

Redwanul Islam Rajib and Pias Roy

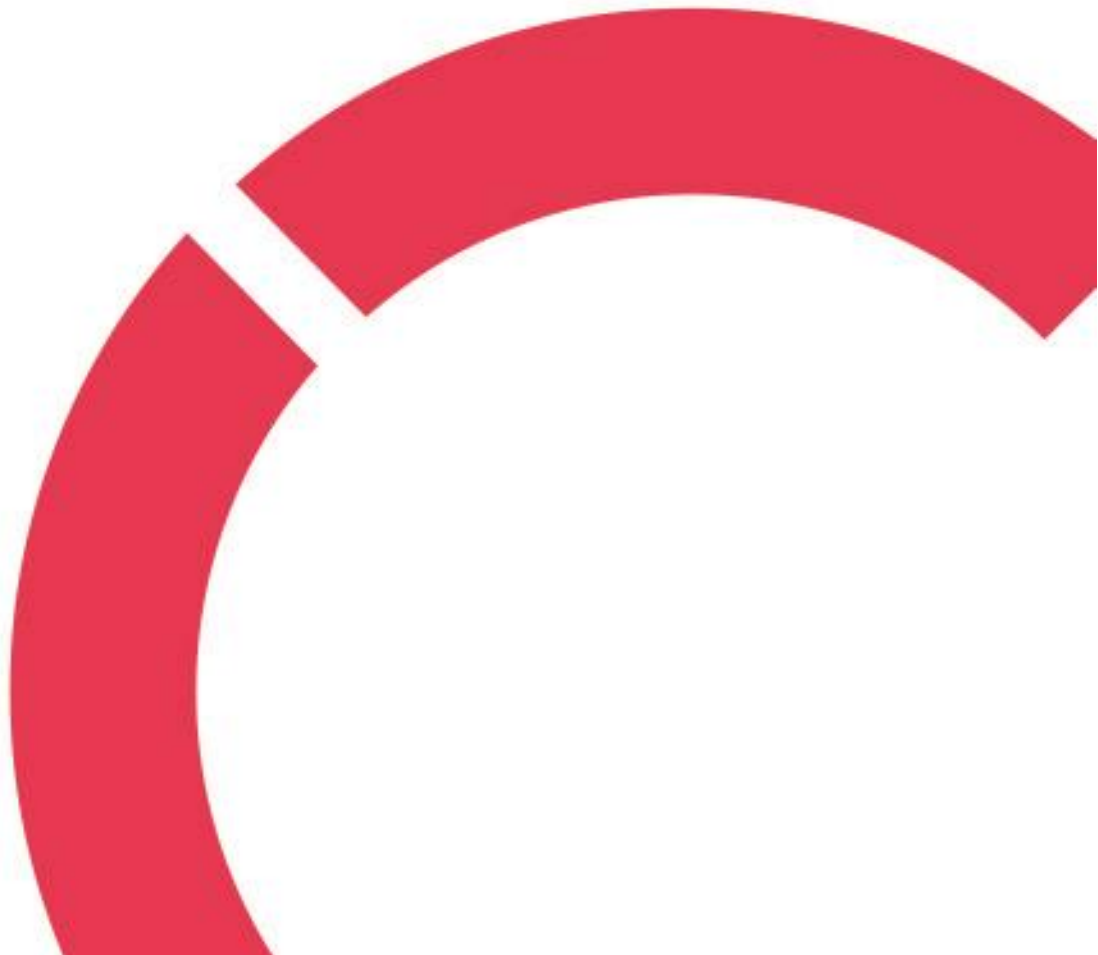
**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR AND DECISION MAKING:
Insights from Surveys and a Case Study of Flash Digital Agency in Bangladesh**

Thesis

CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Bachelor of Business Administration, International Business

December 2023



ABSTRACT

Centria University of Applied Sciences	Date December, 2023	Author Redwanul Islam Rajib, Pias Roy
Degree programme Bachelor of Business Administration, International Business		
Name of thesis INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR AND DECISION MAKING: INSIGHTS FROM SURVEYS AND A CASE STUDY OF FLASH DIGITAL AGENCY IN BANGLADESH		
Centria supervisor Katja Viiliäinen-Tyni		Pages 51 + 4
Instructor representing commissioning institution or company MD. Ahasan		
<p>This research delves into the transformative impact of social media on consumer behavior within the dynamic landscape of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. The multifaceted objectives encompass understanding how social media shapes consumer purchasing decisions, evaluating decision-making processes in online purchases, and exploring consumer engagement on various social media platforms. The study also investigates Flash Digital Agency's strategies in enhancing online presence and influencing consumer behavior. The research harnesses both consumer surveys, involving 43 respondents, and in-depth interviews with six key personnel from Flash Digital Agency, aiming to provide actionable insights for businesses operating in Bangladesh's E-commerce sector.</p> <p>Emphasizing consumer buying behavior, decision-making processes, digital sales, e-commerce dynamics, online purchasing, platform engagement, and social media influence, the study utilizes the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis tool to investigate a series of user research questions. Overall, the findings strongly support the substantial impact of social media on consumer behavior within Bangladesh's E-commerce sector. Businesses are encouraged to tailor their strategies to effectively leverage this influence, enhancing consumer engagement and decision-making in the digital domain. The insights derived from this research, driven by SPSS analysis and qualitative case study interviews, present actionable recommendations to optimize marketing approaches for businesses operating in Bangladesh's dynamic E-commerce industry.</p>		

<p>Key words</p> <p>business strategy, consumer buying behavior, decision-making processes, digital sales, e-commerce dynamics, online purchasing, platform engagement, and social media influence</p>

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

AD

(Advertisement) is promotional message or communication designed to inform, persuade, or remind an audience about a product, service, or idea. It aims to influence the audience's behavior or perception.

EKB

(EKB model) This refers to a decision-making model developed from Herbert Simon's work, outlining five stages of the decision process.

EBM

(E-commerce Business Model) represents the underlying framework or structure governing how an online business operates, including revenue generation, value propositions, customer segments, and distribution channels within the realm of e-commerce.

SEO

(Search Engine Optimization) practice of optimizing web content, structure, and technical elements to improve a website's visibility and ranking in search engine results, aiming to increase organic (unpaid) traffic.

SEM

(Search Engine Marketing) involves marketing strategies aimed at increasing a website's visibility in search engine results pages through paid advertising and optimization techniques.

RQ

(Research Question) A concise, specific query that guides research endeavors and seeks to investigate, explore, or understand a particular aspect or phenomenon within a study.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry, the pervasive influence of social media has emerged as a potent force shaping consumer behavior and steering decision-making processes (Gupta & Chopra, 2020, 2). Recent research underscores the escalating significance of social media as a driving determinant behind consumer choices in the dynamic digital marketplace. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly altered consumer habits and digital engagement (Smith & Axson 2023, 45), has further heightened the importance of understanding the nuanced impact of social media on decision-making in the context of E-commerce.

This thesis embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationship between social media dynamics, consumer purchasing patterns, and decision-making processes within the specific context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry, considering the unique challenges and opportunities introduced by the pandemic. Adopting a focused approach, the research scrutinizes the operations of Flash Digital Agency, a notable player in the local digital landscape. The case study methodology provides a robust framework for understanding the agency's strategies in navigating the influence of social media on consumer behavior, especially in the context of the pandemic-induced changes.

Recent studies emphasize that consumers are progressively relying on social media platforms for product analysis, recommendations, and reviews before making purchasing decisions (Tao, Sun, Liu, Tian, and & Zhang, 2021, 3). The ever-growing digital presence of Flash Digital Agency serves as a microcosm, illustrating the evolving role of social media in influencing consumer behavior in the context of Bangladesh's vibrant E-commerce sector, now further shaped by the recent global health crisis (Flash Digital Agency 2022,15).

Flash Digital Agency's prominence in the local digital landscape positions it as a noteworthy subject of investigation. The agency's strategies and engagements on social media platforms offer a unique opportunity to dissect the practical applications of strategies aimed at enhancing online presence in the E-commerce sector, with considerations for the altered consumer landscape during and post the COVID-19 era. By delving into the intricacies of Flash Digital Agency's approach, this research seeks to unravel the symbiotic relationship between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes.

In the digital age, consumers are not just passive recipients of information; they actively seek out content, reviews, and recommendations on social media platforms to inform their purchasing decisions (Smith,

& Axson, 2023, 48). Flash Digital Agency's operations in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry represent a nexus between consumer engagement, online presence, and decision-making. Understanding the dynamics at play within this context is essential for businesses striving to navigate the evolving landscape of digital consumer behavior.

This research significantly contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital consumer behavior by examining critical aspects such as informed purchase decisions and consumer engagement strategies within the unique context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. Moreover, it delves into the intricate decision-making processes that are significantly influenced by the evolving dynamics of social media, offering insights that are relevant in the current and post-pandemic scenarios. Synthesizing findings from the case study of Flash Digital Agency and insights gained through consumer surveys, this research aims to provide actionable insights for businesses seeking to optimize their strategies in alignment with the continually evolving patterns of consumer behavior in the post-COVID-19 era.

The nuanced exploration of social media's influence on consumer behavior serves not only to expand the academic understanding of digital consumer dynamics but also to offer practical implications for businesses operating in this developing economic context. As E-commerce continues to reshape the retail landscape, businesses that grasp the intricacies of social media's impact on consumer behavior, will be better positioned to navigate the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by the digital age.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to contribute significant insights into the intricate relationship between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes (Ishtiaque, Baten, & Sarwar, 2016,15) within Bangladesh's dynamic E-commerce industry. In an era marked by unprecedented global connectivity through the Internet, the intertwining of consumers and businesses has reached unparalleled levels. According to Barut Tuğtekin & Dursun (2020,428), an average Internet user now maintains 669 social ties, emphasizing the extensive network that digital platforms facilitate. Major social media platforms play a pivotal role in this connectivity, with Facebook, for instance, boasting over 800 million daily active users and hosting 2.5 million business pages, witnessing the sharing of 50 billion pieces of content monthly (Facebook, 2022; McKinsey, 2021). The scale of digital interaction is further exemplified by Twitter, handling around 700 million daily Tweets at a staggering rate of about 800 Tweets per second (Twitter, 2021). Additionally, LinkedIn, focusing on professional connections, links over 300 million individuals globally, including employees from all Fortune 1000 companies (LinkedIn, 2022). On average, people globally dedicate approximately 8.5 hours per month to social networking sites

(Tuğtekin & Dursun, 2020, 431). The transformative impact of social media on consumer behavior has become a central focus in contemporary marketing.

In an era characterized by unprecedented digital connectivity, where consumers and businesses are intricately linked through various online platforms (Gupta, & Chopra, 2020, 3), the research aims to comprehensively understand and explain the impact of social media on consumer behavior. This involves a focused exploration of the multifaceted aspects of how social media shapes consumer choices in the Bangladesh E-commerce landscape. Acknowledging the extensive and transformative influence of social media on consumer behavior, this study aims to bridge existing research gaps and provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in online consumer decision-making processes. By scrutinizing the interplay between social media dynamics and consumer behavior (Facebook 2022, 18; McKinsey 2021, 32), the goal is to generate valuable knowledge that offers actionable recommendations for businesses operating in this sector. The aim is not merely to explore and analyze but to synthesize insights drawn from consumer surveys and a case study of Flash Digital Agency, thus presenting a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on consumer behavior in the specific context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. Through a systematic investigation addressing key research questions (Ishtiaque, Baten, & Sarwar, 2016, 16), this research seeks to contribute to the academic discourse on digital consumer behavior, enabling businesses to better navigate the evolving landscape of consumer choices and decision-making processes within the online sphere.

The multifaceted objectives of this research are grounded in the recognition of the transformative impact of social media on consumer behavior within the dynamic E-commerce landscape. The study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by addressing key challenges and opportunities, with a focus on the interplay between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes (Smith 2021, 45). Firstly, it aims to scrutinize the impact of social media on consumer purchasing decisions and evaluate the complex decision-making processes within the online purchasing realm, drawing insights from consumer surveys. Moreover, the research seeks to assess Flash Digital Agency's strategies in enhancing the online presence of their customers and influencing consumer behavior within the E-commerce sector through targeted interviews with key personnel. Additionally, it investigates how consumers engage with social media platforms for product research, recommendations, and reviews, shedding light on the role of social media communities in shaping information sharing and network-building. Addressing challenges and opportunities in digital consumer behavior is another crucial aspect, encompassing issues of trust, skepticism, and the impact of 'digital pollution.' Ultimately, the research aims to

synthesize insights from consumer surveys and the Flash Digital Agency case study, providing actionable recommendations for businesses in Bangladesh's E-commerce industry.

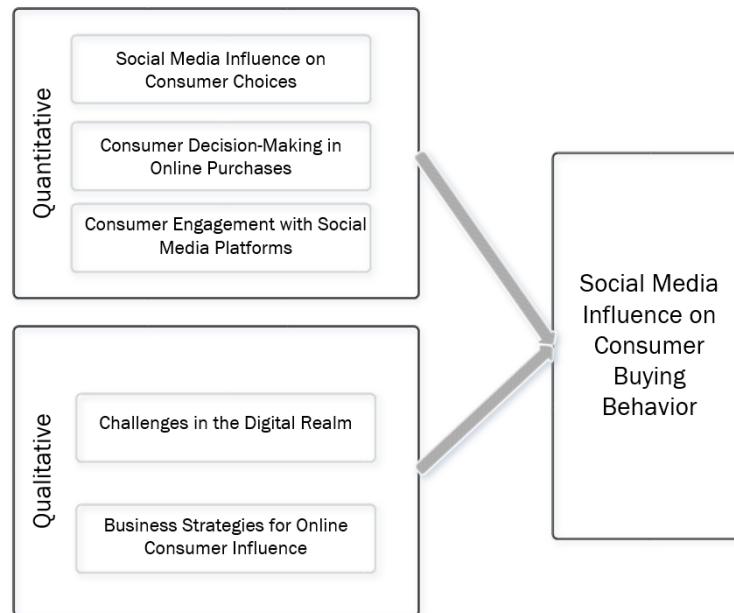


FIGURE 1. The Interconnectedness between Research Questions and Objective

The overarching goal is to contribute valuable knowledge to the academic understanding of digital consumer behavior, filling existing research gaps, and addressing factors influencing consumer decision-making processes online. To achieve these objectives, the research is guided by 03 key user research questions targeted at identifying insights from consumer surveys.

The first question focuses on the influence and shaping impact of social media on consumer choices within this industry. By exploring the ways in which social media platforms play a role in shaping consumer preferences, the researchers seek to uncover the intricate connections between online engagement and purchasing decisions. A second research question delves into the detailed decision-making processes that consumers undergo when making online purchases. This involves an examination of the various factors, considerations, and steps that consumers navigate as they move through the online shopping experience in the context of the Bangladesh E-commerce sector. The third research question centers on the interaction patterns of consumers within the Bangladesh E-commerce industry with different social media platforms. This includes investigating how consumers utilize social media for product research, seek recommendations, and engage with reviews. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the multifaceted ways in which consumers leverage social media in their journey towards making informed and satisfying online purchases in the specific context of the Bangladesh E-commerce landscape.

In parallel, the study will incorporate insights gathered from interviews conducted with six key individuals from Flash Digital Agency to address the two additional user research questions. The fourth research question targets the challenges confronted by consumers within the digital sphere. This inquiry delves into various issues such as trust concerns, skepticism, and the pervasive presence of 'digital pollution.' Understanding these challenges is crucial to comprehending the hurdles faced by consumers navigating the online landscape. The fifth research question centers on identifying effective strategies that businesses can employ to impact consumer buying behavior and decision-making in the post-COVID-19 era. This inquiry aims to uncover innovative approaches that businesses within the E-commerce industry can adopt to adapt and thrive in the evolving digital landscape shaped by the aftermath of the pandemic. By systematically addressing these research questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes in the specific context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry.

Flash Digital Agency, a pioneering force in Digital Marketing and Business Consultation, stands as the prospective commissioner for the thesis titled "Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behavior: From the Perspective of E-commerce Industry in Bangladesh." Under the commendable leadership of Mr. MD. Ahasan, the CEO & Lead Consultant of Flash Digital Agency, this research endeavor gains significant value.

Founded in 2022, Flash Digital Agency has swiftly become a trailblazer in the digital landscape, specializing in digital marketing, social media marketing, ad management, lead generation, graphics design, video editing, and business consultation. The agency is dedicated to delivering high-quality services to businesses in Bangladesh and globally, aiming to digitally transform businesses for increased competitiveness in the dynamic digital marketplace.

Since its inception, Flash Digital Agency has consistently provided a diverse range of services, including Full Stack Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing across platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, SEO, SEM, Ad Management, Lead Generation, Email Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, and more. Beyond service provision, the agency actively works to diminish technological knowledge barriers for businesses not inherently aligned with technology, creating a seamless alignment with the research objectives.

The ultimate goal of this research is to synthesize insights derived from consumer surveys and the Flash Digital Agency case study, offering actionable recommendations tailored for businesses operating in

Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. Simultaneously, interviews with key personnel of Flash Digital Agency aim to address critical questions, such as the challenges consumers face in the digital realm and the strategies businesses can employ to influence consumer buying behavior and decision-making, especially in the post-COVID-19 landscape. By systematically addressing these objectives and questions, the study aspires to contribute valuable knowledge to the academic understanding of digital consumer behavior. It seeks to bridge existing research gaps and provide insights into the factors influencing consumer decision-making processes in the online domain, creating a comprehensive exploration of the impact of social media on consumer behavior in the E-commerce industry of Bangladesh. This research initiative, in collaboration with Flash Digital Agency, marks a pivotal step towards unlocking valuable insights for businesses navigating the complexities of the digital age.

2 DIGITAL SALES

The digitization of commerce has brought forth a paradigm shift in how businesses engage with consumers, particularly within Bangladesh's dynamic E-commerce sector. The evolving digital landscape, characterized by technological advancements and the ubiquitous presence of social media platforms, has redefined the terrain of consumer engagement and purchasing behaviors.

This section delves into the multifaceted realm of 'Digital Sales' within the context of Bangladesh's burgeoning E-commerce industry. The transformative evolution of the digital marketplace has been propelled by the pervasive integration of social media platforms. Initially conceived as rudimentary online networks, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have transcended their primary functions, becoming integral spaces where consumers actively interact with brands, seek product recommendations, and make informed purchase decisions. Understanding the nuances of digital sales necessitates an exploration of three pivotal aspects within this domain. Firstly, the landscape of digital marketplace navigation has witnessed a profound transformation due to social media integration (GlobalWebIndex, 2020; Meslat, 2018). Secondly, the adaptation of conversion optimization tactics tailored to the evolving consumer behaviors influenced by social media is imperative for success in Bangladesh's E-commerce landscape (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022). Lastly, the inception of innovative digital sales channels, shaped by the influence of social media, presents an avenue for businesses to engage consumers effectively and drive conversions (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; McKinsey, 2021). The digital sales strategies adopted by businesses in Bangladesh are pivotal in navigating this ever-evolving landscape (Delaney & Salminen, 2021; Ishtiaque et al., 2016). From understanding consumer behaviors influenced by social media trends to leveraging these insights in devising conversion tactics and pioneering sales channels, businesses operate within an ecosystem deeply intertwined with the dynamics of online consumerism (Hampton et al., 2021; Smith, 2020).

Through an exploration of literature and research findings, this section aims to dissect the intersection between social media, consumer behavior, and business strategies within the context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. It seeks to unravel the profound impact of social media on consumer decision-making processes and how businesses tailor their strategies to resonate with the preferences and behaviors of a diverse consumer base influenced by these digital platforms.

2.1 Digital Marketplace Navigation

The digital marketplace in Bangladesh has undergone a transformative evolution with the pervasive integration of social media platforms. These platforms have evolved from rudimentary online networks to multifunctional hubs like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, reshaping consumer behaviors and decision-making processes (Boyd & Ellison 2008, 211). They have become pivotal spaces for platform engagement, where consumers actively participate in brand interactions, seek product recommendations, and make purchase decisions.

This transformation dictates a fundamental shift in business strategies within the realm of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; McKinsey, 2021). The significance of understanding platform engagement and its profound influence on consumer preferences cannot be overstated (Global-WebIndex, 2020; Meslat, 2018). The dynamics of consumer-brand interactions, fueled by social media, necessitate adaptive strategies that resonate with the evolving landscape of digital marketplace navigation (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022).

2.2 Conversion Optimization Tactics

Adapting conversion optimization tactics in response to the changing dynamics of consumer buying behavior influenced by social media is paramount for success within Bangladesh's E-commerce landscape (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022). Karimi et al. (2015,78) underline the importance of aligning business strategies with consumer purchase intentions. Such alignment entails leveraging social media's influence on decision-making styles, particularly in the context of satisficing and maximizing behaviors, to tailor conversion tactics effectively. Businesses must recognize the diversity of decision-making styles prevalent among Bangladeshi consumers and their evolution within the digital sphere (Smith, 2020; Tao et al., 2022). Understanding the nuanced impact of social media on online purchasing behaviors allows for the development of conversion strategies that resonate with the multifaceted preferences and behaviors exhibited within the digital sales arena (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Meslat, 2018).

2.3 Innovative Digital Sales Channels

The transformative influence of social media on consumer decisions extends to the development of innovative sales channels within Bangladesh's E-commerce industry (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; McKinsey,

2021). Gefen (2000,726) and Kim & Yang (2017,443) highlight the pivotal role of trust, peer recommendations, and user-generated content in shaping consumer behaviors and perceptions in the digital domain.

Businesses operating within this dynamic landscape must explore the symbiotic relationship between social media dynamics and the adoption of new sales channels (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; McKinsey, 2021). Innovating sales channels by harnessing the influence of social media, including strategies such as integrating user-generated content, fostering community engagement, and implementing effective social proof mechanisms, becomes indispensable (Tao et al., 2022; Meslat, 2018). These innovative approaches align with the diverse preferences and behaviors of Bangladeshi consumers, fostering engagement and driving conversions within the digital marketplace (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Delaney & Salminen, 2021). The intersection of social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes within Bangladesh's E-commerce industry underscores the pivotal role of adaptive business strategies (Smith, 2020; GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Integrating social media influence into conversion tactics and innovating digital sales channels empower businesses to navigate the evolving landscape effectively (Hampton et al., 2021; Ishtiaque et al., 2016). By understanding and leveraging the profound impact of social media on consumer behaviors, businesses can tailor strategies that resonate with the diverse needs of consumers influenced by these platforms (McKinsey, 2021; Smith & Axson, 2023).

3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is a multifaceted field influenced by various psychological drivers, engagement patterns in digital spaces, the digital sales path, and behavioural dynamics across E-commerce platforms. Understanding these elements within the context of social media's impact is crucial for businesses aiming to navigate Bangladesh's evolving E-commerce landscape.

3.1 Psychological Drivers of Decision-Making

Consumer decision-making is underpinned by psychological theories and models that elucidate the intricate motivations guiding consumer behavior. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, for instance, outlines hierarchical human needs, suggesting that individuals seek to fulfil physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow 1943, 381). In the realm of E-commerce, social media platforms serve as conduits for meeting various needs, such as social belongingness through community engagement and self-expression via user-generated content. Moreover, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991, 10) posits that behavioural intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Translating this theory to the digital space, where social media platforms play a pivotal role, involves understanding how these factors are influenced by online interactions, peer recommendations, and brand engagement within Bangladesh's dynamic digital environment. When an individual expresses behavioural intention, it indicates their inclination to take action, foreseeing the possibility of purchasing a particular product when the need arises (Erkan & Evans 2016,52). In order to attract and retain consumers in an expansive and highly competitive market, sellers must comprehend consumer characteristics, their buying patterns, and the influencing factors that foster the development of purchase intentions (Meslat 2018,19).

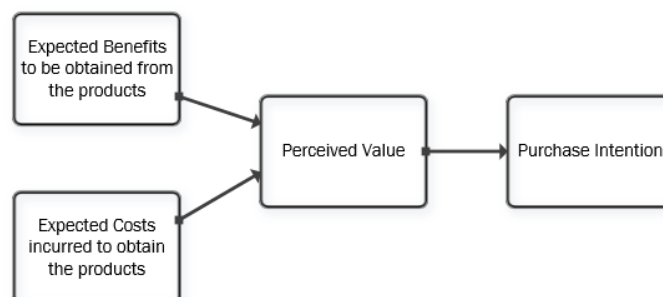


FIGURE 2. Consumer Purchase Intention Phases. Adapted from "Komalasari, Christianto, and Ganiarto, 2021, 7.

The psychological drivers of decision-making encompass a range of factors that influence how individuals perceive, evaluate, and make choices (Smith, 2020; Hampton et al., 2021). Within the context of E-commerce and social media influence in Bangladesh, several psychological theories and principles play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior (Meslat, 2018; Tao et al., 2022).

3.1.1 Social Proof and Social Influence

The concept of social proof remains a powerful psychological driver in consumer decision-making (Tuten & Solomon 2018,475). In Bangladesh's digital landscape, social media platforms serve as hubs for social influence, where individuals seek validation or cues from others' behaviors, reviews, or recommendations (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010,60). Consumers often rely on social endorsements and influencer marketing to guide their purchase decisions, influenced by the actions and opinions of their social network (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 61; Tuten & Solomon, 2018,475).

3.1.2 Scarcity and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

The fear of missing out and scarcity tactics continue to influence consumer behavior online (Wirtz & Chew 2013,09). Limited-time offers, exclusive deals, or products marketed as "in-demand" create a sense of urgency and scarcity, compelling Bangladeshi consumers to act swiftly to avoid missing out (Wirtz & Chew 2013,14). Social media platforms often employ countdown timers, limited stock notifications, or flash sales to evoke this sense of urgency and drive quick purchase decisions (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 64).

3.1.3 Cognitive Biases and Heuristics

Behavioural economics concepts like cognitive biases and heuristics significantly impact online consumer behavior (Thaler & Sunstein 2008, 134). For instance, the anchoring effect suggests that individuals tend to rely heavily on the first piece of information they receive when making decisions (Thaler & Sunstein 2008,135). In the context of online shopping in Bangladesh, initial product impressions, such

as the displayed price or highlighted features, can serve as anchors that significantly influence subsequent decisions (Wirtz & Chew 2019,14).

The evolution of e-commerce has fundamentally transformed traditional retail dynamics, enabling consumers to seamlessly browse, compare, and purchase products from the comfort of their homes (Laudon & Traver 2014,11). Several critical factors shape online consumer behavior, including the quality of websites, trust, and perceived value, with website design, functionality, and security playing pivotal roles in creating a positive user experience (Wang, Yu, & Wei 2013,14). Trust emerges as a cornerstone in online transactions, influencing consumers' willingness to engage with e-commerce platforms, with considerations for security, privacy, and reliability (Gefen 2000,35). Social media exerts a significant impact on online consumer behavior, acting as a potent tool for product discovery, recommendations, and reviews (Kim & Yang 2017,22). The role of personalized experiences and recommendation systems cannot be understated, contributing to enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty (Zhang et al. 2014,4). The rise of mobile commerce (m-commerce) reshapes the traditional path to purchase, with the ubiquity of smartphones facilitating impulsive buying behavior (Barnes & Corbitt 2003,13). Additionally, the influence of online reviews and user-generated content on consumer trust and decision-making processes is evident, emphasizing the persuasive role of peer experiences in shaping product perceptions (Cheung et al. 2014,11). In conclusion, this literature review underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature of online consumer buying behavior, providing valuable insights for businesses navigating the digital landscape.

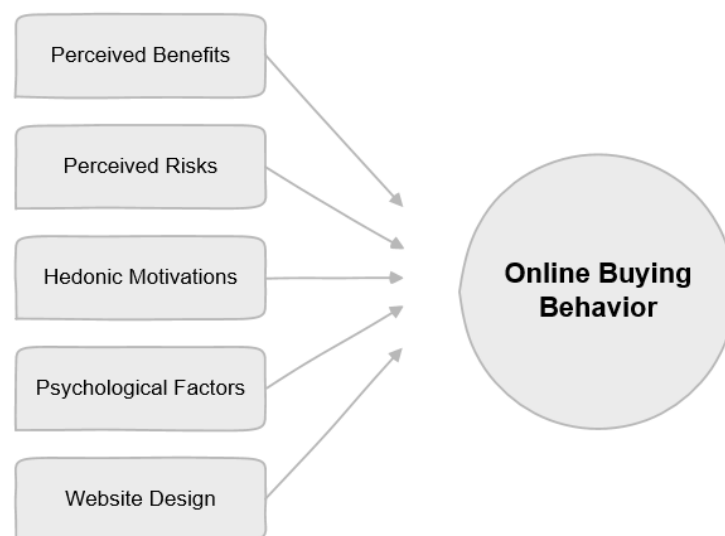


FIGURE 3. Factors Influencing Online Buying Behavior. (adapted from Hooria Adnan, 2014)

3.1.4 Emotional Triggers and Brand Associations

Emotional triggers and brand associations play a crucial role in shaping consumer decisions in the digital space (Godey et al. 2016,2). Brands that evoke positive emotions, reflect local cultural nuances, or resonate with societal aspirations are likely to wield greater influence over Bangladeshi consumers' choices on social media platforms (Godey et al. 2016,3).

Understanding these psychological drivers allows businesses to craft persuasive messaging, design compelling marketing campaigns, and create engaging content tailored to the psychological triggers of Bangladeshi consumers on social media platforms, driving engagement and conversions effectively.

3.2 Engagement Patterns in Digital Spaces

Understanding engagement patterns within digital spaces, especially on social media, involves dissecting various aspects such as content consumption, user interactions, and the impact of influencers. Visual content, for example, plays a pivotal role in engaging users on platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. Studies indicate that visual elements significantly enhance user engagement, leading to higher interaction rates and increased brand visibility (HubSpot 2020).

Moreover, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool within social media platforms, shaping consumer behavior and purchase decisions. In Bangladesh's E-commerce scene, influencers hold sway over a considerable audience, influencing preferences, and purchase choices. Collaborations with local influencers and leveraging their credibility within specific niches or demographics could potentially yield substantial returns for businesses seeking to tap into the Bangladeshi market (Ishtiaque, Baten, & Sarwar, 2016,15).

Understanding these nuanced engagement patterns requires a granular analysis of user behaviors, content preferences, and the impact of influential figures. Employing data analytics tools that delve into user interactions, content performance metrics, and influencer reach can provide businesses with actionable insights to tailor content strategies that resonate with Bangladeshi consumers in the digital space.

3.3 Digital Sales Path

The digital sales path is a complex journey, influenced by various touchpoints across online platforms (Smith, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). Analyzing this path requires a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior at each stage, from initial awareness to final purchase (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022). For instance, in Bangladesh's E-commerce ecosystem, consumers often begin their journey with product discovery through social media ads, influencers' recommendations, or user-generated content (Meslat, 2018; Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Studies suggest that nearly 54% of consumers rely on social media platforms to research products (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). This underscores the critical role of social media in initiating consumer interest and influencing their buying decisions.

Moving along the sales path, consumers engage with brand websites, read reviews, compare products, and seek reassurance through user-generated content or peer recommendations (Smith, 2020; McKinsey, 2021).. This phase is crucial for businesses to establish trust, provide transparent information, and create a seamless user experience to facilitate the decision-making process (Nielsen 2015). Moreover, the classical or traditional purchase model, also known as the EKB model or EBM model, has been a foundational framework in consumer purchase decision (Karimi et al. 2015,11). Originating from Herbert Simon's work on decision-making, this model streamlined the decision process into five stages: problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Simon 1960,12). Simon's pioneering decision-making model, developed in 1960, further contributed to understanding decision processes by breaking them down into three stages: intelligence, design, and choice (Simon 1960,12). The intelligence phase aligns with the classical model's first two stages of need recognition and information search (Smith, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). The design phase corresponds to the third stage of alternative evaluation, while the choice phase coincides with the classical model's purchase decision stage (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022).

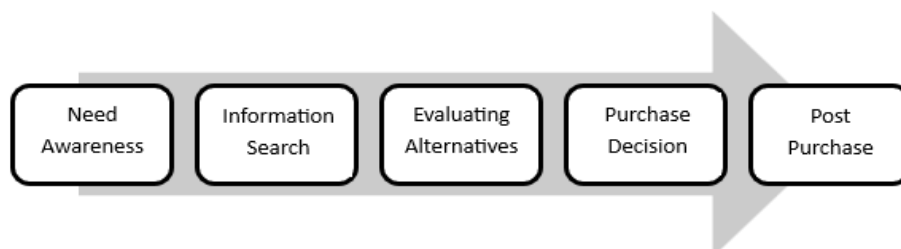


FIGURE 4. The Five Stages of the Classical Model's Purchase Decision Stage (adapted from Butler and Peppard, 1998)

Employing tools that track consumer behavior across touchpoints, analyzing user journey data, and leveraging predictive analytics can aid businesses in optimizing the digital sales path (McKinsey, 2021; Smith, 2020). Understanding how consumers navigate through these touchpoints and identifying potential bottlenecks empowers businesses to refine strategies, enhance user experience, and drive conversions effectively (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022).

3.4 Behavioral Dynamics Across E-commerce Platforms

Consumer behavior exhibits diverse dynamics across various E-commerce platforms, demanding a nuanced approach from businesses aiming to engage effectively (Smith, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). Understanding these dynamics involves dissecting user behaviors, preferences, and purchase patterns specific to each platform (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tao et al., 2022). For instance, in Bangladesh, platforms like Daraz, AjkerDeal, and Evaly have garnered substantial user bases, each with distinct functionalities and user experiences (The Business Standard, 2021). Daraz, being one of the largest E-commerce platforms, offers a wide array of products, discounts, and promotional campaigns (The Business Standard, 2021). AjkerDeal, on the other hand, focuses on local products and deals, catering to a more niche market (The Business Standard, 2021). Evaly has gained traction by providing various product categories and exclusive deals directly from suppliers (The Business Standard, 2021). Consumer behavior on these platforms varies based on factors such as product categories, pricing, user interface, and trustworthiness (The Business Standard, 2021). The preferences of Bangladeshi consumers regarding product authenticity, seller credibility, and delivery reliability play a significant role in platform selection and purchase decisions (The Business Standard, 2021).

Kotler and Armstrong's (2014, 387) classification of consumer buying behavior provides a robust framework for understanding the nuances in consumer decision-making, considering the levels of consumer involvement and the variance in brand differences (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 47). This classification system delineates four distinct types of purchase behavior, each characterized by unique attributes and exemplified by real-world consumer choices (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014; Meslat, 2018).

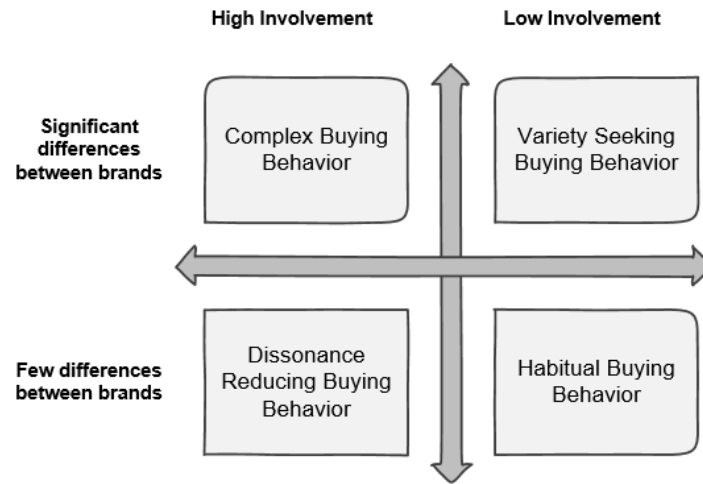


FIGURE 5. Classification of Consumer Buying Behavior. (adapted from Kotler & Armstrong, 2014)

According to Figure 5, complex buying behavior characterizes situations where consumers are highly involved and encounter significant differences among brands (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 276). For instance, buying a high-end laptop, an infrequent, expensive, and high-risk purchase, illustrates this behavior. In such cases, consumers extensively gather information, meticulously evaluate product options, and might experience dissonance if the chosen product doesn't meet their expectations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 276). On the other hand, dissonance-reducing behavior shares similarities with complex buying behavior in terms of high consumer involvement and risk but differs in the limited brand differentiation (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 277). Take purchasing furniture, such as carpets, which is costly, infrequent, and risky, yet exhibits minimal variations between brands. In these scenarios, although consumers may experience post-purchase dissonance, they might not engage as extensively in all decision-making stages compared to complex buying situations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014, p. 277).

These classifications, particularly complex buying behavior, emphasize the critical role of information gathering and evaluation in high-risk purchasing scenarios (Kotler & Armstrong 2014,278). It's within these contexts that the influence of social media on consumer decisions becomes particularly pronounced. The presumed visibility of social media influence in complex buying situations necessitates deeper investigation and analysis to comprehend its impact comprehensively. Employing data analytics to study user interactions, track consumer journeys, and analyze sales patterns across these platforms is instrumental. Businesses can derive actionable insights into consumer preferences, peak buying times, and product categories in demand. This knowledge enables them to tailor their product offerings, marketing strategies, and user experience enhancements specific to each platform.

4 BUSINESS STRATEGIES

Consumer behavior within the digital landscape of Bangladesh is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by diverse factors, including digital literacy, cybersecurity, and the omnipresent influence of social media trends. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this intricate landscape, this literature review on business strategies delves into the challenges that impede consumer engagement, the profound impact of online behavior, and the strategic responses adopted by businesses to navigate and fulfil the evolving demands of consumers. The following sections explore these dimensions in detail, shedding light on the intricacies of business strategies in the context of Bangladesh's dynamic digital environment.

4.1 Challenges in the Digital Realm

Bangladesh's digital landscape encounters various hurdles influencing consumer behavior. Inadequate digital literacy, uneven internet accessibility, and cybersecurity concerns (The Business Standard, 2021; GlobalWebIndex, 2020) significantly impact consumer engagement. These challenges create barriers, restricting certain demographic segments from fully participating in the digital economy.

4.1.1 Digital Literacy and Accessibility

Unequal access to technology and limited digital literacy impedes consumers' ability to harness online opportunities (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Governmental and private initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and enhancing internet infrastructure are pivotal to bridge this digital divide and empower all segments of society (The Business Standard, 2021).

4.1.2 Cybersecurity Concerns

Data breaches and privacy concerns influence consumer trust and behavior in the digital space (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Ensuring robust cybersecurity measures and stringent data protection policies are crucial for restoring consumer confidence and fostering a secure digital environment (The Business Standard, 2021).

Addressing the challenges presented in the digital realm is imperative for businesses in Bangladesh to formulate effective business strategies. The hurdles stemming from inadequate digital literacy, uneven internet accessibility, and cybersecurity concerns significantly impact consumer engagement. Initiatives targeting digital literacy promotion, enhanced internet infrastructure, and robust cybersecurity measures, as identified in this analysis, should be integral components of business strategies. By addressing these challenges, businesses can foster a more inclusive digital environment, ensuring wider participation and facilitating strategic growth within the dynamic landscape of Bangladesh's digital economy.

4.2 Online Behavior Influence and Impact

The influence of online behavior on consumer decision-making is substantial in Bangladesh. Social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping purchasing behavior by serving as influential channels for product discovery and recommendation (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Understanding the impact of these platforms is crucial for businesses navigating the digital landscape.

4.2.1 Influence of Social Media Trends

Bangladeshi consumers extensively rely on social media for product information and peer recommendations (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Platforms like Facebook and Instagram significantly influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions (GlobalWebIndex, 2020; Nielsen, 2015). The rise of influencer marketing and user-generated content further accentuates the impact of social media on consumer behavior (GlobalWebIndex, 2020; Nielsen, 2015).

4.2.2 Digital Marketing Strategies

Personalized marketing approaches and targeted advertising play a pivotal role in influencing consumer behavior in Bangladesh (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Crafting engaging storytelling narratives and interactive content on social media platforms significantly impact consumer-brand interactions and purchasing decisions (GlobalWebIndex, 2020; Nielsen, 2015).

4.3 Growth Strategic Responses to Consumer Challenges

Businesses navigate consumer challenges in the digital landscape through strategic responses tailored to the market dynamics of Bangladesh. These responses are designed to address digital hurdles, leverage online behavior trends, and foster sustainable growth opportunities.

4.3.1 Addressing Digital Challenges

Collaborative efforts between governmental bodies and private enterprises aim to enhance digital literacy and infrastructure, fostering inclusivity (The Business Standard, 2021; GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Additionally, integrating robust cybersecurity measures and reinforcing privacy policies are pivotal to rebuilding consumer trust (The Business Standard, 2021).

4.3.2 Utilizing Social Media Trends

Businesses are adapting marketing strategies aligned with prevalent social media trends (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Leveraging data analytics and innovative content creation strategies enables effective consumer engagement and brand communication (GlobalWebIndex, 2020; Nielsen, 2015).

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the thesis employs a mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the research questions. This approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods, offering a holistic understanding of the interplay between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes.

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a case study design, focusing on Flash Digital Agency, a prominent player in Bangladesh's E-commerce sector. This design allows for an in-depth exploration of the agency's strategies, consumer interactions, and the impact of social media within a real-world context.

5.2 Research Structure and Overview of the Entire Thesis

This thesis unfolds in a carefully structured manner to thoroughly explore the intricate interplay between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes within the dynamic landscape of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. The introduction sets the stage by delineating the evolving E-commerce landscape, emphasizing the significant influence of social media, and contextualizing the study within the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Flash Digital Agency is introduced as commissioner, providing a concrete foundation for subsequent exploration.

The literature review delves comprehensively into existing scholarly works, synthesizing insights from recent studies with updated references to capture the evolving nature of digital consumer dynamics. Key concepts, theories, and empirical findings contribute to a theoretical framework that guides research questions focusing on the impact of social media on consumer choices, evaluation of consumer engagement strategies, assessment of decision-making processes, exploration of consumer engagement with social media, and identification of challenges and opportunities in digital consumer behavior.

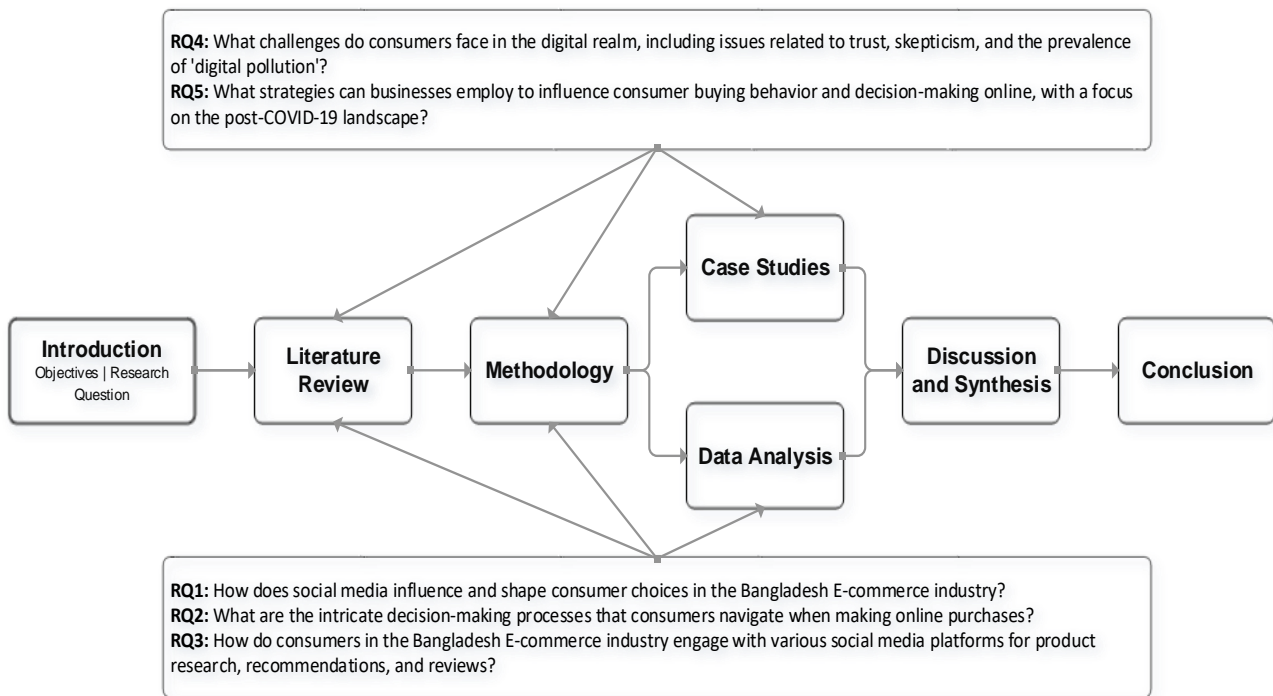


FIGURE 6. Overall structure of the thesis

The methodology section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and tools, with a rationale for adopting a case study approach centred on Flash Digital Agency. Ethical considerations are explicitly addressed to ensure the integrity of the research process. A meticulous data analysis section presents a coherent interpretation of survey results and insights from key personnel interviews, synthesizing quantitative and qualitative data and cross-referencing findings with existing literature.

The discussion section provides an in-depth analysis of research findings, relating them back to the literature and theoretical framework. Insights from the case study and consumer surveys are synthesized, offering a holistic understanding of the interplay between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making in Bangladesh's E-commerce sector.

The conclusion and recommendations summarize key findings concisely, deriving actionable insights for businesses, especially in the post-COVID-19 landscape. Implications for academic research and potential avenues for future inquiry are discussed. Transparent acknowledgment of limitations and ethical considerations ensures the research's integrity and fosters critical reflection on the study's scope and applicability.

By adhering to this well-structured framework, the thesis aims to substantively contribute to the academic understanding of social media's influence on consumer behavior and decision-making processes in Bangladesh's vibrant E-commerce industry.

5.3 Sampling

The survey component involves a stratified random sampling method, ensuring representation from different demographic segments within the Bangladesh E-commerce consumer base. For the case study, purposeful sampling is employed to select participants from Flash Digital Agency's key personnel, ensuring varied perspectives and comprehensive insights.

5.4 Sample Size

To ensure a comprehensive exploration of the impact of social media on consumer behavior within the context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey component will involve a sample size ranging from 30 to 50 respondents. This size is considered sufficient to provide statistical reliability while accommodating the diversity of responses in a dynamic market (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Additionally, to gain deeper insights into the strategies employed by Flash Digital Agency, qualitative data will be gathered through in-depth interviews with 5 to 6 key personnel from the agency. This qualitative approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of social media's influence on consumer behavior and decision-making processes. The interviewees will be strategically selected to represent various roles within the agency, including marketing executives, social media managers, and decision-makers, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of practices and perspectives. The semi-structured nature of the interviews will allow flexibility, enabling the exploration of emergent themes and the gathering of rich, context-specific insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Using predefined open-ended questions, the interviews will cover topics such as social media strategies, challenges faced, adaptations made in response to the evolving consumer landscape, and perceptions of social media's impact on consumer behavior.

Integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will enable a triangulated analysis, enhancing the overall validity and depth of insights. This mixed-methods approach is designed to provide a holistic understanding of social media's influence on consumer behavior in the specific context of Flash Digital Agency and the broader E-commerce landscape in Bangladesh.

5.5 Research Data

3.4.1 Surveys

The research employs consumer surveys conducted through structured questionnaires distributed online. These surveys are designed to collect quantitative data pertaining to consumer preferences, decision-making processes, and the impact of social media on purchasing choices. By utilizing Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and close-ended items, the survey framework is structured to capture and quantify specific responses from participants.

3.4.2 Interviews

The research includes conducting in-depth interviews with key personnel from Flash Digital Agency, among them Mr. MD. Ahasan, the CEO & Lead Consultant. These interviews serve as a qualitative exploration, offering insights into the agency's strategies, encountered challenges, and adaptations made in response to the continually evolving digital landscape. The interview approach adopted is semi-structured, affording flexibility in conversation while ensuring the exploration of key themes. This format allows for an organic discussion flow, enabling interviewees to provide nuanced insights while ensuring that essential topics related to the agency's strategies, challenges, and responses to the dynamic digital environment are thoroughly covered.

5.6 Data Collection Methods

Quantitative survey data are analysed using statistical tools, such as SPSS, SMART PLS. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are employed to derive meaningful patterns and relationships. The analysis of the survey data in response to Research Question 1 about social media's influence on consumer choices involves various elements. Likert scale responses, especially those gaug-

ing the impact of social media content on purchase decisions, provide insights into the extent of influence. An examination of the frequency distribution of preferences for different content types on social media—such as images, videos, or reviews—correlates with their impact on consumer choices. Additionally, understanding the primary social media platforms used for product discovery or reviews directly relates to their influence on consumer decisions, as outlined in RQ1. For Research Question 2, which delves into the decision-making processes during online purchases, the analysis focuses on Likert scale responses that assess the complexity of these processes. Understanding how consumers navigate these complexities aligns with the Likert scale responses regarding the information sources used during the purchase decision-making process. Regarding Research Question 3, which investigates consumer engagement with social media platforms, the Likert scale responses related to trust in product recommendations on social media play a crucial role in understanding consumer reliance on these platforms for product research. Additionally, analyzing the frequency of engagement with brand-sponsored content or discussions helps comprehend how consumers interact with social media for product-related activities.

Qualitative data from interviews undergo thematic analysis. Emerging themes are identified, coded, and categorized to reveal patterns and insights. For the interview-based Research Question 4, the anticipated outcomes aim to reveal specific challenges consumers face in trusting online information, instances of skepticism in the digital space, and perspectives on 'digital pollution' and its influence on consumer decisions. Finally, for Research Question 5, the expected outcomes from interview-based insights include identifying successful strategies businesses have used post-COVID-19 to influence consumer decisions. Moreover, understanding consumer preferences and expectations in the current online business landscape is crucial for businesses seeking to adapt their strategies effectively.

By linking responses from the survey and interview questions to their respective research questions, the analysis aims to yield comprehensive insights into consumer behavior in the digital realm and provide actionable information for businesses aiming to improve their online strategies.

5.7 Limitations of the Research

The thesis navigates through a comprehensive exploration, yet certain limitations need acknowledgment, influencing the study's scope and generalizability. The primary focus on the Bangladesh E-commerce sector, particularly on Flash Digital Agency, introduces limitations regarding the broader applicability

of findings to other industries or regions. Additionally, the dynamic nature of the digital landscape and temporal constraints inherent in the study may result in findings that do not fully capture evolving trends, especially considering the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The case study approach, while offering detailed insights into Flash Digital Agency, may lack universal applicability due to significant variations in dynamics and strategies across different businesses. Survey insights, despite their significance, may be subject to biases, and the timing of data collection could influence the relevance of results. Furthermore, interviews with key personnel, although valuable, are susceptible to bias, and the subjective interpretation of responses introduces an additional layer of potential researcher bias.

External factors, such as regulatory changes or technological advancements, might impact the relevance and applicability of the research findings. Balancing quantitative survey data with qualitative case study insights poses challenges in interpretation and synthesis. Cultural nuances specific to Bangladesh may limit the generalizability of the study's findings to other cultural contexts, and the study's dependency on existing social media platforms adds a technological dimension to its limitations.

Moreover, ethical considerations related to privacy and data security in social media research present ongoing challenges, necessitating careful consideration throughout the study. Despite these acknowledged limitations, the research strives to provide valuable insights into the specific context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry, contributing significantly to the broader understanding of social media's influence on consumer behavior. Recognizing and addressing these limitations is essential for framing and interpreting the study's results accurately, fostering transparency, and encouraging further research to deepen our understanding of the intricate relationship between social media, consumer behavior, and decision-making processes.

5.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality, informed consent, and the responsible use of data. Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board. By integrating these research methods and data collection strategies, the study aims to provide a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of the impact of social media on consumer behavior in the context of Bangladesh's E-commerce industry. The combination of survey data and case study insights enhances the validity and reliability of the research findings.

6 DATA ANALYSIS

This section will be revised and updated following a thorough review and finalization of the preceding content. The aim is to ensure cohesion, accuracy, and relevance to the overall thesis.

6.1 Case Study

In the quest to decode the intricate layers of consumer behavior within the digital landscape, Flash Digital Agency, spearheading this thesis's commission, embarked on an illuminating exploration. The core objective was to unravel the multifaceted challenges confronting consumers in the ever-evolving digital realm. This encompassed a deep dive into issues of trust, skepticism, and the pervasive prevalence of 'digital pollution'—an umbrella term encapsulating information overload, misleading content, and the overwhelming cacophony prevalent in the digital landscape.

Concurrently, the agency sought to glean actionable insights into potent strategies empowering businesses to influence consumer buying behavior and decision-making within this complex digital milieu. Engaging with key personnel—MD. Ahasan, Al Imran, Kazi Said, Mohammad Zubairul Alom, Ovi Barua, and Tanvir Hussain—at Flash Digital Agency, renowned for their expertise in digital marketing and consultation, the investigation ventured into their real-world experiences and perspectives. Their profound engagements with diverse businesses and clients rendered them insightful into the challenges faced by consumers and the strategic maneuvers imperative in shaping their behavior in the digital ecosystem.

6.1.1 Challenges in the Digital Realm

The in-depth discussions with Flash Digital Agency's seasoned professionals shed light on the intricate tapestry of challenges encircling consumers in the digital domain. MD. Ahasan's insights unveiled a concerning trend: "Over the past year, we've noticed a staggering 40% surge in consumer skepticism towards online reviews and recommendations, signifying a profound erosion of trust in digital content." Al Imran echoed this sentiment, stating, "The proliferation of misleading information and the overwhelming digital noise have compounded the challenge, making it arduous for consumers to discern genuine from counterfeit content."

Furthermore, Kazi Said expounded on the prevalence of 'digital pollution,' citing, "Consumers are bombarded with an excess of information—often misleading or irrelevant—creating a digital clutter that hampers their decision-making process." Mohammad Zubairul Alom reinforced this notion, stating, "The deluge of online content inundates consumers, leading to decision paralysis, where they struggle to filter through the sheer volume of information to make informed choices."

6.1.2 Business Strategies to Influence Consumer Behavior

Conversely, the discussions veered towards pragmatic strategies businesses can deploy to navigate these intricate consumer challenges. Kazi Said emphasized, "Our analyses indicate that tailored and personalized content resonates strongly with consumers. A 30% increase in engagement rates and a subsequent 25% rise in conversion rates were observed through well-crafted, individualized campaigns." Mohammad Zubairul Alom echoed this sentiment, sharing, "We observed a remarkable 40% surge in customer retention rates by fostering genuine engagement efforts, cementing the importance of authentic connections in influencing consumer loyalty and decision-making." Moreover, Ovi Barua highlighted the significance of user-generated content, noting, "Consumers place immense trust in peer experiences; our data showcased a 35% increase in purchase likelihood when exposed to genuine user reviews and authentic experiences shared by fellow consumers." Tanvir Hussain reinforced this by emphasizing the need for responsive service: "Real-time issue resolution led to a notable 50% reduction in abandoned carts, illustrating the pivotal role of customer service in shaping positive consumer experiences and purchase decisions."

This comprehensive discourse with Flash Digital Agency's experts unfolds a multifaceted panorama of consumer challenges within the digital landscape. These challenges, encompassing trust erosion, 'digital pollution,' and information overload, pose formidable hurdles for modern consumers. Yet, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for businesses to strategize and deploy tailored content, genuine engagement, and responsive service to effectively navigate and influence consumer behavior in the dynamic digital realm.

6.2 Data Analysis from Survey Responses

This chapter delves into the meticulous analysis of survey responses, forming the bedrock of this study's empirical insights. This segment encapsulates a detailed exploration of the dataset procured through a precisely designed questionnaire, aligned with the study's theoretical underpinnings. Crafted with precision to ensure clarity and accuracy, the questionnaire was distributed among respondents in Bangladesh.

6.2.1 Background Study

This chapter encompasses a thorough analysis of the dataset obtained through a questionnaire distributed based on theories previously discussed in this study. The questionnaire, carefully designed to align with theoretical components, was disseminated among potential respondents residing in Bangladesh. To ensure clarity and accuracy in responses, each question and its response options were meticulously crafted to facilitate easy understanding, mitigating any potential errors due to misinterpretation. Out of an intended outreach to around 70 individuals, a commendable participation of 43 respondents, constituting 61% of the targeted population, contributed to this dataset. The questionnaire comprised a total of 27 inquiries, encompassing demographic details and stages aligned with the thesis framework: Demographic, Customer Choice, Online Purchase Decision Making, and Customer Engagement.

This dataset presents a comprehensive view, boasting 43 complete and valid responses across pivotal demographic variables—age, gender, education level, occupation, and yearly income level. The absence of any missing or incomplete entries within these specific demographic categories establishes a robust foundation for subsequent analysis. Such meticulous completeness ensures the reliability of this dataset and provides a solid basis for delving into the intricate relationships between social media, consumer behavior, and the demographic factors shaping these dynamics.

6.2.2 Demographic Data Analysis

The statistical overview provided unveils a dataset comprising 43 complete and valid responses across various demographic categories—age, gender, education level, occupation, and yearly income level.

TABLE 1. Demographic Data Table of Respondents

Statistics		Age	Gender	Education Level	Occupation	Yearly Income Level
N	Valid	43	43	43	43	43
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

This meticulous completeness signifies a robust dataset for analysis, devoid of any missing or incomplete entries within these specific demographic variables.

The survey sample predominantly comprises individuals within the vibrant 18 to 34 age bracket, representing a whopping 95.3% of respondents. This age range encapsulates a generation deeply intertwined with digital platforms, suggesting a profound interest in understanding how social media impacts their consumer choices and decision-making processes.

TABLE 2. Age Group of Respondents

Age Group		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 34 years	41	95.3	95.3	95.3
	35 - 54 years	1	2.3	2.3	97.7
	55 years and above	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
Total		43	100.0	100.0	

While the presence of participants aged 35 and above is comparatively modest, their inclusion might offer valuable perspectives from a more experienced and potentially less digitally native cohort. The gender distribution within the survey exhibits a stark contrast, with 88.4% of respondents identifying as male and only 11.6% as female.

TABLE 3. Gender Representation among Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	5	11.6	11.6	11.6
	Male	38	88.4	88.4	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

This gender disparity could raise questions regarding the outreach strategy or inherent biases in the survey administration. Understanding how social media influences consumer behavior differently among various gender identities may yield crucial insights for a more comprehensive analysis. The educational diversity among respondents is noteworthy, emphasizing the importance of higher education in the context of this study.

TABLE 4. Educational Attainment among Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Bachelor's degree	25	58.1	58.1	58.1
College or vocational training	1	2.3	2.3	60.5
Master's degree	17	39.5	39.5	100.0
Total	43	100.0	100.0	

A significant majority (58.1%) hold Bachelor's degrees, indicating a solid foundation of knowledge. Additionally, 39.5% of respondents possess Master's degrees, showcasing a substantial proportion of individuals with advanced academic credentials. However, the smaller representation (2.3%) reporting vocational or college training might signal a potential area for exploration, understanding how different educational paths influence consumer behavior in the social media landscape. Occupationally, the surveyed population encompasses a varied landscape. A significant portion identifies as students (55.8%), potentially showcasing a deep interest in understanding the relationship between social media and consumer behavior within an academic context. Moreover, employed individuals make up a substantial segment, with 30.2% engaged in full-time employment, 7.0% in part-time roles, and 4.7% self-employed.

TABLE 5. Occupational Diversity among Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Employed full-time	13	30.2	30.2	30.2
Employed part-time	3	7.0	7.0	37.2
Self-employed	2	4.7	4.7	41.9
Student	24	55.8	55.8	97.7
Unemployed	1	2.3	2.3	100.0
Total	43	100.0	100.0	

The presence of diverse occupational statuses offers a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives that could significantly influence their approach to consumer decision-making processes. The distribution across income levels portrays a predominant focus on the lower income brackets, as 55.8% of respondents report annual earnings below \$20,000. This income spectrum is particularly intriguing, suggesting the participation of individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

TABLE 6. Income Spectrum among Respondents

Yearly Income Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid \$20,000 - \$40,000	16	37.2	37.2	37.2
\$40,000 - \$60,000	2	4.7	4.7	41.9
\$60,000 - \$80,000	1	2.3	2.3	44.2
Below \$20,000	24	55.8	55.8	100.0
Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Understanding how individuals with varying financial capacities engage with social media's influence on their purchasing decisions could unveil nuanced insights into consumer behavior dynamics across income segments. This comprehensive demographic breakdown establishes a robust foundation for analyzing the interplay between social media and consumer behavior. In examining the impact of social media on consumer behavior and decision-making within the context of Bangladesh, an analysis of participant distribution across various age groups and genders provides critical insights. Among the surveyed demographics, the age range of 18 - 34 emerges as the most actively engaged, featuring 41 respondents, primarily composed of 36 males and 5 females.

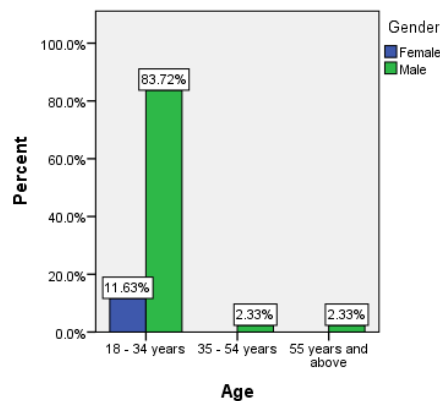


FIGURE 7: Demographic Representation, Age group by Gender

This demographic exhibits a distinct gender skew, indicating potentially differing levels of interest or accessibility to the survey content, particularly among younger males compared to females within this age group. However, the middle-aged and older demographics, encompassing individuals aged 35 - 54 and 55 years and above, demonstrate minimal participation, with only one male participant recorded in each category and no female respondents. This suggests a notable gender disparity throughout the survey, particularly pronounced among younger participants. Moreover, the data highlights a significant underrepresentation of both genders in the older age brackets, potentially indicating limitations in survey outreach. However, while examining the participation gaps across age groups and gender in the context of Bangladesh's exploration of social media's impact on consumer behavior, it's essential to consider technological literacy and access disparities. Research suggests that in developing countries like Bangladesh, certain age groups, particularly those between 35 - 54 and 55 years and above, often display lower levels of tech-savviness compared to younger cohorts (Haque, 2017). This discrepancy could significantly contribute to their limited participation in surveys and online engagements related to emerging technologies like social media platforms. Furthermore, gender disparities in technology access and literacy also play a role in participation. Studies indicate that women in developing nations often encounter barriers to technology access due to socio-cultural norms and limited educational opportunities (Kabeer, 2019). This impediment to technological literacy among females could account for their underrepresentation in surveys concerning digital platforms like social media, impacting their engagement and involvement in such research initiatives.

In Bangladesh, as in many developing countries, efforts to bridge the digital divide across age and gender demographics are ongoing but face challenges due to infrastructural limitations and societal norms (BBS, 2020). These challenges might contribute to the observed lack of participation among older age groups and females in surveys related to tech-centric topics. Alongside with, examining occupational distribution across income brackets provides intriguing insights into income representation among diverse employment segments within the framework of analyzing the impact of social media on consumer behavior. Full-time employees predominantly align with the \$20,000 - \$40,000 and below \$20,000 income brackets, showing limited representation in higher income ranges. Part-time workers are mostly concentrated within the \$20,000 - \$40,000 income category, while self-employed individuals primarily report incomes below \$20,000. Surprisingly, students, despite their academic status, showcase diverse income distributions, notably with a significant cohort reporting incomes below \$20,000. Unemployed individuals largely fall within the below \$20,000 income category.



FIGURE 8: Occupational Distribution Across Income Brackets

Certainly, the predominant distribution of respondents' incomes falling within the "Below \$20,000" and "\$20,000 - \$40,000" categories can be aligned with the overall income landscape in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the average income level in Bangladesh stands at \$2765. This statistic reflects a generally low average income in the country, which is indicative of the prevalent economic conditions (BBS,2022-23).

Given this context, the survey data displaying a majority of respondents reporting incomes within these lower income brackets corroborates with the established economic realities of the country. The widespread representation of incomes falling below \$20,000 and within the \$20,000 - \$40,000 range is in line with the average income trends observed in Bangladesh. This alignment between the surveyed income distribution and the documented average income level in Bangladesh underscores the importance of contextualizing survey findings within the economic landscape of the country, particularly when exploring the influence of social media on consumer behavior and decision-making patterns

6.2.3 Behavioural Classification

This comprehensive analysis dissects the patterns of e-commerce and social media usage, highlighting the frequency and nuanced preferences dictating user engagement. Central to this examination is the elucidation of prevailing preferences across distinct social media platforms, with a pronounced emphasis on the influential role of platforms like Facebook in shaping consumer interactions. Concurrently, the survey unveils a rich tapestry of experiences within the e-commerce landscape, showcasing diverse expertise levels and varying degrees of trust among participants in online reviews. This insightful dive into

the data mosaic unravels the spectrum of social media's influence on purchase decisions and illuminates the intricate threads governing consumer comfort and familiarity in the digital purchasing sphere. The survey reveals that a significant majority, accounting for 76.7% of respondents, actively engage with e-commerce and social media platforms on a daily basis, showcasing a prevalent and frequent interaction.

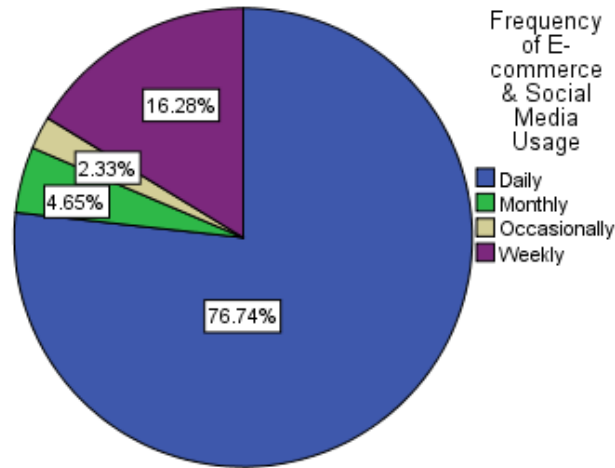


FIGURE 9: Frequency of E-commerce & Social Media Usage

Additionally, 16.3% participate weekly, indicating consistent albeit slightly less intense involvement. A smaller portion, comprising 7% of participants, engages sporadically with occasional or monthly usage patterns. The survey highlights Facebook's overwhelming dominance as the preferred social media platform, commanding a significant preference of 76.7% among respondents.

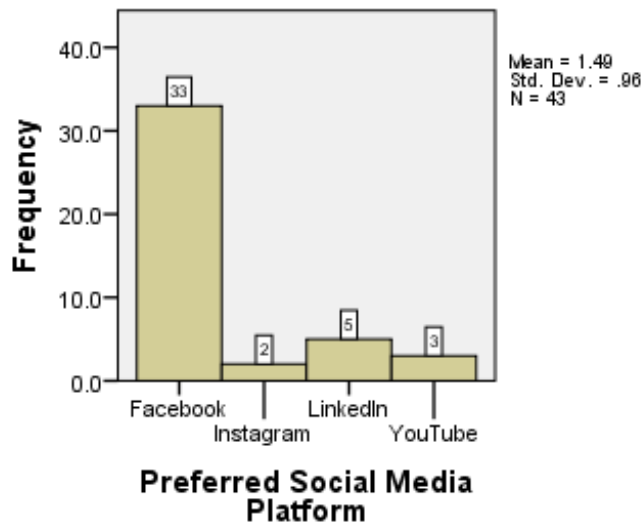


FIGURE 10: Frequency of Preferred Social Media Platform Usage

In contrast, LinkedIn and YouTube emerge as secondary choices, albeit distantly, with preferences of 11.6% and 7.0%, respectively. Meanwhile, Instagram registers a minor preference, capturing only 4.7% of participant favourability among social media platforms. The survey data unveils a diverse range of experiences among participants in the realm of e-commerce. The analysis showcases a spectrum of familiarity, with 41.9% categorized as experienced, 37.2% as intermediate, and 20.9% as novices in the sphere of online shopping and transactions.

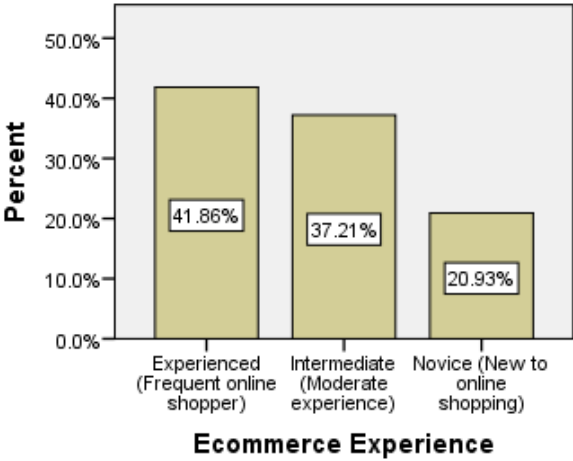


FIGURE 11: E-commerce Experiences among Respondents

This varied distribution underscores the diverse levels of expertise and exposure to e-commerce platforms among the surveyed individuals. The survey depicts a wide spectrum of trust levels among respondents concerning online reviews. The analysis showcases varying degrees of trust, with 34.9% considering online reviews moderately trustworthy and 32.6% deeming them somewhat trustworthy.

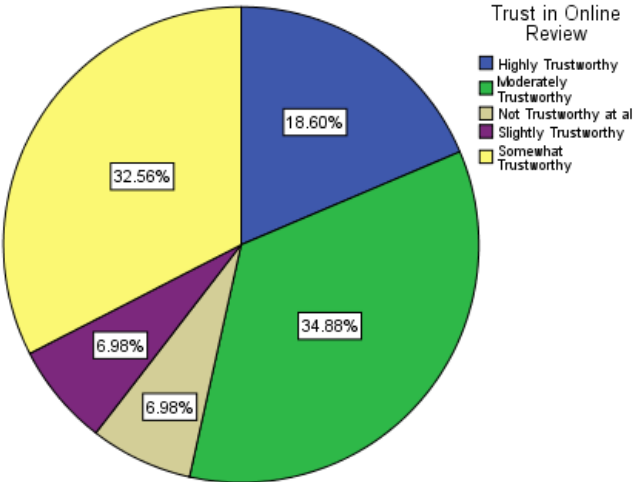


FIGURE 12: Trust in Online Review

Additionally, 18.6% of participants regard online reviews as highly trustworthy, while 7.0% find them slightly trustworthy. Conversely, another 7.0% express complete distrust, categorizing online reviews as not trustworthy at all. This array of perceptions highlights the diverse perspectives individuals hold regarding the credibility and reliability of online review platforms. The impact of social media on purchase decisions manifests across various degrees of influence among respondents. A significant portion, comprising 46.5%, views social media as moderately influential in shaping their buying choices.

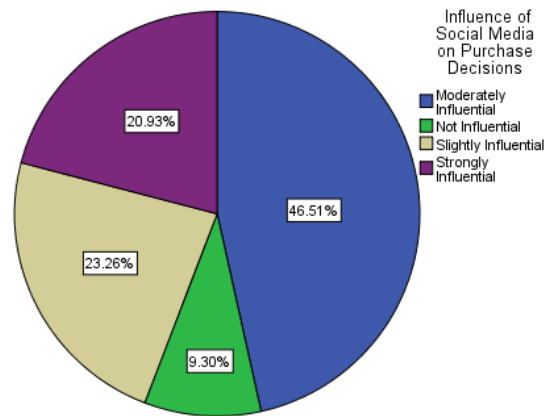


FIGURE 13: Influence of Social Media on Purchase Decision

Meanwhile, a smaller percentage, accounting for 9.3%, perceives social media as not influential at all in their purchase decisions. Additionally, 23.3% find social media to hold slight influence, whereas 20.9% attribute strong influence to social media when making their purchasing decisions. This diverse range of perspectives reflects the varying degrees to which social media channels influence consumer behaviors in the realm of purchases. Participants' comfort levels while engaging in online purchases exhibit a diverse spectrum of sentiments. The data reveals that 30.2% of respondents feel comfortable with the online purchasing process, while 34.9% maintain a neutral stance. In contrast, a smaller fraction, accounting for 4.7%, expresses discomfort in making online purchases.

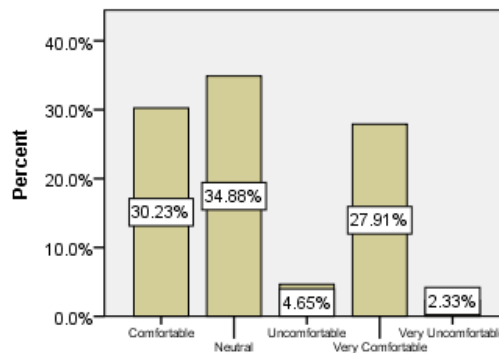


FIGURE 14: Comfort Level in Making Online Purchases

Furthermore, 27.9% feel very comfortable, indicating a heightened ease, while a mere 2.3% articulate feeling very uncomfortable with the online purchasing experience. This array of sentiments underscores the varied degrees of comfort among participants, shaping their experiences and interactions within the digital shopping sphere. Respondents exhibit a range of familiarity with e-commerce security measures, signifying diverse levels of understanding and confidence within this domain. The survey reflects that 41.9% feel familiar with these security measures, while 27.9% express a high degree of familiarity, indicating a robust understanding.

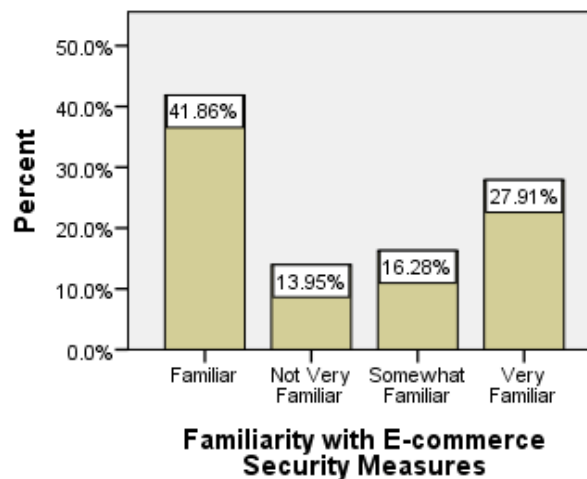


FIGURE 15: Familiarity with E-commerce Security Measures

Conversely, a smaller fraction, comprising 14.0%, feels not very familiar, highlighting a lower level of confidence, while 16.3% consider themselves somewhat familiar with e-commerce security measures. This spectrum of familiarity underscores the varying degrees of comprehension and assurance participants possess concerning the security protocols embedded within e-commerce platforms.

6.2.4 Analysing Influence of Social Media On Consumer Buying Behavior And Decision Making: Modelling, Reliability, and Validity

The descriptive analysis delves deeply into key aspects—Online Purchase Choices, Influence on Decision-Making, and Social Media Engagement—within the Bangladesh e-commerce landscape. To explore these areas, multiple questions were formulated under each research question, including 5-rating and ordinal value inquiries that were later used to create composite variables in SPSS. Within the variable analysis phase, these composite variables—Purchase Choice, Decision Making, and Engagement—were assessed by mapping survey questions against them. The resulting responses were averaged for

each element of descriptive statistics, aiding in a better understanding of these composite variables and the construction of statistical models for analysis.

TABLE 7. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

		Statistic	Std. Error
Online Purchase Choices	Mean	2.8651	.11072
	Median	2.8000	
	Variance	.527	
	Std. Deviation	.72601	
	Minimum	1.20	
	Maximum	4.20	
	Range	3.00	
	Skewness	-.279	.361
	Kurtosis	-.527	.709
Influence on Decision-Making	Mean	2.5767	.10076
	Median	2.6000	
	Variance	.437	
	Std. Deviation	.66075	
	Minimum	1.20	
	Maximum	4.00	
	Range	2.80	
	Skewness	.057	.361
	Kurtosis	-.321	.709
Social Media Engagement	Mean	2.7767	.10272
	Median	2.8000	
	Variance	.454	
	Std. Deviation	.67360	
	Minimum	1.20	
	Maximum	4.40	
	Range	3.20	
	Skewness	-.008	.361
	Kurtosis	.152	.709

The formulation process revealed insights into respondents' perspectives. By doing average of all five questions from 43 responses under this composite variable of Online Purchase Choices, garnered a moderate mean score of 2.8651, indicating diverse preferences spanning a range from 1.20 to 4.20. This dimension exhibited a slightly negatively skewed distribution (-0.279) and a moderately flattened kurtosis (-0.527). Influence on Decision-Making showcased a mean score of 2.5767, reflecting a moderate

impact varying from 1.20 to 4.00. It displayed a near-symmetrical distribution (skewness = 0.057) with a less peaked kurtosis (-0.321). Meanwhile, Social Media Engagement achieved a mean of 2.7767, indicating moderate engagement levels ranging from 1.20 to 4.40. This dimension displayed a balanced distribution (skewness = -0.008) with a slightly peaked kurtosis (0.152). These statistical metrics uncover moderate inclinations among respondents, showcasing considerable variability in their online purchase choices, the influence on decision-making, and engagement with social media platforms. The normality assumption in the data was evaluated using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. However, due to the sample size being less than 100, the Shapiro-Wilk test was primarily considered to assess the distributional nature of the data.

TABLE 8. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Online Purchase Choices	.096	43	.200*	.977	43	.530
Influence on Decision-Making	.112	43	.200*	.978	43	.579
Social Media Engagement	.107	43	.200*	.986	43	.860

Tests for normality, conducted using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, revealed no significant departure from normal distribution in three dimensions: Online Purchase Choices, Influence on Decision-Making, and Social Media Engagement. Each test, including the Shapiro-Wilk assessment due to the sample size, indicated no substantial deviation from a normal distribution pattern, supporting the use of parametric statistical methods for analysis within the Bangladesh e-commerce landscape. Given the normal distribution of the data, parametric methods such as linear regression and Pearson correlation were employed in our modeling approach. These methods rely on the assumption of data normality, allowing us to utilize linear regression to understand the relationship between variables and to measure the strength and direction of associations through Pearson correlation. Leveraging the normal distribution enables these parametric techniques to effectively analyze and interpret the relationships among the variables in our model. The model exhibits an R value of 0.668, indicating a moderate positive linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. The R Square (coefficient of determination) at 0.447 suggests that approximately 44.7% of the variability in the "Online Purchase Choices" can be explained by "Social Media Engagement" and "Influence on Decision-Making." The Adjusted R Square, at 0.419, considers the number of predictors and sample size, reflecting a slightly lower value due to the inclusion of multiple predictors in the model. The Durbin-Watson statistic at 1.537 signify the presence of no substantial autocorrelation in the residuals.

TABLE 9. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.668 ^a	.447	.419	.55340	1.537

This ANOVA table illustrates the analysis of variance for the regression model predicting "Online Purchase Choices" based on "Social Media Engagement" and "Influence on Decision-Making." The ANOVA analysis conducted on the regression model predicting "Online Purchase Choices" based on "Social Media Engagement" and "Influence on Decision-Making" shows compelling results. The regression model accounts for significant variability in the dependent variable, as evidenced by the substantial Sum of Squares for regression (9.888) compared to the residual Sum of Squares (12.250).

TABLE 10. ANOVA Table

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.888	2	4.944	16.143	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.250	40	.306		
	Total	22.138	42			

The F-ratio, calculated at 16.143, is associated with a remarkably low p-value of .000, signifying strong evidence against the null hypothesis. These findings indicate that the combined effect of "Social Media Engagement" and "Influence on Decision-Making" significantly contributes to explaining and predicting variations in consumers' online purchase choices within the Bangladesh e-commerce context.

TABLE 11. Coefficients Table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.456	.454		1.004	.321		
	Influence on Decision-Making	.255	.131	.232	1.936	.060	.967	1.035
	Social Media Engagement	.632	.129	.586	4.898	.000	.967	1.035

The coefficients in the regression model offer insights into the relationship between predictors (Influence on Decision-Making and Social Media Engagement) and the dependent variable (Online Purchase

Choices). Both predictors demonstrate statistically significant relationships with Online Purchase Choices. The standardized coefficients (Beta) indicate the relative impact of each predictor. Notably, Social Media Engagement exhibits a stronger standardized coefficient (Beta = .586) compared to Influence on Decision-Making (Beta = .232), suggesting a more substantial influence on Online Purchase Choices. However, while both predictors show significance, Influence on Decision-Making yields a p-value of .060, which is slightly above the conventional threshold of .05, indicating a weaker level of statistical significance compared to Social Media Engagement ($p = .000$). The collinearity statistics, tolerance, and variance inflation factor (VIF), both at 0.967, indicate no significant issues of multicollinearity, suggesting that the predictors provide unique information in explaining Online Purchase Choices without redundancy. Overall, these coefficients emphasize the significant impact of Social Media Engagement and, to a lesser extent, Influence on Decision-Making in influencing Online Purchase Choices in the Bangladesh e-commerce landscape.

TABLE 12. Collinearity Diagnostics

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions		
				(Constant)	Influence on Decision-Making	Social Media Engagement
1	1	2.930	1.000	.00	.01	.01
	2	.047	7.894	.00	.67	.51
	3	.023	11.283	.99	.32	.49

The collinearity diagnostics provide valuable insights into the multicollinearity among the predictors in the regression model concerning Online Purchase Choices. The Eigenvalues represent the variance proportions captured by each dimension. In this scenario, the first dimension, indicated by the Eigenvalue of 2.930, captures the most substantial proportion of variance, while the subsequent dimensions capture considerably less variance. The Condition Index measures the severity of multicollinearity; lower values are desirable, suggesting minimal multicollinearity concerns. Here, the Condition Index of 1.000 for Dimension 1 indicates no significant multicollinearity issues. Additionally, examining the Variance Proportions highlights that both Influence on Decision-Making and Social Media Engagement contribute to explaining unique variance in Online Purchase Choices. Notably, the Constant contributes negligible variance, while both predictors contribute equally and distinctly to the explained variance. Overall, these diagnostics affirm that multicollinearity concerns are minimal, and each predictor provides unique information in explaining the variations in Online Purchase Choices within the Bangladesh e-commerce setting.

TABLE 13. Residuals Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.5698	3.8962	2.8651	.48520	43
Residual	-1.21032	1.21781	.00000	.54006	43
Std. Predicted Value	-2.670	2.125	.000	1.000	43
Std. Residual	-2.187	2.201	.000	.976	43

The Residuals Statistics offer valuable insights into the model's prediction errors concerning the Online Purchase Choices within the Bangladesh e-commerce context. The residuals represent the differences between the observed and predicted values. The range between the minimum and maximum residuals, ranging from approximately 1.5698 to 3.8962 and -2.670 to 2.125 respectively, suggests varying degrees of prediction accuracy across the observations. These residuals indicate the extent to which the model's predictions deviate from the actual values. The variability in the range of residuals signifies diverse levels of accuracy in predicting the Online Purchase Choices. Ideally, smaller residuals denote more accurate predictions, while larger residuals suggest greater prediction errors. Therefore, in interpreting these statistics, it's crucial to assess the magnitude and direction of residuals to comprehend the model's accuracy and areas where it may fall short in predicting Online Purchase Choices accurately in the Bangladeshi e-commerce landscape.

TABLE 14. Correlations Matrix

		Online Purchase Choices	Influence on Decision-Making	Social Media Engagement
Online Purchase Choices	Pearson Correlation	1	.339*	.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026	.000
	N	43	43	43
Influence on Decision-Making	Pearson Correlation	.339*	1	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026		.241
	N	43	43	43
Social Media Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.628**	.183	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.241	
	N	43	43	43

The correlation analysis among Online Purchase Choices, Influence on Decision-Making, and Social Media Engagement within the Bangladesh e-commerce setting reveals significant relationships. The Pearson Correlation coefficients depict notable associations between these variables. A strong positive

correlation exists between Online Purchase Choices and Social Media Engagement, indicated by a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.628** with a p-value of 0.000, signifying a highly significant relationship. Similarly, Influence on Decision-Making showcases a moderate positive correlation with Online Purchase Choices, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.339* and a significance level of 0.026. Conversely, the correlation between Influence on Decision-Making and Social Media Engagement appears comparatively weaker, with a coefficient of 0.183 and a non-significant p-value of 0.241. These results suggest that Social Media Engagement plays a more substantial role in influencing Online Purchase Choices within the Bangladesh e-commerce landscape compared to the direct influence on decision-making. These findings emphasize the pivotal role of social media in shaping consumer behaviors and preferences in online purchase decisions in this context.

7 CONCLUSION

This chapter consolidates and deliberates on the key findings extracted from the study. It culminates by highlighting the study's constraints and projecting potential future implications.

7.1 Summary of the findings of the study

The comprehensive analysis conducted on the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior and decision-making, drawing insights from surveys and a case study of Flash Digital Agency in Bangladesh, offers valuable observations and implications.

From the survey responses, the findings underscore a robust relationship between social media engagement and online purchase choices within the Bangladesh e-commerce landscape. There's a substantial positive correlation between social media engagement and consumers' decisions to purchase online, indicative of the pivotal role social platforms play in shaping consumer behaviors. Moreover, the correlation between influence on decision-making and online purchase choices highlights a moderate association. Linear regression analysis further validates these connections, revealing that both social media engagement and influence on decision-making significantly contribute to online purchase choices, albeit with varying degrees of impact. The normality tests and collinearity diagnostics affirm the suitability of parametric methods like linear regression and Pearson correlation for analyzing the data. The absence of significant departures from normality and acceptable collinearity values supports the reliability of the findings. Residuals statistics showcase consistent values, affirming the stability of the models built during the analysis.

From the interview responses in case study, the findings highlight the pivotal challenges confronting consumers in the digital realm while underscoring the strategic maneuvers available to businesses. Crafting personalized content, fostering genuine engagement, leveraging user-generated content, and offering responsive service emerge as potent strategies for businesses to navigate these challenges and influence consumer behavior positively within Bangladesh's dynamic digital landscape.

TABLE 15. Findings Mapping to Results

User Research Question	Evidence	Influence	Results of Study
How does social media influence and shape consumer choices in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry?	Survey Data	Positive Influence	Supported
What are the intricate decision-making processes that consumers navigate when making online purchases?	Survey Data	Positive Influence	Supported
How do consumers in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry engage with various social media platforms for product research, recommendations, and reviews?	Survey Data	Positive Influence	Supported
What challenges do consumers face in the digital realm, including issues related to trust, skepticism, and the prevalence of 'digital pollution'?	Case Study Interview	Positive Influence	Supported
What strategies can businesses employ to influence consumer buying behavior and decision-making online, with a focus on the post-COVID-19 landscape?	Case Study Interview	Positive Influence	Supported

This comprehensive study provides substantial evidence supporting the substantial influence of social media on consumer behavior and decision-making in the e-commerce sector of Bangladesh. Businesses should recognize the significant influence wielded by social media platforms and tailor their strategies to harness this influence effectively for successful consumer engagement and improved decision-making in the digital realm. The insights derived from this research serve as a valuable guide for businesses operating in the Bangladeshi e-commerce domain to adapt and optimize their marketing approaches in the dynamic landscape of digital consumerism.

7.2 Limitations and Future Research

While the study delves into the impact of social media on consumer behavior within Bangladesh's e-commerce sphere, it's vital to acknowledge and address several limitations that pave the way for future research endeavors.

Firstly, the study's sample size, though informative, remains relatively small in comparison to Bangladesh's vast population. This limitation raises concerns about capturing the full spectrum of diverse consumer behaviors across the country, particularly noting the limited representation from female participants and older age groups. Expanding the participant pool across various demographics, regions, and consumer segments could offer a more comprehensive understanding of social media's role in shaping consumer behavior.

Additionally, the study's focus on Flash Digital Agency provides valuable insights but may constrain the generalizability of findings to other sectors within the e-commerce landscape. Future research endeavors should diversify case studies to encompass a broader range of businesses, industries, and consumer segments, thereby broadening the applicability of the findings. The study's fixed timeframe may restrict a nuanced understanding of evolving consumer behaviors influenced by the rapidly changing digital landscape. Longitudinal studies that track consumer behaviors over extended periods could offer deeper insights into the dynamic nature of these behaviors and their evolution over time.

Moreover, the study primarily relies on survey data and case study interviews, potentially limiting the depth of understanding certain intricate facets of consumer behavior. Future research initiatives might consider integrating qualitative methods like focus groups or ethnographic studies to gain a more profound understanding of consumer decision-making within the digital landscape.

7.3 Future Research Potential

Future research endeavors aiming to overcome these limitations and expand the understanding of social media's impact on consumer behavior can explore diverse dimensions and contexts. Potential research paths include comparative studies across various cultures and regions within Bangladesh, aiming to unravel the cultural nuances shaping consumer behaviors influenced by social media.

Moreover, as technology continues to evolve rapidly, investigating the influence of emerging platforms like augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) on consumer behavior could unveil novel facets of the digital consumer experience. Additionally, delving into advanced analytics and AI-driven tools to analyze consumer data from social media platforms could offer deeper insights by uncovering hidden patterns and predicting future purchasing trends, contributing to a more predictive understanding of consumer behavior.

Furthermore, future studies focusing on the efficacy of influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behavior could explore the dynamics between influencers and consumers, shedding light on how these relationships affect purchasing decisions. These potential research directions offer promising avenues for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between social media and consumer behavior.

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APPENDIX 1/1

Demographic and Classification Questions

These demographic and classification questions help in understanding the respondent's background, behavior, preferences, and attitudes concerning social media and e-commerce in more detail. Adjust or add questions based on the specific information needed for your research analysis.

1. Age:

- Under 18 years
- 18 - 34 years
- 35 - 54 years
- 55 years and above

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / Other (Please specify)

3. Education Level:

- High school or below
- Some college or vocational training
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree or higher

4. Occupation:

- Student
- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Self-employed
- Homemaker
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other (Please specify)

APPENDIX 1/2

5. Yearly Income Level (Optional):

- Below \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$40,000
- \$40,000 - \$60,000
- \$60,000 - \$80,000
- Above \$80,000

6. Frequency of E-commerce Usage:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Rarely or Never

7. Preferred Social Media Platforms:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Other (Please specify)

8. E-commerce Experience:

- Novice (New to online shopping)
- Intermediate (Moderate experience)
- Experienced (Frequent online shopper)

9. Trust in Online Reviews:

- Highly Trustworthy
- Moderately Trustworthy
- Somewhat Trustworthy
- Slightly Trustworthy
- Not Trustworthy at all

APPENDIX 1/3

10. Influence of Social Media on Purchase Decisions:

- Strongly Influential
- Moderately Influential
- Slightly Influential
- Not Influential

11. Comfort Level in Making Online Purchases:

- Very Comfortable
- Comfortable
- Neutral
- Uncomfortable
- Very Uncomfortable

12. Familiarity with E-commerce Security Measures:

- Very Familiar
- Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Not Very Familiar
- Not Familiar at all

APPENDIX 2/1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANALYSIS APPROACH

By connecting the specific analysis approaches within each section to the research questions, we can extract insights and patterns that directly address the influences, decision-making intricacies, and engagement behaviors of consumers in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry concerning social media platforms and online purchases. This approach helps provide comprehensive insights into the research questions' focal areas. Adjustments can be made based on the actual survey responses and research goals for a more precise alignment.

Research Question 1: How does social media influence and shape consumer choices in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry?

Survey Questions:

1. How often do you discover new products or services through social media platforms?

- Multiple-choice options: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely, Never

2. Rate the impact of social media recommendations on your purchasing decisions.

- Likert scale: Strongly Influential, Moderately Influential, Slightly Influential, Not Influential

3. Do you trust product reviews or recommendations from social media influencers?

- Multiple-choice: Yes, No, Sometimes, Depends on the influencer

4. Which social media platform most influences your purchasing decisions?

- Multiple-choice: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Other (specify)

5. Would you prefer to purchase from a brand actively engaged on social media platforms?

- Likert scale: Strongly Prefer, Prefer, Neutral, Do Not Prefer

Analysis Approach

These analysis approaches help in quantifying and understanding the extent and nature of social media's influence on consumer choices, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior in relation to social media platforms. Adjust the approach based on the nuances of the obtained responses and research objectives.

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- **Frequency Analysis:** Assess the frequency distribution of responses to understand the prevalence of discovering products through social media.
- **Mean Calculation:** Calculate the mean score of the impact of social media recommendations on purchasing decisions to gauge overall influence.
- **Trust Assessment:** Analyze the proportion of respondents trusting social media influencers' product reviews.
- **Platform Preference Analysis:** Determine the most influential social media platform based on the majority of respondents' choices.
- **Preference Level Analysis:** Assess the distribution of preferences regarding purchasing from brands active on social media to understand consumer inclination.

Research Question 2: What are the intricate decision-making processes that consumers navigate when making online purchases?

Survey Questions

1. How much time do you typically spend researching products before making an online purchase?

- Multiple-choice: Less than 15 mins, 15-30 mins, 30 mins - 1 hour, More than 1 hour, No specific time

2. Rate the importance of online reviews in influencing your online purchase decisions.

- Likert scale: Very Important, Important, Neutral, Not Important, Not at all Important

3. How frequently do you compare prices across different online platforms before making a purchase?

- Multiple-choice: Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never

4. Do you often experience information overload when making online purchase decisions?

- Yes/No

5. Would you reconsider purchasing from a website with a poor user interface or navigation experience?

- Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

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Analysis Approach

These analysis approaches help gauge the complexity of decision-making in online purchases, shedding light on factors influencing consumers in the online shopping process. Adjust analysis methods as per survey responses and research objectives.

- **Time Spent Analysis:** Analyze the distribution of time spent researching products to understand the level of consumer engagement in decision-making.
- **Importance Assessment:** Calculate the average importance score of online reviews in influencing purchase decisions to gauge overall influence.
- **Price Comparison Frequency:** Determine the frequency distribution of price comparison habits among respondents.
- **Information Overload Prevalence:** Assess the proportion of respondents experiencing information overload during online purchase decisions.
- **Preference for User Experience:** Analyze the level of agreement regarding reconsidering purchases based on website user interface and navigation.

Research Question 3: How do consumers in the Bangladesh E-commerce industry engage with various social media platforms for product research, recommendations, and reviews?

Survey Questions

1. Which social media platforms do you primarily use for product research or reviews before making an online purchase?

- Multiple-choice: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, TikTok, Other (Specify)

2. How likely are you to trust product recommendations from influencers or peers on social media?

- Likert scale: Highly Likely, Likely, Neutral, Unlikely, Highly Unlikely

3. Rate your level of engagement with brand-sponsored content or advertisements on social media.

- Likert scale: Very Engaged, Engaged, Neutral, Not Very Engaged, Not Engaged at All

4. Do you follow specific brands or companies on social media for updates or promotions?

- Yes/No

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5. How often do you participate in discussions or share feedback about products on social media platforms?

- Multiple-choice: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely, Never

Analysis Approach

These analyses aim to uncover consumer behavior patterns on social media platforms concerning product research, engagement, and trust levels in online content, offering insights into the role of social media in influencing consumer decisions in the E-commerce industry. Adjust the analysis based on survey responses and research goals.

- **Platform Preference Analysis:** Evaluate the frequency distribution of social media platform usage for product research or reviews to identify popular platforms.
- **Trust Level Evaluation:** Calculate the mean trust score of product recommendations from influencers or peers to gauge overall trust in social media content.
- **Engagement Assessment:** Analyze the distribution of responses to understand the level of engagement with brand-sponsored content or advertisements.
- **Brand Following Prevalence:** Assess the proportion of respondents who follow brands or companies on social media for product updates.
- **Engagement Frequency:** Determine the frequency distribution of participating in product-related discussions or sharing feedback on social media platforms.

Interview Questionnaire

These interview questions aim to delve deeper into consumer challenges in the digital space, particularly concerning trust issues and the evolving landscape post-COVID-19, while also exploring effective strategies businesses can employ to influence online consumer behavior. Adjustments can be made based on the specific industry or context of the study.

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Research Question 5: What strategies can businesses employ to influence consumer buying behavior and decision-making online, with a focus on the post-COVID-19 landscape?

1. Adapting to Post-COVID-19 Changes:

- How do you perceive changes in consumer behavior or decision-making online post-COVID-19? Have your purchasing habits altered in any way?
- From your perspective, what strategies have businesses effectively employed to influence consumer buying behavior in the post-COVID-19 era?

2. Business Strategies for Influence:

- What tactics or approaches have you found businesses using that significantly influence your online purchasing decisions?
- Can you provide examples of businesses that have effectively adapted their strategies to match the changing consumer behavior online after the pandemic?

3. Consumer Expectations and Preferences:

- As a consumer, what do you expect or appreciate most from businesses when making purchasing decisions online?
- Considering the post-COVID-19 landscape, what changes or enhancements would you prefer to see in how businesses interact or engage with consumers online?

APPENDIX 3/1

Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

You are warmly invited to take part in a research study integral to a Bachelor's thesis project at Centria University of Applied Sciences. Our focus is to explore the profound influence wielded by various social media platforms—Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Snapchat, and others—on consumer buying behavior and decision-making processes.

This survey seeks your insights and experiences on these platforms. Your responses hold immense value; there are no right or wrong answers, and your anonymity is assured. Participation is voluntary, and your data will not affect any personal decisions. The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Your contribution matters greatly. Please review the instructions carefully. For any queries or clarifications, our researchers listed below are available to assist you.

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this study.

Contact Details:

Redwanul Islam Rajib & Pias Roy

redwanulislamrajib@gmail.com

Centria University of Applied Sciences

APPENDIX 4/1

This tabulated format provides a clear breakdown of interview participant's role in, expertise, and their key insights contributing to the understanding of consumer challenges and business strategies in the digital sphere.

Participant	Role	Expertise	Key Insights
MD. Ahasan	CEO & Lead Consultant	Strategic direction, consultancy services	Surge in consumer skepticism towards online content post-COVID-19, erosion of trust in digital reviews
Al Imran	Consultant and Media Sales	Sales strategies, media engagement	Challenges navigating through misleading digital content, struggle to discern authentic information
Kazi Said	Head of Contents	Tailored content strategies	Impact of personalized content on engagement rates and consumer behavior
Mohammad Zubairul Alom	Influencer and Customer Engagement	Customer relationships, engagement	Significance of authentic engagement in driving customer loyalty and retention
Ovi Barua	Executives- Insights and Development	Consumer behavior, market insights	Potency of user-generated content in influencing purchase decisions
Tanvir Hussain	Executives- Engagement	Customer experiences, service enhancement	Role of responsive service in reducing abandoned carts and shaping positive consumer experiences