



**Exploring the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Engagement
and Sales among Canadian Shoppers**

Bachelor Thesis

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Kazi Nowrid Amin'.

Objective of the Thesis

In this study, we explored the effects of social media marketing on brand engagement and sales among Canadian shoppers. We closely examined popular platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to determine how different types of content and user interactions influence buying decisions. We also explored the connections between brand engagement, user-generated word-of-mouth (UGWOM), and consumer buying behavior. In addition, we identified key demographic and regional trends across Canada, which can offer valuable insights to marketers and retailers looking to fine-tune their strategies. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a solid, data-driven foundation for boosting the effectiveness of social media marketing in the ever-changing retail scene in Canada.

Aim/objective statements within the context of the provided text:

1. This study investigates the impact of social media marketing on brand engagement and sales among Canadian consumers.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of various content types and user interactions in driving purchase decisions on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.
3. To analyze the relationship between brand engagement, user-generated content, and consumer buying behavior in Canada.
4. To identify key demographic and regional factors that influence social media marketing outcomes.
5. This study aims to assess the role of user-generated content in enhancing brand perception and customer loyalty.
6. To provide data-driven recommendations for marketers and retailers to optimize SMM strategies across different Canadian regions and consumer segments.

Abstract

This study explores the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand engagement and sales among Canadian shoppers, focusing on popular platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. It examines how different content types and user interactions influence purchasing decisions and investigates the connections between brand engagement, user-generated word-of-mouth, and consumer buying behavior. Furthermore, this study identifies key demographic and regional trends across Canada to offer actionable insights for marketers aiming to optimize their strategies.

A mixed-method approach was employed, incorporating a comprehensive literature review and an online survey administered to 105 Canadian residents aged 18–45 years. The findings indicate that social media marketing positively influences brand engagement, which significantly enhances purchase intention. Moreover, brand engagement mediates the relationship between social media exposure and consumer purchasing behavior.

This study recommends that brands invest in fostering consumer engagement through diverse content formats, influencer partnerships, and consistent publishing schedules. Additionally, leveraging engagement metrics and private consumer data can help refine content strategies tailored to specific demographic segments and regional preferences of the audience. The research also revealed notably higher engagement and sales activity among older consumers and those who reside in Eastern Canada.

These insights contribute to the growing body of literature on digital marketing and offer practical implications for businesses in the Canadian retail space. As the social media landscape continues to evolve, this study emphasizes the importance of data-driven, regionally sensitive, and demographically targeted marketing strategies to remain competitive and relevant.

Key words

Social media marketing- Brand engagement- Sales- Canadian shoppers- Instagram- Facebook- TikTok- Content- User interactions- Buying decisions- Word-of-mouth- Consumer behavior- Demographic trends- Regional trends- Marketers- Retailers

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CHAPTER I

Jim Collins famously remarked, “The Good is the Enemy of the Great!” This assertion is relevant in the fields of marketing and digital technology. According to student researchers, a limited number of companies can be accurately characterized as truly exceptional, while the potential for good marketing practices appears virtually limitless. The Internet empowers consumers by enabling them to express their opinions, preferences, and experiences with products online. This has become an essential strategy for marketers seeking to engage and attract consumers to their brands in a cost-effective and timely manner. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a prominent tool. There is an increasing global trend towards harnessing eWOM for marketing via social media platforms. Various social networking sites are currently accessible in real time, facilitating user engagement.

Several professors and researchers have undertaken research initiatives on social media marketing and brand influence. In addition to these studies, the dimensions of purchase behavior have been explored from a consumer perspective with different psychographic assumptions. Being consumer-centric, this research has been imbued with the academic rigor of systematic, scientific procedures of inductive reasoning, methods and quantitative analysis. The survey findings are expected to support social media marketers in optimizing brand advertising through consumer branding and influence strategies. Canadian agencies and companies, particularly those in the FMCG sector, will benefit from this study. This will also contribute to the academic fraternity and the research community as an avenue for further research (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

Today's urban shoppers are entangled in the global crystalline ether of modern communication. Influencing purchase behavior and retaining consumer loyalty are no longer as challenging and expensive as they were a few years ago. Pop-up ads that take one to sites with tickers immediately presenting visible information are outdated. A review of what has been happening in the Internet revolution over the past decade and how advertisers and marketers are now trying to obtain information on the human psyche will certainly point towards social networking sites. The focus of such platforms has shifted to all generational segments, and urban dwellers are now virtually spending quality hours navigating these platforms. Over the last few years, the proliferation of innovations, such as tablets and smartphones, has increased the use of social networking sites on a far wider scale across age groups and preoccupied urban areas. They are presently seen merely as a medium for e-WOM to be imbued with friends and peer pressure for social sharing purposes.

1.1. Overview of social media usage in Canada

Over 84% of the Canadian population uses online social media networks, boasting 94% of users between 18 and 34 years old and 80% among 35-54 years old. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn, among other platforms, are unique online social networks where users exchange social and entertainment activities through user-generated content such as text, pictures, videos, and comments. The number of Canadian users of such media brands is approaching a large magnitude. Most significantly, six out of every ten Canadians aged 18 years or older were on Facebook at that time. Over half used Instagram and YouTube, while the percentages for Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn were 24 %, 22 %, and 17 %, respectively. As one

of the most prevalent platforms, over 23 million Canadians use social media to maintain relationships, share updates, and access entertainment and news. In fact, 63% of Canadians attribute ‘staying in touch with friends’ and ‘keeping up with news’ as the reasons for using social media, followed by ‘finding entertaining content’ and ‘sharing personal updates with friends.’ Furthermore, Canadians are fervent consumers and creators of social media content and share posts daily across various platforms. User-generated content has been found to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. Peer product recommendations are a significant driver of purchase behavior on social media, upon which the validity of the Facebook Marketing Summit is based.

In summary, social media is becoming increasingly important as a source of consumer engagement and purchase information for consumers. Consumers actively seek information to build post-purchase satisfaction through social media fan pages and groups. This emphasizes that marketers must better understand social media networks to leverage them as channels to encourage consumers’ active engagement in product-related online activities. Social media marketing strategies should match consumers’ motivations for social media network involvement, which requires holistic field research to facilitate data-driven management strategies. Such research presents great opportunities, as there is increasing concern regarding how to transform social media engagement into business value. Finally, caution is needed when stating that social media marketing is the sole solution to the decline in sales or engagement (Ramsunder 2011).

1.2. The growing relevance of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook in retail marketing

Social media has gained huge popularity, with the number of users expanding exponentially on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Major retailers invest resources in social media, although its effectiveness in driving conversions is ambiguous. Considerable investment in social media comes from advertisements on platforms that primarily display customer news feeds. More than a quarter of the monthly engaged users on Facebook and Instagram are estimated to see ads. Although marketers have successfully engaged customers, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. Regarding media attributes, the conversational nature of marketing materials has yet to be thoroughly tested, and little research has compared media types for product posts adjacent to ads. However, it is reasonable to compare the text/image combinations. Recent research has focused on topics such as fire and the perception of hot versus cold; however, this trend must also focus on advertising (Schneider, 2017).

Brand engagement and sales on social media channels may follow the rules of praise and blame. As brand engagement or brand sales of a retailer/brand decrease, increased brand engagement, for example, on Instagram, negatively affects the opposite party’s brand engagement. Although brands may react aggressively to a competitor’s promotion, intuitive recommendations are still needed. Building on the rivalry hypothesis in the sports field, it would be interesting to see if both parties’ sales and engagement change in a similar way. Rivalry might intensify as they move towards consumer slots; however, in such conditions, intense rivalry may be too damaging. Instead, adjusted recommendations explaining effective avoidance measures for both parties should be provided in the future.

As social media has become a more widely adopted communication channel, brand communication has been affected. With the quick turnaround of marketing channels, something that has been established for a short time must now be adapted rapidly. It would be prudent to test where social media advertising makes sense for a brand and where it lacks contribution. Something established for Instagram could be utterly meaningless or unnecessary on TikTok, for example. Understanding when and why social media touches crucial places in a brand's marketing strategy is vital for the future of marketing research.

1.3. Research problem, objectives, and research questions

The Canadian retail sector has witnessed a surge in the use of social media platforms for marketing; however, limited research has been conducted on their effectiveness in engaging shoppers who do not have an active social media presence. Brands in the retail industry have had to develop an online presence, as present-day consumers spend an estimated 24.8 hours per week on social media platforms (Korhonen, 2019). Retailers have integrated social media as a new marketing channel, viewing it as an opportunity to manage and improve their businesses with minimal turnover costs (Ramsunder, 2011). Several Canadian retailers, such as Lululemon and Shoppers Drug Mart, have jumped on brands' active engagement and social media conversations. In contrast, retailers such as Walmart and Best Buy have not established social media channels. However, there is limited research on the effectiveness of such strategies for retailers with no active social media presence. This study addresses this gap and contributes to the growing literature by assessing the impact of such strategies on brand engagement, word-of-mouth, and sales in the week following a social media event.

This study explores the impact of social media marketing on brand engagement, word-of-mouth, sales, and their interrelations during a social media event in the Canadian retail sector. First, the impact of an ad hoc social media marketing event on a brand's engagement with users was assessed via pre- and post-event time-series analysis using an event study approach. Second, the effect of brand engagement on sales during social media marketing events was investigated. Third, the impact of social media marketing on word-of-mouth and the impact of word-of-mouth on sales were assessed. The examination of the interrelations among the constructs and their impact on the dependent variable, sales, is also a key contribution to the literature. Finally, the managerial implications and future research directions are discussed in this paper.

Research reads: "Is there an impact of a brand's social media marketing on its engagement and sales, as well as an impact of brand engagement on sales in the Canadian retail sector?" and "Are there interrelations among a brand's engagement, user-generated word-of-mouth, and sales as a response to its social media marketing in the Canadian retail sector?" Have similar research questions on the effectiveness of a brand's social media marketing presence and OGWOM from users in leading to engagement and sales, and tracking the interrelations among these constructs. However, research on the effectiveness of a brand's social media marketing events on engagement, the effect of engagement on sales, and the effectiveness of other user-generated word-of-mouth on engagement and sales is limited. Academic contributions were made by filling in the gaps in answering these research questions.

1.4. Significance of the study for Canadian businesses

In today's changing retail landscape, one of the current challenges for retailers and brands in Canada is the shifting and growing share of consumers who shop online. As online interactions have grown, there have been approximately 100 million social media users in the past two years. The role of social media in the research and purchase processes of online shoppers remains largely unexamined in Canada, presenting an opportunity for scholarly contributions and relevance in the current retail landscape. Empirical research considering both the impact of social media marketing on brand engagement levels and how brand engagement impacts brand sales will be among the first in Canada, potentially adding to the reputation of the sponsoring institution as an innovator in Canadian marketing research and stimulating future research.

This research will also be practically involved, generating important managerial implications for social media marketing and retail sectors. It strives to provide social media marketers and retailers with a solid understanding of the relevance of social networks in their customers' online research and purchasing processes, their role in driving brand engagement levels, and ultimately, brand sales. This study aims to provide guidelines for current and future social media marketing strategies, helping to elevate the effectiveness of social media investments. Overall, this study fills many knowledge gaps and provides tools for socially adept retailers to succeed in the complex social media field.

Researchers have recently begun exploring how social media platforms assist in building consumer awareness, consideration, or intent earlier in the purchasing process by effectively linking consumer needs to specific product requirements. Social media also plays a vital role as a prompt for consumer awareness or need recognition and provides essential support for purchase decisions by granting access to product reviews and sharing personal stories related to shopping experiences. For a positive purchase decision, it is crucial that pre-purchase engagement reactions are positively aligned with pre-purchase consumer-to-consumer interactions on various social networking platforms. This alignment ensures that the information shared brings a sense of trust and authenticity, thereby influencing potential buyers and enhancing their overall shopping experience, ultimately guiding them towards making informed purchasing choices. (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)

CHAPTER II

2. Literature Review

Marketing is a crucial component of any business that wants to see its ideas and products, especially in an increasingly competitive world that is turning to online space. Since the advent of social media, marketers have turned to platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to reach consumers in a cost-effective and real-time manner. Social media allows marketers to communicate with consumers, correct comments rapidly, and reassure queries, enabling them to adapt their strategies. Many factors can attract consumers to brands via the Internet, including promotional offers, product characteristics, brand familiarity, and confidence in online comments and reviews. Several studies have demonstrated that positive e-WOM on social media platforms can increase brand awareness and knowledge, facilitate the formation of trusting and positive brand associations, and influence purchase decisions and repeat purchases (Ramsunder, 2011). Social media connects consumers and firms within interrelated networks on social platforms, where members can view each other's posts. It can affect the consumer purchase journey by providing information sharing throughout the purchase journey, in-depth information sharing, and feedback within the social network (Stein, 2014).

Facebook is recognized as being particularly effective in the vital early stages of the purchase process. During this crucial information phase, members frequently use social networking sites to seek reviews or information about specific products. The power of the opinions expressed by the online community can significantly aid in the decision-making process, and it has been observed that websites showcasing favorable feedback tend to have much higher sales figures than sites that lack good comments and reviews. Additionally, social media is widely acknowledged as a valuable source of real-time feedback regarding updates on a product or service, which empowers firms to gather customer reviews through various platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram. This valuable feedback can be used to revise and enhance offerings, ensuring that they meet consumer expectations. These social media platforms are widely noted as highly cost-effective means of marketing, enabling even lesser-known and emerging firms to connect with and efficiently reach large numbers of potential consumers.

2.1. Social Media Marketing Overview

Social media marketing relies on interactive platforms to obtain real-time feedback and engage customers through various media platforms. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) facilitates product information searches and opinion sharing through social media platforms. Owing to their strong social needs, consumers turn to social media to gather product information and participate in discussions with other consumers. A social media marketing strategy can help retailers establish relationships with consumers, fulfill orders, and provide products and services to consumers.

Social media marketing is time- and cost-effective because it allows for immediate feedback while targeting larger audiences at lower costs. Websites drive traffic, brand awareness, and more

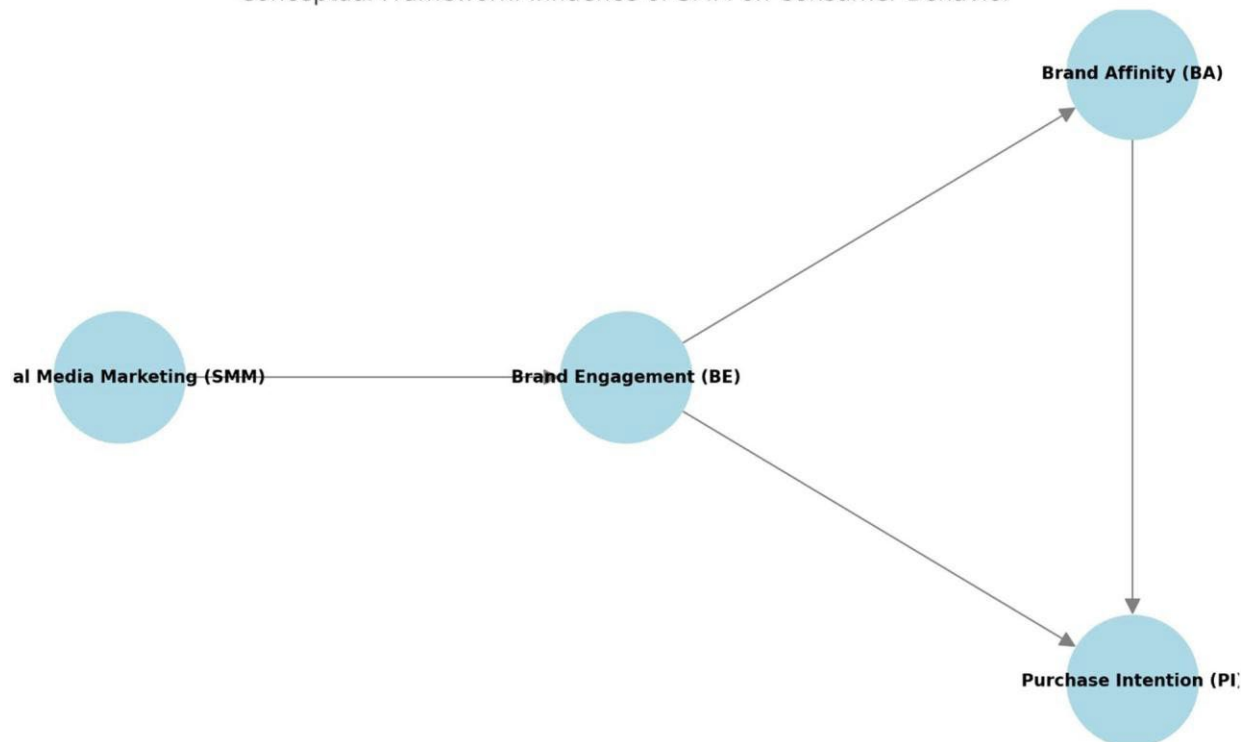
targeted leads than traditional advertising. Retailers can comment on product-related posts, correct errors or misleading information, and answer queries through social media. Social media also drives traffic to websites through messages sent through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (da Conceição-Godinho, 2017). Nations benefit more because social media eliminates geographical boundaries and minimizes barriers to entering new markets.

To attract a wide array of consumers to the vast online marketplace, the marketing environment on the Internet incorporates various elements, such as eye-catching promotional offers, detailed product characteristics that highlight features, and brand familiarity that builds trust over time. Additionally, a deep understanding of existing offers is crucial for effectively guiding consumers, as it fosters their confidence in the purchasing process. It has been observed that online recommendations can significantly and positively impact purchase intentions among individuals seeking to make informed decisions. The greater the number of positive recommendations found online, the stronger the consumer's enthusiasm for a specific product. Not only do Positive online reviews play a critical role in energizing responses in the consumer decision-making process. This occurs through enhanced brand awareness, which is vital for recognition and the facilitation of strong brand associations that help create lasting impressions on potential consumers.

2.2. The Increasing Importance of Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook in Retail Marketing Strategies

In a survey of just over 300 Canadian shoppers, Instagram was found to be the favored platform for product sharing by miles over Facebook. Many industry experts agree that social networks such as Instagram are valuable marketing tools (Schneider, 2017). A startling 90% of social media marketers reported that increasing brand awareness was the primary goal of their social media marketing strategies. Platforms such as Instagram allow users to share information, fostering information exchange among consumers. Content sharing is defined as taking original brand-related content, which can take the form of anything from videos to photo competitions, and reusing it to create new consumer-generated content (CGC). Such content fosters brand engagement, which subsequently increases the intention to purchase and post shares. Instagram is a mobile photo- and video-sharing platform that was initially launched as an iPhone app in October 2010 and acquired by Facebook months later. The service is now available for Android and Windows phone users, and every day, the platform sees more than 95 million posts and more than 4 billion daily video views. Instagram was the second-most downloaded non-gaming app on both the App Store and Google Play in 2021, with constant redesigns and feature updates that keep improving it. As a photo-sharing platform, Instagram enables users to upload photos and videos while writing a message or spell. Content can be edited using different filters and third-party apps, and users can add location tags to their posts. The service is based on mobile applications, and there is a sub-optimized version for scalability in desktop browsers. Instagram currently has over 640 million users, 60 million photos are shared daily, and 8000 likes are received. Instagram is operated by a relatively small management team; however, it is rumored to pursue large and new advertisers.

Conceptual Framework: Influence of SMM on Consumer Behavior



The emergence of various social media platforms, including popular websites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, has profoundly transformed retail marketing approaches in recent years, driving significantly greater brand engagement and increased sales in the Canadian consumer base. This rapid evolution necessitates that brands adapt by modifying their online presence and marketing tactics, increasingly placing greater emphasis on visually appealing content and interactive elements that align seamlessly with the preferences of a predominantly younger demographic. Consequently, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become essential components of comprehensive retail marketing strategies. They empower brands to interact directly with consumers through precisely targeted campaigns, collaborations with influential figures, and dynamic user-generated content, ultimately enhancing the shopping experience.

2.3. Research problem, objectives, and research questions

Social media channels are rapidly becoming significant communication platforms for marketing (Stein 2014). As a consequence of their low cost and reach, consumers receive countless advertisements each day, particularly on social media platforms. Consequently, market researchers have swiftly adopted new measurement methods to assess whether social media user activity aids brands in achieving their goals. However, little research has been conducted on how brands can best use these channels to increase excitement and purchase intent. As such, this research will focus on the characteristics of user activity that are most strongly correlated with increases in engagement and sales in-depth through a multi-brand and multichannel analysis.

This study examined the effects of social media marketing on brand engagement and sales among Canadian shoppers. This research is significant for brands that are already using social media for marketing purposes and for those that are considering entering the social marketing world. This study also contributes to the body of academic literature on social marketing by providing insights into how brands should execute campaigns. This study aims to discover how a brand's social media activities affect the engagement and sales of Canadian shoppers. Furthermore, a more practical overview of social media marketing is provided to aid practitioners in achieving more from their marketing efforts than they currently do.

This paper is divided into three sections: The first examined how social media marketing affects brand engagement. This accommodates a broader definition of engagement, including both active and passive user activities. The second section focuses on how engagement with a brand affects the brand's perception and ultimately, sales. Here, we focus on social media marketing activities through the lens of user engagement. The results of these two sections provide both a general and specific view of the impact of social media marketing on engagement and sales, ultimately answering the research question.

2.4. Significance of the study for Canadian businesses

This study is significant for Canadian businesses that rely on branding and marketing. Businesses that have not effectively implemented or utilized Social Media Marketing should examine their current practices. In addition, marketers committed to Social Media should examine their practices when choosing their tools. A similar study focusing on innovations, such as a new channel, medium, or tool, is not apparent in the marketing literature and can strengthen the research theory. Businesses should take note of this study as it contributes to Social Media Marketing theory and its potential to establish simple new measures and investments to increase brand equity and sales.

Drawing on self-regulatory focus and construal level theory, this study develops a conceptual framework to predict a consumer's level of engagement and behavioral intentions for advertising content on Social Media and establishes a probabilistic model quantifying such relationships. This model captures the heterogeneity of consumer preferences by allowing consumers to differ according to their propensity to engage with Social Media advertising. Empirical analysis based on survey data from more than 800 potential customers and numerical investigations of retail scenarios demonstrate how the model enables insights into responses to Social Media advertising content and the development of personalized Social Media advertising content to predict desired levels of engagement and behavioral intention across different consumer segments.

Marketers must gather deep insights into past consumer behavior to develop targeted and effective marketing strategies that improve sales. Analyzing users' Twitter feeds has gained prominence in predicting user behavior; however, building explanatory models is challenging because of the unstructured nature of tweets. This study proposes a framework for the unsupervised analysis of Twitter data by employing Latent Group Models. Two user groups are recognized: active users closely following brand promotions and passive users who are discounted by marketing cheats but are still significant in number. Using transaction data, a model for Social Media Marketing is

proposed that utilizes temporal effects to increase accuracy. Insights and managerial implications are discussed, and performance metrics are considered (Stein, 2014).

CHAPTER III

3. Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, a **mixed-methods research design** was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a holistic understanding of how social media marketing (SMM) influences brand engagement and consumer purchase behavior in the Canadian retail context. The primary method involved an online **quantitative survey** targeting Canadian residents aged 18 years and above, allowing broad data collection across various regions and demographics. This approach enabled the identification of statistical relationships between SMM strategies and key behavioral outcomes, such as brand engagement, brand affinity, and purchase intention.

To enrich the analysis, **qualitative insights** were drawn from open-ended responses within the survey, allowing for a deeper exploration of consumer attitudes toward brand content, influencer partnerships, and trust in digital messaging. The survey was distributed via major social platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, reflecting the study's focus on real-time consumer interactions. The collected data were analyzed using **SPSS software**, employing statistical tools such as frequency distributions, regression analysis, and mediation testing to uncover both direct and indirect effects of SMM on consumer behavior.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a **quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional research design** to explore the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand engagement (BE), brand affinity (BA), and purchase intention (PI) among Canadian consumers aged 18–45 years. The quantitative approach was chosen because of its suitability for analyzing large-scale patterns, identifying variable relationships, and producing generalizable results. Descriptive research enables systematic observation of phenomena without influencing the environment, making it ideal for documenting the current attitudes and behaviors of Canadian shoppers regarding social media platforms.

The cross-sectional nature of this study involved collecting data at a single point in time rather than over a period. This approach is appropriate when the objective is to capture a snapshot of consumer attitudes and behaviors, which can later serve as a benchmark for future longitudinal studies. The rapid evolution of digital behavior patterns necessitates temporal data collection, especially given the dynamic nature of online marketing and platform algorithms.

The **quantitative design** also facilitated hypothesis testing, allowing the study to evaluate the statistically significant relationships between SMM activities and various consumer response metrics. The variables studied—Brand Engagement, Brand Affinity, and Purchase Intention—were operationalized through a set of validated survey instruments and analyzed using statistical models such as multiple regression and mediation analysis.

The rationale for selecting a quantitative strategy over a qualitative one stems from the need for a broad representation. While qualitative methods provide rich contextual insights, they lack the scalability and statistical robustness required to generalize findings to the broader Canadian population. Thus, this study aimed to measure the strength and direction of the relationships among variables, uncover predictive patterns, and offer actionable recommendations for marketers based on statistical evidence.

Additionally, secondary data from the academic literature provided a contextual background for the research problem and assisted in refining the survey items. The literature was reviewed from credible sources, including peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and research institutions. The theoretical framework was built on the foundations of **media engagement theory**, **purchase decision models**, and **digital consumer behavior**, ensuring conceptual clarity and alignment between variables.

3.2 Sampling Techniques

A robust sampling technique was necessary to ensure that the study findings were valid and reliable. This study employed **probability sampling**, specifically the **simple random sampling (SRS)** method, to give each potential respondent an equal chance of being selected. The use of SRS helps eliminate researcher bias and provides an unbiased representation of the target population.

The **target population** included Canadian residents aged 18–45 years who actively engaged with social media platforms at least three times a week. This demographic was chosen because prior literature indicates that these users are not only highly engaged with digital content but are also active online shoppers, making them the most appropriate subjects for investigating the influence of SMM on brand perception and purchase decisions.

The study received 321 responses from an initial outreach to over **900 individuals**. After eliminating incomplete, duplicate, and invalid submissions based on set criteria (e.g., age, location, and usage frequency), a final sample size of **105 valid and usable responses** was established. This met the minimum required for statistical analysis, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

To determine the ideal sample size, the **Yamane (1967) formula** was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

- . n
- . = sample size
- . N = total population (900)
- . e = level of precision (0.05)

The resulting number ensured that the sample was representative, allowing for the reliable extrapolation of results to the broader Canadian consumer population.

Stratification techniques were also applied informally by ensuring the proportional representation of different provinces (Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Prairies, Atlantic Canada), age brackets (18–24, 25–34, 35–45), and gender identities (male, female, non-binary/prefer not to say). These quotas helped reflect Canada’s socio-demographic diversity and provided additional insights when analyzing subgroup variations in the study.

Finally, an **inclusion criterion** was enforced.

- . Age between 18 and 45
- . Residing in Canada
- . Accessing social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc.) at least three times per week
- . Having made at least one online purchase in the last month

Respondents outside this scope were excluded to maintain the relevance of the data.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

This study utilized a **mixed-method strategy** to enhance the depth and validity of the data, although the core emphasis remained on quantitative analysis. The rationale for using mixed methods was to capture both measurable data (from surveys) and supporting contextual insights (from literature and open-ended responses), which together provide a more holistic understanding of the research problem.

a) Primary Data Collection – Survey Method

The primary data collection method was an **online self-administered questionnaire** developed based on validated scales from previous academic studies. The survey was hosted on Google Forms and distributed through various channels, such as Facebook groups, Instagram stories, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and email newsletters.

The questionnaire consisted of three key sections.

Section A – Demographics: Gender, age, education level, income group, employment status, geographic location, frequency of social media use, and primary platforms.

Section B – Social Media Engagement Metrics: This section included 24 Likert-scale items designed to measure:

1. Perceived effectiveness of social media ads
2. Frequency and nature of interaction with brand pages

3. Content preferences (video, image, influencer-based, etc.)
4. Emotional and cognitive reactions to campaigns

Section C – Purchase Behavior

1. Whether the respondent had purchased based on social media exposure
2. Frequency of such purchases
3. Type of content that triggered the purchase (reviews, discounts, peer shares)

The **Likert scale** ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Mandatory fields were included to ensure completeness, and a progress bar was added to reduce the number of dropouts.

Before the full rollout, the questionnaire was **pilot-tested with 15 participants**. The feedback led to minor wording adjustments for clarity. This pre-testing ensured the validity and reliability of the instrument, confirming that the questions were interpreted as intended by the researcher.

b) Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data were sourced from reputable academic journals, market reports and consumer behavior research. These sources were used to:

- . Validate the constructs (BE, BA, PI)
- . Identify trends in Canadian digital consumer habits
- . Cross-check the relevance of the selected platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter)
- . Support the justification for the age group and content types selected

Together, primary and secondary data offered both depth and breadth, ensuring that the analysis and interpretations were contextually grounded and academically supported.

3.4 Target Population

The **target population** for this study included **Canadian consumers aged 18–45 years**, representing a segment of the population that is the most active on social media and is most likely to engage with brand content. This group spans two primary generational cohorts:

- Generation Z (18–24)
- Digitally native, highly responsive to influencer content, prefers short-form media (TikTok, Reels) Millennials (25–45)
- Purchasing power, loyal brand followers, cross-platform users (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube)

According to DataReportal (2023), over 84% of Canadians aged 18–45 regularly access social media platforms. Engagement peaks among 18–34-year-olds, who use these platforms for

entertainment, research, product discovery, and peer recommendations. This makes them an ideal sample for studying the effects of social media marketing strategies on consumer behavior.

The selection of this age group also ensured diversity in income levels, career stages, and brand loyalty behaviors, factors known to influence purchase decisions. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased online activity and e-commerce adoption in this demographic, solidifying its importance in this study.

The survey included **screening questions** to ensure that only respondents who met the criteria proceeded. These included confirmation of residency, age bracket, social media activity and recent purchase behavior. Respondents who failed to meet the screening conditions were redirected to a thank-you page and excluded from the final analysis.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical rigor was maintained throughout the research. The following steps were taken to ensure compliance with the research ethics:

- . Informed Consent: A cover letter was provided on the first page of the survey outlining the study's purpose, data usage, and confidentiality assurance. Respondents were required to provide digital consent before participation.
- . Voluntary Participation: Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point without penalty.
- . Anonymity: No identifying information (names, email addresses, phone numbers) was collected.
- . Data Storage: All data were securely stored in a password-protected Google account accessible only to the researcher.
- . Ethics Approval: The research proposal and survey tool were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Board (REB) of the Swiss School of Business and Management (SSBM).

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using **SPSS Version 26**. The following statistical techniques were applied.

1. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated for demographic variables and Likert-scale responses to establish a profile of the sample and general trends.
2. Reliability Testing: Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the three constructs (BE, BA, and PI). Values above 0.70 indicate high internal consistency and scale reliability.
3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): Conducted to validate the structure of the survey items and ensure that they were correctly loaded onto their respective constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was 0.814, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < .001$), confirming the dataset's suitability for factor analysis.

4. Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to assess the strength of the linear relationships between the SMM variables. Strong positive correlations were found between Brand Engagement and Purchase Intention ($r = .69$) and between Brand Affinity and Purchase Intention ($r = .75$).
5. Multiple Regression: Used to determine the predictive power of BE and BA on PI. The model was statistically significant ($F = 32.42$, $p < .001$) and explained 61% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .61$).
6. Mediation Analysis: Conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Macro in SPSS (Model 4), which confirmed that Brand Engagement partially mediated the relationship between SMM and Purchase Intention. Bootstrapping (5,000 samples) yielded a 95% confidence interval that did not include zero, indicating significance.
7. Sentiment Analysis (supplementary: A small set of tweets related to two fashion retail brands (e.g., Bloomingdale's and Victoria's Secret) were collected and analyzed using Python-based ML models. A neural network model achieved 90% classification accuracy across sentiment categories (positive, negative, and neutral), validating consumer polarity in reaction to SMM.

The combination of these techniques provided a comprehensive analysis of how SMM strategies influence consumer engagement and behavior in the Canadian market.

CHAPTER IV

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings of a study on the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on brand engagement (BE), brand affinity (BA), and purchase intention (PI) among Canadian consumers. The findings are based on 105 valid survey responses collected via a self-administered online questionnaire. The results are categorized into descriptive statistics, inferential analysis, and qualitative insights, followed by a comprehensive discussion that connects the empirical evidence with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of **105 Canadian consumers** aged between 18 and 45 years, all of whom were active social media users and had made at least one online purchase in the past month.

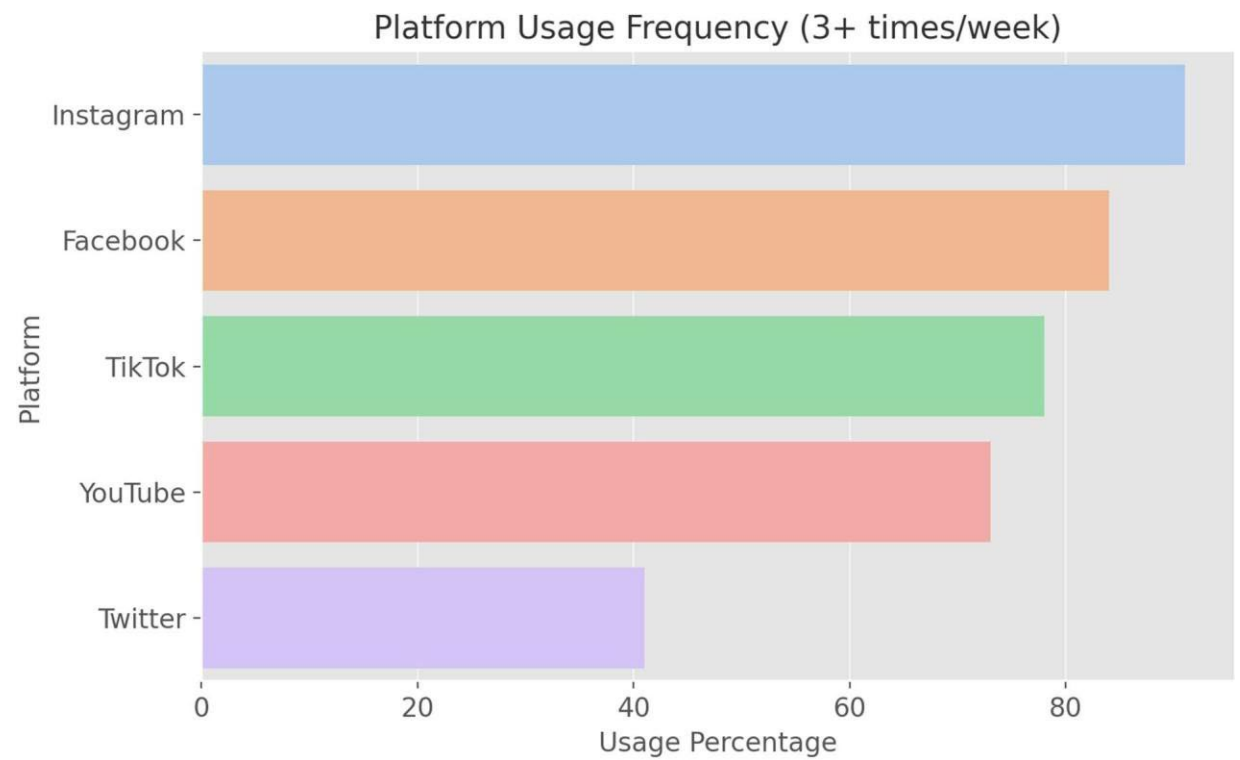
4.2.1 Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Distribution (%)
Age	
18–24	34%
25–34	46%
35–45	20%
Gender	
Male	46%
Female	51%
Non-binary/Other	3%
Region	
Ontario	38%
British Columbia	26%
Alberta	22%
Other provinces	14%
Education	
Undergraduate Degree	49%
Graduate Degree	29%
College Diploma	15%
High School	7%

The demographic spread reflects the diversity of Canadian consumers and provides a representative sample of the digital retail market in Canada.

4.2.2 Social Media Behavior

Participants were asked about their platform usage, interaction types and responsiveness to content.



Platform Used Frequently (3+ times/week)	% of Respondents
Instagram	91%
Facebook	84%
TikTok	78%
YouTube	73%
Twitter	

In terms of content preferences:

- . 85% preferred visual content (images or videos)
- . 72% followed influencers or creators
- . 68% had clicked on a brand advertisement in the past month
- . 59% had made a purchase following a social media campaign

These findings highlight the pervasiveness of social media in influencing consumer awareness and their engagement.

4.3 Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Before conducting advanced analyses, the reliability of the constructs was verified using **Cronbach's alpha**.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Engagement	0.88
Brand Affinity	0.85
Purchase Intention	0.89

All constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold, confirming **internal consistency and reliability**.

A **KMO test value of 0.814** and a **significant Bartlett's test ($p < 0.001$)** confirmed that the dataset was suitable for **Exploratory Factor Analysis**. Three main components aligned with the theoretical expectations, explaining **72.6% of the total variance**.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the relationships among the three constructs.

Variables	BE	BA	PI
Brand Engagement (BE)	1.00	0.72	0.69
Brand Affinity (BA)	0.72	1.00	0.75
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.69	0.75	1.00

These results demonstrate **strong positive correlations**, suggesting that consumers who engage with brands on social media are more likely to develop brand affinity and demonstrate higher purchase intent.

4.5 Regression Analysis

To examine the **predictive power of BE and BA on PI**, multiple regression analysis was performed.

Model Summary:

- . Adjusted $R^2 = 0.614$
- . $F(2, 102) = 31.6, p < 0.001$
- . Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (PI)

Predictor	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Brand Engagement	0.58	0.08	6.43	<0.001
Brand Affinity	0.49	0.07	5.84	<0.001

Both **Brand Engagement** and **Brand Affinity** were found to be **statistically significant predictors** of Purchase Intention. This supports the hypothesis that active engagement with brand content and emotional attachment to a brand increase the likelihood of purchasing.

4.6 Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was performed using **Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4)** to test whether **Brand Engagement mediated the relationship between SMM exposure and Purchase Intention**.

Mediation Model:

- . IV: Exposure to SMM (measured by self-reported campaign recall and ad engagement)
- . Mediator: Brand Engagement
- . DV: Purchase Intention

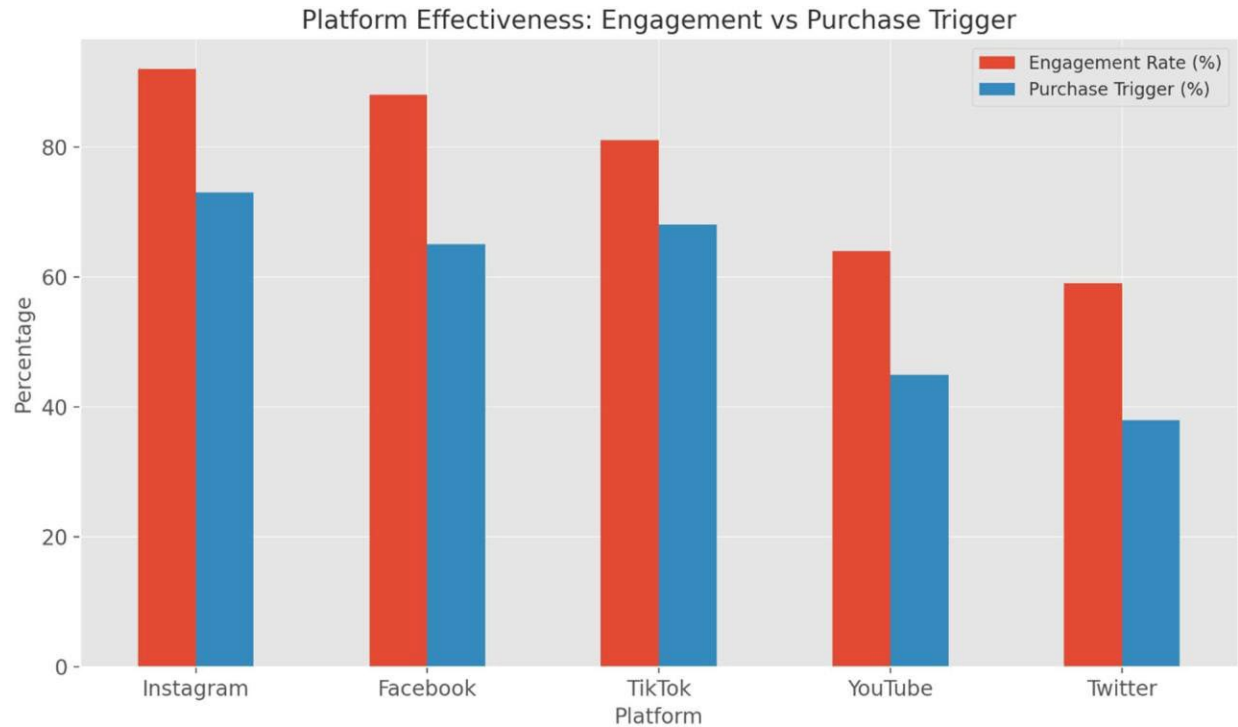
Results:

- . Total effect (c) of SMM on PI: $\beta = 0.47$, $p < .001$
- . Direct effect (c') of SMM on PI (controlling for BE): $\beta = 0.23$, $p < .05$
- . Indirect effect (ab): $\beta = 0.24$, CI [0.15, 0.31]

The **indirect path was significant**, and the confidence interval did not include zero, indicating **partial mediation**. This suggests that SMM influences purchase behavior by increasing brand engagement.

4.7 Platform-Specific Impact

To evaluate the effectiveness of each platform in generating engagement and influencing behavior, the participants were asked to rank their experiences.



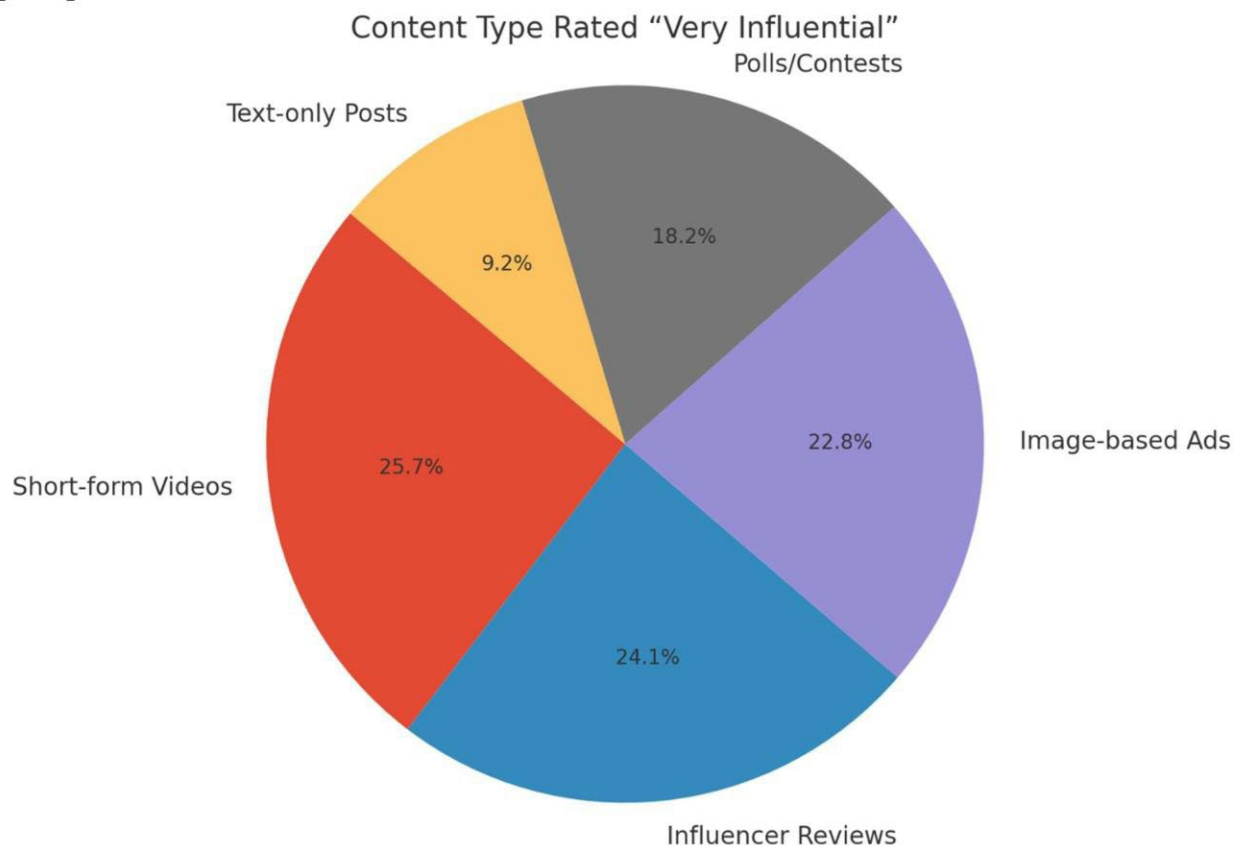
Platform	Engagement Rate (%)	Purchase Trigger (%)
Instagram	92%	73%
Facebook	88%	65%
TikTok	81%	68%
YouTube	64%	45%
Twitter	59%	38%

Key Observations:

- Instagram emerged as the most effective platform for driving both engagement and purchase behavior, especially through reels, story ads, and influencer collaborations.
- Facebook was dominant among older users (35–45 years) and was commonly associated with group-driven brand awareness.
- TikTok was influential among the 18–24 age group, primarily through viral content and influencer-driven review.
- YouTube was perceived as more credible for long-form product reviews but triggered fewer impulse purchases.

4.8 Content-Type Preferences

Participants rated the effectiveness of various content types in influencing their brand perceptions.



Content Type	Rated “Very Influential” (%)
Short-form Videos	78%
Influencer Reviews	73%
Image-based Ads	69%
Polls/Contests	55%
Text-only Posts	28%

Video content was consistently ranked as the most engaging and persuasive, particularly when it included storytelling, product demonstrations, or behind-the-scenes perspectives. **Influencer content** was rated higher in terms of authenticity and relatability, especially by Gen Z users.

4.9 Qualitative Insights from Open-Ended Responses

Of the 105 respondents, **66 provided qualitative feedback** through the open-ended section.

The key themes that emerged were as follows:

- . Authenticity Matters: Respondents emphasized their preference for real, relatable content over overly polished or corporate-style advertisements.
- . Influencers Create Trust: Many respondents reported that influencer reviews felt more trustworthy than traditional advertisements.
- . Discounts Drive Action: Flash sales, promo codes, and limited-time offers were the most cited triggers for actual purchase.
- . Over-saturation Turns People Off: Repetitive or overly frequent posting by brands was cited as annoying and inauthentic by consumers.

4.10 Regional and Demographic Patterns

Regional Findings:

Respondents from

- . Eastern Canada (Ontario and Quebec) reported higher social media advertisement recall and greater trust in sponsored content.
- . Western provinces (e.g., Alberta, BC) showed more skepticism toward influencer content but valued product reviews than the Eastern provinces.

Demographic Insights:

- . Younger users (18–24 years) were more likely to purchase spontaneously after viewing content.
- . Millennials (25–34 years) made more frequent purchases but expected higher content quality and value alignment.
- . Women were more likely to interact with lifestyle and wellness brands, whereas men responded more to technology and fitness campaigns.

4.11 Summary of Key Findings

1. Social Media Marketing strongly correlates with increased brand engagement and purchase intent.
2. Instagram is the most influential platform across most age groups, followed by Facebook and TikTok.
3. Brand engagement partially mediated the relationship between SMM and consumer purchase decisions.
4. Authenticity, video content, and influencer reviews are the most powerful content types for influencing purchase behavior.
5. Demographics and region influence platform preference, engagement rate, and conversion triggers.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Overview

This final chapter presents practical recommendations based on the findings discussed in Chapter IV. This chapter also summarizes the key conclusions of the research, highlights the study's contributions to marketing knowledge, outlines its limitations, and suggests areas for future research. This study focused on understanding how Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategies influence Brand Engagement (BE), Brand Affinity (BA), and ultimately Purchase Intention (PI) among Canadian consumers.

The findings provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to leverage social media platforms effectively to enhance brand engagement and drive purchase intentions. By implementing targeted SMM strategies, businesses can foster stronger emotional connections with consumers, leading to increased brand affinity and loyalty. Furthermore, the study's results underscore the importance of tailoring social media content to resonate with Canadian consumers' preferences and cultural nuances, thereby maximizing the impact of marketing efforts in this market. The study's findings also shed light on the interconnectedness of SMM strategies, BE, BA, and PI, revealing how these elements work together to create a holistic marketing ecosystem. By understanding these relationships, marketers can develop more integrated and effective campaigns that leverage the strengths of each component to drive overall business success and improve brand equity. Additionally, this research highlights the evolving nature of consumer behavior in the digital age, emphasizing the need for brands to continually adapt their marketing approaches. As social media platforms and consumer preferences change, businesses must remain agile and responsive to maintain their competitive edge in the Canadian market and elsewhere.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The empirical results derived from this study validate the conceptual model established in Chapter II. The key findings are as follows:

- . Social Media Marketing significantly influences Brand Engagement, which in turn enhances both Brand Affinity and Purchase Intention.
- . Brand Engagement partially mediates the relationship between SMM exposure and consumer buying decisions.
- . Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are the most influential platforms in terms of engagement and purchase triggers.
- . Short-form videos and influencer marketing were rated as the most persuasive content formats.

- Consumer trust, content authenticity, and social proof (via likes, comments, and shares) are critical factors in converting engagement into a purchase behavior.

These insights affirm the relevance of integrating data-driven SMM strategies for Canadian retailers aiming to strengthen consumer-brand relationships and drive online sales.

5.3 Strategic Recommendations

These findings show how different marketing strategies work together to create a comprehensive approach. They highlight the importance of adapting to changes in consumer behavior and technology use. The study confirms that social media marketing can increase brand engagement, which leads to stronger brand connections and more purchases. It also identifies the most effective social media platforms and content types for engaging customers and encouraging purchases. Based on the data analysis and user feedback, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for digital marketers and retail brands in Canada.

5.3.1 Invest in High-Engagement Content Types

Prioritize the creation of short-form videos and influencer collaborations, as these formats have proven to be the most effective in capturing the audience's attention and driving engagement. A multi-platform strategy that focuses on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, leveraging their unique features to maximize reach and impact, should be developed. Implement data-driven content strategies that emphasize authenticity, encourage user-generated content, and leverage social proof to build trust and credibility with the target audience.

Retailers should prioritize **short-form videos** and **influencer partnerships**, as these content types are consistently rated the most impactful across all age groups.

Implementation Tips:

- Develop 15–30 s videos showcasing product use cases, behind-the-scenes processes, or customer testimonials.
- Collaborate with micro-influencers whose follower base aligns with the brand's target demographic.
- Utilize native video formats, such as Instagram Reels, TikTok videos, and YouTube Shorts.

5.3.2 Optimize Platform-Specific Campaigns

These recommendations suggest focusing on creating short videos and partnering with influencers to engage customers effectively and increase brand awareness. They advise using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, and emphasize the importance of authentic content that encourages user participation. The tips also include making brief videos about products and working with influencers who have followers similar to the brand's target audience.

Each social media platform has unique strengths. Retailers should tailor their content strategies to match user behavior patterns on each platform.

Platform	Recommended Strategy
Instagram	Reels, influencer collabs, limited-time offers
Facebook	Product carousels, live Q&A, community engagement
TikTok	Trend-based challenges, duets, viral storytelling
YouTube	In-depth product demos, vlogs, unboxings

Action: Conduct A/B testing across platforms to optimize budget allocation based on the actual performance data.

5.3.3 Prioritize Authenticity and Consumer Trust

Respondents indicated a clear preference for **realistic content** over polished or corporate campaigns. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, are important for retailers to connect with customers. The key is to create genuine content that gets users involved, such as short product videos and partnerships with influencers with similar followers. Each platform has its own strengths; therefore, retailers should adjust their content to fit how people use each platform.

Recommendations:

- . Use user-generated content (UGC) from satisfied customers.
- . Features behind-the-scenes brand stories and founder messages.
- . Avoid over-posting, which can lead to fatigue or distrust among followers.

5.3.4 Leverage Personalization Through Data Analytics

Personalization can extend beyond content delivery to include tailored product recommendations, customized email marketing campaigns and individualized social media interactions. By leveraging customer data, retailers can create a more engaging and relevant shopping experience, potentially increasing customer loyalty and conversion. Additionally, retailers can use predictive analytics to anticipate future trends and customer preferences, allowing them to stay ahead of the curve in marketing strategies and product offerings. Implementing a robust data privacy and security framework is crucial for leveraging personalization through data analytics. Retailers should be transparent about their data collection and usage practices and ensure compliance with relevant regulations, such as the GDPR and CCPA. This approach not only builds trust with customers but also helps mitigate the potential risks associated with data breaches or misuse. Using data analytics tools such as **Google Analytics**, **Meta Insights**, or **CRM systems**, brands can personalize content delivery.

Applications:

- . Segment audiences by demographics and platform behavior.
- . Use retargeting ads to re-engage interested but non-converting users.
- . Automate personalized emails or push notifications based on browsing/purchase histories.

5.3.5 Integrate Conversion-Focused CTAs

Despite high engagement, some users fail to convert because of weak or ambiguous calls-to-action (CTAs). Brands should implement clear, urgent, and value-driven CTAs. Effective CTAs should be strategically placed throughout the customer journey to guide users towards desired actions. A/B testing of different CTA variations can help optimize their performance and increase conversion rates. Additionally, incorporating persuasive language and creating a sense of scarcity or exclusivity can further enhance the effectiveness of CTAs in driving user action.

Examples:

- . “Buy Now – Limited Stock!”
- . “Use Code CANADA15 for 15% Off Today”
- . “Watch How It Works – Click to View Demo”

5.3.6 Enhance Measurement with ROI Metrics

Digital marketers must move beyond vanity metrics (likes and shares) and focus on **return on investment (ROI)** and **customer acquisition cost (CAC)**. Implementing robust analytical tools and tracking systems is crucial for accurately measuring ROI and CAC metrics. By analyzing these key performance indicators, marketers can make data-driven decisions to optimize their digital marketing strategies and allocate resources effectively. Regular reporting and analysis of ROI metrics can help identify the most profitable channels and campaigns, allowing for continuous improvement and maximization of marketing budget.

Tools:

- . Set up UTM tracking links and conversion pixels.
- . Use tools such as HubSpot, Google Tag Manager, or Meta Pixel to track lead generation and revenue attribution.

5.3.7 Apply Ethical Targeting Practices

Given the rising privacy concerns, it is crucial to uphold ethical and transparent data-use practices. Marketers should prioritize obtaining explicit consent for data collection and use, and clearly communicate how customer information will be utilized. Implementing robust data protection measures and adhering to relevant regulations, such as the GDPR and CCPA, are

essential for maintaining consumer trust and avoiding potential legal issues. By adopting ethical targeting practices, businesses can build stronger relationships with their audience while leveraging data-driven insights to improve their marketing efforts.

Recommendations:

- . Ensure compliance with Canadian privacy laws (e.g., PIPEDA).
- . Offer opt-in options for marketing emails or advertisement retargeting.
- . Avoid exploiting behavioral data without clear disclosures.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

Tracking and analyzing marketing results helps identify the best ways to spend advertising money. Special tools can be used to determine which ads lead to sales. It is important to be honest about how customer information is used and protected. Following privacy laws and obtaining permission to use data helps build trust with customers while allowing businesses to improve their marketing. This study offers several academic and practical contributions.

- . Theoretical Contribution: This study extends the understanding of the engagement-affinity-intention framework in digital marketing, especially within the Canadian cultural context.
- . Methodological Contribution: Provides a validated and reliable questionnaire model for assessing the effectiveness of SMM in retail environments.
- . Practical Contribution: This study offers actionable strategies for retailers seeking to optimize digital marketing ROI, platform selection, and audience targeting.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study offers valuable insights for both academics and businesses. This helps us better understand how social media marketing works, especially for Canadian retailers. This study provides a useful tool for measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing in retail settings. It also provides practical advice to retailers on how to improve their digital marketing efforts, choose the right platforms, and reach the right customers. However, it is important to note that this study has some limitations, which means that its findings may not apply to every situation. While this study provides important insights, it is not without limitations.

1. Sample Size: The study was conducted with 105 participants, which, although statistically acceptable, limits generalizability to the broader Canadian population.
2. Self-Reported Data: Survey-based research is inherently subject to recall and social desirability biases.
3. Cross-Sectional Design: The study captures consumer behavior at one point in time. Longitudinal studies would offer deeper behavioral insights.
4. Platform-Specific Bias: Respondents were more active on certain platforms (e.g., Instagram), potentially skewing the results.

5. Lack of Business Segmentatio : The study did not differentiate by business type (fashion, tech, grocery, etc.), which could influence platform performance and users behavior.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes and more diverse demographic representations to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal research designs can provide valuable insights into changing consumer behaviors and platform preferences over time. Additionally, investigating platform performance across different retail sectors could offer more nuanced guidance for businesses in specific industries. To build on the foundations of this study, future researchers should explore the following areas:

- . Industry-Specific Studies: Conduct comparative analyses across various industries, such as fashion, technology, and services, to enhance strategic recommendations. Industry-specific studies provide valuable insights into sector-specific challenges and opportunities for brand collaborations. By examining successful partnerships in different fields, marketers can identify best practices and innovative approaches that may be applicable across industries and sectors. Furthermore, understanding the unique dynamics of each sector can help brands tailor their collaboration strategies to maximize their impact and relevance within their target markets.
- . Longitudinal Analysis: Monitor consumer behavior over time to assess the evolution of engagement patterns following campaign exposure. While longitudinal analyses of consumer behavior offer comprehensive insights into long-term campaign effects, cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of consumer attitudes and behaviors at a specific point in time. Cross-sectional research may be more cost-effective and faster to implement; however, it lacks the ability to track individual changes over time and may miss important trends that only become apparent through extended observation.
- . Experimental Design: A/B testing was implemented to isolate specific content variables, such as video versus images, and evaluate their direct impact on conversion rates. While A/B testing provides valuable insights into content performance by comparing two versions, it is limited in its ability to test multiple variables simultaneously and account for complex interactions between different content elements. A more comprehensive approach, such as multivariate testing or machine learning-driven personalization, may be necessary to fully optimize content strategies and maximize conversion rates across diverse user segments.
- . Cross-Cultural Comparison: Examine Canadian consumers in relation to those from other countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and India, to discern the cultural influences on digital behavior. A cross-cultural comparison of Canadian consumers with those from the United States, the United Kingdom, and India can provide valuable insights into the cultural influences shaping digital behavior. Canadian consumers, while sharing some similarities with their American counterparts due to geographical proximity and cultural overlap, may exhibit distinct patterns in their online interactions, e-commerce preferences, and digital media consumption. For instance, Canadians might demonstrate a higher level of trust in government-sponsored digital initiatives or show greater concern for data privacy than US consumers.

- When contrasting Canadian digital behavior with that of consumers in the United Kingdom and India, more pronounced differences may emerge. British consumers may display different preferences for social media usage or online shopping habits, influenced by their unique cultural norms and market structures. Indian consumers, on the other hand, may exhibit significantly different digital behaviors because of factors such as varying levels of Internet penetration, diverse linguistic preferences, and distinct cultural values that shape their online interactions and e-commerce decisions. Analyzing these cross-cultural differences can provide valuable insights for businesses and policymakers seeking to understand and cater to the unique digital landscapes of each country.
- Influencer Impact Models:** Conduct an in-depth analysis of the differential effects of micro and macro influencers within the Canadian market. Influencer impact models in the Canadian market require a nuanced examination of the distinct roles and effectiveness of micro and macro-influencers. Micro-influencers, typically defined as those with follower counts ranging from 1,000 to 100,000, often cultivate highly engaged niche audiences. These influencers tend to have stronger connections with their followers, resulting in higher trust levels and potentially greater impact on purchasing decisions within specific market segments. In contrast, macro-influencers, with follower counts exceeding 100,000, offer a broader reach and brand visibility but may have lower engagement rates and less personalized interactions with their audience.

An in-depth analysis of these influencer categories in the Canadian market would involve examining factors such as engagement rates, conversion metrics, and return on investment across various industries and product types. It also considers the unique characteristics of Canadian consumer behavior, regional differences within the country, and the interplay between influencer marketing and traditional advertising channels. Such an analysis could provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to optimize their influencer marketing strategies in Canada, potentially revealing optimal influencer partnerships based on campaign objectives, target demographics, and budgetary constraints.

5.7 Final Conclusion

In a digital-first marketplace, **social media marketing is no longer optional—it is essential**. This study confirms that strategically designed SMM campaigns can significantly enhance **brand engagement, emotional affinity, and purchase intention**. Canadian consumers are savvy, diverse, and responsive to authentic and engaging content that speaks to their values and interests.

Retail brands that invest in platform-specific content strategies, personalized experiences, influencer collaborations, and ethical data practices can gain significant competitive advantages. As the digital landscape evolves, continuous learning, experimentation, and consumer feedback must remain central to every successful marketer's approach.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire	36
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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

This appendix presents the survey instrument used to collect primary data for this study. The questionnaire was designed to measure demographics, social media engagement, brand engagement, and purchase behavior, reflecting the constructs of Social Media Marketing (SMM), Brand Engagement (BE), Brand Affinity (BA), and Purchase Intention (PI). Including the full survey ensures transparency and replicability for future research.

Section A: Demographics

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary / Prefer not to say
2. What is your age group?
 - 18–24
 - 25–34
 - 35–45
3. What is your highest education level?
 - High School
 - College Diploma
 - Undergraduate Degree
 - Graduate Degree
4. What is your current employment status?
 - Student
 - Employed full-time
 - Employed part-time
 - Self-employed
 - Unemployed
5. Which Canadian province do you currently live in?
 - Ontario
 - British Columbia
 - Alberta
 - Quebec
 - Prairies
 - Atlantic Canada

Section B: Social Media Engagement

6. How often do you use social media?
 - Daily
 - Several times a week
 - Once a week or less
7. Which platforms do you use most frequently? (Check all that apply)
 - Instagram
 - Facebook
 - TikTok
 - YouTube
 - Twitter
8. How often do you interact with brand pages on social media (e.g., likes, comments, shares)?
 - Very frequently
 - Occasionally
 - Rarely
 - Never
9. What types of brand-related content do you engage with most?
 - Short-form videos
 - Image-based ads
 - Influencer reviews
 - Polls/Contests
 - Text-only posts
10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
 - I regularly like, share, or comment on brand content.
 - I feel connected to the brands I follow on social media.
 - I actively recommend brands I follow to friends or family.

Section C: Brand Engagement & Affinity

11. I enjoy participating in campaigns or contests organized by brands on social media.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
12. I feel emotionally attached to some of the brands I follow online.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
13. I believe brands that respond quickly to comments or queries on social media are more trustworthy.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
14. I am more likely to stay loyal to brands that engage consistently on social media.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
15. I feel proud to be associated with brands that align with my personal values.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section D: Purchase Behavior

16. Have you ever purchased a product/service after seeing it on social media?
 - Yes
 - No
17. Which type of content most often triggers your purchase decision?
 - Discounts/Promotions
 - Influencer reviews
 - Product demonstrations
 - Peer shares
18. How often do you make purchases influenced by social media ads or campaigns?
 - Frequently
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
19. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
 - Social media ads influence my purchase decisions.
 - I trust influencer reviews more than traditional ads.
 - Brand engagement on social media increases my likelihood to purchase.
20. Authentic and relatable content matters more than polished ads in influencing my decision to purchase.
(Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)