

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Decisions

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Abstract:

Consumer behavior research began in the mid-twentieth century, focusing on how consumers identify needs and consider marketing inputs. Various theories aimed to understand how consumers classify needs based on stimulus inputs from marketing. With the rise of social media, advertisers now see these platforms as effective for reaching larger audiences at lower costs. Although not traditionally viewed as influential, recent research indicates that social media creates social pressures impacting consumer decisions. Social media marketing enhances brand familiarity, simplifies decision-making, and expands opportunities for information search before purchases. (Matić Šošić, 2019)(Ndinda Mutisya, 2018)

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer behavior, marketing inputs, Purchase Decisions.

1. Introduction

Consumers spend several hours on social media every week to share information about brands, products, and services. Social media marketing is defined as using social media and similar online platforms to promote a product or service. The use is rapidly spreading among

companies in the 21st century and even a well established company takes interest in social media to promote their products such as Campbell's Soup, Old Spice and Grey Poupon. Effects of social media marketing on Consumer Purchase Decisions among Millennials in the Philippines is deemed significant due to the demographic of Social Media Users. The millennial generation, consisting of individuals born from 1980 to 1995, is now the largest population segment in the Philippines, holding 25% share of the population and expected to grow (Ndinda Mutisya, 2018). A well-thought campaign may further promote awareness and consideration of a target product. Thus, a study entitled

"Influence of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions among millenials in the Philippines" seeks to identify such campaign methods.

2. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical model of social media marketing's influence on consumer decision-making derives concepts from established consumer behavior research. The Fogg Behavior Model serves as a foundational reference, but its dimensions—motivation, capability, and prompt—are misaligned with social media marketing. To address this, the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model are used to create a framework highlighting key consumer decision variables. This framework identifies five crucial constructs: (1) brand exposure, (2) messaging, (3) targeting, (4) engagement, and (5) operational context. These elements form a multi-faceted model of social media marketing that integrates program design and platform selection, moving beyond mere symbols to examine pay and attribution. (Nash, 2019)

2.1. Consumer Behavior Theories

Social media is vital for brand communications and customer engagement, making it relevant for consumer behavior scholars. Online, customers can't examine products, so they depend on peer guidance about attributes, performance, and brand attitudes. Social channels boost brand exposure to specific communities, increasing awareness and providing insights into purchasing decisions. For potential and actual customers, social media offers valuable pre-purchase information through recommendations and reviews, which enhances or challenges personal knowledge, altering how consumption options are assessed. (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)(Usman & Okafor, 2019)

2.2. Social Media Marketing Constructs

Social media marketing encompasses several constructs that manifest marketing actions in different forms (Matić Šošić, 2019). Brand exposure refers to how often a brand is exposed to the target audience through social media posts, advertisements, profile views, or mentions. Messaging describes what the brand communicates to the audience, including marketing appeals, framing, and other marketing message elements. Targeting defines the selection of customer segments for marketing actions (Usman & Okafor, 2019). Engagement relates to how and to what extent the audience interacts with the brand through likes, shares, comments, and other actions.

3. Methodological Considerations

Social media has evolved into a significant part of daily life, prompting research on its impact on consumer behavior. However, studies on this subject are limited. Most research examines whether social media helps consumers stay informed about brands or influences them to switch brands. Effective social media marketing strategies merge two consumer behaviors: purchasing based on social media suggestions and engaging with posts through likes or comments. The literature includes various research questions and strategies, but common elements like advertising, endorsement, and co-creation emerge. Content co-creation enhances the consumer-brand relationship through social media interactions. However, social media research is often fragmented, focusing on specific platforms like Facebook and primarily approaching it from an information science perspective rather than marketing or communication (Paghaleh et al., 2022). While some studies address corporate

social responsibility, most concentrate on how inter-firm networks impact information-sharing motivation and influence user behavior (Parveen et al., 2015). Qualitative frameworks can summarize elements from various disciplines. Economic and marketing scholars view co-creation as an engaged process where users offer contributions for greater control over decisions (Khan, 2021). Other marketing concepts emphasize achievement, progress, and convenience, suggesting that close substitutes lead to similar decision-making strategies (Khan et al., 2018). (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)(Matić Šošić, 2019)

4. Key Mechanisms of Influence

Social media marketing shapes consumers' purchase decisions through various mechanisms. Exposure to information builds product awareness, generates purchase intentions, and influences offline purchases. A wider reach increases brand recall and progression through the decision cycle. Message framing, including emotional, rational, or humorous appeals, impacts consumer evaluation. Persuasive messages undergo different processing types, from shallow attractiveness assessments to in-depth product attribute evaluations. Social proof in networks affects purchasing; likes and shares boost susceptibility, create positive impressions, and enhance information spread, particularly through influential figures who provide valuable recommendations. Consumers often mimic other users, exhibiting herd behavior. Trust in online sources, including brands and user-generated content, is key throughout the consumer journey, especially during information searches and evaluating alternatives. Relatable influencers enhance brand trust and confidence through parasocial relationships. Influencers can be categorized by popularity and brand fit, with high-fit low-reach influencers being particularly effective. Social media fosters engagement and relationship building. Higher engagement levels indicate stronger ties, while formal contests suggest less meaningful interactions. Social media's relationship-building capacity makes it a vital marketing channel, sustaining influence long after initial purchase intentions. (Houldcroft, 2017)(Leparoux et al., 2019)

4.1. Information Exposure and Awareness

Social media marketing campaigns significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers access product information through social media, such as reviews and recommendations, affecting their interest and intentions to purchase brands. Brand-related awareness enhances the likelihood of purchase over time and distance. Social media is crucial in early buying processes, as it addresses consumers' needs and wants. It helps build brand awareness, which is vital for purchasing decisions and involves familiarity with a brand's qualities or image. Recognizing an unmet need often begins the purchase process. Traditionally, marketers relied on mass media to trigger this recognition. However, social media has expanded outreach, influencing consumers through shared online content even before they actively search for products. (Matić Šošić, 2019)(da Conceição Godinho, 2017)(Vandayuli Riorini, 2018)

4.2. Persuasion Techniques and Message Framing

Social media allow consumers to receive tailored messages from several sources according to their interests, which can impact their decision processes and purchase intentions. The nature and

effectiveness of social media communication vary according to how brands frame their messages, and more specifically, whether they undertake brand orientation or consumer orientation. Brand-oriented communication focuses solely on product attributes. In contrast, a consumer-oriented approach interacts with consumer needs, feelings, and context and provides symbolic and affective messages beyond product attributes. Messages referring to the brand, product, need, mood, and social use of the brand can stimulate interest and attention. Accordingly, framing offers brands the opportunity to adopt diverse communication strategies and persuade consumers during pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase moments (Usman & Okafor, 2019).

4.3. Social Proof and Network Effects

Consumers increasingly rely on social media to support their buying decisions; nonetheless, much is still unknown about the mechanisms behind this influence. Two key concepts that help explain how social media marketing affects consumer behavior are social proof and network effects. Social media provides a range of interactions that can signal social proof and endorse products or services, enhancing consumers' willingness to adopt them. Likes, shares, and comments constitute basic forms of social proof, indicating the popularity of a brand or product and serving as social endorsements. Interactions with posts from individuals in one's network can be even more impactful than brand messages, and influencer endorsements become a form of word-of-mouth exposure. Since many social media platforms and marketing strategies aim to achieve virality, herd behavior amplifies the probability of further adoption and experimentation (Usman & Okafor, 2019).

Purchasing choices can therefore be viewed as belonging to a social or cultural group rather than an individual trait. When the purchase decision is made transparently to peers in a social setting, the pressure exerted by the peers or social group may affect the behavior of the individual considering the purchase. Individuals may fear the disapproval of their peers if they make the "wrong" purchase. Commercial brands attempt to induce the marketing practice called "sjabloonzorg," or "template care," which suppresses the tendency of individuals to question their buying habits or even to buy a product (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

4.4. Trust, Credibility, and Influencer Roles

Source credibility is crucial in marketing and social media, as consumers seek trustworthy information to build desire and trust. Social media creates new opportunities for brand building and product promotion, allowing consumers to interact easily with message sources, enhancing brand awareness and product understanding, which influences purchasing decisions. The perceived credibility of the source significantly impacts this intention, consisting of trustworthiness and expertise. Celebrity and influencer endorsements can boost trust and keep brands top-of-mind, making influencer marketing an effective strategy. Influencers build relativity and authenticity with their followers through engaging content, creating parasocial relationships that make their recommendations feel sincere. Consumers prefer seeking advice from influencers over traditional companies. While celebrities have wide reach, influencers establish closer connections through ongoing communication, offering a unique opportunity to explore consumption complexities. Influencer marketing involves brand-initiated consumer interactions amplified by influential users.

Influencer typologies include: (1) mega influencers, who are like celebrities; (2) macro influencers, with substantial exposure; (3) micro influencers, viewed as experts; and (4) nano influencers, with a localized focus and strong personal connections.

4.5. Engagement, Interaction, and Relationship Building

Online dialogue between brands and consumers is a key social media marketing tactic. Dialogic engagement helps companies build community relationships through content co-creation. Actively managing communities and responding to follower comments demonstrates practicality. Long-term ties require commitment beyond immediate sales, offering substantial benefits. Social media marketing fosters engagement and interaction, generating value and building relationships. Companies and consumers connect through various channels, forming communities around shared interests. Dialogue includes direct exchanges and indirect interactions like comments and likes. Community management is essential for nurturing relationships by monitoring user-generated content. Social media marketing promotes engagement through community and connection among brands and consumers. (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)(Ramsunder, 2011)

5. Platforms and Content Formats

On social media, brands can employ various content formats, including text, images, and video, to expose consumers to information and advertisements. Text-based content can take the form of pure text, or combined with visual elements, e.g., infographics, memes, or animated content. Visual content can include static images and graphics, short animations, and dynamic visual elements embedded in videos, such as image overlays, animated text, and transitions between scenes. The short attention span of consumers on social media calls for maximum engagement within minimum time. Video content—often considered the most impactful format—has been shown to result in higher click-through rates, conversion rates, and brand recall (Ndinda Mutisya, 2018). Long videos can, however, be cumbersome and time-consuming. Short clips in the range of a few seconds to 1–2 minutes are ideal. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram allow for creating and disseminating easy-to-consume short videos, drawing particular attention from marketers.

5.1. Textual, Visual, and Video Content

The use of textual, visual, and video content forms is a critical consideration in social media marketing, as different modalities elicit distinct attention, memory, and effectiveness responses, which in turn shape consumers' purchase decisions. Textual content-based social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, and blogs allow users to present text and images when sharing their thoughts, opinions, and product-related advice; content-based platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Tumblr enable users to create and share multimedia content; yet visual-based users often lack the theoretical underpinnings of usability, in contrast to audio-visual based. Visual marketing has emerged as an influential avenue in the field of marketing communications, as it capitalizes on the predominance of visual information across human sensory modalities (Matić Šošić, 2019).

Indeed, visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text; 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual; and consumers retain 65% of visual

inforf6feb29a-ac9f-446f-be4e-fc7453dc1cba on three days after exposure. These figures demonstrate the efficiency and potential effectiveness of images, videos, infographics, augmented reality, and other audio-visual formats across industries (Johnson Jorgensen & Kean, 2018)

5.2. User-Generated Content and Brand Communities

Consumer adoption of user-generated content remains limited, even though its perceived credibility surpasses that of firm-generated messages. Nonetheless, active participation in online brand communities positively correlates with purchase intention. User-generated content shapes brand perception, and commitment to brand communities fosters co-creation and advocacy involvement (Poulis et al., 2019). Within evolving social media contexts, firm dissemination of marketing communication adapts to accommodate heightened consumer-generated activity.

5.3. Paid Advertising versus Organic Reach

Businesses have recognized the potential of social media to connect with target audiences. Users share content and can follow brands on their news feeds, making marketing seem more organic. Brands must understand social media marketing, as advertisements on social media differ significantly from traditional media, even with the same message. Two ways to share marketing content are through direct posts or via influencers. For effective campaigns, simply sharing knowledge is insufficient; creating an enabling environment is essential. Paid advertising minimizes reliance on luck and enhances engagement. Companies that embrace paid ads quickly can develop smarter, more effective content. Testing various consumer behaviors yields valuable data across regions. Organic outreach can be unpredictable due to unstructured engagement. After viewing multiple ads, savvy consumers decide whether to follow and engage with a brand. (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)(Harding et al., 2019)

6. Consumer Decision Processes in the Social Media Era

Information on search involves consumer activities aimed at finding opinions about a product or service before purchase. In the evolving online landscape, various influences can deviate from traditional consumer behavior. Consumers do not favor a single search channel; their choice depends on factors like content type, application features, channel relevance, and content attributes. These attributes guide consumers in their buy/no-buy decisions, helping them make informed choices that align with their preferences and needs. (Nash, 2019)(Usman & Okafor, 2019)(Matić Šošić, 2019)

6.1. Problem Recognition and Information Search

Problem recognition occurs when a consumer becomes aware of a need, which is often prompted by various internal or external stimuli in their environment. This awareness leads to an information search, which is sparked by a variety of factors including previous purchases made, advertising influences encountered, and interactions on social media platforms. Social media plays an increasingly pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, acting as a powerful platform for promotion and communication that directly influences and guides the decision-making processes of individuals. (Matić Šošić, 2019)

6.2. Evaluation of Alternatives and Attribute Consideration

Consumers evaluate alternatives after recognizing a problem and conducting an information search. In social media, perceived information overload complicates choices. Earlier literature focused on the quantity of data, but contemporary studies highlight unreliability and uncertainty with large unfiltered information. A framework quantifies trusted sources in the buying process. Research shows the social media environment shapes evaluative criteria that influence assessments of alternatives. Social platforms are recognized as significant venues affecting consumer behavior, impacting purchase intention, post-purchase actions, retention, satisfaction, and repurchase decisions. (Ramsunder, 2011)(Matić Šošić, 2019)(da Conceição Godinho, 2017)

6.3. Purchase, Post-Purchase Behavior, and Feedback Loops

Purchase and post-purchase behaviors, along with feedback mechanisms, closely linked to interactions with the retail brand on various social media platforms, represent the final and crucial stages of the consumer decision-making process. While browsing behaviors on social media, influenced by interactions among relevant peers, seem to trigger the “purchase-intention” signal, it is essential to recognize that the multiplicative nature of the decision process facilitates complex chain effects. These effects occur from offline behaviors informing actions on social media, eventually leading to a successful final purchase conversion. Interestingly, among the various purchased categories, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) types exhibited more pronounced engagement and activity on social media platforms. The satisfaction that arises following purchases generates subsequent online feedback, often manifested through reviews and ratings on social media, which are intrinsically linked to the satisfaction and repurchase loop, further demonstrating the importance of maintaining positive consumer relationships online. (Matić Šošić, 2019)(Usman & Okafor, 2019)

7. Moderating and Mediating Factors

Motivated by the compelling and recent observations concerning the influence of social media marketing, a growing body of scholars has thoroughly examined various moderators and mediators in this space, evaluating their significance and relevance to current marketing practices. Research focusing on purchasing intention within social media settings has identified a range of important factors, such as credibility, personalization, and concerns around information overload, which serve as key moderators influencing consumer behavior. The existing literature—while it often focuses on critical areas like establishing direct effects of social media marketing on purchasing decisions—delves deeper into evaluating the relevance of multiple factors like trustworthiness and diverse mixed-marketing-response models. This literature not only contrasts the raw correlations between social media and product effectiveness but also explores responsive-pricing models. It investigates how price changes can influence consumer behavior and highlights the interactions between consumer interest and recommendations, noting that the influence is often missing at the critical transaction stage. Furthermore, it explores both linear and nonlinear dynamic pricing models and analyzes the appropriateness of various models, including free products, multi-product scenarios, government commodity-demand, and the importance of dynamic-pricing awareness in today's market. Additionally, it discusses the role of price-sensitivity agents in shaping consumer attitudes

and behaviors, which adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of social media marketing's impact. (Matić Šošić, 2019)

8. Measurement and Evidence

Social media now significantly influences consumer behavior, shaping attitudes, intentions, and purchase decisions. Exposure through social media marketing increases the likelihood of brand-related information searching (da Conceição Godinho, 2017). Consequently, awareness and consideration of brands are likely to rise, especially among users without prior experience or information. Brands actively leveraging social media not only gain awareness but also remain top-of-mind for consideration.

When considering alternatives, social media marketing encourages evaluation and experimentation. Many consumers rely on social media for assistance, often searching for brands or product categories on platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. The credibility of brand-related content generated by ordinary users (e.g., influencers) further validates information on social media, while likes, shares, comments, and other visible metrics serve as additional indicators of value (Houldcroft, 2017). Messages that resonate within social media networks, especially those conveyed by ordinary users, foster strong consideration.

The role of social media extends beyond the pre-purchase stage to influence post-purchase behavior. Social media marketing reassures consumers about their choices and nurtures the intention to repurchase. Brands are perceived as covering all necessary information and answering questions that arise after purchase. Direct inquiries to the brand on social media, along with content posted by satisfied peers, contribute to this psychological satisfaction. The re-consideration stage and potential for repeat purchases are thus incorporated into the framework.

9. Implications for Practice

The insights garnered from this review can be condensed into three fundamental propositions. First, social media marketing expands the scope and architecture of consumer decision-making. In addition to encountering suitable brand information at the outset of their search, consumers now grapple with diverse alternatives earlier in the process. Furthermore, these decision structures evolve over time, as new details sustain continual interaction with brand candidates. Second, the information acquired via social media channels predominantly informs evaluations of suitability, credibility, and desirability. At an advanced stage, such input plays a crucial role in shaping considerations of worthiness. Third, although the stage that mobilizes social media input may shift, the latent capacity to inform evaluations persists throughout the journey (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

10. Future Directions

As social media becomes a key marketing tool, research has focused on its impact on consumer purchase decisions. However, there is still a significant gap in understanding how social media influences the consumer decision-making process. Future studies should explore the new decision process in this era and how social media marketing drives awareness, shapes evaluation criteria, aids information search, influences sharing, and solicits feedback. Research should assess the

effectiveness of different platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and communication formats (e.g., text, image, video) in enhancing purchase intention. The rise of user-generated content also needs investigation, as consumers increasingly rely on peers rather than marketers. (Matić Šošić, 2019)

11. Conclusion

Over the past decade, social media has come to play an ever-more important role in marketing communications, leading to the emergence of a major new branch of marketing. The volume of social media content has grown exponentially, and consumers continually create new content on social media platforms. Numerous studies examine consumers' online activities, and suggest that they spend on average several hours a day online. Consumers interact with social media for various reasons, foremost among them leisure, socializing, and information retrieval. Given the ubiquity of social media in the lives of consumers, marketers increasingly seek to disseminate their messages via social media concurring with the dominant changes in the media landscape. This has prompted research into the influence of social media marketing on consumers and their purchase decisions. Moreover, social media marketing considerably differs from traditional marketing, prompting marketers to seek to direct consumers from social media platforms to the marketers' own websites. Consumers' decision-making processes have also shifted, with an increase in online shopping and information searching leading to further potential influences.

The existing body of research scholars has explored numerous theoretical foundations, marketing constructs, measurements, platforms, messages, techniques, and other variables or dimensions and their relevance to the purchase-influence process. Strong parallels and additional research gaps stem from differences in media and advertising content between traditional media and social media. There has also been limited investigation from an academic perspective, particularly across social and commercial domains, alongside methodological and evidence-based debates. A systematic theoretical framework delineates social media and purchase-influence dimensions. Notable characteristics of the purchase-influence process in the social media era and attendant constructs of social media marketing, consumer behavior, and consumer-decision-making models are explored. Additional insights extend to the effects of mass and social media, the influence of word-of-mouth, the social media population and usage patterns of other social media marketing players. The burgeoning scope of these scholarly engagements implies a clear, ongoing need for further analysis to keep researchers abreast of these rapidly evolving trends.

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