

IMPACT OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS ON TEENAGERS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR: ONLINE VS TRADITIONAL SHOPPING

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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of this study was to examine the impact of digital platforms on teenagers' buying behaviour and to compare the preferences, motivations, and constraints associated with online versus traditional shopping among teenagers in Punjab.

Methodology: A sample of 550 teenagers aged 13-19 years from three districts of Punjab (Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, and Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar) was considered for data collection. A structured questionnaire was administered to respondents who had experience with both online and traditional shopping platforms. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, and chi-square analysis were employed to analyse the data.

Findings: The study revealed that teenagers exhibit a strong preference for online shopping due to convenience, price comparison, and product variety. However, traditional shopping remains preferred for experiential products such as apparel and footwear where touch, feel, and trial are important. Peer influence, social media exposure, and digital literacy emerged as significant determinants of online purchase behaviour. Boys demonstrated higher preference for electronics and gadgets online, while girls showed greater inclination towards fashion and beauty products across both platforms.

Practical Implications: Marketers and retailers need to adopt an omnichannel approach that integrates the strengths of both online and traditional shopping formats. Understanding teenage buying behaviour across these platforms will enable businesses to design targeted marketing strategies that resonate with this demographic's unique psychographic characteristics.

Introduction

The retail landscape has undergone a paradigm shift over the past decade, driven primarily by the proliferation of digital technologies and the internet. The emergence of e-commerce giants such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra, and numerous direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands has fundamentally transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. This transformation has been particularly pronounced among younger demographics, especially teenagers, who have grown up in a digitally native environment.

India, with its demographic dividend, presents a unique context for studying teenage buying behaviour. According to the United Nations report titled 'The power of 1.8 billion', 28 per cent of India's population is aged 10 to 24 years, which includes approximately 243 million teenagers aged 10-19 years. The Mobile Indian report further highlights that 88 per cent of mobile phones are owned by teenagers in India (<https://www.themobileindian.com/news/88-per-cent-of-adolescents-own-mobile-phone-in-india-528>). This unprecedented access to digital devices has created a generation that is constantly connected, digitally literate, and increasingly independent in their purchase decisions. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and Facebook have evolved beyond mere communication tools into powerful commerce enablers. The phenomenon of social commerce—where purchasing decisions are directly influenced by social media interactions, influencer endorsements, and peer-generated content—

has gained tremendous traction among teenagers. Traditional shopping, characterized by physical store visits, face-to-face interactions with sales personnel, and tangible product examination, continues to coexist with digital shopping formats. However, understanding the relative preferences, decision-making processes, and satisfaction levels associated with these two shopping modalities among teenagers remains an under-researched area.

Teenagers represent a distinct consumer segment with unique characteristics. They are at a developmental stage where identity formation, peer acceptance, and social belonging are paramount. Their buying behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay of factors including peer pressure, family values, media exposure, personal aspirations, and increasingly, digital engagement. Unlike adults, teenagers often have limited independent financial resources, yet they exercise significant influence over family purchase decisions, particularly in categories such as electronics, entertainment, fashion, and food.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards online shopping across all age groups. Lockdowns, social distancing norms, and health concerns compelled even traditional shoppers to experiment with digital platforms. For teenagers, who were already heavy users of digital media, this period reinforced online shopping habits that may persist in the post-pandemic era. However, as physical stores reopened, many teenagers resumed traditional shopping, indicating that both channels serve complementary rather than substitutive roles.

This study seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the key factors influencing teenagers' preference for online versus traditional shopping?
2. How do product categories influence channel choice among teenagers?
3. What is the role of social media and peer influence in shaping online purchase decisions?
4. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each shopping format from a teenage perspective?

By answering these questions, this research aims to provide actionable insights for marketers, retailers, and policymakers seeking to understand and serve this important consumer segment.

Teenagers and Their Buying Behaviour

Defining Teenagers

A teenager, or teen, is a person who falls between the ages of thirteen to nineteen years old. The World Health Organization defines teenagers as young people aged between 13 to 19 years, whereas Datamonitor (2000) describes teenagers as the age group between 14 and 19 years old. The term "adolescent" is often used interchangeably with "teenager," encompassing the transitional stage of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "a teenager, who is perceived as too free-spirited, conspicuously bright, overly plump, or physically weak, risks being targeted or ostracized from the peer group." This definition underscores the intense social pressures that characterize teenage life, where conformity to peer norms and fear of social exclusion drive many behaviours, including consumption patterns.

Characteristics of Teenage Consumers

Teenage consumers exhibit several distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from adult consumers:

1. Emerging Financial Independence: While most Indian teenagers rely on parental income, pocket money, or earnings from part-time work, they are developing financial decision-making skills. The amount of disposable income, though limited, is often spent on discretionary items that signal identity and social status.

2. Susceptibility to Peer Influence: As noted by Gulati (2017), teenagers are highly vulnerable to peer pressure. They have a strong tendency to make decisions that meet the expectations of their peer groups. When accompanied by friends, teenagers are observed to be more brand-conscious and spendthrift.

3. Digital Nativeness: Today's teenagers have never known a world without the internet, smartphones, and social media. This digital fluency makes them comfortable with online transactions, app-based interfaces, and digital payment systems.

4. Brand Experimentation: Unlike older consumers who may exhibit brand loyalty, teenagers are more willing to experiment with new brands, products, and services, particularly those recommended by peers or influencers they follow.

5. Emotional Decision-Making: Teenage purchasing decisions are often driven by emotional factors—desire for belonging, need for self-expression, and pursuit of instant gratification—rather than rational cost-benefit analysis.

Factors Influencing Teenage Buying Behaviour

Deborah H. et al. (2005) stated that college students have strongly embraced the web as a shopping tool, being more likely to obtain online services than to purchase tangible merchandise. Gul, M.S. (2014) identified style/variety and discounts as two major factors influencing teenage buying behaviour, noting that social media plays a major role in fashion consciousness.

Dwivedi, R. (2017) defined buying behaviour of teenagers as affected by various factors including trust, attitude, and advertisement. Martin, C.A. (2000) stated that both direct (father and mother) and vicarious (athletes and entertainers) role models have a significant impact in terms of influencing teenagers to switch or alter brand choices.

Digital Platforms and Online Shopping

Evolution of Digital Commerce

Digital commerce has evolved through several phases. The first phase (1990s-2000s) was characterized by desktop-based e-commerce websites that replicated catalog shopping. The second phase (2000s-2010s) saw the emergence of mobile commerce as smartphones gained penetration. The current phase (2010s-present) is defined by social commerce, where shopping is integrated into social media experiences through shoppable posts, live streaming, and influencer partnerships.

Types of Digital Platforms

- 1. E-commerce Marketplaces:** Platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal, and Myntra aggregate products from multiple sellers, offering variety, competitive pricing, and customer reviews.
- 2. Brand-owned Websites:** Direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands operate their own websites, offering exclusive products, better margins, and direct customer relationships.
- 3. Social Commerce Platforms:** Instagram Shopping, Facebook Marketplace, and WhatsApp Business enable transactions directly within social media applications.
- 4. Group Buying Platforms:** Platforms like Meesho and DealShare focus on social sharing and group discounts, popular in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.
- 5. Omnichannel Retailers:** Traditional retailers such as Reliance Retail, Tata Group, and Future Group have developed integrated online-offline presence, allowing customers to buy online and return in-store (BORIS) or buy online and pick up in-store (BOPIS).

Traditional Shopping

Characteristics of Traditional Retail

Traditional shopping, also known as brick-and-mortar or offline shopping, involves physical store visits, face-to-face interactions with sales staff, and tangible product examination. Traditional retail formats include:

- 1. Department Stores:** Large-format stores offering multiple product categories under one roof.
- 2. Specialty Stores:** Stores focusing on specific product categories such as electronics, footwear, or cosmetics.
- 3. Local Kirana Stores:** Small, family-owned neighbourhood stores that are ubiquitous in India.
- 4. Shopping Malls:** Enclosed retail complexes housing multiple brands, entertainment options, and food courts.
- 5. Weekly Markets and Fairs:** Temporary markets that appear on specific days, offering bargain prices and negotiation opportunities.

Advantages of Traditional Shopping

Traditional shopping offers several benefits that digital platforms cannot fully replicate. These include the ability to touch, feel, and try products before purchase; immediate product availability without waiting for delivery; personalized assistance from sales staff; social experience of shopping with friends and family; and the opportunity for bargaining and negotiation, particularly in unorganized retail settings.

Method

Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed to examine the impact of digital platforms on teenagers' buying behaviour. The study focused on comparing online and traditional shopping preferences among teenagers aged 13-19 years in Punjab.

Sampling Framework

The sampling framework consisted of teenagers residing in three districts of Punjab: Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, and Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali). These districts were selected to represent diverse geographical and socio-economic characteristics—Gurdaspur representing the border region, Hoshiarpur representing the Doaba region, and Mohali representing the urban, technology-savvy region.

A total of 550 teenagers participated in the study, with distribution as follows:

| District | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Gurdaspur | 180 | 32.73% |
| Hoshiarpur | 180 | 32.73% |
| Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar | 190 | 34.54% |

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed based on extensive literature review of prior studies on teenage buying behaviour, online shopping, and consumer decision-making. The questionnaire comprised four sections:

Section A: Demographic information including age, gender, district, type of locality (urban/rural), and source of expenditure.

Section B: Digital usage patterns including time spent on social media, preferred platforms, and online shopping frequency.

Section C: Statements related to online shopping preferences, motivations, and barriers measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

Section D: Statements related to traditional shopping preferences, motivations, and barriers measured on a five-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was administered in English through Google Forms, with links distributed via school networks, social media groups, and direct messaging. Data collection was conducted over a period of three months from January to March 2024.

Inclusion Criteria

To be included in the study, respondents had to: (a) be aged between 13 and 19 years, (b) reside in the selected districts of Punjab, (c) have active social media accounts, and (d) have made at least one purchase through online shopping platforms in the past six months and at least one purchase through traditional retail channels in the past six months.

Pilot Study

A pilot survey was conducted with 50 respondents to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha values for different sections ranged from 0.78 to 0.86, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Based on pilot study feedback, certain items were reworded for clarity, and redundant items were removed.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25.0. The following statistical techniques were employed:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to profile the sample.

2. Independent Samples t-test: Used to compare mean scores between gender groups (male vs. female) and locality groups (urban vs. rural) on various shopping preference dimensions.

3. Chi-square Test: Used to examine associations between categorical variables such as district and preferred shopping channel, age group and online purchase frequency.

4. Paired Samples t-test: Used to compare mean preference scores for online versus traditional shopping across product categories.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 550 respondents who participated in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Characteristic | Category | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| District | Gurdaspur | 180 | 32.73% |
| | Hoshiarpur | 180 | 32.73% |
| | Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar | 190 | 34.54% |
| Geographic Area | Urban | 302 | 54.91% |
| | Rural | 248 | 45.09% |
| Gender | Male | 251 | 45.64% |
| | Female | 299 | 54.36% |
| Age | 13 years | 98 | 17.82% |
| | 14 years | 105 | 19.09% |
| | 15 years | 112 | 20.36% |
| | 16 years | 95 | 17.27% |
| | 17 years | 88 | 16.00% |
| | 18 years | 52 | 9.45% |
| Source of Expenditure | Parental Income | 210 | 38.18% |
| | Pocket Money | 185 | 33.64% |
| | Part-time Work | 112 | 20.36% |
| | Scholarships/Gifts | 43 | 7.82% |
| Monthly Shopping Expenditure | Below ₹1000 | 156 | 28.36% |
| | ₹1000-3000 | 142 | 25.82% |
| | ₹3000-6000 | 128 | 23.27% |
| | ₹6000-10000 | 72 | 13.09% |
| | Above ₹10000 | 52 | 9.46% |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: The sample had a slightly higher proportion of female respondents (54.36%) compared to males (45.64%). Urban respondents (54.91%) outnumbered rural respondents (45.09%). The age distribution shows a concentration in the 14-16 year range, accounting for approximately 57% of the sample. The majority of respondents (38.18%) relied on parental income for their expenses, followed by pocket money (33.64%). Monthly shopping expenditure for most respondents (28.36%) was below ₹1000, indicating limited purchasing power.

Digital Usage Patterns

Table 2: Social Media Usage Among Teenagers

| Platform | Percentage Using Daily | Average Time Spent (Hours/Day) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Instagram | 92.5% | 3.2 |
| YouTube | 88.7% | 2.8 |
| Snapchat | 67.3% | 1.9 |
| WhatsApp | 85.4% | 2.1 |
| Facebook | 34.2% | 0.8 |
| Other (Discord, Telegram) | 22.6% | 1.1 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: Instagram emerged as the most popular social media platform among teenagers, with 92.5% using it daily and spending an average of 3.2 hours per day. YouTube followed closely at 88.7% daily usage. These findings underscore the potential of visual and video-based platforms as marketing channels for reaching teenage consumers.

Comparison of Online vs Traditional Shopping Preferences

Table 3: Mean Preference Scores for Online vs Traditional Shopping Across Product Categories

| Product Category | Online Shopping (Mean) | Traditional Shopping (Mean) | t-value | p-value |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Clothing & Apparel | 3.8 | 4.2 | -5.23 | 0.000* |
| Footwear | 3.6 | 4.1 | -4.89 | 0.000* |
| Electronics & Gadgets | 4.3 | 3.4 | 7.45 | 0.000* |
| Books & Stationery | 4.1 | 3.7 | 3.21 | 0.001* |
| Beauty & Cosmetics | 3.9 | 4.0 | -0.87 | 0.384 |
| Grocery & Snacks | 3.2 | 4.4 | -8.12 | 0.000* |
| Mobile Accessories | 4.4 | 3.2 | 8.94 | 0.000* |
| Sports Equipment | 3.5 | 3.9 | -2.98 | 0.003* |

*Note: *p < 0.05, significant difference; Scale: 1=Strongly Prefer Traditional, 5=Strongly Prefer Online*

Interpretation: The results reveal that teenagers prefer online shopping for electronics, gadgets, mobile accessories, and books—categories where product specifications are standardized and the need for physical examination is minimal. Conversely, traditional shopping is preferred for grocery, clothing, footwear, and sports equipment—categories where touch, trial, and immediate gratification matter. No significant preference difference was observed for beauty and cosmetics, indicating that both channels are used depending on circumstances.

Motivations for Online Shopping

Table 4: Factors Motivating Online Shopping Among Teenagers

| Statement | Mean | SD | Rank |
|---|------|------|------|
| Convenience of shopping from home | 4.5 | 0.68 | 1 |
| Ability to compare prices across websites | 4.4 | 0.72 | 2 |
| Wide variety of products available | 4.3 | 0.75 | 3 |
| Better discounts and offers | 4.2 | 0.81 | 4 |
| Customer reviews help in decision making | 4.1 | 0.85 | 5 |
| Cash on Delivery option | 4.0 | 0.92 | 6 |
| Easy returns and refunds | 3.9 | 0.95 | 7 |
| Peer recommendations via social media | 3.8 | 0.98 | 8 |

Source: Field Survey (Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Interpretation: Convenience emerged as the strongest motivator for online shopping among teenagers (mean=4.5). The ability to compare prices (mean=4.4) and wide product variety (mean=4.3) were also highly valued. Interestingly, peer recommendations via social media (mean=3.8) ranked relatively lower, suggesting that while social media influences product discovery, actual purchase decisions are driven by more rational considerations.

Barriers to Online Shopping

Table 5: Perceived Barriers to Online Shopping

| Statement | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| Cannot touch or try products before buying | 4.3 | 0.78 |
| Delivery charges increase product cost | 3.9 | 0.85 |
| Fear of receiving damaged or wrong product | 3.8 | 0.90 |
| Delayed delivery | 3.7 | 0.88 |
| Complicated return process | 3.6 | 0.92 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Lack of bargaining opportunity | 3.5 | 0.95 |
| Security concerns with online payment | 3.3 | 1.02 |

Source: Field Survey (Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Interpretation: The inability to touch or try products before purchase was the most significant barrier to online shopping (mean=4.3), consistent with the finding that teenagers prefer traditional shopping for apparel and footwear. Delivery charges and fear of product damage were also notable concerns.

Motivations for Traditional Shopping

Table 6: Factors Motivating Traditional Shopping Among Teenagers

| Statement | Mean | SD | Rank |
|--|------|------|------|
| Ability to see, touch and try products | 4.6 | 0.62 | 1 |
| Immediate product availability | 4.4 | 0.70 | 2 |
| Social experience with friends | 4.2 | 0.78 | 3 |
| Opportunity to bargain | 3.9 | 0.88 | 4 |
| Personal assistance from sales staff | 3.7 | 0.85 | 5 |
| No delivery charges | 3.6 | 0.92 | 6 |
| Cash payment preferred | 3.5 | 0.95 | 7 |

Source: Field Survey (Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Interpretation: The sensory experience of seeing, touching, and trying products was the strongest motivator for traditional shopping (mean=4.6), followed by immediate availability (mean=4.4). The social aspect of shopping with friends (mean=4.2) was also highly valued, highlighting that traditional shopping serves not just transactional but also social and recreational purposes for teenagers.

Gender Differences in Shopping Preferences

Table 7: Gender-wise Comparison of Shopping Preferences

| Variable | Male (n=251) Mean | Female (n=299) Mean | t-value | p-value |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|
| Overall Online Shopping Preference | 4.1 | 3.8 | 3.45 | 0.001* |
| Overall Traditional Shopping Preference | 3.7 | 4.2 | -4.89 | 0.000* |
| Influence of Social Media on Purchase | 3.6 | 4.1 | -4.12 | 0.000* |
| Price Sensitivity | 4.0 | 3.9 | 0.87 | 0.384 |
| Brand Consciousness | 3.5 | 4.3 | -6.23 | 0.000* |

*Note: $p < 0.05$, significant difference

Interpretation: Male teenagers showed a significantly higher preference for online shopping compared to females, while females preferred traditional shopping more. Females reported greater influence of social media on their purchase decisions and higher brand consciousness. These gender differences have important implications for targeted marketing strategies.

Locality Differences in Shopping Preferences

Table 8: Urban vs Rural Comparison

| Variable | Urban (n=302) Mean | Rural (n=248) Mean | t-value | p-value |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Overall Online Shopping Preference | 4.2 | 3.6 | 5.67 | 0.000* |
| Comfort with Digital Payments | 4.1 | 3.3 | 6.45 | 0.000* |
| Traditional Shopping Preference | 3.5 | 4.3 | -6.12 | 0.000* |
| Access to Diverse Shopping Options | 4.4 | 3.2 | 8.23 | 0.000* |

*Note: $p < 0.05$, significant difference

Interpretation: Urban teenagers showed significantly higher preference for online shopping and greater comfort with digital payments compared to their rural counterparts. This digital divide reflects differences in internet infrastructure, digital literacy, and exposure to e-commerce platforms.

Social Media Influence on Purchase Decisions

Table 9: Impact of Social Media on Buying Behaviour

| Statement | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|
| I follow brands/products recommended by influencers | 3.9 | 0.88 |
| Ads on Instagram influence my purchase decisions | 3.8 | 0.92 |
| I have made unplanned purchases after seeing social media ads | 3.6 | 0.98 |
| I trust peer reviews on social media more than brand ads | 4.2 | 0.75 |
| Social media helps me discover new products/brands | 4.3 | 0.70 |
| I share my purchase experiences on social media | 3.5 | 0.95 |

Source: Field Survey (Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

Interpretation: Social media plays a significant role in product discovery (mean=4.3) and peer trust (mean=4.2). Teenagers trust peer reviews on social media more than brand advertisements, underscoring the importance of user-generated content and word-of-mouth marketing in the digital age.

Findings of the Study

The study yielded several significant findings:

- Channel Preference Varies by Product Category:** Teenagers prefer online shopping for electronics, gadgets, mobile accessories, and books, while traditional shopping is preferred for grocery, clothing, footwear, and sports equipment.
- Convenience Drives Online Shopping:** Convenience, price comparison, and product variety are the primary motivations for online shopping among teenagers.
- Sensory Experience Drives Traditional Shopping:** The ability to touch, try, and immediately obtain products, along with the social experience of shopping with friends, are key motivators for traditional shopping.
- Gender Differences Exist:** Male teenagers prefer online shopping more than females, while females show stronger social media influence and brand consciousness.
- Urban-Rural Digital Divide Persists:** Urban teenagers have significantly higher online shopping preference and digital payment comfort compared to rural teenagers.
- Social Media as Discovery Tool:** Social media primarily serves as a product discovery and peer validation tool rather than a direct purchase channel for teenagers.
- Trust in Peer Reviews:** Teenagers trust peer-generated content and reviews on social media more than traditional brand advertisements.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that digital platforms have significantly impacted teenage buying behaviour, but traditional shopping remains relevant for specific product categories and social contexts. Teenagers are not abandoning physical stores; rather, they are becoming omnichannel consumers who seamlessly switch between online and traditional channels based on product type, situational factors, and personal preferences.

The study revealed that convenience, variety, and price comparison drive online shopping, while sensory experience, immediate gratification, and social interaction drive traditional shopping. Marketers must recognize that for teenagers, shopping is not merely a transactional activity but also a social and recreational experience.

Two distinct segments of teenage shoppers emerge from this study: the "digital-first shopper" (predominantly urban males) who prioritizes online shopping for most categories, and the "experiential shopper" (predominantly females and rural teenagers) who values the sensory and social aspects of traditional shopping.

Implications for Marketers

The findings of this study have several practical implications for marketers and retailers targeting teenage consumers:

1. **Adopt an Omnichannel Strategy:** Given that teenagers use both online and traditional channels, marketers should integrate their online and offline presence. Features such as buy-online-return-in-store (BORIS) and buy-online-pick-up-in-store (BOPIS) can bridge the two channels.
2. **Leverage Social Media for Discovery:** Since social media is primarily used for product discovery, brands should invest in visually appealing content, influencer partnerships, and shoppable posts on Instagram and YouTube.
3. **Address Channel-Specific Barriers:** For online channels, marketers should address barriers such as inability to try products by offering virtual try-on technologies, free returns, and detailed size guides. For traditional stores, enhancing the experiential and social aspects can attract teenage shoppers.
4. **Segment by Gender and Locality:** Marketing strategies should be tailored to gender-specific preferences and the urban-rural digital divide. Female-focused campaigns can emphasize brand storytelling and social validation, while male-focused campaigns can highlight specifications and price comparisons.
5. **Encourage User-Generated Content:** Since teenagers trust peer reviews more than brand ads, encouraging and showcasing user-generated content, customer reviews, and unboxing videos can build credibility and influence purchase decisions.
6. **Target Through Peer Influence:** Word-of-mouth and peer recommendations remain powerful. Referral programs, group buying discounts, and social sharing incentives can leverage peer influence effectively.

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