

Exploring Consumer Psychology in Digital Product Purchase Decisions: A Qualitative Study of Social Media Users

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology and social media platforms has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in relation to digital products. Social media has evolved beyond its traditional role as a communication platform and now functions as an important environment where consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. This study aims to explore the psychological factors that influence consumer decision-making in purchasing digital products through social media platforms. A qualitative research approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of consumers' experiences and perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with social media users who had purchased digital products based on information encountered on social media platforms. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to consumer psychology in digital purchasing behavior. The findings reveal that consumer decision-making in purchasing digital products is influenced by several interconnected psychological and social factors. Five major themes emerged from the analysis: social media as a discovery environment, cognitive evaluation of digital products, trust formation and credibility cues, psychological motivations for purchasing digital products, and social influence from peers, influencers, and online communities. The results indicate that social media plays a significant role not only in introducing digital products but also in shaping consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions. Consumers actively interpret information obtained from social media, evaluate product credibility through reviews and recommendations, and rely on social interactions to reduce uncertainty before making purchase decisions. This study contributes to the understanding of consumer psychology in digital environments by highlighting how psychological motivations and social influences interact within social media platforms to shape digital purchasing decisions. The findings also provide practical insights for digital marketers and

product creators to design more effective strategies that emphasize authenticity, trust-building, and community engagement in promoting digital products.

Keywords : *Consumer Psychology, Digital Products, Social Media, Purchase Decision, Qualitative Research, Online Consumer Behavior*

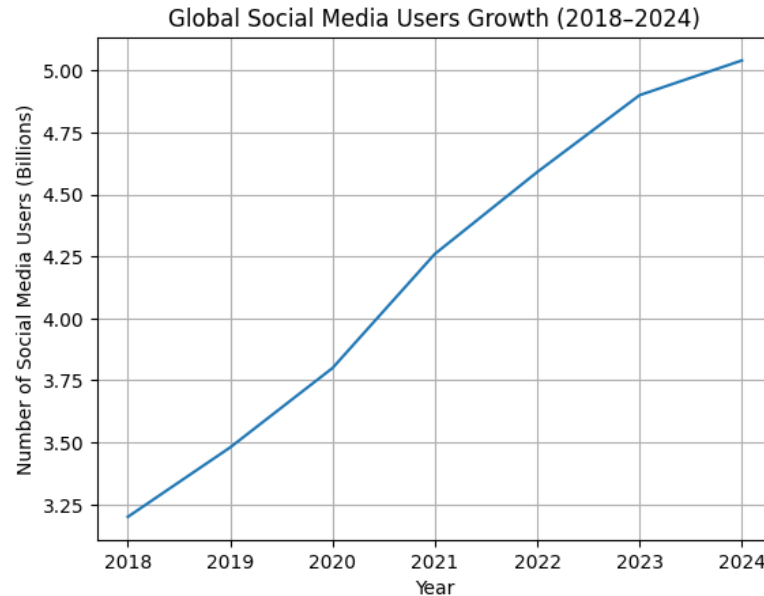
INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology over the past two decades has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including how individuals interact, communicate, and conduct economic activities. One of the most notable changes can be observed in consumer behavior, particularly in the way consumers search for information, evaluate products, and make purchasing decisions. The expansion of internet access, the proliferation of smartphones, and the emergence of digital platforms have created an environment in which purchasing activities are no longer limited by geographical or temporal boundaries. Consumers today are able to explore products, compare alternatives, read reviews, and complete transactions within a highly interconnected digital ecosystem.

This transformation has accelerated the emergence of digital consumption, where many goods and services are purchased and delivered through digital platforms. Digital products such as online courses, software subscriptions, mobile applications, digital entertainment services, e-books, and various forms of virtual goods have become increasingly common in modern consumer markets. These products differ from traditional physical products in several fundamental ways. Digital products are intangible, easily distributed through electronic networks, and often rely heavily on digital platforms for promotion and delivery. As a result, consumer decision-making processes surrounding digital products tend to be strongly influenced by online interactions and digital information environments.

The expansion of digital environments can also be observed through the rapid growth of social media usage worldwide. Social media platforms have become one of the most influential spaces where consumers interact, exchange information, and encounter various digital products and services. The increasing number of social media users indicates that these platforms have become an integral part of everyday life and play a significant role in shaping modern consumption patterns.

Figure 1. Growth of Global Social Media Users (2018–2024) *Source: Adapted from*



DataReportal Global Digital Reports.

Figure 1 illustrates the steady growth in the number of global social media users from approximately 3.2 billion in 2018 to more than 5 billion in 2024. This growth demonstrates how social media platforms have expanded into major digital environments where consumers spend a significant portion of their time. As social media usage increases, these platforms increasingly function not only as communication tools but also as digital marketplaces where consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. The continuous expansion of social media users highlights the importance of understanding consumer behavior within these digital spaces, particularly regarding how psychological factors influence purchasing decisions for digital products.

Among the various digital platforms that shape modern consumer behavior, social media has emerged as one of the most influential environments in the digital marketplace. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have evolved beyond their original function as tools for social interaction. They now serve as powerful communication channels that connect consumers, brands, influencers, and communities in real time. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build upon the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This definition highlights one of the most distinctive characteristics of social media: the active participation of users in producing and distributing information.

The participatory nature of social media has fundamentally reshaped the communication structure between companies and consumers. Traditional marketing communication was largely characterized by one-way communication in which companies delivered promotional messages to passive audiences through mass media channels such as television, radio, and print advertising. In contrast, social media allows consumers to engage directly with brands, share opinions, discuss experiences, and influence the perceptions of other consumers. Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue

that social media has become a hybrid element of the promotional mix because it combines traditional firm-generated communication with consumer-generated communication.

In this new communication environment, consumers play a more active role in shaping the flow of information about products and services. Through posts, comments, reviews, and shared experiences, consumers can influence the attitudes and decisions of others within their social networks. As a result, purchasing decisions are no longer determined solely by company-driven marketing strategies but are increasingly influenced by social interactions among consumers themselves. This shift highlights the importance of understanding consumer psychology within digital environments where information flows rapidly and social influence is highly visible.

From a consumer behavior perspective, purchasing decisions represent the outcome of a complex psychological process that involves cognitive, emotional, and social factors. Kotler and Keller (2016) describe the consumer decision-making process as a sequence of stages that includes problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Each stage involves various psychological mechanisms through which consumers interpret information, assess product attributes, and form preferences.

Psychological factors play a critical role in shaping how consumers interpret and respond to marketing stimuli. These factors include motivation, perception, attitudes, beliefs, and learning processes that develop through individual experiences. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) emphasize that consumer behavior is strongly influenced by psychological processes that determine how individuals perceive value, evaluate risk, and form emotional attachments to products. In digital environments where consumers are constantly exposed to visual stimuli, persuasive messages, and social feedback, psychological processes become even more significant in influencing purchasing behavior.

One of the key psychological mechanisms involved in consumer decision-making is perception. Perception refers to the process by which individuals select, organize, and interpret sensory information in order to create meaningful understanding of their environment. Solomon (2018) explains that consumers do not passively receive information; instead, they actively interpret and filter information based on prior experiences, expectations, and personal values. In social media environments, perception is often shaped by visual content, product demonstrations, storytelling, and the experiences shared by other users.

The abundance of information available on social media platforms has created a unique context in which consumers rely heavily on digital cues when evaluating products. Product images, video reviews, user testimonials, and influencer endorsements all contribute to shaping consumers' perceptions of product quality and reliability. These cues help consumers reduce uncertainty, particularly when evaluating digital products that cannot be physically inspected prior to purchase.

Another important aspect of consumer behavior in digital environments is the influence of social interaction. Social media facilitates various forms of interaction among users, enabling individuals to exchange opinions, recommendations, and experiences related to products and services. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) describe e-WOM as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company that is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet.

Electronic word of mouth has become one of the most powerful sources of information in online purchasing environments. Consumers frequently consult online reviews, ratings, and user comments before making purchasing decisions. These sources of information are often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising because they originate from fellow consumers who have firsthand experience with the product. As a result, e-WOM plays a significant role in shaping consumer trust and influencing purchase intentions.

In addition to peer-to-peer communication, the rise of influencer marketing has also transformed the dynamics of digital consumer behavior. Influencers are individuals who have established credibility and large followings within specific online communities. Through their content, influencers can introduce products, share personal experiences, and recommend brands to their audiences. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) highlight that influencer credibility and audience engagement significantly affect the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

Furthermore, the digital marketplace has introduced new patterns of consumption that are closely tied to identity formation and social expression. Belk (2013) argues that consumption in digital environments is not only about satisfying functional needs but also about constructing and communicating personal identity.

Despite the growing body of research on social media marketing and online consumer behavior, much of the existing literature has primarily focused on quantitative analyses that measure relationships between variables such as brand awareness, purchase intention, and promotional effectiveness. These studies provide valuable insights into the statistical relationships between marketing variables, but they often offer limited understanding of the deeper psychological processes that shape consumer decisions in digital contexts.

Qualitative research approaches provide an opportunity to explore the psychological dimensions of consumer decision-making in greater depth. Through qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and thematic analysis, researchers can gain insight into how consumers interpret digital information, construct trust in online environments, and negotiate their identities within social media communities.

Based on these considerations, exploring consumer psychology in the context of digital product purchasing decisions among social media users becomes an important area of study. Investigating how consumers perceive digital products, interpret social media information, and construct meaning through online interactions can contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary consumer behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore consumer psychology in the decision-making process of purchasing digital products among social media users. Qualitative research is chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, motivations, and interpretations regarding a particular phenomenon. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In the context of this study, the

qualitative approach enables the researcher to examine how social media users interpret information about digital products and how psychological factors influence their purchasing decisions.

The research design used in this study is a qualitative exploratory design. This design is appropriate because the study aims to explore the psychological experiences of consumers when interacting with digital content and making purchase decisions within social media environments. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to understand the subjective perspectives of participants and uncover patterns of meaning related to digital product consumption.

Research Setting

The study focuses on social media users who actively engage with digital content related to products and services. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook are commonly used as sources of information, product promotion, and consumer interaction. These platforms provide a digital environment where users encounter advertisements, influencer endorsements, reviews, and user-generated content that may influence their purchasing decisions.

The research setting is not limited to a specific physical location since the interactions being studied occur in digital environments. Participants may come from different locations but share the common experience of interacting with social media platforms and purchasing digital products online.

Research Participants

Participants in this study consist of social media users who have purchased digital products through information obtained from social media platforms. Digital products in this context may include online courses, digital subscriptions, software, mobile applications, digital entertainment services, or other forms of digital goods.

Participants will be selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select individuals who have relevant experience with the phenomenon being studied. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich cases that provide deep insight into the research topic.

The selection criteria for participants include:

1. Individuals who actively use social media platforms.
2. Individuals who have purchased at least one digital product influenced by social media information.
3. Individuals willing to share their experiences and perspectives regarding their purchasing decisions.

The number of participants in qualitative research is typically smaller than in quantitative studies because the focus is on depth rather than statistical representation. Therefore, this study will involve approximately 8–15 participants, depending on the point of data saturation, where no new themes emerge from additional interviews.

Data Collection Methods

Data in this study will be collected primarily through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews allow researchers to explore participants' personal experiences, feelings, and perspectives related to the research topic.

The interviews will use a semi-structured interview format, which provides flexibility for participants to express their thoughts while still guiding the conversation around key research topics. The interview questions will focus on several aspects, including:

- Participants' experiences using social media to discover digital products.
- Factors influencing their interest in digital products.
- Psychological considerations such as trust, perception, and motivation.
- The role of influencers, reviews, and online recommendations in their decision-making process.
- Their reflections after purchasing digital products.

Each interview is expected to last approximately 30–60 minutes and will be conducted either online (via video call platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet) or through messaging platforms, depending on participants' preferences.

With participants' consent, interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in data transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis involves several steps that help researchers interpret meaning from textual data.

The data analysis process in this study will follow these steps:

1. Data Familiarization, The researcher will read and re-read interview transcripts to become familiar with the data.
2. Initial Coding, Relevant segments of data will be coded to identify meaningful units related to consumer psychology and purchasing behavior.
3. Theme Identification, Codes with similar meanings will be grouped into broader themes that represent patterns within the data.
4. Theme Review, The themes will be reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represent participants' experiences.
5. Theme Interpretation, The final themes will be interpreted to explain how psychological factors influence consumer decisions in purchasing digital products through social media.

This analytical process will allow the researcher to generate insights regarding the psychological mechanisms underlying digital purchasing behavior.

Research Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, several strategies will be applied.

First, member checking will be conducted by allowing participants to review summaries of their interview responses to ensure accuracy. Second, the researcher will maintain thick

descriptions of participants' experiences to provide detailed contextual understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Third, data triangulation will be considered by comparing participants' experiences across different social media platforms.

These strategies help enhance the reliability and validity of qualitative research findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of qualitative research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and their role in the research. Participation will be voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Participants' identities will be kept confidential by using pseudonyms or codes during data analysis and reporting. Additionally, all recorded data and transcripts will be securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study aims to explore consumer psychology in the decision-making process of purchasing digital products among social media users. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with participants who actively use social media and have experience purchasing digital products influenced by content found on these platforms. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify patterns and recurring meanings within participants' experiences.

The analysis revealed that consumer decisions to purchase digital products through social media are influenced by several interconnected psychological and social factors. From the coding and categorization process, five major themes emerged: (1) social media as a digital discovery environment, (2) perception and cognitive evaluation of digital products, (3) trust formation and credibility cues, (4) psychological motivations underlying digital product purchases, and (5) the influence of social interaction and digital communities. These themes collectively illustrate the psychological mechanisms through which consumers interpret digital content and make purchasing decisions.

1. Social Media as a Digital Discovery Environment

One of the most prominent findings of this study is that social media functions as a primary environment where consumers discover digital products. Participants consistently described social media platforms as spaces where they encounter new products, services, and digital solutions during their daily online activities. Rather than actively searching for products, many participants reported that their awareness of digital products often emerges incidentally while browsing social media content.

Participants explained that algorithm-driven content feeds frequently expose them to advertisements, influencer reviews, or demonstration videos related to digital products. These exposures often stimulate curiosity and encourage users to explore products further. As one participant described:

“Most of the time I discover digital products when I’m just scrolling through social media. I’m not specifically searching for them, but suddenly I see someone explaining a tool or an online course, and it makes me curious.”

Another participant described how social media platforms continuously introduce new digital products through recommended content:

“Sometimes TikTok recommends videos about productivity tools or design templates. Even though I didn’t search for them, the videos make the product look useful, and that makes me want to know more.”

These experiences indicate that the discovery of digital products is frequently embedded in everyday social media use. The algorithmic structure of social media platforms plays an important role in shaping what consumers see and how frequently they encounter product-related content. Participants emphasized that repeated exposure to a product through different posts or creators often increases their familiarity and interest.

Additionally, visual and video-based content was described as particularly effective in capturing attention. Participants noted that short videos demonstrating how a digital product works make it easier for them to understand the product's benefits and potential applications. Compared to traditional advertisements, these demonstrations appear more engaging and informative.

For instance, one participant explained:

“When I watch a short video showing how a digital product works step by step, it feels more convincing. I can imagine how I would use it in my daily activities.”

These findings suggest that social media serves not only as a communication platform but also as a digital discovery ecosystem where consumers become aware of products through exposure to dynamic and interactive content.

2. Perception and Cognitive Evaluation of Digital Products

After discovering digital products on social media, participants described entering a phase of cognitive evaluation where they assess the usefulness, quality, and relevance of the product. This evaluation process involves interpreting available information and determining whether the product aligns with their needs or interests.

Participants explained that they often analyze several aspects of a digital product before making a purchase decision. These aspects include the product’s functionality, potential benefits, price, and compatibility with their personal or professional activities.

One participant described their evaluation process as follows:

“After I see a digital product on social media, I usually check what the product actually does. I try to understand whether it will help me solve a problem or make something easier.”

Another participant highlighted the importance of product demonstrations in shaping their perception:

“If the creator shows clearly how the product works and how people use it, I feel more confident about its usefulness.”

Participants also mentioned that clear explanations about product features help them evaluate the value of digital products. In cases where information is limited or unclear, participants reported feeling uncertain about the product's credibility.

The findings indicate that consumers actively interpret information presented in social media content. Their perceptions are influenced not only by the product itself but also by how the information is communicated through visual presentation, storytelling, and user experiences.

Participants also described comparing different digital products before making a purchase decision. This comparison process allows them to evaluate alternatives and determine which product provides the best value.

As one participant stated:

“Sometimes I see similar products from different creators. Before buying, I try to compare them to see which one has better features or more positive reviews.”

These observations demonstrate that even though digital purchases often originate from social media exposure, consumers still engage in cognitive evaluation before making final decisions.

3. Trust Formation and Credibility Cues

Trust emerged as one of the most important psychological factors influencing participants' purchasing decisions. Because digital products are intangible and cannot be physically examined before purchase, consumers rely heavily on cues that indicate credibility and reliability.

Participants explained that they often evaluate trustworthiness based on several indicators, including user reviews, comments, creator transparency, and the reputation of the person promoting the product.

One participant stated:

“Before buying, I usually read the comments section to see what other people are saying. If many users say the product is helpful, it makes me trust it more.”

Another participant described how detailed product explanations increase their confidence:

“When the creator explains the product clearly and shows real examples of how it works, it feels more trustworthy.”

Influencers also play a significant role in shaping consumer trust. Participants indicated that they are more likely to consider purchasing a product when it is recommended by influencers they perceive as credible or knowledgeable.

For example, one participant explained:

“If the influencer regularly shares useful content and seems honest, I feel more comfortable trusting their recommendations.”

However, participants also expressed skepticism toward promotional content that appears overly commercialized. When influencers promote too many products without providing detailed explanations, participants tend to question the authenticity of the recommendation.

These findings suggest that trust formation is a dynamic process influenced by multiple signals within the social media environment.

4. Psychological Motivations for Digital Product Purchases

The interviews also revealed that participants' purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by psychological motivations. Many participants described purchasing digital products because they believe these products can help them achieve personal goals or improve their daily activities.

One of the most common motivations identified in the data is self-improvement. Participants frequently mentioned purchasing digital products such as online courses, productivity tools, and design resources to enhance their skills or knowledge.

One participant explained:

"I bought an online design course because I wanted to improve my creative skills. Social media made it look like a practical way to learn."

Another participant mentioned purchasing digital tools to improve efficiency:

"I purchased a digital planner that I found on Instagram. It helps me organize my schedule better."

Participants also described the appeal of digital products in terms of convenience. Unlike physical products, digital goods can be accessed immediately after purchase and can be used across multiple devices.

As one participant stated:

"The best thing about digital products is that you can use them right away. There's no waiting time."

In addition, participants mentioned that digital products often appear affordable compared to traditional services. This perception of value can encourage consumers to experiment with new products.

These motivations illustrate how psychological needs such as learning, productivity, and convenience influence consumer behavior in digital environments.

5. Social Influence and Community Interaction

The final theme identified in the data relates to the role of social influence in shaping consumer decisions. Participants emphasized that interactions with friends, online communities, and influencers often influence their perception of digital products.

Participants explained that they frequently consult others before making purchase decisions. This may involve asking friends for recommendations or reading discussions in online groups.

One participant explained:

"Sometimes I ask friends who work in the same field if they have used the product. Their experience helps me decide."

Online communities were also described as valuable sources of information. Participants often rely on feedback shared in forums or social media groups to evaluate digital products.

Another participant stated:

“In some online groups, people openly discuss the pros and cons of digital products. Their experiences help me understand whether the product is worth buying.”

Influencer recommendations also influence the initial perception of products. Participants often view influencers as opinion leaders who introduce them to new tools and services.

These findings indicate that digital purchasing decisions are not solely individual processes but are shaped by interactions within social networks and online communities.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the psychological processes underlying consumer decision-making in purchasing digital products through social media platforms. Based on qualitative analysis of participants' experiences, several interconnected psychological and social mechanisms were identified, including the role of social media as a discovery environment, cognitive evaluation of digital products, trust formation, psychological motivations for purchasing, and the influence of social interactions within digital communities. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer psychology in digital environments and align with broader theoretical perspectives on consumer behavior, digital marketing, and social influence.

Social Media as a Digital Discovery Environment

One of the key findings of this study indicates that social media functions as a primary environment where consumers discover digital products. Participants frequently reported encountering digital products unintentionally while browsing their social media feeds. This pattern of discovery reflects the increasingly algorithm-driven nature of digital platforms, where personalized content recommendations expose users to products aligned with their interests and online behaviors.

This finding supports previous research suggesting that social media platforms have transformed the way consumers discover products. According to Tuten and Solomon (2017), social media has evolved into a central component of the digital marketing ecosystem, where consumers are continuously exposed to brand-related content through algorithmic feeds and user-generated content. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media enables consumers to encounter products organically through entertainment, education, and community interactions.

Similarly, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) explain that social media environments are structured around functional building blocks such as identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. These elements collectively create interactive spaces where consumers engage with content and discover new products through dynamic social interactions.

The findings of this study also align with research conducted by Tiago and Veríssimo (2014), who argue that the expansion of social media has significantly reshaped marketing strategies by enabling businesses to interact directly with consumers in digital environments where product discovery occurs naturally through everyday online activities. As consumers spend increasing

amounts of time on social media platforms, these platforms become critical spaces where product awareness and initial interest are generated.

Moreover, digital product discovery through social media reflects the concept of ambient marketing exposure, where consumers encounter marketing messages within their everyday digital activities. According to Stephen (2016), social media platforms blur the boundaries between entertainment, social interaction, and marketing communication, creating environments where consumers are continuously exposed to product-related content even when they are not actively searching for products.

Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce the idea that social media has become an essential environment for product discovery, particularly for digital products that rely heavily on online promotion and distribution.

Consumer Perception and Cognitive Evaluation in Digital Purchasing

The findings also indicate that after discovering digital products on social media, consumers engage in a cognitive evaluation process in which they interpret information, assess product value, and determine whether the product meets their needs. Participants described carefully analyzing product features, usability, and potential benefits before deciding to make a purchase.

This evaluation process aligns with the information-processing perspective of consumer behavior, which suggests that consumers actively process marketing information to make informed decisions. According to Bettman, Luce, and Payne (1998), consumers often employ decision-making strategies that involve comparing available alternatives, evaluating product attributes, and reducing perceived uncertainty before committing to a purchase.

In digital environments, the evaluation process is often influenced by the quality and clarity of information presented in online content. Research by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlights that digital customer journeys involve multiple touchpoints where consumers interact with information across different platforms before making purchasing decisions. Social media content, such as tutorials, product demonstrations, and user reviews, plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions during this evaluation stage.

Furthermore, research by Dehghani and Tumer (2015) demonstrates that digital marketing content, particularly video-based content, significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Visual explanations and demonstrations help consumers better understand how products function, which reduces uncertainty and improves perceived product value.

The findings of this study also suggest that consumers frequently compare digital products from different providers before making a final decision. This behavior reflects the comparative decision-making model, where consumers evaluate alternatives to identify the most beneficial option. According to Payne, Bettman, and Johnson (1993), consumers adapt their decision strategies based on the complexity of the decision context and the amount of information available.

Thus, the cognitive evaluation process observed in this study reflects broader theoretical frameworks that explain how consumers interpret and analyze information before making purchase decisions.

Trust Formation in Digital Purchasing Environments

Trust emerged as one of the most critical psychological factors influencing digital purchasing decisions among participants. Because digital products are intangible and cannot be physically evaluated prior to purchase, consumers rely heavily on trust signals available within social media environments.

This finding is consistent with the literature on online trust in digital commerce. Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) argue that trust plays a central role in online purchasing behavior because it reduces perceived risk and uncertainty associated with online transactions. Consumers are more likely to purchase products when they perceive the seller, platform, or information source as credible and trustworthy.

Participants in this study frequently mentioned relying on reviews, comments, and product demonstrations to evaluate credibility. This behavior reflects the importance of **social proof**, a psychological mechanism through which individuals rely on the opinions of others to guide their own decisions. According to Cialdini (2009), social proof is particularly influential in uncertain situations where individuals seek confirmation from others before making decisions.

Similarly, research by Cheung and Thadani (2012) demonstrates that electronic word-of-mouth significantly influences consumer trust and purchase intention in online environments. Reviews and recommendations from other users serve as credible sources of information because they reflect real experiences with the product.

The role of influencers identified in this study also aligns with previous research on digital trust formation. According to Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg (2011), influencers act as opinion leaders within social media communities and play an important role in shaping consumer attitudes toward brands and products. When consumers perceive influencers as authentic and knowledgeable, their recommendations become powerful drivers of trust.

However, participants in this study also expressed skepticism toward overly promotional content, suggesting that trust is not automatically granted but must be earned through authenticity and transparency. This observation supports research by Audrezet, De Kerviler, and Moulard (2020), who found that perceived authenticity in influencer marketing significantly influences consumer trust and brand attitudes.

Overall, the findings highlight that trust formation in digital purchasing environments involves a complex interaction between social proof, perceived credibility, and authenticity.

Psychological Motivations for Digital Product Consumption

Another significant finding of this study relates to the psychological motivations that drive consumers to purchase digital products. Participants described several motivations, including self-improvement, productivity enhancement, convenience, and accessibility.

These motivations can be understood through the lens of **consumer motivation theory**, which explains how individuals pursue products that satisfy their psychological needs and personal goals. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), individuals are motivated to engage in behaviors that support their intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy, and personal growth.

Many participants in this study reported purchasing digital products such as online courses or productivity tools to improve their skills and knowledge. This behavior reflects intrinsic motivations related to learning and personal development.

Similarly, convenience emerged as an important motivational factor. Digital products allow consumers to access services instantly without the limitations associated with physical goods. Research by Shankar et al. (2016) suggests that convenience is one of the key drivers of consumer adoption of digital services, particularly in environments where consumers value efficiency and flexibility.

The perceived affordability of digital products also influenced participants' purchasing decisions. Digital goods often appear more accessible because they eliminate manufacturing and distribution costs associated with physical products. According to Varian (2019), digital goods possess unique economic characteristics such as low marginal costs and high scalability, which enable businesses to offer products at competitive prices.

These findings indicate that psychological motivations associated with learning, efficiency, and value perception play a central role in shaping digital consumption behavior.

Social Influence and Community Interaction

The final theme identified in this study highlights the role of social influence in shaping purchasing decisions. Participants frequently described discussing digital products with friends, consulting online communities, or reading discussions in social media groups before making a purchase.

This behavior reflects the importance of social interaction in digital consumption environments. According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, individuals learn behaviors and form attitudes by observing others within their social environment. Online communities provide spaces where consumers can observe the experiences and opinions of others, which influences their own decision-making processes.

Research by Kozinets (2015) also emphasizes the importance of online communities in shaping consumer behavior. Digital communities function as spaces where individuals share experiences, exchange recommendations, and collectively interpret product information. These interactions create shared meanings that influence how consumers perceive products and evaluate purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, the influence of peer recommendations aligns with research conducted by Berger (2014), who explains that social transmission of information plays a powerful role in shaping consumer behavior. When individuals share product experiences within their networks, they contribute to the diffusion of information that can influence the purchasing decisions of others.

The findings of this study suggest that digital purchasing decisions are often socially constructed rather than purely individual choices. Consumers rely on social interactions and community feedback to validate their perceptions and reduce uncertainty.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study provide several theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the literature on consumer psychology by demonstrating how traditional consumer behavior theories apply within digital environments shaped by social media interactions.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the importance for businesses to focus not only on promotional strategies but also on building trust, authenticity, and meaningful engagement with consumers. Digital product creators should prioritize transparent communication, clear demonstrations, and community engagement to enhance consumer trust and motivation.

CONCLUSION

This study explored consumer psychology in the context of digital product purchasing decisions among social media users. By employing a qualitative approach, the research sought to understand how consumers interpret digital information, evaluate product credibility, and make purchasing decisions within social media environments.

The findings reveal that social media has become an essential environment for digital product discovery and evaluation. Consumers often encounter digital products while browsing social media platforms, where algorithm-driven content feeds introduce products through advertisements,

influencer content, and user-generated recommendations. These exposures stimulate curiosity and initiate the early stages of the consumer decision-making process.

The study also demonstrates that consumers engage in cognitive evaluation when considering digital product purchases. Participants carefully assess product features, usefulness, and potential benefits before making decisions. This evaluation process often involves comparing alternatives and interpreting product demonstrations and explanations available through social media content.

Trust was identified as one of the most critical psychological factors influencing purchasing decisions. Because digital products are intangible, consumers rely on credibility cues such as reviews, comments, influencer recommendations, and transparent product demonstrations to evaluate product reliability. The presence of positive feedback from other users significantly increases consumers' confidence in purchasing digital products.

In addition, psychological motivations such as self-improvement, convenience, and perceived value play an important role in driving digital product consumption. Many participants reported purchasing digital products to enhance their knowledge, improve productivity, or gain access to convenient digital solutions that support their daily activities.

Furthermore, social influence emerged as a key factor shaping purchasing decisions. Consumers frequently consult friends, online communities, and influencers when evaluating digital products. These interactions help consumers validate their perceptions, reduce uncertainty, and strengthen their confidence in purchasing decisions.

Overall, the study highlights that digital purchasing behavior is not solely determined by product characteristics but is strongly influenced by psychological interpretations and social interactions within digital environments. Social media platforms function as complex ecosystems where information exposure, trust formation, motivation, and social influence collectively shape consumer purchasing decisions.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader understanding of consumer behavior in the digital era and emphasize the importance of psychological and social dynamics in shaping digital consumption patterns. For businesses and digital marketers, the results underscore the importance of creating authentic, transparent, and informative content that builds trust and encourages meaningful engagement with consumers.

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