

**The influence of social media on contemporary consumer behavior: Part III,
Research Findings and Discussion**

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Abstract

The significance of social media in today's world cannot be understated. It has significantly altered how we connect, communicate, and obtain information. Regardless of distance, online communication has made it simpler for people to stay in touch with friends and family. Today's society is heavily reliant on social media, with billions of users regularly using sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Customers are once again in the forefront in the business world thanks to the widespread usage of social media, which also provides marketers with a brand-new set of tools for connecting with customers and inventively integrating them into businesses. In essence, marketers need to be aware of the impact social media has had on customers' buying behavior. Understanding how social media affects consumer behavior can offer useful insights on consumer tastes, inclinations, and decision-making processes, which can guide marketing initiatives and promote company expansion. Businesses can more effectively communicate with customers, better focus their marketing campaigns, and keep on top of consumer trends by researching the effects of social media. Additionally, companies that comprehend how social media affects consumer behavior are at a competitive edge over rivals. Overall, social media has both positive and negative consequences on society, but it has unquestionably altered how we connect and communicate with one another, and it is sure to continue to develop and have potentially interesting implications on our daily lives. Recognizing that consumer behavior is a fairly comprehensive and broad topic, it would be difficult to gather, examine, and draw all relevant data and findings into single research; consequently, the research has concentrated on how decisions are made as it applies to social media marketing. The study's goal is to identify the causes, timing, and ways in which social media's influence on consumer decision-making. Additionally, possibly with this specific perspective, the research can help identify the chances and problems businesses are confronting with this impact on customers' decision-making in order to capture and embrace the opportunities in the new marketing era. Our study used two research questions within this context: 1. How do consumers receive, interpret, and choose the information before making a decision? 2. How social media today affects on consumer behavior? This paper is divided into four chapters, as follows. Part I contains Introduction and Chapter II, the relevant literature review with regard to the consumer decision making process, social media, social media and consumer behavior, and figures about social media. Part II presents the research methodology (qualitative research; research variables connected to the discussion topics). Part III contains research findings and discussion, and Part IV presents the research conclusions.

Keywords: Social media; Consumer behavior; New marketing era

JEL Classification: D10; D80; L81; L82; M31

Chapter IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the results of the 20 in-depth interviews that were performed in order to lay the groundwork for a discussion with the already-available secondary data.

The inductive study based on the researcher's original research is included in the section below that is primarily based on qualitative observations. In this section, 10 hypotheses are validated or rejected based on the original study.

4.1 Hypothesis 1

Question 1. How often do you use social media platforms?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Everyday

The most common response from the respondents, every day, gave the researcher a clearer understanding of the important role that social media plays in our daily lives.

4.2 Hypothesis 2

Question 2. What social media platforms do you use the most?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Tik Tok

The top three social media platforms worldwide at the start of January 2023 are Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Tik Tok, as also mentioned in section VII of table 2. The majority of people worldwide do utilize these social networks, according to respondents.

4.3 Hypothesis 3

Question 3. How do you feel when you use social media?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Connected with other people
- Entertained, great

Based on findings, respondents feel “connected with other people” while using social media. This demonstrates to the person conducting the study how profoundly social media use has changed the ways in which individuals communicate, interact, and gather information.

Consumers are once again at the center of the enterprise world because to the growing use of social media. Marketers may now communicate with clients and inventively integrate them into their businesses thanks to a new set of technologies at their disposal.

4.4 Hypothesis 4

Question 4. What kind of content do you engage with the most on social media?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Video reviews
- Fashion
- Travel Based on findings, most of the respondents spend time on social media watching videos reviews about products. “The perceived information quality and persuasiveness of online product reviews, as well as the perceived amount of feedback, are discovered to have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchasing behavior”. These evaluations provide consumers with a resource for researching and comparing products and services as well as a tool to base decisions on the opinions and experiences of others. Reviews created by actual customers are generally more authentic and impartial than those produced by paid marketing.

4.5 Hypothesis 5

Question 5. Have you ever purchased a product or service based on an advertisement you saw on social media?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Yes

According to the results, the majority of respondents who were asked if they had ever bought something after seeing an advertisement for it on social media said yes. This demonstrates how social media advertising can be a potent tool for businesses to utilize.

4.6 Hypothesis 6

Question 6. How do you feel about targeted advertising on social media?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Useful
- Intrusive

Based on findings, most of the respondents believe that targeted advertising is a useful tool on social media. Instead, the other part of the respondents answered saying that they perceive targeted advertising as an “aggressive” way of promoting on social media. If in finding conclusions in chapter 5.1 consumers feel comfortable revealing their information on social

media websites, in this study a quarter of the respondents don't feel comfortable with this way of advertising.

4.7 Hypothesis 7

Question 7. Do you feel like social media has changed the way you make purchase decisions?

Mostly frequent answer:

– Yes

According to the results, the majority of respondents who were asked if social media had impacted the way they made judgments about purchases said yes. The researcher can comprehend that social media is having an impact on how consumers make decisions.

4.8 Hypothesis 8

Question 8. How do you feel about influencer marketing on social media?

Mostly frequent answers:

– Useful

Based on the findings of the study, the respondents believe influencer marketing to be a beneficial social media strategy. Their responses confirm the main study's hypothesis that social distance limits are the reason why customers choose to spend greater amounts of time engaging with social networking platforms and consuming more material from influencers. This is indicated in chapter 3.4.

4.9 Hypothesis 9

Question 9. Have you ever unfollowed or stopped following a brand on social media?

Mostly frequent answer:

– Yes

Based on the results, the majority of the respondents indicated yes. To help readers understand the motivation behind this reaction, the researcher questioned respondents why they would unfollow a brand on social media. Based on research, several insights and findings were obtained. A common reason for unfollowing or stopping following a brand on social media was the perception of excessive promotional content. Interviewees expressed a preference for brands that strike a balance between promotional messages and content that provides value, such as educational or entertaining posts. This suggests that brands need to adopt a more subtle and strategic approach to promotional content to retain their followers. Further many interviewees reported that they unfollowed or stopped following a brand on social media due to dissatisfaction with the content being posted, as feeling like the brand didn't resonate with their own way of being. It is obvious how each customer's own personality and beliefs influence whether or not

they choose to follow a brand on social media. This information can help brands better understand consumer preferences, refine their social media strategies, and cultivate meaningful and lasting relationships with their followers.

4.10 Hypothesis 10

Question 10. How do you think social media affects your overall perception of brands and products?

Mostly frequent answers:

- Buy more products based on reviews
- Easily influenced by reviews/influencers
- Social pressure

According to research, most respondents are making more purchases as a result of social media. Another group of respondents believes they are readily persuaded to purchase a product after reading a review or seeing an influencer advertise it. Not to mention, some of the responders had to deal with the social pressure brought on by the widespread usage of social media in modern society. “In today’s world, people buy things in order to appear “liked”.

The results of this qualitative research study are consistent with earlier studies in the subject, highlighting how social media has a significant impact on consumer behavior. For instance, according to research by D. Lakshmanan and Dr. S. Rabiya (2017) on the effectiveness of social media platform advertising, the caliber of the messages or contents, the company's involvement, and its connections to other marketing platforms all significantly affect how effective social media marketing is. Similarly, the qualitative study found that most respondents who were questioned about whether they had ever purchased something after seeing an advertisement for it on social media replied yes. This exemplifies how effective a tool social media advertising can be for businesses.

In addition, the qualitative study supports research by Mass Relevance, a business that provides clients with a social media curation platform, which found that 64% of the consumers interviewed had already made purchases based on social media presence and reviews and that 59% of consumers are more likely to trust a brand that is active on social media. The majority of respondents in the qualitative survey routinely spend time on social media watching product review videos. These reviews give customers a resource for learning about and comparing goods and services, as well as a way to make decisions based on the experiences and opinions of others. Reviews written by genuine customers are typically more trustworthy and objective than reviews provided by paid marketing.

The findings, however, also go against several of the accepted theories. The qualitative study found that consumers believe they are easily persuaded to buy a product after reading a review or

seeing an influencer advertise it, which is in contrast to the claims made by Loredana Di Pietro and Eleonora Pantano (2012) who argued that using social networks as a tool to support a purchasing decision is heavily influenced by enjoyment. Not to add, some of the respondents had to deal with the peer pressure that resulted from social media's pervasive use in contemporary society. This difference highlights the need for additional research into the contextual elements that influence how purchasing decisions on social media affects consumer behavior.

In conclusion the research additionally found that social media has a big impact on customer attitudes and views. Participants stated that they have developed aspirational tastes and wants as a result of the carefully curated and frequently idealized depictions of lifestyles and goods on social media platforms. As a result, consumer expectations have changed, and people now look for goods and experiences that reflect the trends and principles presented on social media. This finding highlights the transformative power of social media in influencing consumer attitudes and shaping their perception of what is desirable and appealing.

The study also clarified how social media helps customers feel more connected to one another. Through social media platforms, participants showed a desire to interact with brands and other customers, resulting in the creation of online communities. This sense of belonging and the desire of recognition from society through online networks have a considerable impact on consumer behavior. It stresses the influence of social networking sites on decision-making processes and underscores the value of social approval and acknowledgment in influencing consumer choices.

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