

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON PURCHASE INTENTION IN THE SPECIALTY COFFEE SECTOR: ROLE OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND LIFESTYLE ORIENTATION

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Abstract—This conceptual study examines the influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on consumer purchase intention within the specialty coffee sector by integrating customer engagement as a mediating variable and lifestyle orientation as a moderating variable. Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and engagement theory, the study proposes that sustainability-oriented and interactive social media content enhances consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement, thereby increasing purchase intention. Although prior research has extensively explored the direct relationship between SMM and purchase intention, limited attention has been given to the psychological mechanisms and lifestyle-based contingencies underlying this relationship, particularly within sustainability-driven specialty coffee markets. The proposed framework contributes to the literature by integrating mediation and moderation into a single conceptual model tailored to the Third Wave coffee context. The study further offers managerial implications for specialty coffee brands seeking to design engagement-focused and sustainability-oriented digital marketing strategies. The framework also provides a foundation for future empirical validation using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) or PLS-SEM.

Keywords: Sustainability, Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Customer Engagement, Lifestyle Orientation, Specialty Coffee, Ethical Consumption, Sustainable Branding, Moderated Mediation Model.

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO SPECIALTY COFFEE

“The emergence of speciality or ‘Third Wave’ coffee culture emphasises the relevance of internet marketing tactics...”

Unlike mass-market coffee consumption, specialty coffee consumption is strongly associated with experiential value, ethical sourcing, artisanal identity, and lifestyle symbolism. Consumers within the Third Wave coffee segment often evaluate brands not only on product quality but also on sustainability practices, authenticity, and emotional brand experiences. Consequently, social media marketing within this sector performs a dual role: it functions both as a promotional mechanism and as a symbolic communication tool that shapes consumer identity and value alignment. This makes the specialty coffee industry a particularly relevant context for examining the psychological mechanisms linking social media marketing and purchase intention.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite substantial literature linking social media marketing with purchase intention, much of the existing research remains dominated by direct-effect models that inadequately explain the underlying psychological processes through which digital marketing influences consumer behaviour. Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly focused on mainstream retail or hospitality settings, limiting the contextual relevance of findings for niche experiential sectors such as specialty coffee. Existing research also tends to overlook sustainability-oriented consumption values and symbolic lifestyle dimensions that increasingly shape consumer decision-making in premium coffee markets. Consequently, there remains a need for a more integrated framework that combines engagement processes and lifestyle contingencies within sustainability-driven digital marketing environments.

1.3 RESEARCH GAP

Existing studies have extensively examined the direct impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intention across retail and hospitality settings. Several studies have also investigated mediating variables such as trust, brand awareness, and perceived value. However, three important gaps remain visible within the literature.

- ✓ First, prior studies have largely examined social media marketing from a transactional perspective, while comparatively limited attention has been paid to engagement-based psychological mechanisms that explain how consumers emotionally and cognitively connect with specialty coffee brands through digital platforms.
- ✓ Second, although customer engagement has emerged as an important construct in digital marketing research, its mediating role within sustainability-oriented specialty coffee contexts remains underexplored. Existing studies rarely integrate engagement processes with sustainability communication and ethical consumption behaviour.
- ✓ Third, limited research has examined whether lifestyle orientation influences the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies in niche consumption categories such as Third Wave coffee. Consumers in specialty coffee markets often differ significantly in terms of experiential preferences, sustainability consciousness, and symbolic consumption behaviour, suggesting that lifestyle orientation may condition the effectiveness of social media content.
- ✓ Therefore, the present study proposes an integrated moderated-mediation framework that explains how social media marketing influences purchase intention through customer engagement while accounting for the moderating role of lifestyle orientation in the specialty coffee sector.

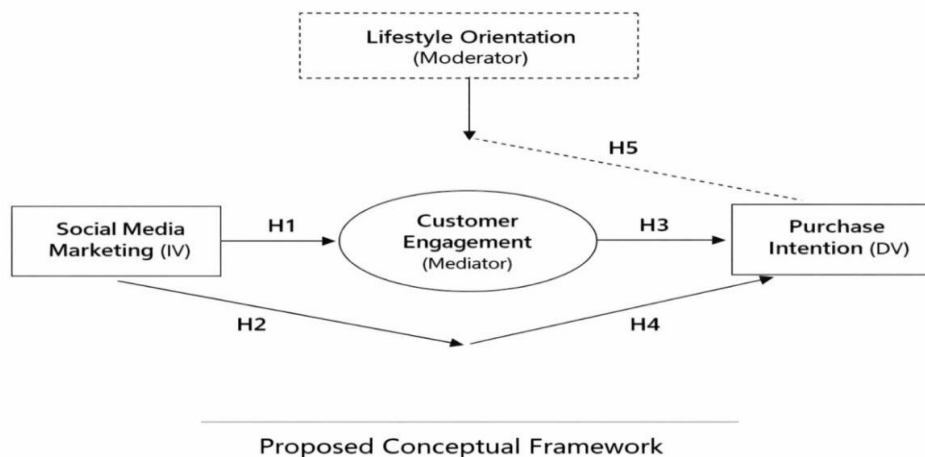
1.4 OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on consumers’ purchase intention in the specialty coffee sector.
2. To analyse the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationship between SMM and purchase intention.
3. To examine the moderating role of lifestyle orientation in the relationship between SMM and purchase intention.

1.5 REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual review approach by synthesising existing literature on social media marketing, customer engagement, lifestyle orientation, sustainability communication, and purchase intention within the specialty coffee context. Relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers were identified through databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Research Gate using keywords including “social media marketing,” “purchase intention,” “customer engagement,” “specialty coffee,” “sustainability marketing,” and “lifestyle orientation.” The review primarily focuses on studies published within digital marketing, consumer behaviour, and hospitality literature to develop the proposed conceptual framework.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL MODEL STRUCTURE



Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention in The Specialty Coffee Sector: Role of Customer Engagement and Lifestyle Orientation

As depicted in the proposed conceptual framework, the conceptual framework of this study illustrates the interconnectedness of four variables: Social Media Marketing (SMM), Customer Engagement, Lifestyle Orientation, and Purchase Intention. According to this framework, SMM directly affects Purchase Intention through Customer Engagement as a direct and indirect mediator between SMM and Purchase Intention. Customer Engagement strengthens the relationship between interaction with a brand and making purchasing decisions. Additionally, Lifestyle Orientation moderates the relationship between SMM and Purchase Intention, indicating the strength of an individual's response to an SMM message.

1.7 HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses for this study were formulated based upon the proposed conceptual framework and current literature:

H1: SMM positively affects Purchase Intention.

H2: SMM positively affects Customer Engagement.

H3: Customer Engagement positively affects Purchase Intention.

H4: Customer Engagement mediates the relationship between SMM and Purchase Intention.

H5: Lifestyle Orientation moderates the relationship between SMM and Purchase Intention.

1.8 EXPECTED THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

This is a conceptual paper. No empirical findings exist yet.

Current wording may lead to rejection.

1.9 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings further suggest that specialty coffee brands should position sustainability communication not merely as a corporate responsibility initiative, but as a strategic engagement tool capable of strengthening consumer-brand relationships and influencing ethical purchase behaviour.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the emerging literature on sustainability-oriented digital marketing by proposing an integrated framework that combines behavioural theory, customer engagement processes, and lifestyle-based consumer heterogeneity within the specialty coffee context. By positioning customer engagement as a psychological mechanism and lifestyle orientation as a contextual boundary condition, the framework advances understanding of how social media marketing influences consumption behaviour beyond simple promotional effects. The study therefore provides a stronger conceptual basis for future empirical research examining digital consumer behaviour in experiential and sustainability-driven markets.

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