

# Factors Influencing Online Shopping Behaviour of Students in Higher Educational Institutions

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## Abstract

The increasing adoption of digital technologies and social media has reshaped consumer behaviour, particularly among students of higher educational institutions. This study examines the factors influencing online shopping behaviour of students in Himachal Pradesh, India. Primary data were collected from 480 students through a structured questionnaire, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and reliability testing in SPSS. Results indicate that students' online shopping is driven by four key factors: (1) product information and personalized recommendations, (2) discounts, offers, and platform engagement, (3) social proof and peer influence, and (4) social media advertising. Findings reveal that most students access social media daily via smartphones, with Instagram being the dominant platform for product discovery. The study underscores social media's significant role in shaping purchase intentions and provides insights for marketers to engage young consumers through targeted content, offers, and interactive promotions. Limitations include the restricted geographic scope, highlighting opportunities for future research to explore broader regions and emerging digital tools.

**Keywords:** Online shopping behaviour, Social media marketing, Higher education students, Factor analysis, Consumer engagement

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of new digital technologies has been changing the marketing environment as well as consumer behaviour. Undoubtedly social media is one of these technologies which has become the most powerful and popular technology for communication, information sharing as well as marketing activities. In today's world, businesses use a diverse range of social media platforms to market products, engage with consumers, and deliver targeted advertisements. These platforms repeatedly provide consumers with product information, marketing messages, and brand messages. As **Swaty (2025)** states, this exposure significantly affects consumers' product search and purchase decisions, particularly through influencer marketing and social commerce.

Students in higher education are a highly active group on social media. Due to their frequent presence on social media platforms, they are now constantly exposed to different types of marketing stimuli like ads, brands and content created by users. Students also post their experiences and views related to products or services on a social media platform. **Alim (2025)**, highlighted that social media marketing activities such as online ads, electronic word-of-mouth along with brand presence significantly impact consumer awareness and buying behaviour especially among youth.

Consumers' responses are shaped by social media marketing communication, with peer interactions acting as key influencing factor. The consumers perception of advertisement and brands on social media is affected by informativeness, entertainment value, credibility and interactivity. **Duffett (2017)** states that social media marketing communications have a significant impact on the attitude of young consumers towards brand and marketing messages, which may influence their purchase intentions.

The element of creativity, the emotional element, the attention-grabbing element, the celebrity endorsement element in social media ads affect consumers' behaviour. As per the findings of **Sriram et al.(2021)**, the dimensions of advertisement greatly influence consumer evaluation and buying power. These findings highlight the need for effective marketing content that enhance consumer engagement and gain attention.

With the rise of social media becoming a powerful tool to influence consumer purchase decisions, it becomes relevant to identify the key factors affecting online-shopping behaviour of students through social media. This study aims to explore how social media advertising, peer influence, platform engagement, offers and discounts, personalization and product information affect the online shopping behaviour of students in higher education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Sin et al. (2012)** investigated the “Factors Affecting Malaysian Young Consumers’ Online Purchase Intention in Social Media Websites”. A sample of 297 undergraduates found that pervasive usefulness was the prime dominant factor followed by perceived ease of use and subjective norm which positively impacted online purchase intention. The results give a guideline for a business or an individual planning to engage in online business using social media.

2. **Khadar (2020)** in his research, studies “Understanding the Pattern of Online Consumer Buying Behavior of Generation Z – An Empirical Study”. It identifies Generation Z as digital natives who use technology from a young age. According to key findings, Gen Z does extensive research on products before they purchase something online. They also prefer Instagram to get deals. Though impatient, they can still wait for discounts. The first mode of payment is cash on delivery followed by wallet payments. Most of their purchases comprise fashion and lifestyle products. According to the research, marketers should use social media and digital marketing rather than traditional marketing to appeal to Gen Z due to their increasing purchasing power as consumers.

3. **Lalwani et al. (2021)** examined “The Influence of Social Media on Buying Behaviour of Generation Z” in metropolitan cities of India. A study of 200 respondents identified the factors that affect online purchasing decisions, consumer expectations, preferable social media platforms, etc. Major findings show that Instagram is most often used app, price is the main consideration while making a purchase and ads have a significant positive influence on male buying behaviour as compared to female. The research shows how brands are engaging with Gen Z consumers since they are quite efficient at online browsing.

4. **Maity & Sandhu (2021)** aim to analyse “The Impact of Social Media on Online Purchase Behaviour of Consumers: An Empirical Study of Youth in West Bengal”. A structured questionnaire was designed and through usage of the primary data on the sample of 370 persons, it was found that behavioral factors such as society influence, product preference, availability of variety and convenience have a significant positive relationship with consumer online purchase intention. Social media influences 71% of individual purchase intentions, making it crucial in shaping youth buying habits.

5. **Ibrahim et al. (2023)** in their paper titled “Online Shopping Behaviour in Youth: A Systematic Review of The Factors Influencing Online Shopping in Young Adults”, identified several major factors influencing online shopping. Through a systematic review methodology data is collected from 15 research work to understand the internet buying behaviour. Young adults are driven to shop online due to the convenience, lower prices, and ability to find a wider selection of items. The perceived usefulness, e-loyalty and e-satisfaction can shape the consumer purchasing behaviour online.
6. **Goyal & Singla (2023)** in their study, focus on “Social Media Factors influencing Teenager Buying Behaviour”. Four important factors were identified to study this phenomenon – Acceptance, Informative, Entertainment and Trust. According to the study, social media advertising is considered as pleasant, and not irritating or deceitful, and provides information that is relevant, timely, and easy to access. Teenagers are also influenced by products promoted on social media. Hence marketers should create content that is wholesome and credible.
7. **Jalaja (2024)** investigates the “Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour in Online Shopping: A Comprehensive Study” with special reference to Chennai. Online marketing involves promoting and selling goods through the internet and has become essential for organizational success in the digital age. The study adopts a descriptive research design using primary data collected from the questionnaire and utilizes tabulation, percentages, and factor analysis. As per study, online marketing is developing globally and revolutionizing shopping every day. The customers enjoy convenience, shopping at any time and offers; this show need for online marketers to develop a unique presence. As a result, they must design strategies to drive customer involvement and sales by understanding consumer buying decisions.
8. **Ekambaram & Krishnamurthy (2025)** in their research explore the “Role of Social Media in Changing the Buying Behaviour of Adolescents in Thiruvannamalai District”. It was found to have a positive impact. The objective of the study is to analyse the factors influencing the perception of social media marketing among the adolescents and their classification as per buying behaviour on social media activities. Through a structured questionnaire and data of 421 adolescents, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling are used. The study reveals that social media marketing influences the purchase decision of the adolescents. There are six major factors related to social media perception- communication, socialization, interaction, transformation, observation, promotion and six factors related to buying behavior- information, exploration, financial position, purchased decision, satisfaction, domination.
9. **Bhanushali & Vyas (2025)** conducted a study titled “To Study Consumer Perception Towards Social Commerce Platforms and their Influence on Purchase Decisions Among Youth”. The study examined young consumers ‘perception of social commerce platforms and their impact on buying decisions, using primary data from 151 respondents and secondary data from journal articles. According to the key findings, 59% of the respondents are using social media on a daily basis to make online purchases with Instagram being the most preferred platform. User-generated content (UGC) is perceived positively by consumers, while following brands is mainly driven by special offers and brand loyalty. The study concludes that social commerce affects the consumer behavior of the youth significantly. Also, the study suggests enhancing the trust level.

## NEED OF THE STUDY

The rapid growth of the internet and digital technologies has transformed the way consumers search for information and purchase products. Online shopping has become increasingly popular, particularly among students of higher educational institutions who are frequent users of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms. These students are regularly exposed to online advertisements, product reviews, influencer promotions, and peer recommendations, which may significantly influence their shopping behaviour.

In the context of Himachal Pradesh, the use of digital platforms and online shopping has also increased with improved internet connectivity and growing digital awareness among youth. Students in higher educational institutions represent an important consumer segment, as they are technologically aware and actively engage with online platforms for both information and purchasing purposes. However, their online shopping behaviour may be influenced by several factors such as convenience, price benefits, trust, social media influence, promotional offers, and perceived risks.

Despite the growing importance of this consumer group, limited research has specifically examined the factors influencing online shopping behaviour among students of higher educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, there is a need to investigate these factors in order to better understand students' purchasing behaviour in the digital environment. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights for marketers, e-commerce businesses, and researchers in developing effective marketing strategies and improving online shopping experiences for young consumers in the region.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the online shopping behaviour of students of higher educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh
- To identify key factors influencing online shopping behaviour among students

### METHODOLOGY

The present study uses a quantitative research design to investigate the factors affecting online shopping behaviour of students of higher educational institutions of Himachal Pradesh. The study is based on primary data collected through structured questionnaire from 480 students of college and university. A convenience sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study. The sample came from higher educational institutions which are located in Kangra, Shimla, Mandi and Solan districts. The data collected were analyzed using the Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To describe students' online shopping behaviour, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. Further factor analysis was used to identify key factors influencing students' online shopping behaviour.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Demographic Profile of Consumers

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistical Analysis for Demographic Profile of Consumers

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=480)	Percentage
Gender	Male	163	34.00
	Female	317	66.00
Age	18-20 years	214	44.6
	21-23 years	199	41.5
	24-26 years	43	9.0
	27 years and above	24	5.0
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	299	62.3
	Postgraduate	152	31.7

	Above PG	29	6.0
<b>Type of Institution</b>	Government College	120	25.0
	Private College	120	25.0
	Central University	30	6.3
	State University	90	18.8
	Private University	120	25.0
<b>Location of Institution</b>	Urban	269	56.0
	Semi-Urban	109	22.7
	Rural	102	21.3
<b>District of Institution</b>	Shimla	120	25.0
	Kangra	120	25.0
	Solan	120	25.0
	Mandi	120	25.0
<b>Monthly Financial Support</b>	Less than 2,500	242	50.4
	2,500-5,000	128	26.7
	5,000-10,000	76	15.8
	10,000 or more	34	7.1

Table 1 presents a detailed demographic profile of the 480 respondents which shows that there were more female participants (66%) than males (34%), and most respondents were aged 18–23 years (86.1%), indicating a predominantly young adult sample. The majority were undergraduate students (62.3%), followed by postgraduates (31.7%) and a few above postgraduate levels (6%). Respondents came from various types of institutions, with equal representation from government colleges, private colleges, and private universities (25% each), while fewer were from state (18.8%) and central universities (6.3%). Most students were from urban areas (56%), with others from semi-urban (22.7%) and rural areas (21.3%), and they were evenly distributed across the four districts of Shimla, Kangra, Solan, and Mandi. Regarding monthly financial support, half of the respondents (50.4%) received less than ₹2,500, indicating limited financial resources. Overall, the sample mainly consist of young, urban, undergraduate students with diverse institutional and district representation, providing a good base for examining the social media–driven shopping behavior.

### Behavioural Characteristics of Consumers

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Behavioural Characteristics of Consumers

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=480)	Percentage
<b>Access to social media</b>	Yes	409	85.2
	No	71	14.8
<b>Frequency of social media usage</b>	Daily	394	82.1
	3-4 times a week	54	11.3
	Once or twice a week	6	1.3
	Rarely	26	5.4
<b>Primary device to use social media</b>	Smartphone	462	96.3
	Laptop/Computer	17	3.5
	Tablet	1	.2
	Yes	389	81.0

<b>Influence of social media on online purchase</b>	No	91	19.0
<b>Frequency of online shopping through social media</b>	Regularly	53	11.0
	Once a month	101	21.0
	2-3 times a month	88	18.3
	Rarely	238	49.6
<b>Platform for product discovery</b>	Instagram	327	68.1
	Facebook	15	3.1
	WhatsApp	14	2.9
	YouTube	79	16.5
	Snapchat	5	1.0
	Pinterest	22	4.6
	Twitter	1	.2
	Telegram	3	.6
	Other	14	2.9

Table 2 presents the behavioural characteristics of the respondents regarding their use of social media and its influence on online shopping. The analysis reveals that a majority of respondents (85.2%) have access to social media, with daily usage being predominant (82.1%), indicating that social media is an integral part of students' daily routines. Smartphones (96.3%) serve as the primary device for accessing social media, reflecting the convenience and mobility they provide. A substantial proportion of respondents (81%) reported that social media influences their online purchase decisions, highlighting its role in shaping attitudes, preferences, and engagement with products. In terms of platforms, Instagram (68.1%) is the most frequently used for product discovery, followed by YouTube (16.5%), while other platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Pinterest are less commonly utilized. Frequent usage and high influence indicate that social media serves as a key channel for information, brand interaction, and decision-making among students, emphasizing its importance in the today's digital shopping environment.

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Table 3- KMO and Bartlett's Test

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>		.963
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	8427.410
	<b>Df</b>	351
	<b>Sig.</b>	.000

Table 3 present Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of 0.963 indicates excellent sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ( $\chi^2 = 8427.410$ ,  $df = 351$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that the variables are sufficiently correlated. Therefore, the data are appropriate for conducting factor analysis.

### Total Variance Explained

**Table 4 Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.200	48.888	48.888	13.200	48.888	48.888	5.514	20.422	20.422
2	1.650	6.112	55.000	1.650	6.112	55.000	5.153	19.087	39.509
3	1.365	5.055	60.055	1.365	5.055	60.055	3.660	13.555	53.064
4	1.106	4.098	64.153	1.106	4.098	64.153	2.994	11.089	64.153
5	.767	2.840	66.993						
6	.676	2.503	69.496						
7	.657	2.434	71.930						
8	.599	2.218	74.148						
9	.567	2.098	76.246						
10	.525	1.944	78.190						
11	.512	1.897	80.087						
12	.498	1.845	81.932						
13	.455	1.685	83.617						
14	.436	1.615	85.232						
15	.409	1.516	86.748						
16	.391	1.449	88.198						
17	.377	1.396	89.594						
18	.350	1.295	90.889						
19	.326	1.207	92.096						
20	.323	1.197	93.293						
21	.309	1.146	94.439						
22	.290	1.072	95.511						

23	.281	1.041	96.552						
24	.268	.994	97.547						
25	.251	.930	98.476						
26	.234	.869	99.345						
27	.177	.655	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Table 4 presents Total Variance Explained which shows that four factors were extracted based on eigenvalues greater than 1. These four factors together explain 64.153% of the total variance, which is considered satisfactory in social science research. After rotation, Factor 1 explains 20.422%, Factor 2 explains 19.087%, Factor 3 explains 13.555%, and Factor 4 explains 11.089% of the variance, indicating that these factors adequately represent the underlying structure of the variables.

### Rotated Component Matrix

Table 5- Rotated Component Matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
PI2	.771	.275	.181	.195
PI1	.759	.227	.233	.231
PI3	.739	.127	.277	.083
PER2	.689	.332	.216	.158
PER1	.688	.289	.181	.207
PER4	.687	.311	.165	.282
PER3	.673	.297	.260	.184
PI4	.583	.295	.316	.157
PE4	.134	.718	.211	.285
DO2	.303	.702	.201	.234
DO1	.338	.699	.245	.149
DO4	.358	.662	.160	.227
DO5	.439	.645	.192	.099
DO3	.423	.637	.236	.052
PE2	.201	.619	.210	.409
PE1	.210	.606	.191	.383
PE5	.375	.579	.362	.124
SP4	.265	.234	.733	.143
SP1	.235	.152	.715	.152
SP2	.307	.240	.680	.206
PR2	.332	.161	.595	.302
PR1	.359	.297	.575	.167
SP3	.044	.449	.575	.269
AD2	.202	.180	.109	.773

<b>AD1</b>	.244	.370	.151	<b>.666</b>
<b>AD3</b>	.233	.171	.304	<b>.641</b>
<b>AD5</b>	.151	.231	.304	<b>.640</b>
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.				

Table 5 presents rotated component matrix indicates that the variables are grouped into four distinct factors, with factor loadings ranging from 0.575 to 0.773. The items related to PI and PER load strongly on the first factor, PE and DO items load on the second factor, SP and PR items load on the third factor, and AD items load on the fourth factor. Three items—AD4, PR4, PE3—were excluded due to low factor loadings (<0.50). Since all remaining factor loadings are above the acceptable threshold of 0.50, the results indicate a clear and valid factor structure after Varimax rotation.

### Extracted Factors from Factor Analysis

**Table 6 Extracted Factors and their Interpretation**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<b>Factor 1: Product Information (PI) and Personalized Recommendations (PER)</b>	This factor represents the role of accurate product information and personalized content in social media shopping. It indicates that consumers value detailed information combined with tailored recommendations, which enhances trust and supports informed purchase decisions
<b>Factor 2: Discounts, Offers (DO) and Platform Engagement (PE)</b>	This factor highlights the influence of promotional incentives and platform engagement features. It reflects how discounts, festive offers, and interactive platform elements encourage impulse buying and sustain user engagement.
<b>Factor 3: Social Proof (SP) and Peer Influence (PR)</b>	This factor captures the impact of social proof and interpersonal influence on shopping behaviour. It suggests that peer opinions, reviews, and social validation significantly shape consumer trust and purchase intentions
<b>Factor 4: Social Media Advertising Influence (AD)</b>	This factor reflects the effectiveness of social media advertising. It shows that advertisement recall, visual appeal, and sponsored promotions play a crucial role in increasing awareness and influencing purchase decisions.

## Reliability Statistics of Extracted Factors

Table 7 Reliability Statistics

Factor	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Factor 1	8	.924	Excellent
Factor 2	9	.923	Excellent
Factor 3	6	.862	Good
Factor 4	4	.805	Good

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all four factors range from 0.805 to 0.924, indicating good to excellent internal consistency, confirming that the items within each factor reliably measure the constructs.

## DISCUSSION

The study shows that social media significantly influences the online shopping behaviour of students in higher educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh. Most students actively use social media daily, primarily via smartphones, and many report that it affects their purchase decisions. Factor analysis identified four key dimensions shaping shopping behaviour: product information and personalized recommendations, discounts and platform engagement, social proof and peer influence, and social media advertising influence. These four factors collectively explain a substantial portion of the variance, highlighting the importance of these elements in shaping consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intentions. The reliability analysis confirms that the measurement scales used are consistent and dependable.

## CONCLUSION

The study indicates that social media plays a key role in shaping the online shopping behaviour of students in higher education. Students rely on detailed product information, personalized recommendations, discounts, and offers to make purchase decisions. Peer opinions, reviews, and social validation also strongly influence their choices. Social media platforms not only help students discover products but also build trust and confidence in their online purchases. Overall, these factors together show that social media is a powerful tool for engaging young consumers and guiding their buying behaviour.

## IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The findings offer practical guidance for marketers and businesses targeting students. Platforms such as Instagram and YouTube can be used effectively to promote products and offers. Providing clear and personalized product information, interactive content, timely discounts, and encouraging user reviews or influencer endorsements can increase trust and engagement. Businesses can design campaigns that combine these elements to capture attention, influence purchase decisions, and strengthen brand loyalty among young consumers. This approach can help maximize the impact of social media marketing and improve online sales outcomes.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study is limited to students only and from selected areas of Himachal Pradesh. Future research could explore other regions, age groups, and emerging digital tools such as AI recommendations and influencer marketing to understand social media's broader impact on online shopping behaviour.

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