

Assessing the Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Engagement and Purchase Behaviour: A Quantitative Descriptive Study in the Indian E-Commerce Sector

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Abstract: The emergence of social media as a dominant communication medium has fundamentally reshaped contemporary marketing practices. E-commerce firms increasingly utilise platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to engage consumers and influence purchasing decisions. Despite the widespread adoption of social media marketing strategies, empirical evaluations of their behavioural effectiveness remain limited, particularly within emerging economies such as India. This study examines the effectiveness of social media marketing in influencing consumer engagement and purchase behaviour. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory research design research approach, primary data were collected from 200 respondents through structured questionnaires. The study employs a descriptive research design to analyse behavioural patterns, perceptions, and interactions associated with social media marketing exposure. Statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modelling were utilised to assess relationships among variables. The findings indicate that social media marketing significantly influences consumer engagement, which subsequently impacts purchase behaviour. The results highlight the strategic importance of interactive digital platforms in shaping consumer decision-making processes. The study contributes to digital marketing literature by providing empirical insights into consumer behaviour within digitally mediated environments and offers practical implications for e-commerce firms seeking to optimise their social media strategies.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Purchase Behaviour, Quantitative Research, E-Commerce, India

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I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the landscape of marketing communication, reshaping how organisations interact with consumers and construct value propositions. Traditional marketing paradigms, historically dominated by unidirectional communication channels such as print, television, and radio, have progressively evolved into interactive, participatory, and consumer-centric engagement models. Central to this transformation is the emergence of social media platforms, which have revolutionised the dynamics of brand-consumer interactions by enabling continuous dialogue, personalised messaging, and real-time feedback mechanisms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Social media marketing represents a paradigm shift in promotional strategy, wherein consumers are no longer passive recipients of information but active participants in content creation, dissemination, and evaluation. Contemporary digital ecosystems facilitate bidirectional communication, fostering relational engagement rather than transactional exposure. Firms increasingly leverage platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to enhance brand visibility, stimulate consumer engagement, and influence behavioural outcomes (Li et al., 2021; Appel et al., 2020).

Within the Indian context, the digital transformation has been particularly pronounced. India's expanding internet infrastructure, widespread smartphone adoption, and increasing digital literacy have collectively accelerated social media usage across demographic segments. Recent industry reports indicate that India represents one of the world's largest social media markets, with consumers demonstrating high levels of digital interaction and platform engagement (Statista, 2024). Concurrently, the Indian e-commerce sector has experienced remarkable growth, driven by evolving consumer preferences, convenience-oriented shopping behaviour, and digital payment innovations (Kumar & Ayedee, 2021). E-commerce firms operating in this highly competitive environment increasingly integrate social media marketing into their strategic frameworks. Unlike traditional advertising models, social media marketing emphasises interactivity, experiential engagement, and relationship-building. Consumer engagement, manifested through behavioural indicators such as likes, shares,

comments, and views, has emerged as a critical determinant of marketing effectiveness (Brodie et al., 2011; Harrigan et al., 2021).

Despite its growing strategic significance, empirical evaluations of social media marketing effectiveness remain limited, particularly within emerging digital economies. While practitioners widely acknowledge the importance of engagement metrics, academic research continues to debate the extent to which social media interactions translate into measurable behavioural outcomes such as purchase behaviour (Yadav & Rahman, 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

This study seeks to address this research gap by systematically examining the effectiveness of social media marketing in influencing consumer engagement and purchase behaviour within the Indian e-commerce sector. By adopting a quantitative cross-sectional, explanatory research design, the study contributes to the evolving discourse on digitally mediated consumer behaviour.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing has emerged as a dominant strategic instrument within contemporary digital marketing frameworks. It is conceptualised as the systematic utilisation of social media platforms to communicate value propositions, foster consumer relationships, and influence behavioural outcomes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Unlike traditional promotional mechanisms characterised by one-way communication, social media marketing emphasises interactivity, consumer participation, and relational engagement (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Recent scholarship highlights that social media platforms function not merely as communication channels but as complex behavioural ecosystems shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes (Appel et al., 2020). Firms increasingly deploy targeted advertisements, influencer collaborations, branded content, and interactive campaigns to stimulate engagement and enhance brand equity (Li et al., 2021).

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that social media marketing significantly enhances brand awareness, consumer trust, and purchase intention. Dwivedi et al. (2021) argue that digital platforms facilitate immersive consumer experiences, enabling firms to establish emotional and cognitive connections. Similarly, Harrigan et al. (2021) identify that interactive marketing strategies positively influence consumer-brand relationships.

Contemporary studies emphasise the importance of content characteristics, including informativeness, entertainment value, credibility, and visual appeal. Research indicates that visually engaging and emotionally resonant content significantly enhances consumer interaction and behavioural responses (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Yadav & Rahman, 2022).

Furthermore, platform-specific dynamics influence marketing effectiveness. Instagram's visual-centric architecture, YouTube's video-based engagement mechanisms, and Facebook's community-driven interactions provide distinct strategic advantages (Tafesse & Wien, 2018; Voorveld et al., 2018).

Despite extensive adoption, debates persist regarding the measurable effectiveness of social media marketing. While engagement metrics are widely utilised as performance indicators, scholars argue that empirical validation linking social media strategies to behavioural outcomes remains insufficient (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

2.2 Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement has emerged as a central construct within modern marketing and consumer behaviour literature. It reflects the behavioural, emotional, and cognitive involvement of consumers with brands (Brodie et al., 2011). Engagement extends beyond transactional interactions, encompassing experiential participation, relational attachment, and psychological investment. Digital environments significantly amplify engagement opportunities. Social media platforms enable consumers to actively interact with brand content, participate in discussions, and share experiences. These interactions represent behavioural manifestations of engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2020).

Recent research conceptualises consumer engagement as a multidimensional construct incorporating behavioural actions (likes, shares, comments), cognitive involvement (attention, processing), and emotional attachment (affection, enthusiasm) (Dessart et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence suggests that engagement significantly influences brand loyalty, trust formation, and purchase behaviour. Harrigan et al. (2021) demonstrate that higher engagement levels correlate with stronger consumer-brand relationships. Similarly, Lim et al. (2022) identify engagement as a predictor of behavioural intentions. Scholars argue that engagement functions as a mediating mechanism through which marketing stimuli influence behavioural outcomes. Social media marketing strategies stimulate engagement, which subsequently shapes consumer decision-making processes (Yadav & Rahman, 2022).

2.3 Purchase Behaviour

Purchase behaviour represents a fundamental construct within consumer behaviour theory, encompassing decision-making processes influenced by informational, psychological, and social factors (Engel et al., 1995). Digital ecosystems introduce additional complexities by incorporating peer influence, interactive communication, and visual stimuli.

Social media platforms significantly shape purchase behaviour by influencing consumer perceptions, trust formation, and decision confidence (Chen & Lin, 2019). Consumers increasingly rely on peer-generated content, reviews, and engagement metrics when evaluating products.

Recent studies emphasise that social media interactions function as social proof mechanisms, influencing purchase intentions and decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Visual content, influencer endorsements, and user-generated feedback significantly impact consumer evaluations (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Empirical research consistently validates the relationship between social media engagement and purchase behaviour (Li et al., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

2.4 Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

The relationship between social media marketing and consumer behaviour has attracted substantial scholarly attention over the past decade, reflecting the growing strategic relevance of digital platforms in shaping consumer decision-making processes. Social media environments represent a departure from traditional communication systems by facilitating interactive, consumer-driven exchanges that significantly influence behavioural outcomes (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Prior research consistently establishes a positive association between social media marketing activities and various dimensions of consumer behaviour, including purchase intention, brand perception, trust formation, and loyalty development. Social media marketing functions as a multidimensional stimulus that integrates informational, social, and psychological influences. Unlike conventional advertising mechanisms, social media platforms enable consumers to actively participate in brand interactions, thereby amplifying cognitive engagement and behavioural responses (Li et al., 2021).

One of the central mechanisms through which social media marketing influences consumer behaviour is consumer engagement. Engagement behaviours, such as liking, sharing, commenting, and content interaction, serve as behavioural manifestations of consumer involvement. Empirical studies indicate that higher engagement intensity correlates with stronger purchase intentions and enhanced brand attachment (Hollebeek et al., 2020; Harrigan et al., 2021). Engagement thus functions as both an outcome of marketing exposure and a predictor of behavioural responses.

Recent research highlights that social media marketing influences consumer behaviour through multiple theoretical pathways. Social influence theory suggests that peer interactions, user-generated content, and social proof mechanisms significantly shape consumer perceptions and decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Consumers increasingly rely on digital cues, including reviews, comments, and engagement metrics, when evaluating products and brands.

Additionally, trust formation emerges as a critical determinant mediating behavioural outcomes. Social media marketing strategies that enhance perceived credibility, authenticity, and transparency significantly influence consumer trust, which subsequently affects purchase decisions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Lim et al., 2022). Trust-driven interactions are particularly salient in digitally mediated environments where information asymmetry and perceived risk remain prevalent.

Despite the robust theoretical and empirical support for positive associations, scholars emphasise that variations in behavioural responses remain insufficiently explored. Social media platforms differ significantly in their structural characteristics, interaction mechanisms, and content formats. Instagram's visual-centric architecture, YouTube's immersive video-based engagement, and Facebook's community-driven dynamics produce differential behavioural effects (Voorveld et al., 2018; Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Furthermore, engagement intensity varies across consumer segments, demographic profiles, and contextual conditions. Dwivedi et al. (2023) argue that consumer behavioural responses are contingent upon content relevance, emotional resonance, platform credibility, and perceived informativeness. Emerging digital economies, characterised by heterogeneous consumer behaviour and evolving digital literacy, present additional complexities requiring empirical validation.

In the Indian e-commerce context, where social media adoption intersects with rapid digitalisation, examining platform-specific behavioural variations becomes particularly important. While prior studies provide foundational insights, there remains a critical need for context-specific empirical research that systematically evaluates the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies in influencing consumer engagement and purchase behaviour.

III. Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of social media marketing on consumer engagement.
2. To analyse the impact of consumer engagement on purchase behaviour.
3. To evaluate the overall effectiveness of social media marketing strategies.

IV. Hypotheses Development

Based on theoretical foundations, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H₁:** Social media marketing positively influences consumer engagement.
H₂: Consumer engagement positively influences purchase behaviour.
H₃: Social media marketing significantly influences purchase behaviour.

V. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **quantitative cross-sectional, explanatory research approach** grounded in a **descriptive research design**. A quantitative methodology is particularly appropriate for examining measurable relationships among variables and for generating statistically verifiable findings. The descriptive research design facilitates the systematic investigation of consumer perceptions, behavioural tendencies, and interaction patterns without manipulating the study environment. This design enables the researcher to capture naturally occurring variations in consumer responses to social media marketing activities.

By employing a structured survey instrument, the study objectively quantifies constructs such as social media marketing exposure, consumer engagement behaviour, and purchase behaviour. The descriptive framework allows for a comprehensive assessment of behavioural trends, while the quantitative approach ensures statistical precision, reliability, and replicability of results.

5.2 Sample Size

The study utilises a sample size of 200 respondents (n = 200) non-probability convenience sampling were used. The selection of this sample size aligns with established quantitative research principles, ensuring sufficient statistical power for correlation and regression analyses. A sample of this magnitude is considered methodologically adequate for behavioural research involving perceptual constructs measured through Likert-scale instruments. The respondents represent active social media users who engage with e-commerce platforms. The chosen sample size enables reliable estimation of central tendencies, variability, and inter-variable relationships. Furthermore, it supports inferential statistical techniques required for hypothesis testing, thereby enhancing the robustness and credibility of empirical findings.

5.3 Variables of the Study

Variable	Type
Social Media Marketing	Independent Variable
Consumer Engagement	Dependent Variable
Purchase Behaviour	Dependent Variable

The study conceptualises Social Media Marketing (SMM) as the independent variable influencing behavioural outcomes. Consumer Engagement (CE) and Purchase Behaviour (PB) are treated as dependent variables representing consumer behavioural responses.

VI. Data Analysis and Findings

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Marketing	3.82	0.74
Consumer Engagement	3.65	0.81
Purchase Behaviour	3.58	0.77

The descriptive statistics provide preliminary insights into respondent perceptions and behavioural tendencies. The mean score for Social Media Marketing (3.82) indicates a relatively high level of respondent agreement regarding exposure to social media campaigns and digital promotional activities. Similarly, Consumer Engagement (3.65) reflects moderate-to-high interaction levels, suggesting that respondents actively engage with branded content through behaviours such as liking, sharing, and commenting. The Purchase Behaviour mean (3.58) indicates that social media interactions moderately influence consumer buying decisions.

The standard deviation values demonstrate acceptable variability, indicating that responses are reasonably distributed without excessive dispersion. Collectively, these findings suggest that social media marketing is a salient component of consumer experience and plays a meaningful role in shaping engagement and purchase-related behaviours.

6.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Marketing	0.83
Consumer Engagement	0.86
Purchase Behaviour	0.81

Reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of measurement scales. Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceed the widely accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating strong reliability. The Consumer Engagement construct ($\alpha = 0.86$) demonstrates particularly high internal consistency, suggesting that the measurement items effectively capture engagement-related behaviours. Similarly, Social Media Marketing ($\alpha = 0.83$) and Purchase Behaviour ($\alpha = 0.81$) exhibit robust reliability. These results confirm that the questionnaire items consistently measure their respective constructs and minimise random measurement error. High reliability strengthens the validity of subsequent statistical analyses, ensuring that observed relationships among variables are attributable to genuine behavioural patterns rather than inconsistencies in measurement.

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	SMM	CE	PB
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	1		
Consumer Engagement (CE)	0.68	1	
Purchase Behaviour (PB)	0.59	0.72	1

p < 0.01

Correlation analysis reveals statistically significant positive relationships among key variables. The strong correlation between Social Media Marketing and Consumer Engagement ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$) indicates that increased exposure to social media campaigns is associated with higher engagement levels. Similarly, Consumer Engagement demonstrates a strong positive relationship with Purchase Behaviour ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$), suggesting that interactive behaviours significantly influence buying decisions. The moderate-to-strong correlation between Social Media Marketing and Purchase Behaviour ($r = 0.59$) further highlights the behavioural relevance of digital marketing activities. These findings empirically support Hypotheses H_1 and H_2 , reinforcing theoretical perspectives that emphasise engagement as a key behavioural mechanism linking marketing exposure to purchase outcomes.

6.4 Regression Analysis

Model 1: Social Media Marketing → Consumer Engagement

Table 4: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Social Media Marketing	0.68	12.45	0.000

R² = 0.46

Regression analysis demonstrates that Social Media Marketing significantly predicts Consumer Engagement ($\beta = 0.68, p < 0.001$). The high t-value confirms statistical significance, while the R² value (0.46) indicates that Social Media Marketing explains 46% of the variance in Consumer Engagement. This suggests that digital marketing activities exert substantial influence on consumer interaction behaviours. The findings validate Hypothesis H_1 , confirming that social media marketing functions as a critical driver of consumer engagement. The results align with contemporary engagement theories, emphasising the behavioural impact of interactive digital platforms.

Model 2: Consumer Engagement → Purchase Behaviour

Table 5: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Consumer Engagement	0.72	14.87	0.000
Predictor	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Consumer Engagement	0.72	14.87	0.000

R² = 0.52

Consumer Engagement significantly predicts Purchase Behaviour ($\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). The R^2 value (0.52) indicates that engagement behaviours account for 52% of the variance in purchase-related decisions. This highlights the pivotal role of engagement as a behavioural determinant.

These findings support Hypothesis H_2 and reinforce theoretical models suggesting that engagement functions as a behavioural catalyst influencing consumer decision-making.

Model 3: Social Media Marketing → Purchase Behaviour

Table 6: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Social Media Marketing	0.59	10.32	0.000

$R^2 = 0.35$

Social Media Marketing exhibits a statistically significant direct effect on Purchase Behaviour ($\beta = 0.59$). The R^2 value (0.35) indicates moderate explanatory power, suggesting that marketing exposure independently influences consumer decisions. This confirms Hypothesis H_3 and validates the behavioural influence of social media strategies beyond engagement mechanisms.

VII. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result
H_1	Supported
H_2	Supported
H_3	Supported

The hypothesis testing results provide strong empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework. All hypotheses are supported, confirming the significant relationships among Social Media Marketing, Consumer Engagement, and Purchase Behaviour. The findings indicate that social media marketing influences consumer behaviour both directly and indirectly through engagement mechanisms.

These results reinforce contemporary digital marketing theories and highlight engagement as a central explanatory construct. The statistical validation enhances the study's theoretical contribution and managerial relevance.

VIII. Discussion

The empirical findings of this study provide strong support for contemporary digital marketing theories that emphasise consumer interactivity, participation, and engagement within digitally mediated environments. The results demonstrate that social media marketing significantly influences consumer engagement, reinforcing the notion that digital platforms operate not merely as communication channels but as behavioural ecosystems shaping consumer responses. This aligns with prior research suggesting that interactive marketing strategies enhance consumer involvement and foster meaningful brand-consumer relationships.

Consumer engagement emerges as a pivotal construct within the behavioural framework examined in this study. The statistical analyses reveal that engagement functions as a critical intermediary mechanism through which social media marketing exerts its influence on purchase behaviour. This finding substantiates theoretical models that conceptualise engagement as a behavioural catalyst linking marketing stimuli to consumer decision-making outcomes. Engagement behaviours such as liking, sharing, and commenting reflect deeper cognitive and emotional involvement, which subsequently translate into purchase-related actions.

Furthermore, the study highlights that social media marketing exerts both direct and indirect effects on purchase behaviour. This dual influence underscores the strategic significance of engagement-driven marketing approaches. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature that recognises engagement as a central explanatory mechanism within digital consumer behaviour models. In the context of the Indian e-commerce sector, where digital interactions increasingly shape consumer decisions, the results emphasise the transformative role of social media marketing in influencing behavioural outcomes.

IX. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several important theoretical contributions to the domains of digital marketing and consumer behaviour research. First, the findings provide empirical validation for Consumer Engagement Theory, reinforcing its relevance within digitally mediated marketing contexts. The observed relationships confirm that consumer engagement is not merely a passive response but a multidimensional behavioural construct that mediates the effects of marketing stimuli on purchase outcomes. This strengthens theoretical perspectives that position engagement as a central explanatory variable in contemporary marketing models.

Second, the study reinforces emerging Digital Behavioural Models, which emphasise the role of interactive platforms in shaping consumer decision-making processes. By demonstrating that social media marketing significantly influences both engagement and purchase behaviour, the research extends theoretical understanding of how digital environments function as behavioural influence mechanisms. The results support frameworks integrating social interaction, cognitive involvement, and behavioural response dynamics.

Third, the study contributes to Emerging Market Research, particularly within the Indian digital economy. Much of the existing literature is grounded in developed market contexts; therefore, this research provides context-specific empirical evidence from a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem. The findings highlight that consumer engagement mechanisms operate consistently across cultural and economic environments, while also acknowledging potential contextual variations.

Collectively, the study advances theoretical discourse by integrating social media marketing, engagement behaviour, and purchase decision processes into a unified analytical framework.

X. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer significant practical insights for e-commerce firms seeking to optimise their digital marketing strategies. The results underscore the strategic importance of adopting **engagement-driven marketing campaigns**, highlighting that consumer engagement serves as a critical pathway influencing purchase behaviour. Firms should prioritise marketing initiatives that stimulate active consumer participation rather than relying solely on informational exposure.

Optimising **interactive and visually appealing content** emerges as a key managerial consideration. Social media platforms thrive on engagement dynamics; therefore, content strategies should incorporate elements that encourage consumer interaction, including compelling visuals, emotionally resonant messaging, and participatory communication formats. Interactive mechanisms such as polls, user-generated content initiatives, and influencer collaborations may further enhance engagement intensity.

Additionally, firms should invest in **behavioural analytics and performance monitoring systems**. Engagement metrics, including likes, shares, comments, and views, should be systematically analysed to evaluate campaign effectiveness. Data-driven insights can enable firms to refine targeting strategies, personalise communication efforts, and optimise platform-specific approaches.

The findings also suggest that social media marketing exerts both direct and indirect behavioural effects. Consequently, firms should adopt integrated digital strategies that align marketing communication with engagement-building objectives. In competitive e-commerce environments, leveraging consumer engagement as a strategic asset may enhance brand relationships, improve customer retention, and drive sustainable growth.

XI. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, the sample size ($n = 200$), while statistically adequate, may limit the generalisability of findings. Future studies may incorporate larger and more diverse samples to enhance external validity and capture broader consumer behavioural variations.

Second, the study employs a cross-sectional research design, capturing consumer perceptions at a single point in time. Consumer behaviour within digital environments is dynamic; therefore, longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into evolving engagement patterns, behavioural shifts, and long-term marketing effectiveness. Third, the reliance on self-reported measures introduces potential response biases. Although structured questionnaires facilitate standardised data collection, respondents' perceptions may not fully reflect actual behavioural actions. Future research may integrate behavioural tracking data, experimental designs, or mixed-method approaches. Further research may also explore platform-specific effectiveness, demographic moderating effects, and advanced statistical modelling techniques such as structural equation modelling (SEM). Investigating psychological mediators such as trust, perceived credibility, and emotional attachment may further refine theoretical understanding.

XII. Conclusion

This study concludes that social media marketing significantly influences consumer engagement and purchase behaviour within the Indian e-commerce sector. The empirical findings demonstrate that consumer engagement functions as a central behavioural mechanism through which digital marketing strategies exert their effectiveness. Engagement behaviours represent critical indicators of consumer involvement, participation, and relational interaction.

The results highlight that social media marketing exerts both direct and indirect behavioural effects. This underscores the strategic importance of interactive digital communication frameworks that foster consumer participation. Consumer engagement emerges as a pivotal explanatory construct shaping purchase-related decisions, reinforcing contemporary digital marketing theories.

From a broader perspective, the study contributes to understanding consumer behaviour within digitally mediated environments. As social media platforms continue to dominate marketing ecosystems, firms must recognise engagement as a strategic asset rather than merely a performance metric.

In the context of emerging digital economies such as India, where consumer interactions increasingly occur within social media ecosystems, the findings emphasise the transformative role of digital engagement strategies. The study thus provides both theoretical and managerial insights, offering a foundation for future research exploring digitally driven consumer behaviour.

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