



**Social Media Content, Brand Perception, and Purchase  
Intentions: An Empirical Study in Bagalkot City**

**Kiran Malapur**

Research Scholar, Department of Commerce & Management, Singhania University, Pacheri  
Bari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

**Dr. Anil Tiwari**

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce & Management, Singhania University,  
Pacheri Bari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

**ABSTRACT**

This empirical study investigates the interrelationships among social media content characteristics, brand perception formation, and purchase intentions in the emerging urban market of Bagalkot City, Karnataka. Drawing upon a sample of 350 social media users who actively engage with branded content, the research examines how content dimensions— informativeness, entertainment value, and interactivity— influence brand perception and subsequently shape purchase intentions. Employing structural equation modeling with bootstrap mediation analysis, findings reveal that social media content significantly enhances brand perception ( $\beta = 0.586, p < 0.001$ ), which in turn strongly predicts purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.542, p < 0.001$ ). Brand perception partially mediates the content-purchase intention relationship, accounting for 58.2% of the total effect. Among content dimensions, interactivity demonstrates the strongest influence on brand perception, followed by informativeness and entertainment value. The study contributes to digital marketing scholarship by elucidating content-specific mechanisms in emerging urban contexts and offers actionable implications for marketers targeting tier-2 Indian cities.

**Keywords:** Social Media Content, Brand Perception, Purchase Intentions, Digital Marketing, Emerging Urban Markets, Bagalkot

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary marketing landscape is characterized by the ascendancy of social media as a primary channel for brand-consumer communication. In India, social media penetration has transcended metropolitan boundaries, reaching deep into tier-2 and tier-3 cities where evolving consumer aspirations intersect with increasing digital connectivity. Bagalkot City, situated in northern Karnataka, exemplifies this transformation—a traditional agricultural and educational hub now experiencing accelerated digital adoption among its predominantly young population. Social media platforms enable brands to disseminate diverse content formats including informational posts, entertaining videos, user-generated testimonials, and interactive polls. However, the differential effectiveness of these content dimensions in shaping brand perception and driving purchase intentions remains insufficiently understood, particularly in emerging urban contexts where socio-cultural dynamics and media consumption habits may diverge from metropolitan patterns.

Brand perception—the constellation of cognitive and affective associations consumers hold regarding a brand—serves as a critical intermediate variable linking marketing exposures to behavioral outcomes. Social media content potentially shapes brand perception through multiple pathways: informative content enhances perceived expertise and credibility; entertaining content fosters emotional connection and memorability; and interactive content signals responsiveness and customer orientation. Understanding which content dimensions most effectively enhance brand perception in Bagalkot's unique market context holds substantial theoretical and practical significance.

This study addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) How do different social media content dimensions influence brand perception among Bagalkot consumers? (2) To what extent does brand perception mediate the relationship between social media content and purchase intentions? (3) Which content dimensions demonstrate the strongest indirect effects on purchase intentions through brand perception?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Social Media Content Dimensions**

Scholarly conceptualizations of social media content effectiveness identify multiple dimensions contributing to consumer engagement and persuasion. Informativeness refers to the extent to which content provides useful, relevant, and timely information enabling informed consumer decision-making. Entertainment value captures content's capacity to generate enjoyment, emotional arousal, and hedonic gratification. Interactivity encompasses features enabling two-way communication, user participation, and personalized responses.

Prior research establishes positive associations between these content dimensions and various consumer outcomes including brand attitude, engagement behaviors, and purchase likelihood. However, the relative importance of each dimension may vary across product categories, platform types, and consumer segments. Emerging urban consumers, characterized by evolving media literacy and distinct cultural reference points, may evaluate content dimensions differently than their metropolitan counterparts.

### **2.2 Brand Perception Formation**

Brand perception represents consumers' mental representations of a brand, encompassing cognitive beliefs regarding attributes and benefits alongside affective responses including liking and emotional attachment. Perception formation occurs through cumulative exposure to brand communications, direct experiences, and social influences.

Social media platforms facilitate perception formation through unique mechanisms unavailable in traditional media. Algorithmic content curation enables repeated exposure to brand messages tailored to individual interests. Social cues including likes, shares, and comments provide heuristic signals regarding brand popularity and acceptance. Influencer endorsements leverage parasocial relationships to transfer credibility and aspirational associations to endorsed brands.

### **2.3 Purchase Intentions in Digital Contexts**

Purchase intention, defined as consumers' conscious plans or willingness to purchase a brand's offerings, represents a proximal antecedent of actual purchase behavior. In digital contexts, purchase intentions may be activated through multiple pathways including direct response to

promotional content, enhanced brand salience during decision-making, and reduced perceived risk through social proof mechanisms.

The relationship between brand perception and purchase intentions is well-established in consumer behavior literature. Favorable brand perceptions reduce information search costs, enhance willingness to pay premium prices, and increase resistance to competitive appeals. Social media content may influence purchase intentions both directly—through promotional messages and calls-to-action—and indirectly through perception enhancement.

#### **2.4 Hypotheses Development**

Based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H1:** Social media content dimensions (informativeness, entertainment value, interactivity) positively influence brand perception.

**H1a:** Informativeness positively influences brand perception.

**H1b:** Entertainment value positively influences brand perception.

**H1c:** Interactivity positively influences brand perception.

**H2:** Brand perception positively influences purchase intentions.

**H3:** Social media content positively influences purchase intentions.

**H4:** Brand perception mediates the relationship between social media content and purchase intentions.

**H5:** Interactivity demonstrates the strongest indirect effect on purchase intentions among content dimensions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design and Sampling**

A cross-sectional survey design was employed targeting residents of Bagalkot City aged 18-50 years who actively use social media platforms and have been exposed to branded content within the preceding three months. Purposive sampling ensured inclusion of respondents with relevant social media experience. Data collection occurred through a combination of online distribution (via WhatsApp and Instagram) and face-to-face administration at commercial establishments, yielding 350 complete responses.

#### **3.2 Measurement Instrument**

All constructs were measured using multi-item scales adapted from validated instruments, employing five-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

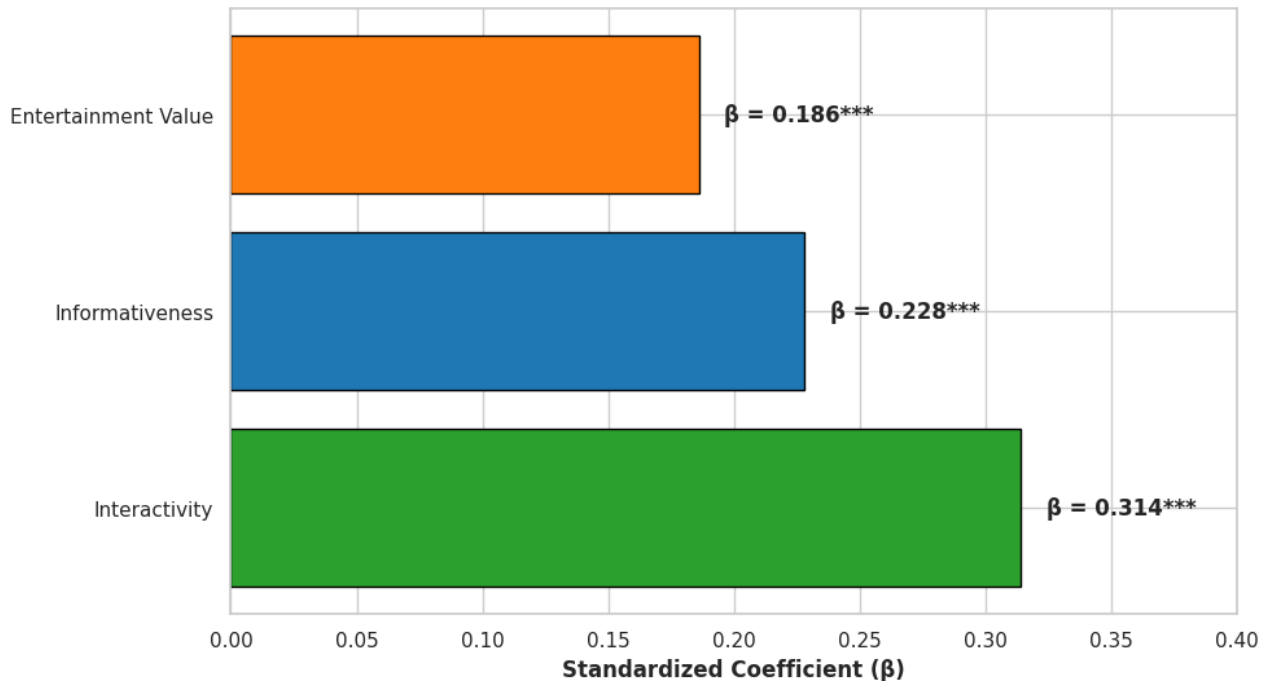
**Social Media Content** was operationalized as a second-order construct comprising three first-order dimensions:

- Informativeness ( $\alpha = 0.852$ ): Four items assessing perceived usefulness, relevance, and informational value of branded content.
- Entertainment Value ( $\alpha = 0.868$ ): Four items capturing enjoyment, emotional engagement, and hedonic gratification from content consumption.
- Interactivity ( $\alpha = 0.841$ ): Four items measuring perceived two-way communication, responsiveness, and participatory features.

**Brand Perception** ( $\alpha = 0.891$ ) was measured through six items assessing brand credibility, quality inferences, value perceptions, emotional connection, and overall brand attitude.

**Purchase Intentions** ( $\alpha = 0.884$ ) comprised five items measuring likelihood of future purchase, willingness to recommend, consideration in choice sets, and preference over alternatives.

### 3.3 Analytical Strategy



**Figure 1: Effects of Content Dimensions on Brand Perception**

Data analysis proceeded through sequential stages: (1) descriptive statistics and reliability assessment; (2) confirmatory factor analysis to validate measurement models; (3) correlation analysis to examine bivariate relationships; (4) structural equation modeling with 5,000 bootstrap samples to test hypothesized direct and indirect effects.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Sample Characteristics

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	192	54.9
	Female	158	45.1
<b>Age Group</b>	18-25 years	132	37.7
	26-35 years	124	35.4
	36-45 years	62	17.7

	46-50 years	32	9.2
<b>Education</b>	Undergraduate	108	30.9
	Graduate	156	44.6
	Postgraduate+	86	24.5
<b>Primary Platform</b>	128	36.6	
	Instagram	142	40.6
	Facebook	52	14.8
	YouTube	28	8.0

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

**Table 2: Construct Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Informativeness	3.68	0.82	1.000				
2. Entertainment Value	3.74	0.79	0.528	1.000			
3. Interactivity	3.52	0.86	0.486	0.542	1.000		
4. Brand Perception	3.61	0.78	0.512	0.488	0.546	1.000	
5. Purchase Intentions	3.55	0.84	0.426	0.392	0.468	0.624	1.000

$p < 0.01$

All constructs demonstrate adequate reliability with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80. Significant positive correlations exist among all variables in expected directions.

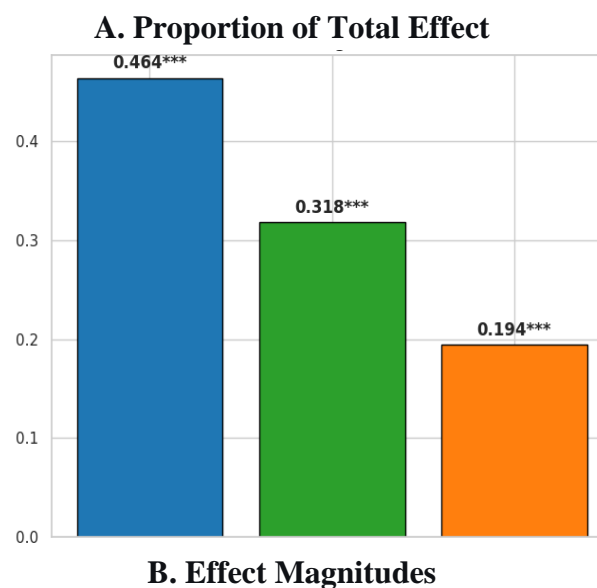
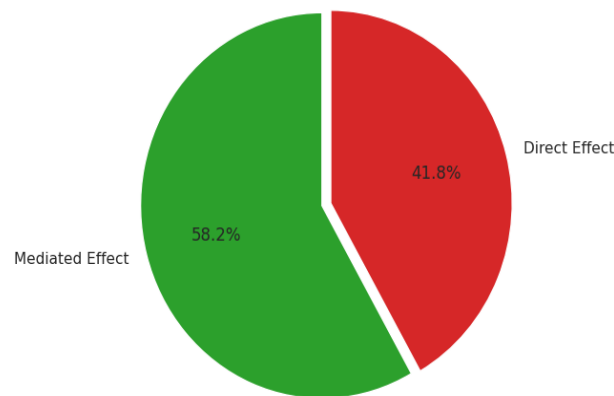
#### 4.3 Structural Model Results

**Table 3: Direct Effects in Structural Model**

Path	Standardized $\beta$	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Informativeness → Brand Perception	0.228	0.052	4.38	<0.001	[0.126, 0.330]
Entertainment → Brand Perception	0.186	0.054	3.44	<0.001	[0.080, 0.292]
Interactivity → Brand Perception	0.314	0.048	6.54	<0.001	[0.220, 0.408]

<b>Overall Content → Brand Perception</b>	<b>0.586</b>	<b>0.042</b>	<b>13.95</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	<b>[0.504, 0.668]</b>
Brand Perception → Purchase Intentions	0.542	0.046	11.78	<0.001	[0.452, 0.632]
Content → Purchase Intentions (Direct)	0.194	0.048	4.04	<0.001	[0.100, 0.288]
Content → Purchase Intentions (Total)	0.464	0.046	10.09	<0.001	[0.374, 0.554]

The results support H1a, H1b, and H1c, confirming that all three content dimensions significantly influence brand perception. Interactivity demonstrates the strongest effect ( $\beta = 0.314$ ), followed by informativeness ( $\beta = 0.228$ ) and entertainment value ( $\beta = 0.186$ ). The overall content construct significantly predicts brand perception ( $\beta = 0.586$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1. Brand perception significantly predicts purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.542$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2. The direct effect of content on purchase intentions remains significant ( $\beta = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3.



**Figure 2: Mediation Decomposition**

#### 4.4 Mediation Analysis

**Table 4: Indirect Effects through Brand Perception**

Path	Indirect Effect	SE	95% CI	Proportion Mediated
Content → Brand Perception → Purchase Intentions	0.318	0.038	[0.245, 0.394]	58.2%
Informativeness → Brand Perception → PI	0.124	0.032	[0.063, 0.189]	52.5%
Entertainment → Brand Perception → PI	0.101	0.031	[0.042, 0.164]	56.4%
Interactivity → Brand Perception → PI	0.170	0.030	[0.112, 0.232]	59.6%

The indirect effect of overall content on purchase intentions through brand perception is significant ( $\beta = 0.318$ , 95% CI [0.245, 0.394]), supporting H4. Brand perception accounts for 58.2% of the total effect, indicating substantial partial mediation. Among content dimensions, interactivity demonstrates the strongest indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.170$ ) and highest proportion mediated (59.6%), supporting H5.

### 5. DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Content Dimension Effectiveness

The differential effects of content dimensions on brand perception offer nuanced insights for social media strategy in emerging urban markets. Interactivity emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.314$ ), suggesting that Bagalkot consumers particularly value two-way communication and participatory features in branded social media content. This finding may reflect the relational orientation characteristic of tier-2 city consumer cultures, where personal connection and responsiveness carry substantial weight in brand evaluation.

Informativeness demonstrated the second-strongest effect ( $\beta = 0.228$ ), indicating that useful, relevant information remains a cornerstone of effective social media content even in entertainment-oriented platform environments. Bagalkot consumers, many navigating evolving consumption landscapes, appear to value content that facilitates informed decision-making and reduces perceived purchase risk.

Entertainment value, while significant ( $\beta = 0.186$ ), demonstrated relatively weaker influence compared to interactivity and informativeness. This pattern suggests that while hedonic content elements enhance brand perception, purely entertainment-focused strategies may underperform in emerging urban contexts where functional and relational considerations predominate.

#### 5.2 Mediating Role of Brand Perception

The substantial indirect effect through brand perception (58.2% of total effect) underscores the centrality of perception formation in translating social media content into purchase intentions.

This finding aligns with cognitive response theories positing that marketing communications influence behavior through belief and attitude modification rather than direct stimulus-response associations.

The partial mediation pattern indicates that social media content influences purchase intentions through both perception-mediated and direct pathways. Direct effects may operate through increased brand salience, reduced information search costs, and immediate call-to-action responses that do not require substantial perception modification. However, the predominance of indirect effects suggests that sustainable purchase intention enhancement requires perception-oriented content strategies.

### **5.3 Emerging Urban Market Specificities**

Bagalkot's characteristics as an emerging urban market shape the observed relationships in discernible ways. The strong performance of interactivity may reflect the community-oriented social fabric characteristic of tier-2 cities, where personal relationships and direct communication carry cultural significance extending to brand interactions. The importance of informativeness may stem from evolving consumer sophistication accompanying economic development, with consumers actively seeking information to navigate expanding choice sets.

### **5.4 Theoretical Contributions**

This study advances digital marketing scholarship through several contributions. First, it provides empirical validation of content dimension effectiveness in an emerging urban context, extending findings from metropolitan-focused research to tier-2 city settings. Second, it quantifies the mediating role of brand perception with precision, establishing the proportion of total effect attributable to perception-mediated pathways. Third, it identifies content dimension-specific indirect effects, enabling more granular theoretical understanding of content effectiveness mechanisms.

### **5.5 Practical Implications**

For marketers targeting Bagalkot and similar emerging urban markets, findings suggest several actionable implications:

**Prioritize Interactivity:** Investment in interactive content features—including polls, quizzes, question-response formats, and responsive community management—should receive strategic priority given strong effects on brand perception and subsequent purchase intentions.

**Balance Information and Entertainment:** While entertainment content contributes to brand perception, informational content demonstrates stronger effects. Content strategies should emphasize useful information delivery, with entertainment elements serving complementary rather than primary roles.

**Measure Perception Metrics:** Given substantial mediation through brand perception, measurement frameworks should incorporate perception metrics alongside engagement and conversion indicators to capture intermediate marketing effectiveness.

**Platform-Specific Optimization:** With Instagram and WhatsApp dominating platform preferences, content should be optimized for these environments' unique characteristics—visual storytelling for Instagram and conversational intimacy for WhatsApp.

### **5.6 Limitations and Future Research**

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The cross-sectional design precludes definitive causal inference despite theoretical support for directional hypotheses. Longitudinal research tracking perception evolution and purchase behavior over time would strengthen causal claims. The geographic focus on Bagalkot limits generalizability; multi-city comparative studies would enhance external validity. Self-reported measures introduce potential common method variance; future research should incorporate objective behavioral data where accessible.

Future research should examine moderating factors including product category characteristics, consumer social media usage intensity, and individual difference variables that may condition observed relationships. Investigation of specific content format effectiveness—video versus static imagery, short-form versus long-form content—would further refine practical implications.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This empirical study elucidates the relationships among social media content dimensions, brand perception, and purchase intentions in Bagalkot City's emerging urban market. Findings demonstrate that interactive, informative, and entertaining content differentially enhance brand perception, with interactivity demonstrating strongest effects. Brand perception substantially mediates the content-purchase intention relationship, accounting for over half of the total effect. These findings underscore the importance of perception-oriented social media strategies that prioritize meaningful consumer engagement over mere content distribution. As tier-2 Indian cities continue their digital transformation journeys, understanding content-specific mechanisms of brand perception formation becomes increasingly essential for marketing effectiveness. Marketers who adapt strategies to emerging urban consumers' relational and informational preferences stand to realize superior returns on social media investments.

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