

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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In the contemporary scenario, where information spreads at light years in seconds, people are living in the era of social media. Many more have begun using mobile applications, such as Instagram, Telegram and TikTok, not only for the purpose of communicating, but also for sifting through and purchasing items. They define our speech, shape our perceptions, and what is most important from a commercial perspective, dictate our purchasing habits. With the evolution of the digital space, it is pertinent to understand how social media shapes the purchasing behavior of individuals as well as what factors influence their product choices and how businesses can adapt in this dynamic environment.

Within social networks, various forms of user data are collected and used to create custom content for each individual thanks to elaborate algorithms. These algorithms target aspects such as the activities of users as browsing pages, liking posts, reposting content and commenting, as well as the duration spent on

specific pages. Thus, certain target audiences can be selected. There is no limit regarding the amount of information that can be shared on social media. It acts more like a social network that provides an opportunity for every individual to air their views and ideas alike. Such content grabs attention and helps in establishing a bond with the audience rather well especially because it incorporates videos and images.

There is one variable concerning the behavior of customers that holds a lot of weight and that is trust. The reviews made by other users prove more beneficial than the advertisements and marketing messages of the business. Most people rely on reviews before making any purchases which gives them an idea of the quality of the product as well as how to use it. Reviews and recommendations are forms of word of mouth where peers and friends are central to the audience. In the social networking stage, word of mouth and positive comments can be contagious and affect the thoughts of an innumerable amount of people. The actions of other consumers give further assurance to the buyer of the correctness of the choice they have made in case the feedback was from a trusted individual.

Feedback and suggestions have a big impact on how consumers make decisions when buying products. Consumers evaluate different choices and make comparisons relying on the reviews that are accessible. This is especially important for new or unknown brands that can gain consumer trust through positive feedback. Negative reviews, on the contrary, can scare off potential buyers and reduce sales.

Influencers are bloggers, stars, experts in a particular field, or just popular personalities who share their experiences, tips and recommendations. They allow brands to reach more potential customers, especially on social media. Campaigns involving famous personalities on Instagram or YouTube often lead to increased brand awareness and sales growth [3,c.143]. Influencers influence sales through several key mechanisms:

1) Building trust: The audience often trusts the recommendations of influencers, considering them "friends" or experts in a certain field.

2) Visual demonstration: Influencers use photos and videos to showcase the product in real-life scenarios, allowing potential customers to imagine how it might be used.

3) Increasing visibility: By collaborating with influencers, brands can expand their reach and attract a new audience that may not have been aware of their products.

Cooperation with influencers has good and bad sides. They can help your brand be more known and get more customers. But if an influencer does something bad, it can hurt your reputation. It might be hard to work with them because it needs money [1,c.9]. Here are some examples of companies' bad experiences with influencers:

- Fashion Nova, a well-known fashion brand, has faced criticism for using influencers to promote counterfeit products from renowned designers. This has led to legal problems and a decline in the company's reputation among customers who value authenticity.

- In 2017 Pepsi released a commercial featuring Kendall Jenner, which caused a significant backlash. In the video, Jenner joined the protesters and offered a can of Pepsi to the police, which was seen as an inappropriate attempt to profit from social movements. The advertisement was swiftly withdrawn following the negative response, and the company issued an apology.

The cosmetics company L'Oréal has initiated the #WorthSaying campaign, which has brought together a wide range of influencers, including celebrities and bloggers. These individuals have shared their personal stories about beauty and self-esteem. This campaign has not only increased brand awareness but also contributed to a positive perception among the audience [2,c.215].

In the age of social media, the risks of influencing consumer behavior and human psychology are growing. Social media can have a significant impact on public opinion about a company. Negative reviews, customer dissatisfaction and viral scandals can spread quickly and cause significant damage to the brand's reputation.

The digitalization has reshaped all the process of making purchases through the whole process of online shopping, specifically hindering the fact of informed purchasing decisions. The so called "purchasing fatigue", whereas the adverts are being ignored, dramatically reduces marketing effectiveness on target audience. Being bombarded with information leads to blindness and decreased engagement with marketing messages. As it goes, lack of inability to react promptly has a vivid potential for obsolete marketing campaigns.

In Belarus, for example, over 60% of the population actively uses social networks, emphasizing digital channels' importance [4]. While targeted ads are widely used, overly aggressive campaigns can alienate

users and harm brand image. Companies must strike a balance between engaging content and respecting user space. To thrive, brands need flexible, innovative marketing strategies and meaningful customer interactions. A strong online presence and a positive image are essential in the modern landscape.

To sum it up, success in modern purchasing process is largely influenced by the vast eco-systems of social media platforms. While these platforms offer new opportunities for market expansion and brand engagement, the oversaturation of digital content complicates consumers' decision-making, contributing to phenomena such as advertising fatigue. This paper examines the implications of content overload, rapidly shifting consumer trends and evolving social behaviors on business strategy.

The paper also explores strategic responses, including personalization, agile marketing, and social listening. Using Belarus as a regional example, it underscores the rising importance of digital channels and the need for adaptive strategies to maintain competitiveness.

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