



# EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AMONG YOUTH IN 3-TIER CITIES

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## **Abstract :**

We are living in the digital age, and since 2015, the internet has advanced rapidly from 1G to 5G. The widespread use of smartphones, supported by affordable data plans and initiatives like the Digital India campaign, has led to a massive rise in social media usage. This transformation has changed lifestyles and communication patterns, influencing almost every individual in some way. The shift in marketing practices, tools, and techniques has been remarkable and far beyond imagination.

Earlier, markets were restricted to physical spaces, limited by geography, time, and access. Today, globalization and digitalization have made the world market available at the touch of a finger, shrinking it to the size of a smartphone screen. Social media, once designed for social interaction, has now become a powerful medium for brand promotion, advertising, and marketing management. Businesses have gradually shifted from traditional advertising methods such as print, radio, and television to social media platforms.

This transformation has particularly influenced the younger generation, who are more tech-savvy and spend considerable time online, making them highly responsive to digital marketing strategies. This research focuses on studying the use of social media among youth in Tier-3 cities, the influence of social media advertising, the effect of peer recommendations on purchase decisions, and the overall effectiveness of such marketing. A sample of 250 postgraduate students from Bhusawal was studied, offering insights to help marketers design more effective strategies.

**Keywords -** Digital Advertising, E-Advertising, Social Media, Social Media Advertising

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the digital era, social media has rapidly evolved to become a dominant force in mass communication, entertainment, and marketing. Its emergence and growth can be attributed to multiple factors— increased internet access, faster connectivity from 1G to 5G, the widespread availability of affordable smartphones, and India's young and tech-savvy population. Alongside these, the government's digitalization initiatives and low data costs have created a fertile ground for digital advertising. These developments have led to an exponential rise in social media users and the proliferation of multiple platforms in recent years.

Social media today is an integral part of life across all age groups. Every day, millions of people join online communities, reshaping how society communicates and interacts. Individuals are increasingly conscious of their online identity and work to maintain a positive digital image. Much like traditional media, social media comprises various sub-platforms or "channels" such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, and LinkedIn, each offering unique features and experiences to users.

These platforms have redefined connectivity and marketing. Instagram, for example, began as a photo-sharing app but now includes instant messaging and short video content through "Reels." Facebook allows global community engagement through groups and discussions, while YouTube enables creators to showcase talent and reach global audiences.

Thus, social media has revolutionized communication by enabling people to create, share, and exchange ideas instantly. Its vast and growing influence continues to reshape human interaction, business practices, and the digital economy, India being no exception.

Social Media users have grown leaps and bound and India too is progressing in that direction. In fact, after China, India ranks second in the world with the largest proportion of its population active on social media. In this digital age, it is rare to find a young person who is not engaged on at least one social platform. As of 2025, India has over 491 million social media users, representing 35.07% of its population, with the average user spending 2 hours and 30 minutes daily on these platforms. Approximately 68.6% of Indian users are male and 31.4% are female. WhatsApp leads as the most popular platform with 83% of internet users, followed closely by YouTube, which also has 491 million users. Nearly all global users (99%) access social media via smartphones.

As users increasingly engage with social platforms, businesses have shifted their marketing focus toward these digital spaces. Advertising on social media not only informs potential customers but also stimulates demand. Social media has become a key component of marketing communication, allowing businesses to interact, engage, and influence consumer decisions directly.

This form of marketing, i.e., Social Media Advertising (SMA), involves running paid campaigns on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to reach target audiences. Unlike traditional advertising, SMA thrives on real-time interaction, influencer endorsements, and viral engagement.

Globally, there are 5.42 billion social media users in 2025, with ad spending projected to reach \$276.7 billion, and 83% of that via mobile by 2030. In India, social media ad spending is projected to reach US\$1.76 billion in 2025, growing at a 10.9% CAGR to US\$2.95 billion by 2030. With 318 million rural users and a mobile-first approach, India offers immense opportunities for advertisers.

Given the youth's increasing digital empowerment through smartphones, digital wallets, and independent purchasing power, this study aims to explore how social media advertising can be made more effective.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher reviewed online printed journals for research papers and articles related to the topic. Not much literature was available. The literature reviewed revealed that most of the research is on social media marketing or social media advertising in India in general or relating to a product's social media advertising. Hence, this paper attempts to study social media advertising in 3 tier cities and give valuable suggestions.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand which social media platforms the youngsters use and how much time they spend on social media in 3 tier cities.
2. To know the various aspects of social media advertising.
3. To find out the advantages perceived by youth of social media advertising over print media advertising.
4. To study the effectiveness of social media advertising on young consumers in 3 tier cities.
5. To suggest strategies for businesses to effectively target young consumers through social media advertising.

## IV. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- H<sub>0</sub>1: Social media advertising has no advantage over print media advertising.  
H<sub>1</sub>1: Social media advertising has advantage over print media advertising.  
H<sub>0</sub>2: Social media advertising is not effective for young consumers in 3 tier cities.  
H<sub>1</sub>2: Social media advertising is effective for young consumers in 3 tier cities.

## V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Type of Research:** The research is descriptive in nature.

**Area of Study:** Bhusawal City, a 3-tier city in Maharashtra, is selected for the study

**Data Collection:** The data is based on Primary as well as secondary data.

- i) **Primary Data:** To undertake the survey, a sample of 250 post graduate students from various colleges in Bhusawal were taken.
- ii) **Secondary Data:** Secondary data was used to get insights into the various aspects of social media and social media advertising. Various papers and articles available online were referred to.

**Type of Sampling:** Convenience Sampling was used to collect data.

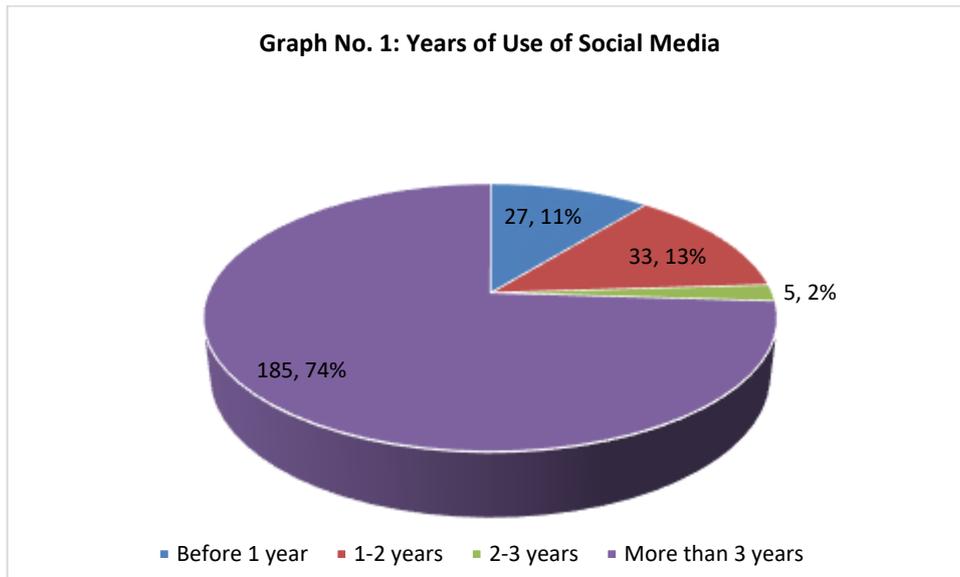
**Data Analysis:** Data from the first 250 questionnaires received will be analysed with the help of tables, graphs and percentages.

### Limitations of the Study

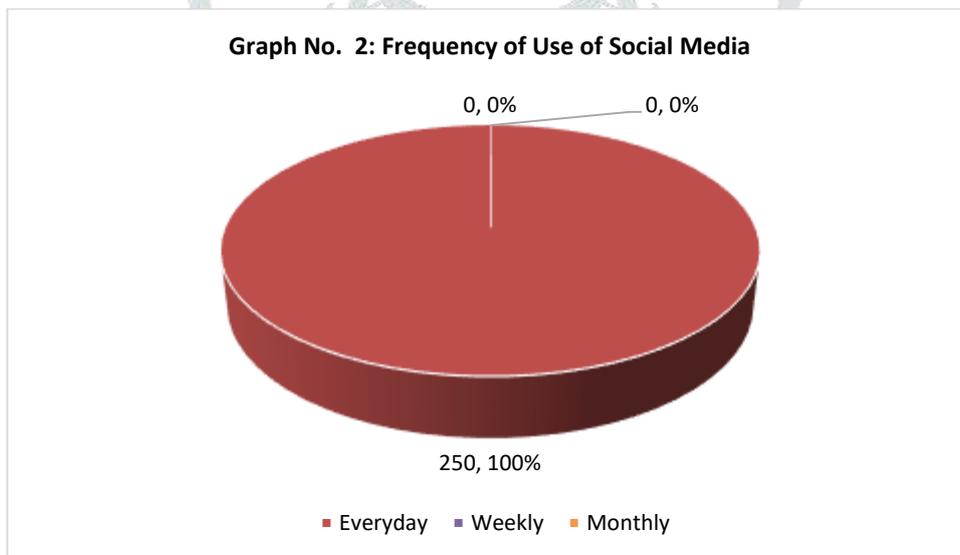
1. The study is limited to young consumers, excluding middle-aged and older generations.
2. The study is limited to 3-tier city Bhusawal in Maharashtra. The data may vary depending on type of city, geographical region and cultural differences.
3. Rapidly changing social media trends may affect the relevance of findings in the long term.
4. Responses may be biased, as young consumers are often influenced by peers and social trends.

**VI. DATA ANALYSIS**

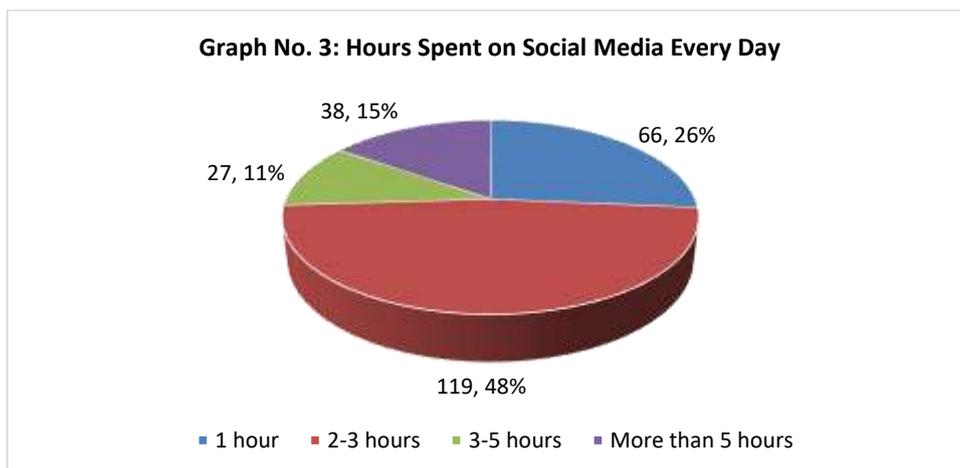
From the 250 questionnaires received duly filled up, the analysis was done. Various graphs were prepared with had data in numbers and percentages. The percentages at times were rounded up for graphs.



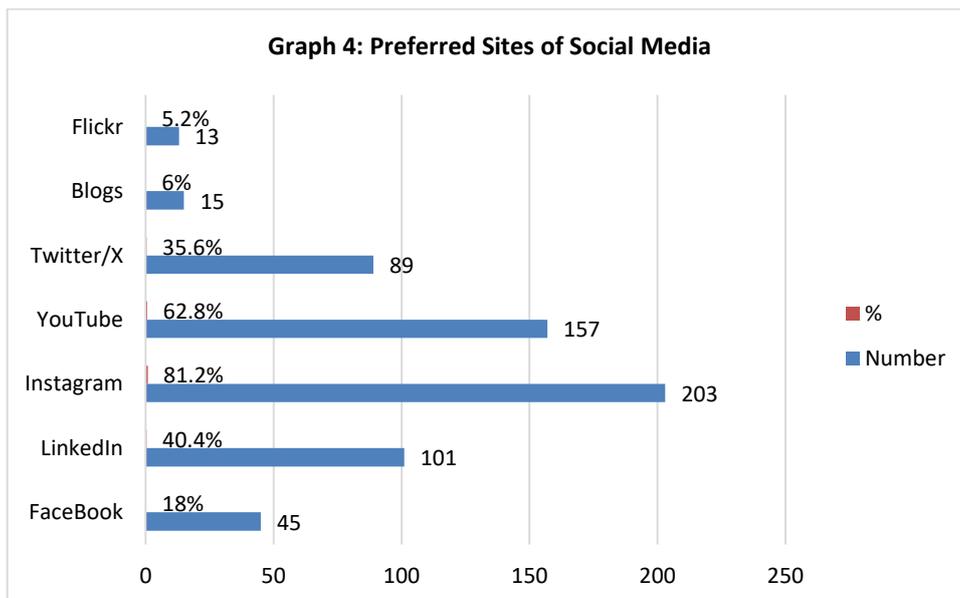
From Graph No. 1 it can be interpreted that almost 3/4<sup>th</sup> i.e., 185 out of the 250 respondents have been using social media for more than 3 years. 10.8% respondents have started using it for more than 1 year. 13.2% have been using social media for between 1 to 2 years and a meager 2% for 2-3 years. This shows that majority of the youth start using social media from a very young age.



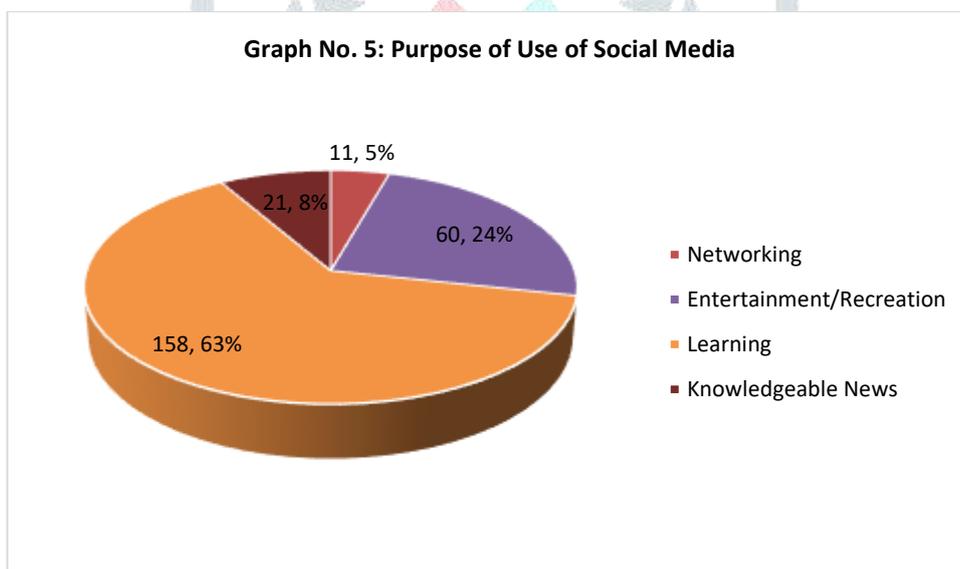
Regarding frequency of use of social media, cent percent of the respondents stated that they use social media every day.



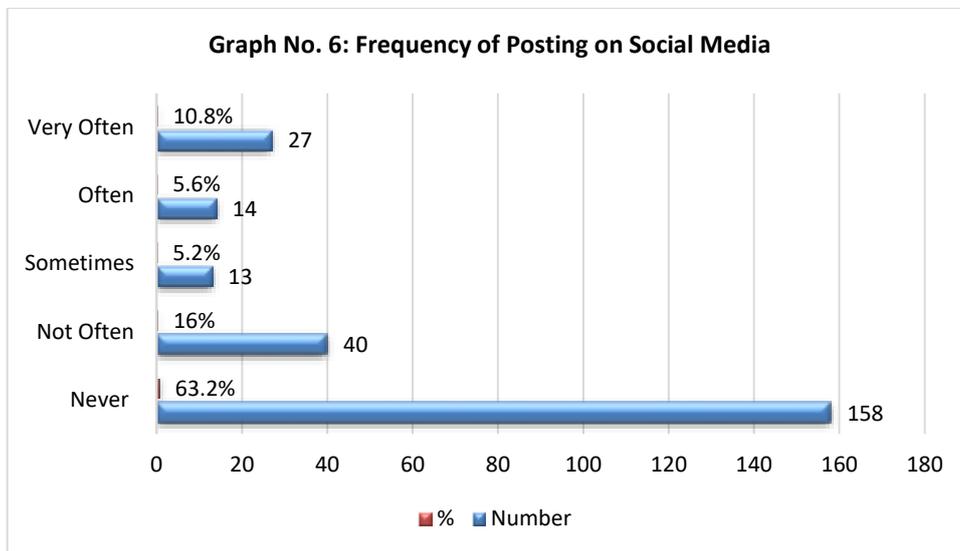
But when asked how much time they spend on social media, a bit less than half of them said that they spend 2 to 3 hours daily on social media. 26.4% spend daily around an hour on social media. 10.8% spend 3 to 5 hours and only 10.8% spend more than 5 hours per day on social media.



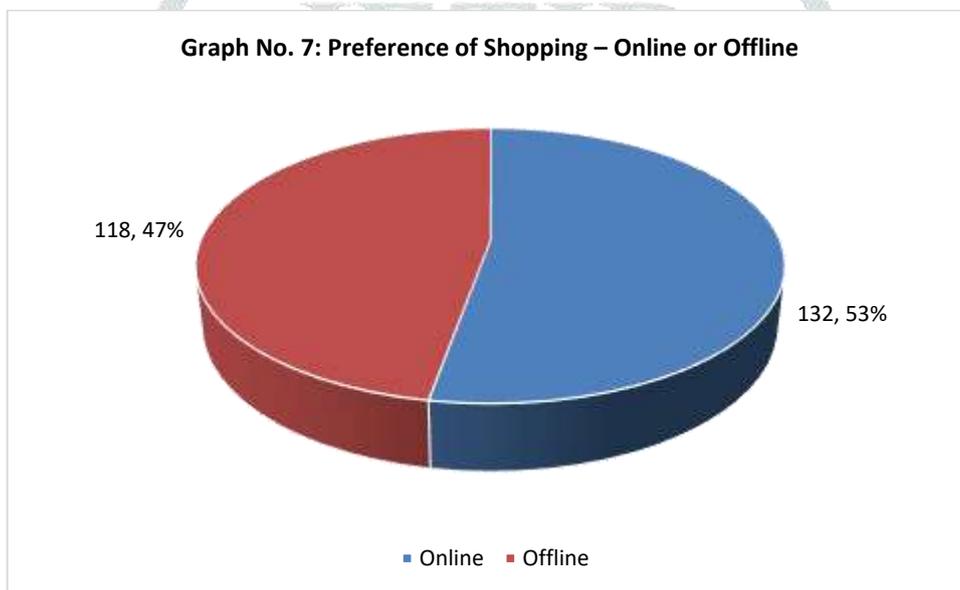
There are various sites of social media. The respondents response showed that Instagram was the most popular and preferred site for the youth with 81.2% showing their preference towards it. YouTube stood at the second most preferred site at 62.8% followed by LinkedIn with 40.4% voting for it. LinkedIn could be because students are at postgraduate level preparing for jobs and would like to be in touch with professionals. Twitter/X stood at 35.6% and FaceBook at 18%. Blogs and Flickr had 6% and 5.2% response respectively with just 15 and 13 responses out of 250.



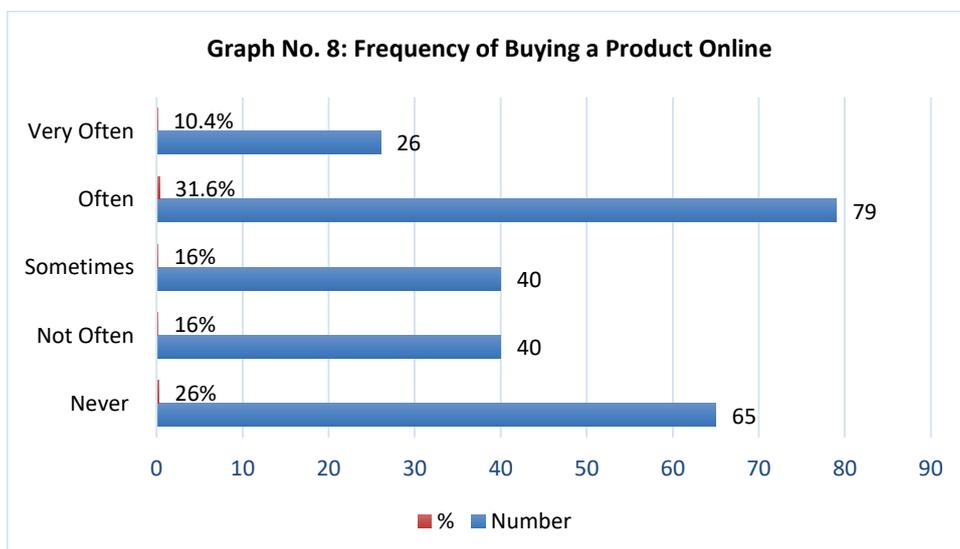
As indicated in Graph No. 5 nearly 2/3<sup>rd</sup> (63.2%) was on social media for learning. This could be because the respondents were students. 1/4<sup>th</sup> approximately was there on social media for entertainment and recreation. Only 8.4% and 4.4% were for knowledgeable news and networking respectively.



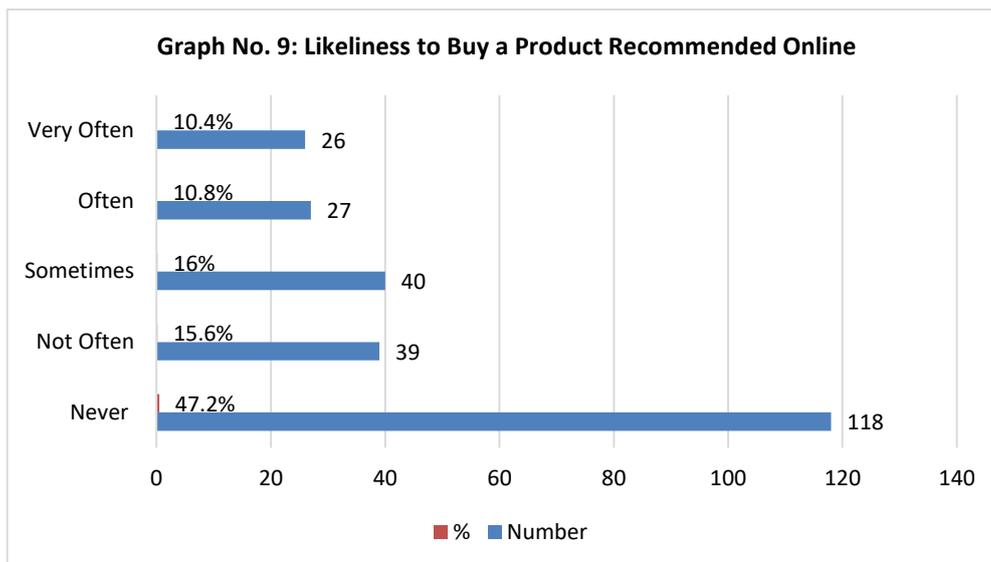
The above Graph No. 6 depicts that majority, i.e., 63.2% do not post at all on social media. 16% do not post quite often whereas 5.2% post on social media sometimes. 5.6% often post on social media and 10.8% regularly post on social media. The reason for not posting on social media could be that they belong to 3 tier town which is semi-rural and they have restrictions and limited data.



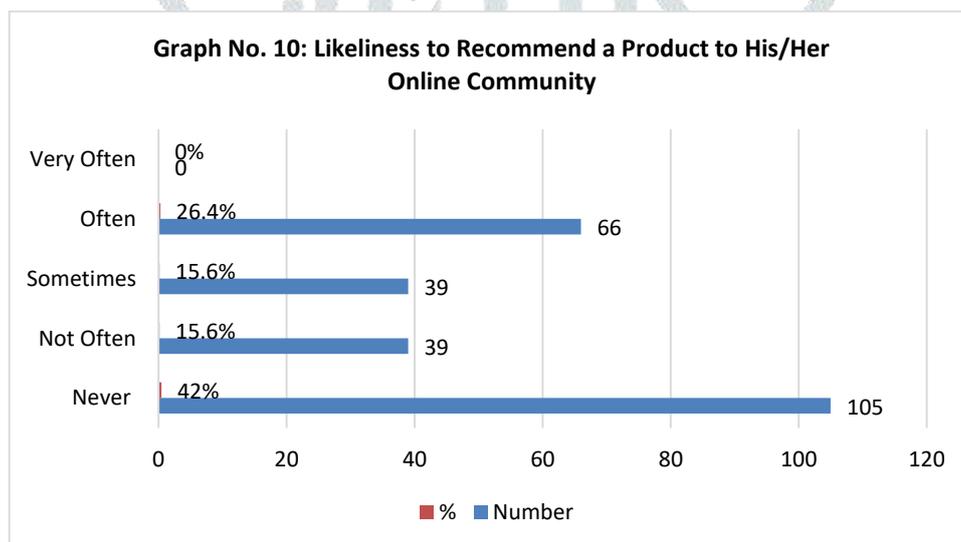
When respondents were asked as to whether they prefer online or offline shopping, the answer was around 50-50%, where the preference for online shopping was more by around 5.6%. The reason for this could be in small cities, shops are not far off and things are available on just a call away. Going for shopping by youngsters is a way to get out of their homes and enjoy as being a small town, there are restrictions on youth.



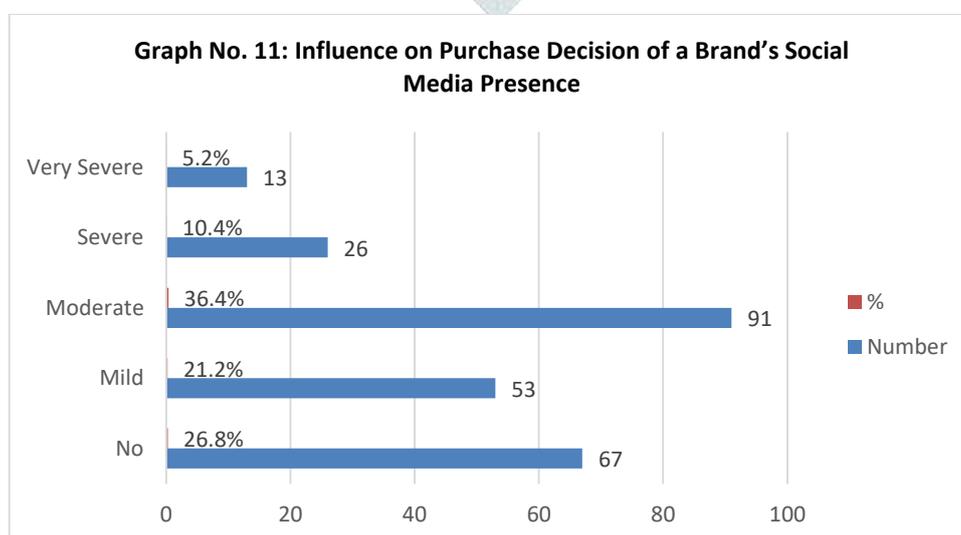
Graph No. 8 shown above indicates that nearly 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the respondents never prefer to buy online. 32% of the respondents would either buy not so often or sometimes. 31.6% of respondents prefer to buy online often and 10.4% buy it very often.



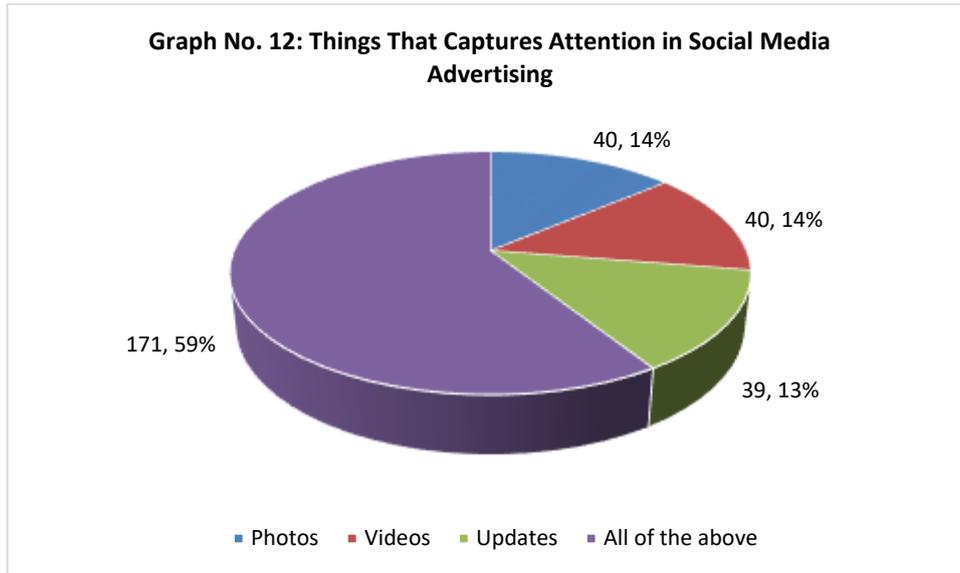
To the question ‘How likely are you to buy a product recommended online?’, nearly 50% said ‘never’. ‘Not Often’ was replied by 15.6% and ‘Sometimes’ by 16% of the respondents. 10.8% and 10.4% of the respondents replied ‘Often’ and ‘Very Often’ respectively.



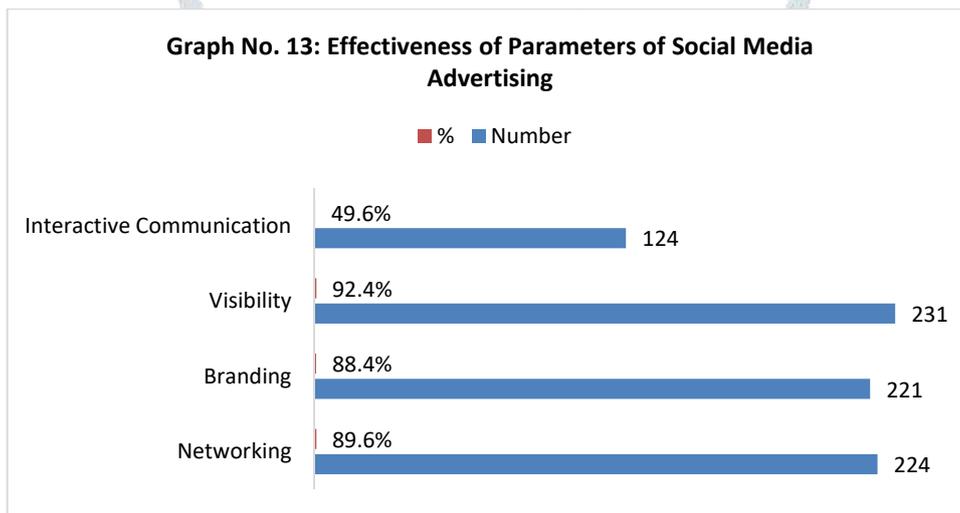
On the likelihood of recommending a product to their online community, 42% said they would never do so. 15.6% said not often and sometimes respectively. 26.4% said they would often do so. None would do it very often.



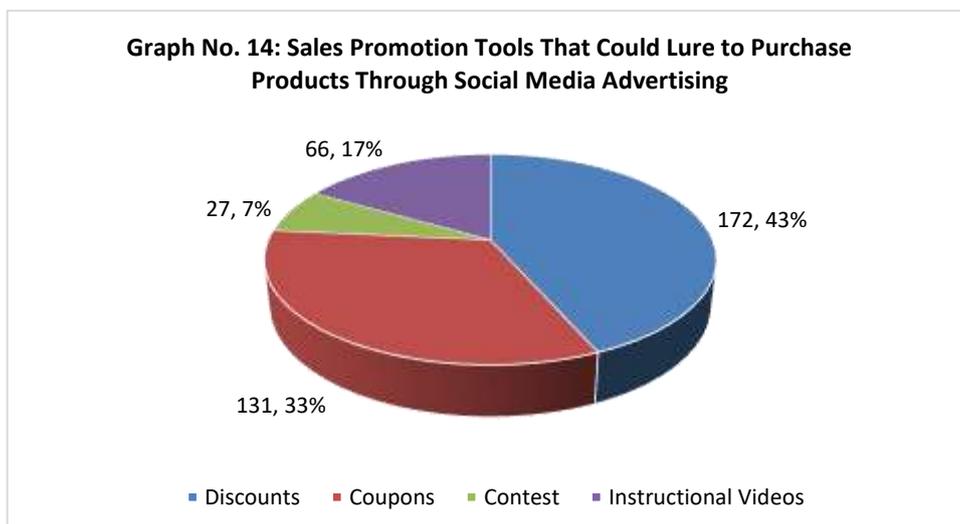
The above Graph No. 11 indicates that around 50% are either not at all influenced or are mildly influenced to purchase by a brand’s social media presence. 36.4% are moderately influenced whereas 10.4% are severely influenced and 5.2% are very severely influenced.



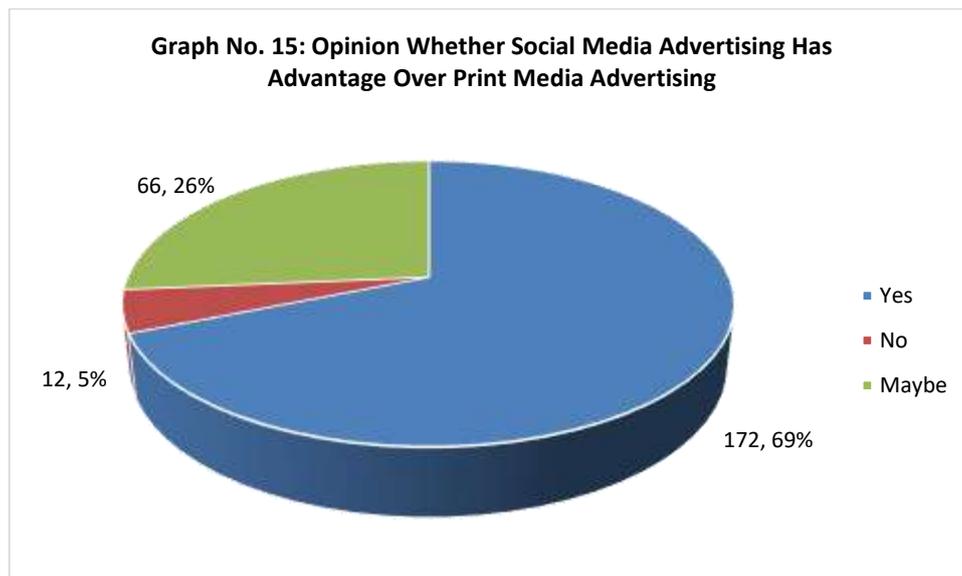
On questions relating to parameters that capture the attention of the respondents in Social Media Advertising, 16% each said it was photos, videos and updates but more than 2/3<sup>rd</sup> (68.4%) said all these play an important role in capturing attention to an advertisement in social media.



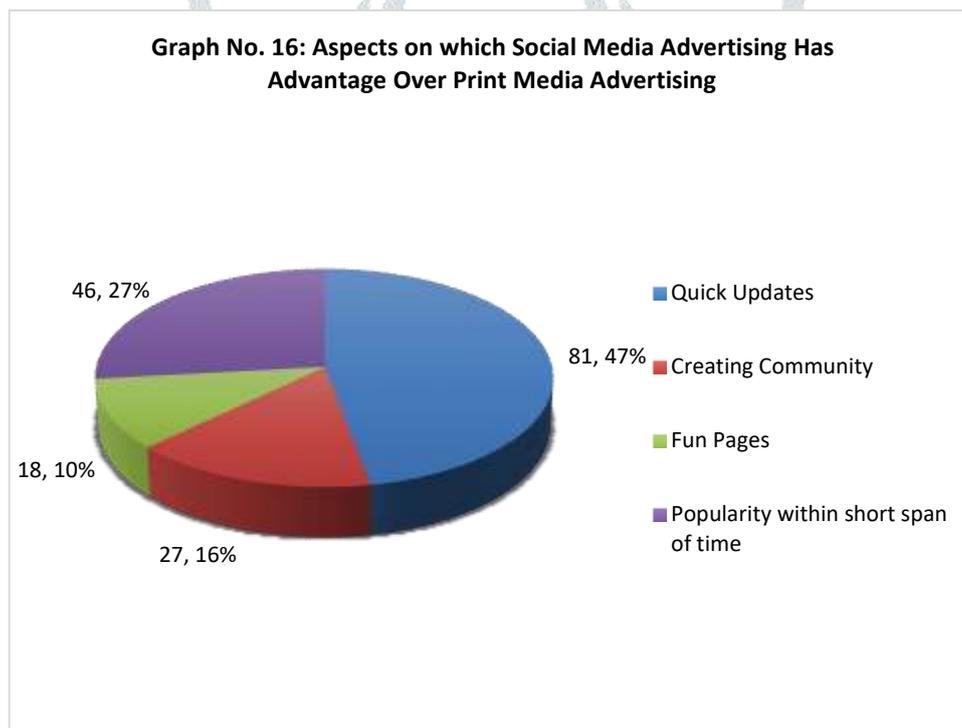
Graph No. 13 which represents effectiveness of parameters of SMA clearly shows that visibility gets 92.4% which is 231 out of 250 respondents. Networking gets 89.6% responses followed by branding with 49.6% responses. The least percentage, i.e., 49.6% was given to the parameter of interactive communication (49.6%).



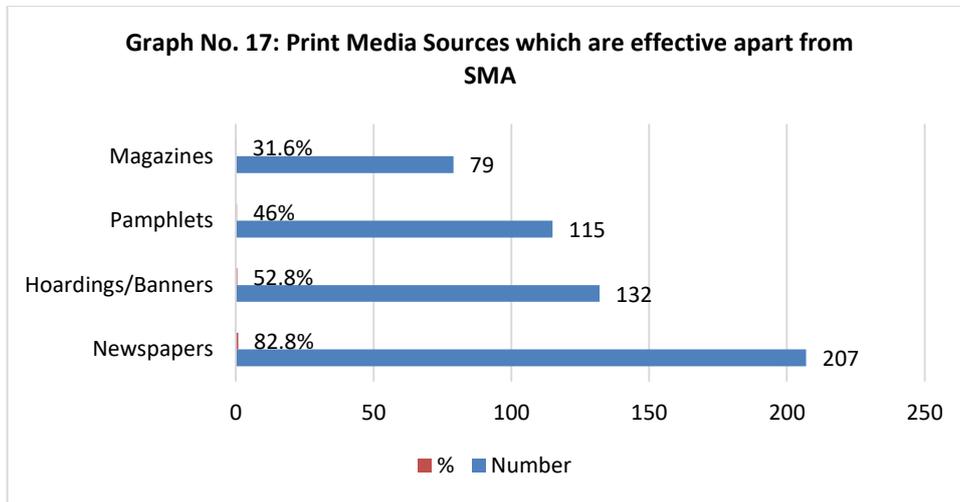
It can be seen in Graph No. 14 that discounts allures a person to purchase a product through social media with 68.8% (172 out of 250) voting for it followed by coupons as a promotional tool for which 50%+ respondents voted. 66 out of 250 i.e., 26.4% of the respondents went for instructional videos to be lured by social media advertising. Sales promotion through contest could be the tool to lure around 11% of the respondents.



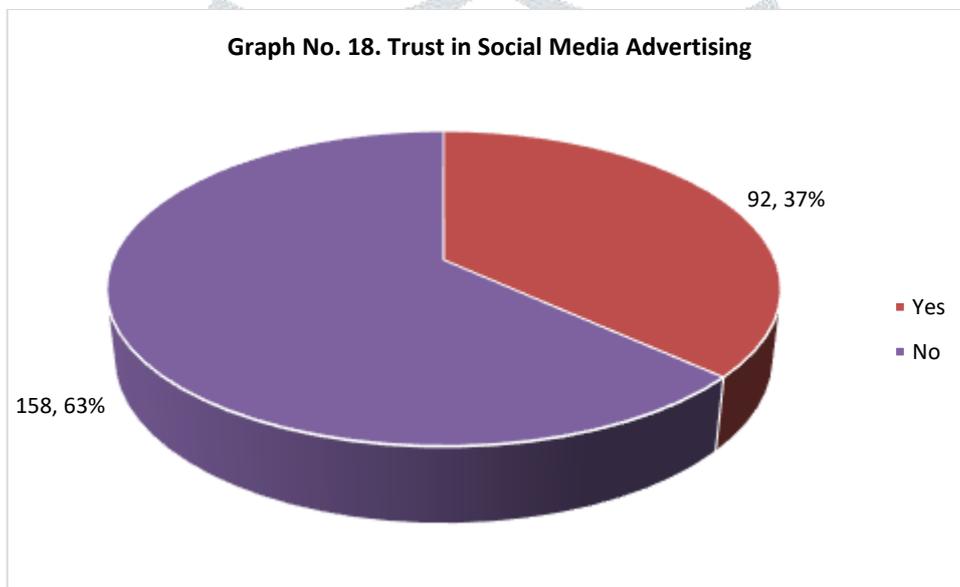
Above 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the respondents felt that social media advertising has advantage over print media advertising, whereas around 5% did not feel so. A quarter of the respondents were not sure whether social media advertising has advantage over print media advertising. Hence,  $H_0$ : Social media advertising has no advantage over print media advertising is accepted.



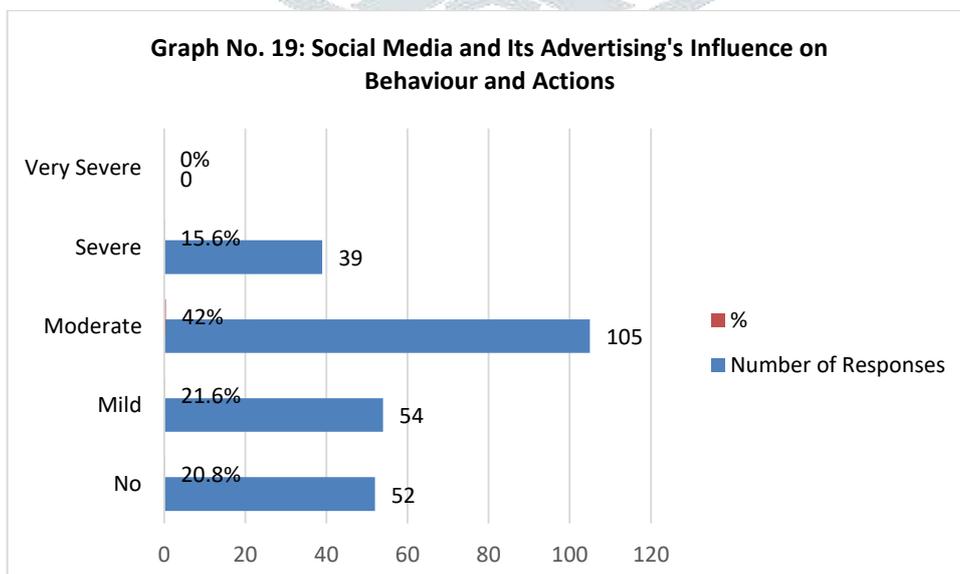
The respondents those who said yes, which were 172 out of 250, were asked to specify the parameters on which social media advertising had advantage over print media advertising. Graph No. 16 shows that 47% stated that it has an advantage of quick updates, more than 1/4<sup>th</sup> were of the opinion that it helps bring the product popularity within a short span of time, 15.7% talked on creating community through social media advertising and about 10% went for fun pages.



Apart from Social Media Advertising, more than 4/5<sup>th</sup> of the respondents said that newspapers were effective. More than 50% were for Hoarding/Banners as being effective other than SMA. 46% of respondents were also for pamphlets and 31.6% were for magazines being effective.



The most interesting point revealed in the survey was that around 1/3<sup>rd</sup> only trusted of the respondents trusted social media advertising and the remaining 2/3<sup>rd</sup> did not trust it.



As per the analysis Graph No. 19 clearly shows that 42% of the respondents behavior and actions are just moderately affected by social media and social media advertising. Around 42% of respondents are mildly influenced whereas only 15.6% (39 out of 250) were severely influenced and none were very severely influenced. As only 40% of the respondents stated that they

were moderately or no or mildly influenced by social media and social media advertising, it could be concluded that  $H_0$ : Social media advertising is not effective for young consumers in 3 tier cities is accepted. Efforts are needed to improve its effectiveness.

## VII. FINDINGS

1. Instagram is the most popular social media platform as 74% of youth were on it.
2. Youth spend 2 to 3 hours daily on social media (47.6%).
3. Around 50% prefer online and majority those who buy online do not buy it very often.
4. Only 21.2% (10.8%+10.4%) but recommended products.
5. 47.2% of the youth do not recommend a product online.
6. Discounts (68.6%) and Coupons (52.4%) are the most effective promotional tools for social media advertising.
7. Other than Social Media Advertising, newspapers (82.8%) and banners/hoardings are considered effective (52.8%).
8. Social Media Advertising gives quick updates and helps products to gain popularity in short span of time.
9. Majority 63.2% do not trust Social Media Advertising.
10. Only 15.6% are respondents behavior and actions are severely influenced by social media. Others behavior and actions are either influenced moderately (42%), or mild and not (another around 42%) are influenced.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The most important thing for companies is to make social media advertising **trustworthy**. They should post **real photos and real results** and always be **honest** about their products or services. Not every ad is fake, but people should still be careful online. Marketers should share **clear and genuine content** to build trust with customers.
2. Companies should use **Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube** more for marketing, especially to reach the **younger generation**.
3. Brands can connect better with people by using **memes and trending content**, which are very popular today.
4. A **mix of social media and print advertising** like ads in newspapers, hoardings, and banners can help reach more people.
5. **Creative and attractive ads** can grab people's attention better than regular ones. Using **interesting videos or pictures** can make ads stand out.
6. Social media ads should be **fun, engaging, and interactive**, using **polls, reels, and stories** to get the attention of young viewers.
7. **Awareness programs** should be started to teach people about **safe online shopping** and how to avoid scams and fraud.
8. In **small cities**, ads for national brands should be in **Hindi or local languages**, or in **simple English**, because not everyone understands difficult English.
9. **Friends and influencers** should be encouraged to help promote products, as they influence buying decisions.
10. Ads should include **discounts and coupons** to attract more customers.
11. Companies should give **small rewards or benefits** to people who recommend their products, as it will motivate them to help increase sales.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

*"Online is old news. Online in social media is today's news... Social media is not a subset of the internet. Social media is the internet."* – Sean Case, Nielsen Social President

The study found that social media advertising could have a significant influence on the buying decisions of the younger generation. Among all platforms, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube were identified as the most effective for reaching this audience. While advertisements do shape consumer choices, trust levels vary, emphasizing the importance of authenticity and transparency in online marketing. Peers and influencers also play a major role and should be actively involved in influencing purchasing intentions.

Overall, social media has become a powerful tool for promoting products, building brand image, encouraging impulse buying, and setting new trends among young consumers. Companies that use social media advertising strategically are more likely to gain a competitive edge in the fast-growing digital marketplace.

As SEO expert Matthew Woodward notes, *"With digital advertising projected to reach \$876.1 billion by 2026, and 80% of online buyers already purchasing through social media ads, businesses must adopt a multi-channel digital strategy to remain competitive and connect with their target audience."*<sup>12</sup>

Social media advertising continues to evolve rapidly, offering newer and more effective methods to reach, engage, and influence audiences. It remains one of the most impactful ways to generate meaningful interaction and conversions.

Since almost all young consumers are active on social media, marketers need to take a more personalized approach, tailoring advertisements to individual preferences, interests, and behaviors to create deeper connections and stronger brand loyalty.

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