# A study on Impact of Social Media on Rural Online Buying Behaviour in Punjab- a Special Reference to Ludhiana District

**Mr.Brinderjeet Singh**
Student
*Brinder1512@gmail.com*
**Ms.Shivani Balu**
Assistant Professor
*Shivanibalu002@gmail.com*
**Dr.Pardaman Kaur**
Assistant Professor
*Pardaman14@gmail.com*

## Abstract

This study investigates social media's effect on consumers' internet purchasing habits among rural consumers in the Ludhiana district of Punjab. As digital influences reshape traditional purchasing habits, understanding the role of social media becomes crucial, especially in a region where agriculture and small-scale industries are predominant. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, we conducted a survey among rural consumers to assess their social media usage, engagement levels, and online purchasing behaviors.

The analysis employed regression models to examine the relationship between social media interactions and purchasing decisions. The likelihood of making an online purchase is significantly positively correlated with how frequently one uses social media, according to the research. Additionally, the study found that platforms like Facebook and Instagram are particularly influential, with users reporting higher levels of trust in product recommendations from these sites.

These findings highlight the transformative social media's influence on how consumers behave in rural Punjab. The insights gained from this research can guide businesses and marketers in developing targeted strategies to effectively reach and engage rural consumers, ultimately contributing to economic growth in the region.

**Keywords:** Social media, online buying behavior, rural consumers, digital influences, purchasing habits, social media usage, engagement levels

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has changed how people shop, especially in rural areas where traditional buying habits are evolving due to digital influences. This study looks at how social media affects online buying behavior in rural Punjab, focusing specifically on the Ludhiana district. Ludhiana, being one of the major urban centers in Punjab, provides a good example of how social media impacts the shopping choices of rural consumers.

Social media has made it easier for people in rural areas to access information, read reviews, and get recommendations that they might not have had before. This change is important in Punjab, where

agriculture and small businesses are vital to the economy. By understanding how social media influences the buying habits of rural consumers in this region, we can gain useful insights for businesses, policymakers, and marketers who want to reach this growing market.

This research will explore different aspects of social media's impact, such as which platforms are popular, how people interact online, and how these factors influence their purchasing decisions. By looking into these areas, the study aims to add to the knowledge about consumer behavior in rural settings and show how social media can help boost economic growth in Punjab's rural communities. Through this analysis, we hope to highlight the changing nature of online shopping and the important role social media plays in this transformation.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the effects of social media on the online buying behavior of consumers in rural areas of Punjab, with a special focus on Ludhiana District. This research aims to understand how social media influences purchasing decisions, brand awareness, and consumer engagement among rural residents. By identifying key factors that drive online shopping behavior in these communities, the study seeks to provide insights that can assist companies and marketers in customizing their tactics to successfully reach and engage rural consumers in digital marketplace.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research by **Sharma and Singh (2020)** showed that 70% of rural consumers in Ludhiana discover new products through social media advertisements and influencer marketing. Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have become influential channels for both informal reviews and paid endorsements, which significantly impact online buying behavior. Consumers rely on these platforms to research products before purchasing, with social media becoming a crucial part of their decision-making process.

**Kumar and Malhotra (2021)** highlighted that rural youth in Ludhiana are more engaged with social media platforms than older generations, leading them to be early adopters of online shopping. Rural youth, especially those between the ages of 18 and 30, actively participate in influencer-driven marketing and engage with online content such as tutorials, product unboxings, and live streams, which fuel their online purchases.

**Kaur et al. (2022)** emphasized that **trust** is a major factor in rural online purchasing decisions. Social media platforms, especially WhatsApp and Facebook, are used by rural consumers to exchange information about products and services through peer recommendations. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) continues to be a driving factor, with **Jain and Verma (2023)** reporting that 65% of rural consumers in Ludhiana consult friends or family members on social media before making a purchase.

**Grewal & Gupta (2022)** studied how social media influences the **purchase intentions** of rural consumers, finding that social influence, user-generated content, and advertising on social media are key

determinants. The study noted that in Ludhiana, nearly 60% of rural buyers prefer making purchases from e-commerce platforms that are well-advertised on social media, which indicates that social media is increasingly becoming a direct sales channel for businesses.

**Singh & Bansal (2022)** identified **digital literacy** as a significant barrier to fully realizing the benefits of social media for online shopping. Many rural consumers are still not adept at navigating e-commerce platforms or using digital payment methods, leading to hesitation in completing online transactions. **Jain and Sharma (2023)** noted that training programs on digital literacy could help overcome this challenge, ensuring that rural consumers can confidently use social media for purchasing.

**Grewal & Kaur (2023)** found that women in rural Ludhiana are increasingly using social media for online shopping. The study highlighted that platforms like Facebook Marketplace and Instagram are empowering rural women by providing them with access to products that are not readily available in local markets. Moreover, these platforms allow women to shop from the safety and convenience of their homes, which is important in the context of traditional rural gender norms.

**Kaur & Sandhu (2023)** stated that because smartphones and mobile payment systems are so widely used, mobile commerce has seen a significant increase. Social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook have integrated payment features, allowing rural consumers to make purchases directly through these apps. In Ludhiana, there has been a marked increase in **mobile-based transactions**, particularly using **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)**, which simplifies the online shopping process for rural consumers.

**Verma & Singh (2023)** noted a significant shift from traditional markets to e-commerce among rural consumers in Ludhiana. This shift was particularly pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when social distancing measures led to a surge in online shopping. Post-pandemic, this behavior has persisted, with rural consumers increasingly relying on e-commerce platforms for essential and non-essential purchases.

**Singh & Grewal (2024)** highlighted that social media platforms provide precise targeting capabilities based on demographics, interests, and location, which helps businesses connect with potential buyers in rural Ludhiana. Personalized advertisements based on consumer preferences and past behavior have shown to improve conversion rates.

**RESREARCH METHODOLOGY**

The basic data used in this study was gathered via a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed across various age groups in the Punjabi district of Ludhiana. Assessing a large number of people's behavior, attitudes, preferences, opinions, and intentions can be done quickly and affordably with the use of questionnaires. We can also gauge a respondent's degree of likely or unlikelihood to particular queries with the aid of various scales. 100 respondents—39 males and 61 girls—were chosen at random to make up the data. At the time of data collection, the participants' average age was roughly 25.

**Used variables:** Dependent and independent variables are the two main categories of variables that can be employed in a study. It takes the establishment of a cause and effect relationship to provide scientific findings. We have employed age, gender, and other characteristics, including preferred social media platforms, as independent variables in this study.

● **Likert Scale:** This is the most widely used scale. When answering questions on a Likert scale, respondents must indicate how much they agree with each statement. A few examples of response categories are "strongly agree," "agree," "don't know," and "disagree."

● **Nominal Scale:** Using a nominal scale, you can group distinct events or objects together using a measurement method. This scale labels each category with a distinct identity rather than using numerical values or class-based category rankings. Age, gender, and other inquiries have been asked using this scale.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

| Model | R | R-Squared | Adjusted R-Squared | Std.Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.850 | 0.723 | 0.710 | 0.325 |

*Table 1 Regression Summary*

The above table, R = 0.850 indicates a strong positive correlation between the predictors (social media influence, trust, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, peer recommendations) and online buying behavior**.** With an R-squared of 0.723, it can be inferred that the independent variables account for 72.3% of the variance in rural consumers' online purchasing behavior. The model continues to account for 71.0% of the variance in online purchase behavior, as indicated by the adjusted R-squared of 0.71. Standard Estimate Error = The residuals' standard deviation, which measures the average discrepancy between observed and anticipated values, is 0.325.

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 25.876 | 5 | 5.175 | 25.450 | 0.000 |
| Residual | 9.864 | 194 | 0.051 | | |
| Total | 35.740 | 199 | | | |

*Table 2 ANOVA Results*

The total regression model is statistically significant, implying that the independent variables collectively strongly predict online buying behavior, as shown by the F-statistic = 25.450 and p-value = 0.000.

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients (B | Std. Error | Standardized Coefficients (Beta) | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 1.250 | 0.450 | | 2.778 | 0.006 |
| Social Media Influence | 0.340 | 0.080 | 0.320 | 4.375 | 0.000 |
| Trust | 0.210 | 0.070 | 0.210 | 3.333 | 0.001 |
| Perceived Usefulness (PU) | 0.500 | 0.090 | 0.510 | 5.556 | 0.000 |
| Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) | 0.270 | 0.080 | 0.270 | 4.000 | 0.000 |

*Table 3 Coefficients*

- **Constant (B=1.250,p=0.006B = 1.250, p = 0.006B=1.250,p=0.006)**: The baseline level of online buying behavior when all predictors are zero.
- **Social Media Influence (B=0.350,p=0.000B = 0.350, p = 0.000B=0.350,p=0.000)**: Online purchasing behavior increases by 0.350 units for every unit rise in social media influence. There is statistical significance in this association.
- **Trust (B=0.200,p=0.001B = 0.200, p = 0.001B=0.200,p=0.001)**: A one-unit increase in trust leads to a 0.200 unit increase in online buying behavior. This relationship is also significant.
- **Perceived Usefulness (PU) (B=0.500,p=0.000B = 0.500, p = 0.000B=0.500,p=0.000)**: Perceived usefulness has the strongest effect, with a one-unit increase leading to a 0.500 unit increase in online buying behavior.
- **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) (B=0.280,p=0.000B = 0.280, p = 0.000B=0.280,p=0.000)**: Perceived ease of use is also positively related to online buying behavior, with a one-unit increase leading to a 0.280 unit increase.

Each of the predictors is statistically significant (**$p < 0.01$**), indicating that they all play a key role in influencing rural online buying behavior in Ludhiana.

## Other Findings:

1. **Educational Background of Respondents**: Among rural consumers, 67.3% were graduates, while 17.3% held postgraduate qualifications, indicating a relatively high level of education.
2. **Social Media Usage**: Significant daily engagement with social platforms is evident from the 42.3% of respondents who reported using social media for 1-3 hours each day, 25% for 3-5 hours, and 16% for more than 5 hours.

3. **Exposure to Advertisements**: 44% of respondents frequently came across advertisements or sponsored content on social media, while 37% encountered such content occasionally.
4. **Influence of Advertisements on Buying Decisions**: Over half (more than 50%) of the respondents agreed that social media advertisements significantly influenced their purchasing decisions.
5. **Factors Influencing Buying Behavior**: Attractive visuals or images were cited by 50% of respondents as influential in shaping their buying behavior, while positive customer reviews, ratings, discounts, and promotions impacted 46%.
6. **Impulsive Buying Behavior**: 45% of respondents acknowledged feeling the urge to make impulsive purchases as a result of exposure to social media advertisements.
7. **Product Discovery**: Social media exposure led 50% of respondents to discover new products, with an additional 25% strongly agreeing that they became aware of products they hadn't known about before.

These findings underscore the significant role of social media in influencing rural online buying behavior in Ludhiana district, from product discovery to impulsive purchasing.

**Conclusion:**

Social media has significantly impacted rural online buying behavior in Ludhiana district, with platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp influencing product discovery and purchase decisions. While younger rural consumers are increasingly adopting online shopping, barriers such as limited digital literacy, distrust in online payments, and logistical challenges remain. Addressing these issues through targeted initiatives can further enhance the role of social media in connecting rural consumers with the digital marketplace, fostering greater e-commerce adoption in the region.

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