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Role of Social Media Advertisements in Buying Behaviour: A Conceptual Perspective

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Abstract

In recent times, social media platforms have emerged as a popular tool for marketing communication. Companies worldwide are leveraging the reach and influence of social media to promote their products and services. Social media advertisements have become a significant part of the promotional mix, with big brands investing a significant amount of resources in social media marketing. The current study aims to investigate the impact of social media advertisements on consumer behavior. The study identifies the key antecedents that influence the buying intention of social media users who encounter such content on various social media platforms. The research explores the role of factors such as the perceived quality of the advertisement, the level of trust and credibility associated with the brand, the level of interactivity offered by the advertisement, and the level of entertainment value provided by the advertisement. The study proposes a conceptual framework that outlines the relationships between the various antecedents and the buying intention of social media users. The research utilizes a quantitative methodology, with data collected from a sample of social media users through an online survey. The findings of the study provide valuable insights into the factors that influence consumer behavior in the context of social media advertisements. The results offer useful implications for marketers, highlighting the importance of creating high-quality and engaging social media advertisements that build trust and credibility with consumers. The study contributes to the literature on social media marketing, providing a theoretical framework for future research in this area.

Keywords: Social media, purchase intent, informativeness, interactivity, source credibility, entertainment

Introduction

Social media has emerged as the most important tool for interacting with others in today's world. Its use has elevated the limits of human interaction. It affects everything in its immediate vicinity. This field has also provided opportunities in the world of business and trade. The marketers view it most significantly as a platform for effectively contacting consumers. Online communities, e-WOM, social media marketing, and online advertisements have been shown in numerous studies to effectively increase brand loyalty and purchase intention. The importance of the digital age in contemporary marketing and communication is emphasised by research. Internet marketing and social media advertising are the modern technologies that have most significantly changed the marketing landscape.

One of the primary goals of marketers is to arouse the purchase intention that ultimately leads to reaching the goals of the marketing effort. Social media advertising is advantageous since it maintains a brand's digital presence and allows brands two-way communication with customers. As a result, it has become the main focus of marketing intelligence in order to acquire insight into consumer behaviour. Influencing purchase decisions requires effective consumer communication, and this can be done via social media advertisements. Purchase intention is a critical element for

anticipating consumer behaviour in future purchasing decisions (Morwitz, 1997) ^[12], which is influenced by a positive attitude toward the brand. This is where social media communication can help, because the buyer is more likely to buy the product after they encounter it (Bickart & Schindler, 2001) ^[4]. Consumers regard social media content as a source of information, which includes both brand-driven and user-generated content (Shankar, 2021) ^[15].

The focus of this study is brand-driven paid social media advertising and not user-generated content in the form of online product reviews, comments, ratings, feedback evaluations, etc. In terms of product information, social media is significantly more interactive and faster. Customers rely on E-WOM more than official sources for additional information on products and services because they perceive it as far more trustworthy. This process of social interaction to acquire information over the web ultimately influences customers' buying decisions (Isenberg, 1986) ^[8]. Much research has been conducted on the impact of social media advertisements on the purchase intent of consumers, and all of these forms the scientific basis of the current study.

The modes of communication have changed dramatically in recent years, as traditional media have been replaced by social media. While traditional media remains important, marketers are increasingly turning to social media to complement it

because it is easier to interact and communicate with customers in a cost-effective manner. It aids in targeting the advertisement on the right audiences and helps to build cost effective advertising plans (Dar, Ahmed, Muzaffar, Nawaz, & Zahid, 2014) [5].

There are various forms of social media communication and all of these impacts the overall purpose of marketing. This research proposes a conceptual model to gain insights about the brand induced paid advertisements over the social media. These advertisements have many forms including the promotion on the social media handles of the firm, some related social media pages, traditional celebrity social media accounts or the new-age influencers. The main focal point is the part that is clearly visible as advertisement and ad-skepticism value is high. Through this research one can understand the role of social media advertisements, by various brands, in formation of intent to purchase. This research will bring an insight into designing appropriate promotional strategy on social media to influence the consumer purchase decision. Consumers become aware, remain informed, and thus influenced by the brand through social media advertising during frequent visits to social media networks. This ensures that customers are encountered with ample customer-brand touch points that the marketing efforts of the firm do not go wasted. Although, people can recognize that the communication they encounter is paid and induced by the brand but as they can interact directly with the company via likes, comments, shares, etc. over the social networking sites (SNSs), it is perceived as a two-way authentic communication by the social media users.

Literature Review

Understanding the dynamics and rapid usage of social media in a global context is required to carry out this research. It is mandatory to comprehend the current research status of this field. The literature review has been done to gain a deeper understanding of the work done by other researchers on social media marketing, social media advertisement, customer attitude, source trustworthiness, ad-informativeness, ad-entertainment value, and purchase intention. We used recent studies to understand the state-of-the-art research in the field. Some useful studies are mentioned below:

Lewis (2009) [10] noted "social media" is a "label for digital technologies that allow people to connect, interact, produce and share content" (p. 2). Social media can be used as a platform for advertising and promotional activities. Although user generated content is an important aspect and the owned media is an asset for the marketers but the paid media can also be leveraged as a tool for marketing.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) [9] described social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). Social media therefore can be a great space for marketers to achieve the results of their marketing efforts. This is the reason that social media advertising are gaining popularity and this domain interests the academicians all around the world.

As per the Interactive Advertising Bureau, social media advertising is described as web advertising that incorporates user information, such as images, into the advertisement. Social media advertisements are such an important element of marketing mix now-a-days (IAB, 2009).

Ajzen (1991) [2] defined attitude as an individual's positive or negative judgement of using a specific service. As a result, a

consumer's attitude toward social media advertising can be defined as their liking or disliking of mobile advertising.

Mehta (2000) [11] defined consumers' attitude toward social media advertising as their liking or disliking of mobile advertising. Consumer attitudes regarding advertising are important drivers of advertising efficacy and it can influence the results of the marketing effort. It is inferred that consumer attitude is such an important aspect when one has to get insights about consumer behavior and brand related variables. So, it is included as one of the important constructs in the proposed study.

Voorveld & van Noort (2014) [17] discovered that combining social networking sites with television in a single campaign produces a more favorable response than using these media separately. They indicated that when the two mediums are utilized concurrently, individuals perceive advertising to be less persuasive than when they are used separately. This suggests that the type of medium utilized for advertising has an impact on customer behaviour.

Ahmad *et al.* (2020) [1] studied the role of YouTube advertisement in generating and building brand awareness using 280 respondents recruited for data collection. The study found that such social media advertisements have a positive influence over the brand awareness. This study was limited to single social media platform and each social media networking site possesses a distinct aura. Therefore, a study is needed which will cover all major platforms. The limitations also emphasize that more research on this topic should be carried out in the regions where internet using population is high.

Rahman (2018) [14] studied the effects of source credibility such as trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness upon the brand awareness. This study used the Elaboration Likelihood Model to investigate the role of advertisements in generating brand awareness. It employed qualitative in-depth interview method and sample was drawn from Bangladesh. Findings indicate that advertisements are an effective medium to enhance the brand awareness among target audience.

Onu, Nwaulune, Adegbola, & Kelechi (2019) [13] was a similar study conducted in Nigeria and it found that trustworthiness is an important element which influences the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

Tan, Geng, Katsumata, & Xiong (2021) [16] claimed that Ad-informativeness and persuasiveness contribute to greater consumer brand awareness. It is well demonstrated in research that if the advertisement content is informative and persuasive, the consumers feel more engaged and aware with regards to the advertised brand or product.

Erkan, Gokerik, & Acikgoz (2019) [6] did a study to look into the effects of Facebook ads on brand equity, brand awareness, and brand image. They found that if the advertisement has an entertainment value, it is more likely to develop brand image, brand awareness and brand equity.

Zhang & Hung (2020) [18] claim that endorsement that can increase brand awareness, brand image, consumer attitude, and purchase intention. The analyzed variables were advertisement, brand equity and purchase intention.

Alalwan (2018) [3] conducted a study to identify and test the main factors related to social media advertising that could predict purchase intention and found that performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, interactivity, informativeness, and perceived relevance had significant impact on purchase intentions.

Proposed Conceptual Model

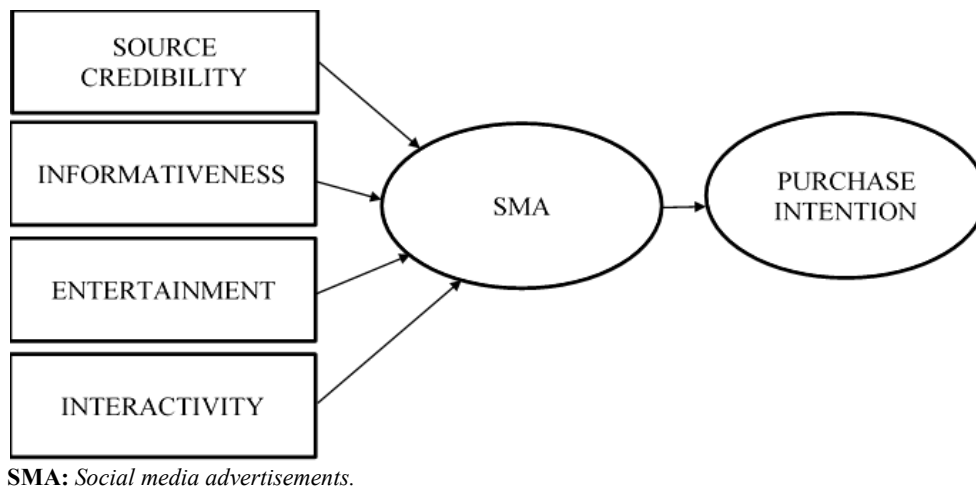


Fig 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework.

Findings and Conclusions

Social media advertisements impact the purchase intention of the customers who interact with the aforementioned ads after they view content on their social media feeds. Customers find such social media content informative, entertaining, interactive and trustworthy. This influences their decision to purchase the products advertised on social media, and this framework identifies the main factors influencing such decisions. These factors were identified as a result of a thorough review of the previous research in this area. The present work contributes to the corpus of knowledge by putting forth a conceptual model that looks into how social media affects consumers' desire to buy products they see presented over the social media.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The major limitation of the current study lies in the fact that it is an explorative study and hence it only identified the factors affecting purchase intent with regards to the social media advertisement activities. The present study calls for future empirical investigations in the area using the proposed framework.

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