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Social Media Brand Engagement of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students as a Predictor of Online Purchase Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the relationship between social media brand engagement and online purchase behavior among Hospitality and Tourism Management students of Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. Furthermore, the study analyzed the respondents' profiles based on program, age, gender, and social media usage frequency; evaluated brand engagement activities, such as liking and sharing posts, participating in online contests and campaigns, and giving comments and feedback; and described online purchase behavior in terms of purchase frequency, product types purchased online, and average spending. The study utilized a quantitative descriptive research design and a structured survey questionnaire administered via Google Forms to collect respondents' data. A total of 150 Hospitality and Tourism Management students, selected through simple random sampling, participated in the study. The data gathered were analyzed using frequency, percentage distribution, and weighted means. The results showed that most respondents were Tourism Management students, aged 20-21 years, females, and very frequent social media users. In terms of brand engagement activities, respondents always engaged in liking and reacting to brand-related posts, while participation in online contests and commenting activities were interpreted as often. In addition, results showed that respondents were very likely to engage in purchasing on a regular basis, particularly with promotional offers and sales. Clothing, fashion, health, and beauty products were the most commonly purchased items in respondents' online purchases. The results demonstrated that respondents exhibited high levels of social media brand engagement and favorable tendencies toward online purchase, particularly in response to promotional offers and sales among Hospitality and Tourism Management students. The frequent exposure to social media content, online promotions, and brand interactions contributes to higher engagement levels and the potential to engage in purchasing online. The study's results can help businesses and marketers formulate effective social media marketing strategies to improve their consumer engagement and sales.

Keywords: Brand Engagement Activities, Digital Marketing, Online Purchase Behavior, Online Shopping, Social Media Brand Engagement, Social Media Marketing
JEL Classifications: M31, D12, L13

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an essential tool in influencing the behavior of consumers and implementing contemporary marketing strategies globally. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X enable businesses to promote products, interact with consumers, and strengthen relationships through engaging brand-related content (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Aljuhmani et al., 2023; Zeqiri et al., 2025).

Globally, online purchasing has grown with the increased integration of social media and e-commerce platforms. Social-media environments enable product discovery, information searching, consumer interaction, and purchasing activities, especially with younger digital consumers (Hajli, 2015; Lina et al., 2022; Rachmad, 2022; Kumar et al., 2025). This integration of social media and online commerce has also strengthened opportunities for consumers to interact with brands before, during, and after purchasing activities.

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In the Philippines, social media has transformed into an essential aspect of everyday digital activity, making social platforms relevant to marketing and consumer behavior. DataReportal reported 90.8 million social media user identities in the Philippines in January 2025, equivalent to 78.0% of the country's population (Kemp, 2025)

Social media brand engagement provides the central conceptual foundation of this study. Hollebeek et al. (2014) conceptualized consumer brand engagement as positively valenced cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity associated with consumer-brand interactions in social-media contexts. Their framework identified cognitive processing, affection, and activation as important dimensions of consumer brand engagement. Schivinski et al. (2016) developed and validated a scale measuring consumers' engagement with brand-related social-media content, distinguishing among consumption, contribution, and creation activities.

In the present study, social media brand engagement is operationalized through observable consumer activities such as liking and sharing brand posts, participating in online contests and campaigns, and commenting on or providing feedback to brands. These activities represent different types of behavioral interactions between consumers and brands, allowing the study to investigate whether heightened engagement correlates with online purchasing behavior.

In Nueva Ecija, specifically in Cabanatuan City, social media engagement among students has increased immensely. Many students actively use online platforms to discover products and interact with brands. At Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Hospitality and Tourism Management students are highly exposed to digital marketing and online purchasing activities. They frequently engage with brands through likes, comments, reactions, and shares online. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media brand engagement and online purchasing behavior among Hospitality and Tourism Management students at the College of Management and Business Technology.

Among university students, social media provides consumers the opportunity to discover products, interact with brands, obtain product-related information, and form purchase-related intentions (Schivinski et al., 2016; Zeqiri et al., 2025). The relationship between brand engagement and purchase-related behavior is also supported by empirical studies showing that brand engagement, social media marketing, customer satisfaction, and consumer interaction can contribute to purchase intention and repurchase-related outcomes (Amaldi et al., 2021; Goyal and Verma, 2022; Majeed et al., 2022).

Previous empirical studies demonstrated that social media marketing and consumer brand engagement are associated with consumer responses relevant to purchasing. Aljuhmani et al. (2023) examined the relationship between social media marketing efforts, customer brand engagement, and brand loyalty, emphasizing the importance of social-media interactions in strengthening customer-brand relationships. Similarly, Zeqiri et al. (2025) examined social media marketing, brand awareness, consumer brand engagement, and purchase intention in emerging economies and found that social media marketing can contribute to consumer engagement and purchase-related outcomes. Related research has likewise shown that perceived value and consumer brand engagement can influence purchase intention, while social media marketing activities can strengthen consumers' perceptions and responses toward brands (Bushara et al., 2023; Maryyam et al., 2025).

Within tourism-related contexts, social media marketing has also been associated with brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty, demonstrating the relevance of social-media activities to tourism consumers and destination-related marketing (Rimadias et al., 2021). Kumar et al. (2025) investigated brand-directed and influencer-directed social media marketing in relation to customer engagement and purchase behaviour. Similarly, influencer-related social media activities and multi-platform social media strategies have been examined in relation to consumer engagement, online buying intentions, and sales outcomes (Koay and Lim, 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

The study's results will provide a basis for investigating whether social media brand engagement is associated with online purchase behavior among Hospitality and Tourism Management students. However, the study focuses specifically on university students in the Philippine hospitality and tourism education context to provide a localized perspective on the relationship between social media engagement and online purchasing.

This study aimed to determine "Social Media Brand Engagement as A Predictor of Online Purchase Behavior." Specifically, this sought to answer the following:

1. How may the profile of social media users be engaging with brands in terms of:
   - 1.1 Program
   - 1.2 Age
   - 1.3 Gender
   - 1.4 Social media usage frequency.
2. To assess brand engagement activities in terms of:
   - 2.1 Liking and sharing posts
   - 2.2 Participating in online contests and campaigns
   - 2.3 Commenting and providing feedback.
3. To describe online purchase behavior among respondents in terms of:
   - 3.1 Frequency of online purchases
   - 3.2 Types of products purchased online
   - 3.3 Average spending on online purchases.
4. To propose social media marketing strategies to improve consumer-brand engagement and sales.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the relationship between social media brand engagement and online purchase behavior among Hospitality and Tourism Management students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. The researchers collected numerical data via a structured survey distributed through Google Forms.

The study's respondents were 150 Hospitality and Tourism Management students selected through simple random sampling. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: respondents' profile, brand engagement activities, and online purchase behavior. A 4-point Likert scale was used to measure participants' responses.

Data gathered were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution to describe the respondents' profile, while the weighted mean was used to assess the level of brand engagement activities and online purchase behavior. The study adhered to ethical principles by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and proper consent from the respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the data gathered from the survey questionnaire and outlines the findings from the data collection and analysis processes. This chapter also includes brief descriptions of the participants to allow readers to draw insights from each participant's unique perspective and build context from their experiences.

3.1. Profile of Social Media Users

Table 1 presents the profile of the 150 social media user respondents by program, age, gender, and frequency of social media use.

In terms of program, most respondents were from Tourism Management (84, 56%), while 66 (44%) were from Hospitality Management. This shows that Tourism Management students had higher participation in the survey than Hospitality Management students.

By age, the majority of respondents were 20-21 years old, with 69 respondents (46%). This was followed by the 18-19 age group, with 45 respondents (30%), while 29 respondents (19.33%) belonged to the 22-23 age group. The fewest respondents were aged 24 and above, with only 7 respondents (4.67%). The results indicate that most respondents were young adults who were commonly active on social media.

By gender, female respondents had the highest number, at 81 (54%), followed by male respondents at 64 (42.67%). Meanwhile, 5 respondents (3.33%) preferred not to disclose their gender. This means that female respondents were more represented in the study.

Regarding social media usage frequency, the majority of respondents reported using social media very often, with 75 respondents (50%). This was followed by respondents who answered "often," with 38 respondents (25.33%). On the other hand, 22 respondents (14.67%) answered "rarely," while 15 respondents (10%) answered "sometimes." The findings suggest that most respondents are active social media users, which supports the relevance of the study in examining social media-related behaviors and experiences.

Table 1: Profile of social media users

Program	Frequency	Percentage
Hospitality management	66	44
Tourism management	84	56
Total	150	100
Age		
18-19	45	30
20-21	69	46
22-23	29	19.33
24 and above	7	4.67
Total	150	100
Gender		
Male	64	42.67
Female	81	54
Prefer not to say	5	3.33
Total	150	100
Social media usage frequency		
Rarely	22	14.67
Sometimes	15	10
Often	38	25.33
Very often	75	50
Total	150	100

Table 2: Brand engagement activities in terms of liking and sharing posts

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I frequently like posts from brands I follow on social media.	3.56	0.91	Always
2. I often share brand-related content with my friends or followers.	3.02	0.92	Often
3. I engage with brands by reacting to their posts (like, heart, etc.).	3.32	0.79	Always
4. I follow brands mainly to stay updated with their posts.	3.34	0.87	Always
5. I like posts that I find interesting or entertaining.	3.36	0.83	Always
Grand mean	3.32		Always

3.25-4.00: Always; 2.50-3.24: Often; 1.75-2.49; Sometimes; 1.00-1.74: Never

3.2. Brand Engagement Activities

3.2.1. Liking and sharing posts

Table 2 indicates that respondents actively engage with brands on social media by liking and sharing posts, with an overall grand mean of 3.32, interpreted as "Always." This suggests a consistently high level of interaction with brand content.

Among the indicators, frequently liking brand posts (3.56), reacting to posts (3.32), following brands to stay updated (3.34), and liking interesting or entertaining content (3.36) are all interpreted as "Always," indicating strong engagement behaviors. Meanwhile, sharing brand-related content (3.02) is rated slightly lower at Often, indicating that while students regularly interact with content, they are somewhat less inclined to share it.

Overall, the findings suggest that Hospitality and Tourism Management students are highly engaged with brands on social media, particularly through passive and reactive actions, which may influence their online purchase behavior.

Table 3: Brand engagement activities in terms of participating in online contests and campaigns

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I join online contests or giveaways organized by brands.	2.97	1.16	Often
2. I participate in online campaigns when the mechanics are easy to follow.	2.99	1.10	Often
3. I am motivated to join brand campaigns if there are rewards or incentives.	3.0	1.05	Often
4. I encourage others to join brand contests or online promotions.	2.93	1.07	Often
5. I participate in brand campaigns to stay connected with the brand community.	2.98	1.11	Often
Grand mean	2.97		Often

3.25-4.00: Always; 2.50-3.24: Often; 1.75-2.49; Sometimes; 1.00-1.74: Never

Table 4: Brand engagement activities in terms of commenting and providing feedback

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I leave comments on brand posts that interest me.	2.99	1.13	Often
2. I provide feedback or reviews about products or services I have used.	3.21	0.81	Often
3. I respond to brand posts when they ask for customer opinions.	2.97	1.06	Often
4. I comment to share my experience with a product or service.	2.95	1.03	Often
5. I engage with brands through direct messages or comments when I have concerns.	3.08	1.08	Often
Grand mean	3.04		Often

3.25-4.00: Always; 2.50-3.24: Often; 1.75-2.49; Sometimes; 1.00-1.74: Never

3.2.2. Participating in online contests and campaigns

Table 3 shows that respondents often participate in online contests and campaigns, with a grand mean of 2.97. All indicators fall within the Often range, suggesting a moderate level of involvement in these activities.

Students are more likely to join when mechanics are simple (2.99) and when there are rewards or incentives (3.00), indicating that ease and benefits influence their participation. Encouraging others (2.93) and joining to stay connected with the brand community (2.98) are also common but slightly lower.

Overall, while Hospitality and Tourism Management students engage in contests and campaigns, their participation is less consistent than their liking and reacting to posts, suggesting that more effort or motivation is needed for this type of engagement.

3.2.3. Commenting and providing feedback

Table 4 shows that Hospitality and Tourism Management students often engage with brands through commenting and providing feedback on social media, as reflected by the grand mean of 3.04 (Often). This indicates that such engagement is a regular behavior among respondents and may influence their online purchase decisions.

Table 5: Online purchase behavior in terms of the frequency of online purchases

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I am likely to shop online at least once a week.	3.34	0.79	Very likely
2. I am likely to purchase products online whenever I receive promotional offers or discounts.	3.34	0.78	Very likely
3. I am likely to increase my frequency of online shopping compared to the previous year.	3.23	0.74	Likely
4. I am likely to use online platforms instead of physical stores for most of my purchases.	3.51	0.67	Very likely
5. I am likely to continue shopping online regularly in the future.	3.31	0.72	Very likely
Grand mean	3.35		Very likely

3.25-4.00: Very likely; 2.50-3.24: Likely; 1.75-2.49: Unlikely; 1.00-1.74: Very unlikely

Table 6: Online purchase behavior in terms of types of products purchased online

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I am likely to purchase clothing or fashion items online.	3.37	0.79	Very likely
2. I am likely to buy gadgets or electronic products through online shopping.	1.88	0.91	Unlikely
3. I am likely to order food or beverages using online delivery platforms.	2.06	1.03	Likely
4. I am likely to purchase health and beauty products online.	3.41	0.82	Very likely
5. I am likely to buy school or work-related materials (books, supplies, software) online.	3.31	0.79	Very likely
Grand mean	2.81		Likely

3.25-4.00: Very likely; 2.50-3.24: Likely; 1.75-2.49: Unlikely; 1.00-1.74: Very unlikely

Table 7: Online purchase behavior in terms of average spending on online purchases

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Verbal description
1. I am likely to spend more than ₱500 on a single online purchase.	3.01	0.85	Likely
2. I am likely to allocate part of my monthly budget for online shopping.	3.09	0.83	Likely
3. I am likely to spend more on online shopping during special sales (ex., 11.11, 12.12).	3.67	0.50	Very likely
4. I am likely to prioritize online shopping over in-store shopping when spending money.	3.38	0.73	Very likely
5. I am likely to increase my online spending if I see strong brand engagement on social media.	3.35	0.78	Very likely
Grand mean	3.3		Very likely

3.25-4.00: Very likely; 2.50-3.24: Likely; 1.75-2.49: Unlikely; 1.00-1.74: Very unlikely

Table 8: Summary of Lowest-Mean Indicators for Brand Engagement and Online Purchase Behavior

SOP	Indicator	Results	Interpretation
2.1 Liking and sharing posts	Sharing brand-related content with friends/followers	3.02	Lowest mean under liking and sharing posts
2.2 Participating in online contests and campaigns	Encouraging others to join brand contests/ promotions	2.93	Lowest mean under contests and campaigns
2.3 Commenting and providing feedback	Commenting to share product/service experience	2.95	Lowest mean under commenting and feedback
3.1 Frequency of online purchases	Increase in online shopping frequency compared to the previous year	3.23	Lowest mean under frequency of online purchases
3.2 Types of products purchased online	Buying gadgets/electronic products online	1.88	Lowest mean under product types purchased online
3.3 Average spending on online purchases	Spending more than ₱500 on a single online purchase	3.01	Lowest mean under average spending online

Among the indicators, providing feedback or reviews obtained the highest mean (3.21), suggesting that students are particularly active in sharing their experiences after using products or services. Other activities, such as messaging brands when they have concerns (3.08) and commenting on interesting posts (2.99), are also performed often, showing consistent interaction with brands.

Overall, the findings imply that students are active participants in online brand communication. Their frequent feedback and comments can help shape their purchasing behavior, as these interactions build trust, express satisfaction or concerns, and influence decision-making.

3.3. Online Purchase Behavior

3.3.1. Frequency of online purchases

Table 5 shows that Hospitality and Tourism Management students have a high tendency toward online purchasing, with a grand mean of 3.35 (Very Likely). This indicates that online shopping is a common and preferred behavior among the respondents.

The highest rating (3.51) reveals that students are more inclined to use online platforms rather than physical stores. They are also very likely to shop regularly, be influenced by promotions, and continue purchasing online. Meanwhile, the increase in shopping frequency compared to the previous year (3.23, Likely) is slightly lower but still positive.

Overall, the results suggest that students strongly favor online shopping due to convenience and marketing incentives, making it a significant aspect of their buying behavior.

3.3.2. Types of products purchased online

Table 6 shows that Hospitality and Tourism Management students are generally likely to purchase certain types of products online, with a grand mean of 2.81 (Likely).

Among the items, health and beauty products (3.41) and clothing or fashion items (3.37) are rated Very likely, indicating these are the most commonly purchased products online. School or work-related materials (3.31) also fall under Very likely, showing that students rely on online platforms for both personal and academic needs.

On the other hand, food and beverage orders (2.06) are only Likely, while gadgets or electronic products (1.88) are rated Unlikely, suggesting lower preference or possible concerns when buying these items online.

Overall, the findings indicate that students prefer purchasing every day, low-risk items online, whereas they are more hesitant about higher-value or more sensitive products.

3.3.3. Average spending on online purchases

Table 7 shows that students have a strong tendency to spend on online purchases, with a grand mean of 3.30 (Very likely). They are most influenced during special sales (3.67, Very likely), indicating that promotional events greatly drive their purchasing behavior. They also tend to prioritize online shopping over in-store shopping (3.38) and are likely to increase spending when exposed to strong social media brand engagement (3.35).

Meanwhile, allocating a monthly budget for online shopping (3.09) and spending more than ₱500 on a single purchase (3.01) are rated as Likely, suggesting that financial considerations still affect their decisions.

Overall, the findings indicate that while students remain budget-conscious, social media brand engagement and promotional strategies significantly influence their online spending behavior.

3.4. To Propose Social Media Marketing Strategies to Improve Consumer-brand Engagement and Sales

Table 8 shows the indicators with the lowest percentage and mean results from SOP 2 to SOP 3. Findings reveal that respondents are less active in sharing brand-related content, encouraging others to join campaigns, and commenting about products or services. Regarding online purchasing, students are more hesitant to buy gadgets online and to spend large amounts. Overall, the results suggest that respondents prefer passive social media engagement and remain cautious with expensive online purchases.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that respondents are highly engaged in liking, reacting, and following brand-related posts on social media. These

activities help increase their exposure to online advertisements and brand content. However, respondents are less active in sharing brand-related posts, showing that they prefer passive forms of engagement.

The findings conclude that respondents often participate in online contests and campaigns when rewards and simple mechanics are provided. Incentives strongly influence their willingness to participate in brand activities. However, respondents are less likely to encourage others to participate in online promotions and campaigns.

The study concludes that respondents regularly provide feedback and interact with brands through comments and reviews. These interactions help build communication between consumers and brands. However, respondents are more selective when sharing personal experiences publicly on social media.

The findings conclude that respondents are very likely to purchase products online due to convenience, accessibility, and promotional offers. Most students prefer online shopping over physical stores and are expected to continue shopping online regularly in the future.

The study concludes that respondents commonly purchase fashion items, health and beauty products, and school-related materials online. However, they are hesitant to buy gadgets and electronic products online due to potential risks, higher prices, and concerns about product quality.

The findings indicate that respondents are highly influenced by promotional events, discounts, and strong social media brand engagement when making online purchases. Although students are willing to spend during sales and online promotions, they still remain budget-conscious when making purchasing decisions.

In terms of liking and sharing posts, sharing brand-related content with friends or followers obtained the lowest mean. Businesses should create relatable, entertaining, and shareable content to motivate users to actively share posts online.

Participating in online contests and campaigns, and encouraging others to join brand promotions, received the lowest mean. Companies may provide referral rewards, incentives, and simpler mechanics to increase participation and promotion among users.

For commenting and providing feedback, commenting to share experiences with products or services obtained the lowest mean. Brands should encourage feedback and discussions by offering incentives and responding actively to customer concerns.

In the frequency of online purchases, the increase in online shopping frequency compared to the previous year received the lowest mean. Businesses may offer more discounts, loyalty rewards, and promotional campaigns to encourage frequent online purchases.

Among the types of products purchased online, gadgets and electronic products had the lowest mean. Online sellers should build consumer trust by providing warranties, authentic reviews, and secure payment methods for expensive products.

Lastly, spending more than ₱500 on a single online purchase had the lowest mean, below the average for online purchases. Businesses may introduce budget-friendly promos, installment options, and discounts to encourage higher online spending among students.

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