

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The impacts of social media marketing on consumer behavior was studied. Five objectives were targeted, which were: to explore the history and current trends of social media marketing; to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes; to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions; to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer repurchase decisions and to offer recommendations to retailers on how to make use of social media marketing to increase their sales performance. Primary data was used, and two retail organizations with operations in Finland were targeted, namely: Lidl and IKEA. Six participants were targeted, and they were contacted through interviews. The data was analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative technique.</p> <p>The findings show that the respondents are well versed in the terms and trends that relate to social media marketing based on their educational backgrounds, and work experiences. As managers they acknowledge that social media marketing is relevant in today's world, and that it affects consumer buying behavior as well as consumer repurchase behavior. Consumer attitudes are also influenced by social media marketing and thus organizations ensure that they maintain a positive brand image by constant online presence in order to ensure purchase decisions.</p> <p>The instruments that are used to measure the impact of social media marketing however vary from organization to organization, and aid in compiling data to measure the effectiveness of the tool. Recommendations were given to guide retail managers on how to best use social media for marketing.</p>		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

A study on social media marketing would be best founded upon an understanding of the concept of marketing as a whole before narrowing down to the concept of social media marketing. The practice of marketing has been around for millennia.

Traditionally goods and services were sold in physical stores (shops). It rapidly evolved with the times, leading to increased competition from the early twentieth century to the late 1940s (Hardy, 2016), requiring modern market techniques. Marketing thus needed consumer communications in order to cope with the rising competition. In, the 1990s branding emerged as a marketing technique. Companies that branded could sell more high-quality products and reap the rewards of increased profit margins and enhanced reputation (Hardy, 2016). In the years that followed, technological advances were developed and the Internet was born, followed by web-based companies.

These companies allowed for the information of goods and services to be conveyed, and surprisingly it was noted that they also impacted the consumers by influencing their brand purchases. Thus internet marketing was launched, ushering a new era in digital marketing today.

According to the digital marketing institute (2020), "digital marketing is described as the employment of digital platforms or channels to market or promote goods and services to consumers and business entities." Its advancement came with advantages that it could be able to reach a large number of people over a short time and increase customer base. The development of search engines like google rapidly progressed the flow of information leading to various social networking sites popping up like Facebook, Twitter, among others. This could be accessed anywhere by use of laptops, phones, and other Internet-friendly devices.

Companies began to notice avenues to promote their products, which has led to social media marketing. Social media marketing is described as a technique where information is passed electronically from one internet use to another about its products and services. It relies heavily on word of mouth as a tool (WOM). Richins &

Root Shaffer (1988) describe WOM as an act of transferring information from one person to another and plays a big role in influencing customer buying behavior. Porter and Golan (2006) define social marketing as a non-paying peer to peer communication of provocative material from a known source, which uses the Internet to influence its target market to relay the message to others. An aspect of social media marketing is viral marketing, which can be intentional or non-intentional. Many managers are now adding viral marketing as a way of promoting their brands.

1.2 Study Problem

With the onset of the Internet, there has been increased globalization and a wider spread of information that has led to an increase in business activities. Jackson and Parsa (2009) note that customers have a more comprehensive range of goods and services, which has led to stiff competition. Many organizations are now on board with social media marketing as a technique of promoting their brands, but few have equipped their managers to understand it. As an emergent tool in marketing, managers need to understand how to create social media content that is beneficial to the organization and create a buzz among the consumers in a positive manner. This study will contribute to additional material in addressing this challenge.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Social marketing is now beginning to gain scholars and industry players' attention as a technique in marketing over the past decade. Since it is relatively new and ongoing, there exists insufficient literature that properly delves into it. This study will seek to add to other existing literature on the topic by carrying out a case study on consumers directly impacted by it.

Social media marketing relies more on human behavior than structured advertisements and so the study will seek to find out how this affects the consumer purchase power. It will also benefit academia by critically reviewing all the previous works that have been done on the topic. Lastly, it will contribute significantly to managers and organizations by providing useful information that will be gleaned from the study's recommendations.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer behaviour. To do this, the study will have five objectives, as follows:

To explore the history and current trends of social media marketing

To determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes

To determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions

To determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer repurchase decisions

To offer recommendations to retailers on how to make use of social media marketing to increase their sales performance

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the background of social media marketing, from what it was, to how it has evolved to become. It has given definitions and terms that are used in marketing today. It has further highlighted the problem to be studied, as well as illustrated the significance of the study. Consequently, the aims and objectives have been discussed, in relation to the topic that has been posed. The next chapter shall pore over literature works that have been written in regards to this topic.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter endeavors to give a detailed discussion of past literature review from documented sources. There are five major parts to this chapter. The first is the introduction, which is then followed by the theoretical review. This review is based on previous theories that scholars have written concerning this study. The conceptual review follows, which explains the definitions of the keywords related to this study. The empirical review is the fourth part, and it critically reviews existing literature on the topic at hand. The last section concludes the study.

The major theoretical frameworks that relate to the study and understanding of how social media works can be separated into three schools of thought (Pan and Crotts, 2012). These are micro-theories, macro-theories, and pseudo-theories. Micro-theories deal with the study of contributions that are online and their communication with individual actors. Macro-theories look at the structure and relationship of social actors and media content through global views, while pseudo-theories relate to recent frameworks in marketing and social media that have been proposed by enthusiasts of the subject. In this chapter, the psychological ownership theory, which falls under the Micro-theory, McLuhan's theory, which is part of the Macro-theories and the Social feedback loop under the pseudo-theories, is discussed because they are most closely related to this research.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Psychological Ownership Theory

Asatryan and Oh (2008) applied this model based on their observations in the tourism sector. It explains why former customers are encouraged to give word-of-mouth feedbacks. It goes further to say how customers develop emotional connections with organizations that they profess loyalty to. This enables them to create a feeling of ownership as evidenced by their use of words like 'My', 'Our', and 'mine' when giving their feedback. In these instances, Mattila (2001) states that a consumer would give positive feedback and report negative feedback to the owners of the establishment. In a case where no loyalty exists, there is a desire to indirectly influence the organization by communicating positive and negative reviews to future customers.

In support of this, Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2003) state that consumers' desire to control these communications by such reviews may develop to feelings by the consumer of intrinsic success, happiness, and satisfaction that benefit them as a result of advising others. Thus the Internet, having allowed critiques to voice their views, facilitates not only in influencing friends and relatives but also in strangers worldwide. This theory is hence relevant to this study because it illustrates how social media marketing can influence consumer purchase decisions.

2.2.2 McLuhan's Media Theory

McLuhan is of Canadian origin and is a renowned philosopher and educator. He coined the famous quote, 'the media is the message' (McLuhan 1995). He points out that the transformation of people and society is by the media, as opposed to the media's actual content.

In essence, the messages that are being communicated will vary on any new media but the connections and repetition of the communication patterns will change the consumer behaviors for good. Hence the impact of the media is greater than the content of the media. He further divides the media's content into two categories, 'Hot' and 'cool'. 'Cool' media requires the viewer to concentrate and participate in understanding its message.

This can be in the form of Seminars, televisions and cartoons. On the contrary, 'Hot' media relies on the viewers' senses, so they do not need an immense effort to understand it. An example of these is films, radio, and pictures (McLuhan, 1995). In this case, social media would fall under hot media because it relies on the viewers' senses to actively participate in purchasing decisions, based on communication.

2.2.3 The Social Feedback Loop

This theory connects consumer purchases as a funnel to social media. According to Dave Evans (2008), a traditional purchase funnel has three levels; the awareness, consideration, and actual buying with which a marketer can influence the buyer's purchase decision. Consequently, a modern purchase funnel differs from this by assuming the customer has no preconceived notions.

The customer will purchase, use the product and later on talk about it. The views will then be posted online, which will then loop back into other customers purchasing decisions. This feedback cycle is fueled by word of mouth and is driven by use, trial, and sampling by the consumer. This is relevant to our study because it shows how hearsay through social media influences customer's decisions.

2.3 Conceptual Review

2.3.1 Social Media

The term social media is used to refer to a new form of online media that involves interactions and participation. It can also be described as a digital tool that allows users to create and share content with the public. Borgan (2010) describes social media as the change of people's attention to online platforms where they can share, discover, and read information. Conrad et al. (2010) further attest that social media is a relationship between sociology and technology that creates an environment where people can share experiences and develop networks that can either be official or non-official.

It involves a digital platform that can either be mobile or stationary. Unlike traditional media, it is not passive in terms of communication and must involve interactions with friends, family or the public. Its characteristics include participation, openness, and conversation, allow community involvement as well as encompass connectivity. Examples of social media are Facebook and Snapchat. Anyone can be involved in social media as long as they have internet access. It only requires signing up. Most of the time, it is broad and uncensored, except for explicit content in some cases.

2.3.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is defined as using social platforms and web-based sites to promote products and services. Social media marketing thereby uses natural conversational platforms in terms of people to build relationships that go towards satisfying their needs through feedbacks. Dwivedi et al. (2015), Yadar and Rahman (2017) have defined social media marketing as a concept that facilitates connectivity and interactions among existing and prospective customers. Consequently, other scholars like Tuten and Solomon (2016) and Choi et al. (2016) ascertain that social media marketing's primary goal is to facilitate businesses because they relate to consumer satisfaction and purchase intentions with loyalties and consumers shares. Dwivedi et al. (2015) provided that the concept of social media marketing was born out of focusing discussions that arose around the market offering.

These discussions then allowed users to come into contact with information from other user's experiences. As a result, social media marketing has provided opportunities for organizations and consumers to participate in open dialogues that allow for contributions, thereby enabling influencing to a broader audience.

2.3.3 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior has been defined as the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their resources that include time, money, and effort on consumer-related items. Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990), defined it as the actions and decisions that people go through to purchase goods and services for personal use. Loudon and Bitta (1988) consequently described it as physical activity and decision-making process that consumers engage in when accessing, acquiring, using, or disposing of the said goods and services. It is essentially studying what customers buy when they buy, and how often they buy, to mention a few.

It is essential to understand consumer behavior because, according to Assael (1995), the consumers determine organizations' profit and sales because they make the purchasing decisions. Therefore the economic viability of a business is in their hands. Therefore, consumer behavior is studied to know or predict how a consumer will behave regarding market offerings.

2.4 History and Current Trends in Social Media

Social media looks like a new trend, but its roots from the beginning of the computer era in the 1950s (Gebauer et al., 2013). Today's technology is the result of continuous development in social media in previous centuries. Usenet which was launched in 1979 was the first progenitor of social media and the journey from Usenet to Facebook has been a long journey. Since the 1990s to date, social media has taken over business marketing that is being embraced in close to all major and small enterprise organizations.

Usenet allowed users to post on newsgroups that was followed by bulletin board systems (BBS) that allowed login in and interactions by users (Gebauer et al, 2013). Social media is a game-changer since it provides flexibility to communication at both personal and organizational levels. Using search icons in social media marketing,

companies increase rankings, sales, leads, and traffic of networking with their consumers. Social media optimization also helps in boosting company business (Kumar et al., 2016).

By setting clear goals and objectives, social media marketing helps organizations maximize on their strategies hence great Return on Investments (ROI). Many social networking sites were created in the 1990s like BlackPlanet, Asian Avenue, MoveOn, among others. Other blogging sites like Blogger and Epinions were also formed. By the year 2000, social media received a massive boost by the springing up of many social networking sites. Among those launched included LunarStorm, Cyworld, and Wikipedia. From 2002 onwards sites like MySpace, LinkedIn, tribe.net, Facebook, Yahoo, and YouTube were developed sequentially (Junco et al, 2011).

Further, social media marketing also helps in setting measurable goals, knowing your consumers, doing R & D, exploring more social networks, and enabling the capability to choose core related topics to your organization from online contents. Social media marketing helps in increasing company branding (Mayfield, 2011).

The brand awareness helps in consumer knowledge of a product. So, the brand name, according to Cohen (2009) should overshadow your product and services. By choosing the right social media channel for marketing company products, the company can make strong social content strategy. Keeping of track of all metrics live reachability, linkages and consumer interactions is attained. Lastly, social media marketing offers Viral Marketing on any hot topic. This message comes from one person to another, aiming to evoke intentions that boost the business. Examples of viral marketing include the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge that received increased media attention by soaking the whole world that even celebrities and entrepreneurs participated.

However, Facebook, Google, and YouTube have been among the most popular sites controlling social media marketing, with billions of dollars being spent on consumer advertisements. Furthermore, Twitter has also considered a more reactive site due to its real-time information on numerous followers. There are also emerging online companies like TikTok that are trying to enter the social media networks to bring

competition to the latter social media bigwigs. Figure 2.1 illustrates the growth of the most dominant social media platforms in the world at the end of 2018.

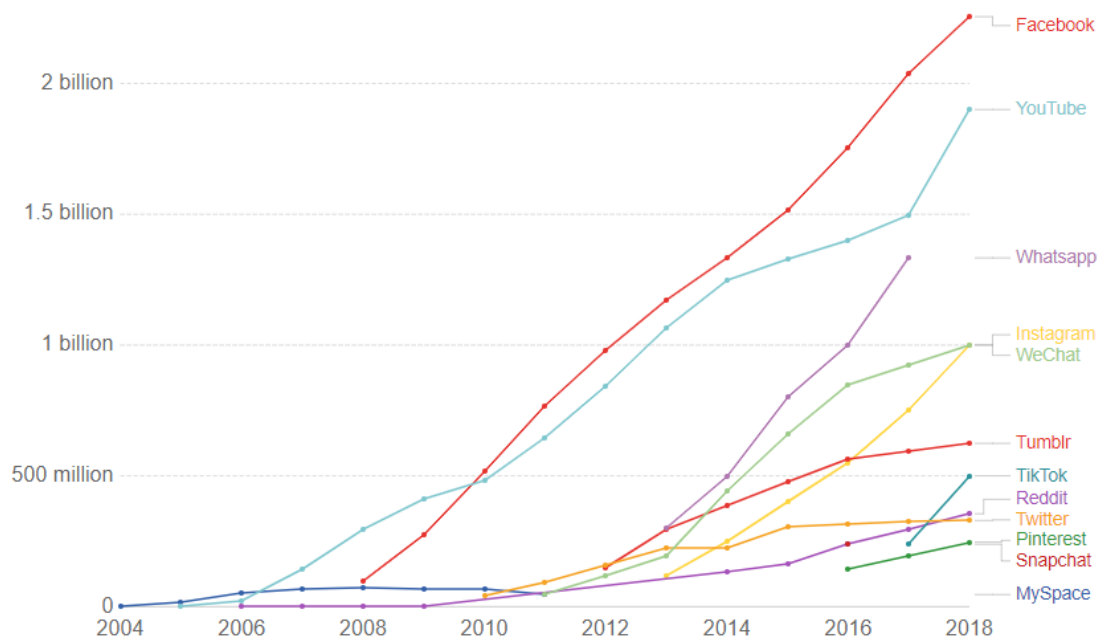


Figure 2.1: number of monthly active users of selected social media platforms

Source: Ortiz-Ospina (2019)

Moreover, it is notable that there is a difference between social media and social networking in that social media is seen as a strategy for online broadcasting while networking is involved as a utility for connecting online site users (Cohen, 2009). There are many differences between social media and networking, including the Return on Investment (ROI).

2.5 Evolution of Social Media Marketing

The evolution of social media Marketing emerged around the Dot-com Bubble between 1995-2002 (Arora et al., 2019). The emergence of the internet made it a viable tool for marketing. Initially most organizations seeking to establish online presences began by developing websites to establish online presence and promote their brand. The emergence of Google, Yahoo and MSN search engine made it possible for companies to take advantage of search engine optimizers (SEO) (Arli, 2017). The

Search engine Optimizers made it possible for organization to market themselves at the top of search results.

The second generation website gave birth to blogs that increase the popularity of content marketing. Inbound marketing popularly known as Content marketing increased the value creation to customers while, at the same time, earning business to the various organization. Hence, the blogs replaced the old buy, beg or bug models outbound marketing strategies. Finally, business moved to social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The corporation were able to identify and pick the most positive net effect of social media presence to their business model (King, 2017).

Social media also enables multiple companies access cheaply a huge database. The companies were able to apply data analytics to identify and isolate potential clients from the crowd. The database also availed analysed information from various search engine companies hence resulting to lead generation (Arli, 2017). Therefore, contributing to approximately 90% of all outbound marketing strategies by most organization on social media.

Most of those firm utilize social media marketing for branding, customer retention, lead generation, e-commerce and research. Social media was not only used as a marketing tool, but also as a communication tool to inform different groups of clients. As a result most of the organization online activities registered 83% customer satisfaction. Most of the customers complaints were registered on twitter and received instant replies. The net effect of such communication was that companies get to retain a huge number of customers and increase their customer transaction (Amaya et al., 2020).

In 2012 most firm fragment their various social media users into different consumer target group (Arli, 2017). Hence their social media marketing content was now being driven by data and demographics. However, most organisation discovered that the social media had officially been hijacked by attention of the masses, therefore, multiple organization began adopting an active social media marketing strategy.

Hence the era of most social media marketing was conceived with various SEOs firms monetizing their platforms.

Towards the end of 2019 studies enunciate the position of the present state of digital communication and the interlocutors advancing mass spread of ideas in social media. The studies establish that Digital communication were (King, 2017) being utilized in the mass spread of ideas in social media marketing. Thus the study established that there was a great transformation in revenue generation especially when social media was involved. The research also established that the diverse groupings within the online social media platform were at the center of consumer segmentation and social media advertisement.

A study by Sueghwan & Dea-Young (2020) established that social media was at the core of all modern communication. The research also established that social media was influential and key in the generating of income. The research discovered that there was need to tailor the relevant information to suite the need of the various grouping within the social media platform. However, the recipient of the information had complex and diverse needs.

The best approach adopted to meet the targeted needs of these complex grouping was targeted digital communication. Hence it was established that it is essential use precision to produce, reproduce, store and distribute media, image and sounds in a digital format to reach the targeted audience (John, Scott, & Keith, 2015). Figure 2.2 is a summary of the marketing techniques that have been used in digital or social media marketing between 1990 and 2020.

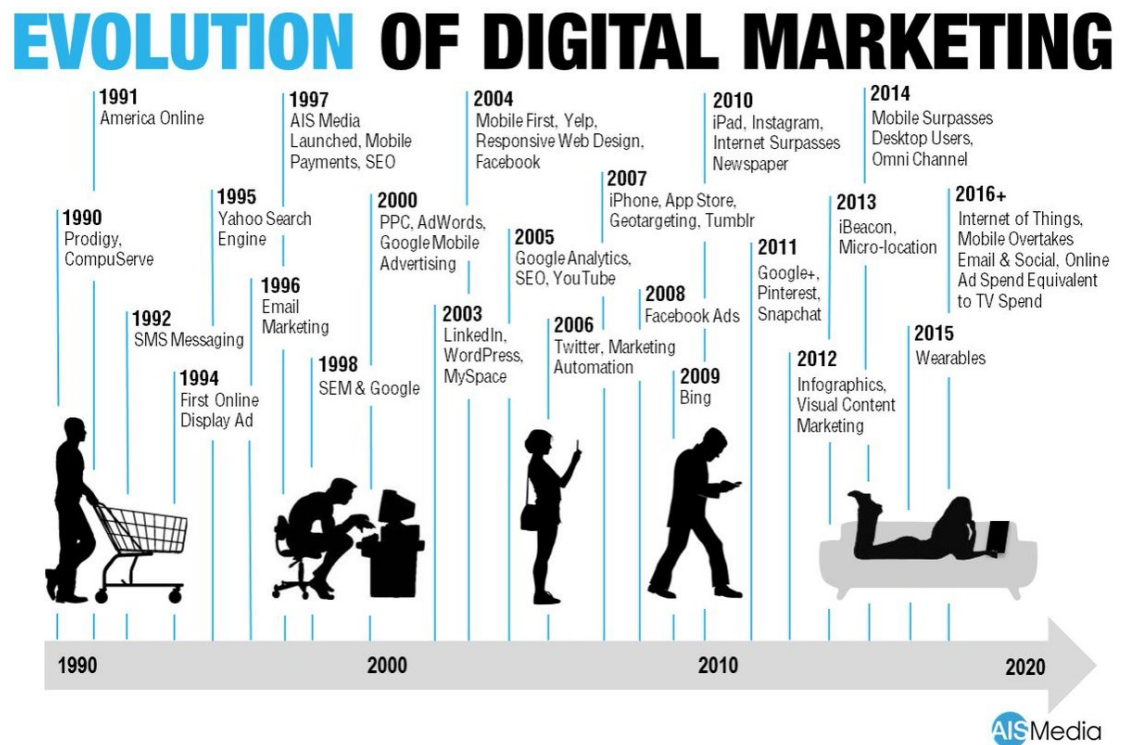


Figure 2.2: Evolution of social media marketing between 1990 and 2020

Source: Walters (2016)

2.6 Impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes

In essence, the research presents that consumers buy products that are either expensive or inexpensive by regarding the recommendations done from friends and online contacts in social media. The relationship between social media and consumer decision-making as presented by Mayfield (2011) argues that social media affects advertisement attitudes, brand quality, and consumers' purchasing intentions.

In the end, the consumers can not be affected on how to purchase directly but can act as a mediating effect in their choice and preferences. Either good branding has also an effect on how consumers decide in undertaking purchases. Further, when friends of company consumers post their recommendations about specific products on social media, it directly impacts their decisions on product purchases.

Nevertheless, advertising on social media provided by commercial branding affects both consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. With the above information,

marketers can plan their strategies to achieve and retain customers. Kumar et al. (2016) explain that many marketers in the current age use social media as a tool for marketing campaigns. In this regard, it is easier to communicate with customers on social media since it is inexpensive to advertise their brands and services.

Another study examines that social media is not merely for advertising but acts as a source of branding in that prospective consumers can communicate with each other as brand representatives. Most consumers use social media to search for brands and purchase items, which can be used as an advantage to advertise. Gebauer et al. (2013) affirm that online consumer is a booming market worldwide but still provides a segmentation in the cultural system of the globe.

For instance, if consumers have impending issues regarding company products or services, they could reach a specific company through social media that is an easier way of communicating their grievances. Moreover, companies are challenged on how to react to consumer comments on social media, but such responses can build a strong brand image that will, in turn, persuade consumers to purchase the products and services of a particular organization.

Every single detail from a company communicates with its consumers directly influences the consumer decision-making process. Businesses can promote products and services, provide instant support while creating an online community of brand enthusiasts through social networks, virtual world, blogging sites, and online gaming sites (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). According to social media marketing industry reports, social media platforms are not merely for advertisement but acts as an attraction site for marketers. (Akhtar, 2011) The traditional formats of selling have been changed to buy innovations in technologies. Social media is a medium of technology that has impacted the consumer-buying behavior process that is now affected by peer reviews.

Additionally, Heinonen (2011) explains that consumer motives in engaging in social media provide insights into customer activities. The author explains that consumers have some gratifications that influence their Internet usage, namely the information, entertainment, and social aspects. The motivation comes in two aspects of rational and emotional thoughts. Rational aspects involve consumer knowledge about

specific products while emotional links the social media connections together with self-expression.

Nowadays, consumers use the Internet as a tool for achieving motivations. The company determines their conduct on the count of times that they visit specific organizational sites. The motivation to purchase might come from their connections to old friends' business reviews to support their decision-making.

2.7 Impacts of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase

Intentions

Socialization around particular brand expectations can also help to buy goods (Constantinides and Fountain 2008). Furthermore, peer communications and social mechanisms can also make specific customers intend to buy a brand. The above reviews support purchases by consumers motivated by how reasonable they spend their money on specific company brands.

Gunelius (2011) explains that social media does not only affect consumer's buying decisions but also helps in other fields of study like politics and impartiality in jury decisions. For instance, the jury can access the Internet and gain online advice that helps them in deliberations and decision-making in company cases. The author advises that the best site in online media to share information and news is Twitter because consumers can get up-to-date information (Jackson 2011). Previous researchers also admit that there are theories of social influence that's affects a person's decision-making.

The authors explain that the people participating in social media activities are in online communities and appear to be influenced by the activities going on in those specific groups.

In understanding this social behavior, it shows that a person is socially influenced when they behave in a particular manner. The idea of social media is supported here on the context that it influences every consumer decision-making process in purchasing a product or not (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009). Most company managers are advised to embrace new technologies so that they can gain a competitive advantage against competing organizations. Based on this literature,

social media is taken into account on how it influences consumer purchasing protocol.

The hypothesis made from this study is that social media marketing does not significantly affect other consumer buying decision-making processes. There are many factors affecting consumer purchase intentions, including; marketing mix, personal factors, psychological factors, social factors, and cultural factors. For example, De Valck et al. (2009) explain that the consumer's purchasing behavior is not only affected by status but also reflects it.

The consumers who have luxurious cars, watches, and other expensive items are considered to have a higher status, which gives them a sense of pride in ownership. For marketers to know the reasons as to why consumers prefer different brands, Gunelius (2011) suggests that managers of organizations must do a study of those particular segments. Firstly, the marketing mix also has components of price, product, place, and promotion when laying the company strategy.

Each component here is vital in satisfying the consumer needs; hence, marketing managers must know these factors, thereby using them to formulate the CSR strategies of knowing the market segment. Secondly, personal factors that include age, gender, educational background, and income, among others, are also important concepts to consider when knowing company prospective consumers. All of the above factors influence the purchasing attitudes of consumers.

However, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explain that the effect can vary from person to person and how they view organizational brands depending on their capabilities, sales, and preferences due to differences in consumers' perceptions. Lastly, psychological factors that include motivation, perceptions, and beliefs are also influencers to purchasing protocols. A need becomes a motive when one is aroused emotionally to purchase products.

Motivational researchers argue that each product evokes a set of different motivations unique to different customers. On the learning side, when one acts, they learn due to attaining individual experiences. Learning theory asserts that marketers can build strong demand by associating themselves with motivational cues that evoke positive reinforcement to purchase. Additionally, perception and beliefs also

provides direction as to what consumers would wish to purchase or not. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) says that individuals select and process information differently because how they react to brands and services is primarily impacted by how they perceive particular product and services.

2.8 Impacts of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Repurchase Decisions

Many factors can make consumers repurchase particular brands, including belief in a brand and situational factors like location, layout, and even environmental cleanliness. Asmussen et al. (2013) explain that with belief and the descriptive thought in consumers' minds, the trust built towards the organization's goods and services is high. This attitude makes consumers find it easier to repurchase the product due to continuous loyalty. Since social media allows access to information despite the geographical one, consumers make online orders and get deliveries from retail shops and door-to-door deliveries. Moreover, the situational factors affecting the consumer repurchase include the lighting, layout, music, and beautifications of the products.

There are also situations like time, the reason to repurchase, and the effect of mood on getting a similar product. The reasons can be restocked, the distance from consumer location to the stores being close, high level of income to spend, and the possibility of right timing by the company towards satisfying its consumer needs (Trainor et al., 2014). Purchasing behavior is different in groups, individuals, and companies since people have different ideas and experiences regarding the different brands that satisfy their needs and desires.

As Constantinides and Fountain (2008) explained, the study of human behavior may help in understanding the past and predicting the future. This involves knowing the market trends by learning from social media interactions among consumers. It then becomes possible to know how consumers have been purchasing the company brands and services while predicting future purchasing curves.

In other words, customers can be influenced by external factors to repurchase products mainly from the online crowds and individual perception. The general

phenomenon from social media is the online discussion that offers comments about particular brands,

A consumer then decides to repurchase the product regarding the qualities portrayed by the online traffic discussing particular brands. However, the gender parity is also found by (Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) says that it affects perception as females are seen to be most affected by the location of their purchasing brands, making this issue conformity. Brand-consumer engagement can also influence how repurchasing is done.

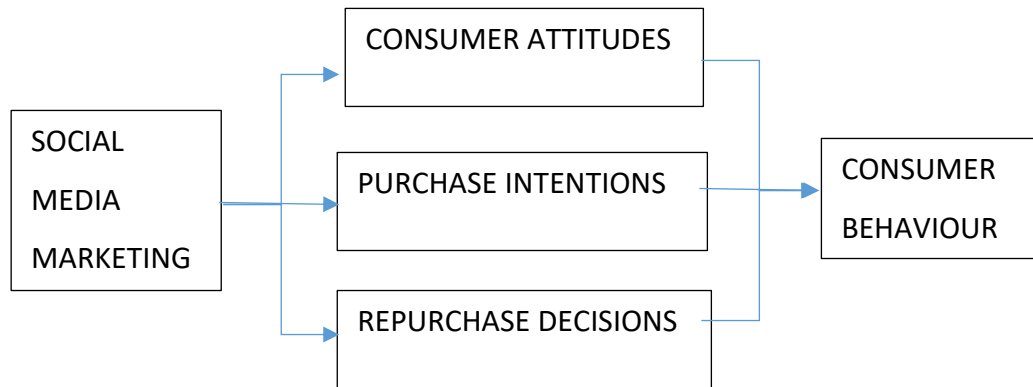
For instance, when organizations use social media to know what products consumers are interested in buying, it is easier for consumers to associate themselves with company brands because of the available knowledge accessed online on brand performance and specification.

Lastly, Trainor et al. (2014) assert that a consistent level in online recommendations done by the organization's website management can also help remind the consumer about the company brands. The social media has now formed an online Word of Mouth (WOM) interactions that have enabled interaction among consumers, making it possible for consumers to engage both the organization and fellow customers that aid them in deciding on repurchasing.

2.9 Research Framework

Figure 2.2. below shows the research framework, which comprises the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variables are social media marketing, whereas the independent variables are consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and repurchase decisions, all of which are aspects of consumer behaviour.

From the figure, it can be deduced that social media marketing is expected to have a direct influence on consumer attitudes, purchase intentions and repurchase decisions, and these are in turn expected to have a direct impact on consumer behaviour. Thus, by measuring how social media marketing influences each of these three aspects, it becomes possible to understand how it affects consumer behaviour.

Figure 2.3: Research framework

2.9.1 Measuring Social Attitudes

The online social media attitude is measured using users-generated reviews, blogs review comments and word-of mouth recommendations (John, Scott, & Keith, 2015). Another key performance indicator is web traffic and social attitude which can actually affect the firm's value in the long-run is the number of pay per click (Lim et al., 2017). In fact, web traffic has been linked to the firms overall performance by several accounting literatures.

At the same time, most of the accounting literature have linked user-initiated web activities and corporation performance to social media marketing. A study by Cunningham and Bright (2012) also utilized a vector auto regression with exogenous variable model to examine the relationship between web-based activity and the firm financial performance. On the other hand, the regression model address a series of questions such as the social media interaction effects, the dynamic effects, market competition effects. The Accounting figure relates a positive analysis reveal that firm that perform better than the rest have a substantial online presence.

2.9.2 Measuring Purchase Intention

In studies conducted by, Seunghwan and Dae-Young kim (2016) observed that purchases intension is influenced by psychological reasons. The study established

that satisfied clients developed a psychological attachment to the brand and were more likely to make referrals. On the other hand, non-loyal customers or brand immigrants were indifferent towards the services and were less likely to make any referrals. On the other hand, social media marketing relied heavily on the emotion and attitude of the customers. However, the research established that psychological effects highly correlates to brand loyalty to purchase intention. The research also established that a firm was most likely to benefit from word-of-mouth advertisement from satisfied clients.

Jussila et al (2015) critically reviewed the two main elements of social media marketing, physical product and services. The study aimed at establishing the applicability of the two elements in marketing and consumer behavior. The study confirmed that quality product, efficient and effective services created an intense loyalty from satisfied customers.

The research further established that social media marketing can be applied in three main realm. Firstly, the theory can be applied in virtual services and social media applications. Secondly, it can be applied in understanding the unique marketing consequence of psychological ownership. Thirdly, the theory can be used to measure consumer's satisfaction. Hence, as (John, Scott, & Keith, 2015) also found out, the three realm states that social media forms the next frontier of advertisement in terms of reaching the most relevant consumer grouping.

In other connected studies by Won, Jihee, Alane, & Sang (2013) utilized the psychological theory in the reduction of behavioral bias from social media consumer. The research utilized the adjusted contingent valuation model in understanding how consumers place value based on their expectations. The study established that the consumers were willing to pay or were willing to accept certain services or products after they had received positive review from their contemporaries and peers. Hence the study established that hypothetical bias and various behavioral bias reduced after positive reaffirmation from a peers.

2.9.3 Measuring Repurchase Decision

The repurchase decision is measure using the price elasticity model and the previous consumer experience (Cunningham & Bright, 2012). The idea is that there is a decrease in the demand of a product with the increase of the price. On the other hand, the decrease in the price of a product increase the demand. The repurchase decision is influenced by the inverse relationship between price and demand. The model focus on the price, as well as, the previous experience with the product. However, familiarity and previous experience are most likely to influence the consumer repurchase option.

Hence the repurchase decision is measure in monetary terms based on the monthly increase in sales and experience. The month over month firm's financial position measured using horizontal metrics. Determines the overall position of the firm based on the firm's social media marketing financial figures performance. Generally, the key performance indicators in relation to repurchase intent is the net income generate compared to the expense incurred in social media marketing.

The repurchase decision can also be measures by the traffic generated by the social media sites, as well as, from the websites. The information is derived from analyzing database related to certain market demographic which then influence and determine the strategy to be adopted. The strategy also focus on previous purchase to influence new purchase or referral purchase. Therefore, the results is measured using clicks on products against actual purchase. The firms retains consumer's information and purchases.

2.10 Chapter Summary

A critical review of literature focusing on the concepts, theories and empirical evidence is presented. The literature shows that social media as a concept has evolved significantly from its infancy in the late 20th century. At the same time, social media marketing has also evolved over time, becoming more relevant to businesses as it continues to grow in size and scope. The impacts of social media marketing on consumer behaviour has been interrogated, but further research is necessary to help underpin how it affects retailers in particular.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological perspectives, as well as practical considerations used in this research. It is broken down into research techniques, research approach, the method used, sampling, and data collection and analysis. The research is based on Saunders's (2007) research onion that states that it is proper for justification to be provided in all research levels so that the research methodology is plausible. Hence, the research onion gives a detailed description of every study level, showing how and why things were done, making it easier to follow the processes and justifications.

3.2 Research Design

This study took a case study approach, and specifically, the case of two retail companies in Finland was used, which are Lidl and IKEA. Research designs are the methods and techniques used by a researcher to collect data and analyze the degree of variables outlined in the research (Creswell, 2014). Thus, a case study enables a more in-depth analysis of a specific group or industry niche. Bryman (2012) asserts that a case study allows a subject to establish its key features and generalize. It is often presented as a report whereby each section within the report's body is meant to deal with certain aspects of the study.

3.3 Sampling

Taherdoost (2016) defined sampling as a process whereby a specific number of observations are taken from a larger population. An entire population cannot be analyzed because there would be a lack of time and resources (Fowler, 2002). Hence each research would need to pick a sampling technique best suited to its purpose. A variety of sampling methods, which fall into either probability or non-probability sampling categories, have been used.

The probability methods include stratified, quota, systematic, and clustered methods. Examples of non-probability sampling methods are snowballing and

convenient sampling (Datta, 2016). This research chose to use simple random sampling, which is advantageous because it would provide a simple and straightforward data collection mechanism for the present cases. The study is based on social media marketing that would require consumer perspectives that could be accurately analyzed and remove bias because it would randomly choose from the population.

3.4 Data Collection

Two data collection methods are commonly used, which are primary data and secondary data (Kabir, 2016). Primary data is collected on a first-hand basis by using questionnaires, surveys, experiments, focus groups, and interviews. Secondary data refers to data that has already been collected and written by established authors and comes in the form of books, government reports, company and industry reports, journals, compiled databases and articles (Ghauri, 2005). Crewell (2003) stated that primary research was, among other reasons, imperative for establishing goals to find answers for new studies, focus on demographics in a new area or be used to confirm results for previous studies further.

In the present study, primary data collection was used because the author aims to find first-hand information on how social media marketing has continued to affect consumer behavior. Specifically, data was collected from managers of the selected retail stores, Lidl and IKEA. Data was collected by using interviews and six participants were sampled. The entire data collection process took a week, and this was because only one interview was carried out per day. The interview took place electronically, and the participants were called and recorded through the free Whatsapp platform.

3.5 Data Analysis

There are two forms of data analysis, according to Kawulich (2004). Quantitative analysis entails numerical data and qualitative data that focus on the quality rather than the quantity of information. It is imperative to analyze data, according to Bartlett (2001), because it summarizes and identifies trends that relate to the subject being studied. Karwulich (2004) further states that qualitative data will seek to

dissect the interviews, questionnaires, and other data entries used to evaluate the hypotheses. In the present case, a qualitative analysis technique was used. The reason qualitative approach was used is that the data collected through interviews lends itself best to content analysis. Further, through this approach, it is possible to determine not only what the respondents think about the perspectives that they give, but also why they offer those views. Thus, qualitative analysis provides information that is both in-depth and detailed in nature.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology that were used to carry out this research. The research design is a case study of retail organizations in Finland. Specifically, targeted retail organizations were Lidl and IKEA. The method used to collect data was simple random sampling, and this was done to provide consumers an equal chance to voice their views. A primary data collection approach was adopted, thereby allowing the collection and analysis of primary data. Specifically, interviews were used, and the data was analysed using content analysis.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and analysis of the data obtained. This study aims to examine the impacts of social media marketing on consumers' behaviour. As mentioned in chapter one, the study's objectives were to explore the history and current trends of social media marketing; to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes; and determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions.

Further, the study objective also included determining the impacts of social media marketing on consumer repurchase decisions; and offering recommendations to retailers on how to use social media marketing to increase their sales performance.

The collected data was analysed using content analysis. The first part of this chapter gives demographic analyses of the respondents. The second part of this chapter analyses data collected that relates to the influence of social media marketing on consumers.

Further, each sections have data combined from primary and secondary data of the study. Interviews were obtained from six respondents whom due to the issue of disclosure, the study tagged the respondents as respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

4.2 Demographics

According to Salkind (2010) demographics refers to information that provides data with regard to the participants of a study that is their age, gender, education level and ranking. This study had six respondents who were interviewed on the impact of social media marketing on consumers' behaviour. Their demographic characteristics included; gender, age, highest academic qualifications, current position and school type. On the gender perspective, this study ensured that there was gender equality and therefore three of the respondents were female while the others were male. In terms of age, three of them were young adults aged between 24 to 35 years, two were middle-aged between 36 and 39, and one was aged 57 years old.

In terms of qualifications, respondent 4 and 6 had a master's degree with the rest respondent 1, 2, 3, and 4 having a degree. All of the respondents were managers in their respective organizations. Lastly, they all had different years of experience that ranged from 2 years to 20 years of experience. The table below shows a table of the demographic representation of the respondents.

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6
Firm	IKEA	IKEA	LIDL	IKEA	LILD	LIDL
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	24	26	23	39	35	57
Qualification	Degree	Degree	Degree	Masters	Degree	Masters

Current position	Assistant HR	Sales	Finance	Customer service	HR	Sales
Years of experience	2	3	0.5	14	7	30

Table 4.1: demographic representation of respondents

4.3 History and Current Trends of Social Media Marketing

In this objective three questions were asked to determine what knowledge the respondents had on the history and current trends of social media marketing. The first question asked the respondent what they understood by social media marketing.

All of them seemed to have a similar understanding of what social media marketing is about. Respondent 1 answered “I understand that social media marketing involves using social media platforms to reach potential customers,” while respondent 3 said “social media marketing according to my understanding involves advertising a brand online inclusive of its products.” On the other hand, respondent 4 asserted that “social media marketing is the act of using social media platforms to advertise products of a certain brand and reach out for customers.”

The definition of the respondents on social media marketing agrees with Kenton (2018) who gives the same definition of social media marketing by stating that it is the use of websites and online platforms to market a brand’s products and services.

The second question asked the respondent where and when they learned about social media marketing. The study found that the respondents had varying responds to these questions since the age gap between the respondents defined when they got to learn about social media marketing. Some learnt about it in their current workstations while others heard about it while they were still in college. For instance, respondent 5 responded that “I first heard of social media marketing back in during campus life that is ten years ago.”

On the other hand, respondent 6 learnt about social media marketing in his current job because it was not there earlier in his time. He responds that, "I have come to learn about social media marketing in this organization." In addition, respondent 3 said, "I learnt about social media marketing three years ago in my previous workstation, which was an organization that supplied goods and services through online means." Therefore, the respondents had a different time frame on when they learnt about social media marketing.

Lastly, the third questions asked the respondents on how they would compare social media marketing 10 years ago and today. All the respondents seemed to go about the same changes in social media marketing that is increase in social media platforms and a pool of customers. Respondent 2 answers that, "There numerous social media platforms today as well as a massive traffic of customers looking for a suitable brand to buy from." In addition, respondent one states that, "The addition of social media platforms over the years has also had a great impact on social media marketing."

Others responses suggested that the improved and easy access to technology over the years has increased the efficiency of social media marketing. Respondent 4 indicates this when he says, "today almost everyone has a smartphone unlike ten years back when few due to their higher price owned smartphones." Therefore, the study was able to show that social media has significantly evolved over time, which agrees with the conclusions of Sharma & Soundarabai (2017), both of whom noted that social media has not only evolved, but that it has evolved so rapidly that what is possible today could not have been imagined even ten years ago.

4.4 Impacts of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Attitudes

Under this objective, three questions were asked in order to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumers' attitudes. The first question asked the respondents whether they perceived that many of their consumers use social media to gain knowledge on their products. The responses to this questions was almost similar among the respondents, with most of them pointing out that their consumers use social media platforms to gain knowledge on their products. Respondent 1 responded that, "yes, they do. Everything today has gone digital" adding that

because most transactions are increasingly done online, “consumers are all over the internet” as they try to find the best deals.

According to respondent 3, “people get information from online sources,” and this could be goods or services. Respondent 4 also supported this by responding that, “yes. It is a new world full of technology use and therefore everything is taking place through social media where we learn about new trends and news.” However, respondent 6 responded that, “consumers get to know about our products not only from social media but from visiting our shops. Not every consumer uses social media to learn about a product.” These responses agree with David (2020) who states that research has proven that people make use of social media to access information”. What this implies is that social media users are increasingly seeking information online in addition to the usual entertainment that is derived from social media (Kenton, 2018).

The second question sought to know the thoughts of the respondents on social media marketing role in influencing customer’s attitudes. The respondents had a similar approach to this question stating that consumers are more inclined to buy products that have been previously used and reviewed by people they trust that is social media influencers. Respondent 1 stated that, “Most of them look out for reviews from influencers they trust and end up purchasing the products since their attitudes towards it has been changed by the influencer.”

Similarly, respondent 2 gave a response that, “Social media influences through enticing adverts that are done on social media platforms by prominent influencers on products, which they then wish to buy after they have seen it work for them.” On the other hand, respondent 6 stated that, “When products are advertised through social media they create a certain sensation to consumers since they have a platform to talk about the product and seek advice from others who have had the chance to use the product thus influencing the initial attitude they had on the product.” To add on, respondent 6 commented that, “social media marketing significantly plays a role in influencing the attitudes of consumers because of the products reviews they get online.”

Overall, the respondents indicated that social media plays a significant role in influencing the attitudes of consumers towards a product since they get recommendations from others who have used the products thus creating trust. These responds align with FitzGerald (2019) statement, which says that consumers get information from social media platforms while at the same time testing and exchanging information with others who have already used the products. Thus, the reliability and validity of that information from other users creates trust between consumers and brands.

Lastly, in the third question, the interviewer asked the respondents in what capacity they thought it plays a role in consumer attitudes in regards to their products. That is positively or negatively. All the respondents weighed their answers onto the positive side indicating that social media marketing impacts positively on the consumers' attitudes. This is by creating a warm atmosphere for the consumers, which the respondents have witnessed through increased sales and high demand of their products. Respondent 1 responded that, "I would say positively. This is because since the start of using social media marketing, the company has witnessed an increase in sales and consumers are happier with our products." Responded 3 comments that, "it has affected the consumer attitude positively.

This has been through an increase in sales and also a great customer following and maintenance if return customers." Which shows that it has also helped organization to maintain customers as well as return customers. Respondent 4 states that, "the consumers have created a bond with us in that they offer recommendation for products they would like us to add and their future preference which indicates a positive relationship." This clearly shows that social media marketing has enhanced the bond between consumers and companies. Consumers are able to communicate regularly with the companies and give their views on products.

Respondent 6 responds that, "this organization has witnessed tremendous increase in sales and high demand due to the use of social media." This statements agree with social report (2017) which states that social media has proved its importance by building a close relationship between brands and customers, grabbing potential customers, customer retention, high end promoting system and brand's potential

growth through increased sales and high demand on products. Thus, social media marketing has influenced the attitude of consumers towards their products in a positive way.

4.5 Impacts of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intentions

To find out the impacts of social media on purchase intentions, three questions were posed. The first question was to find how social media had affected buying behavior in their organizations. The second was to establish which trends of social media the organization engaged in and the third was how the organization was able to measure the impact of social media. All the six respondents agreed that there was indeed a significant impact of social media marketing that influenced the consumer purchase intentions.

They all implied that items that were posted on social media got reviews that influenced how other consumers purchased their products. The response from respondent 5 was “Yes. We have noted that when there is a lot of traffic on social media about certain item, it sells more thereby increasing our sales.” To further expound on that point, respondent 4 said, “most customers in our organization do both online and retail purchases on frequent occasions. Our IT experts have used computer analysts to analyze the trends and divergent findings have been observed.”

The respondent also mentioned the issue to do with emotional engagement. Specifically, the respondent said that they “observed that when customers are emotionally engaged there is a positive attitude that comes with humour and enthusiasm, but when negatively involved (skepticism and rigor), then purchasing power collides.” When consumers converse with each other on Facebook the responses can go either way depending on “the advice given and recommendations given by the fellow consumers”.

This is in agreement with Wang et al. (2017) who states that consumer’s beliefs, behaviors and attitudes can be influenced by information from a credible source.

This was possible because it created awareness of the products through creating online traffic by word of mouth.

Respondent 3 and Respondent 1 added that social media enhanced customer loyalty for the brand through positive feedbacks that enabled the company to have a good positive image to the consumers. Brown and Fiorella (2013) also postulate, that true influence that affects a consumer's purchase intentions are formed by dyadic relationships.

A dyad can be described as the smallest form of a social group that is composed of two people. In this scenario, a consumer's purchase intentions would then be influenced by a friend, a relative, or even a workmate, that would have common mutual interests that are shared with the consumer. This could be done through behaviors or ideas.

Therefore a consumer would purchase a certain item because his friend recommended it. These personal interactions go a long way in influencing purchase intentions, because of the power of the relationship that the two people share in regards to time shared.

In relation to the social media trends that were applied in their organizations, all respondents named the most popular trends which included Facebook, snapchat, Instagram, twitter among others. These perspectives agree with the views observed in literature, and figure 4.1 illustrates some of the most popular social media platforms that retailers used in the past 12 months.

Gade (2019) noted that personality influenced buyer behavior, thus saying most of these trends have customer profiles, which would portray their personality thereby influencing other customers' buying behaviors. Another model that can be applied to this observation is the customer-centric model.

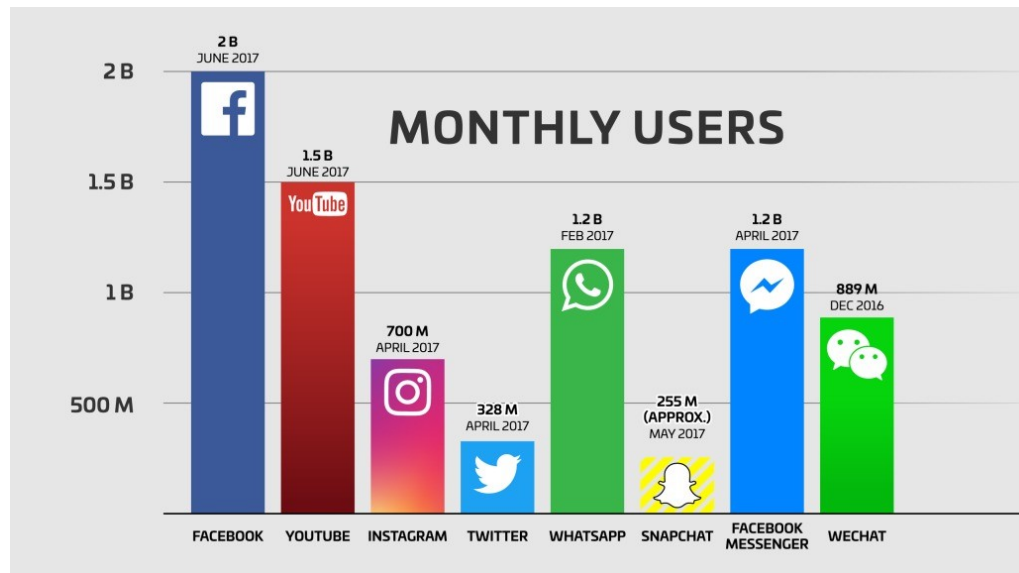


Figure 4.1: Most popular social media marketing platforms as of 2017

Source: Amaya et al. (2020)

Brown and Fiorella (2013) expound on this model as one that puts the customer at the centre of relationships, in the communication flow. When this happens, communities, technologies, institutions and all that affect the marketing chain are forced to align around the consumer in order to influence their purchasing decisions. Placing the customer at the core enables organizations to study consumer buying behaviours, so as to focus on the context and the impact that these social media trends would have on the consumer. In order to do this, they would need to identify their target audience, and identify a social media trend that would identify with them.

For some organizations the system of tagging a consumer would enable them to follow customer purchase decisions and therefore allow them to be able to inform them of available goods and services that would be in line with their tastes. Trending social media sites also facilitate social media marketing by engaging in gamification. This is the application of addictive gaming materials that encourage active participation by the audience that is targeted. For this they award online badges, and achievement status bars that encourage customers to engage in activities that are posted in these sites. Thus, the more popular the site is, like Facebook and Twitter

the more the audience and information connectivity, which facilitates as free media to the organization.

The third factor was how the organization was able to measure its social media marketing impact. For this question all the respondents had varying replies based on the tools the organizations employed. Respondent 1 said that “our organization has been able to measure social media marketing effectiveness by assessing the number of sales made through social media platforms and websites that indicates that consumers have seen the adverts online and made purchases. The results are then compared to initial sales where social media marketing was not used and the impact is quite massive”. Respondent 2 stated that their organization measured their sales by comparing them to the goals and objectives set for social media marketing, and whether they had been able to reach them. In this he admitted that there was a challenge.

Respondent 5 said that they had “formulated short questionnaires that are on media sites that customers fill upon purchase. One of the question reads ‘How did you know about our products?’ then you tick the option that is most applicable to you.” The respondent further mentioned additional strategies used by the organisation, including “the use of cookies in those sites to monitor frequency”.

Respondents 6 measured their sales through online surveys while respondent 4 used the SPSS analysis which is an IT database to analyze their outcomes. She stated that “our experts in the computer department have robust IT and database experience in SPSS analysis which is among the best technique to use. The trends inflow of comments on Facebook and youtube and also google services was adopted. The analysts found an increase in online traffic in searches and Facebook comments not forgetting twitter discussions involving top managers with general stakeholders”.

Urhofer (2017) adheres that performance measurement models should focus on efficiency, effectiveness and economy and should be considered not effective if a difference is not perceived. Thus it is important to measure the impact of social media marketing for the organization to ascertain if it adds value, by affecting

consumer purchase decisions, as well as increasing its brand awareness and sales turnover as a positive impact.

4.6 Impacts of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Repurchase Decisions

For this objective the respondents had to answer three questions. These were in regards to whether they thought social media marketing had an impact on the consumer repurchase decisions, how social media marketing helped an organization to achieve customer repurchase decisions, and finally how the organization measured customers repurchase. The first question posed had a conclusive answer for all the respondents except respondent 2.

They all agreed that social media marketing had an impact on consumer repurchase decisions depending on the content that was posted online and the satisfaction the consumers derived from the product. Respondent 1 said that “customers will always be inclined to buy products from a company they can trust”, while respondent 3 said: “most of the customers that purchase our products end up repurchasing it. We always keep them updated of our products, which pushes them to even purchase again.” Content that was posted online notified customers on new products facilitating repurchases.

Positive feedback on social media also encouraged repurchases. Respondent 5 added that social media marketing had also enabled them to retain the clients who then later repurchased their products because they were existing clientele. Respondent 2 however said that “customer repurchase decisions depends on the satisfaction the customer receives during the first purchase of a product”. This is because the consumer was bound to repurchase the product based on the satisfaction derived from the quality of the product up to its delivery, hence assuring a repurchase. Michael & Bojan (2017) found that there was a connection between perceived value and customer repurchase intentions, which goes on to support the statement by respondent 2.

For the second part of the question, it was noted that for organizations to achieve customer repurchase decisions, an effort had to be made towards achieving this. All

respondents mentioned that their organizations had to continually update their products online so that the consumers could stay informed. These online updates also ensured brand loyalty and trust was foremost on the consumers' minds to require them to repurchase. Repurchases could also be made in response to the observation of respondents answer to customer purchase. Respondent 1 stated that, "Most of them look out for reviews from influencers they trust and end up purchasing the products since their attitudes towards it has been changed by the influencer." Influencers would facilitate consumer repurchases because they made the product trustworthy, as well as endorsed it in order for the consumer to feel that they had similarities with the influencer (Gefen, 2002).

Respondent 4 went on to add that e-commerce specialists were employed to ensure that the company's positive image remained. They also viewed online comments to ensure positivity was key leading to repurchases. Respondent 5 added to this point by saying that their company monitored online consumer behavior which went towards ensuring that repurchases were made. Social media marketing could also facilitate repurchase by identifying the needs of the consumer based on their locality. These could be influenced by situational factors (Brown and Fiorella, 2013).

Different geographies and industries can be affected by different situations.

Consumers would then have to make repurchases based on these factors.

Respondent 5 also went on to add that their company being a furniture company engaged with customer discussions that allowed them to design products as per their taste. This necessitated repurchase because a consumer would then design their home based on their own designs that the companies would tailor for them.

The third section sought to address how the organization measured these repurchases. Respondents 1, 2 and 3 had the same answer, in that their companies were able to achieve this by checking available goods against repurchased goods, over a period of time. This enabled them to measure the frequency of the online purchases. Respondents 5 used surveys to measure their repurchases by asking direct questions concerning repurchase in their surveys and doing the tally. Respondent 6 said "We monitor a lot of our customer feedback through surveys conducted at the entry point of the store that take a very short time to fill." The

respondent further added that they “also ensure that our sales teams establish good employee customer relationships” to improve their services. Notably, as well, the respondent added that “for the goods that are delivered, we do online surveys”.

This meant that employing good customer client relationships was an effective way to measure because it gave direct feedback. Respondent 4 however differed from them, by saying that their organization used database managers who provided analysis returns from their online media traffic. Top managers were also actively involved with discussions with consumers, which also added to the online searches on Facebook and twitter, which the analysts were also able to measure. These were able to give them measurement information. These responses concur with Barone (2011) who states that as yet there has been no tool that measure completely the effect of social media.

4.7 Chapter Summary

From these findings we note that the respondents are well versed in the terms and trends that relate to social media marketing based on their educational backgrounds, and work experiences. As managers they acknowledge that social media marketing is relevant in today’s world, and that it affects consumer buying behavior as well as consumer repurchase behavior.

Consumer attitudes are also influenced by social media marketing and thus organizations ensure that they maintain a positive brand image by constant online presence in order to ensure purchase decisions. The instruments that are used to measure the impact of social media marketing however vary from organization to organization, and aid in compiling data to measure the effectiveness of the tool.

5 Discussions

5.1 Summary

This chapter seeks to outline the conclusions and recommendations that pertain to this study. The chapter is divided into four parts. Part one is the introduction, which is subsequently followed by the conclusions that were found in relation to the aims

and the objectives of the study. The third section outlines the recommendations are put forth emerging from the findings and analysis of the study. The fourth part entails the limitations and recommendations that are put forth to benefit future studies that will be based on this subject.

Chapter one was an in depth introduction into the study, that followed a path to trace how social media marketing came to evolve to what it is today. It sought to study the problem as well as lay out the significance that would be benefitted from this study.

The chapter had five main aims and objectives. These were namely, to explore the history and current trends of social media marketing, to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes, and to determine the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions. The final two objectives were to determine the impact of social media marketing on consumer repurchase and finally to offer recommendations to retailers on how to make use of social media marketing to increase sales performance.

The second chapter in this study was the literature review. This gave a critical review of the existing literature on this topic and the theories that supported the study. There were three theories that related to this topic and subsequently, each theory was represented under a major theory. These were the psychological ownership theory under micro theories, the McLuhan's theory under macro theories, and the social feedback theory under the pseudo theories respectively.

Chapter two also sought to review the concepts of social media, social media marketing, consumer behavior, the history and trends that were associated in social media marketing, the impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes, the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions, and the impacts that it had on consumer repurchase, based on the current found.

Chapter three of this study described the research design, sampling method, data collection and data analysis used to arrive at the findings. As a result, findings and analysis were presented in chapter four, including the interview data.

5.2 Conclusions

From the findings it was noted that all the respondents could define social media marketing and each of them had experience with it either learned from the job or through friends and family. This goes to show that social media is a vibrant component in communication today, and that social media marketing had a strong base as a marketing tool. Its evolution was attributed to the current technological advancements as people could access it through mobile phones from wherever they were. Social media platforms have further supported the advancement of social media marketing through customer interactions.

Borges (2009) states that trends like twitter involve a tweet which is not more than 140 characters done in real time, and can go towards influencing in that particular moment. This then allows for interactions to be formed by the consumers as they express their views and opinions, which encourages the exchange of ideas thus allowing for purchasing decisions to be made.

To answer the objective regarding impacts of social media marketing on consumer attitudes, it was established that social media platforms played a role in influencing consumer attitudes. This allowed for the latest trends and news to be followed, which then created online activity in the form of consumers' opinions. This would be relayed in the form of posts and reviews, allowing consumers to form attitudes towards them. This inter activity between consumers went on to allow attitudes to be formed concerning certain products and services. They could either be positive or negative based on the interactions, which then led to either a sale or a repurchase by the consumer.

Social media marketing could also convince consumers to purchase products because of positive reviews, from influencers which would then go towards boosting the sales margins of the organizations.

Regarding the impacts of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions, the results from the findings show that social media marketing did indeed influence consumer purchase decisions. This was evidenced by the fact that all the respondents alluded to the notion by responding in the affirmative. It was found that

social media marketing through consumer reviews and posts, encouraged consumers' attitudes and behavioral changes that affected their purchasing decisions.

Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2003), support this by stating that customers need to control communications to get happiness and satisfaction and as result they influence others purchase decisions. Social media marketing also created awareness on products, allowing the consumers to choose and be informed, as well as inspire loyalty based on the posts that came from a product. As a tool it facilitates for a large amount of information to be given on a product as well as visual aids that also help to inspire confidence. In the case of IKEA, as one of the companies that practiced social media marketing in this study, their furniture could be viewed online, item by item, and as such specifications could be adjusted according to the consumer based on these interactions.

Regarding trends, all the respondents cited the most recent and popular trends showing that relevance was a key aspect in social media marketing. Keeping up with the trends is important because consumers are intrigued by different things and want to stay informed. There was, however, no consensus on the measurement tools used in social media marketing. This may have been because it is relatively recent and is still a subject of research. However, the respondents cited various methods ranging from comparing online sales to actual stock, comparing the goals and objectives that have been set with the actual sales.

The true measurement of social media marketing however is to test whether the organization is moving stock through online communication, thus the organizations were suitably able to measure the impact of social media marketing against their objectives.

Regarding the impact of social media marketing on consumer repurchase, the findings to this objective again were positive. Social media marketing played an active role in consumer repurchase decisions. The respondents based these on online customer posts that monitored the traffic, as well as the satisfaction that was derived from the products in order to facilitate a repurchase. New products that

were posted online created awareness, leading to repurchases, as well as positive feedback from consumers that had already tried out the products. This could be also explained by the feedback loop. The communication between the consumers and the organizations through the surveys and posts allowed the organizations to improve on their products facilitating repurchases to be made.

Positive posts also allowed for repurchases because of customer retention. Hence we note that social media marketing allows for customers satisfaction or dissatisfaction in order to allow repurchasing to occur. For consumers to make repurchases, it was noted that organizations had to apply an effort on social media to keep the consumers aware. These efforts were notably in the form of updating their products, encouraging positive comments on the sites and also promoting brand loyalty and trust. Promotions and sales discounts could also be applied to encourage repurchases as a way of rewarding the customers.

Monitoring of consumer buying behavior was also a tactic that was used in order to ensure that stocks did not run out. In tabulating the measurement of consumer repurchase decisions, it was established again that different organizations computed this aspect differently. They varied from measuring available goods to repurchased goods over a period of time, and online surveys. Database managers were also employed to manage the data through the SPSS analysis and consequently the use of analysts that compiled online discussions was also adapted. All these enabled data to be captured that supported consumer repurchase on social media marketing.

5.3 Recommendations

This study found that social media marketing was relevant for the retail companies observed, and as such, it is recommended that marketing managers of retail organisations adopt it. This is because it increased their sales margins through the interactions that consumers had online as well as their brand image. It was also lauded because it had a wider reach in terms of audience as everyone could access it through phones and other gadgets as long as they had the Internet. According to Eze and Bello (2016), the Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) model supports this because it implies that when social media comes into play, it provides customers with

information that is sufficient enough enabling them to consider to make the purchase.

Further, it is also important for companies to create groups that would efficiently enable them to reach their target market. These would be for example, in the form of housewives to advertise a new mop and so on. By engaging in this, the message is efficiently passed on widening the impact of the sales.

Moreover, it is recommended that organizations engage in online discussions that would go towards enhancing their communication with the consumer. This will enable them to forecast on the consumer needs as well as solve existing product problems and act on consumer suggestions. Popular social media trends assist the organization in staying active and relevant, and as such constant research should be carried out on which of these trends is effective. However, it is necessary to note that to determine which trend to use, research needed to be carried out to select a target market that would be best suited to the products to be marketed.

5.4 Limitations to the Study

To begin with, only six people were interviewed for this study. Their views cannot be correctly generalized as the views of most organizations. As managers they needed to allocate time to participate in the interviews which was difficult, as each worked in particularly busy departments. There was a lack of empirical data to support these findings, because the views could be analyzed from a personal perspective, therefore giving room for assumptions. Furthermore, there existed insufficient literature that addressed this topic.

5.5 Future Research and Recommendations

Future studies should engage in more research on social media marketing as a marketing tool. A more unified approach for all sectors that engage in social media marketing should be taken so as to give accurate measurements on its impacts. Managers should be equipped with real time knowledge of all the trends that are available in order to carry out effective market campaigns on social media. As such

more literature should be made available in order to better inform them of how to maximize social media marketing in their organizations.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

History and current trends of social media marketing

1. What do you understand by social media marketing?
2. Where and when did you learn about social media marketing?
3. How would you compare social media marketing ten years ago and today?

Impact of social media marketing on consumer attitudes.

4. Do you perceive that many of your consumers use social media to gain knowledge on your products?
5. Do you think that social media marketing plays a role in influencing your customer's attitudes? If so explain
6. In what capacity do you think it plays a role in consumer attitudes in regards to your products? Positively or negatively? Give a brief explanation

Impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase intentions

7. how has social media marketing affected the consumer buying behavior in your organization
8. which trends of social media marketing has your organization engaged in
9. How has your organization being able to measure the impact of social media marketing in your organization?

Impact of social media marketing on consumer repurchase decision

10. In your opinion, do you think social media marketing has had an impact on customer repurchase decision
11. In general, how does social media marketing help an organization to achieve a customer repurchase decision?
12. How does your organization measure customer repurchase?

Recommendations for retailers on how to make use of social media marketing

13. What advice would you give an organization that has not yet invested in social media marketing
14. Which social media marketing trends would you recommend for retailers who wish to increase their sales by fetching customers?
15. Are there challenges in social media marketing