

# *The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Behavior*

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**Abstract:** Social media, an essential part of social connection, is becoming an inevitable global communication tool. The popularity and availability of mobile phones have further fueled the importance of social media. Social media marketing activities carried out by enterprises helps to attract more comprehensive customers and influence customers' purchase behavior. However, with the increasing investment of significant brands in marketing activities on social media platforms, marketing on social media is becoming increasingly competitive in building consumers' awareness about a particular product, customers' purchase behavior, and purchase decisions. Marketing research has focused on using social media to motivate consumers' purchase intentions and maintain consumer loyalty. The previous studies have shed some light on the significant impacts of social media on consumers' behaviors. However, few focus on consumers' purchase intentions and decisions. Through a literature review, this paper studies how consumer behavior changes due to social media. This paper explores how social media can ultimately market consumer behavior by influencing consumer psychology, attitude, and internal motivation for consumption through a literature review. Hopefully, this paper also can provide some ideas for enterprises to better their strategy formulation, optimize marketing plans, and improve brand benefits and corporate earnings in the increasingly fierce social media marketing competition.

**Keywords:** social media, marketing, consumer behavior

## 1. Introduction

Social media marketing, different from traditional marketing, is increasingly popular worldwide. It refers to the sum of marketing communication activities on social media platforms. In recent years, the use of social media has increased significantly [1], and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated social media use among U.S. adults [2]. Previously, consumers bought a product mainly through brand manufacturers or advertising to understand the product. At the same time, social media provides a platform for consumer information acquisition, enabling consumers to understand the product from different channels and obtain the information they need. Moreover, social media platform enables consumers to view the product experience and feedback published and shared by real users. Social media changes people's purchasing styles and makes people more accessible and more convenient to buy things online.

There are some characteristics of social media marketing. First of all, social media marketing is interactive. This means enterprises pay much attention to customers' sense of using their products' experience and have dialogues and interactions with consumers. On social media, the interaction between enterprises and consumers is interactive and based on trust. Based on trust, consumers, and enterprises are more closely connected, which makes it easier to achieve consumer behavior. Secondly, social media marketing creates a two-way, timely communication environment for enterprises and consumers. It increases the opportunities for enterprise brands to gain a lot of attention.

Moreover, social media marketing is targeted at market segments. Therefore, compared with traditional marketing, social media marketing is more accurate and can better meet the market's and consumers' needs, thus helping enterprises obtain good economic returns. Social media marketing makes it convenient for customers in the consumption process, reducing trouble, assisting consumers in spending less time browsing product information, and motivating consumers' desire for consumption.

## **2. Social Media Marketing Affects Consumer Attitudes, Psychology, and Motivation**

According to GlobalWebIndex, 54% of social media users use social media to research products, and 71% are more likely to purchase products and services based on social media referrals[3]. Under the influence of the Internet and social media, consumers' attitudes, psychology, and motivation have changed tremendously, affecting consumer behavior.

### **2.1. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Attitudes**

The pandemic has accelerated the digitization process of consumers and businesses and increased consumers' marketing behavior on social media platforms. As a result, online shopping is increasingly becoming an inevitable part of people's daily life. In the post-epidemic era, consumers increasingly depend on online shopping, making social media marketing an unavoidable choice for enterprises. Consumption attitude refers to people's positive or negative evaluation, feelings, and tendencies towards something subjectively from their perspective. Specifically, consumption attitude relates to people's psychological inclination towards a specific brand or service or before engaging in a particular consumption activity, which affects the direction of consumer decision-making and consumption behavior.

By using digital technology, social media marketing can improve the consumer spending experience at the purchase level by making ordering, purchasing, and payment of products more accessible to save customers time and money [4]. Social media marketing changes consumers' attitudes by changing their perceptions. Consumers' cognition comes from three main aspects: advertising, others' recommendation, and their own user experience in social media marketing. Enterprises use various strategies to let consumers understand and pay attention to their specific products or services. From changing consumers' cognition, enterprises can then change consumers' emotions through emotional marketing to gain consumers' favor. However, consumers' attitudes and emotions determine their consumption intentions. The research found some activities on the social media platform, such as consumers' participation in discussions, and knowledge sharing, influence other customers' consumption attitudes and purchase behavior. Among them, online word-of-mouth makes a vast marketing impact on consumers' attitudes. Those comments, reviews, and evaluations from friends on social media platforms will actively market consumers' attitudes toward the products. Research proves online word-of-mouth marketing affects consumers' purchase intention and final behavior.

## **2.2. The Trend of Consumers Psychology in the Post-epidemic Era**

In the era of global stagnation, internal circulation has become a significant feature of the consumer market. At the same time, the mentality of consumers has also changed: focus on internal needs, release daily pressure, and virtual reality meets spiritual communication. Under such a social background, consumers pay more attention to spiritual satisfaction and have higher requirements for comfort. In the face of many uncertainties, consumers pay more attention to seeking a sense of security in consumption. In addition, consumers like to establish more connections with brands and pursue a healthier, better-quality lifestyle.

Social media platforms meet the psychological needs of consumers and become the best choice for consumers. Through network monitoring and extensive data analysis, enterprises discover consumers' attitudes and demand tendencies toward specific products or brands. According to consumers' psychological needs, carry out activities on social media platforms to attract consumers' attention and interest. This stage belongs to confirming consumer demand, jointly stimulated by external factors such as marketing communication and internal factors. At this stage, social media marketing affects consumers' consumption psychology and ultimately affects consumers' consumption behavior and purchase decisions. Because consumers' gender, age, occupation, interest, hobbies, and other differences make consumers' consumption psychology also have significant differences. Given this feature, social media must divide consumers in marketing planning, determine their target customers, and then carry out targeted marketing.

## **2.3. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Motivation**

Consumers' buying motivation is their internal driving force driving customers to make their determination to purchase specific products or services, which is the premise and cause of purchase behavior. The generation of consumer motivation must be based on the needs of consumers and also needs corresponding stimulation. Only by arousing consumers' consumption demand can consumers be driven to take action, and the awakening of conditions can be derived from internal and external stimuli. Sometimes consumers need to realize that they need something. However, when a particular product constantly appears, along with some recommendations from friends, consumers will become curious or trendy, resulting in a demand for purchase. With its unique functions, social media can accurately and effectively capture consumers' consumption psychology and motivation to carry out targeted promotional activities on major social platforms. Enterprises use search engines and social media to realize the process of consumers' cognition, understanding, liking, and purchasing through video combination with corresponding marketing strategies.

Social media marketing is the marketing and promotion of enterprises, institutions, or individuals on social platforms. Its goal is to discover or explore prospective consumers' needs so that they can understand a product and then purchase it. In this process, social media influences consumers' attitudes, psychology, and internal motivation, shaping and changing consumers' consumption behavior. Next, we will discuss the changes in consumer behavior brought about by social media marketing activities from the following points.

## **3. The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Behavior**

### **3.1. Social Media Marketing Affects Consumers' Purchase Intention and Frequency**

Social media marketing provides consumers access to their benefits and needs, and social media marketing influences their purchasing intention, decisions, and frequency. Gao studied the influencing factors stimulating users' purchase intention under social media marketing [5]. Her research shows that marketing activities positively influence users' participation and purchase intent.

Moreover, interaction and online word-of-mouth positively affect the three dimensions of customer involvement. However, entertainment, customization, and the trend only significantly positively affect consumption-based and contribution-based participation, not creative participation. There are also many other factors influencing consumers' purchase intention. Focusing on the influencing factors, some researchers study the common factors influencing consumers' purchase intention when they think twice before buying something. Those researches help us understand and obtain insights into consumer buying behavior when consumers consume on social media platforms. Social media promotes the connection between consumers and virtually stimulates consumers' purchase intention. Trust is the premise of any transaction. Only by gaining consumers' trust can we encourage consumers' consumption behavior. It has been proved that consumers' trust in brands directly influences consumers' purchase intentions.

Moreover, it's known that there is a specific intention behind any action. In the consumption field, any behavior is accompanied by its corresponding definition. Social media impacts consumers' consumption intention, affecting consumer behavior. Social media plays a vital role in consumers' purchase intention. A study is conducted on the impact of social media, especially the effect of word-of-mouth marketing on social media. It has been found that word-of-mouth marketing has a significant development, positively influencing brand images and consumers' purchase intention [6]. Social media entirely and significantly affect purchase intentions through brand image.

Research proves that most consumers' purchase intention is influenced by social media marketing, and consumers' purchase intention has excellent effects on consumers' consumption frequency. However, existing research has proved that social media activities have a significant favorable influence on consumers' purchase intention. The study shows that social media marketing can enhance the participation of social media users and thus enhance consumer purchase intention. However, the inadequacy of the research is that it needs to point out what social media marketing factors affect the participation of different levels of users and its impact mechanism.

### **3.2. Social Media Marketing Makes Consumer Behavior More Proactive**

Social media marketing is highly humanized without too much interference from the sales force. Moreover, through interactive communication, consumers' initiative is enhanced, enabling enterprises and consumers to establish a good long-term cooperative relationship. Compared with the passive position in traditional marketing, customers have more proactive rights in their consumption activities. The extensive products and product information on social media allow customers to choose what they like and need. Therefore, it can be said that social media platforms increase the consumer's consumption choice. Consumers' consumption behaviors are more active than traditional marketing time. Massive social media marketing activities have stimulated consumer demand and increased the number of consumers consumption. Moreover, the more customers engage on various social media platforms, the more they can buy products to meet their needs.

Social media platforms being widely used and advertising activities are inevitable strategies for organizations to motivate consumers to buy their products. Some researches focus on the advertisements' influence on consumers' purchase intention before consumers decide to buy something. There are many factors influencing consumers' behaviors. Consumers' awareness of the brand ultimately determines their purchase behavior. Through various marketing activities, enterprises can enhance brand awareness and deepen the relationship between brands and consumers to ultimately promote consumers' purchase behavior. Research finds that fan page engagement positively affects consumers' brand awareness, word of mouth (W.O.M.) activities, and purchase intention [7].

### 3.3. Social Media Marketing Influences Consumers' Brand Loyalty

The highly commercialized social media platforms are not only a sharing tool and brand for sharing opinions, insights, experiences, and views but also a meaningful way to connect brands and consumers. Social media activities not only affect consumers' purchase intention but also gradually affect consumers' behavior, such as consumers' loyalty and participation intention.

Social media marketing has high communication efficiency, and interaction is one of its most significant characteristics. Due to this characteristic, customers can communicate and give immediate feedback on the product information as soon as enterprises release it. Interaction strengthens the stickiness between users and enterprises. More importantly, it can help enterprises cultivate their loyal customer groups. Based on more rational consumers, consumer stickiness and loyalty to brands have been significantly enhanced in social media marketing. Consumers will maintain a high level of rationality and buying frequency when they find a trustworthy brand.

In social media marketing, many studies have focused on consumer loyalty to one or some brands. Some focus on the favorable activities and content provided by brands on social media, the frequency of their appearance on social platforms, specific applications, and other relevant factors which impact consumers' brand loyalty. Budiman focuses on analyzing online word-of-mouth marketing of products and the role of community marketing in brand image [8]. The study proves that e-WOM, community, and online advertising are the three main influencing factors that decide customers' brand loyalty.

Huang et al [9] investigate the effect of social media interactivity on community benefits and the effect of community benefits on brand loyalty. The study found that enterprises strengthen the connection with consumers by establishing communities, and the formation of customer-oriented interactions directly impacts consumer behavior. In addition, the more activities enterprises use social media to carry out, the more they can affect consumers' loyalty to the corporate brand. Moreover, the degree of consumers' response to the enterprise will determine the strength of consumers' access to product information, relevant knowledge, and community identity. On the contrary, the degree of consumers' acquisition of product information and product knowledge and acceptance of self-identity in the community will affect consumers' consumption behavior. Fetais et al [10] research to investigate the impact of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty directly and through mediating variables of community engagement and love mark. Based on the social media context, all the above articles take brand royalty as the dependent variables and choose different independent variables. Though the independent variables are other, the results all show the significant influence of the activities produced on social media platforms on product brand loyalty. How to use social media efficiently to maintain and increase consumer loyalty to the brand is the key to enterprise brand development. In a word, social media is not only a sharing tool and brand for sharing opinions, insights, experiences, and views but also a meaningful way to connect brands and consumers.

## 4. Conclusion

Social media has become necessary for enterprises to influence consumer attitudes, opinions, and purchase behavior. Social media affects consumers' consumption behavior by influencing their consumption attitude, consumer psychology, and internal motivation for consumption. However, the constantly developing and changing social media environment has challenged marketers. Marketers must measure the investment value of these channels, pay attention to consumers' needs and brand image, advance technology and strengthen the ability of technology applications to obtain potential customers, maintain existing customers' loyalty, and stimulate more consumer consumption.

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