The Impact Of Social Media On Consumer Buying Behaviour For Infant Care Products

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The widespread adoption of social media has transformed consumer behaviour, particularly in sensitive product categories like baby care. This study examines the influence of social media on buying behaviour among consumers in the Tirunelveli district, with a special focus on baby care products. The research examines the impact of social media platforms on shaping perceptions, fostering brand awareness, and influencing purchasing decisions through user-generated content, peer reviews, influencer marketing, and targeted advertisements. A review of existing literature reveals that while global and national studies highlight the importance of social media in consumer decision-making, there is limited research focusing on regional behaviour, especially in semi-urban districts like Tirunelveli. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of digital consumerism in regional markets and help marketers formulate effective strategies for baby care branding and engagement.

Key Words: Social Media, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Infant Care Products, Digital Marketing, Parental Purchase Decisions.

1. Introduction:

The impact of social media on consumer behaviour has surged dramatically in recent years, particularly within niche markets such as baby care products. As digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and specialised parenting forums gain popularity, new parents and caregivers are increasingly turning to these sites for valuable information, product reviews, and heartfelt recommendations from their peers. This trend is particularly pronounced in areas such as the Tirunelveli district, where increasing digital awareness and widespread access to mobile internet have transformed the way consumers interact with brands and products.

In the realm of baby care products, consumers exhibit a heightened sensitivity to critical factors, including product safety, brand reputation, and the experiences shared by fellow parents. Social media has emerged as a crucial tool in shaping these perceptions and influencing buying decisions. Parents now find themselves following influential parenting

figures, engaging with product demonstrations, and exploring online reviews that offer insights and opinions on various products. This reliance on digital content is not merely a trend; it reflects a profound shift in how parents seek out reliable information for making informed choices about their children's well-being.

Brands have recognised this shift and are actively leveraging a variety of digital marketing strategies to connect with this emotionally driven market segment. Through targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content, companies are crafting messages that resonate deeply with consumers, fostering a sense of community and shared experience.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the dynamics of how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour concerning baby care products in the Tirunelveli district. It seeks to explore the frequency and manner of social media usage among consumers, the level of trust they place in online information, the influence exerted by peer recommendations, and the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies. By examining these elements, the research aims to uncover valuable insights that can empower marketers and businesses to better meet the evolving preferences and needs of consumers in this region.

2. Profile of sample unit:

Tirunelveli district, located in southern Tamil Nadu, is one of the state's oldest and culturally rich areas. Bordered by the Western Ghats and the Bay of Bengal, it features a diverse landscape of plains, hills, and river basins, with the River Tamirabarani providing crucial irrigation for agriculture. The district encompasses both urban and rural populations, with Tirunelveli city serving as its administrative centre. Notable towns are Palayamkottai, Ambasamudram, and Nanguneri. Tirunelveli is renowned for its educational institutions, temples, traditional sweets and small-scale industries. Recent developments in infrastructure and digital connectivity have led to an increase in smartphone use, particularly among younger demographics, which in turn influences consumer habits and buying decisions, especially for baby care products.

3. Review of Literature:

Kapoor, K., Dwivedi, Y.K., Piercy, N. (2018). The research conducted emphasised the significant impact of influencer marketing within the baby care sector. It revealed that consumers tend to place greater trust in social media influencers, particularly those who have real-life parenting experience, compared to traditional brand endorsements featuring celebrities. This trend suggests that parents often seek relatable and authentic advice when choosing products for their children, making influencers with firsthand knowledge more effective in connecting with their audience. The findings indicate that personal stories and experiences shared by these influencers can foster a sense of community and relatability, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions in a way that conventional celebrity endorsements may not achieve.

Meera & Rajalakshmi (2020). In a comprehensive regional study examining the impact of social media on consumer behaviour in Tamil Nadu, researchers discovered a significant correlation between exposure to product reviews and visual content on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, and the resulting awareness and purchasing interest in baby care products. The findings highlighted that as consumers, particularly in Tier-II cities, increasingly engage with these digital platforms, their digital literacy has also improved, enabling them to make more informed purchasing decisions. This trend suggests that the effective use of social media marketing strategies can play a crucial role in enhancing product visibility and consumer interest in the rapidly evolving market landscape of baby care items.

Kavitha, R. & Venkatesh, R. (2022), The research titled "Digital Marketing and Consumer Behaviour in Southern Tamil Nadu" highlights a significant shift among young parents, particularly in districts like Tirunelveli. This demographic is gradually moving away from relying on traditional word-of-mouth recommendations and is increasingly turning to digital channels for advice on selecting baby products. Platforms such as WhatsApp groups, where parents share experiences and recommendations, and regional YouTube channels, which provide product reviews and tutorials, have become popular sources of information. This change underscores the growing influence of digital media on shaping consumer choices within this community.

4. Statement of Problem:

The baby care market has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, with consumers increasingly relying on social media platforms for product information, reviews, and informed purchasing decisions. Parents and caregivers, especially first-time buyers, are highly cautious and selective when choosing baby care products such as diapers, baby lotions, powders, feeding bottles, and health supplements. In this context, social media plays a critical role by providing instant access to a wide range of content, including parenting advice, product comparisons, influencer endorsements, and peer reviews. Despite the growing influence of social media in urban areas, limited research has been conducted to understand how this trend is evolving in semi-urban and rural regions such as the Tirunelveli district. The district, with its mix of traditional and modern consumer behaviour, presents a unique setting to explore how digital platforms are shaping buying patterns for baby care products. It is unclear to what extent social media influences consumers in this region, what platforms are most used, and how trusted or impactful online content is in guiding purchase decisions. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical evidence and regional understanding of how social media affects consumer buying behaviour regarding baby care products in the Tirunelveli district. This gap necessitates a focused investigation into the digital consumption habits, trust levels, and decision-making processes of local consumers in the context of social media marketing.

5. Objectives of the study:

← To examine the level of awareness and usage of social media platforms among consumers of baby care products in the Tirunelveli district.

← To identify the most influential social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) in shaping consumer buying decisions for baby care products.
← Analyse the impact of online reviews, influencer recommendations, and user-generated content on consumer trust and purchasing behaviour.

6. Null and Alternative Hypotheses:

H_O: The impact of online reviews, influencer recommendations, and user-generated content does not influence consumer trust and purchasing behaviour.

H_1: The impact of online reviews, influencer recommendations, and user-generated content influences consumer trust and purchasing behaviour.

7. Scope of the study:

This study examines the impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour regarding baby care products in the Tirunelveli district. It focuses on the consumer decision-making process, including awareness, product evaluation, purchase decisions, and post-purchase behaviour influenced by platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Targeting parents and caregivers who are active on social media and have purchased items such as diapers and lotions, the research provides insights into regional consumer behaviour and digital habits. The scope is limited to social media influence, excluding offline advertising, offering valuable insights for marketers and baby care brands aiming to enhance their strategies in semi-urban digital markets.

8. Methodology:

The researcher meticulously designed a detailed questionnaire, inspired by the study's specific objectives and insights from prior research, to ensure both accuracy and relevance. To enhance its effectiveness, the survey instrument underwent a careful refinement process. For the data collection phase, the researcher randomly selected a diverse area within the Tirunelveli district, ensuring a representative sample of the population. The questionnaire was distributed to 125 individuals within the targeted community, and ultimately, 119 fully completed responses were gathered and thoroughly analysed, providing valuable insights for the study.

9. Limitations:

✓ The collected data reflects respondents' self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be influenced by personal bias, exaggeration, or memory inaccuracies.
✓ The study focuses solely on social media and does not account for the influence of traditional marketing channels.

10. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	48	40.34
	Female	71	59.66

Age	< 30 Years	41	34.45
	30 – 50 Years	54	45.38
	> 50 Years	24	20.17
Marital Status	Married	92	77.31
	Widow/widower	27	22.69
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary	29	24.37
	Graduates	51	42.86
	Post Graduates	31	26.05
	Others	8	6.72
Employment	Govt. Service	19	15.97
	Self-employed	29	24.37
	The employee of the private sector	47	39.50
	Others	24	20.17
Annual Income	< Rs.2,00,000	21	17.65
	Rs.2,00,000 – 5,00,000	57	47.90
	>Rs.5,00,000	41	34.45

The demographic analysis reveals an interesting profile of the surveyed group. Females constitute a larger portion (59.66%) compared to males (40.34%). In terms of age, the 30-50 years old bracket is the largest (45.38%), followed by those under 30 years (34.45%), and then individuals over 50 years (20.17%). A significant majority of the respondents are married (77.31%), with widows and widowers making up the remaining 22.69%. Looking at educational qualifications, graduates form the largest segment (42.86%), followed by post-graduates (26.05%) and those with higher secondary education (24.37%), with a small percentage falling into the "others" category (6.72%). Regarding employment, the private sector accounts for the highest proportion of employees (39.50%), followed by self-employed individuals at 24.37%, "others" at 20.17%, and government service employees at 15.97%. Finally, concerning annual income, the Rs. 2,00,000 – 5,00,000 bracket is the most prevalent (47.90%), with individuals earning over Rs. 5,00,000 (34.45%) outnumbering those earning less than Rs. 2,00,000 (17.65%).

Table 2 Ranking of Social networking sites has been heard and used/ or is being used

Sl. No	Social media	WAS	Rank
1	WhatsApp	3.714	II
2	Facebook	3.535	III
3	Instagram	3.843	I
4	YouTube	3.276	V
5	X (formerly Twitter)	3.382	IV
6	Share Chat	3.176	VII
7	Moj / Josh	2.843	IX

8	LinkedIn	3.019	VIII
9	Threads	2.645	X
10	Telegram	3.218	VI

Table 2 presents the ranking of various social networking sites based on their recognition and frequency of use among respondents, as measured by the Weighted Average Score (WAS). Among the platforms, Instagram secured the highest rank (Rank I) with a WAS of 3.843, indicating its strong popularity and high level of user engagement. This is followed closely by WhatsApp, which attained the second rank with a WAS of 3.714, reflecting its widespread use for communication and status sharing. Facebook was ranked third (WAS = 3.535), indicating that it remains relevant, particularly among slightly older demographics. X (formerly Twitter) achieved fourth place with a WAS of 3.382, suggesting its steady use, particularly for news and public discourse. YouTube, a major video-sharing platform, was placed in fifth rank (WAS = 3.276), indicating moderate awareness and usage, possibly due to its more passive nature (viewing rather than interacting). Telegram followed in sixth position (WAS = 3.218), while Share Chat, which caters to users of regional languages, ranked seventh with a WAS of 3.176. LinkedIn, primarily used for professional networking, was placed eighth (WAS = 3.019), indicating limited engagement compared to entertainment-focused platforms. Indian short video platforms, such as Moj/Josh, were ranked ninth (WAS = 2.843), while Threads, a relatively new entrant, stood in tenth and the lowest position (WAS = 2.645), indicating lesser penetration and usage among the respondents.

Table 3 Factors motivating the use of social networking sites for Baby care

Sl. No	Factors motivating the use of social networking sites for Baby care	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Friends / Peer pressure	18	15.32
2.	Reduce risk and uncertainty	27	22.41
3.	Search for better products	32	27.02
4.	Follow others	24	20.10
5.	Social life / Personal life	18	15.16
Total		**119**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 3 highlights the factors motivating individuals to use social networking sites for baby care. The main factor is the search for better products, cited by 32 respondents (27.02%), indicating reliance on social media for finding quality baby care items. The second is the desire to reduce risk and uncertainty, noted by 27 respondents (22.41%), reflecting the pursuit of insights and reassurance. Following others' behaviours influences 24 respondents (20.10%),

showcasing the impact of online trends. Peer pressure affects 18 respondents (15.32%), while another 18 (15.16%) consider social and personal life factors in their choices. Overall, social networking sites are crucial for gathering information and influencing decisions regarding baby care.

Table 4 Frequency of use of social media

Sl. No	Frequency of use of social media	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Most frequently	56	47.45
2.	Frequently	24	20.26
3.	Occasionally	22	18.45
4.	Rarely	16	13.84
Total		**119**	**100**

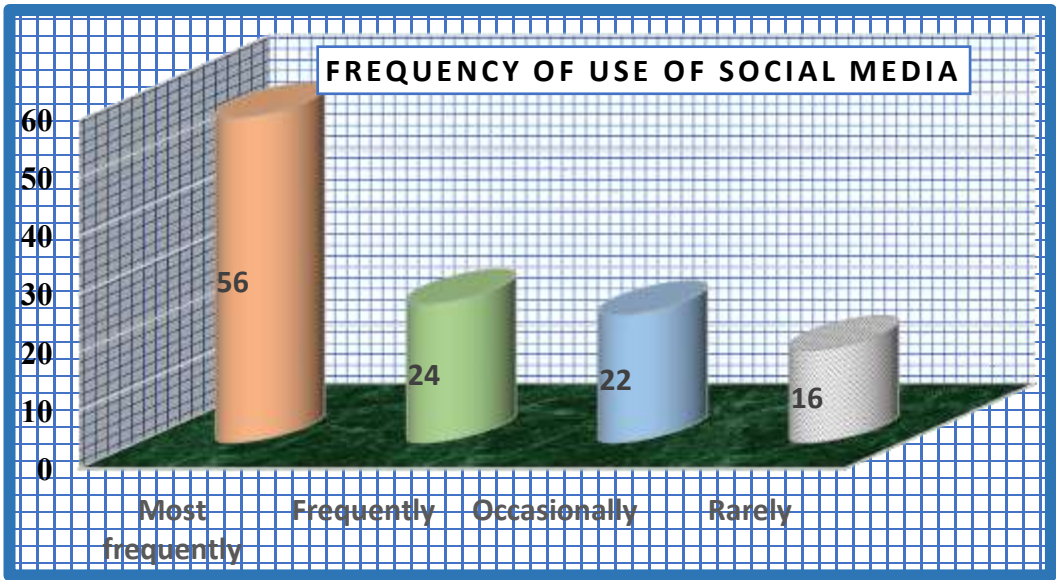**(Source: Primary Data)**

Fig 1

Table 3 highlights the frequency with which respondents use social media for baby care. A significant portion, 56 individuals (47.45%), reported using it most frequently, indicating strong reliance on these platforms for information and support. Additionally, 24 respondents (20.26%) use social media frequently, and 22 (18.45%) use it occasionally, showing they find it useful when needed. Only 16 respondents (13.84%) use social media rarely, indicating a limited dependence on it. Overall, the data highlight the increasing significance of digital platforms in parenting.

Table 5 Association between the Impact of Social Media and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.032	.089		11.608	**< 0.05**
Access to Real-life Experiences of Other Parents	.147	.007	.228	19.962	**< 0.05**
Trusted Peer and Community Recommendations	.453	.021	.520	22.041	**< 0.05**
Information on Product Safety and Ingredients	.368	.024	.350	15.563	**< 0.05**
Influencer Endorsements and Expert Advice	.154	.025	.191	6.094	**< 0.05**
Awareness of New and Innovative Products	.012	.023	.014	.538	**> 0.05****
Convenient Online Shopping Integration	.439	.021	.603	20.603	**< 0.05**
Promotions and Discounts	.015	.021	.014	.746	**> 0.05****
Brand Interaction and Support	.243	.025	.268	9.848	**< 0.05**
Visual Demonstrations of Product Use	.117	.011	.152	10.885	**< 0.05**
Emotional Engagement and Storytelling	.031	.015	.033	2.150	**< 0.05**
"R"	**0.810**				
"R^2"	**0.656**				
Adjusted "R^2"	**0.655**				
"F" value	**584.389**		**Sig. Value .000**		

**Not significant at 5 per cent level.

The regression analysis, detailed in Table 5, demonstrates a substantial relationship between various social media impacts and consumer buying behaviour. The model effectively explains 65.5% of the variation in buying behaviour (Adjusted R^2=0.655), and its overall significance (F=584.389, Sig.<0.001) confirms its strong predictive capability. Several factors significantly influence consumer buying behaviour at a 5% level of significance. Notably, "Trusted Peer and Community Recommendations" emerged as the most impactful predictor, evidenced by its standardised beta coefficient of 0.520, highlighting the critical role of social proof in purchasing decisions. "Convenient Online Shopping Integration" also showed a strong influence (standardised beta = 0.603), underscoring the importance of seamless e-commerce experiences on social platforms. Consumers' reliance on social media for crucial details like "Information on Product Safety and Ingredients" was also significant (standardised beta = 0.350). Active "Brand Interaction and Support" on social media platforms positively affects buying behaviour (standardised beta = 0.268). Furthermore, "Access to Real-life Experiences of Other Parents" (standardised beta = 0.228) and "Influencer Endorsements and Expert Advice" (standardised beta = 0.191) were found to be significant, emphasising the power of personal testimonials and expert opinions. While less impactful, "Visual Demonstrations of Product Use" (standardised beta = 0.152) and "Emotional Engagement and Storytelling" (standardised beta = 0.033) also contributed significantly to consumer decisions. Conversely, "Awareness of New and Innovative Products" (standardised beta = 0.014, Sig.=0.538) and "Promotions and Discounts" (standardised beta = 0.014, Sig.=0.746) did not show a statistically significant direct impact on consumer buying behaviour within this model. In essence, the findings robustly suggest that social media profoundly shapes consumer buying behaviour, primarily driven by peer influence, integrated online shopping, product transparency, brand engagement, and authentic experiences.

11. Findings:

- ←   Females make up 59.66% of respondents, while males account for 40.34%.
- ←   The largest age group is 30-50 years (45.38%), followed by those under 30 (34.45%) and over 50 (20.17%).
- ←   A significant majority are married (77.31%), with widows and widowers at 22.69%.
- ←   In education, graduates represent the largest segment (42.86%), followed by post-graduates (26.05%) and higher secondary education holders (24.37%), with others at 6.72%.
- ←   Employment-wise, the private sector employs 39.50%, self-employed individuals make up 24.37%, others account for 20.17%, and government employees at 15.97%.
- ←   For annual income, the Rs. 2,00,000 – 5,00,000 range is most common (47.90%), followed by those earning over Rs. 5,00,000 (34.45%) and under Rs. 2,00,000 (17.65%).
- ←   Instagram ranked first with a WAS of 3.843, showing high popularity and user engagement. WhatsApp followed closely in second with a WAS of 3.714 for communication.

- ← Facebook came in third (WAS = 3.535), remaining relevant among older users. X (formerly Twitter) achieved fourth place with a WAS of 3.382, indicating steady use for news and public discourse.
- ← The search for better products is the main factor, cited by 32 respondents (27.02%), highlighting reliance on social media for quality baby care items.
- ← The desire to reduce risk and uncertainty follows with 27 respondents (22.41%), showing the need for insights and reassurance. Influences from others' behaviours impact 24 respondents (20.10%), while peer pressure affects 18 respondents (15.32%), and another 18 (15.16%) consider social and personal life factors in their choices.
- ← The findings robustly suggest that social media profoundly shapes consumer buying behaviour, primarily driven by peer influence, integrated online shopping, product transparency, brand engagement, and authentic experiences.

13. Conclusion:

Social media profoundly impacts consumer buying behaviour for infant care products, largely due to the unique needs and concerns of parents. The analysis clearly shows that trusted peer and community recommendations are paramount, reflecting parents' reliance on shared experiences for sensitive decisions like infant care. Similarly, access to real-life experiences of other parents and the availability of information on product safety and ingredients are critical drivers, as parents prioritise the well-being and safety of their children. The convenience of online shopping integration is also a significant factor, catering to the busy schedules of new parents. While "Awareness of New and Innovative Products" and "Promotions and Discounts" played a less significant role, the overall influence of social media in shaping perceptions and driving purchases for infant care products remains strong, making it an indispensable channel for brands in this sector to build trust and engage effectively with their target audience.

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