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HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

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MSc. International Management (Dual Award with Nottingham Trent
University)

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March, 2023

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to understand how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour. For this dissertation, I conducted quantitative research using a survey questionnaire. I decided to choose positivism as my research philosophy. To analyse the data acquired, I also employed the descriptive statistics data analysis method. Generation Z was the focus of my research. Social media does, in fact, influence consumer purchase behaviour, at least as far as the survey's participants are concerned. This paper provides insightful information about Generation Z and how social media affects their decision-making.

This research analysis makes it clear that social media has a big impact on how we live and make some decisions. The responses to the survey questions show that consumers believe social media influences their decision to purchase a specific product. Social media has a complex and multifaceted impact on how people behave, with different platforms and communication methods leading to different results. It significantly affects how customers act when making purchases, how they perceive goods, and if they plan to buy anything. Some variables that affect how people use social media are culture and personal values.

I advise emphasising the paper's flaws even more in subsequent studies on the subject. To provide a more accurate picture of the public's perception of the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour, the sample size should be significantly greater. Another approach would be to try to concentrate on a certain niche by reducing the range of the research.

KEYWORDS:

Social Media, Marketing, Brands, Advertising, Popularity, Influence, and Purchasing Decision.

JEL CODES:

M0, M30

PORTUGUÊS

O objetivo desta dissertação é entender como a comunicação social afeta o comportamento de consumidor, no seu processo de aquisição. O uso de questionário é uma prática de investigação muito comum nas ciências sociais e psicológicas. Para esta dissertação de carácter quantitativa, decidi realizar um estudo por meio de questionário. E, a filosofia de investigação é positivista. O tratamento estatístico dos dados é descritivo.

O alvo da investigação é a geração Z, contudo, teria sido mais profícuo se pudesse ter feito uma comparação profunda da geração dos millennials com grupos de mais idade. É claro que a comunicação social afeta efetivamente o comportamento de compra do consumidor, como revelado pelos respondentes do inquérito administrado. Neste trabalho, ideias muito válidas sobre a geração Z são apresentadas e como a comunicação social influencia as suas decisões.

O presente relatório de investigação torna evidente que a comunicação social exerce uma influência na forma como vivemos e nas nossas vidas e, força-nos para determinadas decisões. As respostas ao nosso questionário demonstram que os clientes sentem que a comunicação social realmente afeta as suas escolhas de produtos finais. A comunicação social tem um papel complexo e multidimensional na forma como agimos, com plataformas diferentes e estilos de comunicação diversos e que produzem um certo resultado final. Ela tem um impacto enorme como efetuamos as compras, como olhamos para os artigos e se queremos efetuar uma aquisição. A cultura, valores pessoais e traços de personalidade são alguns dos fatores que influenciam como relacionamos com a comunicação social-

Para investigações futuras sobre este tema, deveremos usar uma amostra maior para obter uma visão melhorada sobre a impressão da população no que se refere ao impacto da comunicação social sobre o comportamento de compra do consumidor. E, estudar um nicho de mercado mais particularizado.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to socialisation where individuals produce, share, or exchange ideas and concepts in online communities (Carr & Hayes, 2015). This growth of social media has been sparked by humans' demand for social interaction. It is expanding at a never-before-seen pace. When the internet became widely used, its popularity skyrocketed, and it has since continued to rise (Lenhart et al., 2010). Social media is used by people from all backgrounds, both similar and distinct. People who would have never had a voice before now had access to information thanks to the amazing advancements in communications and imaginative, astounding leisure activities like Virtual and Augmented Reality (Alamäki et al., 2021). The current generation has the good fortune to experience some of the most incredible technological advancements in human history. It is currently all the rage and will continue to be for a long time.

Social media has had a significant impact on how buyers choose their products (Madni, 2014). Customers may quickly get information and reviews about goods and services, as well as communicate with other customers and businesses, thanks to platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). As a result, there has been a substantial change in the balance of power, giving customers more influence over their buying decision. A consumer's choice to make a purchase might be influenced by favourable social media reviews, referrals from friends and family, and visually appealing content produced by businesses (Ki & Kim, 2019). However, social networking can also have a detrimental effect on consumers' purchase choices. False information, internet fraud, and other illegal conduct can damage a company's reputation and discourage customers from making purchases (Reuber & Fischer, 2010). Additionally, regular exposure to carefully selected and idealised content can exacerbate problems with self-esteem and body image, encouraging customers to make rash or unnecessary purchases (Corner, 2014). Social media has grown to be a significant informational resource for customers, allowing them to do product research, evaluate brands and prices, and get tailored suggestions based on their preferences and actions (Godey et al., 2016). Brands may utilise social media to display their goods and services, develop interesting and educational content, and increase consumer awareness and loyalty (Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012). Additionally, it is critical for firms to follow moral and open standards, refrain from deceptive marketing strategies, and put the interests of customers first (Carroll & Brown, 2022). As a result, social media has developed into a potent tool for both consumers and businesses, having a variety of effects on consumer purchasing choices. Consumers must be informed and apply critical thinking, and firms must place a high priority on ethics and transparency (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Social media also enables firms to focus their advertising efforts on particular demographic groups while customising their marketing approaches to cater to the wants and interests of specific customers (Schiffman et al., 2013). Facebook and Instagram are now two of the social media sites that have the most power to influence what people buy considering that each platform has over a billion active users, giving businesses the chance to access a wide audience and promote their goods and services (Nuseir, 2020). Particularly Instagram has developed into a visual platform for companies to present their goods through aesthetically beautiful and visually engaging material, such as product images and videos, influencer partnerships, and sponsored posts. Through the platform's shopping capabilities, customers can also access

product information and reviews, making it simpler for them to make educated purchasing selections (Riaz et al., 2021). Facebook and Instagram now play a big role in how consumers decide what to buy as it gives businesses a platform to interact with customers in a more personal way (Hansson et al., 2013). Businesses can have two-way conversations with their clients using Facebook groups, responding to inquiries and resolving grievances (Istanbulluoglu, 2017). Through Facebook's tailored advertising choices, businesses can reach particular demographics and tailor their marketing campaigns to the precise wants and interests of different customers (Curran et al., 2011). It's crucial to remember that Facebook and Instagram both have their share of issues, including the dissemination of misleading information and the potential for having a detrimental effect on mental health.

When using these platforms to influence their purchasing decisions, consumers need to use critical thinking skills and be conscious of their own biases and limits. Businesses must also follow moral standards, be open and honest, avoid misleading advertising, and put the interests of customers first.

Consumer purchase decisions have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mason et al., 2020). Consumer behaviour has changed as a result of the global health crisis, with many people reassessing their buying patterns and placing a higher priority on necessities (Truong & Truong, 2022). Due to the overwhelming anxiety and apprehension around the pandemic, customers are becoming more and more interested in buying goods and services that put their health and wellbeing first. This has increased the demand for items like masks, hand sanitizers, and cleaning supplies as well as for online food stores and delivery services (Arora et al., 2020). Additionally, because many consumers prefer the convenience and security of internet purchasing, the epidemic has expedited the transition towards online shopping. Businesses have also moved their attention to online shopping as physical storefronts are still closed or only partially operational in many regions (Maruca, 1999). The pandemic's economic effects have, however, also changed consumer behaviour, with many people becoming more frugal and controlling their expenditures and as a result, customers are prioritising needs, which has led to a fall in sales for non-essential things like clothing and technology (Galhotra & Dewan, 2020). Finally, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a large influence on consumer purchasing choices. In response to the financial effects of the epidemic, consumers are prioritising necessities, putting a higher premium on health and well-being, and becoming more cost-conscious (Loxton et al., 2020). Businesses must adjust to these shifts in consumer behaviour and concentrate on addressing their clients' changing demands and concerns.

Setting a study inside a larger social, cultural, historical, and theoretical context is the process of contextualization. Understanding the function of social media in influencing consumer behaviour in various cultures and societies is essential to the study of how social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour.

By identifying the cultural, historical, and theoretical aspects that drive consumer behaviour and combining prior research, literature reviews and APA style reference can help contextualise the study. A literature review might, for instance, focus on the influence of cultural variations on consumer behaviour, such as the contribution of individualism vs collectivism to consumer behaviour. Contextualization can also assist in identifying research gaps and guiding the research design and ideas. For instance, a study may examine the

influence of social media on consumer behaviour in a particular nation or region or compare the influence of social media on consumer behaviour across various age groups to contextualise the research topic.

The objective of this research paper is to identify and if identified, to see how much of an impact social media platforms have on a consumer's purchasing behaviour (Gupta & Shome, 2022). The purpose of this study is to ascertain how social media influences consumers' purchasing decisions. This study aims to familiarise readers with the literature on how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour and critically analyse it. The article is broken down into four sections: the literature review, which explores the various theories' points of view and how they relate to one another in the first half; The connection between various ideas, Separate the theory development from Analysis of the past and the effect of COVID-19 on social media as it relates to consumer purchasing behaviour. The second half covers the methodology, research design and hypotheses, contextualization of the study, methodologies, and findings of the literature review. The third section of this report includes the data presentation and discussion of the results, and the fourth section includes the conclusion and recommendations.

This paper is relevant now more than ever as social media has reached all corners of the world and is the dominant space in online communications. Billions of people have access to the internet now and everyone connects through social media. The space is evolving in front of our eyes as Meta, previously known as "Facebook", is working on making the Metaverse a part of our eventual daily lives (Veeraiah et al., 2022).

The following thesis is based on data analysed after being collected using a survey which had 115 responses from students. The questions asked in this survey reflect the three research questions, namely:

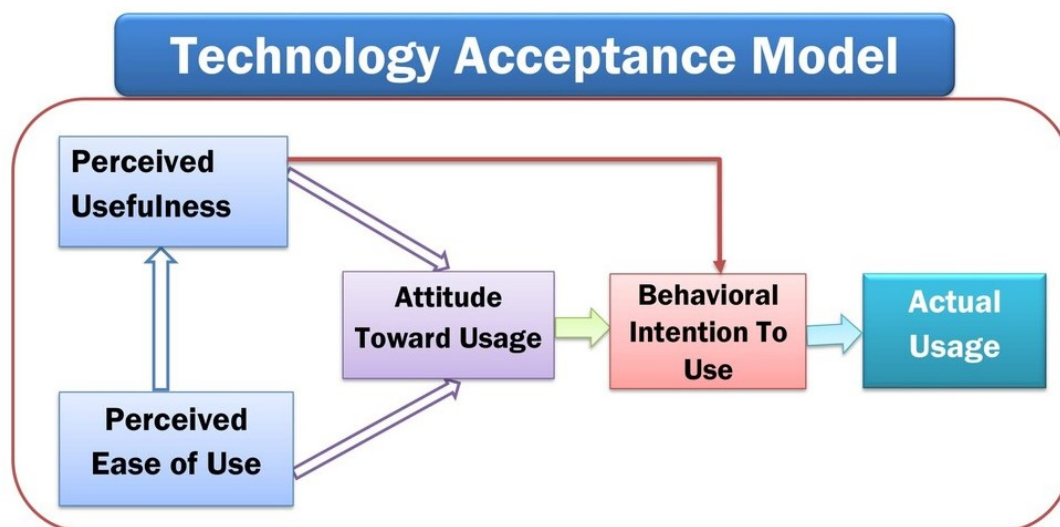
- What social media do people use the most?
- If social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour?
- If yes, how in particular does social media affect consumer purchasing behaviour?

Following this is the literature review which contains peer review articles and other sources which I have utilised to gain information and insight on the field that I will be writing my dissertation on. Considering that social media is a fairly new phenomenon, there have been relatively lesser studies conducted based on it.

Relevant model showing how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour

To explain how social media affects consumer purchase behaviour, numerous models have been put forth. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), created by Davis in 1989, is one such model. This model suggests that perceived utility and perceived ease of use are the two characteristics that have the biggest impact on people's intentions to utilise a technology. While perceived ease of use refers to the amount of effort needed to utilise the technology, perceived usefulness measures how much a customer believes utilising a technology would improve their life or job performance.

This model can be used to explore how consumer purchasing behaviour is influenced by how beneficial and simple social media is to use as a tool for information discovery and assessment in the setting of social media. The availability of product information and recommendations from friends or reliable sources on social media, for instance, may have an impact on how beneficial consumers consider social media to be when making purchases. Meanwhile, elements like the platform's layout and usability, the accessibility of mobile devices, and the amount of security offered for online transactions may have an impact on how easily people perceive using social media for making purchasing decisions.



Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) By Davis (1989)

Figure 1

The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theoretical framework that describes how people acquire and utilise technology. The theory maintains that perceived utility and perceived ease of use are the two main characteristics that affect a person's intention to adopt a certain technology. The term "perceived usefulness" describes how much someone thinks utilising a technology will improve their performance or assist them in achieving their objectives. The degree to which a person anticipates finding a technology to be simple to use

and intuitive to learn is known as perceived ease of use. The TAM model may be used to evaluate how customers view social media as helpful and simple to use for making purchase decisions. Social media has a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour. The consumer's perception that social media sites offer helpful information about goods and services, such as reviews, suggestions, and product specifics, is an illustration of perceived usefulness. The accessibility of social media platforms on smartphones, tablets, and laptops as well as how simple it is to navigate and find pertinent content on social media are additional ways to illustrate perceived ease of use. Researchers and marketers may create effective ways to use social media to boost sales and improve customer experiences by using the TAM framework to better understand how social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour.

The Social Influence Model, created by Cialdini in 2001, is another model that has been suggested to explain how social media affects consumer purchase behaviour. According to this paradigm, a consumer's social network's activities and viewpoints have an impact on their purchasing decisions. This concept contends that recommendations and opinions expressed on social media platforms can affect people's purchase decisions in the setting of social media. A customer can be more inclined to buy a product, for instance, if they read favourable reviews or recommendations from friends or influencers on social media.

The Social Influence Model and the Technology Acceptance Model both offer a helpful framework for comprehending how social media influences customer purchasing behaviour and can be used to direct research and advise marketing initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have been conducted on the influence of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour, and a growing body of literature offers insights into the ways in which Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other platforms are affecting consumer behaviour.

A consumer's choice to make a purchase can be influenced by a variety of factors, including favourable reviews and recommendations from friends and family, as well as visually appealing content offered by businesses (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Additionally, social media gives businesses the chance to direct their advertising efforts towards particular demographics, allowing them to customise their marketing plans and better cater to the wants and interests of specific customers (Grier & Buyer, 2011).

Additionally, social media can give users more access to details about goods and services as well as possibilities to network with other users and companies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This can boost credibility and trust, which will ultimately increase the possibility that someone will make a purchase (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Social media does not always have a good influence on customer purchase decisions, either. The thoughts and attitudes of consumers toward goods and services can be significantly impacted by unfavourable reviews and comments made on social media (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Furthermore, the overwhelming amount of information and advertising that consumers can access on social media might result in information overload and impaired decision-making efficacy (Grier & Buyer, 2011).

In conclusion, social media has a complex and wide-ranging influence on consumer purchase decisions. While social media can provide businesses new ways to connect with and engage with customers, it can also present difficulties and traps that must be carefully avoided.

Examining the research that is currently available on this subject and assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the studies that have been carried out are necessary for critical examination of the influence of social media on consumer purchasing decisions. Social media can influence consumer purchasing decisions significantly, according to research in this area, but the precise nature and scope of this influence may differ depending on a number of variables, including the type of social media platform, the consumer demographic, and the particular product category.

The sharing of information and recommendations from friends, family, and other reliable sources is one of the major ways that social media influences consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers are more inclined to believe product recommendations from individuals they know than from conventional advertising sources, according to a study by (Anderson & Dill, 2000). As a result, influencer marketing and word-of-mouth advertising have become more popular on social media platforms.

Another way that social media has an impact on consumer purchasing behaviour is through the development of online forums and communities that give users a place to express their opinions and share experiences about goods and services. Because customers are more likely to believe the opinions of other consumers than those of marketers or advertising, these online communities can have a major impact on consumer purchase decisions (Huang et al., 2017).

To be clear, social media can sometimes have a bad influence on consumer purchase decisions, especially when it comes to privacy and security issues. Consumers frequently worry about the security and privacy of their personal information while making purchases through social networking sites, which may discourage them from using these networks for online shopping (Srensen & Torfing, 2017).

In conclusion, social media's influence on consumer purchasing behaviour is a complicated topic that needs more investigation and analysis. While social media can offer consumers helpful advice and recommendations, it's also critical to address their privacy and security worries while utilising these channels for online purchasing.

Current views on how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour.

In recent years, social media has significantly increased its impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Numerous research have been done to look at this relationship; some have found good impacts, while others have found detrimental effects.

The capacity to obtain suggestions from friends and influencers is one of the positive benefits of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour. Other positive consequences include greater brand awareness and confidence in a brand. Exposure to social media enhanced brand trust and purchase intention (Lin et al., 2015). The most important element influencing customer purchasing decisions was recommendations made by friends on social media (Kim & Ko, 2011).

Social networking does have a negative impact on consumer purchasing habits, though. The first is the chance of developing a social media addiction, which can result in rash and imprudent purchasing decisions. Excessive usage of social media was linked to higher levels of impulsivity and lower levels of self-control (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). In addition, peer pressure and influence from social media can result in conformity and a desire to fit in with a particular social group, even if doing so means making poor purchasing decisions (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

In conclusion, social media has a complex and wide-ranging impact on consumer purchase behaviour. Social media can have both positive and negative consequences, including peer pressure and addiction. Positive effects include greater brand trust and the potential to get recommendations. To completely comprehend how social media influences consumer behaviour and to design social media use tactics that are advantageous to both consumers and businesses, more research is required.

The relationship between different ideas on how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour

Research and discussion on the question of the connection between social media and consumer purchase behaviour have been extensive. Social media's influence on consumer behaviour have given rise to a variety of theories, which can be broadly divided into beneficial and harmful consequences.

The capacity to obtain suggestions from friends and influencers is one of the positive benefits of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour. Other positive consequences include greater brand awareness and confidence in a brand. For instance, a study by Kim and Ko in 2011 discovered that the most significant influencer of customer purchasing decisions was friends' recommendations on social media. Similar findings were made by Lin, Lee, and Fei in 2015 in which they discovered that exposure to social media enhanced brand trust and purchase intent.

On the other side, social networking can have a detrimental impact on consumers' purchase decisions. The possibility for social media addiction, which can result in impulsive and unreasonable purchasing decisions, is one such effect. For instance, Kuss and Griffiths in 2011 found that excessive usage of social media was linked to higher levels of impulsivity and lower levels of self-control. In addition, peer pressure and influence from social media can result in conformity and a desire to fit in with a particular social group, even if doing so means making poor purchasing decisions (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

In conclusion, there are many different facets to the intricate interaction between social media and consumer purchasing behaviour. Social media can have both beneficial and negative consequences, including increased brand awareness and trust as well as peer pressure and addiction. To completely comprehend the connection between social media and consumer behaviour and to design social media use strategies that are advantageous to both consumers and businesses, more research is required.

It might be intricate and multifaceted to relate many theories about how social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour. To explain how social media influences consumer behaviour, a variety of theories and models have been produced, and these frequently take diverse stances and approaches.

The Davis-created Technology Acceptance Model (1989) is one of the most popular ideas. According to this concept, a variety of characteristics, such as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, have an impact on consumer behaviour. According to the concept, social media platforms can boost users' perceptions of their utility and usability, which increases the possibility that they will utilise social media for product research and purchases.

The Social Capital Idea is another important theory, which asserts that social media can boost users' access to information, connections, and resources (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This theory contends that social media can aid in the development of online networks and communities, increasing consumer access to data and resources that can affect their purchase decisions.

For a better understanding of how social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour, consider the Social Identity Theory (SIT). According to this hypothesis, people are influenced by the beliefs and practises of their social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). SIT contends that social media can have an impact on consumer behaviour by fostering a feeling of social identification and group belonging, which increases adherence to societal norms and values, particularly those governing purchasing behaviour.

Last but not least, according to the Influencer Marketing Theory, social media influencers can significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions. According to this hypothesis, influencers can utilise social media to connect with a sizable and interested audience, and their advice and viewpoints can have a big influence on what consumers decide to buy.

Overall, there are many distinct theories and models that offer diverse viewpoints on the ways in which social media influences consumer behaviour, making the interaction between various theories of how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour complex and multifaceted.

Distinguishing the theory development in the area of how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour

The growth of social media platforms and their rising popularity, technological developments, and changes in consumer behaviour and tastes have all had an impact on the creation of ideas about how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). In this field, it has been common practise to analyse and integrate previous studies in order to reach conclusions about how social media affects consumer behaviour.

The Social Influence Theory, as proposed by Kelman in 1958 is a well-known theory in this field, that contends that people's purchasing decisions are influenced by what other people in their social network think and do. According to this hypothesis, social media can significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour by giving people a forum to exchange facts and opinions about products and services.

The Social Comparison Idea is another significant theory which refers to a practise where we evaluate ourselves more accurately by comparing various parts of who we are to those of other people, such as our behaviour, opinions, status, and success (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). According to this theory, people use social media to compare themselves to others and assess their own worth. This may have an impact on how they shop since people sometimes try to emulate their friends by buying goods and services that reflect well on them.

Grasping just how social media affects consumer behaviour requires an understanding of the Online Word of Mouth (OWOM) theory. OWOM is the term used to describe the dissemination of knowledge and views on goods and services via online channels, such as social media (Liao et al., 2020). According to this notion, customers are probably impacted by the advice and opinions of people in their social network.

Historical analysis of how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour

Since the advent of social media platforms and the subsequent rise in popularity of these platforms, researchers have been studying the effects of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour. To evaluate and synthesise existing research and to provide a thorough grasp of the historical development of beliefs on how social media influences consumer behaviour, literature reviews and APA style reference have been extensively used.

The initial research on social media's influence on consumer behaviour was done in the 1990s, with a particular emphasis on the function of online forums and discussion boards. According to these research, online communities can affect consumer behaviour by giving people a forum to share knowledge and opinions on goods.

The focus of study on how social networks affect consumer behaviour changed in the early 2000s with the emergence of social media platforms like MySpace and Facebook. Theories like the Social Influence Theory and the Social Comparison Theory were created, contending that people use social media to compare themselves to others and assess their own value and that they are influenced by the beliefs and actions of those in their social network.

The notion of Online Word of Mouth (OWOM), which focused on how recommendations and reviews affect customer behaviour, first arose in the late 2000s and early 2010s. According to this research, OWOM significantly affected consumer behaviour, with people being more likely to buy goods and services that had received favourable ratings from people in their social network.

Recent studies like Social Media Marketing: Utilizing Social Media To Advance Brand Awareness and Increase Online Sales (Momany & Alshboul, 2016), Social Media Marketing, Functioning Branding Strategy and Intentional Branding (Al-Zyoud, 2018) and The Effect Of Social Media Marketing On Brand Trust, Brand Equity And Brand Loyalty (Haudi et al., 2022) have concentrated on how social media affects particular consumer demographic groups, such millennials and Generation Z, as well as how social media is utilised for marketing and brand creation.

Impact of COVID-19 on how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour

Social media and consumer behaviour have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic, with many consumers turning to social media for information and suggestions about goods and services. A thorough explanation of the effects of COVID-19 on social media and consumer behaviour has been provided through the use of literature reviews and referencing in the Harvard style.

According to studies, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people using social media, with many people utilising it to keep in touch with friends and family, access news and information, and make decisions about purchases. Consumers now frequently rely on online evaluations and suggestions from people in their social network as a key source of information about goods and services.

According to research, the epidemic has caused a change in consumer behaviour, with many people opting to buy things online rather than in physical stores. Due to this, there has been a huge rise in e-commerce, with social media being crucial in marketing and boosting sales through online purchasing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, in general, had a significant impact on social media and consumer behaviour, underscoring the significance of social media in influencing consumer behaviour and serving as a platform for businesses to connect and engage with customers.

Critical Analysis Of Literature Reviews

1. From the research paper “The Role Of Social Media Advertising In Consumer Buying Behaviour” (Ertemel & Ammoura, 2016) findings are important for understanding how social media advertising affects consumer purchasing decisions. The numerous stages of the consumer decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchasing decision, and post-purchase behaviour, are highlighted, along with the varying degrees of strength between social media advertising and each stage. One important finding is that social media advertising has a big effect on evaluating alternatives and making a purchase decision but has a weak effect on recognising needs and finding information. This implies that, despite social media advertising's potential ineffectiveness in evoking the need to buy or the process of information search, it is still important in determining customer preferences and actual purchasing decisions. The research was only done in Istanbul, Turkey, so it is crucial to keep in mind that the findings might not apply to other areas or nations. To better understand the generalizability of these findings, an additional study should be carried out in a wider range of regions and demographic groupings. Businesses should think about the effectiveness of their social media advertising campaigns and how they fit with the various stages of the consumer decision-making process when making suggestions. Businesses can improve their advertising tactics to have the biggest impact on their target audience by better understanding how social media advertising affects customer behaviour. The research paper offers insightful information about the connection between social media advertising and consumer purchasing patterns, but more research is necessary to properly grasp how broadly applicable these findings are.
2. The research paper “Social Media Influence On Consumer Behaviour” (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2020) offers insightful information on how major mobile phone manufacturers like Samsung, Apple, Xiaomi, and BQ use social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram to market their products and establish their brand identities. The study finds that these businesses' social media engagement influences consumer behaviour favourably, with no discernible changes in average ratings of advertising across various social media platforms. It is crucial to take into account the study's limitations, such as the sample size and the particular geographical area in which the research was carried out, in order to objectively evaluate the

findings. The impact of personal recommendations and word-of-mouth advertising, as well as other considerations like product characteristics and pricing, could also have an impact on customer purchasing decisions. As for suggestions, businesses may want to think about creating a thorough and integrated marketing plan that makes use of numerous platforms, including social media, to reach their target audience. Developing a strong brand image and reputation, may entail producing interesting and pertinent content, using influencer marketing, and interacting with customers through social media platforms. In order to continually enhance their social media marketing campaigns, businesses can also collect information and insights on their target audience through analytics and client feedback.

3. The findings of the research paper "Does Social Media Influence Consumer Buying Behaviour? An Investigation of Recommendations And Purchases" (Forbes, 2013) emphasise how companies can affect and influence consumers' upcoming purchases by encouraging them to post on social media. This suggests that recommendations made on social media can significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly when it comes to expensive or inexpensive products. To ascertain whether the results are generalizable, it would be critical to study this link on a bigger scale and in various circumstances because the conclusion is based on a small sample. Businesses also need to be aware of the potential drawbacks and moral ramifications of using social media to sway consumer behaviour. Given these conclusions, it is advised that companies carefully assess the ethical ramifications of integrating social media marketing methods into their advertising campaigns as well as the influence of social media on customer purchasing behaviour. To fully comprehend the intricate connection between social media and consumer purchasing behaviour, more research is also required.
4. The results of the study "A Study On The Impact Of Social Media On Consumer Purchasing Behaviour Of Mobile Phones In Chennai" (Gajashree & Anand, 2021) show that social media, specifically in the case of mobile phones in Chennai, has a significant impact on consumer satisfaction during the data search and alternative evaluation stages of purchasing a product. While social media does have an impact, it is crucial to remember that information is exposed selectively and arbitrarily, and not all of the material on social media platforms may be reliable or accurate. Businesses may benefit from this by making sure that their social media presence is expert, educational, and current, and by interacting with customers to address any queries or worries they may have. Companies may also want to spend money on reputation management and monitoring solutions to make sure that inaccurate or unfavourable remarks about their brand are promptly rectified. Prior to making purchases, it is crucial for consumers to be sceptical and assess the information they find on social media networks. Cross-referencing data from various sources will help with this, as will seeking out expert advice as appropriate.

5. The research paper “Social Media Marketing Efforts Of Luxury Brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behaviour” (Godey et al., 2016) highlights the positive impact of social media marketing on brand equity and consumer behaviour. By utilizing social media, luxury brands can increase brand awareness, build brand reputation, and foster customer loyalty. However, it is important to note that there are also managerial challenges that come with social media marketing such as maintaining a consistent brand image and ensuring the security of customer data. In order to effectively leverage social media for marketing, it is recommended that luxury brands carefully plan and execute their social media strategy, taking into consideration their target audience, goals, and resources. Brands should also regularly monitor and evaluate their social media performance and make adjustments accordingly. Additionally, brands should be transparent and ethical in their use of customer data and maintain a consistent brand image across all social media platforms.
6. The article titled "The Impact of Social Media To Consumer Buying Behaviour" (FitzGerald, 2019) offers important details about how social media affects consumer purchasing habits. The statistics show that social media has a big impact on how consumers behave when making decisions about what to buy, with 71% of consumers more likely to make a purchase based on comments made on social media, 47% of millennial purchases influenced by social media, 80% of consumers using social media to interact with brands, and 31% of buyers using social media to browse for potential purchases. These figures show the growing influence of social media on customer behaviour and underline the necessity for companies to successfully integrate social media into their marketing plans. The sources and procedures utilised to get the data, as well as the particular demographic groupings and geographic areas being researched, are all relevant considerations for evaluating the limitations of these statistics. It might be necessary to conduct more research to confirm these results and assess how generalizable they are. Businesses can use these results to optimise their social media strategy so that they can interact with their target market more effectively and change their buying habits. Utilizing user-generated content, coming up with interesting and dynamic social media postings, and offering a seamless user experience across various social media platforms are a few examples of how to achieve this. In conclusion, Rob FitzGerald's figures emphasise the importance of businesses utilising social media strategically in their marketing plans and offer insightful information on how social media affects customer purchasing behaviour. To confirm these results and determine whether they are generalizable, additional study is required.
7. In the article “14 Stats that prove that social content influences consumer buying behaviour” (Nosto, 2021), the expanding influence of social media on customer behaviour and purchase choices is shown. It is clear that social media has completely changed how consumers find, evaluate, and buy things. Social media has reduced the consumer journey by enabling quicker access to information and goods. Social media has also increased the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing since users are more likely to believe the advice of their peers and influencers. Another cutting-edge

strategy that companies may employ to engage their audience and affect consumer decisions is the use of influencer marketing and tales. But it is crucial to evaluate these conclusions and suggestions attentively. Social media can undoubtedly affect consumer behaviour, but it is only one of several elements that affect how consumers behave when making purchases. Businesses must have a comprehensive marketing plan that considers all facets of consumer behaviour and decision-making. Businesses should also be mindful of the possible drawbacks and difficulties of relying too much on social media, including the possibility of influencer fraud and the platform's rapid-fire nature, which can make it challenging to sustain a consistent brand image. In conclusion, social media can have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour, but it shouldn't be the only aspect of a company's marketing plan. Businesses should adopt a comprehensive strategy that takes into account all elements impacting consumer behaviour and make data-driven decisions in order to fully harness the potential of social media.

All these papers and articles go on to show just how much of an influence social media and marketing/promotional activities on those platforms can have on potential and existing consumers. The knowledge I have gained through this literature review will be taken into account as we go more in depth into this research paper.

METHODOLOGY

115 people responded to the survey that consisted of 15 questions and was used to obtain the data for the empirical study. The sample size is 1, while the population size is 115. These have been transformed into pie charts and bar graphs, two types of graphs. Every question was designed to either evaluate the respondent's attitude towards social media or to determine how much time they spend on social media and how it influences their choice to make a purchase. This research was carried out to conduct an overview and get opinions from various persons about whether social media influences consumers' purchase decisions. The survey was conducted online using a Google Forms questionnaire. Students pursuing bachelor's degrees and master's degrees, aged 20 to 25, who reside in the UK and India, made up the demography of the survey respondents.

Depending on the research objective, research design, and data sources employed, several methodologies and research techniques are used to examine how social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour. However, a few regularly employed strategies and tactics are as follows:

- *Surveys*: Surveys are a well-liked research technique for gathering information on consumer attitudes, views, and habits, including how they use social media and how that influences their purchasing decisions.
- *Observational Studies*: Ethnographic studies, for example, allow researchers to observe and gather information about consumer behaviour in actual situations, including how they utilise social media and how that affects their purchase choices.

The synthesis of current research and the provision of a thorough understanding of the methodology and tactics are frequently accomplished through the use of literature reviews and APA-style referencing.

The act of gathering data from a sample of people by asking them questions is known as survey research (Check & Schutt, 2012). For people interested in conducting research, there are several methodological options available. A few of the factors that affect the decision of a research approach include the purpose of the study, the nature of the research questions to be addressed, and the availability of resources.

For this dissertation, my quantitative research strategy of choice is to use a survey questionnaire (Apuke, 2017). Numerous strategies for participants, data collection, and apparatus can be used in this kind of study. The methodologies used in survey research might be quantitative (such as using numerical ratings on survey items) or qualitative (such as using open-ended questions), or both (i.e., mixed methods). Surveys are commonly utilised in social and psychological research because they are frequently used to describe and explore human behaviour (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

This dissertation also includes a few key design choices, namely being:

- Research Philosophy (Positivism)
- Sampling Strategy (Non Probability)

Let me explain each design choice in detail below.

- *Research Philosophy (Positivism)*

A philosophical theory known as positivism holds that only factual information received by observation, including measurement, is trustworthy (Crossan, 2003). It has dominated the domains of business and management research for a long time.

The core assumption of positivism is that only the application of science can lead to knowledge of the truth. In positivist studies, the researcher's duties are limited to data gathering and objective analysis. In other words, the researcher approaches the subject objectively and independently of personal values. These inquiries usually produce observable and quantifiable research findings. Positivism requires quantitative observations that lead to statistical analysis.

- *Sampling Strategy (Non-Probability)*

Sampling is the procedure of gathering a specific number of data points from a broader population for statistical analysis. Depending on the sort of study being undertaken, either systematic sampling or simple random sampling may be the method used to select a sample from a wider population (Sharma, 2017). The non-probability convenience sampling strategy was employed by the researchers for this study.

A subset of sample selection known as non-probability sampling uses non-random methods to pick a group of people to be the participants of a specific study. In contrast to probability sampling and its procedures, non-probability sampling does not focus on accurately reflecting all members of a large population within a smaller sample set of participants (Vehovar et al., 2016). The study is therefore not representative of the full population because not every member of the population had an equal opportunity to participate. When access to the full population is insufficient or unnecessary, non-probability sampling is routinely used. The most common kind of convenience sampling is non-probabilistic sampling (Etikan, 2016). Convenience sampling is the practise of collecting samples that are conveniently located close to a location or Internet service. The primary application for this form of sampling is pilot testing. This method has the advantages of low population knowledge requirements, excellent internal and external validity, and straightforward data processing. The most obvious objection to convenience sampling is that the sample is not representative of the entire population. In comparison to stratified samples of the same size, it typically exhibits significant sampling mistakes and lesser precision (Acharya et al., 2013). Customers who are between the ages of 20 and 25 make up the sample population.

Sample Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Sampling frame
Customers are aged 20-25 and above. (Both male and female)	115	Convenience (Non-Probability) sampling	An online survey by Google survey forms

Analysis of the Data

Data analysis is the methodical application of logical and/or statistical approaches to describe, illustrate, summarise, appraise, and evaluate data (Chambers & Skinner, 2003). The researchers can evaluate the responses further and draw inferences, connections, and patterns from them by analysing the data. The information from the survey questionnaire replies of 115 respondents will be analysed in this study. The data was gathered quantitatively through the use of a simple convenience sampling procedure. The survey was conducted using Google Survey, and SPSS software was used to further process the results. In comparison to stratified samples of the same size, it typically exhibits significant sampling mistakes and lesser precision (Acharya et al., 2013). Customers who are between the ages of 20 and 25 make up the sample population.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

To describe and demonstrate, summarise, assess, and evaluate data, data analysis is the methodical use of logical and/or statistical methodologies (Chambers & Skinner, 2003). The collection of the data in the form of a fifteen question long survey for the empirical study resulted in 115 responses. The population size is 115 and the sample size is 1. They have been converted into two forms of graphs, namely pie charts and a bar graph. Every question was phrased in such a manner so as to either test the respondent's attitude toward social media and to see how much the survey taker indulges in social media and how it affects their final purchase decision. The following are the graphs and they will each be followed up with a description which will explain the graph and an analysis. This study was carried out in order to do an overview to get different people's perspectives on if they think that social media affects consumer purchasing behaviour. The survey was carried out online using a questionnaire on Google Forms. The demographic of the survey takers were Bachelor's Degree Students and Master's Degree Students of the ages between 20 and 25, who reside in The United Kingdom and India.

Let us now look at the results of the survey and analyse them.

Which of the following forms of marketing do you tend to view as more authentic?

115 responses

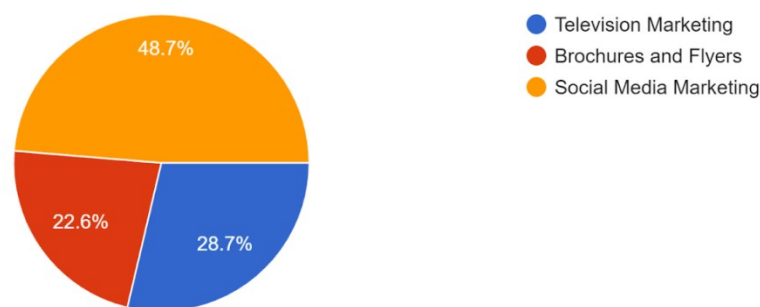


Figure 2

The first of the fifteen questions is “Which of the following forms of marketing do you tend to view as more authentic?”. As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a plurality swing in favour of social media marketing with 56 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 48.7% of the total vote. It is followed up by Television Marketing which received 33 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 28.7% of the total vote and coming in finally, receiving 26 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 22.6% of the total vote is Brochures and Flyers. From this we can conclude that Social Media Marketing is the form of marketing that is seen as the most authentic by this group of respondents. This could also point towards a shift in culture as Generation Z comes of age. Traditionally speaking, Television Marketing was seen as the gold standard and the most accessible, but considering how much the world has changed in

the last ten years, it is clear to see the marketing opportunities that social media platforms present and how the narrative for marketing has been shaped for a whole generation.

Do you use social media?

115 responses

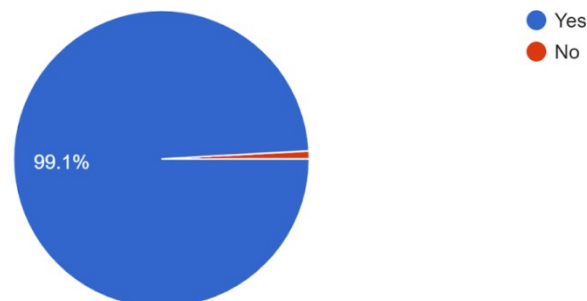


Figure 3

The second of the fifteen questions is “Do you use social media?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, 99.1%, which is 114 out of 115 survey takers responded with “yes”. Only 1 survey taker responded with “no”. This goes to show just how big of an influence social media has in the current day and the influence it commands is only going to get bigger as more and more people flock to different social media platforms every single day.

What social media platforms do you use?

115 responses

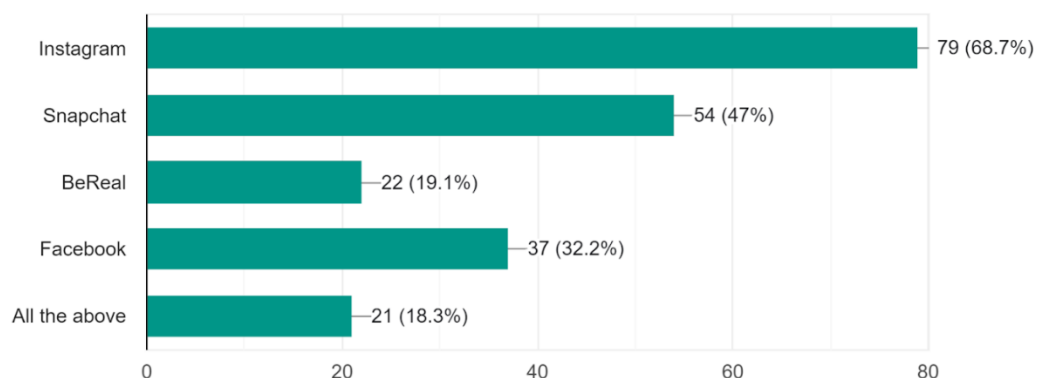


Figure 4

The third of the fifteen questions is “What social media platforms do you use?” As can be seen from the bar graph above, Instagram is the most used social media platform with 79 out of 115 votes, which comes up to 68.7 of the total vote. Snapchat comes in at second place receiving 54 out of 115 votes, which comes up to 47% of the total vote. Coming in at third is Facebook with 37 out of 115 votes, which comes up to 32.2% of the total vote. BeReal has the lowest user base of the social media platforms listed in this survey, receiving 22 out of

115 votes, which comes up to 19.1%. Finally, with 21 out of 115 votes which comes up to 18.3% are the users of all the above social media platforms.

How long do you spend on social media daily?

115 responses

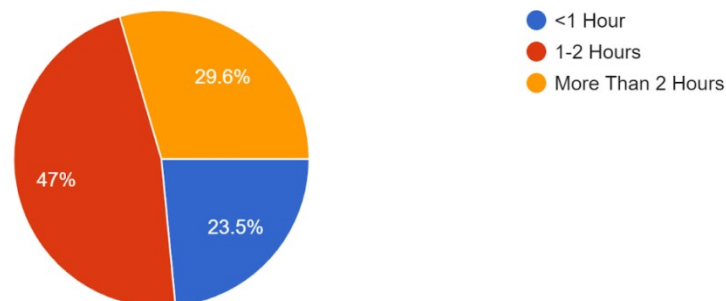


Figure 5

The fourth of the fifteen questions is “How long do you spend on social media daily?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a plurality swing in favour of “1-2 hours” a day with 54 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 47% of the total vote. It is followed up by “More than 2 hours” a day with 34 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 29.6% of the total vote. And finally with 27 out of 115 votes comes “Less than 1 hour”, adding up to 23.5% of the total vote. As can be seen, young people seem to be spending more and more time on social media and as a result, social media ends up being an opportunity for companies to increase their customer base by appealing to various demographics.

Do you follow any of your favourite brands on social media?

115 responses

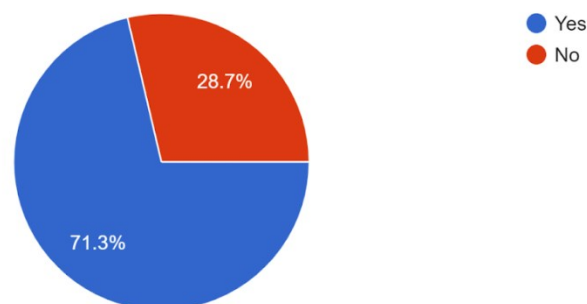


Figure 6

The fifth of the fifteen questions is “Do you follow any of your favourite brands on social media?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 82 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 71.3% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 33 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 28.7% of the total vote. As is shown through

this, the younger generation seems to want to connect with their favourite brands and influencers and social media presents the perfect platform for that. The younger generation following their favourite brands on social media will surely increase promotion of goods, services and even people as a brand on social media.

Do you think that social media has an effect on consumer purchasing behaviour?

115 responses

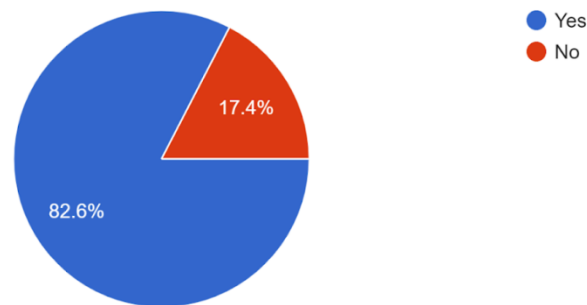


Figure 7

The sixth of the fifteen questions is “Do you think that social media has an effect on consumer purchasing behaviour?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 95 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 82.6% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 20 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 17.4% of the total vote. This shows us that an overwhelming majority of the survey takers are aware of the influence that social media has over them and about how it affects their purchasing behaviour pattern, at least to a certain degree.

Does the popularity of a good or service on social media influence your choice to buy it?

115 responses

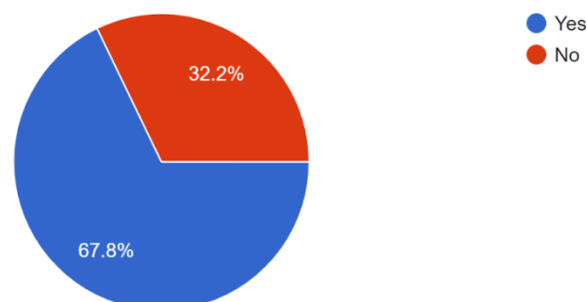


Figure 8

The seventh of the fifteen questions is “Does the popularity of a good or service on social media influence your choice to buy it?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a

majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 78 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 67.8% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 37 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 32.2% of the total vote. This shows us that most of the survey takers keep an eye out for the different trends and popular items throughout the year and buy them as the popularity of said product or service affects their final purchase decision.

Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being advertised on social media?

115 responses

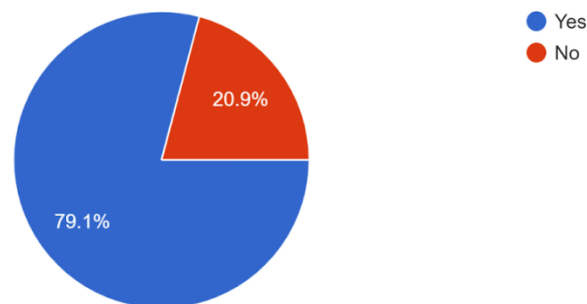


Figure 9

The eighth of the fifteen questions is “Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being advertised on social media?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 91 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 79.1% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 24 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 20.9% of the total vote. This shows the power of social media marketing. Just out of this small group of 115 people, 91 of those have bought something after being advertised to on social media. This opens up an avenue for marketing and commercialisation like never before.

How much of an influence did that advertisement have on your final purchase decision?

115 responses

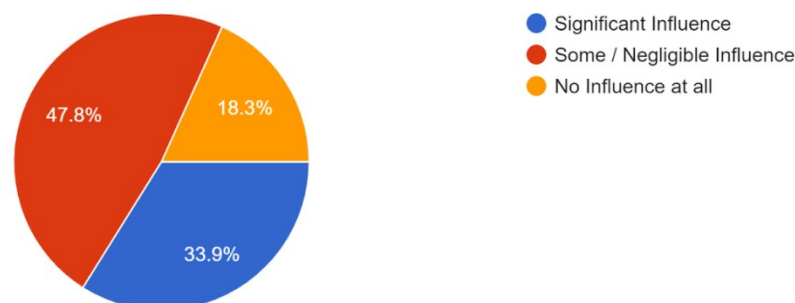


Figure 10

The ninth of the fifteen questions is “How much of an influence did that advertisement have on your final purchase decision?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a plurality swing in favour of “Some/Negligible Influence” with 55 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 47.8% of the total vote. It is followed up by “Significant Influence” with 39 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 33.9% of the total vote. And finally with 21 out of 115 votes adding up to 18.3% of the total vote comes “No Influence at all”. Seeing that there was influence on the consumer to some degree due to an advertisement, the “No Influence at all” group gets dominated by the other two as it adds up to 81.7% of the total vote. This influence is key in order to gain new customers and to retain existing customers.

Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being used by someone you know on social media?
115 responses

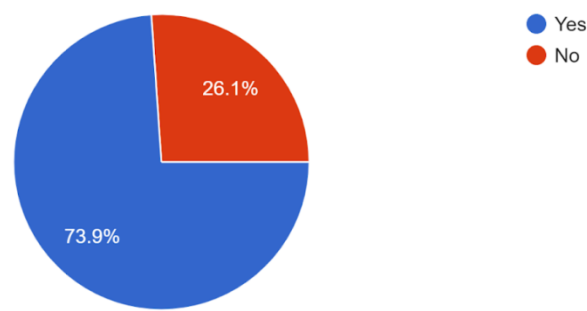


Figure 11

The tenth of the fifteen questions is “Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being used by someone you know on social media?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 85 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 73.9% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 30 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 26.1% of the total vote. Again, the number of people who have purchased a product or service after seeing it being used by someone they know on social media is significantly higher than those that did not. This too should be taken notice of as advertisements are not the only way to get your product or service to be taken note of. Word of Mouth is always the best promotion.

How much of an influence did you seeing someone use it have on your final purchase decision?

115 responses

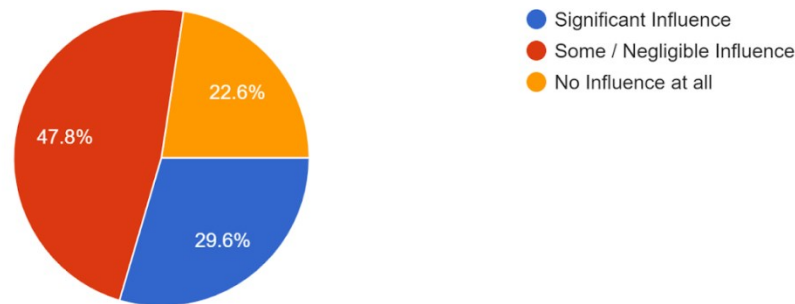


Figure 12

The eleventh of the fifteen questions is “How much of an influence did you seeing someone use it have on your final purchase decision?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a plurality swing in favour of “Some/Negligible Influence” with 55 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 47.8% of the total vote. It is followed up by “Significant Influence” with 34 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 29.6% of the total vote. And finally with 26 out of 115 votes adding up to 22.6% of the total vote comes “No Influence at all”. Seeing that there was influence on the consumer to some degree due to an advertisement, the “No Influence at all” group gets dominated yet again by the other two as it adds up to 77.4% of the total vote. This influence too, is key in order to gain new customers and to retain existing customers.

Generally speaking, what has your experience been with the purchases you have made after being advertised to on social media?

115 responses

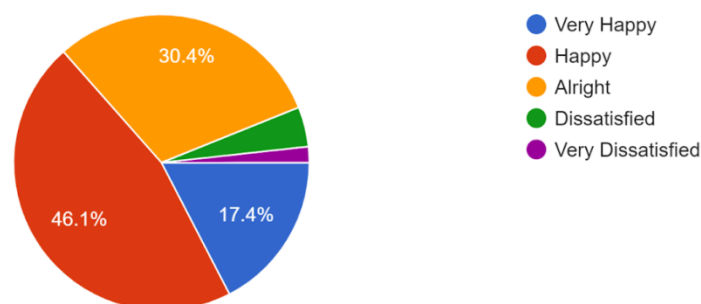


Figure 13

The twelfth of the fifteen questions is “Generally speaking, what has your experience been with the purchases you have made after being advertised to on social media?” As we can see from the pie chart, there is a plurality swing in favour of “Happy” with 53 out of 115 votes,

adding up to 46.1%. It is then followed by “Alright” with 35 out of 115 votes, adding up to 30.4%. Next comes “Very Happy” with 20 out of 115 votes, adding up to 17.4%. The penultimate group is “Dissatisfied” with 5 out of 115 votes, adding up to 4.3%. Lastly, we have the “Very Dissatisfied” group with 2 out of 115 votes, adding up to 1.7%. As is clear to see, more people are happy than unhappy with their purchases made after being advertised to on social media. But it is also very crucial to convert the dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones as the smallest minority is often the most vocal and it is important to promote organic word of mouth and positivity.

Do you post your new purchases on your social media platforms?

115 responses

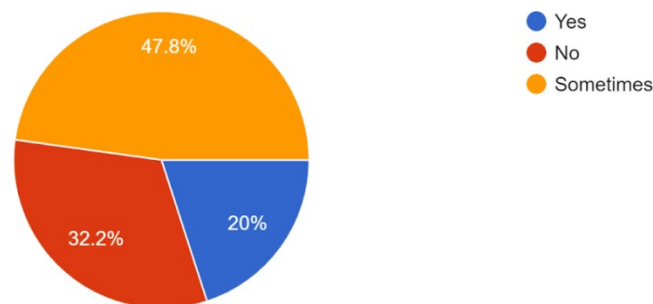


Figure 14

The thirteenth of the fifteen questions is “Do you post your new purchases on your social media platforms?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a plurality swing in favour of “Sometimes” with 55 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 47.8% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 37 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 32.2% of the total vote. And finally with 23 out of 115 votes adding up to 20% of the total vote comes “No Influence at all”. This question was asked to understand whether “hype culture” is on the decline and seeing that only a small 20% of the total voters do post their purchases on social media, it may well and truly be on its way out.

Does getting to show off the purchase on your social media play any part in the final purchase decision?
115 responses

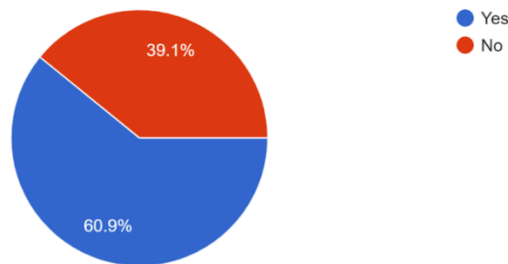


Figure 15

The fourteenth of the fifteen questions is “Does getting to show off the purchase on your social media play any part in the final purchase decision?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 70 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 60.9% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 45 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 39.1% of the total vote. Perhaps a slight inconsistency showing up here as in the previous graph, only 20% posted their purchases on social media but as we can see here, the majority of the survey takers admitted to purchasing something with the mind to show it off on their social media. Although that does not always mean that they will surely post it so it checks out.

Have you ever purchased something that was advertised to you on social media that you were not initially going to buy?
115 responses

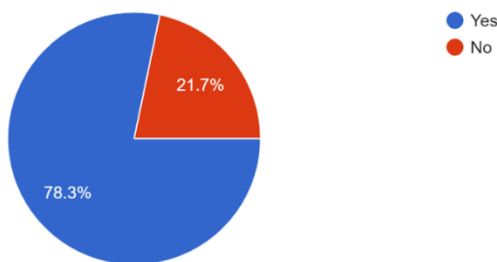


Figure 16

The last of the fifteen questions is “Have you ever purchased something that was advertised to you on social media that you were not initially going to buy?” As can be seen from the pie chart above, there is a majority swing in favour of “Yes” with 90 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 78.3% of the total vote. It is followed up by “No” with 25 out of 115 votes, which adds up to 21.7% of the total vote. The power of marketing is understated. All the mind needs is a spark and once it decides that it needs something, it is a constant thought until you have it for yourself. Over 78% of the survey takers purchased something advertised to them and this is proof of the influence that social media has on the final consumer purchasing decision.

Data Interpretation Using PCA Analysis Using SPSS Software

Principal component analysis, or PCA, is a technique for reducing the number of dimensions in large data sets by condensing a large collection of variables into a smaller set that retains the majority of the large set's information. Accuracy naturally suffers as a data set's variables are reduced, but the answer to dimensionality reduction is to trade a little accuracy for simplicity. Because machine learning algorithms can analyse data much more quickly and easily with smaller data sets since there are less unnecessary factors to process. Hence, the basic principle behind PCA is to minimise the number of variables in a data set while maintaining as much accuracy as possible. What can we infer about the correlations between the variables from the covariances that we have as matrix entries, Matter of fact, what matters is the covariance's sign:

If the outcome is positive, both variables will either increase or decrease (correlated).

If negative, one rises while the other falls (Inversely correlated).

The link below displays the results of the PCA analysis. SPSS was used to carry out the analysis. Numerous variables have been considered, including the correlation matrix, the KMO and Bartlett's test, the anti-image matrices, the communalities, the total variance explained, the component matrix, reproduced covariances, rotated component matrix, component score coefficient matrix, and component score covariance matrix.



Output1 PCA
analysis using SPSS (f

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Dissertation aimed to answer the question of how social media affects the final consumer purchasing decision. It is clear to see that social media has a huge impact on the way we live our lives and make some of our decisions. It is seen from the responses to the survey questions that consumers believe that social media does influence their final purchasing decision. Social media plays a complicated and multifaceted function in influencing how people behave, with various platforms and communication methods have varying results. It significantly influences consumer purchasing behaviour and consumers' perceptions towards products as well as their intentions to make purchases. Social media's influence on consumer behaviour is influenced by a range of elements, such as cultural variances, individual values, and personality traits.

The conclusion might offer the following recommendations:

To fully comprehend how social media affects consumer behaviour in various cultural and social contexts, more research is required. Future research should look at how various social media platforms and communication philosophies affect customer behaviour. The influence of personal beliefs and unique traits on how social media affects consumer behaviour should be taken into account by researchers.

The finding can imply the following in terms of practical applications:

Companies and marketers should take into account how social media affects customer behaviour when creating marketing strategies and choosing where to advertise and place products. Consumers need to be aware of how social media affects their purchasing decisions and critically assess the advice and information they get from these platforms.

An analysis of how social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour should include a section on limitations that acknowledges the restrictions and limits of the study and makes recommendations for how to overcome them in future research. The study may only provide a snapshot of the effect of social media on consumer behaviour and may not reflect longer-term patterns or changes in social media usage, among other potential shortcomings.

The study may not generalise to other regions or groups and may only be reflective of a specific cultural or geographic setting. The study might not adequately represent the diversity of the social media ecosystem because it only takes into account a small subset of social media platforms and communication methods. The study might only use self-reported data and not truly represent how social media actually affects consumer behaviour.

Eight of the survey's questions resulted in majorities and six of them resulted in pluralities. From the analysis of the data gathered, we can see that consumers who use social media, which is the overwhelming majority, tend to view social media marketing as the most authentic form of marketing. Also taking into consideration the fact that over three-quarters of the survey respondents spend over an hour a day on social media and given the fact that most of them follow their favourite brands, it is without question that they will be influenced by different advertisements, people and brands they see on social media platforms.

Having seen a landslide majority when it came to purchasing decisions made on the basis of being advertised to or after seeing someone use a particular product or service, it is yet again clear to see the considerable influence that social media has on our daily lives and our purchasing decisions (Stephen, 2016).

As most people have had a satisfactory or positive experience with the purchases made after being advertised to on social media, it will not be a surprise to see the online retail industry continue to boom. Especially after taking into consideration that the global economy is in recession and brick-and-mortar stores still have not regained the heights they had reached before the COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives forever (Stephen, 2016). Social media advertisements are 100% contributing to this space.

“Yes” getting 78.3% on the final question of the survey, that is “Have you ever purchased something that was advertised to you on social media that you were not initially going to buy”, should be a wake-up call to all people who think that social media does not have an insanely huge reach and influence.

Technology and social media are relatively young phenomena. As a result, there is little literature on my subject. In comparison to other themes, this helps my research to stand out more and become more distinct.

This study, on the other hand, has its own set of limitations, and it is up to the reader to evaluate them critically. The survey's first flaw is its small sample size. Given the tiny sample size of 115 students, it would be irresponsible to conclude that this is how the whole public feels about the subject. Furthermore, the demography of the survey participants is comprised of students of the age of 20 - 25, thereby limiting the scope for generalisation.

The survey's second flaw is the broad breadth of the study topic. The subject of how social media affects consumer purchasing decisions is broad, and because of that, it is difficult to limit it down so that more attention can be paid to specific points.

Older age groups weren't given enough attention. My research focused on Generation Z, however it would have been nice to compare millennials' characteristics in-depth with those of earlier age groups.

My suggestions for future research on the topic are to double down on the weaknesses of this particular study. The sample size should be much larger in order to paint a clearer picture of the general public's impression of the impact of social media on consumer purchasing behaviour. Another suggestion would be to narrow down the breadth of the study topic and try to focus on a particular niche. For example, how Instagram marketing affects consumer purchasing behaviour, or how content marketing and influencers have an effect on consumer purchasing behaviour and so on.

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ANNEXURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Which of the following forms of marketing do you tend to view as more authentic? *

- ☐ Television Marketing
- ☐ Brochures and Flyers
- ☐ Social Media Marketing

Do you use social media? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

...

What social media platforms do you use? *

- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ BeReal
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ All the above

...

How long do you spend on social media daily? *

- ☐ <1 Hour
- ☐ 1-2 Hours
- ☐ More Than 2 Hours

...

Do you follow any of your favourite brands on social media? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you think that social media has an effect on consumer purchasing behaviour? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Does the popularity of a good or service on social media influence your choice to buy it? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being advertised on social media? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

How much of an influence did that advertisement have on your final purchase decision? *

☐ Significant Influence

☐ Some / Negligible Influence

☐ No Influence at all

...

Have you ever purchased a product or service after seeing it being used by someone you know on social media? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

How much of an influence did you seeing someone use it have on your final purchase decision? *

- ☐ Significant Influence
- ☐ Some / Negligible Influence
- ☐ No Influence at all

Generally speaking, what has your experience been with the purchases you have made after being advertised to on social media? *

- ☐ Very Happy
- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Alright
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very Dissatisfied

Do you post your new purchases on your social media platforms? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Does getting to show off the purchase on your social media play any part in the final purchase ^{*} decision?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you ever purchased something that was advertised to you on social media that you were ^{*} not initially going to buy?

☐ Yes

☐ No