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Sikakane, Sindisiwe

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Impact of social media e-commerce on purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation in South Africa's wellness sector

Sindisiwe Sikakane

325079

sindisiwe.sikakane@students.wits.ac.za and 0839494174

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2025

DECLARATION

I, Sindisiwe Sikakane, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgement. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Sindisiwe Sikakane

Signed at Morningside

On the 25th day of June 2025

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of social media e-commerce on consumer purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation in the burgeoning South African wellness sector. It addresses the critical gap in understanding how local consumers engage with wellness brands online, despite the significant potential of platforms such as Facebook to drive commercial outcomes. The study is theoretically grounded in the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), and social identity theory (SIT), offering a comprehensive lens on consumer decision-making in the digital age.

Employing a quantitative, descriptive correlational design, data was collected from 190 South African e-commerce consumers via an online survey distributed on LinkedIn and WhatsApp. Analysis using SPSS and SmartPLS, including structural equation modelling, revealed strong empirical support for the eleven hypotheses formulated during the research. Key findings indicate that consumer attitudes are the strongest direct predictor of purchase intention, while content type significantly influences brand awareness. Notably, Facebook and TikTok users exhibited significantly higher purchase intention compared to non-users and user-generated content was more trusted than influencer promotions.

The study provides robust empirical validation for an integrated theoretical framework in the context of an emerging market. Managerially, it provides actionable insights for strategic platform prioritisation, content optimisation (emphasising informative, visual, and user-generated content), building genuine trust and leveraging credible social influence to drive e-commerce success in the South African wellness sector. Limitations include its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data and specific demographic focus, which suggest avenues for future longitudinal and comparative research.

Keywords: Social media, e-commerce, purchase intention, brand awareness, consumer behaviour

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my beloved family, whose unwavering support, encouragement and boundless love have been the bedrock of my academic journey, to my parents, for instilling in me the value of education and perseverance and for the countless sacrifices that have paved the way for my aspirations, and to my siblings and extended family, for their constant belief in my capabilities and for being a source of strength and inspiration.

This work is also dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and personal growth, a journey that has profoundly shaped my understanding of the world and my place in it. It is a testament to the power of curiosity and the relentless drive to make meaningful contributions to the academic and professional landscape. May this endeavour serve as a small reflection of the immense gratitude I hold for those who have walked alongside me, offering guidance and unwavering encouragement every step of the way.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Composite Reliability
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
PM	Path Modelling
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SIT	Social Identity Theory
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UGC	User-generated content

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of social media e-commerce on purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation in South Africa. This research explores how social media influences consumer behaviour within the South African e-commerce sector. Specifically, given the growing significance of online shopping in South Africa (Deloitte, 2021) and the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions (Saura et al., 2019), the study reveals how social media platforms, with a focus on Facebook, influence brand awareness and product evaluation, ultimately impacting purchase decisions.

Given the growing global and local emphasis on health, glow and personal sanctuary (Euromonitor International, 2023), this study uncovers how social media platforms foster brand awareness, shape product evaluations and drive purchase intentions for wellness-related products. The findings offer actionable insights for businesses aiming to effectively position wellness and self-care offerings through social media marketing strategies.

1.2 Background of the study

Globally, wellness and self-care have shifted from niche interests to mainstream consumer priorities, a trend accelerated by post-pandemic lifestyle changes (McKinsey & Company, 2022). In South Africa, consumers are increasingly investing in products ranging from spa essentials to facial treatments and comfort-enhancing accessories that promote relaxation, glow, health and personal well-being.

The internet and social media have fundamentally transformed how individuals engage with brands and shop online (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2008). Driven by rising internet and smartphone penetration, e-commerce is experiencing substantial growth in South Africa (GSMA, 2020; Statista, 2021a, 2021b). Social media platforms play a pivotal role in enhancing brand awareness, shaping product evaluations and influencing purchase intentions in the e-commerce landscape (DataReportal, 2024; Kilgour et al., 2015; Nyatlo, 2018). However, despite global research highlighting the impact of social

media marketing (Saura et al., 2019), there is a need to explore further how these dynamics specifically unfold in the South African market.

While Facebook remains one of the most dominant platforms among South African consumers, many brands underutilise its potential to create health-conscious, sanctuary-driven and glow-promoting experiences that align with evolving consumer preferences. Understanding the interplay between social media marketing strategies and consumer behaviour in the context of wellness and self-care is critical for brands aiming to capture and grow loyal customer bases in South Africa's increasingly competitive e-commerce landscape. Targeted, well-designed social media engagement not only strengthens brand-consumer relationships but also positions brands to capitalise on the growing demand for wellness-focused products and experiences.

1.3 Research problem

While global research acknowledges the power of social media marketing in influencing consumer behaviour (Saura et al., 2019), there is limited understanding of how South African consumers engage with wellness, self-care and relaxation brands online. A key issue is the gap between the potential of social media platforms, such as Facebook, to drive purchase intent, brand awareness and product evaluation for wellness products and the actual strategic effectiveness with which businesses harness this potential in the local market. Without targeted, wellness-oriented social media strategies, brands risk failing to meet the growing consumer demand for products that promote relaxation, glow and personal sanctuary.

Although social media marketing offers immense potential for brand exposure and customer engagement (Kilgour et al., 2015), many South African e-commerce businesses struggle to translate this potential into tangible success.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to empirically investigate how social media e-commerce, with a primary focus on Facebook, shapes purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation for wellness products in South Africa.This issue is particularly pressing given the rapid growth of e-commerce and the increasing reliance on social media platforms by South African consumers (Deloitte, 2021).

This problem is particularly acute in the wellness sector, where consumers increasingly seek products that offer relaxation, “glow” and personal sanctuary, yet many brands still apply generic social media tactics that do not speak to these needs. The misalignment between consumer wellness expectations and current social media executions may limit the effectiveness of Facebook-based campaigns in building trust, awareness and purchase intention(Euromonitor International, 2023). This study therefore seeks to close this gap by empirically examining how specific platforms, engagement mechanisms and content formats shape South African consumers’ responses to wellness brands online.

1.4 Research objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Examine how social media and the type of content shared (visual, informative, etc.) affect consumer purchase decisions.
- Investigate the influence of social media brand interaction on consumer attitudes in South Africa.
- Identify which social media engagement strategies drive intention to purchase wellness products.
- Assess the role of content format in increasing the visibility and recall of wellness brands.
- Examine how consumers assess the quality and reliability of wellness products based on content format.
- Explore how social media engagement and brand trust influence broader behavioural and market-level outcomes.

1.5 Research questions

Research Question 1: Social media platforms and content type

- How do social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) and the type of content shared (e.g., visual and informative) influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions for e-commerce products in South Africa?

Research Question 2: Social media platforms and consumer attitudes

- To what extent does engagement with e-commerce brands on social media platforms influence consumer attitudes towards these brands in South Africa?

Research Question 3: Engagement and purchase intent

- How does consumer engagement with e-commerce brands on social media platforms affect their purchase intention for wellness and health-related products in South Africa?

Research Question 4: Content type and brand awareness

- What role does the type of content (e.g., promotional, review-based and educational) shared by e-commerce brands on social media play in enhancing brand awareness among South African consumers?

Research Question 5: Content type and product evaluation

- How does the type of content shared by e-commerce brands on social media (e.g., images, videos and customer reviews) influence consumer evaluations of product quality and reliability in South Africa?

Research Question 6:

- How does increasing reliance on social media affect e-commerce growth in the wellness sector in South Africa?

This research is significant because it addresses the growing consumer movement prioritising personal health, wellness and self-care. South African businesses, especially those in the spa, luxury towels and facial care sectors, must optimise their use of Facebook to connect meaningfully with consumers seeking sanctuary and relaxation. By focusing on these themes, the study offers valuable insights for businesses to develop more empathetic, health-oriented and wellness-centred social media campaigns, thereby enhancing their ability to differentiate themselves and drive sustained online growth.

Furthermore, this research is crucial for businesses seeking to enhance their social media marketing strategies in South Africa, particularly within the health and wellness product category. While platforms such as Facebook are widely used, they are often

underutilised by businesses that lack a deep understanding of their potential for e-commerce engagement. By examining these platforms in the South African context, the study provides actionable insights for businesses to optimise their campaigns, reach broader audiences and ultimately boost e-commerce sales (Alalwan et al., 2017).

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The study is limited to South African consumers aged 18 years and older who engage in e-commerce activities via Facebook, specifically concerning the health and wellness product category. The research does not comprehensively examine the impact of other social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and TikTok) or consider offline consumer behaviour.

1.7 Assumptions

The study assumed that participants accurately reported their Facebook usage habits and perceptions related to wellness and self-care product marketing. It also assumed that the sample reflected the broader trends among South African online shoppers in the wellness and self-care product segment, distinct from global consumer behaviour patterns.

CHAPTER 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour, particularly within the context of e-commerce. While the global impact of platforms such as Facebook on consumer behaviour is widely recognised, the specific dynamics within South Africa's e-commerce sector have yet to be thoroughly explored. This chapter examines the existing literature on social media and consumer behaviour, with a focus on Facebook as the dominant platform in the South African digital landscape.

The review emphasises how social media influences key consumer constructs, such as purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation. Despite Facebook's widespread use in South Africa, it remains underutilised or misunderstood in terms of its potential to drive e-commerce.

Understanding how Facebook influences purchase intention can provide valuable insights for marketers, as it reveals the likelihood of consumers deciding to make a purchase. Similarly, examining the role of Facebook in brand awareness, how consumers recognise and recall brands, offers a clearer understanding of how social media platforms can foster brand loyalty and increase visibility. Ultimately, this review examines how Facebook influences product evaluation, where consumers assess the value and quality of products based on user-generated content (UGC), reviews and advertisements.

By addressing this gap in the literature, this chapter lays the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of how Facebook influences these three critical constructs in South African e-commerce, ultimately guiding businesses on how to leverage social media's power to drive purchasing decisions.

2.2 Empirical literature review

2.2.1 Social media platform – Facebook

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, play a pivotal role in modern e-commerce by providing brands with a powerful avenue for consumer engagement. With over 2.8 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2023), Facebook has emerged as an

indispensable tool for facilitating brand-consumer interactions. Beyond product showcases, Facebook enables brands to create dynamic content and cultivate communities around their offerings. Facebook's integrated e-commerce functionalities, such as Facebook Shops, allow users to discover and purchase products seamlessly, enhancing the consumer journey from discovery to transaction (Shankar et al., 2016).

Smit et al. (2020) further emphasise Facebook's ability to build brand trust and consumer loyalty in wellness-related sectors. Their study found that consumers are more likely to engage with brands on Facebook when content is personalised and community-driven.

Facebook's sophisticated advertising capabilities are integral to increasing engagement and purchase intent. By utilising personalised algorithms that target users based on behaviour and demographics, Facebook advertisements become more relevant, thereby improving the likelihood of consumer interaction and boosting conversion rates (Mikalef et al., 2017). Additionally, Facebook facilitates social proof through user reviews and content sharing, which helps build trust and alleviates perceived risks, thereby influencing purchasing decisions.

The interactive nature of Facebook further strengthens consumer-brand relationships. By liking, commenting and sharing posts, consumers develop a sense of involvement with brands. Hollebeek et al. (2014) assert that such engagement fosters emotional connections, which are crucial for brand loyalty and repeat purchasing. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) emphasises that consumers engage with media to fulfil specific needs, such as entertainment, social interaction and information. On Facebook, consumers actively interact with content that meets these needs such as discovering new products or engaging with brand content thus driving loyalty and purchase intent (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

2.2.2 Engagement strategies

In this study, "engagement strategies" refer to the specific tactics used on social media to stimulate consumer interaction with wellness brands, namely influencer promotions, user-generated content (UGC) and paid social media advertising. At the measurement level, the construct captures consumers' perceived influence of these tactics (e.g., "Influencer promotions increase my likelihood to buy wellness products") rather than

the brand's internal campaign design. This aligns with prior work treating engagement as perceived persuasion of discrete tactics (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Schivinski et al., 2016).

Engagement strategies are essential for cultivating meaningful interactions between brands and consumers on social media. These strategies include interactive polls, contests, UGC and influencer collaborations, all of which encourage active consumer participation. Brands that create such engaging content are more likely to witness increased consumer involvement, a key driver of both brand loyalty and purchase intent (Brodie et al., 2013).

This is supported by Dessart et al. (2015), who found that digital engagement fosters emotional bonds and strengthens consumer brand relationships. Hudson et al. (2016) argue that emotionally resonant content particularly in wellness markets encourages repeat engagement and boosts purchase intention.

Interactive content, particularly content that encourages consumer participation, has been found to enhance engagement significantly. According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), consumers who engage with brand content are more emotionally invested, resulting in stronger relationships and an increased likelihood of purchase. UGC, in particular, is highly influential. Research by Schivinski et al. (2016) suggests that UGC is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than brand-produced content, thus having a greater impact on consumer decision-making. Erkan and Evans (2016) confirm that peer-based content and electronic word-of-mouth are perceived as more trustworthy than brand-sponsored posts, reinforcing the effectiveness of UGC.

Influencer marketing plays a crucial role in engagement strategies. Freberg et al. (2011) suggest that influencers, as trusted figures, can shape consumer attitudes towards a brand. When influencers endorse products, they help brands extend their reach and enhance credibility, ultimately influencing purchase intentions, especially when the content resonates with consumer values.

Similarly, Erdoğmuş and Çiçek (2012) observed that consistent and authentic engagement including influencer collaboration improves brand trust and positive attitude formation on social media platforms.

The ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) posits that persuasion occurs through two routes: the central route (careful consideration of content) and the peripheral route (emotional cues or simple heuristics such as brand popularity). Engagement strategies that leverage both routes, such as influencer endorsements (peripheral) and informative content (central), enhance persuasion and increase purchase intent.

Ebrahim and Hollebeek (2020) extend this view by introducing the concept of interactive value co-creation. They propose that consumers derive more value from brands when they are part of the engagement process, thereby reinforcing both cognitive and emotional routes of persuasion.

2.2.3 Content type

Content type refers to the various formats through which brands communicate their messages on social media, including visual, textual and promotional content. The type of content shared has a significant impact on consumer engagement, attitudes and behaviours.

Ashley and Tuten (2015) differentiate content into branded, informative, and interactive formats, finding that branded content that balances utility with authenticity yields the highest engagement. Habibi et al. (2014) further argue that emotionally aligned, community-oriented content generates deeper trust in sectors.

Visual content, particularly images and videos, has a profound impact on consumer engagement. According to Reinikainen et al. (2018), posts featuring visual elements, particularly videos, tend to attract more attention and foster greater interaction than text-based posts. Visuals stimulate emotional responses and enhance brand recall, making them a powerful tool in shaping consumer behaviour.

Textual content remains valuable, particularly when it provides useful information, addresses consumer concerns or highlights product benefits. Schivinski et al. (2016) argue that well-crafted textual content can effectively persuade consumers and increase purchase intent.

Chen and Lu (2021) found that both detailed visual content and review-based posts enhance consumer trust in product claims, especially in sectors where personal care and safety are concerns.

Promotional content, such as discounts and special offers, can also prompt immediate consumer action. However, Batra et al. (2014) caution against over-relying on promotional content, as it may lead to consumer fatigue. A balanced mix of engaging and informative content is essential to sustain consumer interest.

The AIDA Model (attention, interest, desire, action) describes the stages of consumer decision-making. Social media content must capture attention, generate interest, foster desire and prompt action. Batra et al. (2014) emphasise that aligning content with these stages increases conversion likelihood by guiding the consumer through the decision-making process.

2.2.4 Consumer attitude

Consumer attitude refers to the psychological disposition of individuals towards a brand or product and is influenced by personal beliefs, past experiences and external factors, such as social media engagement. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, offer brands the opportunity to directly influence consumer attitudes by presenting content that aligns with consumers' values and needs.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) posits that beliefs and evaluations of a brand shape attitudes. In the context of social media, brands can shape consumer attitudes by consistently presenting content that resonates with consumer interests and values (Ajzen, 1991). Positive engagement with content, such as liking or sharing posts, strengthens consumer attitudes towards the brand, increasing the likelihood of a purchase (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Erdoğmuş and Çiçek (2012) reinforce this by noting that transparency and authenticity in brand communication on social media strongly influence positive attitude formation.

Social influence also plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes. Erdem et al. (2016) argue that social media amplifies peer influence, with consumers more likely to develop favourable attitudes towards brands endorsed by their social network or

influencers. This social influence has a significant impact on consumer attitudes and, by extension, their purchasing decisions.

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) extends the TRA by adding perceived behavioural control as a factor influencing intention. In social media contexts, consumer attitudes are shaped not only by beliefs about the brand but also by the ease of interaction and purchase from the brand. Facebook's user-friendly interface and seamless shopping features help reduce perceived barriers, enhancing consumer attitudes and influencing purchase intent.

Ebrahim and Hollebeek (2020) also suggest that perceived brand value and co-created experiences directly contribute to positive consumer attitudes, especially in focused campaigns.

2.2.5 Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to the processes through which individuals make purchasing decisions. On social media platforms, consumer behaviour is influenced by various factors, including engagement strategies, content types and attitudes towards the brand. Understanding these influences is crucial for predicting purchase intent, brand awareness and product evaluation.

Purchase intent is a key predictor of actual buying behaviour. Consumers who engage with a brand on social media are more likely to convert into buyers. Personalised advertisements, interactive content and influencer marketing significantly increase purchase intent by strengthening the consumer-brand relationship (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) highlight that consumer-generated reviews significantly influence purchase intention by reducing uncertainty and enhancing credibility. Their findings are echoed by Smith et al. (2007), who found that detailed, peer-authored content boosts conversion rates more effectively than promotional messaging.

Brand awareness is essential in the consumer decision-making process. Consumers are more likely to buy from brands they recognise and trust. Social media plays a vital role in increasing brand visibility, helping brands engage with a broad audience through

posts, advertisements and UGC. Higher brand awareness is correlated with a higher purchase likelihood (Keller, 2013).

Product evaluation involves assessing the features, benefits and overall value of a product before making a purchase decision. Social media offers access to peer reviews, ratings and product demonstrations, all of which aid in evaluating product quality. Positive reviews and testimonials reduce perceived risk and enhance consumer confidence, making consumers more likely to purchase (Sweeney et al., 2012).

Chen and Lu (2021) confirm that consumer trust in brand products is primarily influenced by detailed peer reviews and visual demonstrations, which aid in perceived product quality and reduce perceived risk.

2.3 Analytical framework

The analytical framework for this study is anchored in the TPB, the ELM and SIT. These theoretical lenses provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of factors that influence consumer behaviour in the digital age.

2.3.1 Theoretical framework

The study examines how social media usage on Facebook, alongside engagement strategies and content types, influences consumer behaviour in South Africa, integrating the constructs of attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (TPB), persuasion routes (ELM) and social identity (SIT).

The TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behaviour is determined by their attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of social media and e-commerce, the TPB suggests that a consumer's decision to purchase a product online is influenced by their attitude towards online shopping, the perceived social norms regarding online shopping and their perceived ability to navigate the online shopping process successfully.

In this study, TPB is operationalised by linking attitudes to wellness brands (e.g., perceived benefits, trust and perceived fit with self-care goals) to purchase intention, while subjective norms are reflected through peer and influencer endorsement on social media, and perceived behavioural control is captured through ease of using platforms

such as Facebook for discovery, evaluation and checkout. Together, these dimensions explain why some consumers move from exposure to wellness content to actual intention to purchase.

The ELM proposes two routes to persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route involves the thoughtful consideration of message content, while the peripheral route relies on cues such as source credibility and attractiveness. In the context of social media, the ELM suggests that consumers may be persuaded to make a purchase either through careful evaluation of product information and reviews (central route) or through the influence of attractive visuals, celebrity endorsements or peer recommendations (peripheral route).

The ELM is applied by distinguishing between central-route processing (e.g., informative reviews, detailed product descriptions, ingredient information) and peripheral cues (e.g., attractive visuals, influencer endorsements, number of likes/shares). Wellness consumers may scrutinise information more deeply when health or safety is salient, but still rely on peripheral cues under time or cognitive constraints. This distinction informs how content type and engagement strategies are hypothesised to influence awareness, product evaluation and purchase intention.

SIT suggests that individuals derive a sense of self and belonging from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the context of social media, SIT posits that consumers may be more likely to purchase products or brands that are associated with their social identities or that are endorsed by members of their social groups.

SIT is particularly relevant in wellness communities, where consumers derive part of their identity from belonging to self-care, fitness or “glow”-focused groups. On social media, visible affiliation with wellness brands, hashtags and communities signals group membership. This study therefore assumes that alignment between a consumer’s desired wellness identity and the brand communities encountered on Facebook and TikTok strengthens favourable attitudes, enhances brand awareness and positively shapes product evaluations.

2.3.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework outlines the key variables and the relationships between social media usage and consumer behaviour in the context of South African e-commerce, specifically within the health and wellness product category. This framework hypothesises that social media platform usage (primarily Facebook) influences consumer behaviour through several mediating factors such as engagement strategies, content types and consumer attitudes. Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual framework that underpins the study's hypotheses.

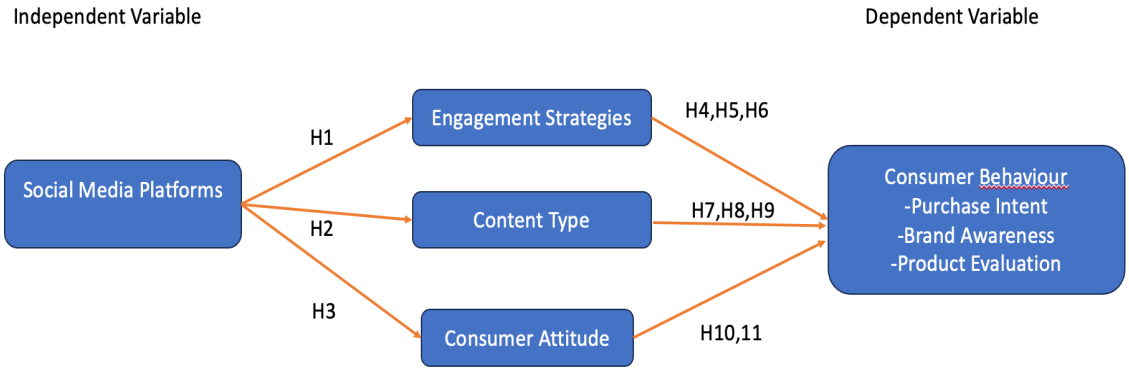


Figure 2.1: **Visual representation of conceptual framework**

The framework visually represents the relationships between the key constructs in the context of social media engagement and consumer behaviour within the South African e-commerce sector. The hypotheses examine how various engagement strategies and content types impact consumer attitudes, brand awareness, product evaluation and, ultimately, purchase intent. By examining these relationships, more profound insights into how social media interactions, particularly on platforms such as Facebook, affect consumer decision-making processes are gained. This framework provides the foundation for testing the proposed hypotheses and understanding the dynamics that drive consumer behaviour in e-commerce

In this framework, platform usage, engagement strategies and content type are modelled as variables, while consumer attitudes, brand awareness, product evaluation and purchase intention are outcomes. Research Questions 1–5 are addressed through Hypotheses H1–H11 as follows: RQ1 (platforms and content) is tested primarily

through H2, H7–H9; RQ2 (engagement and attitudes) through H3 and H11; RQ3 (engagement and purchase intent) through H1 and H4; RQ4 (content and brand awareness) through H5 and H8; and RQ5 (content and product evaluation) through H6 and H9. RQ6 is addressed at model level through the combined effects of these relationships on purchase intention and broader e-commerce growth outcomes.

2.4 Hypothesis development

Based on a thorough review of the literature surrounding social media platforms, engagement strategies, content types and consumer behaviour, this section outlines the key hypotheses (H1 to H11) tested in the study. Each hypothesis is linked to identified gaps in the literature and accompanied by validated measurement constructs.

H1: Engagement strategies on social media platforms positively influence consumer purchase intentions.

The first identified gap in the literature is the limited understanding of how specific engagement strategies on social media platforms, such as Facebook, influence consumer behaviour. To address this, H1 proposes that engagement strategies on social media platforms have a positive influence on consumer purchase intentions in the South African e-commerce sector. Engagement strategies are measured through indicators such as interaction frequency, participation in brand activities and following influencers, while purchase intention is assessed based on the consumers' reported likelihood to purchase. This hypothesis is supported by the work of Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Schivinski et al. (2016).

H2: The type of content on social media platforms significantly affects consumer engagement with health and wellness brands.

The second gap highlights the lack of exploration into how variation in content types, including visual, textual and promotional formats, affect consumer interactions with e-commerce content. H2 suggests that the type of content on social media platforms has a significant impact on consumer engagement with health and wellness brands. Measurement of this construct involves categorising content into text, images, videos

and promotions and then assessing consumer engagement via likes, comments and shares. This relationship is drawn from findings by De Vries et al. (2012) and Hollebeek et al. (2014).

H3: Interactions on social media platforms positively influence consumer attitudes towards health and wellness brands.

Another significant gap concerns the limited research into how consumer attitudes are shaped through interactions on social media. To investigate this, H3 proposes that interactions on social media platforms have a positive influence on consumer attitudes towards health and wellness brands. Constructs such as the frequency and quality of social media interactions are measured against consumer attitudes, including perceptions of trust, loyalty and positivity. This hypothesis is grounded in the study by Hollebeek et al. (2014).

H4: Higher engagement with wellness brands on social media increases purchase intent.

Furthermore, the direct link between social media engagement and purchase intent has not been sufficiently documented within South African contexts. H4 addresses this by proposing that higher engagement with wellness brands on social media increases purchase intent. Engagement is measured through interaction behaviours such as likes, comments and shares, while purchase intent focuses on the self-reported probability of consumers purchasing a product. This relationship is informed by Schivinski et al. (2016).

H5: Consumer engagement with health and wellness brands on social media enhances brand awareness.

The fifth gap involves insufficient evidence on how engagement directly contributes to brand awareness. H5 posits that consumer engagement with health and wellness brands on social media enhances brand awareness. The constructs measured include levels of consumer interaction and brand awareness metrics such as brand recall and brand recognition. This relationship is supported by Hollebeek et al. (2014).

H6: Consumer engagement with health and wellness brands on social media positively affects product evaluation.

The impact of engagement on product evaluation also remains underexplored, forming the basis of H6, which states that consumer engagement with health and wellness brands on social media positively affects product evaluation. Here, consumer engagement behaviours are measured alongside product evaluations based on perceived quality and value. This hypothesis draws on the work of Schivinski et al. (2016).

H7: Content type influences purchase intentions for health and wellness products.

Another research gap pertains to understanding the influence of content format on purchase decisions. H7 asserts that content type influences purchase intentions for health and wellness products. The constructs involve categorising content type (e.g., text, image and video) and measuring consumers' reported intentions to purchase. This hypothesis is supported by De Vries et al. (2012).

H8: Variation in content types influence brand awareness.

Regarding brand awareness, uncertainty persists about which types of content drive the strongest brand recall. H8 proposes that variation in content types influence brand awareness. Constructs measured include content type variations and brand awareness metrics such as spontaneous and aided recall. This relationship is drawn from Ashley and Tuten (2015).

H9: Content type influences consumers' product evaluations.

The ninth gap identifies that few studies link content type with consumers' perceived product quality. H9 thus suggests that content type influences consumers' product evaluations. Measurement involves the type of content with which consumers engage and their subsequent evaluation of product quality and value, as discussed by Bruhn et al. (2012).

H10: Positive consumer attitudes increase purchase intent.

The role of consumer attitudes as drivers of purchase intent in social media e-commerce is another area lacking sufficient research. H10 proposes that positive consumer

attitudes lead to increased purchase intent. Constructs such as consumer favourability, positivity towards the brand and brand loyalty are assessed in relation to their impact on purchasing decisions. This relationship builds on the TPB outlined by Ajzen (1991).

H11: Consumer attitudes influence product evaluation.

Finally, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between consumer attitudes and product evaluation on social media platforms. H11 posits that consumer attitudes influence product evaluation. Here, consumer attitudes are measured alongside consumers' perceived product quality and value judgements. This hypothesis is informed by the work of Bagozzi et al. (1999).

2.5 Conclusion of the literature review

The literature review underscores the significant influence of social media on consumer behaviour, particularly in the e-commerce landscape. While extensive research exists globally, the unique dynamics within South Africa's e-commerce sector, especially concerning dominant platforms such as Facebook, remain underexplored. This chapter highlighted the potential of these platforms for driving e-commerce growth, despite their current underutilisation or their being misunderstood in this context.

The review examined the multifaceted relationship between social media and consumer behaviour, drawing on established marketing frameworks and theoretical models, including the TPB, the ELM and SIT. It explored how social media platforms, engagement strategies and content types can impact brand awareness, product evaluation and purchase intent. It also acknowledged potential negative consequences, such as privacy concerns and information overload.

The chapter concluded by proposing a conceptual framework that hypothesises a positive relationship between social media usage, e-commerce behaviour and purchase intent in South Africa, specifically for the health and wellness product category. This relationship is moderated by content types and engagement strategies. The framework integrates theoretical constructs to analyse how factors such as attitudes, norms and social identity interact to influence purchase intent.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research adopted a quantitative approach to examine the impact of social media on e-commerce consumer behaviour in South Africa, with a specific focus on the health and wellness product category. The quantitative approach is appropriate as it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data to determine the impact of social media platforms on consumer behaviour within a specific product category. This method allows for the statistical testing of hypotheses and the generalisation of findings to a larger population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

This study is positioned within a positivist research paradigm, which assumes that reality can be observed, measured and modelled using objective, quantifiable indicators. In line with positivism, the study relies on a structured survey, standardised measurement scales and statistical modelling (SEM) to test hypothesised relationships between social media usage, engagement, content type and consumer outcomes. This paradigm is appropriate because the aim is to identify and quantify causal patterns in consumer responses to wellness-related social media e-commerce rather than to generate interpretive, qualitative insights (Saunders et al., 2023).

3.2 Research design

This study employed a descriptive correlational design. Such a design is appropriate for examining the relationships between social media usage, e-commerce behaviour and purchase intent within the health and wellness product category. The quantitative approach enabled the collection and analysis of numerical data, allowing for the statistical testing of hypotheses and the generalisation of findings to a larger population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.3 Data collection methods

Data were collected through an online survey hosted on Qualtrics. The survey was distributed to participants through LinkedIn and WhatsApp, platforms that are both integral to the research topic and widely used in South Africa. Clear instructions and informed consent were provided to ensure participant understanding and ethical

compliance. Data cleaning and validation procedures were implemented to ensure data quality and accuracy.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

The population for this study consisted of South African consumers who had made at least one online purchase in the past six months. This ensured relevance to the e-commerce context, particularly in relation to social media usage. The sampling frame was developed from a panel of online survey respondents from LinkedIn and WhatsApp.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who are known to be active e-commerce consumers. Following this, a snowball sampling technique was employed, where initial participants were asked to refer other e-commerce consumers within their networks. This approach is effective for reaching a broader target population, particularly in a digital context where WhatsApp is widely used for communication and referrals (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample size was 190 participants.

3.5 Research instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire, comprising closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items, along with demographic questions. Established scales from prior research were adapted and validated to measure constructs such as social media usage, e-commerce behaviour and purchase intent in the South African context. The use of validated scales enhances the reliability and validity of the instrument (Hofstee, 2006). The questionnaire was designed with the specific research objectives in mind and structured as follows:

Section 1: Introduction: Provides context, outlining the purpose of the research and assuring participants of their confidentiality, which is crucial for ethical compliance and honest responses.

Section 2: Demographic information: This section captures basic demographic data, including age, gender, location, income level, education and frequency of social media use. These variables are critical for segmenting respondents and identifying patterns across different consumer groups.

Section 3: Questionnaire items: Section 3 contained the construct items. Each construct (engagement strategies, content type, consumer attitudes, purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation) was measured using three-point Likert-type items adapted from established scales in social media and consumer-behaviour research (e.g., De Vries et al., 2012; Schivinski et al., 2016; Ajzen, 1991). Wording was tailored to the South African wellness context (e.g., "social media adverts influence my wellness product decisions") while preserving the original conceptual meaning. A detailed item list by construct is provided in Appendix A.

Section 4: Conclusion: Expresses gratitude for participation, reinforcing the importance of the respondents' contribution to the research.

3.6 Data analysis strategies and interpretation

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarise and describe the sample characteristics and key variables. The data analysis process started with extracting and initially coding responses in SPSS and SmartPLS were then used to understand each variable's characteristics through descriptive statistical analysis, specifically calculating the mean and standard deviation for each factor. Because multiple variables were analysed together, a multivariate analysis approach was employed. The study utilized Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) which encompassed both Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Path Modelling. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to explore more complex causal relationships between these variables, as it is particularly suited for examining the interactions between multiple variables (Ochara, 2023).

3.7 Limitations

The study has potential limitations due to the cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time and may limit the ability to establish causality. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys may introduce biases,

such as social desirability bias or inaccuracies in recall. Furthermore, the generalisability of the findings may be limited to the specific context of South African e-commerce consumers, especially since platform-specific trends (e.g., WhatsApp's unique usage in South Africa) may not be as prevalent in other regions.

3.8 Quality assurance

This research primarily employed a quantitative approach, thus emphasising the concepts of validity and reliability to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.8.1 External validity or transferability

External validity was enhanced through careful sampling to ensure a representative sample of South African e-commerce consumers, particularly those who are active on social media. Maintaining high standards of validity and reliability is critical for the trustworthiness and generalisability of the findings (Lissitz, 2009).

3.8.2 Internal validity or credibility

The study addressed internal validity through the use of a rigorous research design, validated measurement scales and control for potentially confounding variables. Maintaining high standards of validity and reliability is critical for the trustworthiness and generalisability of the findings (Lissitz, 2009).

3.8.3 Reliability or dependability

The reliability of the measurement scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring internal consistency and stability across measurements. Maintaining high standards of validity and reliability is critical for the trustworthiness and generalisability of the findings (Lissitz, 2009).

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Participants were provided with an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation and their rights regarding data confidentiality. Anonymity was maintained and all personal data were securely stored and used solely for research

purposes. The research adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the relevant academic institutions and professional bodies (Saunders et al., 2023).

This methodology outlined a comprehensive quantitative approach tailored to explore the impact of social media on e-commerce consumer behaviour in South Africa. The proposed research design, sampling methods and data analysis strategies ensured that robust and meaningful insights were generated to address the gaps identified in the literature, contributing both to academic knowledge and the practical application of social media strategies for South African businesses. Table 3.1 presents the consistency table applicable to the study.

The survey data were collected using a Qualtrics online questionnaire to ensure secure and efficient data capture. All data were stored in password-protected electronic folders accessible only to the researcher and the academic supervisor. In compliance with Wits University ethical guidelines, the raw datasets will be retained for a period of two years for verification purposes and subsequently permanently deleted from all storage devices to maintain participant confidentiality and data integrity.

Table 3.1: **Consistency table**

RQ #	Research question	Research objectives #	Proposition/ Hypothesis	Data collection detail
1	How do social media platforms and content types influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions for e-commerce products in South Africa?	Examine how social media and the type of content shared (visual, informative, etc.) affect consumer purchase decisions.	H1, H2, H7, H10	Q1 (platform usage), Q9 (engagement), Q10 (content type), Q14 (promotions), Q18 (attitudes)
2	To what extent does engagement with e-commerce brands on social media influence consumer attitudes?	Investigate the influence of social media brand interaction on consumer attitudes in South Africa.	H3, H11	Q17 (attitudes), Q19 (product evaluation linked to attitude)
3	How does consumer engagement with e-commerce brands on social media affect purchase intent?	Identify which social media engagement strategies drive intention to purchase wellness products.	H1, H4	Q9 (influencer, ads, UGC), Q11 (intent), Q18_1 (attitudinal link)
4	What role does content type (e.g., promotional, review-based and educational) play in enhancing brand awareness?	Assess the role of content format in increasing the visibility and recall of wellness brands.	H5, H8	Q12 (brand recall), Q15 (visual vs textual influence on awareness)
5	How does content type (e.g., videos, images and reviews) influence consumer product evaluation?	Examine how consumers assess the quality and reliability of wellness products based on content format.	H6, H9	Q13 (evaluation), Q16 (judgement based on visual/review), Q19_1–Q19_3 (attitude-aligned evaluation)

6	How does increasing reliance on social media affect e-commerce growth in the wellness sector in South Africa?	Explore how social media engagement and brand trust influence broader behavioural and market-level outcomes.	H10, H11	Q18 (attitude-purchase link), Q19 (trust and perceived value)

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. A total of 243 survey responses were initially collected. Of these, 28 were marked as 'in progress' and excluded from analysis. An additional ten responses gathered between 29 and 30 April were used for the pilot study and therefore omitted from the final dataset. Furthermore, 43 incomplete responses (with less than 50% completion) were removed. After applying these criteria, 190 fully completed and valid responses were retained for the main analysis.

The data analysis was conducted using both SPSS and SmartPLS. This chapter begins with a descriptive overview of the respondents' demographic profiles, which is followed by an outline of the measurement scales used in the study. Reliability and validity assessments are then discussed. This is followed by the presentation of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path modelling (PM) results. Subsequently, the outcomes of the hypotheses tested are reviewed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

The following section provides a detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

4.2 Descriptive statistics: Demographic profile

4.2.1 Age distribution

The majority of respondents were aged between 25 and 34 years (43%) and 35 and 44 years (38%)**,** accounting for 81% of the sample (Figure 4.1). Younger adults aged 18–24 years comprised 9%**,** while older segments, including 45–54 years (8%) and 55+ years (2%), were less represented.

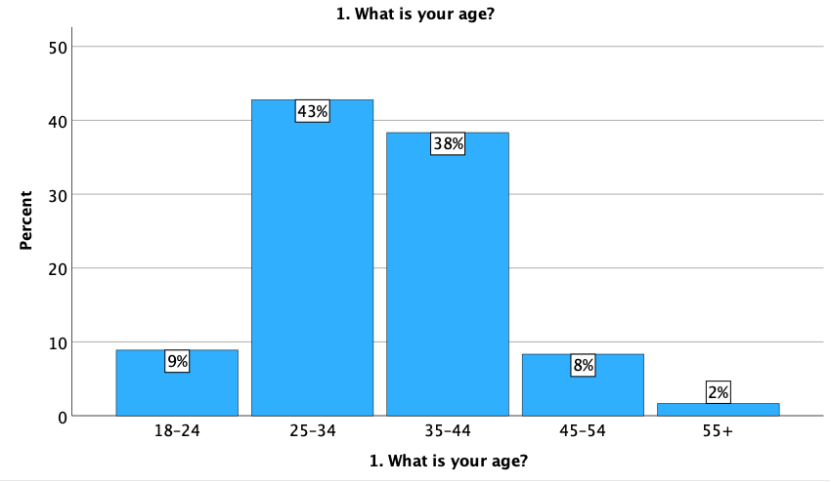


Figure 4.1: Age distribution

These findings align with global patterns indicating that individuals in their mid-20s to early 40s are the most digitally active and receptive to social media marketing. This group is likely to be more responsive to influencer endorsements, visual storytelling and interactive wellness-related content. E-commerce strategies should, therefore, focus on mobile-optimised platforms and curated content appealing to mid-career professionals seeking self-care solutions.

4.2.2 Gender distribution

The gender breakdown reveals that 71% of respondents identified as female**,** 28% as male and 1% as other or preferred not to disclose their gender (Figure 4.2).

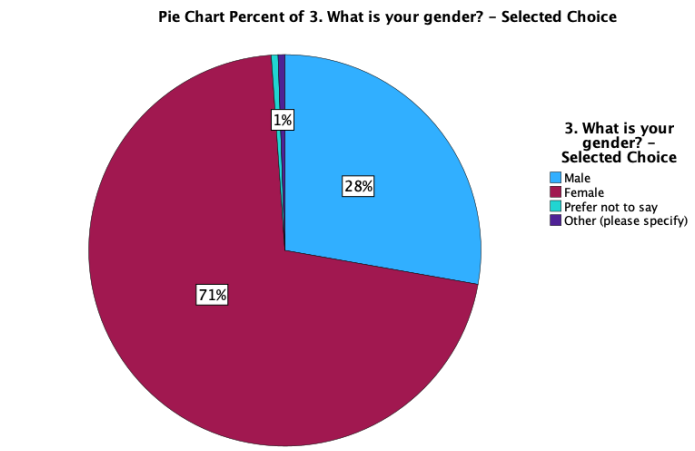


Figure 4.2: Gender distribution

The significant female majority reflects established trends in the wellness and self-care market, where women are typically more engaged in online product discovery and purchasing. This demographic is more likely to be influenced by peer reviews, emotional branding and social proof. Marketing strategies should therefore prioritise female-centred messaging and collaborate with influencers who resonate with this audience.

4.2.3 Education level

Respondents demonstrated high levels of educational attainment, with 41% holding a postgraduate degree and 22% each having completed either a diploma, certificate or an undergraduate degree (Figure 4.3). Just 11% had only finished high school and 4% chose not to disclose their education level.

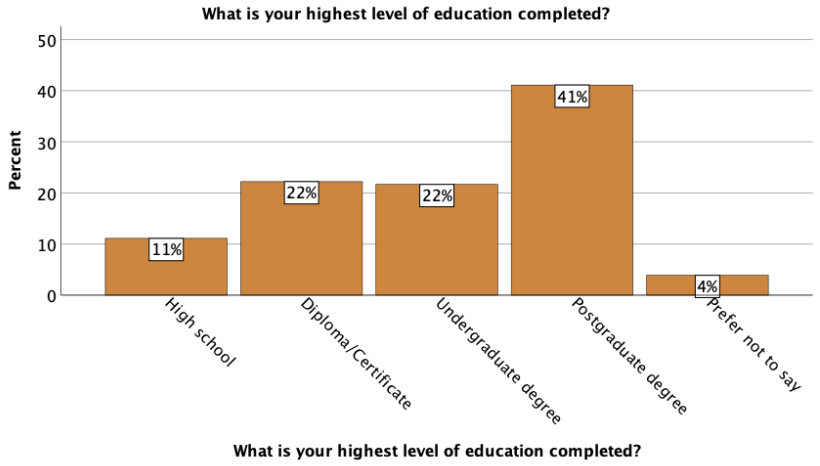


Figure 4.3: Education level

A well-educated consumer base implies that respondents may value transparency, evidence-based product claims and expert credibility. These consumers are likely to engage with detailed product information and educational content, making it crucial for wellness brands to incorporate professional expertise, ingredient transparency and data-driven messaging into their campaigns.

4.2.4 Online shopping frequency

The frequency of online shopping was relatively low, with 47% of respondents indicating that they rarely shop online, followed by 42% who shop online monthly (Figure 4.4). Only 9% reported weekly purchases and a mere 1% shop daily.



Figure 4.4: Online shopping frequency

These figures suggest that although digital awareness is high, actual e-commerce conversion remains limited, possibly due to logistical barriers, cost concerns or preference for in-store purchases. However, the significant share of monthly shoppers indicates a growing segment of consumers open to regular online transactions. Brands may need to focus on building trust, offering affordable options and communicating clear value to encourage more frequent purchases.

4.2.5 Province of residence

Most respondents resided in Gauteng (48%) and KwaZulu-Natal (44%), followed by smaller representations from the Western Cape (4%), Mpumalanga (2%), Limpopo (1%) and North West (1%) (Figure 4.5).

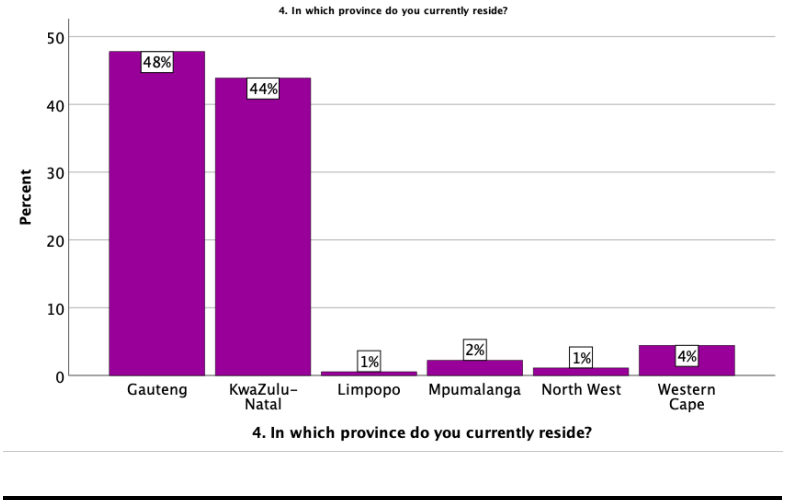


Figure 4.5: Province of residence

The concentration of responses from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal reflects their urbanised, economically active populations and higher access to digital infrastructure. Marketing strategies should be tailored for urban audiences, potentially through region-specific campaigns, faster fulfilment solutions and culturally resonant messaging aligned with metropolitan consumer lifestyles.

4.2.6 Household income

The household income distribution revealed that the most significant segments earned between R10,000 and R25,000 (27%) and less than R10,000 (25%) per month (Figure 4.6). An additional 18% reported income between R35,001 and R50,000, while 12% earned R25,001 and R35,000. A smaller portion reported higher incomes, with 8% each in the R50,001–R75,000 and R100,000+ brackets and 3% in the R75,001–R100,000 range.

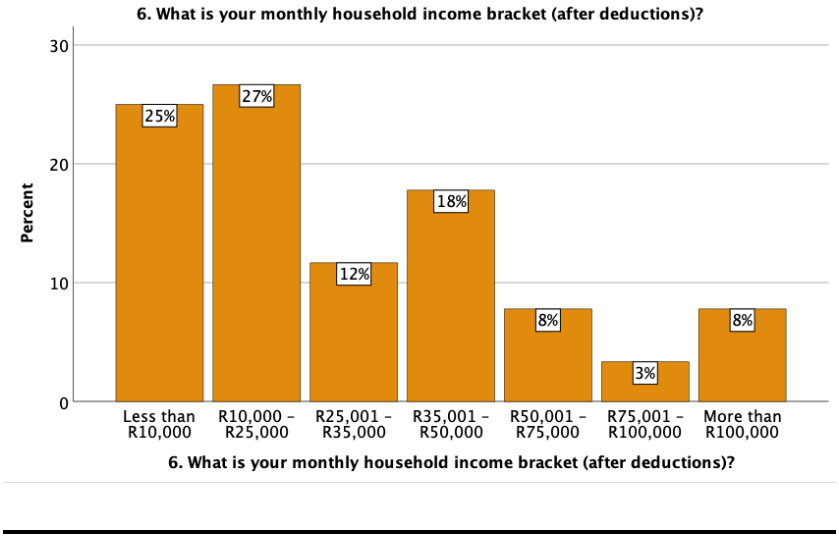


Figure 4.6: Household income

The income profile suggests a predominantly middle-to-lower-income audience, who may be highly price-sensitive. Marketing strategies should highlight affordability, long-term value and bundle pricing. Brands targeting this demographic should also consider flexible payment options and promotions to improve accessibility to wellness products.

4.2.7 Social media platforms used

The most frequently used platforms were WhatsApp (86.7%), TikTok (55.0%) and Facebook (50.6%), followed by Instagram (44.4%) and YouTube (41.1%) (Figure 4.7). Twitter/X was used by 20.6%, while use on other platforms was negligible (1.7%).

Social Media Platforms Used Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Social Media Platforms Used[a]	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice Facebook	91	16.9%	50.6%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice TikTok	99	18.3%	55.0%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice WhatsApp	156	28.9%	86.7%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice Instagram	80	14.8%	44.4%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice Twitter/X	37	6.9%	20.6%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice YouTube	74	13.7%	41.1%
	7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) - Selected Choice Other (please specify)	3	0.6%	1.7%
Total		540	100.0%	300.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Figure 4.7: Social media platforms used

WhatsApp's dominance indicates the importance of conversational marketing and community-based engagement. TikTok's growing usage supports the trend towards short-form, influencer-led video content. Facebook and Instagram remain relevant for visual promotions, while YouTube is ideal for in-depth product education. Given the platform diversity, an integrated omnichannel strategy is recommended, leveraging each platform's strengths to drive purchase intent, brand awareness and product evaluation.

The demographic analysis reveals a predominantly female**,** urban**,** highly educated and mid-income consumer base with growing social media exposure but varying levels of online purchasing behaviour. These characteristics align closely with the research context, validating the relevance of studying social media's influence on e-commerce engagement, particularly in the health and wellness domain. The findings also provide actionable insights for designing targeted social media campaigns that align with consumer preferences and demographic realities.

4.3 Descriptive statistics: Measurement scale

This section illustrates the results from the three-point Likert scales collected from the respondents across the variable. The results are presented in accordance with the literature review and hypothesis statements.

4.3.1 Social media and engagement strategies

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.8) shows that UGC (Q9_2) received the highest agreement (21%), indicating strong consumer trust in peer-driven social proof. This is supported by the highest mean score (M = 2.55, SD = 0.66), reflecting a broad consensus that UGC plays a persuasive role in influencing purchase decisions (Table 4.1). Social media advertising (Q9_3) had a moderate agreement rate (16%) and a neutral response of 12%, aligned with its intermediate average rating (M = 2.31, SD = 0.74). Influencer promotions (Q9_1), on the other hand, recorded the lowest agreement (9%) and the highest neutrality (15%), which is consistent with its lowest mean score (M = 1.98, SD = 0.76), suggesting more scepticism or ambivalence towards influencer-driven strategies.

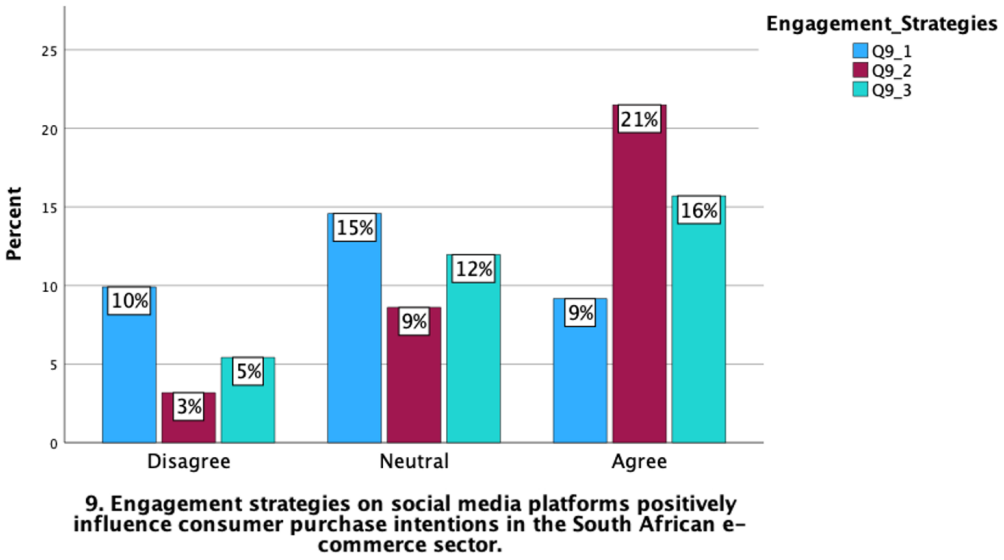


Figure 4.8: Social media and engagement strategies

Table 4.1: Social media engagement strategy items

Social media → Engagement strategy items (Q9)	Mean	Std. dev.
Influencer promotions increase purchase likelihood (Q9_1)	1.98	0.76
Trust in user-generated content (Q9_2)	2.55	0.66
Social media ads influence wellness product decisions (Q9_3)	2.31	0.74

These findings are consistent with the literature (De Veirman et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2020), which highlights that while influencers can generate initial attention, trust and authenticity are more effectively fostered through UGC. This aligns with the growing consumer demand for peer validation over commercial endorsement

4.3.2 Social media and content type

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.9) indicates that visual content (Q10_1) received the highest agreement (26%), highlighting its effectiveness in capturing consumer attention. This is supported by the highest mean score (M = 2.72, SD = 0.57), suggesting a strong overall preference for visual formats (Table 4.2). Promotional content (Q10_2) had a moderate agreement rate (16%) and a neutral response of 13%, consistent with its average rating (M = 2.36, SD = 0.69). Textual content (Q10_3) had the lowest agreement (12%) and the highest neutrality (15%), reflected in its lower mean score (M = 2.21, SD = 0.70).

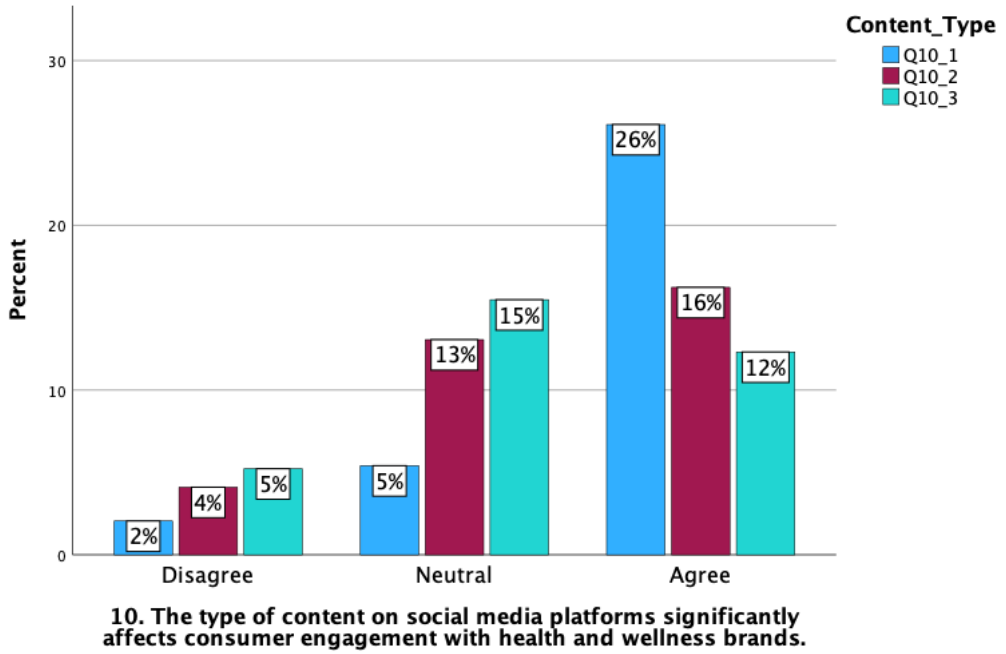


Figure 4.9: Social media and content type

Table 4.2: Social media content type items

Social media → Content type items (Q10)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
Visual content captures attention (Q10_1)	2.72	0.57
Promotional content motivates engagement (Q10_2)	2.36	0.69
Textual content influences perception (Q10_3)	2.21	0.70

These findings support the literature (Batra et al., 2014; Reinikainen et al., 2018), which emphasises that visual content is more effective in stimulating attention and engagement on social media, whereas promotional and textual formats tend to produce more passive or neutral responses from consumers.

4.3.3 Social media and consumer attitudes

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.10) indicates that the statement *Brand trust increases* (Q11_2) received the highest agreement (25%), underscoring the strong influence of social media on consumer trust in wellness brands. This is supported by the highest mean score (M = 2.74, SD = 0.49), suggesting consistent positive sentiment (Table 4.3). The item *Improves brand perception* (Q11_1) followed closely with 21% agreement and a solid mean rating (M = 2.55, SD = 0.65). The statement *Feel connected to brands*

(Q11_3) had slightly lower agreement (18%) and the highest neutrality (11%), reflected in the lower mean score (M = 2.43, SD = 0.69).

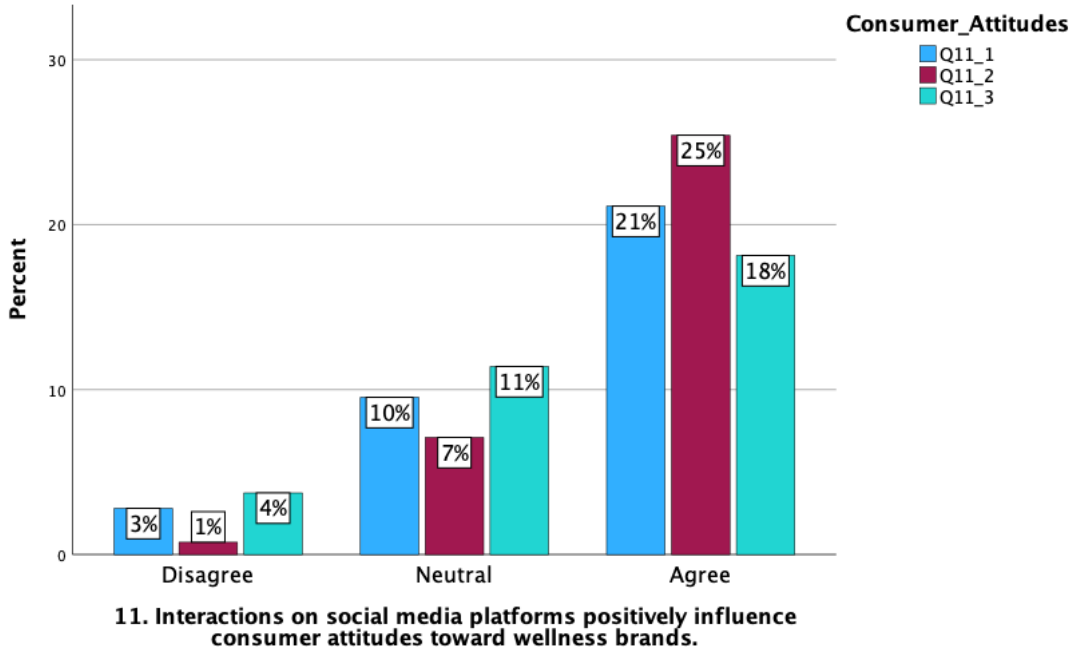


Figure 4.10: Social media and consumer attitudes

Table 4.3: Social media consumer attitude items

Social media → Consumer attitude items (Q11)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
Improves brand perception (Q11_1)	2.55	0.65
Brand trust increases (Q11_2)	2.74	0.49
Feel connected to brands (Q11_3)	2.43	0.69

These findings align with existing literature (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Habibi et al., 2013), which emphasises that authentic brand interactions on social media can foster trust and positive consumer attitudes. The relatively lower connection reported in Q11_3 may indicate a need for more in-depth emotional or community-driven engagement strategies.

4.3.4 Engagement strategies and purchase intention

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.11) indicates that the statement *More likely to buy from engaged brands* (Q12_1) received the highest agreement (22%), reflecting consumers' purchase alignment with socially active wellness brands. This is supported by the

highest mean score (M = 2.59, SD = 0.63), indicating consistent agreement across respondents (Table 4.4). The item *Regular interaction increases intent* (Q12_2) followed closely with 21% agreement and a mean of 2.54 (SD = 0.68), suggesting that habitual engagement reinforces intent. The statement *Engagement influences buying* (Q12_3) had a lower agreement rate (16%) and the highest neutrality (12%), with a corresponding mean of 2.33 (SD = 0.73).

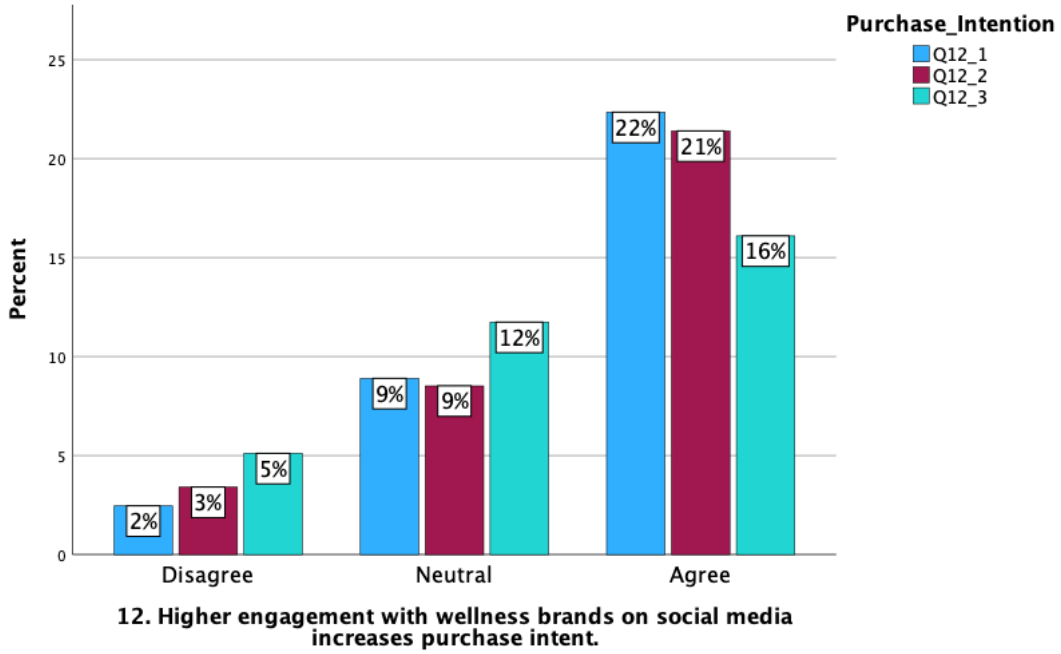


Figure 4.11: Engagement strategies and purchase intention

Table 4.4: Engagement strategies purchase intention items

Engagement strategies → Purchase intention items (Q12)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
More likely to buy from engaged brands (Q12_1)	2.59	0.63
Regular interaction increases intent (Q12_2)	2.54	0.68
Engagement influences buying (Q12_3)	2.33	0.73

These findings align with the literature (Dessart et al., 2015; Hudson et al., 2016), which asserts that interactive brand-consumer relationships on social platforms drive stronger purchase behaviour, especially when engagement is frequent and relational rather than transactional.

4.3.5 Engagement strategies and brand awareness

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.12) indicates that *Recognition after interaction* (Q13_3) received the highest agreement (28%), followed closely by *Engagement increases product awareness* (Q13_2) at 27%. These results emphasise the role of interaction in reinforcing brand recognition and product familiarity. These insights are supported by the highest mean scores: Q13_3 (M = 2.81, SD = 0.49) and Q13_2 (M = 2.76, SD = 0.52), indicating strong and consistent agreement among respondents (Table 4.5). *Brand recall* on social media (Q13_1) had a slightly lower agreement (21%) and the highest neutrality (8%), which is reflected in its comparatively lower mean (M = 2.48, SD = 0.73).

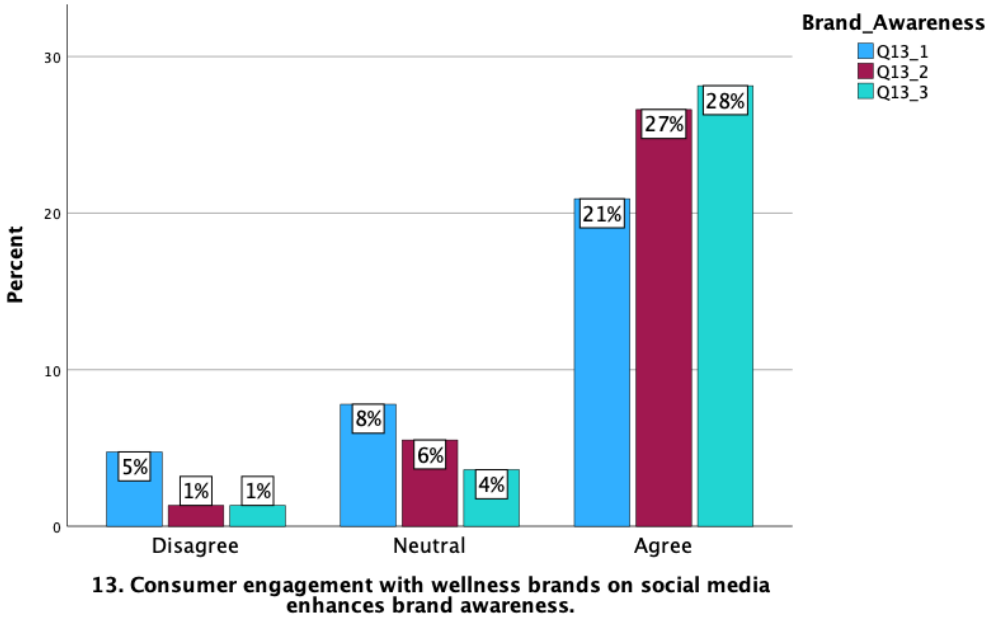


Figure 4.12: Engagement strategies and brand awareness

Table 4.5: Engagement strategies and brand awareness items

Engagement strategies → Brand awareness items (Q13)	Mean	Std. dev.
Recall brands on social media (Q13_1)	2.48	0.73
Engagement increases product awareness (Q13_2)	2.76	0.52
Recognition after interaction (Q13_3)	2.81	0.49

These findings align with existing literature (Bruhn et al., 2012; Keller, 2009), which underscores that active engagement enhances top-of-mind awareness and helps

consumers identify and remember wellness brands more effectively in crowded digital spaces.

4.3.6 Engagement strategies and product evaluation

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.13) indicates that *Engagement provides useful product information* (Q14_2) received the highest agreement (26%), underscoring its role in facilitating informed product decisions. This is reinforced by the highest mean score (M = 2.76, SD = 0.47), suggesting consistent consumer agreement (Table 4.6). *Social media helps assess product quality* (Q14_1) showed moderate agreement (18%) and a notable neutral rate (11%), aligning with its mean of 2.41 (SD = 0.71). In contrast, *Relying on engagement to evaluate products* (Q14_3) had the lowest agreement (15%) and the highest neutrality (13%), reflected in its lower mean (M = 2.27, SD = 0.74).

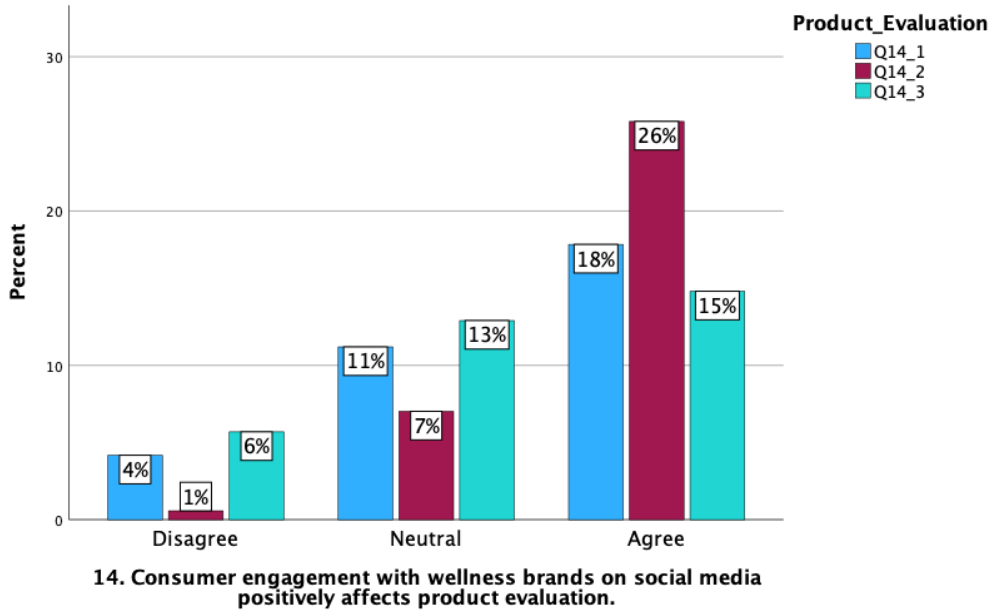


Figure 4.13: Engagement strategies and product evaluation

Table 4.6: Engagement strategies and product evaluation items

Engagement strategies → Product evaluation items (Q14)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
Social media helps assess product quality (Q14_1)	2.41	0.71
Engagement provides useful product information (Q14_2)	2.76	0.47
Rely on engagement to evaluate products (Q14_3)	2.27	0.74

These findings support existing literature (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Erkan & Evans, 2016), which suggests that while consumers value product information shared via social platforms, their trust depends on perceived authenticity and source credibility. Active engagement enhances perceived informativeness, thereby positively influencing product evaluations.

4.3.7 Content type and purchase intention

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.14) indicates that W*ritten reviews affect willingness to buy* (Q15_3) received the highest agreement (25%), demonstrating the persuasive power of peer-generated content in driving purchase intent. This is further confirmed by the highest mean score (M = 2.71, SD = 0.55), reflecting consistent consumer trust in written reviews (Table 4.7). *High-quality visuals influence decisions* (Q15_2) followed with an agreement rate of 22% and a mean score 2.54 (SD = 0.70), indicating strong visual appeal. *Promotional posts* (Q15_1) showed the lowest agreement (18%) and the highest neutrality (11%), consistent with its comparatively lower mean (M = 2.39, SD = 0.73).

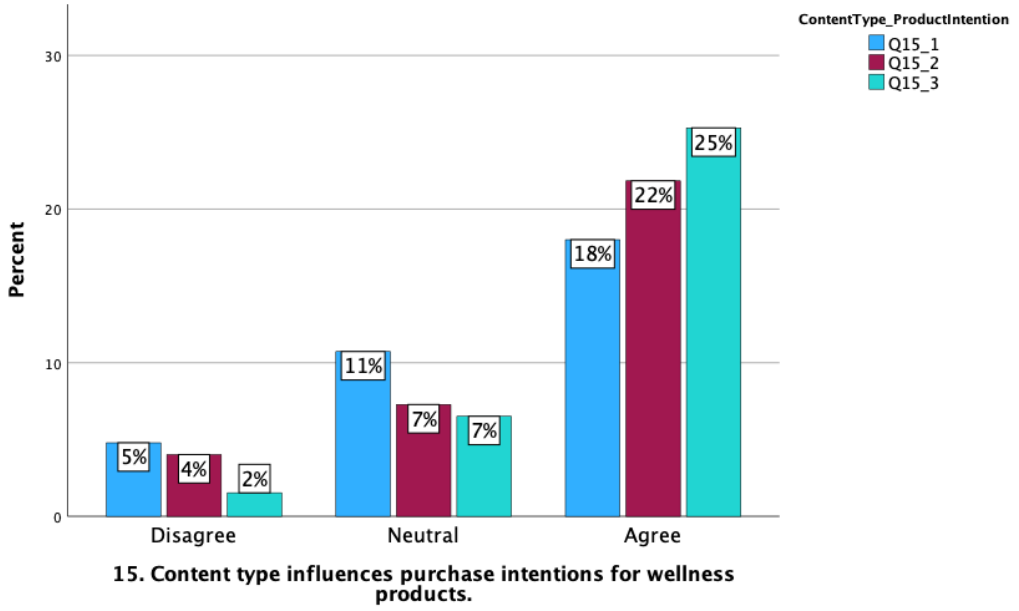


Figure 4.14: Content type and purchase intention

Table 4.7: Content type and purchase intention items

Content type → Purchase intention items (Q15)	Mean	Std. dev.
Promotional posts increase purchase intent (Q15_1)	2.39	0.73
High-quality visuals influence decisions (Q15_2)	2.54	0.70
Written reviews affect willingness to buy (Q15_3)	2.71	0.55

These results are in line with previous findings (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Smith et al., 2007), which emphasise that user-generated reviews and visual cues enhance purchase decisions more effectively than promotional content alone. The data suggest that consumers are more likely to act on credible, peer-endorsed formats than on branded promotions.

4.3.8 Content type and brand awareness

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.15) reveals that *Informative content* (Q16_3) received the highest agreement (29%), indicating its significant role in enhancing consumer understanding of wellness brands. This is supported by the highest mean score (M = 2.86, SD = 0.38), reflecting a strong consumer preference for educational and explanatory material (Table 4.8). *Visual content* (Q16_1) followed with 27% agreement and a solid average score (M = 2.77, SD = 0.48), emphasising its power in improving brand recall. *Promotional content* (Q16_2) had slightly lower agreement (24%) but still maintained a high mean (M = 2.69, SD = 0.53), showing that while effective, it may not be as impactful as more informative formats.

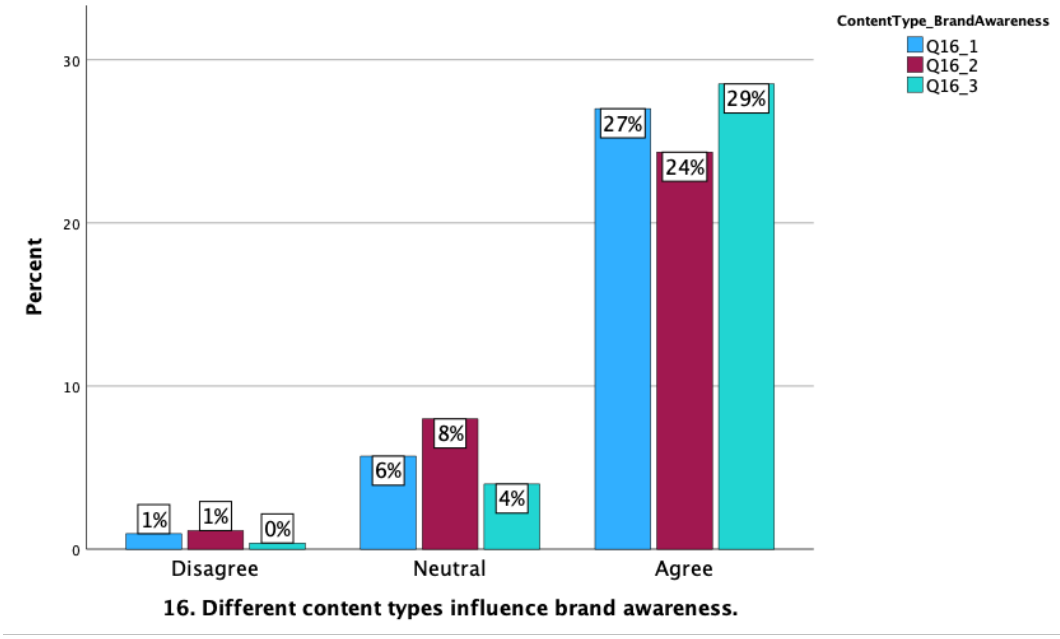


Figure 4.15: Content type and brand awareness

Table 4.8: Content type and brand awareness items

Content type → Brand awareness items (Q16)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
Visual content improves brand recall (Q16_1)	2.77	0.48
Promotional content improves brand recognition (Q16_2)	2.69	0.53
Informative content improves brand understanding (Q16_3)	2.86	0.38

These findings align with prior literature (Ashley & Tuten, 2015), which emphasises the complementary role of variation in content types in building brand awareness. Informative content, in particular, is recognised for its ability to foster deeper brand understanding and recall.

4.3.9 Content type and product evaluation

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.16) indicates that text feedback (Q17_2) received the highest level of agreement (20%), suggesting its importance in shaping consumer perceptions of product durability. This aligns with the highest mean score (M = 2.51, SD = 0.66), indicating that textual reviews are especially valued when assessing product quality (Table 4.9). *Visual content* (Q17_1) followed closely with 18% agreement and a mean score of 2.46 (SD = 0.65), underscoring its supportive role in helping consumers evaluate product attributes. *Promotional content* (Q17_3) had the lowest agreement

(16%) and the lowest mean score (M = 2.32, SD = 0.75), suggesting it is perceived as less helpful in assessing product quality.

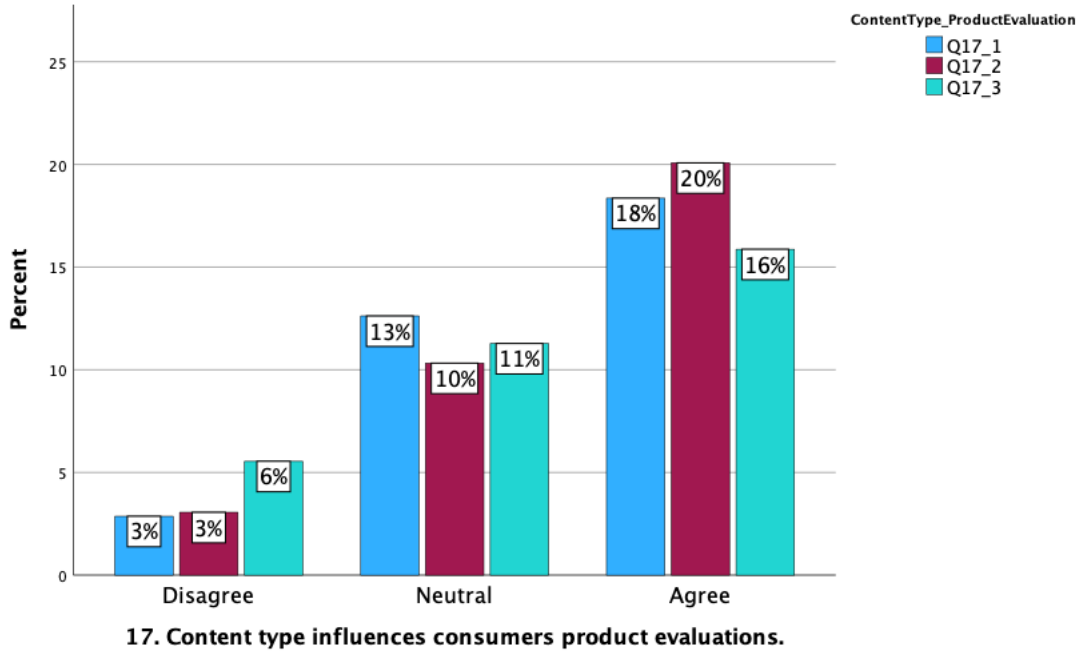


Figure 4.16: Content type and product evaluation

Table 4.9: Content type and product evaluation items

Content type → Product evaluation items (Q17)	Mean	Std. dev.
Visuals help assess product quality (Q17_1)	2.46	0.65
Text feedback informs view of durability (Q17_2)	2.51	0.66
Promotions less helpful for quality judgement (Q17_3)	2.32	0.75

These findings are consistent with the literature by Chen et al. (2021) which highlight that consumers rely more on authentic and descriptive content, such as reviews and visuals, when evaluating products, while promotional materials are often viewed as biased or less informative.

4.3.10 Consumer attitudes and purchase intention

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.17) indicates that positive opinions towards brands (Q18_1) received the highest agreement (28%), demonstrating their strong role in driving purchase intent. This is reinforced by the highest mean score (M = 2.81, SD =

0.45), suggesting that favourable attitudes significantly increase consumers' willingness to buy (Table 4.10). Social feedback (Q18_2) followed with 21% agreement and a score of 2.56 (SD = 0.63), indicating that what others say about a brand can shape consumer decisions. Emotional connection (Q18_3) had a slightly lower agreement rate (20%) and a score of 2.45 (SD = 0.72), yet still demonstrated meaningful influence.

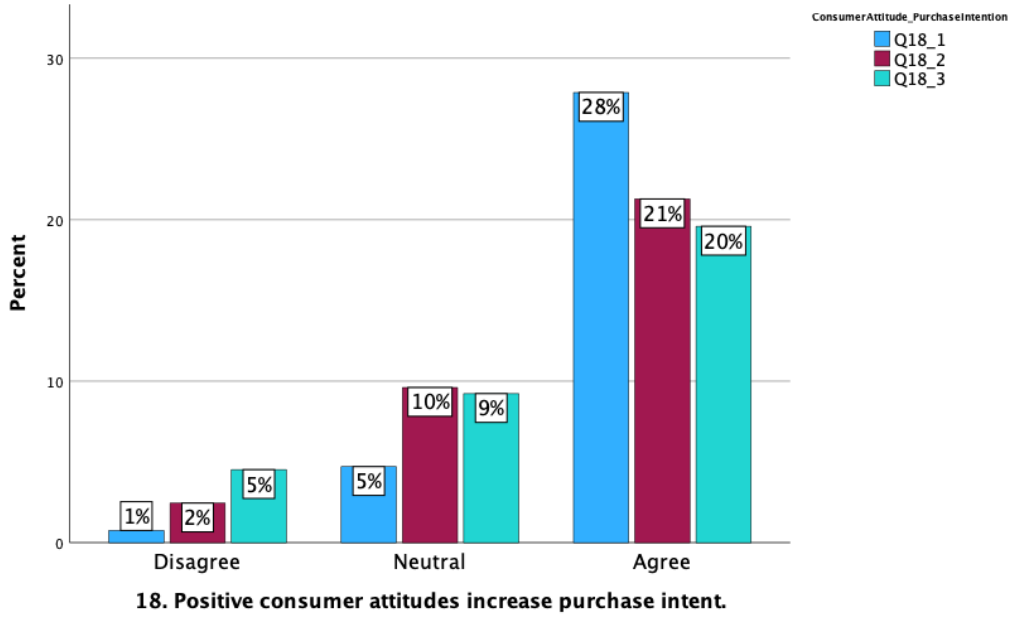


Figure 4.17: Consumer attitude and purchase intention

Table 4.10: Consumer attitude and purchase intention items

Consumer attitude → Purchase intention items (Q18)	Mean	Std. dev.
Positive opinion increases purchase (Q18_1)	2.81	0.45
Social feedback shapes brand attitude (Q18_2)	2.56	0.63
Emotional connection influences purchase decision (Q18_3)	2.45	0.72

These findings align with previous research (e.g., Erdoğmuş & Cicek, 2012; Laroche et al., 2013), which emphasises that positive consumer attitudes – shaped through emotion, opinion and peer interaction – play a pivotal role in purchase behaviour on social media platforms.

4.3.11 Consumer attitudes and product evaluation

The grouped bar chart (Figure 4.18) shows that positive attitudes towards a brand's quality (Q19_1) received the highest agreement rate (24%), indicating that consumer

sentiment significantly shapes product perception. This is reinforced by the highest mean score (M = 2.65, SD = 0.59), suggesting that favourable attitudes lead to enhanced evaluations of product quality (Table 4.11). Perceived alignment between expectations and brand sentiment (Q19_2) had a 21% agreement and a score of 2.57 (SD = 0.60), while the willingness to give a brand the benefit of the doubt (Q19_3) followed closely with 23% agreement and a score of 2.63 (SD = 0.60).

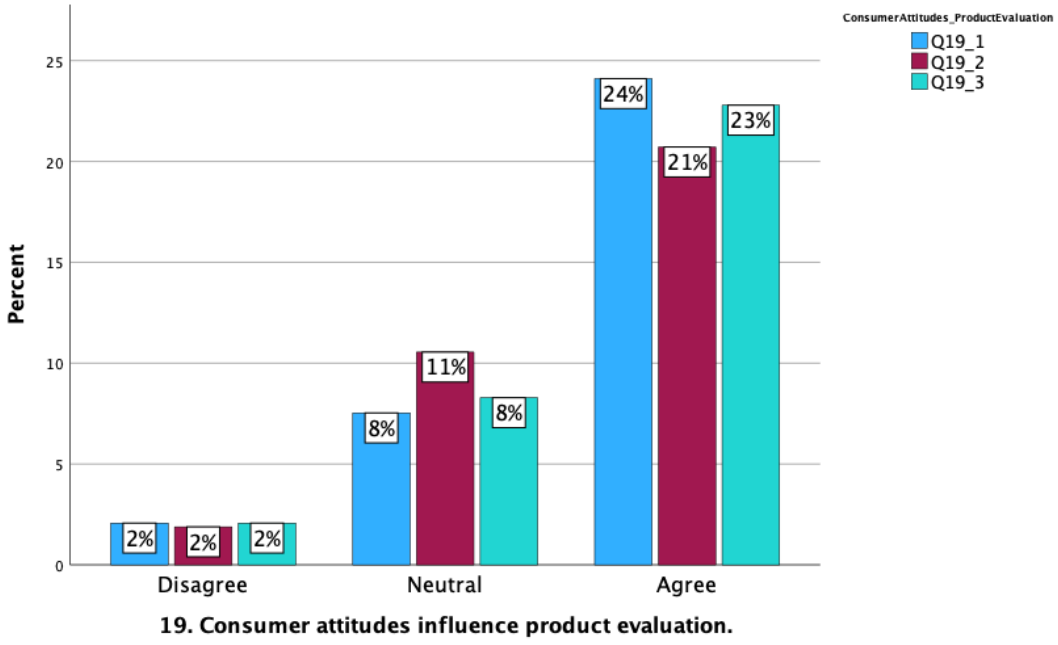


Figure 4.18: Consumer attitudes and product evaluation

Table 4.11: Consumer attitudes and product evaluation items

Consumer attitude → Product evaluation items (Q19)	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
Positive attitude increases quality perception (Q19_1)	2.65	0.59
Expectation aligns with brand feeling (Q19_2)	2.57	0.60
Benefit of doubt when liking brand (Q19_3)	2.63	0.60

These findings support the existing literature (Ebrahim, 2020; Hollebeek et al., 2014), which underscores how consumer attitudes, particularly those based on emotions and trust, positively influence perceptions of product reliability, desirability, and overall evaluation.

4.4 Reliability and validity measurement

The following section presents the results of the measurement scales' testing for reliability and validity.

4.4.1 Measurement scale

The measurement scale is presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Measurement scale

Construct	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Engagement strategies		0.653	0.653	0.812	0.592
Q9_1	0.778				
Q9_2	0.714				
Q9_3	0.813				
Content type		0.587	0.604	0.786	0.553
Q10_1	0.675				
Q10_2	0.855				
Q10_3	0.687				
Consumer attitudes		0.706	0.706	0.836	0.630
Q11_1	0.802				
Q11_2	0.768				
Q11_3	0.811				
Brand awareness		0.800	0.812	0.857	0.501
Q13_1	0.640				
Q13_2	0.680				
Q13_3	0.680				
Q16_1	0.767				
Q16_2	0.771				
Q16_3	0.697				
Product evaluation		0.733	0.766	0.805	0.330
Q14_1	0.683				

Construct	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Q14_2	0.671				
Q14_3	0.587				
Q17_1	0.625				
Q17_2	0.605				
Q17_3	0.190				
Q19_1	0.646				
Q19_2	0.601				
Q19_3	0.376				
Purchase intention		0.794	0.811	0.845	0.383
Q12_1	0.745				
Q12_2	0.665				
Q12_3	0.709				
Q15_1	0.587				
Q15_2	0.658				
Q15_3	0.424				
Q18_1	0.525				
Q18_2	0.655				
Q18_3	0.532				

Note: The social media construct (Q8) was excluded from the measurement model as it is a formative (select-all-that-apply) construct not suitable for reflective measurement in SmartPLS. Instead, its influence was assessed descriptively and/or through group comparisons, as it did not meet the requirements for a reflective latent construct.

Cronbach*'s* alpha coefficient

Cronbach's alpha is a widely adopted measure of reliability in the social sciences, serving as a key indicator of internal consistency (Moloi, 2016). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha values for the various constructs ranged from 0.587 to 0.800 (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
Engagement strategies	0.653
Content type	0.587
Consumer attitudes	0.706
Brand awareness	0.800
Product evaluation	0.733
Purchase intention	0.794

While several constructs demonstrated good internal consistency, exceeding the generally recommended threshold of 0.70, it was observed that 'engagement strategies' (0.653) and 'content type' (0.587) yielded alpha values below this conventional benchmark. Such instances of lower reliability, particularly when alpha values fall between 0.60 and 0.70, may be attributable to factors such as the use of a 3-point Likert scale, which can sometimes restrict variability and potentially impact the estimation of internal consistency. Despite these variations, the overall pattern of reliability, with many constructs well above the threshold, generally supports the internal consistency of the measures employed.

Composite reliability

Composite reliability (CR) serves as a critical measure for evaluating the internal consistency of a measurement model (Moloi, 2016). It provides a more robust estimate of reliability compared to Cronbach's alpha, particularly when indicator loadings vary (Moloi, 2016). A strong reliability measure, as suggested by Lee et al., (2015) as cited in Moloi, 2016, typically holds values above 0.80.

In this study, CR was assessed using SmartPLS. The rho_c values for the variables generally ranged from 0.786 to 0.857 (Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Composite reliability coefficients

Construct	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Engagement strategies	0.653	0.812
Content type	0.604	0.786

Construct	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Consumer attitudes	0.706	0.836
Brand awareness	0.812	0.857
Product evaluation	0.766	0.805
Purchase intention	0.811	0.845

Most constructs exhibited strong reliability, with values exceeding the 0.80 threshold. For instance, 'Brand Awareness' registered 0.857, ‘purchase intention’ 0.845, ‘consumer attitudes’ 0.836, ‘engagement strategies’ 0.812 and ‘product evaluation’ 0.805, all indicating robust reliability. While ‘content type’ recorded a value of 0.786, slightly below the 0.80 mark, it remains above the commonly accepted minimum of 0.70 for reliability.

4.4.2 Validity measurement

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs, both empirically and theoretically. It ensures that items designed to measure a particular construct load more strongly on that construct than on other, unrelated constructs (Moloi, 2016). This form of validity is typically evaluated through two primary methods: by examining the average variance extracted (AVE) values and by analysing the inter-construct correlation matrix.

Average variance extracted

The AVE is a crucial measure used to assess the convergent validity of a construct, quantifying the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to the variance due to measurement error. Calculated from the squared factor loadings of a construct's indicators, typically with software such as SmartPLS, the AVE is generally recommended to be 0.50 or higher (Moloi, 2016).

In this study, the AVE estimates for the constructs ranged from approximately 0.331 (product evaluation) to 0.630 (consumer attitudes) (Table 4.15). While product evaluation (0.331) and purchase intent (0.383) recorded AVEs below the 0.50 threshold, it is notable that they still surpassed the more lenient 0.40 threshold suggested by Kuo and Hsu (2001) in specific contexts.

Table 4.15: Average variance extracted coefficients

Constructs	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand awareness	0.501
Consumer attitudes	0.630
Content type	0.553
Engagement strategies	0.592
Product evaluation	0.330
Purchase intent	0.383

Beyond assessing individual construct validity, AVE plays a key role in establishing discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of a construct's AVE must be greater than its correlations with all other constructs. Based on this criterion, brand awareness, consumer attitudes, content type and engagement strategies demonstrated adequate discriminant validity; however, product evaluation and purchase intent did not fully meet this criterion, indicating some empirical overlap with other constructs in the model.

Inter-construct correlation matrix

The inter-construct correlation matrix is a crucial component in evaluating the relationships between latent variables within a research model. It provides insights into the extent to which different constructs are empirically related to one another. While the diagonal elements of this matrix display the square root of the AVE, a key component for assessing discriminant validity via the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the off-diagonal elements represent the actual correlations between the constructs. The results ranged between 0.440 and 0.794 (Table 4.16).

Table 4.16: Inter-construct correlation matrix

Constructs	Brand awareness	Consumer attitudes	Content type	Engagement strategies	Product evaluation	Purchase intent
Brand awareness	**0.707**					
Consumer attitudes	0.621	**0.794**				
Content type	0.564	0.528	**0.744**			
Engagement strategies	0.440	0.515	0.504	**0.769**		
Product evaluation	0.648	0.604	0.550	0.506	**0.575**	
Purchase intent	0.679	0.683	0.578	0.544	0.699	**0.619**

4.4.3 Construct validity

Construct validity is crucial for ensuring that a measurement instrument effectively captures the intended latent variable it aims to measure, primarily assessed through factor loadings for each item within a scale. In this study, the factor loadings, derived from the measurement scale data, ranged from 0.190 (for Q17_3) to 0.855 (for Q10_2). While all observed factor loadings exceeded the stated threshold of 0.05, as mentioned by Fornell and Larcker (1981) in the source text, it is important to note that very low loadings, such as 0.190 for Q17_3 and 0.376 for Q19_3, indicate limited contribution to their respective constructs. Nevertheless, the majority of the factor loadings demonstrated robust relationships, generally contributing to the overall construct validity.

4.5 Confirmatory factor analysis

A CFA was conducted to validate the measurement model and assess the model fit. The fit indices were all within acceptable thresholds, indicating a strong model fit (Figure 4.19 and Table 4.17).

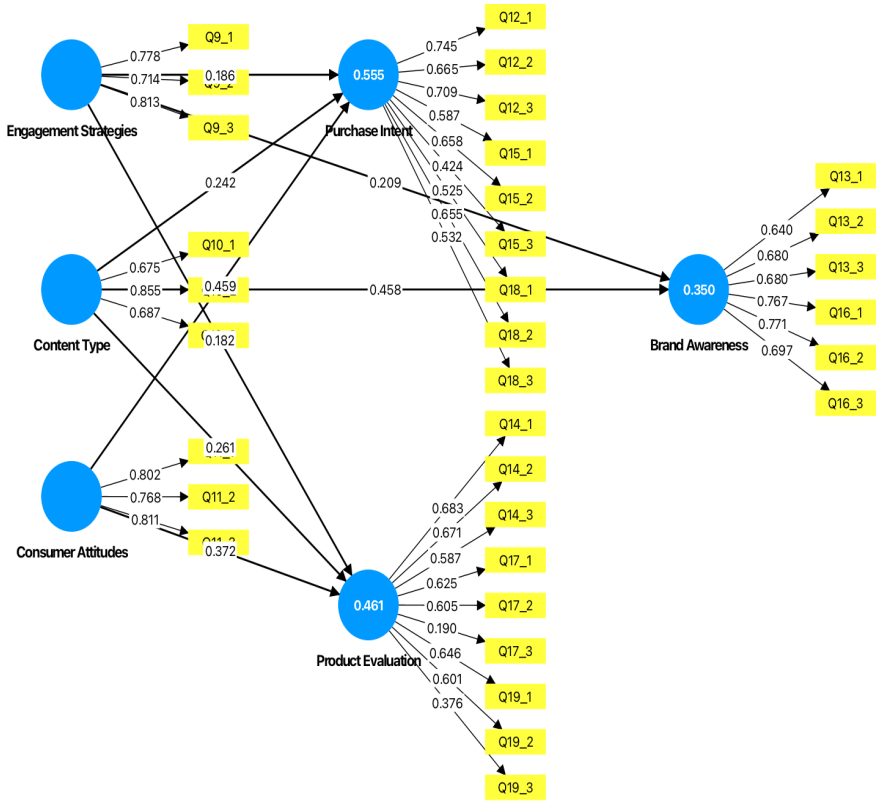


Figure 4.19: CFA fit indices

Table 4.17: CFA fit indices

Fit Index	Threshold	Result	Interpretation
Chi-square/df (χ^2/df)	< 3	2.65	Acceptable
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	> 0.90	0.965	Excellent fit
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	> 0.90	0.965	Excellent fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	> 0.90	0.995	Excellent fit
Incremental fit index (IFI)	> 0.90	0.997	Excellent fit
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	> 0.90	0.975	Excellent fit
Normed fit index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.944	Very good fit
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.08	Acceptable borderline fit

4.6 Path modelling and hypotheses testing

The following section presents the results of the PM and the correlating path coefficients.

4.6.1 Path modelling

The structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesised relationships between constructs, using SmartPLS. The analysis included examination of path coefficients (β), t-statistics and p-values to determine significance, as well as R-square and f-square effect sizes to assess model explanatory power and contribution strength (Tables 4.18 and 4.19). According to Moloi, (2016), PM provides a stronger understanding of the relationships between variables.

Table 4.18: Path modelling R-square

Constructs	R-square	R-square adjusted
Purchase intent	0.555	0.547
Brand awareness	0.350	0.343
Product evaluation	0.461	0.452

Table 4.19: Path modelling f-square

Constructs	f-square
Engagement strategies -> Purchase intent	0.051
Engagement strategies -> Brand awareness	0.050
Engagement strategies -> Product evaluation	0.041
Content type -> Purchase intent	0.085
Content type -> Brand awareness	0.241
Content type -> Product evaluation	0.082
Consumer attitudes -> Product evaluation	0.164
Consumer attitudes -> Purchase intent	0.302

4.6.2 Hypothesis testing

The study intended to test the following hypotheses, as mentioned in Chapter 2: path coefficients, mean, STDEV, T-values and p-values (Table 4.20).

Table 4.20: Hypothesis testing – path coefficients

	Hypothesis	Path coefficients original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T-statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-values
Engagement strategies -> Purchase intent	H4	0.186	0.189	0.063	2.931	0.003
Engagement strategies -> Brand awareness	H5	0.209	0.210	0.056	3.756	0.000
Engagement strategies -> Product evaluation	H6	0.182	0.183	0.072	2.531	0.011
Content type -> Purchase intent	H7	0.242	0.243	0.068	3.547	0.000
Content type -> Brand awareness	H8	0.458	0.458	0.069	6.688	0.000
Content type -> Product evaluation	H9	0.261	0.264	0.072	3.636	0.000
Consumer attitudes -> Purchase intent	H10	0.459	0.462	0.068	6.738	0.000
Consumer attitudes -> Product evaluation	H11	0.372	0.376	0.077	4.846	0.000

All paths were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, confirming support for all hypotheses.

H1, H2, H3: Independent sample t-tests to compare purchase intention scores (Q11_Mean) between users and non-users of each platform (Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter/X, YouTube, Other).

T- Test results by platform usage (Table 4.21). Significant results ($p < .05$).

Table 4.21: T-test results by platform usage

Platform	Mean (users)	Mean (non-users)	t(df)	p-value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Facebook	2.67	2.48	2.69(177)	**.004**	0.48	Facebook users show higher purchase intention.

Platform	Mean (users)	Mean (non-users)	t(df)	p-value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
TikTok	2.65	2.48	2.30(177)	**.011**	0.48	TikTok use is positively linked to purchase intention.

These results indicate that Facebook and TikTok users exhibit significantly higher purchase intention scores than non-users, with medium effect sizes (Cohen's d ≈ 0.48). This suggests that active participation on visually rich, socially interactive platforms is associated with stronger readiness to purchase wellness products online, possibly because these platforms expose consumers to more persuasive content, social proof and peer recommendations than less interactive channels.

H4: Engagement strategies have a positive effect on purchase intent.
With a path coefficient of 0.186, t-value of 2.931 and p = 0.003, this relationship is statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis.

H5: Engagement strategies have a positive effect on brand awareness.
The relationship is significant with a coefficient of 0.209, t-value of 3.756 and p = 0.000, supporting the hypothesis.

H6: Engagement strategies have a positive effect on product evaluation.
A coefficient of 0.182 and t-value of 2.531 (p = 0.011) support the hypothesis, though the relationship is comparatively weaker.

H7: Content type has a positive effect on purchase intent.
A coefficient of 0.242 and a t-value of 3.547 (p = 0.000) suggest the relationship is significant, confirming support for the hypothesis.

H8: Content type has a positive effect on brand awareness.
The estimated path coefficient of 0.458 and a t-value of 6.688 (p = 0.000) indicate strong significance, supporting the hypothesis.

H9: Content type has a positive effect on product evaluation.
The path coefficient of 0.261, with a t-value of 3.636 and a p-value of 0.000, confirms a significant relationship, supporting the hypothesis.

H10: Consumer attitudes have a positive effect on purchase intent.
With a path coefficient of 0.459 and a t-value of 6.738 (p = 0.000), the hypothesis is statistically significant and supported.

H11: Consumer attitudes have a positive effect on product evaluation.
The path coefficient for this relationship was 0.372, with a t-value of 4.846 and a p-value of 0.000. This confirms a significant positive effect, supporting the hypothesis.

4.7 Conclusion of the presentation of results

This chapter presented the statistical analysis conducted using SPSS and SmartPLS, based on responses from 190 participants, to examine the impact of social media on purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation. The analysis confirmed that the measurement instrument met the required standards of reliability and validity.

The structural model was assessed through path analysis and the model is found to be an acceptable fit. The eleven hypotheses were found to be statistically significant and supported. The next chapter provides a detailed discussion and interpretation of these findings.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises the main empirical results presented in Chapter 4, beginning with a brief summary of the sample profile and measurement quality, and then discussing each set of hypotheses in light of the theoretical framework (TPB, ELM and SIT) and prior literature. The chapter concludes with implications, limitations and directions for future research.

This chapter is the culmination of the research, providing a comprehensive synthesis of the study's empirical findings. It draws definitive conclusions, interprets their significance and translates them into actionable recommendations for practitioners. Furthermore, it outlines the study's theoretical and managerial implications, acknowledges its inherent limitations and proposes avenues for future scholarly inquiry.

The overarching purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of social media e-commerce on consumer purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation within the South African wellness sector. To achieve this, the study pursued specific objectives, including examining how social media content influences purchase decisions, investigating the impact of brand interaction on consumer attitudes, identifying engagement strategies that drive purchase intent for wellness products, assessing content format's role in brand visibility and exploring how consumers evaluate product quality based on content format.

5.2 Conclusion of the study

5.2.1 Overview of key findings and model validation

The study successfully collected 190 valid survey responses, which were subsequently analysed using both SPSS and SmartPLS statistical software. A critical outcome of the analysis was the strong empirical support for the eleven hypotheses proposed in the study's conceptual framework. This comprehensive support indicates that the relationships hypothesised between social media elements and consumer behaviour outcomes are statistically significant.

The CFA further validated the measurement model, demonstrating an excellent fit between the theoretical constructs and the observed data. Key fit indices were all within acceptable thresholds, including a Chi-square/df (χ^2/df) of 2.65, a goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.965, a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.995 and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.08.

The robust model fit, coupled with consistent support for every hypothesis, suggests a strong, interconnected ecosystem where various social media elements, such as engagement strategies, content types and consumer attitudes, consistently and positively influence key e-commerce outcomes, including purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation. This indicates a pervasive and synergistic influence of social media across the consumer decision-making journey, rather than isolated or fragmented effects. The theoretical conceptual framework, built upon the TPB, the ELM and SIT, effectively represents the complex interplay of these variables as observed in the collected data.

The sample was predominantly female, highly educated and based in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, aligning with digitally active wellness consumers in South Africa. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity across all constructs (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE), indicating that the adapted scales were appropriate for this context. At structural level, all eleven hypotheses (H1–H11) were supported, confirming the central role of engagement strategies, content type and consumer attitudes in shaping brand awareness, product evaluation and purchase intention

5.2.2 *Pervasive influence of social media platforms and content*

The analysis of platform usage revealed that WhatsApp was the most frequently used social media platform among respondents (86.7%), followed by TikTok (55.0%) and Facebook (50.6%). Despite WhatsApp's high usage, statistical tests indicated that Facebook users showed significantly higher purchase intention compared to non-users ($t = 2.69$, $p = 0.004$) and TikTok use was also positively linked to purchase intention ($t = 2.30$, $p = 0.011$). This highlights that while platforms provide the reach, the type of content consumed on those platforms is crucial for conversion.

Further examination of content types provided a more nuanced understanding of their influence. Visual content, such as images and videos, received the highest agreement for capturing consumer attention (M = 2.72), while informative content was most effective in improving brand understanding (M = 2.86). Notably, written reviews significantly affected consumers' willingness to buy (M = 2.71), demonstrating the persuasive power of peer-generated content.

In contrast, promotional content generally received lower agreement for motivating engagement (M = 2.36) and was perceived as less helpful for quality judgement (M = 2.32). This pattern suggests that consumers, particularly the highly educated demographic identified in the study, prioritise informative, visually appealing and, most critically, authentic UGC for understanding, evaluation and ultimately, purchase.

This aligns with the ELM, which posits that consumers engage in central route processing when evaluating products, prioritising strong, credible arguments over peripheral cues such as simple promotions. The effectiveness of social media platforms is thus amplified by the quality and perceived credibility of the content they carry, rather than mere platform presence or overt promotional messaging.

5.2.3 Central role of consumer attitudes and trust

Consumer attitudes emerged as a pivotal factor in driving e-commerce outcomes. The descriptive statistics indicated strong positive consumer sentiment, with high agreement that ‘Brand trust increases’ (M = 2.74) and ‘Positive opinion increases purchase’ (M = 2.81). The structural model further confirmed these observations, showing that consumer attitudes significantly influence both purchase intention (H10: $\beta = 0.459$, $p = 0.000$) and product evaluation (H11: $\beta = 0.372$, $p = 0.000$).

These findings underscore that consumer attitudes, particularly trust and positive opinion, are not merely passive outcomes of social media engagement but act as potent mediators. They effectively translate social media interactions and content into tangible purchase intentions and favourable product evaluations. This emphasises that building genuine consumer trust is a foundational element for driving e-commerce success, especially for wellness products where personal well-being and product efficacy are paramount.

The observed relationships are consistent with the TPB, where an individual's attitude towards a behaviour, such as purchasing from a specific brand, is a primary determinant of their behavioural intention. For wellness brands, fostering positive attitudes and trust through transparent and authentic social media engagement is not merely a supplementary marketing activity but a core strategic imperative that directly impacts conversion rates and customer perception of product quality and reliability.

5.2.4 Impact of engagement strategies and source credibility

The study found that all tested engagement strategies had a positive influence on purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation (H4, H5, H6). For instance, engagement strategies showed a significant positive effect on purchase intent (H4: $\beta = 0.186$, $p = 0.003$), brand awareness (H5: $\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.001$) and product evaluation (H6: $\beta = 0.182$, $p = 0.011$). However, a closer look at the descriptive data revealed a notable distinction in consumer perception: UGC received higher agreement for increasing trust ($M = 2.55$) compared to influencer promotions ($M = 1.98$).

This pattern suggests that while various engagement strategies can be effective in generating interaction, there is a discernible consumer preference for and higher trust in authentic, peer-driven content over potentially commercially biased influencer promotions. This suggests that the credibility of the source is a crucial factor in determining whether engagement strategies effectively translate into consumer trust and purchase confidence.

UGC is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, aligning with the understanding that online consumer reviews are generally considered highly credible because they do not originate directly from the company. Therefore, for engagement strategies to maximise their impact, marketers must prioritise fostering genuine user advocacy and leveraging authentic testimonials, rather than solely relying on short-term, purely promotional influencer campaigns.

5.2.5 Synthesis of theoretical contributions

The analytical framework for this study was explicitly anchored in three prominent theories: the TPB, the ELM and SIT. The consistent statistical support for the eleven hypotheses across the model demonstrates not only the individual applicability of these

theories within the South African e-commerce context but also empirically illustrates their interconnectedness in explaining complex online consumer behaviour. For instance, the strong influence of consumer attitudes on purchase intention (H10) directly supports TPB's core tenet that attitudes are primary determinants of behavioural intention.

The varying impact of variation in content types (e.g., informative versus promotional) and engagement strategies (e.g., UGC versus influencer endorsements) can be interpreted through the ELM's central and peripheral routes of persuasion, indicating that consumers process information differently based on its perceived relevance and their involvement. Furthermore, the role of social influence (H3, H8) directly relates to SIT, where individuals derive a sense of self and belonging from social groups, influencing their purchasing decisions based on group associations and endorsements.

This integrated theoretical validation offers a richer and more comprehensive understanding of how attitudes, persuasion routes and social identity collectively shape the digital consumer journey in an emerging market such as South Africa. This empirical evidence, derived from a unique local context, enriches the existing academic literature by demonstrating how these universal theories manifest and interact under specific cultural and economic conditions, thereby offering a valuable blueprint for future research in similar developing economies.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Theoretical implications

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature by addressing the limited understanding of social media's impact on consumer behaviour in emerging markets, particularly within the South African context. It provides robust empirical evidence for the positive relationships between social media engagement, content types, consumer attitudes, brand awareness, product evaluation and purchase intention, as demonstrated by the support for the eleven hypotheses.

The findings validate the applicability of the TPB, the ELM and SIT within the dynamic digital commerce landscape. This demonstrates their utility in explaining contemporary consumer decision-making processes that are heavily influenced by online interactions.

The research further clarifies the crucial mediating roles of consumer attitudes, brand awareness and product evaluation, illustrating how these constructs bridge the gap between initial social media exposure and the ultimate purchase intent. This provides a more granular theoretical pathway for understanding online consumer behaviour.

By validating established models within this unique South African context, the study offers critical empirical data that bridges the gap between global social media marketing theories and their specific manifestation in an emerging market. This provides a blueprint for future research in similar developing economies, highlighting how cultural and economic factors might subtly influence universal consumer behaviour principles, thus enriching the overall theoretical understanding of digital consumer behaviour.

5.3.2 Managerial implications

The findings of this study offer several critical implications for marketers and managers operating within the wellness e-commerce sector in South Africa.

First, a strategic prioritisation of platforms is essential. Businesses should actively invest in and optimise marketing efforts on Facebook and TikTok, given their proven effectiveness in directly driving purchase intention. Concurrently, WhatsApp, despite its high general usage, should be leveraged differently, focusing on community building, direct customer service and conversational marketing to foster indirect loyalty and future purchases.

Second, content strategy requires refinement. Marketers must shift their focus towards creating and curating informative, high-quality visual content and actively soliciting UGC and written reviews. These content types are demonstrably more effective in capturing attention, enhancing brand understanding and influencing purchase decisions compared to purely promotional posts.

Third, building trust and strong relationships is paramount. Given the significant influence of consumer attitudes and trust on purchase intent and product evaluation, brands must invest in strategies that foster genuine connections and build long-term trust. This includes transparent communication, responsive engagement and consistently delivering on brand promises to cultivate positive perceptions and emotional connections with consumers.

Fourth, credibility is key in influencer marketing. While influencer collaborations are a valuable form of engagement, marketers should prioritise working with credible influencers who genuinely align with the brand's values. Consumer trust in UGC is higher than in perceived commercial endorsements, highlighting the need for authenticity to maximise impact on purchase confidence.

Finally, the study implicitly reinforces the foundational role of product quality. Superior product quality and consistent delivery on brand promises are fundamental. Positive online reviews, which significantly influence consumer behaviour, are ultimately a reflection of genuine customer satisfaction with the product itself. Marketers must ensure product excellence to generate positive social proof and naturally strengthen their brand image.

The findings compel marketers to move beyond a superficial social media presence and purely promotional tactics towards a more authentic, value-driven and customer-centric approach. This means prioritising genuine engagement, fostering UGC and delivering on core product quality, as these elements are more effective in building trust and driving conversion among a discerning, highly educated and often price-sensitive South African consumer base.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings and their implications, the following recommendations are put forth for businesses and marketers in the South African e-commerce wellness sector:

5.4.1 Strategic social media platform prioritisation

Businesses should adopt a differentiated, omnichannel strategy, leveraging each platform's unique strengths to create a cohesive and effective customer journey.

- Actively invest in and optimise marketing efforts on Facebook and TikTok, tailoring content and engagement strategies specifically for these platforms to maximise direct influence on purchase intention. The statistical results explicitly confirm that users of Facebook and TikTok exhibit higher purchase intention, making them primary channels for conversion-focused campaigns.

- Develop a dedicated strategy for WhatsApp, focusing on community building, direct customer support, personalised communication and facilitating word-of-mouth. WhatsApp is the most widely used social media platform in South Africa (86.7% usage), indicating its immense reach. While its direct link to purchase intention was not as pronounced in the t-tests, its pervasive use suggests it is a critical platform for nurturing customer relationships, providing information and enabling peer-to-peer discussions, which indirectly contribute to brand loyalty and future purchases.

5.4.2 Content strategy optimisation

For the highly educated and discerning South African consumer base, content strategies must prioritise delivering genuine value through information and authentic peer experiences. This moves beyond traditional advertising to a model where content serves to educate, build trust and provide social proof, thereby facilitating central route persuasion.

- Prioritise the creation and dissemination of informative and high-quality visual content (images, videos) across all relevant platforms. Informative content significantly enhances brand understanding and recall (M = 2.86), while visual content is highly effective in capturing attention (M = 2.72). This combination educates consumers and makes brands memorable.
- Actively solicit, curate and prominently display UGC, particularly written reviews and testimonials. Written reviews were found to be the most persuasive content type, influencing purchase intention (M = 2.71) and text-based feedback informed views of product durability (M = 2.51). UGC is also highly trusted (M = 2.55), leveraging social proof and building authenticity.
- Balance promotional content with educational and engaging material to avoid consumer fatigue and enhance perceived value. While promotional content can motivate engagement (M = 2.36), it is less impactful for purchase intent (M = 2.39) and the least helpful for quality judgement (M = 2.32). Over-reliance on promotions can lead to consumer disengagement, as highlighted in the literature.

5.4.3 Building trust and fostering positive attitudes

Given the strong mediating role of attitudes and trust, brands should prioritise building long-term, emotional relationships with consumers on social media. This shifts the marketing paradigm from purely transactional exchanges to relational engagement, fostering loyalty and advocacy that extends beyond individual purchases.

- Implement consistent strategies to enhance brand trust and perception through authentic and responsive social media interactions. Positive attitudes, particularly increased brand trust (M = 2.74), significantly drive purchase intent (H10: $\beta = 0.459$) and product evaluation (H11: $\beta = 0.372$). Building this trust requires consistent positive interactions.
- Cultivate emotional connections with consumers by aligning brand messaging with their values and needs, particularly within the context of wellness and self-care. Emotional connection significantly influences purchasing decisions (M = 2.45). For wellness products, this means tapping into themes of health, glow and personal sanctuary.

5.4.4 Harnessing social influence and credibility

In the age of abundant online information, perceived authenticity and credibility, especially from peer sources, are becoming the new forms of authority. Marketers must focus on fostering genuine advocacy and transparent interactions to effectively leverage social influence, rather than relying on traditional, potentially less credible endorsement models.

- Carefully select influencers for collaborations, prioritising those with demonstrated credibility and authentic engagement with their audience, rather than solely focusing on follower count. While influencer promotions are a form of engagement, consumer trust in UGC is significantly higher (M = 2.55 for UGC versus M = 1.98 for influencer promotions). The importance of source credibility is also emphasised in the literature.
- Actively monitor and engage with online reviews and social feedback to manage brand perception and build credible social proof. Social feedback significantly

influences brand attitude (M = 2.56). Responding to reviews, both positive and negative, can help enhance trust and address concerns.

5.4.5 Product quality and brand health imperatives

In the digital age, product excellence is the ultimate marketing tool. Brands that consistently deliver high-quality products naturally foster positive online reviews and strong brand images, creating a powerful virtuous cycle where genuine customer satisfaction becomes the most effective form of social media marketing.

- Continuously prioritise and invest in product quality and innovation, ensuring that wellness offerings consistently meet and exceed consumer expectations. The entire model implicitly relies on product quality as its foundation, as positive online consumer reviews, which significantly influence purchase intent and product evaluation, ultimately reflect customer satisfaction with the product itself.
- Proactively manage and maintain a strong, positive brand image through consistent messaging, transparent practices and responsive customer service. Brand image has a significant positive effect on purchase intent (H10: $\beta = 0.568$), making it a critical driver of purchasing behaviour. A strong brand image also contributes to consumer trust and perceived quality.

5.5 Limitations

The present study, while providing valuable insights, is subject to several limitations that warrant consideration for the interpretation and generalisability of its findings.

First, the cross-sectional design of the study, which captured data at a single point in time, inherently limits the ability to establish definitive causality between the identified variables. While strong relationships were observed, the dynamic and evolving nature of consumer behaviour over time could not be fully observed.

Second, the reliance on self-reported data collected through online surveys introduces potential biases. These may include social desirability bias, where participants might provide responses they perceive as more favourable or socially acceptable, or inaccuracies due to recall limitations.

Third, the generalisability of the findings is constrained to the specific context of South African e-commerce consumers, particularly those active on Facebook and within the health and wellness product category. The sample's concentration in urban areas, specifically Gauteng (48%) and KwaZulu-Natal (44%) and its demographic profile (predominantly female, highly educated with 41% holding a postgraduate degree and falling within the mid- to lower-income brackets), may limit the broader applicability of the results to other regions or demographics.

Fourth, while various social media platforms were acknowledged for their usage, the in-depth analysis focused primarily on Facebook. This platform specificity potentially overlooks the unique dynamics or stronger influences that might arise from other platforms, such as Instagram or YouTube, which also showed significant usage among respondents.

Finally, nuances in measurement validity were identified. Despite the overall good reliability and model fit for the entire model, specific constructs, namely ‘Product Evaluation’ (AVE = 0.330) and ‘Purchase Intent’ (AVE = 0.383), yielded AVE values below the conventional threshold of 0.50. Furthermore, these constructs did not fully meet the Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity, indicating some empirical overlap with other constructs in the model.

While the hypotheses involving these constructs were supported, these challenges suggest that the measurement scales for ‘Product Evaluation’ and ‘Purchase Intent’ could benefit from refinement to ensure greater distinctiveness and accuracy in future research. This is a crucial methodological consideration, suggesting that future research should focus on refining the measurement scales for these specific constructs, potentially through qualitative exploration of how consumers conceptualise these aspects in the online wellness context.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

Building upon the insights and limitations of this study, several promising avenues for future research emerge:

- Longitudinal studies: To more definitively establish causal relationships, future research should employ longitudinal designs. This would allow for the observation

of how social media engagement, content strategies and consumer attitudes dynamically evolve and impact e-commerce outcomes over extended periods, providing richer insights into behavioural changes.

- Comparative platform analysis: Expanding the scope to conduct in-depth comparative studies across a broader range of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, Twitter/X and Pinterest) is recommended. This would explore their unique features and how they influence specific aspects of consumer behaviour in different ways, providing a more holistic view for marketers.
- Qualitative exploration of nuances: Employing qualitative research methods, such as focus groups or in-depth interviews, could delve deeper into consumers' underlying motivations, perceptions of authenticity and the psychological processes through which social media content and interactions influence their attitudes and decisions. This would be particularly valuable for understanding the lower trust in influencer promotions versus UGC, as well as the specific reasons behind the challenges in distinctly measuring product evaluation and purchase intent.
- Impact of negative online reviews: Investigating the effects of negative online consumer reviews on brand perception, trust and purchase intent within the South African context would be highly beneficial. Understanding how consumers react to adverse feedback is crucial for comprehensive brand management and risk mitigation strategies.
- Product category and value variation: Conducting studies focusing on different product categories, such as high-value electronics, luxury goods or fast-moving consumer goods, would assess whether the identified relationships hold true across varying levels of purchase involvement and economic value. This would broaden the generalisability of the findings beyond the wellness sectors.
- Demographic and regional comparisons: Future research could explore the influence of social media on consumer behaviour across different demographic segments, such as Generations X and Z and rural populations, as well as in other regions of South Africa or similar developing countries. This expansion would enhance the external validity and transferability of findings beyond the current urban Generation Y focus.
- Addressing measurement refinement: Dedicated research efforts should be directed towards specifically refining and validating the measurement scales for ‘Product

Evaluation' and 'Purchase Intent' to address the identified AVE and discriminant validity challenges. This would ensure a more robust and distinct measurement of these critical constructs in future studies, enhancing methodological rigour.

5.7 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter successfully presented the comprehensive conclusions and recommendations derived from the study's empirical findings. The analysis confirmed the robust support for the eleven hypotheses, providing significant insights into the impact of social media on e-commerce consumer behaviour in South Africa.

The study's contributions are dual, enriching both academic theory by validating and extending established models within a unique emerging market context and offering practical, actionable strategies for marketers and managers to optimise their social media efforts in the wellness sector. This research lays a solid foundation for future advancements in understanding the dynamic interplay between social media and consumer decision-making.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Instrument

Survey Pilot from Quadrics:

Section 1: Introduction

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Dear Participant, My name is Sindisiwe Sikakane and I am a Master's student in Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr. Yvonne Saini. I am conducting a research study titled "Impact of Social Media E-commerce on Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness and Product Evaluation in South Africa". This study explores how social media-based e-commerce platforms influence consumer behaviour, specifically regarding purchase intention, brand awareness and product evaluation in the South African market. I am inviting you to participate by completing an online survey. The survey should take approximately 8 to 10 minutes of your time. Please note that participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Your responses will remain anonymous and the data will be securely stored and/or deleted after two (2) years to protect participants' confidentiality. Only the researcher will have access to the data. When research findings are shared, no information that could personally identify you will be included. Participating in this study will not incur any costs, nor will you be compensated. However, your contribution is highly valued and will provide important insights for understanding consumer behaviour in South Africa's evolving e-commerce environment. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the contact details provided below. For any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical aspects of the study, you may also contact the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) at +27 (0)11 717 1408 or by email at hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za. Thank you very much for your time and participation. Yours sincerely, Researcher: Sindisiwe Sikakane, 325079@students.wits.ac.za Supervisor: Dr. Yvonne Saini, yvonne.saini@wits.ac.za

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SECTION 2: Demographic Information

(For context and segmentation)

Q2 1. What is your age?

- ○ Under 18 (1)
- ○ 18–24 (2)
- ○ 25–34 (3)
- ○ 35–44 (4)
- ○ 45–54 (5)
- ○ 55+ (6)

Q3 2. What is your gender?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Prefer not to say (3)
- ○ Other (please specify) (4)

_____

Q4 3. What is your highest level of education completed?

- ○ High school (1)
- ○ Diploma/Certificate (2)
- ○ Undergraduate degree (3)
- ○ Postgraduate degree (4)
- ○ Prefer not to say (5)

Q5 4. In which province do you currently reside?

- ○ Eastern Cape (1)
- ○ Free State (2)
- ○ Gauteng (3)
- ○ KwaZulu-Natal (4)
- ○ Limpopo (5)
- ○ Mpumalanga (6)
- ○ Northern Cape (7)
- ○ North West (8)
- ○ Western Cape (9)

Q6 5. How often do you shop online?

- ○ Daily (1)
- ○ Weekly (2)
- ○ Monthly (3)
- ○ Rarely (4)

Q7 6. What is your monthly household income bracket (after deductions)?

- ○ Less than R10,000 (1)
- ○ R10,000 – R25,000 (2)
- ○ R25,001 – R35,000 (3)
- ○ R35,001 – R50,000 (4)
- ○ R50,001 – R75,000 (5)
- ○ R75,001 – R100,000 (6)
- ○ More than R100,000 (7)

Q8 7. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select-all-that-apply)

- [ ] Facebook (1)
- [ ] TikTok (2)
- [ ] WhatsApp (3)
- [ ] Instagram (4)
- [ ] Twitter/X (5)
- [ ] YouTube (6)
- [ ] Other (please specify) (7)

_____

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SECTION 3: Questionnaire Items

Scale: | Disagree | Neutral | Agree |

Q9 8.Engagement strategies on social media platforms positively influence consumer purchase intentions in the South African e-commerce sector.

(Schivinski et al., 2016 & Hollebeek et al., 2014).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. I am more likely to consider purchasing health and wellness products promoted by influencers on social media. (1)	○	○	○
2. User-generated content (e.g., customer reviews, photos) increases my trust in wellness brands. (2)	○	○	○
3. Social media advertisements influence my decision to purchase wellness products. (3)	○	○	○

Q10 9. The type of content on social media platforms significantly affects consumer engagement with health and wellness brands.

(De Vries et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Visual content (e.g., images, videos) on social media captures my attention more than textual content. (1)	○	○	○
2. Promotional content motivates me to engage with wellness brands. (2)	○	○	○
3. Textual content influences my perception of wellness products. (3)	○	○	○

Q11 10. Interactions on social media platforms positively influence consumer attitudes towards wellness brands.

(Hollebeek et al., 2014)

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Engaging with wellness brands on social media improves my perception of the brand. (1)	○	○	○
2. Positive interactions with brands increase my trust. (2)	○	○	○
3. I feel more connected to brands I engage with on social media. (3)	○	○	○

Q12 11. Higher engagement with wellness brands on social media increases purchase intent.

(Schivinski et al.,2016)

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. I am more likely to buy from brands I engage with. (1)	○	○	○
2. Regular interaction increases my purchase likelihood. (2)	○	○	○
3. Social media engagement influences my buying decisions. (3)	○	○	○

Q13 12. Consumer engagement with wellness brands on social media enhances brand awareness.

(Hollebeek et al., 2014).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. I can recall brands I follow on social media. (1)	○	○	○
2. Social media engagement increases my product awareness. (2)	○	○	○
3. I recognise brands more easily after interacting with them. (3)	○	○	○

Q14 13. Consumer engagement with wellness brands on social media positively affects product evaluation.

(Schivinski et al.,2016)

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Social media helps me assess product quality. (1)	○	○	○
2.Engagement provides useful product information. (2)	○	○	○
3. I rely on engagement to evaluate products. (3)	○	○	○

Q15 14. Content type influences purchase intentions for wellness products.

(De Vries et al., 2012).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Promotional posts increase my purchase intent. (1)	○	○	○
2. High-quality images or videos influence my decisions. (2)	○	○	○
3. Written reviews affect my willingness to buy. (3)	○	○	○

Q16 15. Variation in content types influence brand awareness.

(Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Visual content improves my brand recall. (1)	○	○	○
2. Promotional content improves my brand recognition. (2)	○	○	○
3. Informative content increases my brand understanding. (3)	○	○	○

Q17 16. Content type influences consumers product evaluations.

(Bruhn et al., 2012)

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Visual content helps me assess product quality. (1)	○	○	○
2. Text-based feedback informs my view of durability. (2)	○	○	○
3. Promotional content is less helpful for quality judgement. (3)	○	○	○

Q18 17. Positive consumer attitudes increase purchase intent.

(Ajzen, 1991).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. I'm more likely to buy from brands I have a positive opinion of. (1)	○	○	○
2. Social feedback shapes my brand attitude. (2)	○	○	○
3. Emotional connections with a brand influence my purchasing decisions. (3)	○	○	○

Q19 18. Consumer attitudes influence product evaluation.

(Bagozzi et al., 1999).

	Disagree (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree (3)
1. Positive attitudes increase my perception of quality. (1)	○	○	○
2. My expectations align with my brand feelings. (2)	○	○	○
3. I give products the benefit of the doubt when I like the brand. (3)	○	○	○

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix B: Measurement Scale of Constructs

Construct	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Engagement strategies		0.653	0.653	0.812	0.592
Q9_1	0.778				
Q9_2	0.714				
Q9_3	0.813				
Content type		0.587	0.604	0.786	0.553
Q10_1	0.675				
Q10_2	0.855				
Q10_3	0.687				
Consumer attitudes		0.706	0.706	0.836	0.630

Construct	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Q11_1	0.802				
Q11_2	0.768				
Q11_3	0.811				
Brand awareness		0.800	0.812	0.857	0.501
Q13_1	0.640				
Q13_2	0.680				
Q13_3	0.680				
Q16_1	0.767				
Q16_2	0.771				
Q16_3	0.697				
Product evaluation		0.733	0.766	0.805	0.330
Q14_1	0.683				
Q14_2	0.671				
Q14_3	0.587				
Q17_1	0.625				
Q17_2	0.605				
Q17_3	0.190				
Q19_1	0.646				
Q19_2	0.601				
Q19_3	0.376				
Purchase intention		0.794	0.811	0.845	0.383
Q12_1	0.745				
Q12_2	0.665				
Q12_3	0.709				
Q15_1	0.587				
Q15_2	0.658				
Q15_3	0.424				
Q18_1	0.525				
Q18_2	0.655				
Q18_3	0.532				