

# Who's the Winner? A Comparative Study of Like, Comment and Share Functions in Consumers' Purchase Intention between Facebook and Instagram

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**Abstract:** *In the past few years, there has been a significant focus on investigating the impact of social media engagement. Although previous studies recognize the importance of social media engagement, there is still a lack of in-depth analysis regarding the specific influences of likes, comments, and shares on consumer behaviour, especially concerning how these engagements affect different platforms. This study aims to examine the relationship between social media engagement metrics (likes, comments, and shares) and consumer purchase intention on two prominent platforms, Facebook and Instagram. By adopting a cross-sectional design, this study employed purposive sampling to gather data from Malaysian university students who have engaged in purchasing activities on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) based on 265 completed responses, comprising 131 from Facebook users and 134 from Instagram users. The results reveal a significant positive relationship between likes and shares with consumer purchase intention on both Facebook and Instagram. However, comments were not found*

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*to be associated with consumer purchase intention on either platform. Furthermore, the study conducted a comparative analysis between Facebook and Instagram and found no significant differences in the relationships between engagement metrics and purchase intention. These findings have practical implications for marketers, emphasizing the importance of fostering engagement through likes and shares to drive consumer purchasing behaviour on social media platforms.*

**Keywords:** Likes, Comments, Shares, Purchase intention, Facebook, Instagram  
**JEL Classification:** M30, M31, M37

## 1. Introduction

Social media platforms facilitate user interaction and transactions, providing avenues for communication and commerce among users. Among these platforms, Instagram and Facebook stand out as influential players that not only connect individuals but also play a pivotal role in influencing consumer purchase behaviour. These platforms are extensively utilized, with individuals spending an average of 5 to 12 hours daily on them (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). They represent a significant technological advancement in the modern era, witnessing widespread global adoption (Appel et al., 2020). In today's globalized world, the use of social media platforms like Facebook, and Instagram has surged. Malaysia, for instance, boasts 26.80 million social media users, with Facebook and Instagram being among the preferred platforms, hosting approximately 20.25 million and 13.9 million, respectively, out of a total population of 34.13 million (Kemp, 2023). These statistics underscore the pervasive influence and popularity of social media platforms in contemporary society.

From a marketing perspective, the present “omni-social” environment highlights the pervasive influence of social media throughout the entirety of a consumer's decision-making journey. This influence extends from the initial stage of need recognition to the final decision-making process (Appel et al., 2020). Imagine a fashion enthusiast browsing through Facebook, following fashion bloggers and influencers. They come across a post showcasing the latest trends from a popular clothing brand. Intrigued by the style and recommendations, they visit the brand's website, explore customer reviews, and engage with comments to gather insights about the quality and fit of the clothing items. This social media interaction influences their

decision-making process and helps them make informed choices about their fashion purchases. In another instance, a couple planning their next vacation turns to Instagram for travel inspiration. They follow travel influencers and browse through stunning photos and travel guides. Through these visual experiences and recommendations, they discover a lesser-known destination that piques their interest. They then research further, read reviews on travel platforms, and engage with other travellers to gather insights and tips. This social media-driven exploration plays a crucial role in shaping their travel preferences and ultimately influences their decision on the destination and activities for their trip. Additionally, platforms such as Instagram and Facebook offer consumers a public space to voice their contentment or discontent regarding products or services.

Instagram and Facebook, with their massive user bases and diverse content ecosystems, have revolutionized how brands interact with consumers. The functions available on these platforms go beyond mere communication; they serve as catalysts in driving consumer engagement and purchase intent (Vaiciukynaite et al., 2023). Among the myriad features that define social media engagement, the functions of likes, shares, and comments play a pivotal role in shaping user interactions and content visibility (Mas'Od et al., 2019). Particularly on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, these engagement metrics not only reflect user preferences but also influence the reach and impact of content within the social ecosystem. This knowledge enables businesses to optimize their content to align with platform algorithms, ultimately enhancing their online presence and engagement metrics. Additionally, studying social engagement contributes to enhancing the overall user experience by allowing platforms to tailor features and functionalities based on user behaviours and preferences (Eslami et al., 2022).

One notable aspect of social media platforms that may impact these dynamics is the feature allowing users to receive positive social validation from fellow users, such as comments or likes, on their own posts (Marengo et al., 2021). Likes, as a fundamental engagement metric on both Instagram and Facebook, play a crucial role in signaling user approval and interest in content or products. Research has shown that the number of likes a post receives can impact perceived social approval and influence subsequent user engagement (Eslami et al., 2022). Brands often leverage likes as a social proof mechanism, showcasing popularity and credibility to potential customers.

The online comments offer individuals a platform to express their opinions, gain insights into others' perspectives, and engage in interactive discussions (Tenenboim, 2022). Comments foster direct communication and interaction between brands and consumers, providing valuable insights and feedback. Research has highlighted the significance of comments in shaping brand perception and consumer trust (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Positive comments can enhance brand reputation, while negative comments can offer opportunities for brands to address concerns and improve customer experience.

Shares amplify the reach and visibility of content, extending its impact beyond the immediate audience. Studies have indicated that shared content on social media platforms can lead to increased brand awareness and consideration among consumers (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020; ElAydi, 2018). Two types of content are commonly found in social media platforms; firm-generated content and user-generated content. Firm-generated content refers to content created and published by businesses or organizations themselves to promote their products, services, or brands (Smith et al., 2012). This content is typically produced by marketing teams, agencies, or content creators hired by the firm. Examples of firm-generated content include official website pages, advertisements, social media posts, blogs, videos, and promotional materials. Meanwhile, user-generated content (UGC) refers to content created and shared by consumers or users of products/services, often on social media platforms or online communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This content is voluntarily generated by individuals who are customers, fans, or followers of a brand. Examples of user-generated content include customer reviews, ratings, testimonials, social media posts, photos, videos, blogs, and discussions (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). UGC is authentic and carries social proof as it reflects real experiences, opinions, and interactions of consumers with a brand or its offerings. When users share content, they are essentially endorsing it to their social circles, leveraging social networks to influence others' opinions and behaviours (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). These two types of content play complementary roles in digital marketing strategies. While content generated by the firm plays a crucial role in establishing brand identity, conveying messaging, and running promotional campaigns, content generated by users contributes credibility, authenticity, and social engagement to brand communication efforts. Strategic integration of both content types can elevate brand perception, cultivate customer trust, and boost engagement and conversions within the digital sphere.

In view of the importance and the distinct nature of liking, commenting, and sharing, this study seeks to investigate whether there are any discernible differences in the interplay of likes, shares, and comments within the dynamic ecosystems of Instagram and Facebook. These platforms create an environment where consumer behaviours are not merely observed but actively influenced, impacting various stages of the consumer decision-making process, including awareness, consideration, purchase, and post-purchase engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011). By understanding the underlying mechanisms driving social media engagement on these platforms, businesses and marketers can develop targeted strategies that resonate with their specific target audience and drive meaningful interactions.

Through this research, we aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting an in-depth exploration of how likes, shares, and comments on Instagram and Facebook influence consumer purchase behaviour. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical research, our goal is to provide actionable insights and strategic recommendations to businesses seeking to leverage the power of social media in enhancing consumer engagement and fostering brand loyalty.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

Social Learning Theory, as proposed by Bandura (1977), stresses the significance of observational learning in shaping human behaviours. Applied to social media, this theory posits that individuals observe and imitate behaviours exhibited by others (Rosli et al., 2019), especially those they perceive as influential or socially desirable. Drawing from this theory, likes, shares, and comments serve as observable behaviours that users can emulate based on their social learning experiences. Understanding the association between social media engagement metrics and social learning theory has significant implications for digital marketers. By anchoring the study of social media engagement metrics and consumer purchase behaviour within the framework of social learning theory, this study provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of digital marketing. It highlights the interconnectedness between observable behaviours on social media platforms and consumer decision-making processes. Social Learning Theory, extensively applied in various behavioural and educational contexts, has seen limited exploration within digital marketing, particularly concerning social

media engagement metrics like likes, shares, and comments. This presents a gap in understanding how the principles of observational learning translate to consumer behaviour in digital environments, necessitating targeted research in this area.

### **2.1 Likes and Purchase Intention**

The “likes” feature on social media, designed for users to express approval or appreciation for posts, has garnered considerable interest as a potential influencer of consumer purchasing intention. According to social learning theory, individuals are motivated to imitate behaviours that result in positive outcomes or rewards (Bandura, 1977). When users observe their peers liking a product or brand, they interpret it as a positive endorsement, which can influence their own attitudes and perceptions towards that entity. This association between likes and social validation can impact consumer purchase intention, as individuals seek products or services that align with socially accepted norms (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020).

Research indicates that likes can function as social signals that impact individuals' attitudes and actions toward products or brands. Previous studies assert that the act of liking content motivates users to actively support advertisers and align with their fan base (Richard & Guppy, 2014). This is facilitated by the “likes” button, which enables users to convey their sentiments through a signal (Sumner et al., 2017). For instance, if users wish to express their fondness and trust in a product, they use the “likes” button as a means of conveying this message (Mas’Od et al., 2019). Mas’Od et al. (2019) further suggested that the “likes” feature plays a role in shaping users' purchase intention and decisions.

Lee et al. (2016) conducted a study aiming to understand the motivations behind virtual endorsements, particularly focusing on the “likes” function on Facebook. Their findings revealed that the primary motives for liking content stemmed from content enjoyment and the desire to maintain social connections. Additionally, the study identified a correlation between participants' attitudes and behaviours related to liking and their personality traits, such as openness and self-esteem. Factors such as perceived social norms and ease of use also influenced users' liking behaviours. Similarly, Wang et al. (2012) discovered a significant positive influence of peers on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. This peer influence occurs

within social media environments where individuals engage in discussions about products and services through digital social networks (Dhar & Chang, 2009), spanning platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and online communities.

Ding et al. (2017) examined the impact of likes on different social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, on consumer behaviours. They found that the nature and effects of likes can vary across platforms, indicating the need for platform-specific strategies in leveraging social media engagement for marketing purposes. Beukeboom et al. (2015) on the other hand, explored how likes on Facebook contribute to consumers' evaluations of brands and their intentions to make purchases. Their research highlights the role of social engagement metrics in shaping brand perception and influencing consumer intention.

Given Facebook's broad user demographics and varied content formats, likes can serve as a strong indicator of social proof, positively influencing purchase intention. Pfeffer et al. (2014) suggest that Facebook likes are significant predictors of user engagement and purchase behaviour due to the platform's multifaceted content presentation. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) on the other hand, note that Instagram likes are influential in shaping young consumers' purchase intention due to the platform's emphasis on visual content and aesthetic appeal. Instagram's visual-centric platform and younger user base make likes a powerful form of social proof, driving consumer purchase intention through visual appeal and peer influence. Despite Instagram's high engagement rates, the more diverse content and detailed information available on Facebook may lead to a stronger influence of likes on purchase intention. Erkan and Evans (2016) suggest that Facebook's broader demographic and richer content formats may amplify the impact of likes on consumer behaviour compared to Instagram's more homogeneous and visually focused user base. Thus, in order to investigate as to whether there are differences between Facebook and Instagram in regard to the relationship between likes and consumer purchase intention, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: *Likes are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Facebook.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Likes are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Instagram.*

Hypothesis 1c: *The relationship between likes and consumer purchase intention will be stronger for Facebook compared to Instagram.*

## **2.2 Comments and Purchase Intention**

The impact of comments on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, on consumer purchase behaviours has been a topic of interest in academic research and marketing studies. Comments on social media facilitate direct interactions and provide additional context or feedback about products or brands. Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of feedback and reinforcement in learning and decision-making (Bandura, 1977). Positive comments can reinforce positive attitudes and intentions towards a brand, while negative comments can raise concerns or deter consumers from making a purchase. The association between comments and social interactions influences consumer engagement and trust-building within online communities.

Studies by Jansen et al. (2011) and Lee and Chen (2020) emphasize the role of comments as interactive elements that facilitate social interactions and discussions on social media platforms. Comments allow users to engage with content, express opinions, and share experiences, contributing to community building and brand conversations. Research by Chen et al. (2022) and Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) delves into how comments contribute to building consumer trust and influencing information-sharing behaviours. Positive comments and reviews can enhance the perceived trustworthiness of brands and products which leads to higher purchase likelihood, while negative comments can raise concerns and impact purchase intention (Guo et al., 2020). User-generated comments, including comments are seen as authentic and credible sources of information, shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes towards brands and products (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Research has shown that comments serve as electronic word of mouth (eWOM), enhancing perceived credibility and trust (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Given the distinct features and user demographics of Facebook and Instagram, it is crucial to explore how comments impact consumer purchase intention differently on these platforms. Facebook's broad and diverse user base, combined with its support for extensive textual content and community interaction, suggests that comments may have a significant influence on



consumer purchase intention (Kwahk & Kim, 2017). Conversely, Instagram's visual-centric platform, while also impactful, may see a different pattern of influence due to its focus on visual content and younger user demographics (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Building upon these insights, this study proposes the following hypotheses to investigate the differential impact of comments on consumer purchase behaviours across Facebook and Instagram:

- Hypothesis 2a: *Comments are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Facebook.*
- Hypothesis 2b: *Comments are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Instagram.*
- Hypothesis 2c: *The relationship between comments and consumer purchase intention will be stronger for Facebook compared to Instagram.*

### **2.3 Shares and Purchase Intention**

Shares on social media play a crucial role in extending content reach and amplifying brand exposure. Social learning theory suggests that individuals are inclined to imitate behaviours that lead to social acceptance or recognition (Bandura, 1977). When users see content being shared widely within their social networks, they may perceive it as valuable or noteworthy, prompting them to consider the associated brand or product. This association between shares and content virality can influence consumer awareness and consideration during the decision-making process.

Recent studies by Singh et al. (2022) highlight shares as a form of social currency on social media platforms. Shares indicate content endorsement and reflect users' willingness to associate themselves with specific brands or products, influencing social perceptions and purchase intentions. Sharing enables individuals to influence what content reaches others and what information becomes known to them. When individuals "share" content, they enhance the likelihood that their online connections, such as friends and followers, will come across this content. Moreover, platform-specific sharing strategies have garnered attention in understanding their influence on consumer behaviours. Studies by Ham et al. (2019) and Kim et al. (2021) delve into these strategies, emphasizing the diverse sharing mechanisms and engagement features present on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

These platform-specific dynamics can greatly affect the virality and effectiveness of shared content in driving consumer actions. Furthermore, recent research by Kitsios et al. (2022) and Maulid et al. (2022) sheds light on the dynamics of shares on consumer purchase intention. Shared content, particularly user-generated content (UGC), serves as a form of social proof that influences consumers' perceptions of product quality, trustworthiness, and desirability. These insights highlight the multifaceted impact of shares on social media, from amplifying content reach to shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours towards brands and products.

Facebook, with its broad user base and features that facilitate extensive content sharing, significantly enhances the visibility and credibility of shared content, leading to increased consumer engagement and higher purchase intentions (Richard & Guppy, 2014). This dynamic supports the hypothesis that shares are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Facebook. The platform's ability to support detailed textual content and community interactions further amplifies this effect, making shared content more influential in shaping consumer behaviour. Similarly, Instagram's visual-centric platform also sees a positive relationship between shares and consumer purchase intention. Visual content is highly engaging and memorable, which makes it particularly effective in influencing consumer behaviour (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Instagram's high engagement rates and features such as re-posts and story shares enable widespread dissemination of visual content, which can significantly drive purchase intention. Moreover, the platform's emphasis on influencer marketing further strengthens this relationship, as shared content from influencers often leads to higher consumer trust and purchase intentions (Kwahk & Kim, 2017).

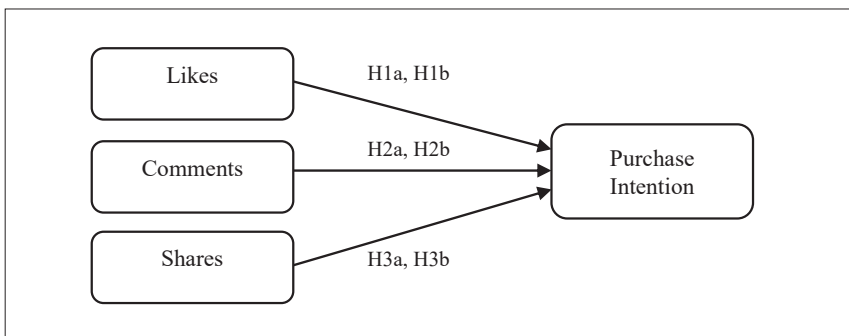
However, the relationship between shares and consumer purchase intention is expected to be stronger on Facebook compared to Instagram. This is primarily due to Facebook's larger and more diverse user base, which allows shared content to reach a broader audience, thereby exerting a greater influence on consumer intention (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, Facebook's features that support detailed community interactions and discussions provide a more comprehensive context for product evaluations, enhancing the persuasive power of shares. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010b), Facebook's ability to facilitate detailed community interactions and discussions significantly amplifies the persuasive impact of shared content, contributing to stronger consumer purchase intentions

compared to platforms like Instagram. Lin and Lu (2011) further explore the motivations and network effects that underpin user engagement on social media platforms, highlighting how Facebook's larger user base and network externalities enhance the reach and influence of shared content on consumer behaviours. Drawing from these findings, this study posits the following hypotheses to examine the varying effects of shares on consumer purchasing behaviours across both Facebook and Instagram:

- Hypothesis 3a: *Shares are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Facebook.*
- Hypothesis 3b: *Shares are positively related to consumer purchase intention on Instagram.*
- Hypothesis 3c: *The relationship between shares and consumer purchase intention will be stronger for Facebook compared to Instagram.*

Figure 1 depicts the study's research framework.

**Figure 1:** Research Framework



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design and Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling for data collection. Purposive sampling entails the deliberate selection of individuals or cases based on specific attributes relevant to the research objective. The choice of this sampling method was based on its flexibility, as it does not require reliance

on established theories or a predefined sample size. The choice of this sampling method was driven by its flexibility, as it does not necessitate underlying theories or a predetermined sample size (Etikan, 2016). The target population for our questionnaire survey comprised Malaysian students who met two primary criteria: (1) having prior experience of making purchases on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, and (2) being university students currently residing in Malaysia. A self-administered survey questionnaires were distributed via an online platform to the targeted respondents due to its convenience for swift data collection, particularly when fieldwork was impractical (Hur & Chang, 2020).

The questionnaire design was meticulously structured to align with the research objectives and ensure robust data collection. It commenced with a cover letter providing a clear overview of the research's purpose and significance, setting the context for participants. Following this, a consent form was included to uphold ethical standards and secure informed consent from all respondents. Subsequently, the filter questions were included to ascertain participant eligibility: (1) whether respondents had prior experience making purchases on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, and (2) whether they were university students currently residing in Malaysia. These filters ensured that participants could provide relevant insights for the subsequent questions.

Following the filters, the questionnaire was strategically organized to gather respondent's demographic information. This was followed by structured questions aimed at exploring variables central to the study, particularly focusing on the impact of comments on consumer purchasing behaviours across both platforms. For assessing the constructs of comments, likes, and shares, the study utilized a scale derived from established literature (Richard & Guppy, 2014). Similarly, a validated scale from (Long & Nga, 2020) was adopted to gauge consumer purchase intention. These measures employed a five-point rating scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (5) 'strongly agree' to capture respondents' perceptions accurately.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of our survey responses, several measures were implemented to control the response rate. Firstly, we employed purposive sampling techniques to target specific demographic and behavioural segments within our audience on both Facebook and Instagram. This approach helped in minimizing response bias by ensuring representation across diverse user groups known to engage actively with shared content.

Additionally, we monitored and adjusted the survey distribution channels and timings to optimize visibility and accessibility, thereby enhancing the likelihood of capturing a representative sample of users from both platforms. These measures collectively aimed to mitigate potential biases and ensure that the survey responses accurately reflected the perspectives and behaviours of our targeted social media users on Facebook and Instagram.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A total of 265 completed and valid responses were collected through the online survey and utilized for subsequent analysis, comprising 131 responses from Facebook users and 134 responses from Instagram users. Table 1 in the study outlines the demographic profiles of the participants.

The demographic analysis of Facebook and Instagram users reveals several key trends; Facebook has a slightly higher proportion of female users, with 75 females (57.3%) compared to 56 males (42.7%). Instagram also shows a higher representation of females, with 81 females (60.4%) and 53 males (39.6%). Among Facebook users, the majority are Malay (87.0%), followed by a smaller percentage of Chinese (4.6%), Indian (3.8%), and others (4.6%). Instagram's user base is predominantly Malay (90.3%), with a slightly higher representation of Chinese (5.2%), followed by Indian (1.5%), and others (3.0%). Facebook users are primarily single (93.9%), while a minority are married (6.1%). Similarly, Instagram users are mostly single (96.3%), with a smaller proportion being married (3.7%).

**Table 1:** Respondent's Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Facebook		Instagram	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	56	42.7	53	39.6
	Female	75	57.3	81	60.4
Race	Malay	114	87.0	121	90.3
	Chinese	6	4.6	7	5.2
	Indian	5	3.8	2	1.5
	Others	6	4.6	4	3.0
Marital Status	Single	123	93.9	129	96.3
	Married	8	6.1	5	3.7

#### 4.2 *Common Method Variance*

Given that our study utilized single-source data, it was imperative to ensure that the results were free from bias. Prior to conducting the analysis, it was essential to address the potential influence of common method variance (CMV) as discussed by Mackenzie et al. (2011). To verify that CMV did not unduly impact our study, a thorough collinearity analysis was performed following (Kock, 2015) recommended approach. Typically, a variance inflation factor (VIF) equal to or exceeding 3.3 indicates the presence of CMV. The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate that all VIF values remained below 3.3, indicating that CMV did not pose a significant concern in our study.

**Table 2:** Full Collinearity

	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Instagram</b>
Comments	1.500	1.386
Likes	1.561	1.267
Shares	1.561	1.324

#### 4.3 *Data Analysis & Results*

We employed partial least squares (PLS) for our data analysis. The PLS is a components-based structural equation modeling technique that focuses on maximizing the explained variance in the dependent variables. Unlike some other modeling techniques, PLS does not require the data to follow a multivariate normal distribution. This makes PLS particularly useful for analyzing complex models with many indicators and latent variables, even when the data might not meet the strict assumptions of normality.

#### 4.4 *Measurement Model Evaluation*

We evaluated both convergent and discriminant validity for the reflective constructs. Convergent validity, defined by Hair et al. (2017), is confirmed when specific conditions are satisfied: all indicators must have loadings equal to or greater than the 0.708 thresholds,  $\rho_A$  and composite reliability (CR) must meet or exceed the 0.70 thresholds, and the average variance extracted (AVE) must be equal to or greater than the 0.50 threshold. Only items

meeting these criteria were included for further analysis. Table 3 presents the results of the convergent validity assessment for all items, where the loading, rho\_A, CR, and AVE values surpassed their respective threshold values, affirming the convergent validity of all latent variables.

**Table 3:** Reliability & Convergent Validity

Construct	Facebook (n = 131)				Instagram (n = 134)			
	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Comments	0.81	0.84	0.89	0.72	0.79	0.89	0.87	0.69
Likes	0.83	0.88	0.90	0.74	0.84	0.90	0.90	0.75
Purchase Intention	0.81	0.84	0.91	0.84	0.78	0.80	0.90	0.82
Shares	0.84	0.88	0.90	0.76	0.83	0.84	0.90	0.75

To ascertain discriminant validity, scholars should employ the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, as advocated in prior scholarly works (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). Discriminant validity is confirmed when all HTMT values remain at or below 0.85. The results delineated in Table 4 illustrate that every HTMT value adhered to this stipulation, thereby affirming the successful establishment of discriminant validity.

**Table 4:** Discriminant Validity – HTMT

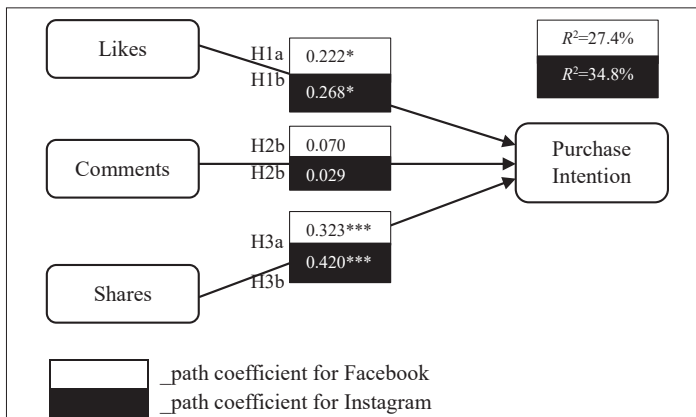
Facebook	Comments	Likes	Purchase Intention	Shares
Comments				
Likes	0.61			
Purchase Intention	0.41	0.49		
Shares	0.62	0.61	0.55	
Instagram	Comments	Likes	Purchase Intention	Shares
Comments				
Likes	0.50			
Purchase Intention	0.38	0.51		
Shares	0.54	0.40	0.65	

### 4.5 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was independently assessed using data from Facebook and Instagram. A bootstrapping resampling technique was conducted with 10000 subsamples. Specifically, the study generated 10,000 subsamples by randomly drawing observations with replacement from the original dataset. This process helps to create a distribution of parameter estimates, allowing us to calculate standard errors and confidence intervals. The use of 10,000 subsamples ensures robust and reliable estimates for hypothesis testing and model validation in the context of this study. The results of this analysis, including the explanatory power and estimated path coefficients specific to Facebook and Instagram, are presented in Figure 2.

The data presented in Figure 2 demonstrate that, in the cases of Facebook and Instagram, the structural model explained 27.4% and 34.8%, respectively, of the variance in purchase intention. These results indicate that the theoretical model effectively captured the purchase intention among users of both Facebook and Instagram.

**Figure 2:** Structural Model Evaluation



Notes: \*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.001

The findings derived from the analysis depicted in Figure 1 offer valuable insights into the relationships among various constructs for Facebook users. Firstly, it was established that likes exert a positive influence on a user’s purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.222$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming



the hypothesis H1a. Secondly, the study found that shares play a significant role in shaping a user's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.323$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby supporting H3a. Surprisingly, the study discovered no association between comments and users' purchase intention, leading to the rejection of hypothesis H2a.

Moreover, the investigation delved into the interplay among constructs (ie; likes, comments, and shares on purchase intention) pertinent to Instagram users. Initially, it discerned a positive influence of likes on a user's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), thus validating hypothesis H1b. Subsequently, the study found a substantial role of shares in shaping user purchasing intention ( $\beta = 0.420$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby lending support to hypothesis H3b. Conversely, the analysis revealed no discernible association between comments and user purchase intention on Instagram, necessitating the rejection of hypothesis H2b.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) reflects the predictive precision of the model, where higher values signify a stronger explanatory capability. For the Facebook purchase intention, an  $R^2$  value of 0.274 was found, suggesting that the combined effects of "comments," "likes," and "shares" explained 27.4% of the variation in purchase intention. Similarly, in the case of Instagram, an  $R^2$  value of 0.348 was observed, indicating that these same variables collectively accounted for 34.8% of the variance in purchase intention. This indicates that these engagement metrics have a slightly stronger explanatory power for purchase intention on Instagram compared to Facebook. It could be due to differences in user behaviour, content engagement patterns, or the overall context and user experience offered by Instagram compared to Facebook.

#### ***4.6 Multigroup Analysis for Differences between Facebook and Instagram***

The study conducted a comparison of the coefficients associated with individual paths within the two structural models to examine our hypotheses. The initial examination was directed towards gauging whether users of Facebook and Instagram perceived the latent constructs similarly (Carte & Russell, 2003). Analysis of factor loadings and cross-factor loadings (Table 5) from measurements indicated a high degree of similarity in loading patterns, thereby permitting comparisons between paths across different contexts.

**Table 5:** Cross Loading

	Facebook				Instagram			
	Comments	Likes	Purchase Intention	Shares	Comments	Likes	Purchase Intention	Shares
KGF1	0.470	0.477	0.302	0.838	0.390	0.330	0.414	0.843
KGF2	0.447	0.469	0.423	0.883	0.392	0.262	0.480	0.839
KGF3	0.419	0.457	0.484	0.888	0.402	0.358	0.479	0.916
KMF1	0.838	0.435	0.201	0.425	0.738	0.314	0.128	0.270
KMF2	0.860	0.400	0.337	0.446	0.897	0.369	0.351	0.393
KMF3	0.851	0.460	0.308	0.417	0.850	0.351	0.264	0.439
KP2	0.288	0.451	0.934	0.475	0.331	0.393	0.889	0.406
KP3	0.353	0.326	0.900	0.394	0.274	0.391	0.923	0.544
SKF1	0.359	0.774	0.244	0.303	0.323	0.808	0.245	0.169
SKF2	0.440	0.914	0.394	0.450	0.317	0.872	0.358	0.219
SKF3	0.490	0.894	0.433	0.573	0.417	0.910	0.464	0.475

The study utilized the approach recommended by Chin and Dibbern (2010) for carrying out a multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA). The study used the parametric approach to determine the significance of the differences between the estimated parameters of each group, considering both equal and different variances. As depicted in Table 6, the analysis revealed that the relationships between likes, comments, and shares on consumer purchase intention did not differ significantly across the two groups—Facebook and Instagram. This lack of heterogeneity resulted in the rejection of hypotheses H1c, H2c, and H3c.

**Table 6:** Results of Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA)

	Facebook (1)		Instagram (2)		Facebook vs Instagram			Hypothesis
	$\beta$	SD	$\beta$	SD	Difference (1 - 2)	t-value (1 vs 2)	p-value (1 vs 2)	
H1c: Likes								
□ Purchase Intention	0.222	0.086	0.268	0.096	-0.045	0.353	0.362	Rejected
H2c:								
Comments								
□ Purchase Intention	0.07	0.078	0.029	0.09	0.041	0.344	0.366	Rejected
H3c: Shares								
□ Purchase Intention	0.323	0.095	0.42	0.117	-0.096	0.64	0.261	Rejected

Notes:  $\beta$  = path coefficient, SD = standard deviation

## 5. Discussion of Findings

The findings provide insights on the influence of social media engagement metrics, specifically likes, shares, and comments, on purchase intention within the contexts of Facebook and Instagram. Our analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between likes and purchase intention in both platforms, as well as a significant influence of shares on user's purchase intention. However, the study did not find a significant relationship between comments and purchase intention across Facebook and Instagram.

The observed positive influence of likes on purchase intention aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of social approval indicators in consumer behaviour (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020; Sumner et al., 2017). The notion of social validation through likes may contribute to increased trust and confidence in product or service offerings, thus influencing purchase intentions. Similarly, the significant effects of shares on purchase intention are consistent with studies highlighting the virality and social influence aspect of shared content on social media platforms (Kitsios et al., 2022; Maulid et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2022). Shared content often reaches a wider audience and can lead to increased visibility and credibility for the promoted products or brands.

However, the lack of a significant relationship between comments and purchase intention warrants discussion. One possible explanation could be the nature and context of comments on social media platforms. Unlike likes and shares, which are more immediate indicators of approval and engagement, comments can vary widely in content and tone. Comments may include discussions, opinions, criticisms, or unrelated content, making it a less direct indicator of purchase intention. Additionally, comments may not always influence others' perceptions or decisions to the same extent as likes and shares, especially in the context of product recommendations or endorsements. Furthermore, the effects of comments may also depend on factors such as the type of product or service being promoted, the target audience, and the specific content or context of the comments. Future research could delve deeper into the dynamics of comments and their varying influences on purchase intention across different social media platforms and consumer segments.

The study also delved into understanding whether there are differences in the influence of social media engagement metrics, specifically likes,

shares, and comments, on purchase intention across two prominent platforms: Facebook and Instagram. An important aspect of our findings is the lack of significant differences between Facebook and Instagram concerning the relationships between our constructs. The consistent findings across both platforms suggest uniformity in how this social media engagement metrics impact purchase intention. This uniformity can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the structure and functionalities of likes, shares, and comments are largely similar on both platforms. Users on Facebook and Instagram utilize these features in comparable ways to express approval, share content, and engage with others. As a result, the effects of these engagement metrics on purchase intention remain consistent across the platforms.

The absence of platform-specific differences highlights the broader implications of our findings for marketers and businesses. Strategies aimed at leveraging social media engagement to drive purchase intention can be applied uniformly across Facebook and Instagram, without the need for significant platform-specific adaptations. This streamlines marketing efforts and ensures a consistent approach to harnessing the power of social media to drive consumer behaviour. Furthermore, these findings highlight the relevance of social media as a unified marketing channel, where strategies can be designed holistically rather than tailored extensively for specific platforms. However, it is important for marketers to continuously monitor and adapt strategies based on evolving platform features, user behaviours, and industry trends to maintain optimal effectiveness.

In conclusion, the current study underscores the significance of social media engagement metrics, particularly likes and shares, in shaping consumer behaviour and purchase intention on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The study not only reveals the consistent impact of social media engagement metrics on purchase intention but also emphasizes the uniformity of these effects across Facebook and Instagram. This insight provides valuable guidance for marketers navigating the dynamic landscape of social media marketing.

### **5.1 *Theoretical Implications***

The theoretical implication of this research lies in its integration and application of Social Learning Theory to the context of social media

engagement and consumer purchase behaviour. By anchoring the study within this theoretical framework, the research advances our understanding of how observational learning mechanisms, facilitated through social media interactions such as likes, shares, and comments, influence consumer intentions. This study not only bridges the gap between traditional behavioural theories and contemporary digital marketing practices but also provides empirical evidence supporting the role of social learning in shaping online consumer behaviour. Consequently, it offers a robust theoretical foundation for future research exploring the dynamics of social media influence on consumer decision-making processes, highlighting the interconnectedness between observable social media activities and consumer purchase intentions. This enriched theoretical perspective can guide digital marketers in leveraging social media engagement metrics to design more effective marketing strategies that capitalize on the principles of social learning.

## **5.2 *Practical Implications***

The findings of this manuscript hold several practical implications for marketers and businesses navigating the digital landscape, particularly in the realm of social media marketing. One significant implication is the opportunity for marketers to adopt unified strategies across platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. The consistent impact of engagement metrics like likes, shares, and comments on purchase intention suggests that strategies focused on generating these interactions can be applied uniformly. This approach streamlines marketing efforts and allows for a cohesive engagement strategy that resonates with consumers across different platforms.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of content creation and engagement strategies that encourage likes and shares. Marketers can benefit from crafting compelling content that fosters user engagement and advocacy. Encouraging user-generated content, initiating conversations, and building a sense of community can amplify brand visibility and influence consumer decision-making positively. Effective monitoring and analysis of social media engagement metrics are essential for marketers to stay ahead. Utilizing analytics tools to track performance metrics, understand audience preferences, and adapt strategies accordingly can lead to optimized outcomes

and enhanced return on investment (ROI) from social media marketing efforts.

### **5.3 *Limitations of the Study and Future Recommendations***

Despite these practical implications, the study is not without limitations. One key limitation is the sample size and demographic representation of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research endeavours could benefit from larger and more diverse samples to enhance the robustness and applicability of the results across different user segments and geographical regions. Additionally, given the dynamic nature of social media trends and user behaviours, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into temporal dynamics and changes in the relationships between social media engagement metrics and purchase intention over time. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could complement quantitative analyses by offering deeper insights into the qualitative aspects of social media engagement and its influence on consumer behaviour. Moreover, extending the analysis to include other emerging social media platforms beyond Facebook and Instagram can enrich our understanding of platform-specific dynamics and their impacts on consumer purchase intention. By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research directions, it can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of social media marketing dynamics and facilitate the development of more effective and tailored marketing strategies.

## **7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the influence of social media engagement metrics on consumer purchase intention within the contexts of Facebook and Instagram. The current study underscores the significance of social media engagement metrics, particularly likes and shares, in shaping consumer behaviour and purchase decisions on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, highlighting the importance of social approval indicators and virality in shaping consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the study's revelation of a lack of significant differences between Facebook and Instagram in the relationships between engagement metrics and purchase intention has practical implications for marketers. It suggests that marketers

can adopt unified strategies that leverage likes and shares effectively across these platforms, streamlining marketing efforts and enhancing engagement with consumers. Overall, this manuscript contributes to the growing body of knowledge in social media marketing by providing empirical evidence of the importance of engagement metrics in driving consumer behaviour. It serves as a foundation for future studies to delve deeper into the nuanced dynamics of social media influence and to develop more targeted and effective marketing strategies in the digital age.

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