Influence of Social Media Shopping on Buying Behaviour of college students. A Case of Rapti Babai Campus.

Rojina Shrestha

Assistant Lecturer, Rapti Babai Multiple Campus, Tulsipur, Dang, Nepal
srojina50@gmail.com

Abstract

This research examines how social media influences college students in terms of their social media shopping behaviour, preferences, and decision-making processes. Through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 54 college students, data were collected and analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to uncover patterns and correlations between social media usage and online shopping behaviour. The findings highlight significant insights into the role of social media shopping platforms in shaping (consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and behaviour) in the online shopping domain. Ultimately, this research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the transformative influence of social media shopping on the online behavior of today's college students. The study also highlights the key indicators that majorly affect the consumer behavior and shopping attitude especially the college students and the transition of shopping pattern from physical shopping to digital shopping. Through the study, one can be aware of the popularity of social media platforms for shopping purposes among college students.

Introduction

Social media shopping has redefined today's e-commerce. It has done so by embracing social interaction with online consumer behaviour. Originally rooted in traditional e-commerce, which facilitated direct transactions between buyers and sellers over the Internet (Jain et al., 2014), online shopping has evolved significantly with the advent of social media platforms. These platforms are new marketplaces where users not only connect socially but also explore, evaluate, and purchase products and

services directly from brands and fellow consumers. It points to a significant shift in consumer behaviour, as college students increasingly turn to platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to discover new products, seek peer recommendations, and engage with brands (Shanthi & Desti, 2015).

The pervasive influence of social media on college students's online shopping behaviour is underlined by its ability to offer personalized shopping experiences, facilitate product reviews, and enable direct interaction with brands and influencers (Butler & Peppard, 1998). It has enhanced convenience, increased accessibility and hastened adoption of online shopping across the world. Consumers today rely heavily on digital platforms to make informed purchase decisions, leveraging the wealth of information, user-generated content, and peer reviews available online (Tapinfluence, 2017).

In early 2024, Nepal had 15.40 million internet users. It constitutes 49.6 percent internet penetration. Social media users numbered 13.50 million, or 43.5 percent of the population. There were 37.47 million cellular mobile connections, more than the country's population. With a median age of 24.6 years, this is expected to increase in the future. (https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-nepal)

Social media have a crucial role in this digital landscape. Social media platforms are widely used for social interaction. They also serve as vital channels for information dissemination, entertainment, and increasingly, online shopping. The addition of social media shopping features into these platforms has transformed how consumers in Nepal discover and purchase products. It has made social media an indispensable part of the digital economy.

Despite skepticism and regulatory challenges, the country's digital infrastructure is rapidly advancing, catalyzed by increased internet penetration and smartphone adoption (Dhungana, 2017). This digital transformation is redefining consumer behaviour. It is particularly true among the younger demographic who are at the forefront of embracing online shopping. Nepali consumers, much like their global counterparts, are increasingly turning to social media platforms not just for social networking but also as primary avenues for shopping and brand engagement (Puri, 2020).

With more Nepali consumers shifting towards online shopping, understanding the crucial role of social media in shaping their purchasing decisions becomes imperative.

Social media platforms offer unique opportunities for businesses to connect directly with consumers, build brand loyalty, and drive sales through targeted marketing strategies. Influencers, who command significant followings on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, play a pivotal role in influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behaviours (Tapinfluence, 2017). By partnering with influencers, brands can leverage their credibility and reach to effectively promote products and services to a highly engaged audience.

This paper aims to explore the multifaceted impact of social media shopping on the online behaviour of college students in Nepal. Through empirical research and qualitative insights, the study seeks to offer insights on how social media platforms are transforming consumer engagement, brand interaction, and market dynamics in the Nepali context.

Research Problem

Growing trend of social media shopping in Nepal has significantly influenced consumer behaviour and business practices, yet there is a notable gap in the existing literature specifically focusing on this context. While global studies have focused on the impact of social media on shopping behaviours, they often overlook the unique socio-economic, cultural, and technological conditions of emerging markets like Nepal. These studies tend to generalize findings from developed nations, which may not accurately reflect the Nepali scenario where factors such as varying internet accessibility, digital literacy, and cultural attitudes play a crucial role.

Moreover, so as to get the solution of this main issue, the study attempts to search answer on the key questions: What motivates Nepali consumers to shop via social media? What social media are in use for shopping ? To what extent influencers drive sales? How satisfied are the social media shopping consumers ? And how do government regulations shape this landscape?

In addressing these questions, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into various facets of digital commerce in Nepal.

Research Objectives

The research objective is to identify the impact of social media in shaping the online behaviour of Nepalese college students focusing on their motivations, purchasing patterns, and the role of influencers in making purchases.

Literature Review

Social media today is an indispensable element in the domain of e-commerce in Nepal. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), proposed by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1986), is instrumental in explaining the adoption of online shopping behaviour. TAM suggests that users' acceptance and use of technology are influenced by their perceived ease of use and usefulness. In Nepal, this model elucidates how technological familiarity and user experience drive online shopping adoption among different demographic segments. Similarly, Consumer Perception Theory, as detailed by Sternberg & Sternberg (2012), states that consumer expectations and sensory experiences significantly shape purchasing decisions. This theory is relevant for Nepal, where consumer perceptions of online shopping platforms, influenced by factors such as product variety, usability, and service efficiency, are crucial in shaping online shopping habits.

The availability of a diverse range of products and brands on e-commerce platforms significantly enhances consumer satisfaction and the intention to shop online in Nepal. Studies by Ganesh et al. (2010) and Yaras et al. (2017) draw attention to the importance of product variety, website design, and efficient delivery mechanisms in fostering positive online shopping experiences and customer satisfaction, thereby encouraging repeat purchases and sustained engagement with online platforms.

Although not specific to social media shopping, recent studies highlight several key factors influencing online shopping behaviour among Nepali consumers. Arora and Aggarwal (2018) emphasize the significance of product variety, particularly for women shoppers, in driving online shopping preferences. The availability of a wide range of products online addresses diverse consumer needs and preferences, enhancing the attractiveness of online platforms over traditional offline stores. Vyas and Bissa (2017) reveal a positive overall consumer perception of online shopping in Nepal, citing the convenience of anytime shopping services as a major advantage. Such conveniences matter for Nepal, where geographical and infrastructural challenges can limit physical shopping experiences.

Trust emerges as another critical factor influencing online shopping intentions, as shown by Akroush and Al-Debei (2015). Trustworthy online platforms, including social media shopping platforms, boost consumer confidence and enhance website reputations, positively impacting purchase decisions. Vaidya (2019) discusses the

adoption of business models like Business to Consumer (B2C) and Customer to Customer (C2C) by online shopping companies in Nepal. Despite challenges such as occasional delivery of incorrect products, Nepali consumers prefer online shopping due to the perceived higher service quality. However, Vaidya's work is centered around online shopping as a whole instead of social media shopping.

Media reports show growing reliance of Nepali consumers on social media platforms for product discovery, price comparison, and peer recommendations. The convenience of shopping within familiar social environments and the availability of user-generated content significantly influence consumer trust and purchasing decisions. Content formats such as shoppable posts, live streaming events, and influencer collaborations play pivotal roles in driving engagement and facilitating sales conversions among Nepali consumers.

Businesses in Nepal are increasingly shifting to social media. But challenges including logistics, payment gateways, and regulatory compliance stand as hurdles to the seamless integration of social media shopping into business operations. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among businesses, policymakers, and digital service providers to foster a conducive environment for sustainable growth in social commerce.
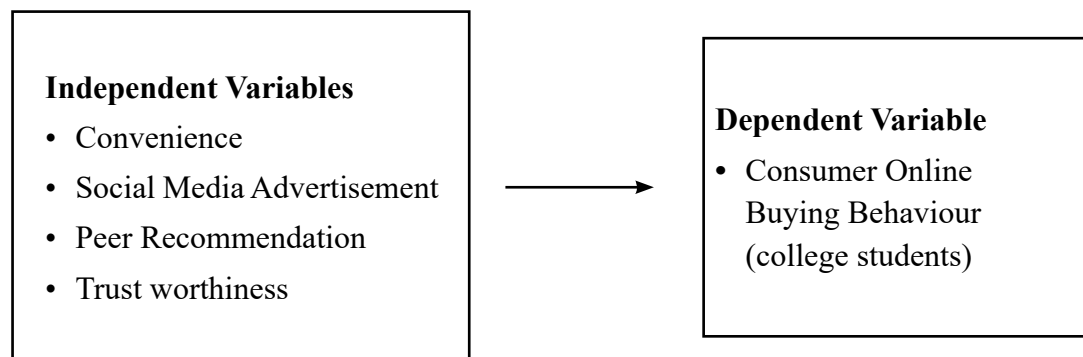
While global research on online shopping including social media shopping is getting deserved attention, studies specific to Nepal, remain relatively sparse. Little attention has been paid to Nepali consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards online shopping, with a focus on the moderated mediation effect of social media. Or how product variety and trust influence online purchase intentions through consumer attitudes? Or assess the moderating role of social media in Nepal's evolving online retail market.

Global research on social media's impact on consumer behaviour lacks specificity for Nepal, particularly among college students. Cultural attitudes, trust in digital platforms, and local influencers' effectiveness require more study. Disparities in digital access across urban and rural areas also influence consumer engagement. Understanding Nepal's regulatory environment and infrastructure challenges is important for sustainable social commerce growth.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Foundation

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model that explains how users come to accept and use technology in the way that best suits their perceived usefulness and

ease of use. By perceived usefulness, it means using something that one thinks is beneficial or useful to them for various purposes. By the perceived ease of use, one means to what extent the system in question is handy and easy to use. Social Influence Theory explains how one's behaviors and decisions are shaped and influenced by social context. Things such as the influence of peer recommendations are examined. For example, the recommendation of friends and acquaintances can significantly impact one's purchasing decisions. So does influencer endorsements, where well-known personalities can shape consumer attitudes and behaviors. Customer Satisfaction Theory explains the factors that add to customer satisfaction and its effect on one's loyalty and habit of purchasing the same thing over and over again. For example, it explains why people purchase coca cola or armani dresses repeatedly. It looks into how satisfaction is formed based on expectations, perceived quality, and value. It examines how higher levels of satisfaction can result in higher degree of customer loyalty and purchases time and again. Regulatory Framework Theory explains how government regulations affect business operations and consumer behavior within the digital commerce landscape. It looks into how laws and policies pertaining to consumer protection, data privacy, and fair trading practices help or hinder businesses and consumers. At the same time, it also looks into the role of regulatory agencies in enforcing these laws and ensuring a fair and safe digital market.

Independent Variables

- Convenience
- Social Media Advertisement
- Peer Recommendation
- Trust worthiness

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Dependent Variable

- Consumer Online Buying Behaviour (college students)

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach to investigate the impact of social media shopping on the online behaviour of college students in Nepal. It integrates qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques to comprehensively explore social media shopping behaviour.

Research Design

The research utilizes a mixed-method design to combine quantitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews, complemented by secondary data sources.

Quantitative Component

The study includes 54 Nepali social media users of Rapti Babai campus aged 16-32 who engage in social media shopping, sampled conveniently for practical reach. Data collection involves a structured questionnaire covering demographic details, social media usage patterns for shopping, product preferences, purchasing influencers, and user satisfaction. Both online and offline administration methods ensure a diverse respondent pool.

Quantitative data analysis employs statistical software to summarize and infer relationships between variables, providing insights into the factors influencing online shopping behaviour.

Qualitative Component

A subset of 10 participants from the initial sample is selected purposively for in-depth interviews. These semi-structured interviews explore personal experiences with social media shopping, perceptions of its advantages and disadvantages, influences of marketing tactics, trust factors, and impacts on traditional shopping habits. Qualitative data is analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes, facilitating a deeper understanding of the nuances in social media shopping behaviour among Nepali college students.

Secondary Data

The study supplements primary data with secondary sources including news articles, industry reports, and scholarly studies. This secondary data contextualizes primary findings and enhances the study's comprehensiveness. Cross-verifying data from surveys, interviews, and secondary sources enhances the study's reliability and validity, providing a robust analysis of social media shopping behaviour. Ethical practices include obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality, and securely handling and storing data throughout the study.

This mixed-method approach contributes to a nuanced understanding of how social media shopping influences the online behaviour of college students in Nepal, informing demographic profiles and business strategies across various sectors.

Demographic Information

Consumer demographics indicated a predominant representation of urban residents, with 60% females and 40% males. The majority of participants (75%) fell within the 18-32 age bracket, reflecting a college students demographic profile. Educational backgrounds varied, all with at least secondary education.

Tools of Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaire were presented in frequency table and simple percentage were employed. Statistical tools (average, percentage and Pearson's correlation) have been used to derive conclusion.

Limitation of the study

A major limitation of this study is its reliance on convenience sampling, which may introduce bias and restrict the generalizability of findings beyond the sampled social media users aged 16-32 studying in Rapti Babai Campus. The cross-sectional design provides a snapshot rather than longitudinal insights into evolving social media shopping behaviours over time. The study's focus on urban/ semi-urban areas may limit insights into rural perspectives and variations in social media usage and online shopping habits across Nepal's regions. These limitations caution against broad extrapolation of findings and highlight the need for future research to explore these dynamics effectively.

Results

Table 1. Driving force for online purchase.

Particulars	Price	Quality	Product choices	Time saving	Faster delivery process	Total
Respondents	10	22	10	10	2	54
Percentage	18%	41%	18%	18%	5%	100%

Table 1 highlights that, 10 (18%) respondents were motivated by price, 10 (18%) by time saving, 22 (41%) by quality, and 2 (5%) by the delivery process. Thus, the majority of respondents were motivated by product quality.

Table 2: Mode of payment

Particulars	Online payment	App payment	Cash on delivery	Net banking	Half online half payment after delivery	Total
Respondents	1	4	38	10	1	54
Percentage	1.95%	7.7%	69.2%	19.2%	1.95%	100

Table 2 highlights that, 38 (69.2%) respondents preferred cash on delivery, 4 (7.7%) respondents preferred app payment, 1(1.95%) respondent preferred half online and half payment after delivery, 10 (19.2%) respondent preferred net banking. Therefore, the majority of respondents preferred cash on delivery for online shopping.

Table 3 : Concerns over privacy doing social media shopping

Particulars	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
Respondents	23	26	5	54
Percentage	42.3%	48.1%	9.6%	100

Table 3 shows that, 26 (48.1%) respondents were sometimes worried, 23 (42.3%) respondents were always worried, and 5(9.6%) respondents were not worried about privacy problems. Thus, the majority of respondents were concern about privacy problems.

Table 4: Problems on social media shopping.

Particulars	Internet Fraud	Infringement of privacy	Online Abuse	Digital Footprints	Unnecessary Advertisement	Total
Respondents	15	6	7	3	23	54
Percentage	28%	10.5%	13%	5%	44%	100

Table 4 highlights that, 15 (28%) respondents thought internet fraud was a problem, 6 (10.5%) thought leaking private information a problem, 23 (44%) thought unnecessary advertisement a problem, 3 (5%) thought digital footprint was a problem, and 7 (13%) thought cyber bullying was a problem. Thus, the majority of respondents considered that internet fraud a major problem on social media platforms.

Table 5: Usage of various social media.

Particulars	Facebook	Instagram	Facebook market place	Tiktok	Others	Total
Respondents	16	14	10	3	11	54
Percentage	28.8%	25%	19.2%	5.8%	21.2%	100

Table 5 highlights that, 16 (28.8%) respondents used Facebook, 14 (25%) respondents used Instagram, 10 (19.2%) respondents used Facebook market place, 3 (5.8%) respondents used TikTok, and 11(21.2%) respondents used other platforms for online shopping. Thus, the majority of respondents used facebook platforms for shopping.

Table 6: Problems faced while purchasing on social media platforms

Particulars	Poor quality product	Delays in delivery	No verification	Damaged Product	Non delivery
Respondents	26	10	13	4	1
Percentage	47.6%	17.5%	23.8%	8%	3.1%

Table 6 highlights that, 26 (47.6%) respondents faced problems of poor quality products, 10 (17.5%) faced problems of delays in delivery, 13 (23.8%) faced problems of no physical verification, and 4 (8%) faced problems of damaged products. Thus, the majority faced problems of poor quality products.

Table 7: Effect of social media on shopping experience.

Particulars	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Respondents	4	19	22	9	0	54
Percentage	7.7%	34.6%	40.4%	17.3%	0%	100

From the data, it is clear that 4 (7.7%) strongly agree, 19 (34.6%) agree, and 22 (40.4%) have a neutral opinion on overall shopping experience via social media platforms.

Table 8: Influence of social media on buying behavior.

Particulars	Online Advertisement	Brand Value	Recommendation by friends and family	Self influence	Total
Respondents	27	10	8	9	54
Percentage	50%	19.2%	13.5%	17.3%	100

Table 8 highlights that, 10 (19.2%) respondents chose the platform by brand value, 8 (13.5%) by recommendations from friends and family, 9 (17.3%) by self-influence, and 27 (50%) by online advertisement. Therefore, online advertisement was a maor influencing factor for shopping.

Table 9: Overall satisfaction from online purchase

Particulars	Facebook Marketplace	Instagram shopping	Tiktok	Facebook page	Others	Total
Respondents	15	18	3	8	10	54
Percentage	28%	34%	6%	14%	18%	100%

Table 9 highlights that, 15 (28%) respondents were satisfied from Facebook Marketplace, 18 (34%) from Instagram Shopping, 3 (6%) from TikTok, 10 (18%) used other platforms and 8 (14%) from preferred facebook page. Therefore, the majority of respondents seems to be satisfied from instagram, followed closely by Facebook marketplace

Key findings

Based on the survey data collected and the key informant interviews, the findings that emerged are as follow :

Facebook and Instagram are two most preferred platforms among Nepali consumers for social media shopping, reflecting their widespread adoption and user-friendly interfaces.

Satisfaction levels with online shopping are high with 75% of respondents indicating a degree of satisfaction, while only less than a third having negative views.

Brand reputation and recommendations from social circles play pivotal roles in guiding consumers towards specific social media shopping platforms.

Key challenges encountered include issues with product quality, lack of physical verification, delayed deliveries, and instances of product damage.

Concerns regarding internet fraud, privacy breaches, and digital footprint issues are some of the most pressing concerns for those involved in social media shopping.

Cash on delivery remains the most preferred payment method among users, showing that cash is still the king due to lack of secure and convenient transaction options.

Female users are not only predominant demographic but also more active on various

social media shopping platforms, outnumbering male counterparts significantly.

Despite regulatory challenges, a notable segment of consumers continues to engage with TikTok for shopping purposes, most possibly using VPN services.

The calculated correlation coefficient (r=0.56) indicates the positive relationship between the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior.

Discussion

The findings reveal a significant shift in consumer behaviour in Nepal, driven by the convenience, accessibility, and wide product variety offered on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This trend has grown especially with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting more Nepali consumers to favour online shopping as a safer alternative to physical store.The impact on traditional retail businesses in urban centers such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, Butwal, Ghorahi and Tulsipur has been profound, with many experiencing reduced foot traffic and sales. Businesses have struggled to compete with the convenience and competitive pricing offered by social media platforms, leading to closures of thousands of shops. Likewise, landlords in commercial areas are facing challenges renting out their properties, leading to increased vacancies and diminished rental incomes.In recent years, Nepali authorities have introduced measures mandating businesses to register and comply with taxation and licensing requirements specific to e-commerce and social media platforms. However, enforcement remains challenging, exacerbated by the informal nature of many social media-based businesses and declining government revenues.The demographic shift towards social media shopping is evident, particularly among younger generations who are embracing digital platforms for their shopping needs. It underlines the transformative impact of social media on consumer behaviour and commerce in Nepal. Businesses navigating this evolving landscape must address logistical challenges such as reliable delivery services and seamless digital payment integration while upholding trust in online transactions. Successful businesses are leveraging social media marketing strategies, influencer collaborations, and interactive content formats like shoppable posts and live streaming events to enhance customer engagement and drive sales.It was found that convenience, peer influence, and engaging content are key factors driving the adoption of social media shopping among Nepali college studentss. Social media influencers reinforces their influential role in shaping social media users preferences and purchase decisions. From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute

empirical support for theories such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Social Influence Theory in explaining consumer behaviours in the context of social media shopping. TAM's emphasis on perceived usefulness and ease of use aligns with consumers' motivations for adopting social media shopping platforms, while Social Influence Theory elucidates the role of influencers and peer recommendations. Practically, businesses in Nepal can tap on these insights by refining their social media marketing strategies, fostering collaborations with influencers, and optimizing customer engagement through personalized interactions and streamlined transaction processes. But there are challenges such as logistical complexities, digital payment integration, and regulatory compliance necessitate robust operational frameworks to sustain competitive advantage and consumer trust in the digital marketplace. Despite these valuable insights, the study has limitations. Its cross-sectional design provides a snapshot rather than longitudinal trends, limiting causal inferences. The sample size was small, confined to mobile/internet using college students in the urban/semi-urban areas, potentially overlooking rural consumer behaviours and regional variations in social media usage and shopping preferences. Future research in this area could focus on longitudinal studies to follow evolving consumer behaviours over time, taking in view of demographic shifts and technological advancements. Exploring the effectiveness of emerging social media platforms in influencing consumer decisions and their impact on traditional retail sectors could be another important area. There is a need for extensive studies on challenges and implications for e-commerce in Nepal in order to foster a transparent and secure digital marketplace. Considering the fact that social media shopping is a relatively contemporary and unexplored field with limited existing literature, there are numerous issues yet to be thoroughly researched and understood.

Conclusion

From our research, we can conclude that the Social Media is the most powerful media that affects the buying behavior of consumers. Comparatively, females are more active and conscious than male in terms of online purchases. The buying behavior seems to be influenced by the recommendations from the social circles and the brand reputation. Though, the frequency of online purchase is in increasing trend, the concern over safety also catches the attention. Consumer tends to shop from those platforms where they feel secure and offers the facility of cash on delivery. As per the research, Facebook and Instagram is the most preferred social platform for the online purchase due to instant reply for the queries and convenience in placing a

order. The overall satisfaction level is impressive. Product with no damage, physical verification before delivery, affordable delivery charges, easy and safe payment are some of the prominent challenges in online purchase. Therefore, considering the satisfaction level and frequency of purchase it is clear that the social media platform plays an important role in shaping the buying behavior.

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