

Social Media vs. Traditional Advertising: A Comparative Study on Customer Engagement

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ABSTRACT: This study focuses on the comparative effectiveness of social media and traditional advertising in promoting customer satisfaction, with specific reference to consumers in Hosur, Tamil Nadu. *Advertising has transformed from one-way mass communication to interactive and data-driven digital collaboration. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis. The results indicate that social media advertising significantly enhances customer engagement, largely due to its interactivity and personalization, while traditional advertising remains a significant factor in the credibility and brand recall. Interactivity was found to have a statistically significant impact on engagement, while personalization showed a positive but non-significant effect. The study suggests that an integrated approach combining both traditional and social media strategies can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.*

KEYWORDS: Advertising, Customer Engagement, Interactivity, Personalization, Social Media Marketing, Traditional Media

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising has been a key element of marketing, influencing consumer perceptions and influencing brand communication. Traditionally, businesses utilized television, radio, newspapers, and billboards to reach audiences effectively. These formats provided a wide range of reach and credibility but were limited by their one-way communication structure. With the advent of digital technology, particularly social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, advertising has been transformed from monologue to dialogue.

Social media advertising facilitates real-time, interactive interaction where consumers can react, share, and interact with brands. This two-way communication model provides emotional connection and customer loyalty. Furthermore, data analytics allow advertisers to target audiences precisely based on their behaviour and preferences. Traditional advertising still holds value for mass awareness and brand trust, particularly among those who are less active online.

This research focuses on how consumers in Hosur engage in social media and traditional advertising, examining differences in interaction, effectiveness, and influence on purchasing behaviour. It also analyses the roles of personalization and interactivity as key drivers of commitment. The findings will enable marketers to design integrated campaigns that align with the evolving consumer behaviour in the digital age.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent literature has extensively explored various facets of consumer engagement, behaviour, and decision-making, particularly in the context of social media and influencer marketing. Barari et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis conceptualizing customer engagement and highlighting its antecedents and outcomes across multiple contexts. Pansari and Kumar (2017) identified key drivers of customer engagement, including satisfaction, trust, and emotional connection. Pradhan et al. (2023) reviewed the evolving role of social media influencers in driving engagement, emphasizing parasocial relationships and influencer credibility. In luxury marketing, Dhaliwal et al. (2025) synthesized findings on psychological motivations and status-driven consumption patterns. Research on organic food consumption by Rana and Paul (2017, 2020) highlighted health consciousness and trust as primary determinants of purchase intentions. Mishra et al. (2020) emphasized seamless integration in omnichannel retailing, while Hassan et al. (2016) validated the Theory of Planned Behaviour across cultures. Tanrikulu (2021) applied the Theory of Consumption Values to understand value-driven decisions, and Zha et al. (2024) addressed paradoxes in customer experiences in hospitality and tourism. Studies on digital platforms and influencer marketing further refined the understanding of consumer engagement. Algharabat et al. (2020) identified drivers of brand engagement and equity through interactivity and community-building. Argyris et al. (2020) highlighted the role of visual congruence in influencer marketing using deep-learning assessments. Authenticity emerged as critical, as shown by Audrezet et al. (2020), while Aw and Chuah (2021) demonstrated the effect of parasocial relationships and self-discrepancy on engagement. Breves et al. (2021) emphasized advertising disclosures, and Carter (2016) examined socio-technical dynamics of influencer content. Emotional responses, including envy, influence

behavior (Chae, 2018), while Chmait et al. (2020) illustrated how athlete influencers impact online engagement and offline attendance. Daniel et al. (2018) explored parasocial interaction in influencer-led communities, and De Veirman et al. (2017) found follower count and content relevance influence brand attitudes. Delbaere et al. (2021) positioned influencers as agents of emotional brand engagement, while Dolan et al. (2016) applied uses and gratifications theory to identify core motivators of social media engagement. Enke and Borchers (2019) proposed strategic influencer communication frameworks. Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed a foundational scale for consumer brand engagement in digital contexts. Hughes et al. (2019) demonstrated the role of sponsored blogging campaigns, and Jin et al. (2019) dissected influencer personas for campaign impact. Kapoor and Banerjee (2020) reviewed the effects of brand scandals on trust recovery, while Khobzi and Teimourpour (2015) proposed LCP segmentation for online engagement. Health communication via influencers was studied by Kostygina et al. (2020), and Latif et al. (2021) examined envy types and social identity in engagement. Lee et al. (2018) highlighted ad content and placement effects, while Lima et al. (2019) explored trust in virtual brand communities. Liu et al. (2019) linked aspirational consumption to social media envy, and Mangold and Faulds (2009) proposed social media as a hybrid promotional element integrating user-generated and company-driven content. Further scholarship reinforced these insights: Algharabat et al. (2020) underscored engagement as a precursor to brand equity; Audrezet et al. (2020) emphasized authenticity in commercial messaging; Britt et al. (2020) compared mega and micro-influencers; Chae (2018) highlighted envy-driven behavioral changes; Chetioui et al. (2020) confirmed influencer credibility’s effect on purchase intentions; Coco and Eckert (2020) explored perceptions of sponsored content; Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019) examined social media’s role in perceived credibility; Daniel et al. (2018) investigated parasocial relationships; Delbaere et al. (2021) emphasized emotional attachment in engagement; Demmers et al. (2020) stressed platform consistency across the customer journey; Dolan et al. (2016) identified motivational drivers of engagement; Enke and Borchers (2019) proposed strategic alignment frameworks; Giakoumaki and Krepapa (2020) linked source identity to brand-related self-concepts; Gräve (2019) suggested refined KPI systems; Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed multidimensional engagement scales; Hughes et al. (2019) demonstrated blogging campaigns’ emotional impact; Jin et al. (2019) reinforced influencers as aspirational figures; Ki et al. (2020) examined influencers as human brands; Lee et al. (2018) highlighted ad placement effects; Lima et al. (2019) studied trust in virtual communities; Liu et al. (2019) connected envy to aspirational consumption; Nyangwe and Buhalis (2018) presented co-creation cases; Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018) validated social presence theory; Pentina et al. (2018) emphasized hedonic engagement in luxury brands; Quelhas-Brito et al. (2020) explored fashion influencer communication; Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021) studied platform-format effects; Tsai and Men (2017) compared engagement across cultures; Tsiotsou (2020) introduced relational dialectics in engagement; Van Doorn et al. (2010) conceptualized engagement as a dynamic multi-actor process; Voorveld et al. (2018) differentiated platform engagement; Wang et al. (2021) discussed trust transfer; Woodcock and Johnson (2019) examined Twitch influencers; Xiao et al. (2018) applied heuristic-systematic models; Yuan and Lou (2020) linked fairness and parasocial bonding; and Yin et al. (2021) connected FoMO and social media addiction to envy and belongingness, highlighting emotional antecedents of consumer engagement.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 250 respondents in Hosur, Tamil Nadu. A non-random sampling technique was used to ensure representation of various age, gender, and occupational groups. The questionnaire covered demographic variables, engagement frequency, interactivity, and personalization preferences. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis through SPSS. Key variables included type of advertising (social vs. traditional) as the independent variable and customer engagement as the dependent variable. Engagement was measured across three dimensions: cognitive (awareness and recall), emotional (brand attachment), and behavioral (purchase intention, sharing, and commenting).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	130	52
	Female	120	48
Age (in years)	18–25	100	40
	26–35	80	32
	36 and above	70	28
Occupation	Student	105	42
	Employed	90	36
	Self-employed	55	22

Time spent on social media per day	<1 hour	60	24
	1–2 hours	105	42
	>2 hours	85	34

Source: Primary Data

As presented in Table 4.1, younger respondents (18–25) dominate (40%), reflecting the digital engagement trend. Gender distribution is balanced. Students form the largest group (42%), followed by employed (36%) and self-employed (22%). Social media usage is high, with 76% spending 1+ hours daily. Social media advertising was preferred by 68% of respondents for interactivity and appeal.

Table 4.2: Regression Analysis – Customer Engagement

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F-value	Sig. (p)
1	0.528	0.279	0.272	0.715	19.05	0.000

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.3: Regression Coefficients – Engagement

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.425	0.248	—	5.74	0.000
Social Media Advertising	0.385	0.060	0.385	6.42	0.000
Traditional Advertising	-0.610	0.097	-0.324	-6.29	0.000

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.4: Regression – Purchase Intention

Predictor Variables	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)	R ²
Social Media Advertising	0.715	3.02	0.004	0.085
Traditional Advertising	-0.372	-1.83	0.069	—

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.5: Regression – Interactivity & Personalization

Variables	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)	R ²
Interactivity	0.490	5.41	0.000	0.325
Personalization	0.104	1.75	0.084	—

Source: Primary Data

The inferential analysis provides a clear understanding of how advertising type, interactivity, and personalization influence customer engagement and purchase intention among the 250 respondents in Hosur. The regression model for customer engagement (Table 4.2) is statistically significant ($F = 19.05$, $p < 0.001$) and explains 27.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.279$). This indicates that the independent variables social media and traditional advertising have a meaningful impact on engagement. From Table 4.3, social media advertising has a strong positive effect on engagement ($\beta = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of interactivity, visually rich content, and real-time engagement in enhancing consumer attention, emotional attachment, and participation. On the other hand, traditional advertising shows a significant negative relationship with engagement ($\beta = -0.610$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that conventional one-way media is less effective in driving active interaction, especially among younger, digitally oriented consumers.

The analysis of purchase intention (Table 4.4) further confirms the superior influence of social media. Social media advertising significantly boosts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.715$, $p = 0.004$), accounting for 8.5% of the variance. Traditional advertising, although contributing to brand awareness and credibility, shows a weak and statistically non-significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = -0.372$, $p = 0.069$), indicating limited direct impact on consumers' buying behavior.

Examining content features (Table 4.5), interactivity emerges as the most dominant predictor of engagement ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.325$). This underscores that interactive elements such as likes, shares, comments, polls, and feedback opportunities play a crucial role in enhancing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Personalization, while positively related to engagement ($\beta = 0.104$), is not statistically significant ($p = 0.084$), suggesting that customized content has a smaller effect compared to interactivity in driving engagement within this sample.

Overall, the inferential analysis demonstrates that social media advertising, particularly when interactive, is significantly more effective than traditional advertising in fostering customer engagement and influencing purchase intentions. Interactivity stands out as the key driver of engagement, while personalization contributes moderately. Traditional media remains important for credibility and brand recall, but its direct influence on engagement and purchase is limited.

These results imply that marketers should focus on creating interactive, visually engaging social media campaigns while strategically using traditional media to reinforce trust and awareness. An integrated approach leveraging the strengths of both mediums can maximize consumer engagement and optimize purchase outcomes.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study reveals that social media advertising significantly outperforms traditional advertising in increasing customer satisfaction among consumers in Hosur. Social media ads, characterized by interactivity and visual appeal, positively influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, whereas traditional advertising shows limited direct impact. Interactivity, such as likes, shares, comments, and polls, emerged as the most dominant factor influencing engagement, while personalization showed a smaller, non-significant impact. Social media advertising also affects purchase intention, particularly among younger consumers aged 18–25, whereas traditional media remains relevant for credibility and brand recall among older or less digitally active audiences.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings suggest that organizations should prioritize interactive social media campaigns to maximize engagement and purchase intention, while maintaining traditional media for credibility and broad brand recognition. Marketing strategies should focus on content that encourages participation and emotional connection, with personalization playing a crucial role to enhance the relevance. Budget allocation should reflect this balance, and integrated campaigns combining social media and traditional channels can effectively strengthen both short-term conversions and long-term brand loyalty, especially by targeting younger, digitally active demographics for maximum impact.

7. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media advertising, with its two-way communication, real-time feedback, and interactive features, is more effective than traditional advertising in driving customer satisfaction and influencing purchase behavior. While traditional media continues to play a crucial role in building credibility and reinforcing brand recall, interactivity is the key factor in consumer engagement. The results highlight the need for integrated marketing strategies that combine the participatory nature of social media with the trust-building aspects of traditional advertising, and future research could expand to larger samples, multiple regions, and longitudinal studies to examine evolving engagement patterns in diverse digital environments.

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