

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Nowadays, social media is an integral part of our lives because of the flourishing of information technology and in particular the Internet. This is especially due to the appearance of Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and other platforms that have fundamentally changed buying processes, business-to-customer interactions, marketing strategies, and even internal business processes. It should be noted that social networks play an important role in product promotion and interaction with customers, which contributes to building trust and loyalty.

Furthermore, social media is having a huge impact on consumer behavior at the moment. Firstly, social media represents a place where the consumer can experience various products or services. People are interested in these offers and they have a desire to purchase any product. By the way, on social media, consumers have the opportunity to explore more product information, which includes studying prices, reviews in transparency and availability mode. This ultimately allows people to make considered purchasing decisions that affect their behavior. So that the purpose of the study is to identify the ways in which social media influences consumer behavior.

Below are some of the most common ways social media influences customer behavior.

1. Influencer marketing: The involvement of Influencers on social media platforms has a significant impact on consumer preferences. Consumers trust the recommendations of Influencers, who are perceived as experts in their field, and often make purchases based on their recommendations and reviews. According to a Nielsen study, 70% of people trust consumer recommendations and opinions posted online [1]. A lot of research also proves that young people are the most susceptible to Influencer marketing. In addition, there is a tendency to attract bloggers with a small audience, as microblogs are the ones that consumers have the most confidence in.

2. Engagement: Engagement marketing is based on personalization. Brands don't fit customers to some image, but instead try to pay attention to each customer individually. Engagement marketing includes shopping cart analytics, surveys, quizzes, launching challenges, live feedback broadcasts, sending out notifications, and more. Companies apply user-generated content in marketing strategies. With its help, you can natively promote the product, involve the audience in interaction with the brand, and also increase recognition. Customers share their opinions or tell interesting stories related to the product or service. As the research of Stackla found, 79% of people say user-generated content strongly influences their purchasing decisions [2].

3. Visual content: Infographics, video content, interactive elements, photographs and illustrations, presentations and more are increasingly attracting the attention of

consumers. Short videos are particularly popular at the moment on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. Consumers prefer short and dynamic content that gets the main idea across quickly. Video content is a good way to promote goods or services, native and direct advertising, organize sales, communicate with the audience, build a loyal audience, attract attention to the brand, develop image, etc.

4. Podcasts: Podcasts today play an important role in promoting brands. This way of engaging consumers is seamlessly integrated into the conversation of the speakers, which is less annoying for users. Companies create their own podcasts or sponsor author releases and collaborations. In addition, podcasts are convenient to listen to in transport, while working out, cooking, walking, etc.

5. Loyalty programs: These programs provide users with unique rewards and bonuses for actively participating in the company's social media channels. At the moment, many companies offer rewards to users on social media for views, likes, comments and reposts of their content. Composing the terms of a simple contest and assigning a contest hashtag is another interesting way to increase customer loyalty to a business. Brands set contest deadlines, during which everyone can post a photo of a product or service on social media with a contest hashtag underneath. In addition, a large number of social media users love games and contests. That's why gamification of SMM loyalty program is becoming more and more popular.

As a result of the study, it can be concluded that social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior in the age of digitalization. Brands use many ways to engage customers, such as Influencer marketing, personalized ads, video content, podcasts, presentations, games, surveys, shuttles, and more. The social media market is currently evolving rapidly, and companies must embrace these changes to remain competitive by actively implementing targeted advertising strategies and engaging with audiences through influencers. So social media has a significant impact on consumers' purchases, their opinion of products and brand.

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