2.227931286
Within Groups	491.4862385	648	0.758466417			
Total	512.9067278	653				

(Source – Primary Data)

Variables V15-V20: The F-statistics (5.65) is greater than the F crit (2.23) with a P-value of 0.00004, confirming that the differences between these group means are statistically significant.

CORRELATION

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
V15	109	400	3.66972	0.72324
V16	109	423	3.88073	0.82824
V17	109	423	3.88073	0.69861
V18	109	406	3.72477	0.66429
V19	109	366	3.3578	0.91709
V20	109	417	3.82569	0.71933

CORRELATION						
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6
V15	1					
V16	0.35539	1				
V17	0.3088	0.45586	1			
V18	0.29511	0.47962	0.34553	1		
V19	0.44204	0.09191	0.06537	0.11547	1	
V20	0.39442	0.29671	0.19245	0.34519	0.3397	1

(Source – Primary Data)

With a sample size of 109 (V15–V20), coefficients of 0.480, 0.456, 0.442, and 0.394 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.30–0.35 ($p < 0.01$) are significant at the 5% level; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, coefficients of 0.091 and 0.065 have $p > 0.05$ and are not significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

7. Demographic Insights (Chi-Square)

The Chi-Square tests reveal how different groups interact with your variables.

Testing across multiple variables generally shows P-values above 0.05. This indicates that male and female students perceive these marketing efforts in a similar way. The tests suggest that being a student vs. working does not significantly change the reaction to startup marketing in this specific sample.

Age Chi-Square Test

Table No. 4.2.2.4 Age Chi-Square Test

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	Likelihood Ratio	Linear-by-Linear Association	N of Valid Cases
Variable 001	11.775*	14.238	.272	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.696	.508	.602	109
Variable 002	10.468*	13.633	.648	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.789	.554	.421	109
Variable 003	8.344*	11.080	.303	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.909	.747	.582	109
Variable 004	8.027*	12.068	.000	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.923	.674	.996	109
Variable 005	11.293*	13.843	.140	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.938	.838	.709	109
Variable 006	11.715*	13.315	.027	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.700	.578	.870	109
Variable 007	34.920*	18.895	4.576	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.021	.529	.032	109
Variable 008	11.616*	13.920	1.203	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.929	.835	.273	109
Variable 009	24.279*	28.734	3.544	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.061	.017	.060	109
Variable	15.825*	17.401	.470	109

010	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.727	.627	.493	109
Variable 011	Value	14.292*	14.495	.497	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.815	.905	.481	109	
Variable 012	Value	12.013*	13.689	.017	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.916	.846	.897	109	
Variable 013	Value	22.033*	14.756	1.475	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.107	.469	.225	109	
Variable 014	Value	16.587*	18.041	1.098	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.680	.585	.295	109	
Variable 015	Value	11.756*	13.570	.515	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.924	.852	.473	109	
Variable 016	Value	26.237*	20.029	2.050	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.158	.456	.152	109	
Variable 017	Value	25.943*	20.979	1.460	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.168	.398	.227	109	
Variable 018	Value	14.788*	18.735	.042	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.788	.539	.838	109	
Variable 019	Value	14.037*	16.559	2.335	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.829	.681	.126	109	
Variable 020	Value	13.356*	14.970	.900	109
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.862	.778	.989	109	

(Source- Primary Data)

Occupation Chi-Square Test

Table No. 4.2.2.5 Occupation Chi-Square Test

Variable		Pearson Chi-Square	Likelihood Ratio	Linear-by-Linear Association	N of Valid Cases
	DF	9 / 12	9 / 12	1	
Variable 001	Value	7.683*	10.947	.318	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.566	.279	.573	109
Variable 002	Value	7.978*	10.058	.000	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.536	.346	.986	109
Variable 003	Value	9.627*	10.628	2.571	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.382	.302	.109	109
Variable 004	Value	6.928*	5.726	.235	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.645	.767	.628	109
Variable 005	Value	6.908*	8.027	.424	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.864	.783	.515	109
Variable 006	Value	6.950*	8.310	.009	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.642	.503	.926	109
Variable 007	Value	3.984*	5.769	1.450	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.984	.927	.229	109
Variable 008	Value	6.704*	8.882	.057	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.877	.713	.812	109
Variable 009	Value	10.288*	9.842	2.209	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.328	.363	.137	109
Variable	Value	6.581*	8.901	.024	109

010	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.884	.711	.876	109
Variable 011	Value	11.075*	14.399	.159	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.523	.276	.690	109
Variable 012	Value	11.556*	11.627	1.818	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.482	.476	.178	109
Variable 013	Value	5.988*	5.790	.445	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.741	.761	.505	109
Variable 014	Value	5.392*	8.050	.877	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.944	.781	.349	109
Variable 015	Value	9.145*	11.343	.584	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.690	.500	.445	109
Variable 016	Value	7.102*	9.211	.592	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.851	.685	.442	109
Variable 017	Value	6.060*	7.667	.409	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.913	.811	.523	109
Variable 018	Value	6.498*	8.255	.814	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.889	.765	.367	109
Variable 019	Value	33.238*	14.011	1.207	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	<.001	.300	.272	109
Variable 020	Value	4.133*	5.548	.111	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.981	.937	.738	109

(Source- Primary Data)

Gender Chi-Square Test

Table No. 4.2.2.3 Gender Chi-Square Test – Social Media Marketing Variables

Variable		Pearson Chi-Square	Likelihood Ratio	Linear-by-Linear Association	N of Valid Cases
	DF	3 / 4	3 / 4	1	
Variable 001	Value	2.782*	2.873	1.555	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.426	.412	.212	109
Variable 002	Value	5.948*	6.357	4.981	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.114	.095	.026	109
Variable 003	Value	2.514*	2.544	2.022	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.473	.467	.155	109
Variable 004	Value	5.592*	5.830	.036	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.133	.120	.849	109
Variable 005	Value	1.152*	1.536	.447	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.886	.820	.504	109
Variable 006	Value	2.190*	2.232	.714	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.534	.526	.398	109
Variable 007	Value	4.480*	4.524	.036	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.345	.340	.849	109
Variable 008	Value	5.015*	5.118	1.666	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.286	.275	.197	109
Variable 009	Value	2.602*	2.761	.569	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.457	.430	.451	109

Variable 010	Value	3.448*	3.469	.644	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.486	.483	.422	109
Variable 011	Value	2.416*	2.460	.284	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.660	.652	.394	109
Variable 012	Value	8.144*	8.414	4.557	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.086	.078	.033	109
Variable 013	Value	9.203*	9.694	8.940	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.027	.021	.003	109
Variable 014	Value	2.077*	2.093	.178	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.722	.719	.673	109
Variable 015	Value	2.483*	2.880	.744	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.648	.378	.388	109
Variable 016	Value	3.157*	3.583	.028	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.532	.465	.866	109
Variable 017	Value	5.904*	6.556	5.054	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.206	.161	.025	109
Variable 018	Value	1.260*	1.644	.005	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.868	.801	.941	109
Variable 019	Value	5.378*	5.856	1.260	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.251	.210	.262	109
Variable 020	Value	6.928*	7.860	.792	109
	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.140	.097	.374	109

(Source- Primary Data)

Summary:

It is clear that visual professionalism catches the eye, but active engagement and social proof keep the customer. The above data shows that while influencers are excellent for reaching new audiences and getting your potential customers to visit your store profile, but they are not the primary reason they choose to trust or stick with a startup brand. Though they significantly contribute to making a customer want to buy your product/services they solely cannot get them to click buy. But this gap is bridged through the next step, that is customer engagement and active social media presence, this is where we see true customer trust and connection build, which is the most essential part of any brand's final sales. It is visible that most of the social media strategies have the same impact on both the genders almost similarly and same goes for the working and student population.

Suggestions:

Startups can assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their social media campaign through the “C.O.N.N.E.C.T.” model created based on the findings of this study.

C: Creative

It is observed that creativity and uniqueness are important when it comes to turning the content engaging and forming a connection with the audience while making the product stand out.

O: Omni-channel

Omni-channel representation of the product is important to reach a wider pool of audience and also making the distribution of the product easier as it is convenient to seek information and make a purchase.

N: Niche

Choosing a niche when designing the product campaign is important to narrow down the prospective customer base thus making it easier to relate to the campaign's story while also making the product feel exclusive, which has been proven to improve the customer purchase intention.

N: Narrative

Setting the right narrative for the product is important to reach the right audience. This can be done by choosing relevant influencer collaborations and creating right copy of marketing.

E: Engaging

The social media campaigns must be engaging i.e. interactive with the audience not just in terms of the creatives posted but also with respect to other parameters like lives, stories, likes, comments, shares, reposts etc. And community building. Using smart strategies for audience engagement is an essential part of any good social media marketing campaign.

C: Conversion

The process of designing a campaign is incomplete without strategically placed call-to-action (CTA).

T: Trustworthy

Trust is the most important factor among the ones acting as a bridge between customer purchase intention and actual buying behavior. Authentic content, ethical marketing and transparency are few important factors for building trust among your customers.

It is represented by the following chart :-



THE C.O.N.N.E.C.T MODEL

(Source- Self-made from the findings of the Research)

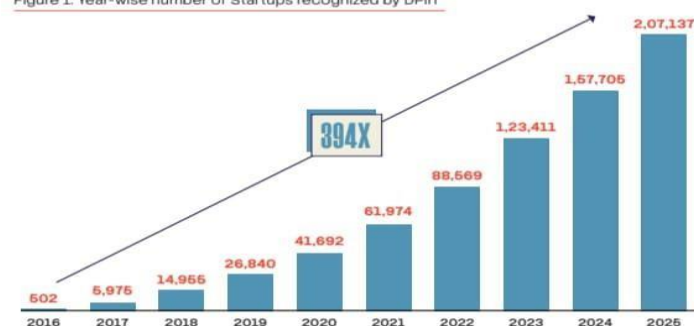
Conclusion:

The research confirms that social media marketing significantly dictates the purchase intentions of the across different demographics especially the student group. Quality of the content posted positive impacts a customer's perception about a brand. Influencer marketing serves as a successful tool for brand differentiation and initial attraction. Influencers effectively expand brand reach and awareness, yet they do not independently secure consumer trust. The statistical evidence proves that the strongest link to customer loyalty lies in active brand engagement and the presence of positive social proof. For a startup to achieve consistent sales performance, it must move beyond mere visibility and focus on building a responsive, interactive, and transparent digital presence.

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Figure 1: Year-wise number of Startups recognized by DPIIT



(Source: DPIIT)

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