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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

***Abstract***

*Social media occupies an important position as a communication tool. People around the world use social media to connect with other people or organizations. Globally, people have started using social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc. to share their experiences. As consumers, people share product reviews, service information, food or health tips, product alerts, product tips, and more. Social media is no longer used only for conversations, it is increasingly used for commerce.*

*Social factors have always played a role in consumer shopping habits, but the ubiquity of smartphones and social networks has taken word of mouth to new heights. Most consumers around the world now carry purchasing power in their pockets every day. Slowly forgetting to go shopping only in stores to discover new products, now consumers can navigate through their social feeds for inspiration.*

*Whether you want to inspire and engage your social audience or encourage online shopping and in-store shopping, the impact of social media on consumer behavior must not be ignored.*

*Statistics show that 81% of consumers shopping decisions are influenced by their friends social media posts. 66% of consumers were inspired to buy from a new brand after seeing pictures on social media from other consumers. Consumers are 71% more likely to make a purchase based on the recommendations of social networks.*

***Keywords:*** *social media, consumers, brand, communication, online shopping.*

**Introduction**

Social media has occupied an important position as a communication tool. People around the world use social media to connect with other people or organizations. In recent years, Internet users are looking at the Internet from a new perspective, in a commercial way. Its development and the emergence of online stores have turned consumers into consumers. Also, the most important role of social media has changed the way consumers and marketers communicate. Influences on the information society influence consumer decision-making processes and product evaluations. Social media provides a new channel for acquiring product information through mutual communication. The Internet and virtual communities have transformed consumers, societies and corporations with widespread access to information, better social networking and improved communication skills. Globally, people have started using social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn to share their experiences. As customers, people share product reviews, service information, food or health tips, product alerts, product tips, and more. People have a lot of "links" on social networks, so the information is consumed by many people. This information becomes a source of influence on consumers and their buying behavior. The unique aspects of social media and its immense popularity have revolutionized marketing practices such as advertising and promotion. Social media has also influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior, such as dissatisfaction statements or behaviors about a product or company. Online communities and social networking sites (SNSs) are an effective web technology for social interaction and information sharing. Social networking sites are central to e-commerce in the current environment, where consumers make social connections and participate in cyberspace. Today's consumers have access to many different sources of information and experiences, which are facilitated by the information and recommendations of other customers. This is an important point because customer engagement through social media is a key factor in marketing.

**The influence of social media on consumer behavior**

There are more customers on social networks than ever before. Consumers are looking for reviews and recommendations. Therefore, it is essential to have a prominent online presence on various social media platforms. The latest trend in marketing is the introduction of social media. Social media has the power to influence potential customers from start to finish and beyond. Consumers need awareness of a particular brand and its offer. At a later stage, when they start narrowing down their choices, an influential person on social media is needed to further promote the brand. Ongoing dialogue between the client and the brand is essential to maintain a strong relationship. Attractive and informative content keeps customers loyal to the desired brand.

There are many ways in which social media influences consumer behavior. Some of these ways are the following:

1. **Building product awareness**

Social media has a huge impact on consumers when they try to raise awareness of a particular product. When people face a problem, they start looking for a solution. But often people do not know which product or service will solve their problems. How do people get to know your product? A large part of the audience gets to know your brand through the content that is distributed on social networks. The goal of any business is to influence consumer behavior. If you do not have a social media brand presence, you are missing out on an important opportunity to influence the consumer buying behavior.

1. **Social proof as a greater force for purchasing decisions**

Social networks have resulted in the evolution of social proof as a greater purchasing power. Happy customers tend to praise products with likes, shares, reviews and comments on social media. Marketers make social space more transparent by sharing reviews, comments, likes, tweets and pins with their happy customers to generate brand trust and increase conversion rates. Sharing testimonials, case studies, photos, comments, and videos of satisfied clients builds more trust and works well on a landing page, consultation page, and login page. The power of social proof can not be undermined when social media has become an integral part of buyers and sellers. Social marketers who want to sell their products need to have solid social proof in the form of case studies, pictures, videos, podcast interviews and influencers as part of their sales strategy. All of this will eventually increase the conversion rate.

1. **Promotions, discounts and deals on social media**

Many social media users sign up for social media groups / forums they are interested in. When consumers see promotions, discounts and deals on social media, it affects their buying behavior. 64% of online consumers wait to buy things until they go on sale. Social media is a low-cost platform that gives brands instant access to the billions of active social media users. Brands need to make sure the target audience sees your products, likes them and shares them on social media, which helps to influence consumer behavior.

1. **Social media influencers**

Consumers are more likely to buy when they receive referrals from a person they trust. Celebrities and celebrities inspire their audiences and influence their buying behavior. 49% of consumers seek guidance from social media influencers before making a purchase decision. Influencer marketing can do wonders for a brand by attracting more customers. Many marketers are replacing celebrities with influencers on YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. These online stars provide unfiltered product feedback, and consumers like it.

Reports indicate that consumers who are influenced by social media are 4 times more likely to spend more on shopping. Moreover, the impact can be so great that 29% of consumers are more likely to buy the same day they use social media.

Whether brands want to inspire and engage social audiences or encourage online and in-store shopping, these are 14 statistics that the brand should not ignore. Here's how social media influences consumer behavior:

1. 81% of consumers 'shopping decisions are influenced by their friends' social media posts. (Forbes)
2. 66% of consumers were inspired to buy from a new brand after seeing pictures on social media from other consumers (Stackla)
3. Consumers are 71% more likely to make a purchase based on the recommendations of social networks. (Hubspot)
4. Facebook participates with 50% of the total social referrals and 64% of the total social income. (Business Insider)
5. 31% of consumers say they use social media channels to search for new products to buy. (Aimia)
6. Millennials are 1.6 times more likely to use digital channels to find out about new products. (Facebook Insights)
7. 84% of millennials say that foreign-generated content has at least some impact on what they buy. (Gartner)
8. 53% of consumers recommend companies or products in tweets, and 48% follow to buy those products or services. (SproutSocial)
9. 78% of consumers say that companies' social media posts affect their purchases. (Forbes)
10. Customers are 6 times more likely to buy a product if the site includes images from social media. (AdWeek)
11. Conversions increase by 133% when mobile phone buyers see positive reviews before making a purchase. (Bazaarvoice)
12. In 2015, Facebook accounted for 52% of online and offline consumer purchases. (DigitasLBi Commerce)
13. Global Social Trade Revenue Reached $ 30 Billion in 2015. (Statista)
14. 56% of consumers say they are more influenced by pictures and videos on social media when shopping online now than before the pandemic. (Stackla)

**The influence of social media on consumer purchasing decisions**

Many purchases are made online nowadays and in 2020 this number has grown significantly thanks to the pandemic. As the number of internet users increases and technology companies develop more ways to integrate the online world into shopping, online retail is expected to grow exponentially. Logically, many consumer shopping decisions are also made online, and where people spend most of their time online - on social media. According to GlobalWebIndex, 54% of social media users use social media to research products and 71% are more likely to buy products and services based on social media referrals. It's hard to say exactly how much social media affects customers, not just what they buy, but their consumer habits in general. Social networks have changed the way products are promoted and even provided new ways of advertising. Social networks influence consumer purchasing decisions in a number of ways:

1. **They shorten the journey of consumers to the desired product**

The first thing that can be noticed when it comes to customers on social networks is the shortened travel of customers. People used to find out about a product, watch a TV commercial several times, and the next week they might go shopping and finally buy the product. Now, this process can take a few minutes. Consumers can now buy the desired product the same day using social media. This means that as soon as they see a product, they simply click on the link and buy it: there is no need to wait before going shopping. Customer travel is not only shorter, but also more complex. Social media has made product research more accessible to consumers. As a result, customers spend more time researching and checking more sources for reviews.

1. **The impact of social proof**

Social proof is not a new concept: man is a social animal and we have been making recommendations for centuries. The thing is, these recommendations and counter-recommendations can now be heard by hundreds of people. People proactively seek recommendations on social media (and brands unfortunately often ignore them). According to the Awario study, only 9% of brand conversations are answered by customer questions, but, depending on the industry, there may be more than 100 people seeking social media recommendations in a month. Social proof has the greatest impact on your friends and the people you know. But more and more people on social media are not just following their friends - they are also following influencers. This is where influencer marketing comes into play.

1. **The power of influencers over consumer purchasing decisions**

Influencers are social media users who have a strong loyal audience that often shares the same interests. Their opinions are naturally seen by a large number of people, people who trust them. According to a study by Influencer Marketing Hub, almost 50% of Twitter users bought as a direct result of an influencer tweet. Micro-influencers are especially effective in convincing their audience because they are usually experts in a niche and a specific topic, which makes them a natural source of recommendations for this topic.

**Most Popular Social Media Platforms**

The most popular social networks have seen a lot of movement in the last few years. Their power to reach a large audience plays an important role in the services and products that brands offer to customers. Currently, there are over 4.5 billion people worldwide who use some form of social media - about 57% of the world's population. Knowing how deeply each of these platforms reaches the global online community is crucial to a company's marketing strategy. Choosing the social network on which the brand will focus its marketing efforts is a very important decision.

Some of the best social media platforms in 2022 are the following:

1. **Instagram**

Long home to influencers, brands, bloggers, small business owners, friends and everyone else, Instagram has surpassed 1 billion monthly users. Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms for teens and young adults.

1. **YouTube**

YouTube is the second most popular search engine in the world today, just behind its parent company, Google. If a business could benefit from producing video tutorials or reviews, visual instructional content, product reviews or interviews, then this social media platform is a must to reach their more than 2 billion monthly users.

1. **Facebook**

With almost 2.5 billion monthly users, Facebook is the largest social media site in the world. While this practically guarantees that at least part of the audience uses the platform regularly, it has a somewhat negative reputation among younger users who are increasingly turning to other alternative locations.

1. **Twitter**

While the monthly active Twitter users have been steadily hovering around 300 million for some time now, an astonishing 40% of those users are active on the site multiple times a day, suggesting that the audience that uses the platform is probably very engaged. The popularity of this social media site remains high among tech users and is particularly active in the B2B verticals associated with business, marketing and politics today.

1. **TickTock**

TickTock is less than two years old, but received over 1 billion downloads of their video-based application in its first year of operation. Today, TickTock reportedly has over 800 million monthly users, which immediately puts it among the best social media platforms in the world in terms of net number of users. However, most of his audience is concentrated among those aged 16 to 24.

1. **Snapchat**

Although it seems to be losing ground on competing social media platforms like Instagram and TickTock, Snapchat still remains one of the most used apps with a demographic under the age of 25 - with over 300 million monthly users in recent months. Most Snapchat users visit the app to share updates and communicate with friends and family through missing pictures and short video messages.

1. **Pinterest**

Pinterest has become a very popular tool on social media for storing ideas and finding creative inspiration when it comes to everything from cooking to home projects, vacation ideas, interior design, business and everything in between. This social media platform is often cited as a key part of the product discovery journey. With over 320 million monthly users, Pinterest boasts one of the most concentrated female audiences among all social media pages.

**Conclusion**

The data and our daily experience on the Internet show that social media has a big impact on shopping decisions. The impact of social media on customer buying decisions can be explained by many factors: social proof, social media penetration, and the availability of online retail. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to single out a particular brand on social media. Focusing on the right platform, building creative social media marketing campaigns, and using up-to-date technologies can help. While business owners cannot get customers to use social media, they can influence the products and services that a social media related customer can find. That is why it is important to establish a presence on social networks. Business owners can even encourage people to use social media while shopping by incorporating social media into their marketing. If people know they can find out about special offers on social media, they will go check it out. Social media influences shopping behavior among all age groups, but especially the important younger populations. Business owners need to work on improving their social media marketing strategies in order to increase sales.

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