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Systematic Literature Review and Plans for Further Study on the Relationship Between Social Media Marketing Drivers and Purchase Intention

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Abstract: *Social media marketing (SMM) has become a central component of contemporary digital marketing strategies, profoundly influencing consumer decision-making processes. This systematic literature review synthesizes existing knowledge on the key drivers of social media marketing and their relationship with consumer purchase intention. Drawing on a comprehensive examination of scholarly work, the review identifies the most consistently examined drivers, including electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization, trust, informativeness, and influencer-related attributes. The synthesis reveals that these drivers exert both direct and indirect effects on purchase intention, frequently mediated by constructs such as brand trust, brand image, consumer attitude, engagement, and perceived value. Moderating influences of culture, demographic characteristics, product category, and platform type are also highlighted. Methodologically, the literature is dominated by quantitative approaches employing structural equation modeling. The review further identifies critical research gaps, including limited longitudinal designs, insufficient cross-cultural comparisons, under-exploration of emerging platforms and technologies (such as artificial intelligence-driven personalization and virtual influencers), and sparse attention to dark-side effects such as privacy concerns and content saturation. Based on these gaps, a structured agenda for future research is proposed. The findings offer theoretical consolidation and practical guidance for marketers seeking to design more effective social media strategies that convert engagement into purchase intention.*

Keywords: *Social media marketing; Purchase intention; Electronic word-of-mouth; Consumer engagement; Brand trust; Systematic literature review; Research agenda*

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1.0 Introduction

rapid proliferation of social media platforms and the continuous advancement of digital communication technologies have fundamentally transformed the global marketing landscape, reshaping how organizations interact with consumers, communicate brand value, and influence purchasing decisions. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X have evolved beyond conventional communication channels into strategic marketing environments where businesses create brand awareness, disseminate product information, establish customer relationships and facilitate consumer purchasing decisions. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media enables real-time interaction, information sharing, electronic recommendations and consumer-

generated content, thereby allowing consumers to participate actively in the creation and dissemination of brand-related information (Antczak, 2024; Li et al., 2021). This transformation has made social media marketing (SMM) an increasingly important component of contemporary marketing strategies, particularly as consumers rely more extensively on digital platforms to discover, evaluate and compare products and services. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that social media provides opportunities for interactive participation and user-generated content, while Appel et al. (2020) identify social media as an evolving digital environment that is redefining consumer-brand relationships and the future of marketing.

Social media marketing encompasses various activities and communication mechanisms that influence consumer perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intentions. These mechanisms, commonly described as social media marketing drivers, include electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), online referrals, consumer reviews, interaction, entertainment, informativeness, trendiness, customization, brand engagement and influencer credibility. Their influence extends beyond the dissemination of promotional messages to include the development of consumer trust, perceived brand authenticity and social relationships. Li et al. (2021) conceptualize social media marketing strategy as a multidimensional organizational approach involving the integration of social media activities into broader marketing objectives. Similarly, the growing importance of electronic word-of-mouth reflects the increasing influence of consumer-generated information on product evaluation and purchasing decisions (Filieri et al., 2025). Consequently, consumers are no longer merely recipients of marketing communications but also active participants who generate, evaluate and circulate information that can influence the purchasing decisions of other consumers.

Purchase intention (PI) represents an individual's willingness, likelihood or predisposition to purchase a particular product or service following the evaluation of available information, perceived benefits and associated risks. Within the social media environment, purchase intention is influenced by the quality of marketing information, consumer experiences, online recommendations, perceived credibility and interactions with brands and other users. Although purchase intention does not necessarily translate into actual purchasing behaviour, it remains an important indicator of consumers' behavioural readiness and a useful measure for evaluating marketing effectiveness. The Theory of Planned Behavior provides a theoretical explanation of how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991). In social media marketing, these psychological factors may be shaped by consumer reviews, influencer recommendations, peer endorsements and interactions with brand communities. Thus, understanding the relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention is essential for explaining how digital marketing activities translate into consumer willingness to purchase.

The importance of social media marketing is particularly evident in emerging economies such as Nigeria, where expanding internet access and increasing adoption of digital communication technologies are creating new opportunities for online marketing and electronic commerce. Previous research has identified social media as an important channel for product discovery, consumer engagement and the dissemination of marketing information in developing markets (Bamidele et al., 2023). For academic staff in higher institutions, who constitute a relevant category

of knowledge-intensive professionals and digital consumers, social media platforms provide opportunities for professional networking, information exchange, product discovery and evaluation of alternative purchasing options (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). Their relatively high educational exposure may also make them particularly relevant for investigating how information credibility, vendor reputation, perceived usefulness and online consumer experiences influence purchase intentions. Nevertheless, educational attainment does not necessarily eliminate concerns regarding online transaction risks, misleading product information or the credibility of digital marketing communications. Understanding these factors is therefore important for explaining the extent to which social media marketing influences purchasing decisions among different consumer groups.

Despite the growing adoption of social media marketing, exposure to promotional content does not automatically translate into purchase intention. Consumers frequently evaluate the credibility of product information, the trustworthiness of vendors, the quality of online reviews, the responsiveness of sellers and the risks associated with payment, product delivery, privacy and possible misrepresentation. Cenizo (2025) emphasizes the importance of visual presentation and marketing communication in shaping consumer purchase intention within international social media environments. Similarly, Nigerian evidence indicates that trust in online vendors and perceived website quality positively influence online purchase intention, suggesting that consumers consider both the credibility of individual sellers and the overall quality of digital marketplaces when making purchasing decisions (Esho & Verhoef, 2021). International studies also demonstrate that review quality, review quantity, information credibility and seller responsiveness contribute to consumer confidence and purchasing decisions in social-commerce environments (Senali et al., 2024). These findings suggest that social media marketing drivers may influence purchase intention through both direct relationships and indirect psychological mechanisms involving trust, consumer attitudes, engagement and perceived value.

The literature on social media marketing has increasingly moved beyond examining individual promotional activities towards investigating the mechanisms through which digital interactions influence consumer decision-making. For instance, Bartoloni and Ancillai (2024), in their systematic review of two decades of social media marketing research, provide an integrative perspective on the development of the field and identify emerging research opportunities. Their work demonstrates the importance of consolidating fragmented findings and developing a more comprehensive understanding of social media marketing strategies. Similarly, Appel et al. (2020) highlight the evolving relationship between social media technologies, consumer behaviour and marketing practices, emphasizing the need for research that responds to changing digital environments. These perspectives suggest that social media marketing should be examined not simply as a collection of promotional techniques but as an interconnected system of informational, relational, technological and psychological influences.

The relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention can also be explained through established behavioural and marketing theories. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework provides a useful foundation for understanding how external marketing stimuli influence consumers' internal psychological states and subsequent behavioural responses. Within this framework, social media marketing

drivers such as entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, online reviews and influencer recommendations constitute environmental stimuli, while consumer trust, brand attitude, perceived value and engagement represent internal organismic responses. Purchase intention subsequently emerges as a behavioural response to these psychological processes. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) further explains how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control contribute to behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). In addition, Erkan and Evans (2016) demonstrate the relevance of information adoption in explaining how electronic word-of-mouth communicated through social media influences consumer purchase intentions. These theoretical perspectives collectively indicate that the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention involves multiple interconnected pathways rather than a single direct influence.

Nevertheless, existing empirical findings are distributed across different industries, geographical settings, consumer populations and social media platforms. Some investigations emphasize the influence of electronic word-of-mouth and online reviews, whereas others concentrate on influencer credibility, consumer engagement, brand relationships, entertainment and personalized marketing communications. Although these studies have advanced understanding of individual marketing drivers, their findings are not always directly comparable because of variations in conceptual definitions, measurement instruments, research designs and analytical techniques. Furthermore, differences in consumer characteristics, cultural orientations, product categories and platform functionalities may influence the magnitude and direction of relationships between particular marketing drivers and purchase intention. Consequently, there is a need to examine the extent to which existing findings demonstrate consistent relationships and the circumstances under which particular social media marketing drivers become more influential.

Despite the increasing volume of scholarly publications on social media marketing, important conceptual, empirical and methodological gaps remain. First, research findings are often fragmented across individual marketing drivers, making it difficult to establish an integrated understanding of how informational, relational, experiential and technological factors jointly influence purchase intention. Second, the geographical distribution of research remains an important consideration because findings obtained from developed economies may not necessarily be generalizable to developing economies characterized by different digital infrastructures, purchasing power, consumer protection arrangements and levels of online trust. Third, the predominance of quantitative, cross-sectional survey designs may limit the ability of existing studies to establish causal relationships and explain how consumer attitudes and purchase intentions evolve over time. Fourth, emerging developments such as artificial intelligence-driven personalization, algorithmic recommendations, virtual influencers, short-form video marketing and social commerce are changing the nature of consumer-brand interactions, requiring further investigation. Finally, insufficient integration of negative marketing outcomes, including privacy concerns, information overload, advertising fatigue, misleading endorsements and declining consumer trust, may produce an incomplete understanding of the overall effectiveness of social media marketing. These concerns reinforce the need for systematic evidence synthesis that identifies established findings, unresolved questions and emerging research priorities.



A systematic literature review is therefore necessary to consolidate existing empirical and theoretical contributions, examine the relationships between different social media marketing drivers and purchase intention, and identify areas requiring further investigation. Unlike a conventional narrative review, a systematic literature review adopts a structured and transparent approach to identifying, screening, evaluating and synthesizing relevant scholarly publications. Snyder (2019) explains that systematic approaches to literature reviewing can strengthen the rigor of knowledge synthesis, improve the identification of research gaps and provide a foundation for future scholarly investigations. In the context of social media marketing, such an approach can reveal the most frequently investigated drivers, dominant theoretical perspectives, prevailing methodological approaches, geographical and industrial research concentrations, and the consistency of reported relationships with purchase intention.

Against this background, the main aim of this study is to systematically review existing literature on the relationship between social media marketing drivers and consumer purchase intention, with a view to consolidating current knowledge, identifying research gaps and establishing priorities for future investigations. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the major social media marketing drivers associated with purchase intention; synthesize evidence concerning their direct, mediating and moderating relationships with consumer purchase intention; examine the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches employed in previous investigations; assess the geographical, industrial and population distribution of existing research; identify conceptual, empirical and methodological limitations; and propose an integrated research agenda for advancing knowledge in social media marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to marketing theory, empirical research and managerial practice. Theoretically, it provides an integrated perspective on the different mechanisms through which social media marketing drivers influence purchase intention, thereby contributing to the understanding of consumer behaviour in digital marketing environments. Academically, the review identifies areas of agreement, inconsistencies and underexplored relationships in existing research, providing a foundation for subsequent empirical studies, theoretical refinement and methodological advancement. For marketing practitioners and business organizations, the findings offer insights into the relative importance of electronic word-of-mouth, consumer reviews, interaction, entertainment, informativeness, personalization, trust and influencer credibility in developing effective digital marketing strategies. The review may also assist organizations in designing more credible and consumer-oriented social media campaigns that strengthen brand relationships and encourage purchasing decisions. Furthermore, by identifying geographical and population-related research limitations, the study provides a basis for expanding investigations into developing economies, including Nigeria, where changing digital consumption patterns present important opportunities for further research.

Overall, this systematic literature review seeks to advance understanding of social media marketing by integrating existing evidence on the drivers, mechanisms and contextual conditions associated with consumer purchase intention. By examining established relationships alongside emerging developments and unresolved research questions, the study provides a structured

foundation for future investigations and more effective social media marketing practices.

2.0 Conceptual Background

2.1 Social Media Marketing Drivers

Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the strategic use of social networking platforms and digital communication technologies to create, communicate and deliver value to consumers through interactive, participatory and consumer-oriented marketing activities. It involves the use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X (formerly Twitter) to disseminate promotional information, facilitate customer engagement, develop brand relationships and influence consumer decision-making. Unlike traditional marketing approaches, social media marketing enables continuous interaction between organizations and consumers, allowing users to generate, share, evaluate and respond to marketing-related content. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as internet-based applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content, while Appel et al. (2020) emphasize its evolving role in transforming marketing communication, consumer engagement and brand relationships.

Social media marketing is multidimensional because its effectiveness depends on several interconnected characteristics of marketing content, communication processes and consumer experiences. These dimensions include entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, customization, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer-related attributes and brand engagement. Li et al. (2021) explain that social media marketing strategies involve integrating digital platforms and their interactive capabilities into organizational marketing activities. These dimensions influence how consumers access product information, evaluate brands, interact with businesses and develop purchasing preferences. Understanding their individual and collective contributions is therefore important for explaining the relationship between social media marketing and consumer purchase intention.

2.2 Major Social Media Marketing Drivers

Social media marketing drivers represent the content-related, technological, relational and social factors through which marketing activities influence consumer perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intentions. Although the drivers may operate independently in certain circumstances, they frequently interact to shape consumer experiences and purchasing decisions. Their relevance varies across social media platforms, product categories, consumer characteristics and marketing environments. The major drivers examined in the literature are discussed below.

2.2.1 Entertainment

Entertainment refers to the extent to which social media marketing content provides enjoyment, amusement, excitement and emotional satisfaction to consumers. It includes the use of attractive images, videos, humour, interactive campaigns, storytelling and other creative content designed to capture consumer attention and encourage platform engagement. Entertaining marketing content can stimulate positive emotions, increase the time consumers spend interacting with brands and create favourable associations with advertised products and services. Lou et al. (2019) identify the relevance of social media content and influencer-related communication in shaping consumer responses to digital marketing. Entertainment may consequently influence purchase intention by improving consumers' perceptions of brands, strengthening emotional connections and increasing their willingness to explore promoted products. However, excessive entertainment without sufficient product

information may generate attention without necessarily encouraging purchasing decisions.

2.2.2 Informativeness

Informativeness refers to the extent to which social media marketing content provides accurate, relevant, understandable and useful information about products, services and brands. Informative content may include product specifications, prices, availability, quality characteristics, demonstrations, customer experiences and purchasing instructions. It reduces information asymmetry between consumers and sellers by enabling potential buyers to evaluate product attributes before making purchasing decisions. High-quality information can also reduce perceived uncertainty and facilitate comparisons between competing alternatives. Tabar et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of relevant marketing information in influencing consumer evaluation and purchasing decisions. In addition, Erkan and Evans (2016) demonstrate that the usefulness and credibility of information shared through social media are important mechanisms through which electronic word-of-mouth influences purchase intention. Therefore, informativeness can strengthen purchase intention by improving consumers' knowledge, confidence and perceived ability to make appropriate purchasing decisions.

2.2.3 Interactivity

Interactivity describes the extent to which social media platforms facilitate reciprocal communication and participation between businesses, consumers and other users. It involves activities such as responding to comments, answering customer enquiries, conducting polls, hosting live sessions, facilitating discussions and providing personalized customer support. Unlike conventional one-way marketing communication, interactive social media marketing enables consumers to communicate directly with brands and receive feedback in real time. Foster et al. (2022) highlight the relevance of interaction in developing consumer relationships and strengthening engagement with digital marketing communications. Effective interactivity can improve perceived responsiveness, enhance customer experiences and strengthen consumer confidence in a brand. It may also influence purchase intention by reducing uncertainties, addressing product-related concerns and creating a sense of social connection between consumers and organizations.

2.2.4 Trendiness

Trendiness refers to the extent to which social media marketing content reflects current developments, popular interests, emerging consumer preferences and contemporary cultural movements. It involves the dissemination of current product information, trending topics, fashionable products, viral campaigns and emerging market developments. Trend-oriented marketing can increase brand visibility and make products appear relevant to consumers' changing interests. Kim and Baek (2025) identify the importance of contemporary social media marketing characteristics in influencing consumer perceptions and responses. Trendiness may influence purchase intention through social influence, perceived product popularity and consumers' desire to participate in emerging consumption trends. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of trendiness depends on its relevance to the target audience and the extent to which trending content maintains consistency with the brand's identity and product value.

2.2.5 Customization and Personalization

Customization refers to the adjustment of marketing messages, promotional offers and consumer experiences to reflect individual preferences, interests and purchasing characteristics. Through data analytics, recommendation algorithms and interactive platform features, organizations can provide

targeted advertisements and product suggestions based on consumers' browsing patterns, previous interactions and expressed preferences. Personalization improves the relevance of marketing communications and may reduce the time and effort required to identify suitable products. Kim and Park (2025) provide a basis for considering the role of tailored digital marketing experiences in influencing consumer responses. Customized marketing may strengthen purchase intention by improving perceived usefulness, increasing consumer satisfaction and facilitating product discovery. However, excessive personalization can generate privacy concerns, perceived intrusion and consumer resistance, particularly when the collection and use of personal information are not sufficiently transparent.

2.2.6 Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Online Referrals

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to positive, negative or neutral statements made by existing, potential or previous consumers about products, services and brands through internet-based communication channels. It includes online reviews, ratings, recommendations, comments, testimonials, shared experiences and product discussions. Online referrals are a related form of interpersonal recommendation through which consumers direct other potential buyers towards particular products, services or businesses. These communication mechanisms are important because they provide information from individuals perceived as having direct or indirect experience with the products being considered.

Unlike conventional advertisements, eWOM is often perceived as more independent because it originates from consumers rather than directly from the organization promoting the product. Filieri et al. (2025) highlight the importance of online consumer information and recommendations in shaping product evaluations and purchasing decisions. Erkan and Evans (2016) also demonstrate that information quality, credibility and usefulness influence the adoption of eWOM and its subsequent relationship with purchase intention. The influence of eWOM may depend on the volume, quality, consistency and perceived authenticity of available reviews. Positive recommendations can strengthen consumer confidence and encourage purchasing decisions, whereas negative reviews may discourage purchase intention or motivate consumers to seek additional information.

2.2.7 Influencer Attributes and Source Credibility

Social media influencers are individuals who develop audiences and exert varying degrees of influence over consumer perceptions, preferences and purchasing decisions through digital content and online interactions. Influencer-related attributes include expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, perceived similarity, authenticity and the quality of relationships developed with followers. These characteristics may determine the extent to which consumers accept influencer recommendations and perceive endorsed products as reliable or desirable. Garg and Bakshi (2024) emphasize the relevance of influencer characteristics in explaining consumer responses to social media marketing communications.

Source credibility is particularly important because consumers may evaluate recommendations according to the perceived knowledge, honesty and reliability of the individuals communicating them. Influencers who demonstrate product knowledge, consistency and authenticity may develop stronger relationships with their audiences and generate greater acceptance of their recommendations. Conversely, excessive commercialization, undisclosed sponsorships and exaggerated product claims may reduce credibility and weaken consumer confidence.

Influencer marketing can therefore affect purchase intention through perceived expertise, trustworthiness, social identification and the persuasive value of product recommendations.

2.2.8 Trust, Credibility and Consumer Engagement

Trust refers to consumers' willingness to rely on a brand, seller or information source based on perceptions of honesty, reliability, competence and consistency. Credibility concerns the extent to which consumers perceive marketing information and its source as believable, accurate and dependable. Although related, the two constructs are conceptually different: credibility primarily concerns the believability of information and its source, whereas trust involves a broader willingness to rely on the brand or seller.

Consumer engagement represents the cognitive, emotional and behavioural involvement of individuals in interactions with brands and other users on social media platforms. It may be reflected through likes, comments, shares, discussions, content creation and participation in brand communities. Trust, credibility and engagement are important mechanisms through which social media marketing activities may influence consumer purchasing decisions. Coutinho et al. (2023) provide relevant evidence concerning trust and credibility in digital marketing environments. Similarly, Esho and Verhoef (2021) demonstrate that trust in online vendors and perceived website quality are positively associated with online purchase intention.

These constructs may function as intermediate mechanisms linking social media marketing drivers with purchase intention. For example, informative and credible product reviews may increase consumer trust, while responsive brand interactions may strengthen engagement and confidence in the seller. However, the strength of these relationships may depend on consumer characteristics, platform environments and perceived transaction risks.

2.3 Concept and Dimensions of Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the subjective likelihood, willingness or predisposition of a consumer to purchase a particular product or service within a specified period or under particular purchasing conditions. It represents a behavioural intention that develops following consumers' evaluation of available information, product characteristics, perceived benefits, costs and associated risks. Purchase intention is an important construct in marketing research because it provides an indication of consumers' readiness to undertake a purchasing action and helps organizations evaluate the potential effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

Purchase intention is conceptually distinct from actual purchase behaviour. While intention reflects an individual's willingness or plan to purchase, actual purchasing behaviour represents the completed transaction or acquisition of the product or service. Consumers may develop strong purchase intentions without completing a transaction because of financial constraints, product unavailability, changes in preferences, inadequate delivery arrangements or concerns about transaction security. Consequently, purchase intention should be interpreted as an indicator of behavioural readiness rather than definitive evidence of actual purchasing behaviour.

In empirical research, purchase intention is commonly operationalized using questionnaire items that assess consumers' willingness to buy, likelihood of purchasing, intention to purchase in the future and preference for a particular product or brand. Spears and Singh (2004) provide an established measurement approach for brand attitude and purchase intention in advertising research. Although recommendation intention and willingness to

share product information may be associated with purchasing intentions, they represent related but distinct behavioural outcomes and should not automatically be treated as equivalent measures.

Within social media marketing environments, purchase intention may be influenced by the quality and credibility of promotional information, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer recommendations, brand interactions, perceived value and consumer trust. Marcatto et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of understanding the relationship between digital marketing exposure and consumers' purchasing predispositions. Thus, purchase intention provides an important outcome variable for examining the extent to which social media marketing activities influence consumer decision-making.

2.4 Theoretical Foundations of Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

The relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention can be explained through several theoretical perspectives that describe how consumers process marketing information, develop attitudes and make purchasing decisions. The major theories relevant to this relationship include the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework, Theory of Planned Behavior, Technology Acceptance Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Source Credibility Theory and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. These theories provide complementary explanations of consumer responses to social media marketing, although they differ in their primary assumptions and explanatory emphasis.

2.4.1 Stimulus–Organism–Response Framework

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), explains how environmental stimuli influence individuals' internal psychological states and subsequently produce behavioural responses. The framework proposes that external environmental conditions generate cognitive and emotional reactions within individuals, which influence their approach or avoidance behaviours.

In social media marketing, the stimulus component comprises marketing characteristics such as entertainment, informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, customization, online reviews and influencer communications. The organism component represents consumers' internal responses, including trust, attitudes, perceived value, emotional reactions, satisfaction and engagement. The response component represents the resulting behavioural intentions, including purchase intention, willingness to explore products and other consumer responses.

The S-O-R framework is particularly relevant because it explains how social media marketing drivers may influence purchase intention through psychological mechanisms rather than solely through direct promotional exposure. For instance, informative product reviews may increase perceived credibility, which strengthens consumer trust and subsequently encourages purchase intention. Similarly, entertaining and interactive content may generate positive emotional responses and improve brand evaluations. The framework therefore provides a useful overarching structure for understanding the direct and indirect relationships between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention.

2.4.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), explains behavioural intention through three major determinants: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Attitude represents an individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of performing a particular behaviour. Subjective

norms reflect perceived social pressure from important individuals or groups, while perceived behavioural control concerns the individual's assessment of the resources and capabilities required to perform the behaviour.

In social media marketing, consumers' attitudes may be influenced by the perceived quality, usefulness and credibility of marketing information. Subjective norms may emerge through recommendations, online reviews, peer discussions, influencer endorsements and consumer communities. Perceived behavioural control may be influenced by the availability of product information, purchasing convenience, payment options and confidence in online transactions. These factors collectively influence consumers' willingness to purchase products promoted through social media platforms.

The TPB is therefore relevant for understanding how social influence, consumer attitudes and perceived purchasing capability contribute to purchase intention. It also provides a theoretical explanation for why consumers exposed to similar social media marketing communications may develop different purchasing intentions.

2.4.3 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1989), explains the acceptance and use of information technologies through two principal constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a particular technology improves their performance, while perceived ease of use concerns the degree to which using the technology requires minimal effort.

Within social media marketing, perceived usefulness may relate to consumers' assessment of the value of social media platforms for obtaining product information, comparing alternatives, evaluating reviews and identifying purchasing opportunities. Perceived ease of use concerns the convenience of navigating platforms, accessing promotional information and interacting with sellers. When consumers perceive social media platforms as useful and easy to use, they may be more willing to engage with marketing content and consider purchasing products through digital channels.

Although TAM primarily explains technology acceptance rather than purchase intention itself, it provides a complementary perspective for understanding how platform usability and perceived usefulness influence consumer engagement with social media marketing activities and their subsequent purchasing decisions.

2.4.4 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory explains how individuals actively select and use communication media to satisfy particular psychological and social needs. The theory recognizes that media users are not passive recipients of information but actively seek content that fulfils needs such as entertainment, information, social interaction, personal identity and social integration (Katz et al., 1973).

In social media marketing, consumers may use digital platforms to obtain product information, discover new brands, interact with other consumers, receive recommendations and participate in online communities. Entertainment-related content satisfies recreational needs, while informative content addresses consumers' information-seeking requirements. Social interaction and online referrals may satisfy the need for social connection and interpersonal validation.

The theory is relevant to understanding why consumers engage with particular social media marketing content and how the satisfaction of their information, entertainment and social needs may influence their attitudes towards promoted products. However, media gratification does not necessarily translate directly into purchase intention; its influence

may depend on the relevance, credibility and perceived value of the marketing information encountered.

2.4.5 Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory explains how the perceived characteristics of an information source influence the acceptance and persuasiveness of communicated messages. Hovland et al. (1953) established important foundations for understanding the influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. Credibility is commonly associated with perceived expertise and trustworthiness, while attractiveness and similarity may provide additional persuasive advantages in particular communication contexts.

In social media marketing, consumers evaluate the credibility of information communicated by brands, influencers, online reviewers and other consumers. Influencers perceived as knowledgeable, honest and experienced may be more persuasive because their recommendations are regarded as credible sources of product information. Similarly, authentic consumer reviews and balanced product assessments may increase confidence in promoted products.

This theory is particularly relevant to influencer marketing and electronic word-of-mouth because it explains why the perceived reliability of the communicator can influence consumer acceptance of marketing messages and subsequent purchase intention. It also provides a basis for understanding how misleading advertisements, undisclosed sponsorships and exaggerated endorsements can weaken the effectiveness of social media marketing.

2.4.6 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), integrates major technology acceptance perspectives to explain individuals' intentions to adopt and use technological systems. Its principal constructs include performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions.

In social media marketing environments, performance expectancy may relate to the perceived benefits of using digital platforms to obtain product information and facilitate purchasing decisions. Effort expectancy concerns the ease of accessing marketing content and completing online transactions. Social influence reflects the effects of recommendations and opinions from peers, influencers and online communities, while facilitating conditions concern the availability of technological resources and support required to engage with digital platforms.

UTAUT provides a useful complementary perspective for examining how technological convenience, perceived benefits and social influences affect consumers' engagement with social media marketing environments. Nevertheless, its primary focus is technology adoption and usage, meaning that its application to purchase intention should be connected explicitly to the consumer purchasing context.

2.4.7 Brand Equity Perspective

The brand equity perspective explains how consumers' knowledge, perceptions and associations concerning a brand contribute to its value and influence consumer responses. Keller (1993) conceptualizes customer-based brand equity in terms of the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer responses to marketing activities.

Within social media marketing, consistent communication, informative content, positive consumer reviews, influencer endorsements and interactive brand experiences may strengthen brand awareness and favourable brand associations. These activities can improve brand image, perceived quality and

brand familiarity, thereby influencing consumers' evaluations and purchasing preferences.

The brand equity perspective is particularly useful for explaining how repeated exposure to credible and relevant social media marketing communications may develop favourable brand perceptions and strengthen purchase intention. It also highlights the importance of maintaining consistency between online promotional messages and actual product or service experiences.

2.5 Conceptual Relationships Between Social Media Marketing Drivers and Purchase Intention

The relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention is multidimensional and involves direct and indirect pathways. Social media marketing activities influence the information available to consumers, the quality of their interactions with brands and other users, and their perceptions of product value and credibility. These experiences may subsequently shape consumer attitudes, trust, engagement and purchasing intentions.

Entertainment may influence purchase intention by generating positive emotions, improving brand perceptions and increasing consumers' willingness to engage with promotional content. Informativeness contributes by reducing uncertainty, improving product knowledge and supporting informed purchasing decisions. Interactivity may strengthen consumer relationships with brands through responsive communication and the provision of relevant feedback. Trendiness can increase product visibility and stimulate social influence, while customization may improve the relevance of marketing messages and facilitate product discovery.

Similarly, electronic word-of-mouth and online referrals provide consumers with information derived from other users' experiences. Positive, credible and useful recommendations may strengthen product evaluations and increase purchase intention. Influencer attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness and authenticity can also influence the acceptance of product recommendations and consumers' willingness to consider endorsed products. These relationships are consistent with the information-adoption mechanisms identified by Erkan and Evans (2016).

However, the effects of these marketing drivers may not always be direct. Trust, perceived credibility, brand attitude, perceived value and consumer engagement can function as mediating mechanisms through which social media marketing activities influence purchase intention. For example, informative content may improve perceived credibility, which strengthens trust and subsequently increases the likelihood of purchase. Similarly, interactive communication may improve consumer engagement and brand attitude, thereby encouraging purchasing decisions.

The relationships may also vary according to contextual and moderating factors such as age, income, education, product involvement, cultural background, digital literacy, platform characteristics and perceived online transaction risks. For instance, the influence of influencer recommendations may depend on consumers' familiarity with the influencer, while the effect of online reviews may vary according to product complexity and the perceived authenticity of reviewers.

It is therefore important to recognize that social media marketing drivers do not necessarily produce uniform effects across all consumers and marketing environments. Their effectiveness depends on the interaction between marketing content, communication characteristics, consumer evaluations and contextual conditions. An integrated understanding of these relationships provides the conceptual foundation for systematically examining the existing evidence on social media marketing and purchase intention.

3. 0 Methodology of the Review

This review follows a systematic approach consistent with established guidelines for literature synthesis. Relevant studies were identified through structured searches of major academic databases covering business, marketing, and information systems literature. Search strings combined terms related to social media marketing (including platform-specific and activity-specific descriptors) with terms related to purchase intention and closely related behavioral outcomes. Inclusion criteria prioritized peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual articles that explicitly examined relationships between one or more social media marketing drivers and purchase intention. Exclusion criteria removed pure technical studies, non-consumer contexts, and publications lacking clear measurement or conceptualization of the core constructs.

The resulting body of work spans roughly the past decade and a half, with a marked acceleration in publication volume after 2018. Quantitative survey-based designs employing structural equation modeling dominate the methodological landscape, although experimental, mixed-method, and qualitative contributions are also present. Geographic coverage is global, with notable concentrations of research in Asia, Europe, and North America, and a growing presence of studies from emerging markets.

Data extraction focused on the specific drivers examined, the nature of their relationship with purchase intention (direct, mediated, moderated), the theoretical framing, sample characteristics, and key findings. Thematic synthesis was then used to group drivers, map pathways, and identify patterns of consistency and divergence across studies.

4. 0 Findings: Synthesis of the Relationship

4.1 Prevalence of Key Drivers

Across the reviewed literature, certain drivers appear with markedly higher frequency than others. Nguyen (2024) said that electronic word-of-mouth consistently ranks among the most examined and most strongly supported antecedents of purchase intention. Interaction and entertainment also feature prominently, reflecting the inherently social and hedonic nature of social media platforms. Trendiness, customization, trust-related constructs, and influencer attributes form a second tier of frequently studied drivers.

Fig. 1 presents the frequency distribution of the major social media marketing drivers identified across the reviewed studies and illustrates the relative prominence of factors such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization and trust-related attributes in influencing consumers' purchase intention

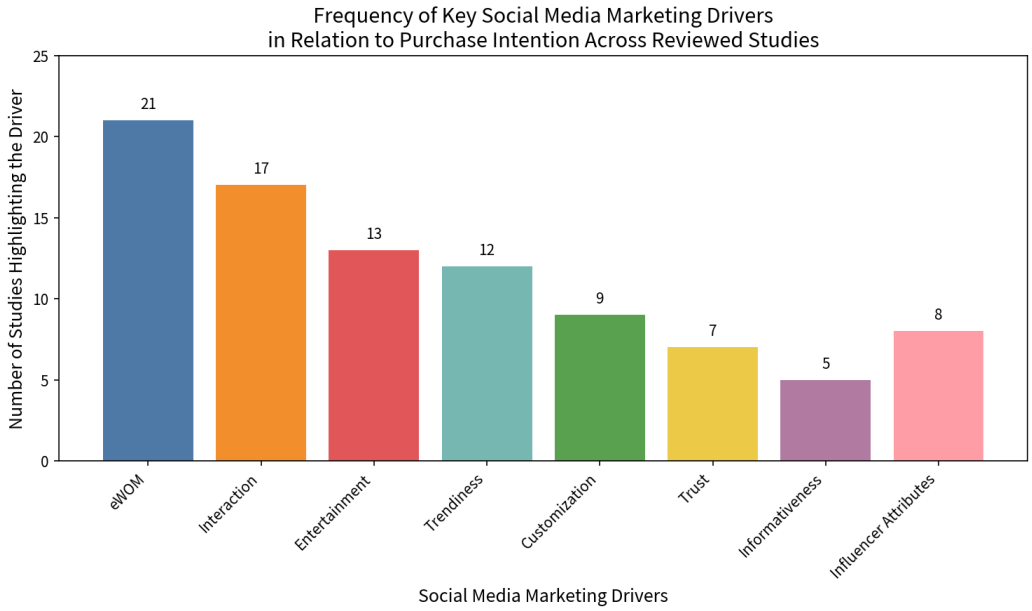


Fig. 1. Frequency of Key Social Media Marketing Drivers in Relation to Purchase Intention Across Reviewed Studies (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024)

As shown in Fig. 1, the distribution highlights the importance of different social media marketing drivers in shaping purchase intention. The prominence of eWOM and interaction-related factors suggests that peer recommendations, online engagement and consumer-to-consumer communication constitute important elements of social media influence on purchasing decisions.The relative prominence of eWOM underscores the shift from firm-controlled messaging toward peer-influenced decision environments. Interaction captures the relational dimension of social media, *et al* while entertainment addresses the experiential value that keeps users engaged with brand content. The comparatively lower frequency of some drivers does not necessarily imply weaker effects; rather, it often reflects later emergence in the research agenda or greater difficulty of measurement (Keyes & Platt, 2024).

4.2 Direct Effects on Purchase Intention

The majority of empirical studies report positive and statistically significant direct relationships between the principal SMM drivers and purchase intention. Entertainment and informativeness enhance the perceived value of brand communications, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase (Bushara *et al*., 2023). Interaction strengthens social bonds and reduces psychological distance. Trendiness positions the brand as culturally relevant. Customization elevates personal relevance. Trust and credibility lower perceived risk. Influencer attributes transfer positive evaluations from the endorser to the endorsed product (Kunz *et al*., 2025).

Nevertheless, direct effects are not uniformly strong. Gary (2026) affirms that in some contexts, the direct path from certain SMM activities to purchase intention is weak or even negative when consumers perceive excessive commercial intrusion. In such cases, the positive influence of SMM often emerges only through mediating psychological processes (Moedeen *et al*., 2024).

4.3 Mediating Mechanisms

Mediation analysis is common in the literature and reveals several robust pathways. Brand trust and brand image frequently mediate the effects of eWOM, interaction, and influencer

credibility on purchase intention. Consumer attitude toward the brand or toward the social media content itself serves as another consistent mediator. Engagement encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions links interactive and entertaining content to stronger purchase intention (He & Zhang, 2025). Perceived value (utilitarian, hedonic, or social) and perceived risk reduction also operate as important intervening variables.

Alkhofaily & Noureidin (2026) stated that these mediating mechanisms align well with the S-O-R framework: external stimuli (SMM drivers) shape internal organismic states (trust, attitude, engagement, value perceptions), which in turn drive the behavioral response (purchase intention). The presence of multiple parallel mediators suggests that SMM influences purchase intention through both cognitive and affective routes (Malik *et al*., 2023).

4.4 Moderating Influences

Several contextual factors moderate the strength of the relationships. Culture emerges as a significant moderator: technical and informational drivers tend to exert stronger effects in certain Eastern contexts, while social and relational drivers may be more potent in Western settings, although patterns are not always consistent (Kitayama & Salvador, 2024). Demographic variables particularly age cohort (e.g., Generation Z versus older consumers) and digital literacy also condition responsiveness to different drivers. Moon (2026) affirms that Product category matters: hedonic products amplify the role of entertainment and trendiness, whereas utilitarian products elevate the importance of informativeness and trust. Platform characteristics (algorithmic feed design, community norms, visual versus textual emphasis) further shape effectiveness.

4.5 Methodological Patterns

The literature exhibits clear methodological preferences. Quantitative approaches, especially cross-sectional surveys analyzed with structural equation modeling, predominate. Mixed-method and qualitative studies remain relatively scarce. Experimental designs that isolate causal effects of specific content features are less common than correlational designs.

Fig. 2 illustrates the distribution of research methodologies adopted in the reviewed studies investigating the relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention, showing the representation of quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research approaches.

As illustrated in Fig. 2, the distribution of research methodologies provides an overview of the approaches used to investigate social media marketing and purchase intention. The representation of quantitative approaches, particularly survey-based studies, indicates the importance of empirical measurement in examining relationships between marketing drivers and consumer purchasing intentions. However, the methodological distribution also provides an opportunity for future studies to employ qualitative and mixed-method approaches to obtain deeper insights into consumer experiences and decision-making processes.The dominance of survey-based SEM studies has produced a rich body of correlational evidence but leaves causal inference and process-level understanding comparatively underdeveloped (Das, 2023). Publication volume has risen steadily, reflecting both academic interest and the practical importance of the topic.

Fig/ 3 presents the publication growth pattern in research examining social media marketing and purchase intention, highlighting the increasing scholarly attention devoted to understanding how social media marketing activities influence consumer purchasing decisions.

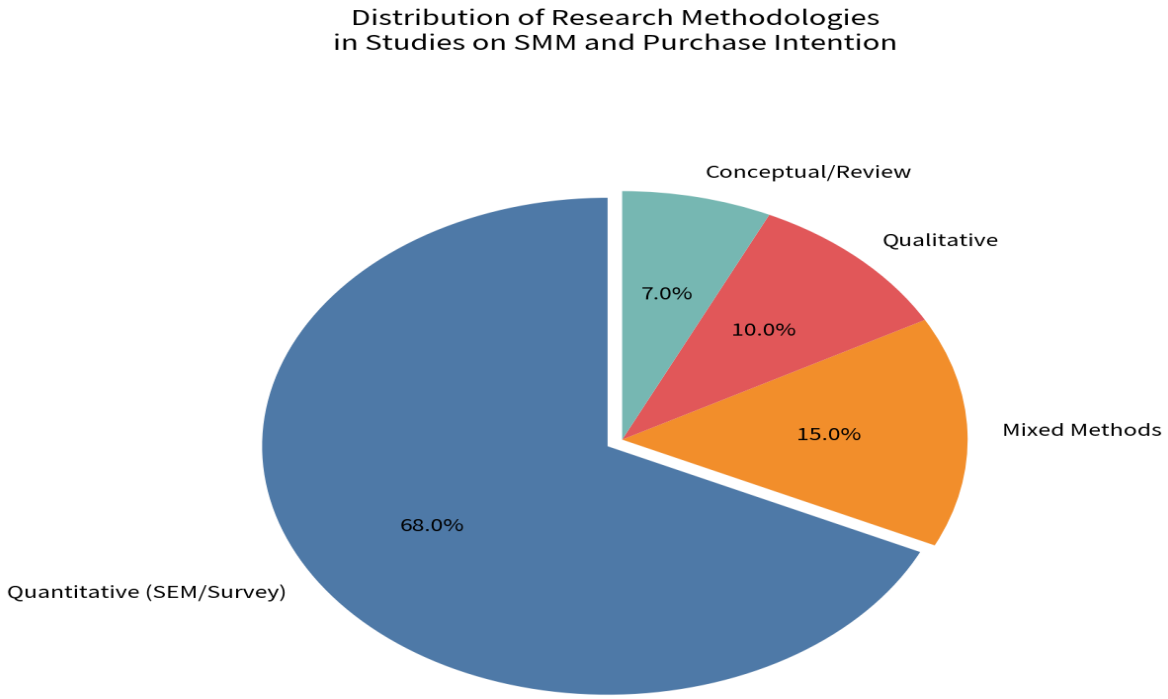


Fig. 2: Distribution of Research Methodologies in Studies on SMM and Purchase Intention (Salvation & Sorooshian, 2018)

As shown in Fig. 3, the publication trend reflects the growing academic interest in the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention. This development underscores the increasing relevance of social media platforms in contemporary marketing research and supports the need for further investigations into emerging marketing drivers, consumer response mechanisms and contextual factors influencing purchase intention.

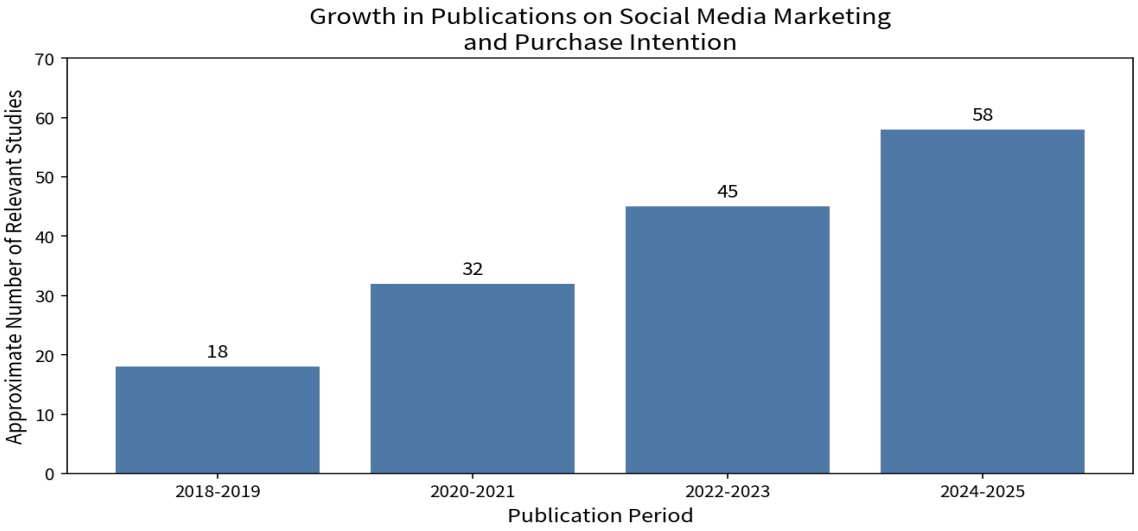


Fig. 3 Growth in Publications on Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention (Vidyanata, 2022)

5.0 Critical *Discussion*

The accumulated evidence strongly supports the proposition that social media marketing drivers influence purchase intention, both directly and through a network of psychological mediators (Selem *et al*., 2023). The most robust and consistent findings center on eWOM, interaction, entertainment, trust, and influencer credibility. Alhomaid (2025) said that these drivers operate by enhancing engagement, building relational capital, reducing uncertainty, and shaping favorable attitudes and brand perceptions.

At the same time, several limitations constrain the current state of knowledge. First, heavy reliance on cross-sectional self-report data limits causal claims and raises concerns about common method bias. Second, the literature is uneven in its geographic and cultural coverage; many studies originate from single-country samples, reducing generalizability. Third, rapid platform evolution means that findings based on older platforms or features may not fully transfer to newer environments characterized by short-form video, live commerce, and algorithmic personalization. Fourth, relatively little attention has been paid to potential negative consequences of intensive SMM, such as ad fatigue, privacy invasion, or the erosion of trust when commercial motives become too transparent.

Theoretically, the field has benefited from the flexibility of the S-O-R paradigm and the integration of multiple established theories. However, the proliferation of slightly different operationalizations of the same underlying constructs has hindered cumulative knowledge building. Greater construct clarity and measurement standardization would strengthen future synthesis efforts.

Managerially, the findings underscore that effective social media marketing is not merely about posting volume or production quality. It requires deliberate cultivation of interactive, entertaining, informative, and trustworthy content that stimulates peer conversation and builds genuine relational equity. Influencer selection should prioritize perceived trustworthiness and audience fit over pure reach metrics. Personalization must be balanced against privacy sensitivities.

6. 0 Plans for Further Study

Building on the gaps identified in the existing literature, the following research agenda is proposed to advance understanding of the relationship between social media marketing drivers and purchase intention.

6.1 Methodological Advancements

Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs that track how exposure to SMM drivers over time shapes the evolution of purchase intention and eventual conversion. Experimental and quasi-experimental approaches that manipulate specific content features (for example, levels of interactivity or degrees of personalization) would strengthen causal inference. Multi-method designs combining behavioral data (clickstream, purchase records) with self-report measures would reduce reliance on intention alone and mitigate common method concerns. Qualitative and ethnographic work remains valuable for uncovering nuanced consumer interpretations of social media content that quantitative scales may miss.

6.2 Expanding Theoretical Integration

Scholars are encouraged to integrate emerging theoretical perspectives, including social identity theory, social learning theory, and theories of para social interaction, particularly in the context of influencer and virtual influencer research. Hybrid models that combine cognitive, affective, and social pathways within a single framework would better capture the multi-layered nature of social media influence. Greater attention to dual-process models of persuasion could clarify when central versus peripheral routes dominate.

6.3 Contextual and Comparative Research

Cross-cultural comparative studies are urgently needed to test the boundary conditions of established relationships. Research should systematically compare developed and emerging markets, individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and high- versus low-context communication environments. Platform-specific investigations contrasting, for instance, Instagram, TikTok, and emerging live-commerce platforms would illuminate how technological affordances shape driver effectiveness. Industry and product category comparisons (luxury versus mass-market, experiential versus material goods) would further refine contingency knowledge.

6.4 Emerging Phenomena and Technologies

Several rapidly evolving phenomena warrant dedicated research programs. Artificial intelligence driven personalization and recommendation systems raise new questions about perceived autonomy, transparency, and trust. Virtual influencers and AI-generated content challenge traditional source credibility models. Short-form video and live streaming commerce introduce temporal and social dynamics that differ from static or asynchronous content. The role of social commerce features (in-app checkout, shoppable posts) in converting intention into immediate purchase deserves systematic examination. Finally, the dark side of SMM privacy concerns, algorithmic bias, misinformation, and content fatigue should be integrated into models rather than treated as peripheral.

6.5 Measurement and Construct Refinement

Future work should invest in scale development and validation to improve the psychometric quality of key constructs, particularly engagement, perceived authenticity, and para social relationships. Multi-dimensional operationalizations of purchase intention that distinguish between short-term impulse intention and longer-term planned intention may yield more nuanced insights. Greater use of actual behavioral outcomes alongside intention measures would enhance practical relevance.

6.6 Specific Research Priorities

The following concrete priorities are recommended for near-term research efforts:

(i) 7Conduct multi-country longitudinal panel studies examining the dynamic interplay of eWOM, interaction, and trust over successive purchase cycles.

(ii) Experimentally test the relative effectiveness of human versus virtual influencers across product categories and audience segments.

(iii) Investigate the moderating role of algorithmic transparency and perceived data control on the personalization–purchase intention relationship.

(iv) Develop and validate integrated models that simultaneously incorporate cognitive, affective, and social mediators within a single S-O-R framework.

(v) Examine platform affordance effects by comparing identical campaigns adapted to different social media environments.

(vi) Explore threshold effects and saturation points at which additional SMM exposure begins to produce diminishing or negative returns on purchase intention.

7.0 Conclusion

This systematic literature review consolidates current understanding of the relationship between social media marketing drivers and consumer purchase intention. The evidence demonstrates that drivers such as electronic word-of-mouth, interaction, entertainment, trendiness, customization, trust, informativeness, and influencer attributes reliably shape purchase intention, primarily through mediating processes involving brand trust, brand image, attitude, engagement, and

perceived value. Contextual factors including culture, demographics, product type, and platform characteristics moderate these relationships.

While the literature has grown rapidly and produced valuable insights, important gaps remain in causal design, cultural breadth, technological currency, and attention to potential negative effects. The research agenda outlined above provides a structured pathway for addressing these gaps. By pursuing more rigorous, comparative, and forward-looking studies, scholars can deepen theoretical understanding and equip marketers with more precise guidance for converting social media engagement into genuine purchase intention in an increasingly complex digital environment.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of social media marketing hinges not on any single driver but on the thoughtful orchestration of multiple drivers that together create credible, relevant, engaging, and socially reinforced brand experiences. Future research that captures this systemic quality will make the most lasting contribution to both theory and practice.

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Data Availability

Data shall be made available upon request

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Not applicable

Author Contributions

Sagir Abubakar conceptualized the study, designed the review methodology, conducted the literature search, analysed and synthesized the findings, and drafted the manuscript. Nuruddeen Abubakar contributed to the literature review, interpretation of findings, critical revision, and refinement of the research agenda. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript for publication.