

SOCIAL PROOFING FACTORS: A STUDY OF TAGGING AND NON-TAGGING BEHAVIORS ON THE INSTAGRAM PLATFORM

Ms. Parasala Jothi Sundhareeswari Jagadeesan

Institute of Education, University College London, Greater London, WC1H 0AL

parasala.jagadeesan.23@ucl.ac.uk

Dr. Shobana Karthikeyan

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Madras Christian College, Chennai - 600 059

shobanakarthikeyan@mcc.edu.in

Abstract

Social media, with its inherent qualities of interactivity, connectedness and user-generated content has become a highly indispensable part of people's lives today. Social media has undoubtedly impacted our ability to communicate, form relationships, access, process and spread information and has become a potent tool in guiding decision making. This paper seeks to research how social proofing agents such as willingness to purchase, price consciousness, unnecessary purchases, research-backed purchase, and inherent need aid people in making informed purchasing decisions. This study analyzes how socially conscious users behave on the Instagram platform and examines Instagram's tagging and mentioning features in-depth. The study also seeks to analyze why few users on Instagram, while enjoying the benefits of the tagging phenomenon are themselves reluctant to do so. This paper identifies two social proofing factors: 'social proofing overriding' and 'inherent need' (insulation against social proofing) and analyses the effect of these factors on customers regarding making educated purchasing decisions and on influencers/endorsers in marketing the product better. Results of the study indicate that while only 50 % of the non-tagging population in the age range of 24-26 is eager to try out new goods and services, 88 % of females and 41 % of males who tag agree that social proofing strategies make them informed decision-makers. This study can be termed as one of the first attempts at developing social proofing factors. This research contributes to the growing literature on evaluating social proofing strategies by examining how social proofing strategies impact consumers.

Keywords: *Social media, Instagram, social proof, purchasing decision, tagging behaviors, tagging, non-tagging*

JEL classification: *M3, Marketing and Advertising*

Introduction

In 2010, cofounders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger launched Instagram, a social media platform for sharing images and videos. Facebook Inc. purchased the service in April 2012 for \$1 billion. One of the most widely used social networking sites, Instagram, has an extensive user base. The social network had over a billion monthly users as of April 2019. The platform's user base has grown, so no business or marketer can ignore it. Influencer companies and marketers flock to it, making it a crucial social media marketing tool.

Instagrammers worldwide have unique tastes and preferences over art, music, and whatnot. They have little in common; they follow each other and express their interest via likes, comments, shares, tags, and mentions. Over the years, Instagram has become a convenient platform for introverts, extroverts, and ambiverts. It is not just a photo-sharing application anymore. Instagram helps people create and recreate memories. The uncustomary features introduced in the platform, such as disappearing, viewing once, replay and reels, and visual replies to photos and videos, made social media personal for Instagrammers more than ever.

The Instagram platform gives consumers the power to investigate products, label, and criticize them in equal measure and more. Therefore many companies today have pages on social networks to complement the information held about products, owned by consumers' feedback about products, and help relate more to a company after reading various reviews (Ioană & Stoica, 2014). Before deciding to purchase, prospective consumers traditionally gather valuable data and make comparisons.

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a trustworthy data source for comparisons. The term "eWOM" refers to consumers' assessment and sharing their experiences with other prospective customers regarding goods and services. These tools that facilitate one's purchase are social proofing tools (Dwidienawatia, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawarohe, 2020).

Social proofing tools or eCommerce persuasive tools are defined as a psychological, social phenomenon whereby an individual can copy the actions of others to make a purchasing decision (Cialdini, 2007). This influence of social effects can be seen throughout all online platforms, from social media to eCommerce websites. It has been commonly recognized as a level of conformity or herd-like behavior. Social proof influences can be seen today via online blogs, whereby reviews and opinions are shared regarding products or brands. Online reviews via tools such as trust pilot and bizarre voice are used on retailers' websites, such as reviewing buying experience for a customer and reviewing products themselves via the bizarre voice platform (Cawley, 2020). The social proofing strategies used here are influencer endorsements and consumer reviews.

Influencer endorsement describes the act of an influencer promoting a certain item or service. An influencer is a person who enjoys widespread fame due to their online and public following. A post promoting a business or a video reviewing and thoroughly describing a specific product are both examples of influencer endorsements. Peer-generated product evaluations on firm or third-party websites are called electronic customer reviews. Shopping online, like shopping in person, is a social activity. People's interactions with people tend to affect purchase decisions. Consumers' perceptions of risk can be reduced by reading online customer reviews, boosting their level of pleasure and decision-making efficiency (Yan, et al., 2016).

Despite the scant research on social proofing techniques, consumers regard it as a reliable source when making purchase decisions (Bokunewicz & Shulman, 2017). This research was conducted to assist consumers with their purchase decisions. The social proofing factors discussed in this article will serve as a resource that customers may use to inform their decision-making process.

Literature Review

The dissemination of knowledge across societies and the globe is altering due to social media. The quick adoption of social networking sites, blogging platforms, and media-sharing tools (like YouTube) was made possible by the rapid growth of mobile technology. Information now moves much more quickly and is much more transparent. A few years ago, certain events would have been kept as state secrets indefinitely, but now they are publicized instantly around the globe (Thomas D. Mayfield III, 2011).

There are over 25m brand accounts on Instagram, with 80% of users following one. Among the top 100 brands in the world, 90% have an Instagram account. 96% of U.S. fashion brands are on Instagram. 60% of Instagram users discover new products on the platform. Engagement with brands on Instagram is ten times higher than Facebook, 54 times higher than Pinterest, and 84 times higher than Twitter. Over a third of Instagram users have used their mobile to purchase a product online— making them 70% more likely to do so than non-users (Kit Smith, 2019). According to research, there are 150 million active Instagram users each month, and businesses are increasingly using the platform for marketing purposes. The author of "An Experiment: Instagram Marketing Techniques and Their Effectiveness" wanted to determine the most effective strategy for businesses to engage with their target audience. When encouraged to take part in an Instagram contest or see a post with a featured customer, it was discovered that they were more likely to follow an account. According to the findings, participants far prefer to see an ordinary consumer wearing the brand's merchandise than a famous person (Ha, 2015).

According to the findings of a study, information from experienced customers is valued by prospective customers when making decisions about online purchases. The opinions of experienced customers can lessen ambiguity and perceived risk, and as a result, eWOM affects purchasing decisions. This study also demonstrated that not all eWOM impacted consumers' buying propensity. Purchase intention is positively influenced by influencer endorsement, while customer reviews did not demonstrate this influence (Dwidienawatia, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawarohe, 2020).

Social Proof

The social media marketing model was developed based on a Social proofing Theory, which is essential for our study to understand how consumer preferences and demands are influenced (Amblee & Bui, 2011). *The social proof psychology principle states that when people are uncertain, they will most likely look to others for behavioral guidance. To harness this concept for persuasion, marketers must first identify the uncertainties of their customers and then buffer accordingly with appropriate social proof. Two of its types are influencer endorsement and product/service reviews* (Roethke, Klumpe, Adam, & Benlian, 2020). People replicate others' conduct to respond in a certain way in response to a scenario, known as the psychological and social phenomenon known as social proof. "People replicate others' conduct to respond in a certain way in response to a scenario, which is known as the psychological and social phenomena known as "social proof (Robert, 1984)." Even if formal analysis shows that social proof can help people to make conclusions based on little information and cause even more significant groups of people

to make decisions too soon, social proof nevertheless represents a logical motivation to consider the knowledge of others.

Conformity of this kind includes social proof. People frequently seek others for guidance on appropriate behavior when they are in a circumstance where they are unclear about how to act. Informational social influence occurs when we comply because we think other people's assessment of an unclear circumstance is more valid than ours and will help us pick an acceptable course of action (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999).

In contrast, normative social influence causes a person to comply to win the approval or acceptance of others. Social proof frequently results in private acceptance and public compliance (the act of publicly imitating the conduct of others without necessarily thinking it to be correct) (conforming out of a genuine belief that others are correct). When higher accuracy is valued, and people are considered exceptionally knowledgeable, social evidence is more persuasive (Roy, 2021).

Testimonials, a social proofing tactic employed on social media sites, are powerful because of their neutrality. In other words, when a third party speaks on behalf of the company, the credibility should be better. (Zarrella, 2010). Social Proofing strategies will be discussed in the below paragraph.

Customer ratings and reviews can be immensely powerful. 87 % of online shoppers conduct online research before ever making a purchase. 61 % read product reviews to gather information about the product they want to buy. Product and service reviews gain more weight when the perspectives of more significant populations are considered (Rossouw, 2009). Nearly every book has endorsements from influential people on the jackets, covers, and first pages. Product and service reviews gain more weight when the perspectives of more significant populations are considered (Rossouw, 2009). This form of social proof is meaningful if the endorsement is unpaid. This strategy is also called celebrity endorsement (Carter, 2016).

Case studies are an in-depth, data-driven investigation of the goods or services the company offers its clients. An example of a curated review is a case study, which may describe the customer's Story more thoroughly than a user-generated review. Using photographs, videos, and interactive elements, you may emphasize how a specific company's product or service assisted its customers in resolving their problems. Case studies are excellent for promoting a problematic or expensive commodity or service.

User-generated content (UGC), created by consumers and shared on social media sites, has a significant influence. Social media is a public platform where individuals' choices are instantaneously shared with numerous others. When users post about how much they love your brand, upload images and videos of how they use your products in real life or leave positive comments, it shows others your brand is well-loved. Credentials are a type of social evidence that is developed when a company obtains notable recognition or collaborates with well-known clients. You are enhancing your credibility in the eyes of potential customers by featuring prominent clients on your website or social media channels. Affiliate marketing involves partnering with bloggers, social media stars, and other content producers to insert affiliate links on their platforms. Affiliate links take users to your brand's website, where they may read product details and make

purchases. An affiliate receives a financial commission each time you make a sale via their link. Sometimes, a reputable affiliate's comments and recommendations may significantly impact inspiring new clients to make a purchase. Using client logos as evidence of successful adoption is a relatively common and powerful social proof method. Companies leverage their current clientele to prove that their product is good enough for all firms with the same market share. The term "expert approval" refers to the endorsement of your product by a recognized authority or thought leader in your sector. This suggestion might be in the form of a blog post, a social media update, or any other open usage or endorsement of a product (Jessica Huhn, 2022).

Social media is essential for brand recognition since it distributes positive feedback from existing consumers and brand evangelists via tweets, Facebook posts, and Instagram comments. Every uplifting statement regarding the good or service will be shared on social media. The best applications of this kind of social proof are for B2C goods and services. A certification is an uncommon type of social evidence in which you receive the seal of approval from a recognized professional in your field, i.e., the blue checkmark on Twitter or Facebook.

The two main social proofing strategies used to study consumer preferences in this study are Influencer Endorsements and Customer Reviews.

Instagram Features

The aforementioned social proofing strategies are continuously implemented on the Instagram platform. All their product features were designed with 'People' in mind. These features help us express ourselves and connect with the people we love and trust.

1. Reels

Reels are 30-second, multi-clip videos created with easy-to-use text, A.R. filters, and audio. Users can create, watch and share short, entertaining videos here. It allows us to create seamless transition moments with alignment to line up objects between clips, set a timer to record hands-free, and adjust speed for video and audio. A reel is remixed by recording your video next to someone else's by adding your perspective and collab with your community to present something the followers can explore. New Reels from our friends' or followers' profiles are shared with friends in Messenger or their own Stories. Some of the highlights of Reels are amplifying your ideas with audio from the Instagram music library, creating users' unique sound by adding voiceover to clips, and collecting and sharing audio pages.

2. Stories

Instagram stories are usually perceived as fun, casual, and rarely informative. They bring the Story to life and last 24 hours in the profile. Stories are a quick, effortless way to share moments and experiences using text, music, stickers, effects, and GIFs. We can also add the Questions sticker and other interactive features to Stories to share and get feedback from friends. Any memorable Story is added as highlights on the profile.

3. Messenger/Instagram Direct

Messenger allows us to send messages, photos, and videos to friends across Instagram or Facebook—complete with effects and captions. Users can also send posts or connect on video chat. Users can watch videos they find on Instagram and share them with friends and family in video chats. Messengers also hold exciting features such as selfie stickers, custom reactions, message effects, and customized chat colors and themes. The vanish mode has been popularly used to have fun conversations with messages and photos that disappear after they are seen or when the chat is being closed.

4. Video

Users can create and watch engaging videos now on Instagram. Videos are personalized to users, making it easier to discover and watch content from creators they follow—or may want to follow. Videos can be edited and deleted whenever needed. Similar to Stories and photos in their Feed, users can now like, comment, or share videos with friends across social networks. The video makes it even easier to tell users' Stories, connect with their audience and reach more people.

5. Live

Users can start a live broadcast to connect with their followers in real time. Once a live broadcast has ended, they can share a replay or access it in their Live archive. Influencers use Instagram to announce a product or collection launch. Using the "add a friend" option, they interview people while bringing the audience behind the scenes of their workspace, an event, or a journey connected to their line of business. Celebrities often hold Q&A sessions with their audience and teach them how to utilize products and services.

6. Shopping

Infamous Instagrammers refer to this way of shopping as 'See it, love it, shop it.' There are many ways to shop on Instagram, from tapping product tags and saving items on wish lists to buying directly with checkout. When users find articles, they are curious about in their Feed in Stories, they tap the product tag to reveal details like name and price. This is colloquially referred to as 'Tap to Shop.' Users can also add items to their private wish list to come back to them whenever they want. Users can securely store payment information for future shopping.

7. Search & Explore

Users can Discover content and creators based on their interests. This complete search experience makes it easy to go deep into their interests.

8. Fundraisers & Donations

Users can raise money on Instagram for charities and causes they care about that will live in their bio for 30 days. Charities must also create an Instagram Business account. Users will be allowed to promote the fundraising on other posts, articles, or a Live video within 30 days. Donations can be made by searching for the charity on Instagram and donating on their profile, tapping a donation sticker on a story or live video (Instagram, n.d.).

Tagging And Mentions

Instagram Tagging

People, goods, and locations may be connected through Instagram tagging and mentions. The tagging method involves including a link to an account, place, and product in your Post or Story. It is an excellent way for online shoppers to gain exposure through interactions with brands, creators, dealers, and other businesses. The user's Instagram account must be public for the tags to work. If the account is private and the user tags an account that does not follow the user back, then they will not be able to see the user's content that has been tagged.

Instagram tagging can be classified into three types. First, User Tag. User tagging is when a user tags a friend/follower in their Post/Story. Adding a clickable link to a person's profile to the Post is a popular form of user tagging. User tagging is an informative tool for businesses that could tag customers, such as reviews, influencers, product promotions, and other firms, such as collaborations. The users can choose the audience to tag or mention on their privacy settings from the Instagram application. If someone not in the user's selected audience tries to tag or mention them, they will see that the user does not allow tags or mentions from an unknown account. Second, Location Tag. They can be used to add locations to a user's Post/Story. Location tags can represent where the user has been, such as a restaurant, resort, mall, or café, and indicate where a photo or video was shot. The Post will show up when other users search for the same place after it has been given a location tag. Product tags provide a connection to the item in the Instagram store. The tag option directs us to the website and includes information on the product, such as name, price, and comparable items (Geyser, 2022).

Now the question is, why do people even tag? Users often tag the product or location they enjoyed for their friends to experience the same. Users can tag a product to their Post/Story to help if their friend or a close one has a venture. Some users tag a product or location when they genuinely enjoy the product/service and want to suggest them to their followers. Other reasons why people tag will be discussed later in this paper.

Instagram Mentioning

In the Post's comment and caption sections, a mention can be made by placing a @ symbol in front of any user's handle (for instance, "Great photo, @user!"). Blocked contacts cannot mention the user's account in any Posts, Stories, or Comments. Mentions (usually) alert users, allow them to reply in the comment section quickly, and provide a great way to interact with customers. Users often mention their friends on their Posts for E.C.- Editing Credits (the person who edits your photo), C.C.- Caption Credit/Courtesy (The person suggests the caption for your photo), S.C.- Selection Credit (Credit to the person who chooses/recommends the picture to post) and P.C. – Picture Courtesy (Credits to the person who took the picture). Users also mention their friends in their Posts, Stories, and Comments if they find those relevant or if they remind them of their friends (Instagram, n.d.).

Table 1. Tagging vs. Mentioning on Instagram

<i>Tags</i>	<i>Mentions</i>
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i. The content creator can only do Instagram Tagging.	i. Any users on any content can do Instagram mentioning.
ii. Tagging on Instagram is done in/on the image of your original Post.	ii. Instagram mention is accomplished by placing the @ symbol in front of somebody's Instagram username in a comment or a caption to get their attention.
iii. Tags notifications show up separately.	iii. Mention notifications often get lost on the Feed.
iv. Users will not see the tagged person unless they tap on the Post.	iv. Mentions alert the user and allow them to reply to users in the comment section.

Why is Instagram Tagging Better than Mentioning?

Instagram users might wonder why they would want to tag an account if they could simply @mention them. There are two reasons why people prefer to tag than to mention.

First, @mentions appear in the standard notification stream and are prone to be overlooked. Only the 100 most recent notifications are displayed in the notification stream. Therefore, if an account receives 200 alerts, it will only display the most recent 100, not the first 100. But if you tag that account, a different message will appear. By doing this, you can ensure that the user sees your content and that it stands out from rival notifications.

The second reason is that the information from tagged accounts is stored on a different page on their Instagram profiles. A massive gallery of user-generated content regarding the brand is essentially created from the labeled content. Only tagging accounts on Instagram and not @mentioning them has drawbacks. Even if a post's tag lists all tagged accounts, most users will not tap on the content to check who was tagged in it or which accounts were referenced. In this situation, it is essential to also @mention all those tagged accounts in the caption so that the typical person reading it may see their usernames (Lyon, 2020).

Why Do People Tag?

Table 2. Why Do People Tag?

Sl. no.	Reasons for People to tag	No. of Taggers (in %)
1	<i>I would like to become a famous personality in the social media</i>	13.3
2	<i>I genuinely want people to know about the happenings in my life</i>	73.3

3	<i>I want my Followers to know the people and places I have visited</i>	53.3
4	<i>Followers can repost my stories</i>	46.7
5	<i>To get more followers</i>	10
6	<i>To get more likes</i>	13.3

Millennials want to become famous on social media (Brailovskaia & Bierhof, 2018). Unlike influencers and digital content creators, Instagrammers want to thrive in social media by either posting frequently about themselves or Posts that their followers would approve of. This attention-seeking behavior may stem from jealousy, low self-esteem, loneliness, or personality disorder (Brailovskaia & Bierhof, 2018). People who genuinely want their followers to know what is happening in their life are conventionally considered someone who wants to maintain an imposing social media impression (Tong, Langwell, & Walther, 2008). A study on Contingencies of Self-Worth and Social-Networking-Site highlighted that women who post loads of photos of themselves on their sites convey strong personal characteristics. These women are more likely to base their self-worth on appearance and use social networking to compete for attention (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011). Their stories and posts on Instagram are supposed to advocate for their flawless virtual life, but in real life, they seek validation when in self-doubt (Stapleton, Gabriella, & Chatwin, 2017).

People post pictures and videos in stories and posts to create memories on social media. They are more plausibly to remember memories that they post on social media. These effects may occur because posting involves rehearsing and processing the event. After all, people may post more memorable events (Rohman & Pitaloka, 2020). Posting stories are also competitive. People prefer to be the first to post a picture or video, thinking that they would break the internet or expecting the least as it is sensitive enough to get the best out of their followers' reactions. It also allows the person tagged to re-share their Story. A new story can also be posted when we meet someone or visit a place out of the blue. When we tag a person or place in a story, curious people will check out the tagged person's account or explore the tagged place (Bainotti, Caliandro, & Gandini, 2020). Instagrammers who expect to gain more followers or acquire an excellent social media impression will tag their followers (friends/colleagues), allowing the mutual friends to follow the tagged account. Introverts and people who are not good at social conversations seldom tag their followers, hoping to start a conversation. Although Instagram is our virtual prestige, users follow an unwritten rule *'The more likes you get, the more confident you feel and have a good night's sleep.'* Instagrammers who want to reach a wider audience will share their posts in their stories with flaunting captions such as *'New Post'* or *'Tap to see the new reels.'* Curious followers might view the Post, but it is uncertain that they will like what they see!

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics of Taggers

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	<i>Taggers (in %)</i>
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Attribute s	N	Min imu m	Max imu m	N ₁	Informed Decision		Urge to try out		Actually tried out		Tags help discover		Willing to avail expensive		
					Ye s	No	Pro duc t	Ser vic e	Pro duc t	Ser vic e	Pro duc t	Ser vic e	Prod uct	Servi ce	
Gen der	Male	27	-	-	44	41	59	75	83	75	58	75	67	42	50
	Female	33	-	-	54	88	12	89	83	83	67	100	89	55	50
Age	18-20	18	18	20	43	72	28	82	81	81	45	82	82	45	54
	21-23	37	21	23	61	68	32	87	81	75	75	100	82	50	44
	24-26	55	24	26	60	66	34	100	10	100	0	67	67	67	67

Note: N = total no. of respondents (in %), N₁ = no. of tagging respondents (in %)

Table 3 shows that 88 % of the female who tags agrees that social proofing strategies make them an informed decision-maker, but only 41 % of male agree. The tagging population has agreed that they not only have the urge but also try out new products and services. Although only 67 % of the taggers are willing to avail of expensive products and services, all respondents have tried out new products and services.

Why Do People Not Tag?

Table 4. Why Do People Not Tag?

Sl. no.	Reasons for People not to tag	No. of Non-Taggers (in %)
1	I don't want to reveal my personal life in a social platform	53.3
2	Concerned about what might others think about me	16.7
3	Scared of my data being stolen	16.7
4	To avoid unnecessary interactions/conversations	36.7
5	Not interested in tagging at all	40

The NTRs' (non-tagging responders) reasons for not tagging are summarized here. NTRs do not think being tagged or being tagged is thrilling. NTRs have seen instances when people take pride in getting tagged and take offense when left out. Respondents agree that using tags does draw followers' attention and helps spark discussion in the comments area. In the end, they also talk about the Story/Post in private chat. The digital age frightens NTRs. They believe their data has been taken, but not due to tagging or mention. According to the respondents, they opt not to tag because they are not interested in doing so.

NTRs are not concerned with what others may think about their social media usage. They hold that one should tag or not tag based on interest rather than out of obligation or concern for what their followers may think. One respondent's remark caught my attention: "People behave depending on a scenario, place, or person, and responding correctly and following the circumstances of a certain scenario is very normal." However, I think they have gotten a new distraction called the exclusive social media face. People have three faces: their social media, private, and public selves. The responder believes that the social media persona is the most perilous factor that might destroy one's identity. They do not wish to subject themselves to suffering to be validated on social media. They respect their privacy, believe their lives should be more personal and do not want their social media friends or followers to validate them. They also want to upload things that do not insult people. NTRs do not wish to tag since they think they have more intriguing pastimes to pursue.

Table 5. Respondent Characteristics of Non-Taggers

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>				<i>Non-Taggers (in %)</i>											
<i>Attributes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>N₂</i>	<i>Informed Decision</i>		<i>Urge to try out</i>		<i>Actually tried out</i>		<i>Tags help discover</i>		<i>Willing to avail expensive</i>		
					<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Service</i>	
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Male</i>	27	-	-	56	18	37	47	47	47	40	53	80	47	40
	<i>Female</i>	33	-	-	46	27	18	53	60	40	46	80	87	60	53
<i>Age</i>	<i>18-20</i>	18	18	20	57	11	28	57	43	28	28	71	100	43	14
	<i>21-23</i>	37	21	23	39	32	24	48	57	48	48	62	71	52	52
	<i>24-26</i>	5	24	26	40	0	40	50	50	50	100	100	50	100	100

Note: N = total no. of respondents (in %), N_2 = no. of non-tagging respondents (in %)

Table 5 shows that 80 % of males who do not tag agreed that tags help them discover new services, and 53 % of the non-tagging respondents agreed that it helps them find new products. Although the non-tagging population of the age group 24-26 is willing to avail of expensive products and services, only 50 % of the population is urged to try out new products and services. The same age group agrees that social proofing strategies are not helping them make informed decisions. This paradigm explains the inefficiency of the social proofing strategies employed in social media marketing (Simerpreet, 2017). However, only 50 % of the age group 24-26 are urged to try out new services, and 100 % of the same age group have tried the new services.

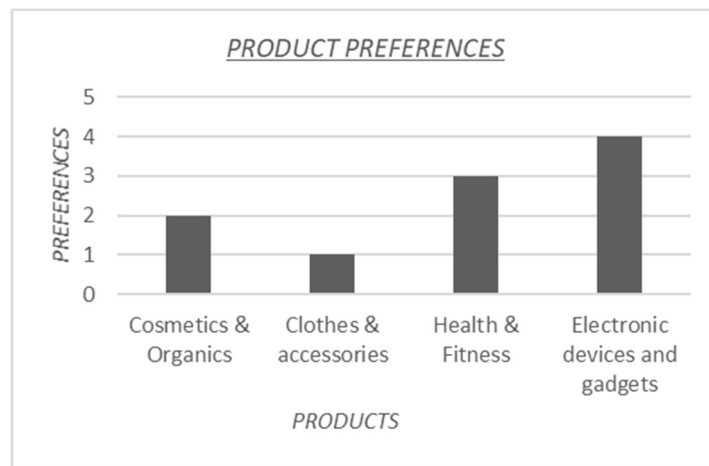


Figure 1. Product Preferences on Tagging

Fig. 1 describes the ranking of product preferences of respondents considering their willingness to tag. Four preferences were given to the respondents, i.e., cosmetics & organics (skin, hair, nail, and hygiene cosmetics), clothes & accessories (Garments, jewelry, watch, purse, and handbag), health & fitness (all wearables, smart bands, smart watches, fitness trackers and V.R. headsets) and electronic devices and gadgets (mobile phones, desktops, laptops, sound and gaming systems). Electronic devices and gadgets are the most preferred product to tag, where clothes and accessories are the least preferred products to tag.

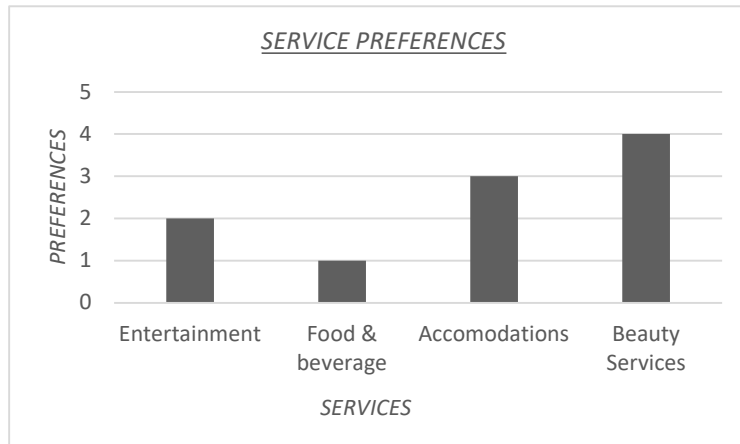


Figure 2. Service Preferences on Tagging

Fig. 2 describes the ranking of service preferences of respondents. The four preferences given to the respondents are entertainment (theatre, mall, concert, park), food & beverage (restaurant, café, pub), accommodations (hotel and resort), and beauty services (parlor, salon, and spa). Beauty services are the most preferred service to tag online, and the least preferred is food and beverage.

Tagging Behavior Affects Social Life

Table 6. Tagging Practices Impact Social

Life

<i>Tagging affects Social Life (in %)</i>		
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Product Review</i>	<i>Service Review</i>
<i>M</i>	33	33
<i>F</i>	50	44

Note: M = Male, F = Female

Recent studies acknowledge that not being tagged on Instagram is a form of social media ostracism (Büttner & Rudert, 2022), but failed to show how tagging behavior on Instagram can affect social life. 33% of male respondents feel that reviewing a product or a service on the Instagram platform can affect their social life. 50% of the female respondents feel that reviewing a product on Instagram can affect their social life, but only 33% think that reviewing services will affect their social life.

Methodology

Overview Of Studies

We conducted a study to understand the tagging behavior on Instagram. The study population is the students at Madras Christian College (MCC), Tambaram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The population size is 8500, approximately that belongs to the age group 18-24. The sample size is 60. In this study, convenience sampling was employed. The respondents were chosen within the Department of Economics for convenience.

Research Design

Procedure

Two separate schedules were prepared for people belonging to two different groups (taggers & non-taggers). Respondents, both taggers and non-taggers, were studied for their tagging behaviors. The questionnaire for tagging respondents was designed to comprehend their level of reasoning on the urge to tag & its effect on their social life and product & service preferences. The questionnaire for non-tagging respondents was designed to understand why they chose not to tag and their product & service preferences. A few common aspects of understanding their (taggers & non-taggers) purchasing behavior based on social proofing factors include Willingness to Purchase, Price Conscious on Purchasing, Conspicuous Consumption, Research-Backed Purchase, and Inherent Need.

Table 7. Social proofing agents

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Agents</i>	<i>Variables</i>
1	<i>Willingness to purchase</i>	<i>A₁ - Willingness to purchase a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₁ - Willingness to avail of a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₁ - Willingness to purchase a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₁ - Willingness to avail of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>
2	<i>Price conscious on purchasing</i>	<i>A₂ - Price conscious on purchasing a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₂ - Price conscious on availing a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₂ - Price conscious on purchasing a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₂ - Price conscious on availing of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>
3	<i>Conspicuous consumption</i>	<i>A₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>
4	<i>Research-backed purchase</i>	<i>A₄ - Research backed the purchase of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₄ - Research backed the purchase of a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>

- C₄ - Research-backed purchase of a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram*
 - D₄ - Research-backed purchase of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram*
 - 5 *Inherent need*
 - A₅ - Inherent need for a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram*
 - B₅ - Inherent need for a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram*
 - C₅ - Inherent need for a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram*
 - D₅ - Inherent need for a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram*
-

This paper attempts to ascertain factors that affect social proofing strategies based on consumers' purchasing preferences. Agent one, Willingness to purchase, includes the willingness of the respondent to purchase a product or a service endorsed by an influencer (celebrity) or reviewed by a friend(follower) on Instagram (*A₁, B₁, C₁, D₁*).

Agent two, Price conscious on purchasing discusses how price-conscious the respondents are on purchasing a product or a service endorsed by an Instagram influencer or reviewed by a follower on Instagram (*A₂, B₂, C₂, D₂*).

Agent three, Conspicuous consumption encompasses unnecessary purchases made) by a celebrity(or a follower) of a product or a service endorsed (or reviewed) (*A₃, B₃, C₃, D₃*). In his book "The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions (1899)," Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) invented the phrase "conspicuous consumption." Conspicuous consumption is a convention in which a person exhibits affluence by spending a lot of money on luxury goods and services (Trigg 2001). The fundamental demand addressed by conspicuous products is reputation (Belk 1988; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Shukla 2008). Consumer happiness with these items frequently stems from reactions from the public rather than actual product use (Wong 1997).

Agent four, Research-backed purchase, examines purchases made by the respondents backed by deliberate research on the products, such as price comparison, reading reviews, and online vs. offline purchasing (*A₄, B₄, C₄, D₄*).

Agent five, Inherent need, argues the purpose of the product or service is a fundamental need or not (*A₅, B₅, C₅, D₅*).

Operationalization Of Variables: Social proofing factors

Social proofing Factors - Cluster Analysis

Table 9. Cluster Analysis

<i>Factors</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
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	-		
<i>Factor I</i>	1.9255853	0.0916336	0.5436677
<i>Factor II</i>	0.9402314	-0.90866	0.4441821
		-	
<i>Factor III</i>	1.272453	0.8650833	0.3016014
<i>Factor Average</i>	0.09570	-0.56070	0.42982
<i>Factor Ranking</i>	<i>C₂</i>	<i>C₃</i>	<i>C₁</i>

Note:

Factors 1,2 & 3 = unknown factors, C₁, C₂ & C₃ = Factor Ranking

Responses from tagging and non-tagging respondents were pooled together to run a Principal Component Analysis and identify the principal components in the data. Then, factor analysis was done based on the identified principal components. Following this, we used cluster analysis to cluster the factors into groups with similar characteristics. In descending order, three factors were developed based on their factor ranking C₁, C₂, and C₃. The version of SPSS used in this study is SPSS-28.

Table 8. Social proofing Factors

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Variables</i>
1	<i>Social proofing overriding</i>	<i>A₂ - Price conscious on purchasing a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>A₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>A₄ - Research-backed purchase of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₂ - Price conscious on availing a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₄ - Research-backed purchase of a Service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₄ - Research-backed purchase of a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₂ - Price conscious on availing of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₃ - Unnecessary purchase of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₄ - Research-backed purchase of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>
2	<i>Purchasing preference on account of social proofing</i>	<i>A₁ - Willingness to purchase a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₁ - Willingness to avail of a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₁ - Willingness to purchase a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>

3	<i>Inherent need - insulation against social proofing</i>	<i>D₁ - Willingness to avail of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>A₅ - Inherent need for a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>B₅ - Inherent need for a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i> <i>C₅ - Inherent need for a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i> <i>D₅ - Inherent need for a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>
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The three factors identified are: Social proofing overriding (A₂, A₃, A₄, B₂, B₄, C₄, D₂, D₃, D₄), Purchasing preference on account of social proofing (A₁, B₁, C₁, D₁) and Inherent need – Insulation against social proofing (A₅, B₅, C₅, D₅).

Hypotheses Development

H₀₁: Social proofing overriding has no significant effect on an informed decision.

H₀₂: Purchasing preference on account of social proofing has no significant effect on informed decisions.

H₀₃: Inherent need - insulation against social proofing has no significant effect on an informed decision.

Table 10. ANOVA by Informed Decision

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>α</i>
1	<i>Social proofing overriding</i>	<i>A₂ - Price conscious on purchasing a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	60	4.27	0.23	<.001**	0.94
		<i>A₃ - Conspicuous consumption of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	60	3.93	0.28	<.001**	0.88
		<i>A₄ - Research-backed purchase of a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	60	3.99	0.25	<.001**	0.85
		<i>B₂ - Price conscious on availing a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	60	3.88	0.24	<.001**	0.83

		<i>B₄ - Research-backed purchase of a Service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 82	2 2	0. 01**	<.0	
		<i>C₄ - Research backed the purchase of a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 63	2 1	0. 01**	<.0	
		<i>D₂ - Price conscious on availing of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 52	2 2	0. 01**	<.0	
		<i>D₃ - Conspicuous consumption of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 4	2 0	0. 01**	<.0	
		<i>D₄ - Research-backed purchase of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 62	2 2	0. 01**	<.0	
2	<i>Purchasing preference on account of social proofing</i>	<i>A₁ - Willingness to purchase a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 75	2 4	0. 01**	<.0	0. 6 9 6
		<i>B₁ - Willingness to avail of a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 57	2 0	0. 04*		
		<i>C₁ - Willingness to purchase a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 42	2 0	0. 08	0.0	
		<i>D₁ - Willingness to avail of a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 67	1 9	0. 13*	0.0	
3	<i>Inherent need - insulation against social proofing</i>	<i>A₅ - Inherent need for a product endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 3	2 0	0. 01**	<.0	0. 8 2 3
		<i>B₅ - Inherent need for a service endorsed by an influencer/celebrity on Instagram</i>	6 0	3. 98	2 0	0. 01**	<.0	

<i>C₅ - Inherent need for a product reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6	4.	0.	<.0
	0	03	2	01*
			1	**
			0.	
<i>D₅ - Inherent need for a service reviewed by a friend/follower on Instagram</i>	6	4.	2	<.0
	0	15	0	01*
			7	**

Note: *n* = no. of total respondents, Mean = mean value of all observations, S.E. = Standard Error, α = factor loadings, **p* < .05, ****p* < .001

Table 10 presents the ANOVA results by Informed Decision among social proofing clusters. H_{01} , social proofing overriding seems statistically significant with $p < 0.001$ and $\alpha = 0.941$. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis, H_{a1} , is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected; social proofing overriding significantly affects informed decisions. Purchasing preference on account of social proofing is not significant, corresponding to the highlighted p-value 0.068 and $\alpha = 0.696$. The null hypothesis is accepted here; purchasing preference on account of social proofing has no significant effect on an informed decision. Inherent need–insulation against social proofing is also significant with $p < 0.001$ and $\alpha = 0.823$. The alternative hypothesis H_{a3} is accepted, while the null hypothesis is rejected; inherent need – insulation against social proofing significantly affects the informed decision.

The three factors identified are social proofing overriding ($A_2, A_3, A_4, B_2, B_4, C_4, D_2, D_3, D_4$), purchasing preference on account of social proofing (A_1, B_1, C_1, D_1), and inherent need – insulation against social proofing (A_5, B_5, C_5, D_5).

H₀₄: Gender has no significant effect on Informed Decision

Table 12. Chi-Square Test

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)</i>	<i>Exact sig. (2-sided)</i>	<i>Exact sig. (1-sided)</i>
<i>Pearson Chi-Square</i>	9.16	1.00	0.002*	-	-
<i>Continuity Correction</i>	7.64	1.00	0.006*	-	-
<i>Likelihood Ratio</i>	9.35	1.00	0.002*	-	-
<i>Fisher's Exact Test</i>	-	-	-	0.004	0.003
<i>N of Valid Cases</i>	60.00	-	-	-	-

Table 11. Crosstab

	<i>Informed Decision</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>

Gender	Female	8	25	33
	Male	17	10	27
Total		25	35	60

Note: Yes = male and female agreeing that tagging helps them make an informed decision

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom, **p* < .05

A Chi-Square test was run to understand the relationship between two categorical variables, gender and informed decision. Pearson Chi-Square indicates a p-value of 0.002 and *df* = 1, resulting in statistical significance between gender and Informed Decision. Yates Continuity Correction was run, considering the size of the data. From table 11, The p-value is 0.006 with *df* = 1, spawning a significant relationship between gender and Informed Decision. The Likelihood Ratio has a p-value of 0.002 and *df* = 1, indicating the model's goodness of fit. The alternative hypothesis, Ha4, is accepted as opposed to the null hypothesis. Gender has a significant effect on an informed decision.

H₀₅: Tagging Behavior has no significant effect on Informed Decision

Table 13. Test Statistics

	Informed Decision
Chi-Square	4.8
<i>df</i>	1
Asymp. sig	0.028*

A Chi-Square test was run here to study the significance between another two categorical variables, tagging behavior, and informed decision. Table 13 indicates that the p-value is 0.028 and the *df* = 1. The alternative hypothesis, Ha5, is accepted, while the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between tagging behavior and informed decision.

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom, Asymp. Sig = asymptotic significance **p* < .05

H₀₆: Age has no significant effect on Informed Decision

Table 14. Test Statistics

	Age
Chi-Square	19.933
<i>df</i>	6
Asymp. sig	0.003*

Table 14 examines the relationship between age and informed decision. The p-value is 0.003, with the *df* being 6. The alternative hypothesis Ha6 is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected; age has a significant relationship with an informed decision.

Note: *df* = degrees of freedom, Asymp. Sig = asymptotic

significance, **p* < .05

Results And Discussions

This study identified two social proofing factors: social proofing overriding and inherent need (insulation against social proofing). The factors identified will guide influencers and reviewers in

influencing purchasing decisions. Previous studies showed how endorsements and reviews could help purchase intention and mediate the role of trust in those relationships (Dwidienawatia, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawarohe, 2020) but failed to show how. The social proofing agents (willingness to purchase, price consciousness, unnecessary purchases, research-backed purchase, and inherent need) will serve as the tools to understand the influence of endorsers and reviewers on consumers' purchasing decisions.

88 % of females and 41 % of males who tags agree that social proofing strategies make them informed decision-makers. Tagging respondents always purchase the tagged product or service when urged. 100 % of tagging respondents have tried out new products and services.

Only 50 % of the non-tagging population in the age range of 24-26 is eager to try out new goods and services, while most are willing to purchase expensive goods and services. The same age group strongly believes that social proofing techniques prevent them from making wise choices. However, only 50% of people between the ages of 24-26 are reportedly compelled to try out new services, where all the non-tagging respondents in the same age group have done so.

Theoretical Implications

This study is, as far as our knowledge, would be the first attempt to develop Social proofing Factors. By examining how social proofing strategies impact consumers, this research contributes to the literature on evaluating social proofing strategies.

With its photo and video features, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms for conveying advertising ideas. Social proofing Factors and Agents presented in this study will help consumers assess the source of their product information on the Instagram platform.

The social proofing mechanisms stop consumers from unwittingly accepting the opinions and decisions of the majority, who are voluntarily modeling other people's behavior. These agents help maintain personal differences. They are being able to pick who and what to trust online has made it a crucial component of how businesses communicate. Social proof factors offer customers a method to make wiser judgments in an unsettling environment. It assists advertisers in raising conversions, decreasing bounce rates, and preventing basket abandonment (Stephen Courtney, 2021).

Research Limitations and Future Research:

The primary goal of this study was to complete a postgraduate dissertation; hence it was restricted to the students at Madras Christian College. The sample size is capped at 60 due to the limited time, money, and other resources available during the Pandemic. The motivation for choosing the Instagram platform over any other social media network is that products and services are more frequently tagged and mentioned on Instagram than on Facebook, where most tags are applied to individuals and places.

Conclusion

In contrast to more traditional celebrities, non-traditional celebrities like bloggers, YouTube stars, and "Instafamous" profiles have more significant influence since their credibility is viewed as

higher and their audience can relate to them (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This research justifies the degree to which a customer may connect to and depend on reviews and endorsements. The social proofing factors discussed in this paper will validate customer purchases. Studies suggest that influencer reviews have a favorable effect on consumers' propensity to buy. However, client feedback did not demonstrate its impact (Dwidienawatia, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawarohe, 2020). However, aside from traditional data collecting, no studies have been used as a tool to understand how customers make their judgments.

Social proofing Overriding emphasizes how consumers should scrutinize conventional social proofing strategies. Consumers are believed to be price sensitive and back their purchases by research before making conspicuous or impulsive purchases. The Inherent Need – Insulation against Social proofing is the second and crucial factor that decides whether the consumer has an innate need for the purchase.

Declaration of interest: The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the paper. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Authors

Corresponding Author - Miss. Parasala Jothi Sundhareeswari J., M.A., Postgraduate Student, Institute of education, University College London, greater London, Greater London, The UK, parasala.jagadeesan.23@ucl.ac.uk

Co-Author - Dr. Shobana Karthikeyan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Madras Christian College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, shobanakarhikeyan@mcc.edu.in