



SELLERS' FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CUSTOMERS' BUYING DECISION

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between sellers' Facebook engagement and customers' buying decision among restaurant businesses in Palompon, Leyte, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from restaurant owners and customers through structured questionnaires. Findings revealed that sellers generally demonstrated a very high level of Facebook engagement, while customers exhibited a high level of buying decision influenced by online interactions. Restaurants with more proactive and interactive Facebook strategies showed stronger customer responses compared to others. The analysis further established a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between Facebook engagement and customer buying decision, indicating that increased online engagement leads to higher purchase intention. The findings highlight the importance of social validation, interactive communication, and trust-building in influencing consumer behavior. The study recommends that businesses strengthen personalized, localized, and data-driven social media strategies to enhance customer engagement and conversion.

Keywords:

Facebook engagement, buying decision, social media marketing, consumer behavior, restaurants, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a central component of modern marketing, transforming how businesses communicate and engage with customers. Among various platforms, Facebook

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remains one of the most widely used tools for digital marketing due to its interactive features and broad user base. Businesses utilize Facebook not only for promotion but also for building relationships, fostering trust, and influencing consumer behavior. Studies have shown that customer engagement on Facebook brand pages significantly enhances relationship quality and encourages continuous interaction between businesses and consumers (de Silva, 2019). This highlights the importance of maintaining an active and responsive online presence.

Customer engagement in social media environments plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase behavior. Engagement activities such as liking, commenting, and sharing content act as forms of social validation that influence decision-making processes. Bhattacharyya and Bose (2020) found that Facebook likes significantly affect purchase decisions and recommendations by reinforcing product credibility and popularity. Similarly, Siddiqui et al. (2021) emphasized that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) generated through social media platforms enhances trust and positively impacts online purchase intentions. These findings suggest that social interactions within digital platforms serve as powerful drivers of consumer behavior.

The relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention has also been widely supported in recent empirical studies. Bushara et al. (2023) demonstrated that social media engagement significantly influences restaurant customers' purchase intentions, particularly when perceived value is high. Furthermore, Ibrahim (2023) found that social media marketing activities strengthen consumer purchase intention by fostering identification with online brand communities. These studies indicate that engagement is not only about interaction but also about creating meaningful value and connection with customers.

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence an individual's intention to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of social media, customer engagement particularly visible interactions such as likes and shares can serve as subjective norms that guide purchasing decisions.

In the restaurant industry, where customer trust and experience are critical, Facebook engagement serves as a strategic tool for influencing consumer behavior. Hasan and Sohail (2021) emphasized that localized and culturally relevant social media marketing strategies significantly affect consumer purchase decisions, especially in community-based markets. Additionally, Gouda and Halim (2025) highlighted that authentic and sustainable social media content fosters long-term customer loyalty, which is essential for business success.

Despite the growing body of literature, there remains limited research focusing on how Facebook engagement influences customer buying decisions in localized settings such as small municipalities in the Philippines. Most existing studies focus on large urban markets or international contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how these dynamics operate in community-oriented environments. In areas like Palompon, Leyte, where social relationships and word-of-mouth play a significant role in consumer behavior, the impact of Facebook engagement may be even more pronounced.

In this context, the present study aims to examine the relationship between sellers' Facebook engagement and customers' buying decisions among restaurant businesses in

Palompon, Leyte. Specifically, it seeks to determine the level of sellers' Facebook engagement, assess the level of customers' buying decisions, and examine whether a significant relationship exists between these variables. Furthermore, the study intends to generate practical recommendations that may help restaurant owners and marketers enhance their social media strategies to improve customer engagement and purchasing outcomes. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social media marketing and provides context-specific insights for small and community-based businesses.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between sellers' Facebook engagement and customers' buying decision. The study was conducted in Palompon, Leyte, Philippines. Respondents included four restaurant owners selected through purposive sampling and 120 customers selected using stratified sampling.

Two structured questionnaires were used. The first measured sellers' Facebook engagement, while the second assessed customers' buying decisions across five dimensions: likes, friend likes, comment posting, sharing, and purchase intention. Both instruments utilized a five-point Likert scale. Data were collected through informed consent and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's rho correlation. Ethical standards such as confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

RESULTS

Sellers' Facebook Engagement.

The level of sellers' Facebook engagement among the participating restaurant businesses. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the extent to which sellers utilize Facebook for marketing and customer interaction.

Table 1. Summary of Sellers' Facebook Engagement

Restaurant	Mean	SD	Interpretation
A	4.10	1.37	High Engagement
B	4.10	1.20	High Engagement
C	4.40	0.97	Very High Engagement
D	4.30	1.06	Very High Engagement
Overall	4.23	1.15	Very High Engagement

The table shows that the participating restaurants generally demonstrated high to very high levels of Facebook engagement. Restaurants A and B recorded high engagement, while Restaurants C and D achieved very high engagement, indicating more proactive and strategic use of Facebook such as frequent posting, interactive content, and personalized communication.

The overall very high engagement level suggests that restaurants actively utilize Facebook as a primary marketing tool. This finding is consistent with recent studies which emphasize that active social media engagement enhances customer interaction and strengthens business performance. For instance, social media marketing activities have been shown to significantly influence customer engagement and behavioral outcomes, particularly when content is interactive and responsive (Zabukovsek et al., 2023).

Moreover, consistent engagement practices such as real-time interaction and personalized communication contribute to stronger customer relationships and increased brand trust, which are essential drivers of purchase intention (Fatorachian, 2025).

Thus, the higher engagement levels observed in Restaurants C and D suggest that these establishments may gain a competitive advantage by fostering stronger customer relationships and increasing online visibility.

Customers' Buying Decision

The level of customers' buying decision in response to the restaurants' Facebook engagement. The analysis focuses on key behavioral indicators to determine how online interactions influence customer purchasing tendencies.

Table 2. Customers' Buying Decision

Subscale	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Likes	4.20	0.81	High Buying Intention
Friend Likes	3.97	0.90	High Buying Intention
Comment Posting	3.85	1.11	High Buying Intention
Sharing	3.83	1.03	High Buying Intention
Purchase Intention	3.73	0.95	High Buying Intention
Overall	3.92	0.96	High Buying Intention

Table indicates that customers exhibited a high level of buying decision influenced by Facebook engagement. Among the indicators, likes obtained the highest mean, emphasizing the role of social validation in shaping consumer behavior. Other engagement indicators such as friend likes, comments, and sharing also showed high levels, reflecting the importance of peer influence.

This finding aligns with recent empirical studies showing that social media marketing activities significantly influence purchase intention through engagement and online interaction. For example, Ibrahim (2023) found that social media marketing activities positively influence purchase intention among restaurant customers by strengthening online brand community identification.

Similarly, user engagement indicators such as likes, comments, and shares have been found to enhance perceived credibility and influence purchase decisions, particularly in food-related businesses (Belmonte, 2023).

However, purchase intention recorded the lowest mean among the indicators, suggesting that engagement alone does not always lead to actual purchasing decisions. This supports recent findings that trust and perceived value play a critical role in converting engagement into purchase intention (Bushara et al., 2023).

Thus, while Facebook engagement generates awareness and interest, it must be complemented by trust-building strategies to achieve actual purchase behavior.

Buying Decision by Restaurant

The comparison of customers' buying decision across the participating restaurants. The results highlight variations in customer responses based on different levels of Facebook engagement.

Table 3. Customers' Buying Decision by Restaurant

Restaurant	Likes	Friend Likes	Comments	Sharing	Purchase	Overall
A	4.14	4.02	3.94	3.73	3.66	3.90
B	4.22	3.94	3.74	3.92	3.69	3.90
C	4.27	3.90	3.90	3.83	3.81	3.94
D	4.18	4.01	3.81	3.82	3.76	3.92
Overall	4.20	3.97	3.85	3.83	3.73	3.92

Table 3 shows that all restaurants consistently achieved high levels of customer buying decision, with Restaurants C and D obtaining slightly higher overall scores. This suggests that these establishments may have implemented more effective engagement strategies, leading to stronger customer responses.

The consistently high scores of "likes" across all restaurants highlight the importance of social proof in influencing consumer behavior. Recent studies confirm that social media interactions, particularly visible engagement metrics, significantly affect consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Aras, 2023).

On the other hand, the relatively lower scores in purchase intention suggest that engagement does not always translate directly into purchasing behavior. This is supported by recent research indicating that while engagement increases customer interest, actual purchase decisions depend on additional factors such as trust, satisfaction, and perceived value (Masoetsa et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the slightly higher performance of Restaurants C and D may be attributed to more localized and consistent engagement strategies. Studies suggest that businesses that tailor

their content to customer preferences and maintain consistent interaction achieve higher levels of engagement and purchase intention (Zeqiri et al., 2024).

Correlation Analysis

This section examines the relationship between sellers' Facebook engagement and customers' buying decision. Spearman's rho correlation was used to determine the strength and significance of the association between the two variables.

Table 4. Correlation between Sellers' Facebook Engagement and Customers' Buying Decision

Variables	Spearman's ρ	p-value	Interpretation
Facebook Engagement & Buying Decision	1.00	<0.001	Very Strong, Significant

Table 4 reveals a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between sellers' Facebook engagement and customers' buying decision. This indicates that higher levels of engagement are directly associated with higher levels of customer purchase intention.

This finding strongly supports recent empirical studies demonstrating that social media engagement significantly influences consumer behavior. For example, research in the restaurant sector shows that social media marketing activities have a direct and positive effect on purchase intention, particularly when customers are actively engaged with brand content (Bushara et al., 2023).

Additionally, studies have shown that digital engagement enhances customer responsiveness and plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions in the food and beverage industry (Zabukovsek et al., 2023).

The perfect correlation observed in this study suggests a highly consistent pattern across the participating restaurants, where increased engagement corresponds directly with increased buying decision. This implies that Facebook engagement can serve as a strong predictor of customer behavior, particularly in small and community-based markets.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that sellers' Facebook engagement plays a critical role in shaping customers' buying decisions within the restaurant industry. The consistently high levels of engagement observed among the participating restaurants demonstrate that Facebook has become an essential platform for marketing, communication, and customer relationship management. More importantly, the results confirm that higher levels of engagement characterized by frequent posting, responsiveness, and interactive content are associated with stronger customer interest and increased purchase intention.

The significant relationship identified between Facebook engagement and customers' buying decision highlights the importance of social media as a behavioral influence mechanism.

Engagement activities such as likes, comments, and shares serve as forms of social validation that reinforce consumer trust and credibility perceptions. This supports the notion that customer decision-making in digital environments is not only driven by product attributes but also by social interaction and peer influence.

However, the study also reveals that while engagement effectively stimulates interest and interaction, it does not always guarantee actual purchase behavior. The relatively lower scores in purchase intention compared to other engagement indicators suggest that additional factors such as perceived product quality, trust, and overall customer experience remain crucial in the final decision-making process. This implies that Facebook engagement functions primarily as a catalyst in the early stages of the customer journey, particularly in awareness and consideration, but must be complemented by other value-driven strategies to achieve conversion.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the relevance of contextual factors in community-based markets such as Palompon, Leyte. In such environments, social relationships, familiarity, and localized communication significantly influence consumer behavior. Thus, Facebook engagement becomes more impactful when it reflects authenticity, cultural relevance, and personalized interaction. Overall, the study affirms that social media engagement is no longer optional but a strategic necessity for businesses aiming to remain competitive in the digital marketplace.

Recommendations

Restaurants should maintain consistent and active Facebook engagement by regularly posting relevant content and responding promptly to customer interactions. They are encouraged to enhance personalized communication to build trust and strengthen customer relationships. Utilizing Facebook analytics is recommended to optimize content strategies based on customer preferences. Additionally, incorporating interactive and localized content can improve engagement and increase purchase intention. Future studies may explore additional factors such as trust, customer satisfaction, and perceived value to better understand consumer behavior.

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