

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE UNITED STATES AND UZBEKISTAN.

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 quarantine period accelerated the shift of consumer communication, shopping, entertainment, and brand interaction into digital platforms, making social media marketing a central factor in consumer purchase behaviour. This article examines how social media marketing influences purchasing decisions in the post-COVID digital environment by comparing the United States as a mature digital market with Uzbekistan as a developing digital economy. The study argues that social media marketing affects consumer behaviour through brand awareness, influencer recommendations, online reviews, social proof, targeted advertising, emotional content, direct communication, and purchase convenience. At the same time, it evaluates social media marketing as a double-edged transformation. While it creates opportunities for businesses by reducing marketing costs, expanding customer reach, supporting small enterprises, and increasing online sales, it may also intensify risks such as excessive screen time, impulse buying, misinformation, fake reviews, consumer manipulation, and declining trust. The article concludes that social media marketing has become a powerful driver of modern consumer behaviour, but its long-term value depends on balancing business growth with ethical marketing, digital literacy, consumer protection, and social responsibility.*

Keywords: *Social media marketing; consumer purchase behaviour; post-COVID digital transformation; social commerce; influencer marketing; online reviews; digital advertising; consumer trust; Uzbekistan; United States.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media marketing has become one of the most influential factors shaping modern consumer purchase behaviour. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, social media was already used for communication, entertainment, brand promotion, and online advertising, especially in digitally advanced economies such as the United States. However, the quarantine period changed its role more deeply. As physical interaction became limited and people spent more time at home, digital platforms turned into central spaces for product discovery, online shopping, customer service, entertainment, and business communication. As a result, social media marketing developed from a supportive promotional tool into a strategic mechanism that directly affects how consumers notice, evaluate, trust, and purchase products.

This transformation is closely linked to the growth of digital access and platform usage. The United States entered the post-COVID period as a mature digital economy

with developed e-commerce, online payments, targeted advertising, influencer marketing, customer analytics, and platform-based shopping. Uzbekistan, by contrast, represents a rapidly developing digital economy where social media marketing is expanding, but still requires stronger professional standards, analytics, consumer trust, payment integration, delivery reliability, and digital literacy. Therefore, comparing the USA and Uzbekistan is important because both countries experienced digital growth, but at different levels of market maturity.

Social media marketing influences consumer purchase behaviour through several interconnected mechanisms. It increases brand awareness through posts, stories, reels, videos, paid advertisements, and influencer content. It shapes consumer interest through visual design, emotional storytelling, lifestyle images, short-form videos, and interactive communication. It also affects trust through online reviews, comments, testimonials, influencer recommendations, social proof, and user-generated content. In addition, SMM encourages purchase intention and actual buying through discounts, urgency messages, direct links, marketplaces, Telegram bots, online payments, and delivery services. Therefore, it influences not only one stage of the consumer journey, but the entire process from product discovery to evaluation, purchase, feedback, and repeat buying.

At the same time, the growth of social media marketing should not be viewed only as a positive business trend. On the one hand, SMM creates economic opportunities by helping businesses reduce marketing costs, reach wider audiences, communicate directly with customers, increase online sales, support small enterprises, and contribute to digital economic development. This is especially important for Uzbekistan, where Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, and marketplace platforms allow local brands, education centers, tourism agencies, service providers, and small businesses to compete without large advertising budgets.

On the other hand, rapid digital expansion may also create social, psychological, and ethical risks. Excessive screen time, loneliness, misinformation, fake reviews, hidden advertising, consumer manipulation, impulse buying, privacy concerns, and declining trust are among the key problems associated with intensive social media use. These risks are especially relevant in developing markets where digital literacy, consumer protection, and ethical advertising standards are still forming. For Uzbekistan, the main issue is not only how to use SMM for business growth, but also how to build a responsible digital marketing culture that protects consumers and strengthens trust in online platforms.

This study argues that COVID-19 accelerated the development of social media marketing by increasing consumers' dependence on digital platforms and forcing businesses to become more active online. However, this acceleration produced different outcomes across countries. In the USA, it strengthened an already mature, investment-driven, and data-based SMM system. In Uzbekistan, it accelerated the formation of a growing SMM ecosystem that still needs stronger professional skills, reliable analytics, ethical regulation, online trust mechanisms, and consumer-oriented digital services.

The central purpose of this article is to analyze how social media marketing influences consumer purchase behaviour by comparing the USA and Uzbekistan through digital usage trends, platform development, e-commerce growth, consumer behaviour indicators, advertising practices, and social risks. The article addresses three main questions: how internet and social media usage changed before, during, and after the COVID-19 quarantine period; how SMM influences purchase behaviour through awareness, trust, influencer marketing, social proof, reviews, and convenience; and what Uzbekistan can learn from the U.S. SMM development path while avoiding risks such as consumer manipulation, fake reviews, privacy concerns, digital inequality, and mental health problems. By answering these questions, the article shows that SMM can support business growth and consumer engagement, but only when commercial effectiveness is balanced with ethical standards, digital literacy, consumer protection, and social responsibility.

Literature Review

Social media marketing literature shows that digital platforms have transformed marketing from one-way corporate communication into an interactive environment where consumers actively participate in brand-related discussions. Mangold and Faulds describe social media as a hybrid element of the promotion mix because it combines firm-to-consumer communication with consumer-to-consumer interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein's view of social media as a Web 2.0-based space for user-generated content is also relevant, because it explains why consumers are no longer passive receivers of advertising. They influence product evaluation and purchase decisions through comments, reviews, shares, recommendations, and user-generated content. This is important for the present study because consumer purchase behaviour on social media is shaped not only by brand messages, but also by peer opinions, influencer content, online reviews, and social proof.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, SMM affects the entire purchase journey rather than only the advertising stage. Consumers may discover products through Instagram reels, TikTok videos, Facebook posts, YouTube reviews, Telegram channels, paid advertisements, or influencer recommendations. They may then evaluate products by reading comments, comparing prices, checking reviews, examining delivery proof, and communicating directly with sellers. The AIDA model helps explain this process in a practical way: social media attracts attention through visual content and short videos, builds interest and desire through storytelling, reviews, and lifestyle associations, and encourages action through direct links, promo codes, online payment options, marketplaces, or direct messages. Therefore, SMM influences how consumers notice, evaluate, trust, and purchase products.

Trust is one of the central factors connecting social media marketing with purchase behaviour. In online markets, consumers cannot physically inspect products before buying, so they rely on digital trust signals. Cialdini's concept of social proof is useful here because consumers often evaluate choices based on the behaviour and experiences of others. On social media, social proof appears through likes, comments,

shares, followers, testimonials, customer photos, influencer recommendations, unboxing videos, and before-and-after content. Online reviews and influencer marketing are especially important because they reduce uncertainty, provide product-related information, and shape perceived credibility. In Uzbekistan, this mechanism is particularly relevant because many Instagram and Telegram purchases depend on informal trust indicators such as customer screenshots, delivery proof, comments, and seller communication.

Brand awareness and brand trust are also key elements in the relationship between SMM and consumer purchase behaviour. Social media increases awareness through repeated exposure to posts, stories, hashtags, videos, advertisements, and influencer mentions. However, awareness alone does not guarantee purchase. Consumers also need to believe that the brand can deliver the promised quality, price, service, and convenience. Previous studies on SMM and purchase intention often show that brand trust, brand image, and perceived value mediate the relationship between social media activity and buying decisions. This means that creative content may attract attention, but actual purchase behaviour depends on whether consumers trust the brand, its delivery process, return policy, communication style, and product quality.

The COVID-19 pandemic added a new dimension to this literature by accelerating digital adoption among both consumers and businesses. Lockdowns, quarantine restrictions, social distancing, and reduced offline shopping pushed consumers toward online communication, e-commerce, and platform-based product discovery. At the same time, businesses became more dependent on digital channels to maintain customer relationships and sales. Thus, COVID-19 did not create social media marketing from zero, but it strengthened its role in consumer decision-making and business survival. This supports the central argument of the present article: in the post-COVID digital economy, SMM has become a strategic mechanism influencing how consumers search, compare, trust, and purchase products.

The comparison between the United States and Uzbekistan is important because the two countries represent different stages of SMM development. The United States is a mature digital market where SMM is supported by advanced e-commerce infrastructure, online payment systems, customer analytics, targeted advertising, influencer marketing, and large digital advertising investment. Uzbekistan, by contrast, is a developing digital economy where social media use is growing quickly, but the ecosystem still needs stronger professional standards, consumer protection, analytics, trust mechanisms, payment integration, and delivery reliability. Therefore, the U.S. experience is useful not as a model to copy directly, but as a reference point for understanding how a mature SMM ecosystem functions and what risks developing markets should avoid.

The literature also shows that social media marketing has a double-sided effect. On the positive side, it creates opportunities for low-cost promotion, customer engagement, entrepreneurship, online sales, market access, and small business development. This is especially relevant for Uzbekistan, where Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, and

marketplace platforms allow local businesses, education centers, tourism agencies, restaurants, service providers, and small retailers to reach customers without large advertising budgets. On the negative side, social media expansion may increase excessive screen time, misinformation, fake reviews, hidden advertising, consumer manipulation, impulse buying, privacy concerns, anxiety, loneliness, and unhealthy social comparison. These risks show that SMM should be analyzed not only as a business growth tool, but also as a social and ethical phenomenon.

Overall, previous studies confirm that social media marketing influences consumer purchase behaviour through communication, trust, social proof, online reviews, influencer credibility, brand awareness, convenience, and post-purchase interaction. However, there is still a need for comparative studies that examine how this influence differs between mature and developing digital markets in the post-COVID context. This article addresses that gap by comparing the United States and Uzbekistan and argues that Uzbekistan can benefit from SMM only if its development is supported by professional marketing practices, ethical standards, consumer trust, digital literacy, and responsible platform use.

Methodology

This study uses a comparative analytical research design to examine how social media marketing influences consumer purchase behaviour in the United States and Uzbekistan. The research is based on secondary data analysis, comparative analysis, trend analysis, and SWOT analysis. These methods were selected because the topic requires both statistical comparison and interpretive analysis of how digital development, social media growth, e-commerce expansion, advertising investment, and consumer behaviour are connected in the post-COVID period.

The study focuses on two countries: the United States and Uzbekistan. The United States was selected as an example of a mature digital economy where social media marketing is already highly developed, data-driven, investment-based, and closely connected with e-commerce, influencer marketing, customer analytics, social commerce, and digital advertising. Uzbekistan was selected as an example of a developing digital economy where internet penetration, online business activity, digital payments, and social commerce are growing rapidly, but where SMM practices still require stronger professionalization, measurement, consumer trust, and ethical standards. This comparison allows the study to identify differences between a mature SMM ecosystem and a developing one, as well as to determine what practical lessons Uzbekistan can learn from the U.S. experience.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the main findings of the study by linking statistical indicators with the theoretical arguments developed in the literature review. The analysis focuses on how social media marketing evolved before, during, and after the COVID-19 quarantine period in the United States and Uzbekistan, and how this evolution influenced consumer purchase behaviour. The results are organized around key dimensions such as internet and social media usage, digital infrastructure, e-

commerce development, digital advertising, influencer marketing, consumer trust, and social risks. By comparing a mature digital market with a developing one, this section shows that SMM affects consumer behaviour not only through audience reach, but also through platform maturity, online payment systems, delivery reliability, advertising investment, digital literacy, and trust-building mechanisms.

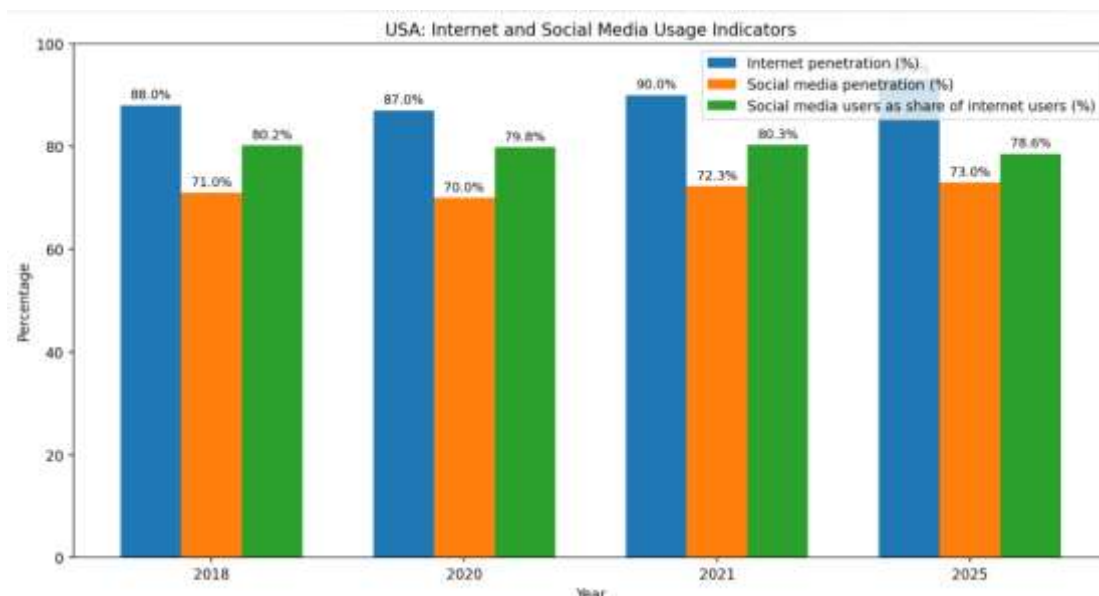


Figure 1. Internet and Social Media Usage in the USA and Uzbekistan Before, During, and After COVID-19

The graph shows a clear contrast between the United States and Uzbekistan in terms of internet and social media development. In the United States, internet penetration and social media penetration were already high before COVID-19 and remained relatively stable between 2018 and 2025. This suggests that the U.S. had already developed a mature digital environment where social media marketing was widely established before the pandemic.

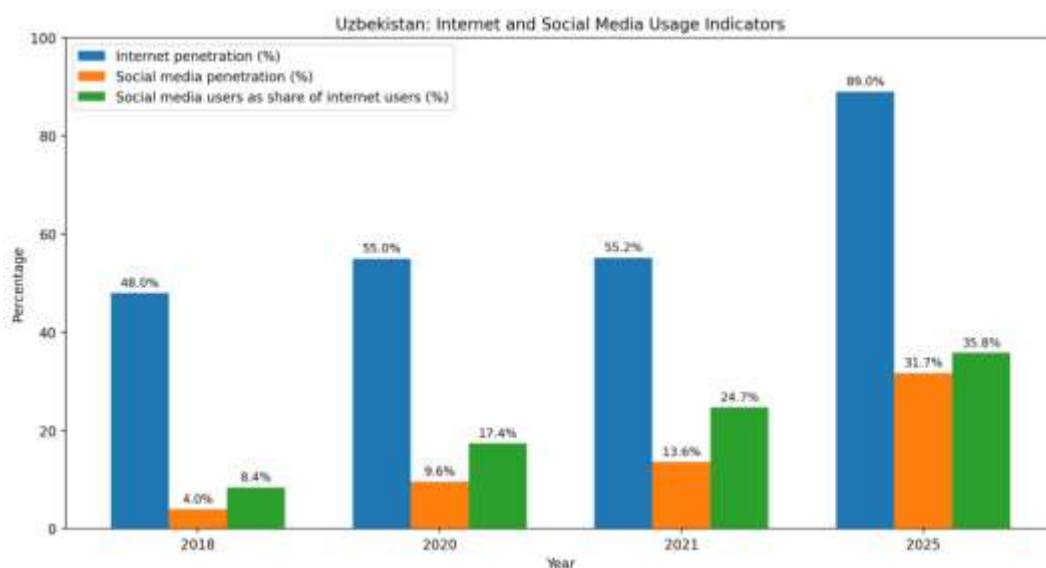


Figure 2. Internet and social media usage indicators in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the growth pattern is much more dynamic. Internet penetration increased sharply from 48.0% in 2018 to 89.0% in 2025, while social media penetration rose from 4.0% to 31.7% over the same period. The share of social media users among internet users also increased from 8.4% to 35.8%, showing that more internet users are gradually becoming active on social platforms.

Overall, the data indicates that the USA represents a mature and stable SMM market, while Uzbekistan represents a rapidly developing digital market with strong future potential. For Uzbekistan, the rapid increase in internet and social media usage creates new opportunities for businesses to reach consumers through Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, influencer marketing, and social commerce.

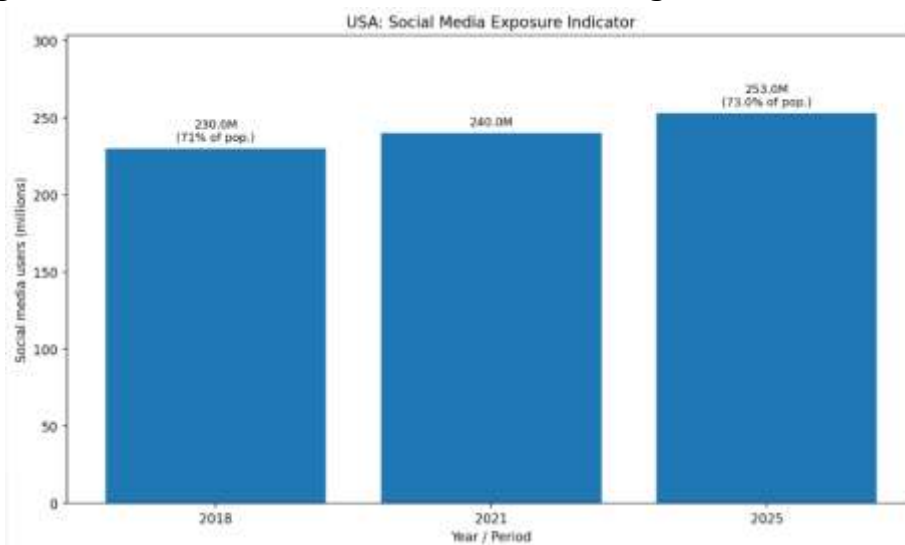


Figure 3 Social media exposure in USA bar chart

The data shows that social media exposure in the United States was already very high before COVID-19, with 230 million users in 2018. This figure increased gradually to 240 million in 2021 and 253 million in 2025, indicating that the U.S. SMM environment was already mature rather than newly emerging. Therefore, social media marketing in the USA functions within a large and stable digital audience where businesses can use platforms for product discovery, brand communication, influencer marketing, and direct purchase stimulation.

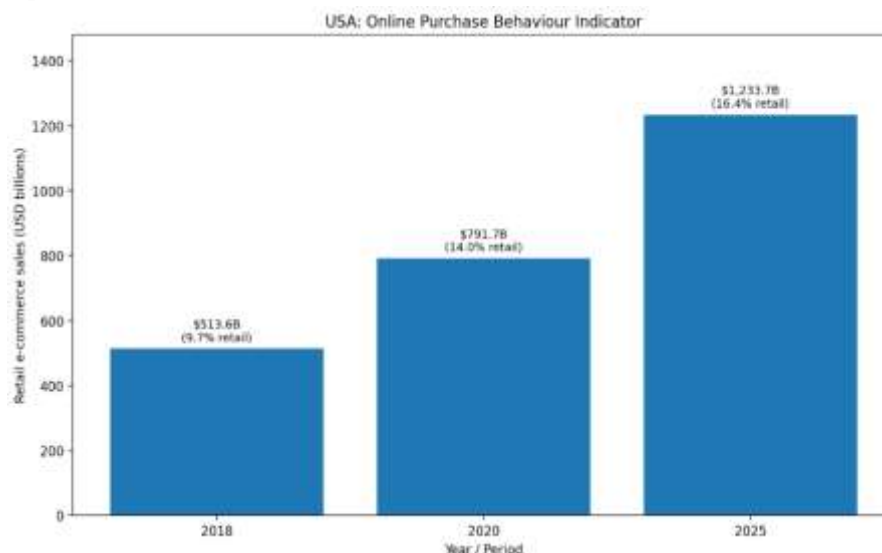


Figure 4. online purchase behaviour indicator in USA.

U.S. retail e-commerce sales increased from \$513.6 billion in 2018 to \$791.7 billion in 2020 and reached \$1.2337 trillion in 2025. Its share of total retail sales also rose from 9.7% to 16.4%, showing that online purchasing became a normal part of consumer behaviour. This suggests that SMM in the USA does not only create awareness, but also supports a developed digital purchase system where social media exposure can lead to actual online buying.

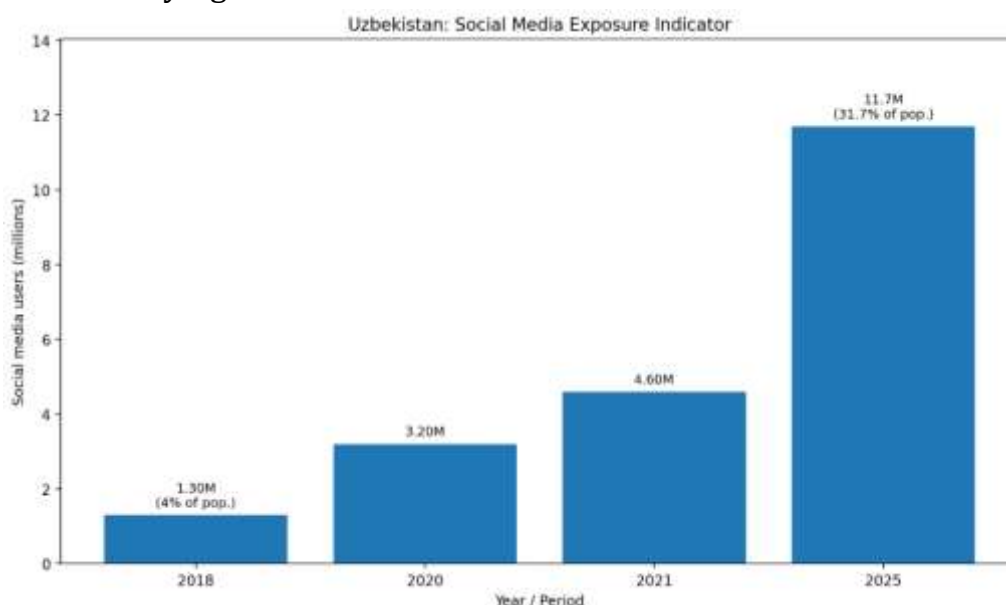


Figure 5. Online purchase behaviour in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's social media audience expanded rapidly from 1.3 million users in 2018 to 3.2 million in 2020, 4.6 million in 2021, and 11.7 million in 2025. This sharp growth shows that social platforms are becoming increasingly important for consumer communication and brand visibility. For SMM development, this means Uzbekistan has moved from a limited social media market to a fast-growing digital audience with strong potential for Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, influencer marketing, and social commerce.

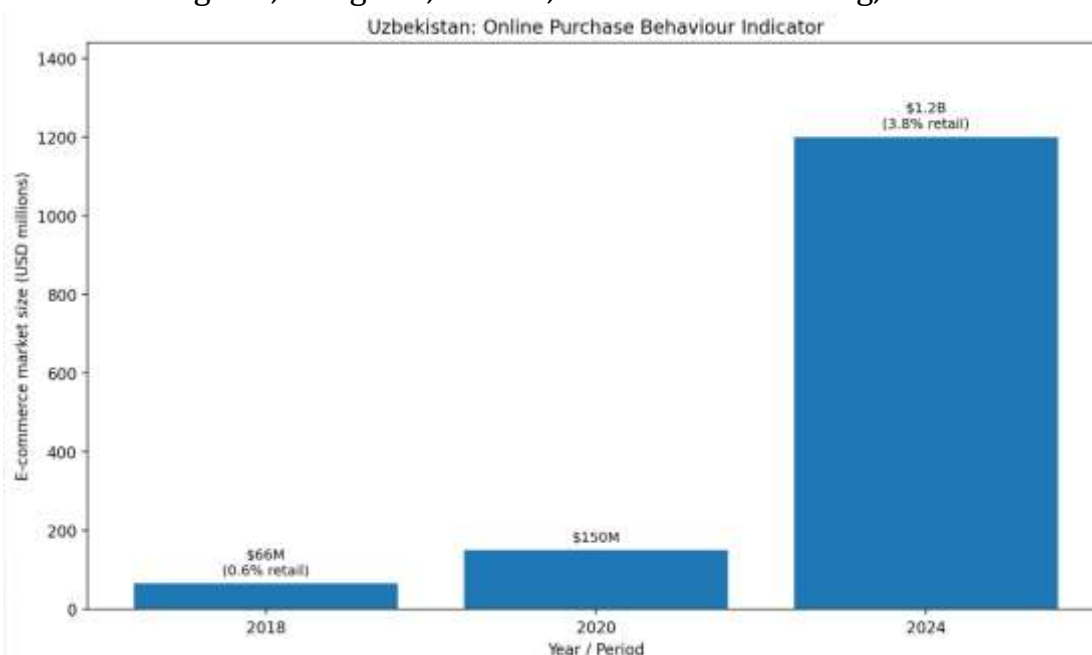


Figure 6. online purchase behaviour indicator in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan's e-commerce market grew from about \$66 million in 2018 to \$150 million in 2020 and reached \$1.2 billion in 2024. Although its share of total retail was still relatively low at 3.8%, the growth rate shows that online purchasing is becoming more commercially important. This indicates that SMM in Uzbekistan is gradually shifting from simple brand awareness toward purchase-oriented marketing, but its effectiveness still depends on consumer trust, payment convenience, delivery reliability, and verified online selling systems.

Internet speed is a key technical factor shaping the capacity of social media marketing. In 2025, the United States recorded a median mobile internet speed of 123.63 Mbps and a median fixed internet speed of 262.59 Mbps. Uzbekistan recorded 37.82 Mbps for mobile internet and 79.06 Mbps for fixed internet. Although fixed internet is about 2.1 times faster than mobile internet in both countries, the absolute gap is significant: U.S. mobile and fixed internet speeds are both approximately 3.3 times higher than those of Uzbekistan.

This difference has direct implications for social media marketing. In the United States, faster internet supports video-based advertising, livestream shopping, interactive content, social commerce, and advanced e-commerce integration. In Uzbekistan, SMM is more dependent on mobile-first formats, short videos, Instagram stories, Telegram communication, online catalogues, and simple ordering systems. Therefore, Uzbekistan's SMM development depends not only on platform usage, but also on stronger internet infrastructure, better video-content capacity, payment integration, and delivery reliability.

In the United States, social media had already begun influencing purchase behaviour before COVID-19, as 15% of U.S. adults had bought something by following a link from social media in the pre-pandemic period. During the pandemic, this role became stronger among younger consumers: 53% of U.S. online adults under 25 completed a purchase on a social or creator platform in 2020, rising to 61% in 2021. By 2025, social media had become a direct commercial channel, with 45% of consumers purchasing a product through a social media platform in the past month, while 50% used social media as a primary way to learn about new brands and products. Paid social media advertising and influencer marketing also affected purchase decisions, as 23% of consumers clicked on brand ads in their social media feeds and 13% purchased products from an influencer's page.

In Uzbekistan, online purchase behaviour developed from a much lower base. In 2018, only 4% of internet users made an online purchase, indicating that social media marketing had limited conversion potential before COVID-19. During the pandemic, this figure increased to 11% in 2020, suggesting that quarantine conditions helped strengthen digital buying habits. By 2024, Uzbekistan's e-commerce market reached \$1.2 billion, equal to 3.8% of total retail, showing clear growth but still a smaller share compared with mature digital markets. Online purchases were also concentrated in specific categories, especially appliances and electronics at 35% and fashion at 19%. By 2025, platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok had become

important tools for promotion and customer communication, but the conversion from social media exposure to actual purchases still depended on trust, payment convenience, delivery reliability, and customer service integration.

Digital expansion has created not only commercial opportunities for social media marketing, but also social, psychological, and trust-related risks. In the United States, the share of teenagers who reported being online “almost constantly” increased from 24% in 2014–2015 to 46% in 2022, showing that young consumers became much more exposed to digital platforms after the pandemic period. In 2022, 36% of U.S. teens also said they spent “too much time” on social media. By 2023, 77.0% of U.S. high school students reported frequent social media use, while 39.7% reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. These figures do not prove that social media alone causes mental health problems, but they show that SMM operates in an environment where digital overuse and youth well-being concerns are increasingly important.

Regional evidence from Europe, Central Asia, and Canada also supports this concern. The share of adolescents showing signs of problematic social media use increased from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022, while 36% reported constant online contact with friends and others. This suggests that stronger online connectivity may also be linked with dependence on digital interaction.

For Uzbekistan, the issue is becoming more relevant as the digital audience expands. In 2025, the country had 32.7 million internet users, equal to 89.0% of the population, and 11.7 million social media user identities, equal to 31.7% of the population. Instagram’s advertising reach increased by 2.95 million users, or 33.9%, between January 2024 and January 2025. This rapid growth increases the business potential of SMM, but it also requires stronger digital literacy, ethical advertising, consumer protection, and safeguards against fake content, excessive platform dependence, and manipulative marketing.

U.S. digital advertising data shows that social media marketing was already a major business channel before the COVID-19 period. In 2018, U.S. full-year internet advertising revenue reached about \$107.5 billion, while social media advertising revenue reached \$28.9 billion, growing by 30.6% from 2017. This indicates that SMM was not an experimental tool even before quarantine, but an established and investment-driven part of the advertising economy.

During the quarantine period, social media advertising became even more important as businesses followed consumers into digital spaces. In 2020, U.S. social media advertising revenue reached \$41.5 billion, accounting for 29.6% of total internet advertising revenue. This shows that the pandemic strengthened the commercial role of social platforms by making them essential channels for brand visibility, customer engagement, and online sales communication.

By the post-quarantine stage, SMM in the United States had become a mature, measurable, and highly funded business system. In 2025, U.S. internet advertising revenue reached \$294.6 billion, while social media advertising revenue reached \$117.7 billion. Sponsored creator content spending was also forecast to exceed \$10 billion in

2025. These figures confirm that social media marketing in the U.S. is now closely connected with influencer marketing, creator economy, e-commerce, targeting technologies, and performance measurement.

Uzbekistan's digital advertising market has moved from basic online visibility to a more structured, mobile-first marketing ecosystem. By 2026, total digital advertising spending reached about \$180 million, doubling from \$85 million in 2022. This growth was supported by wider internet access, expanding social media use, rapid digital payment adoption, and the increasing role of e-commerce. By 2025, internet penetration reached 83.3%, with around 29.52 million users, while social media user identities exceeded 11.7 million, equal to roughly one-third of the population.

The structure of Uzbekistan's digital advertising market shows a strong dependence on mobile platforms and social media channels. Mobile traffic accounted for about 65% of total internet traffic, making mobile-first content, short videos, stories, and messenger-based communication essential for SMM strategies. Telegram became the dominant communication and advertising platform, with more than 95% reach, while Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok continued to play an important role in visual content, influencer marketing, and youth-oriented promotion. Google Ads and Meta Ads together accounted for around 60% of digital advertising spending, but Telegram emerged as one of the fastest-growing advertising channels.

The development of digital payments also strengthened the commercial value of SMM. Cash-based transactions declined from 78% in 2020 to 45% in 2026, creating better conditions for online orders, marketplace sales, social commerce, and advertising-driven purchases. This shift means that social media marketing in Uzbekistan is no longer limited to brand awareness. It is increasingly becoming a direct sales channel supported by payment systems such as Click and Payme, online catalogues, Telegram-based ordering, Instagram shops, influencer recommendations, and short-form video advertising.

SMM development in Uzbekistan can be divided into three stages. Between 2018 and 2021, businesses gradually shifted from traditional media to basic online presence, while Telegram channels became important for direct customer communication. Between 2022 and 2024, e-commerce growth and digital payment adoption accelerated the use of social media for promotion and sales. By 2025–2026, the market entered a more competitive stage, characterized by AI-powered marketing tools, rising CPM and CPC costs, stronger influencer partnerships, and growing investment in Reels, TikTok, and other short-form video formats.

Overall, these indicators suggest that SMM in Uzbekistan has evolved from an optional promotional activity into a high-ROI and increasingly necessary business channel. However, the market's growth also increases the need for professional content strategy, reliable analytics, transparent influencer marketing, creative differentiation, local payment integration, and stronger consumer trust mechanisms. For businesses in Uzbekistan, effective SMM now depends not only on being present on social media, but

on using Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, digital payments, and data-driven advertising in an integrated and strategically managed way.

SWOT Analysis of Social Media Marketing Development in Uzbekistan and Its Impact on Consumer Purchase Behaviour

The SWOT analysis shows that Uzbekistan has strong potential for social media marketing development because the country already has a large internet audience, a growing social media user base, a young population, and expanding e-commerce activity. In early 2025, internet penetration reached 89.0%, while social media user identities reached 11.7 million, showing that businesses have a widening digital audience for promotion, communication, and online selling. However, the gap between high internet penetration and lower social media penetration indicates that Uzbekistan's SMM ecosystem is still developing rather than fully mature.

The main opportunity for Uzbekistan is that SMM can become a practical growth tool for small and medium-sized businesses, education centers, tourism agencies, local retailers, service providers, and regional entrepreneurs. The expansion of e-commerce strengthens this opportunity: Uzbekistan's e-commerce market reached \$1.2 billion in 2024, and its share of retail is expected to grow in the coming years. This means that social media platforms can increasingly influence not only brand awareness, but also product discovery, trust formation, purchase intention, and actual online buying.

At the same time, Uzbekistan's main weakness is not the absence of digital demand, but the incomplete professionalization of the SMM ecosystem. Many businesses use social media, but not all of them apply audience segmentation, campaign planning, conversion tracking, customer analytics, transparent influencer collaboration, verified reviews, or clear return and delivery policies. As a result, social media activity may generate visibility, but it does not always create stable consumer trust or measurable sales growth.

Therefore, Uzbekistan's SMM development should focus on building a professional and trustworthy digital marketing ecosystem. This requires strategic content planning, analytics-based advertising, ethical influencer marketing, transparent sponsorship disclosure, verified customer reviews, digital literacy, consumer protection, reliable payment systems, and delivery integration. If these elements are strengthened, SMM can become not only a promotional tool, but also a sustainable mechanism for business growth, consumer engagement, and responsible digital economic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that social media marketing has become a central factor shaping consumer purchase behaviour in the post-COVID digital economy. The quarantine period accelerated the movement of communication, entertainment, shopping, customer service, and business interaction into digital platforms, turning social media from a mainly communicative space into a strategic marketing and commercial instrument. The findings show that SMM influences the whole consumer journey: it creates brand awareness through posts, stories, reels, paid ads, and influencer content; builds interest through visual storytelling and emotional

communication; shapes trust through online reviews, comments, testimonials, social proof, and user-generated content; and stimulates purchase intention through targeted advertising, discounts, direct messages, Telegram channels, marketplaces, online payments, and delivery services. Therefore, SMM should not be understood as a simple promotional tool, but as a mechanism that affects how consumers discover, evaluate, trust, purchase, and respond to products after buying.

The comparison between the United States and Uzbekistan shows that both countries experienced digital acceleration, but they represent different stages of SMM development. The United States has a mature, commercialized, and data-driven SMM ecosystem supported by advanced targeting, influencer marketing, social commerce, e-commerce infrastructure, advertising investment, analytics, and customer relationship management. Uzbekistan, by contrast, has strong growth potential because of its expanding internet audience, young population, active use of Instagram and Telegram, growing e-commerce market, and rising digital entrepreneurship. However, Uzbekistan's main challenge is not simply increasing the number of business pages or social media advertisements. The priority is to transform active but often informal SMM practices into a professional, measurable, ethical, and trust-based ecosystem.

The evidence also confirms that SMM development depends on more than social media user growth. A sustainable SMM ecosystem requires internet infrastructure, platform diversity, e-commerce readiness, online payment systems, delivery reliability, consumer protection, verified reviews, transparent influencer marketing, digital literacy, and analytics-based decision-making. For Uzbekistan, this means that businesses should move from random posting to strategic social media marketing based on audience segmentation, clear campaign objectives, brand positioning, content planning, conversion tracking, and return-on-advertising measurement. SMM performance should not be evaluated only through likes, followers, and views, but also through reach, engagement rate, click-through rate, cost per lead, conversion rate, repeat purchases, customer acquisition cost, and customer loyalty.

At the same time, social media marketing is a double-edged transformation. On the positive side, it supports business growth, small and medium-sized enterprises, entrepreneurship, tourism promotion, education services, youth employment, and digital economic development. It allows businesses to reach customers faster, reduce marketing costs, communicate directly with consumers, and expand online sales. On the negative side, rapid digital expansion may create risks such as fake reviews, hidden advertising, consumer manipulation, privacy concerns, online scams, excessive screen time, impulse buying, overconsumption, and psychological pressure. For this reason, Uzbekistan should not copy the U.S. model mechanically. Instead, it should adopt its strongest elements, including data-driven advertising, professional content strategy, influencer marketing, social commerce integration, customer analytics, CRM automation, and trust systems, while avoiding mature-market problems such as advertising fatigue, fake digital trust, privacy violations, and manipulative marketing.

Based on the findings, Uzbekistan's SMM development should follow a balanced and responsible path. Businesses should integrate social media with online catalogues, Telegram bots, websites, marketplaces, digital payment systems, delivery tracking, and customer support so that social media attention can turn into completed purchases. Influencer marketing should become more transparent, with clear sponsorship disclosure, honest product claims, relevant influencer-brand fit, and campaign measurement through promo codes, referral links, engagement quality, and sales results. Consumer trust should be strengthened through verified reviews, seller verification, clear refund and exchange policies, transparent pricing, complaint-handling systems, and stronger protection against fake shops, fake comments, and misleading promotions.

Finally, the long-term value of SMM in Uzbekistan depends on digital literacy, ethical standards, and inclusive access. Consumers need to recognize fake reviews, scam pages, hidden advertising, and manipulative discount tactics, while businesses need stronger skills in targeting, analytics, ethical communication, data privacy, and customer service. Training should especially support young entrepreneurs, women-led businesses, regional SMEs, rural communities, and students so that SMM development does not benefit only Tashkent and large cities. If Uzbekistan strengthens professional SMM practices, consumer protection, digital literacy, payment and delivery integration, and transparent online commerce, social media marketing can become not only a tool for increasing sales, but also a driver of sustainable business growth, consumer empowerment, and responsible digital economic development.

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