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Online Marketing: Social Media Influencer's Impact on Shopping Tactics in the United States

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Abstract

Businesses can interact with potential customers through online marketing, also referred to as social media marketing, through digital communication channels like email, social media, and web-based advertising. It makes use of social media, content, and SEO marketing to boost traffic and brand awareness. Successful strategies include using PPC, affiliate marketing, native advertising, influencer marketing, producing high-quality content, hiring social media managers, and adhering to best practices. Since the study emphasizes how important it is to understand consumer behaviour in online marketing, empirical research is needed to assess how well social media increases brand recognition, equity, sales, and post-purchase satisfaction. According to a U.S. survey, consumers are increasingly using social media as a marketing tool, sharing advice, product reviews, and service experiences. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has become more important in influencing consumer choices. Effective use of social media, which employs content, images, promotions, and influence from opinion leaders to favourably impact consumer purchasing decisions, should be a part of any business's marketing strategy. Because of the diversity and impact of the American economy and culture, social media platforms are essential for brand development, particularly in the United States. Social media will probably become more influential worldwide, but when creating social media strategies in other nations, cultural differences should be taken into account. The study highlights the need for empirical research to look at how well social media strategies work to increase brand awareness, equity, purchases, and post-purchase satisfaction. It focuses on self-reported social media behaviours. To ascertain whether shifts in social media usage since the COVID-19 pandemic have long-term, systematic effects on consumer behaviour, longitudinal research is required.

Keywords

Online Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Social Influence, Customer Service, US Digital Market

1. Introduction

Online, or social media, marketing is the process of promoting brands to reach potential customers via the Internet and other digital communication channels. This covers text and multi-media messages, web-based advertising, social media, and email as a marketing channel. Online marketing is the term used to describe a marketing campaign that uses digital communication (Abdelnabi et al., 2022; Bhuyan et al., 2024; Biswas et al., 2024; Castañeda et al., 2020).

Although inbound and online marketing are sometimes confused, they complement each other the best. Effective online marketing initiatives are given structure and direction by inbound marketing, which ensures that every online marketing channel contributes to a common objective. Businesses that operate in the business-to-business (B2B) (Abdelnabi et al., 2022; Bhuyan et al., 2024; Biswas et al., 2024; Ghimire et al., 2024; Hasan, et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c; Source, & Edwards, 2004) and business-to-consumer (B2C) (Ranganathan, & Ganapathy, 2002) sectors have different best practices for online marketing strategies. B2B customers usually have longer decision-making processes and, as a result, longer sales funnels, whereas B2C customers are more responsive to short-term offers and messages. Relationship-building strategies are more effective with these clients, and B2C content is more likely to be emotionally charged and focus on making the buyer feel good about a purchase (Yin & Xu, 2021).

Online marketing strategies come in a variety of forms, including content marketing and search engine optimization (SEO). Technically speaking, SEO is a tool for marketing rather than a kind of marketing in and of itself. To rank as highly as possible on a search engine results page (SERP) necessitates thorough investigation and evaluation of numerous variables (Erdmann & Ponzoa, 2021). The quality and uniqueness of the content, the optimization of key elements for the targeted keyword, the degree of user engagement, the quantity and calibre of backlinks, and internal linking are the most crucial factors to take into account when optimizing a web page for search engines (Jakhrani et al., 2012; Johora et al., 2024; Johora et al., 2021; Ponzoa et al., 2023).

Technical SEO, which includes all the back-end components of your site, is also crucial for improving search engine navigation and crawling (Erdmann & Ponzoa, 2021). While the strategic application of these elements makes SEO a science, the inherent unpredictability turns it into a "art" that frequently calls for skilled SEO specialists. The aim is to appear in Google's AI Overviews or at or close to the top of the first page of a search engine's result page. Even though there are numerous search engines, Google is frequently the focus of digital marketers due to its

dominance in the global search engine market.

The distribution of valuable and pertinent content to a target audience is the foundation of the content marketing strategy. Attracting leads that eventually become customers is the aim of content marketing (Li et al., 2021). It provides value for free in the form of written content, including blog posts, e-books, newsletters, video or audio transcripts, whitepapers, and infographics, rather than luring prospects with the promise of a good or service (Dolega et al., 2021).

92% of marketers think their company values content as an important asset, 62% of companies with at least 5000 employees create content daily, and 84% of consumers expect businesses to create engaging and useful content experiences (Yuceer et al., 2024). Knowing who your audience is will help you create engaging, highly relevant, and effective content. You can choose the kind of content you'll produce once you have a better understanding of your audience. Videos, blog posts, printable worksheets, and other types of content can all be used in your content marketing campaign (Wibowo et al., 2020).

By involving users in online conversations, social media marketing is an effective technique for increasing traffic and brand recognition. Given that billions of people use social media, it may be beneficial to concentrate on social media marketing (Dolega et al., 2021). For social media marketing, Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube are the most widely used digital platforms. Because the platform has built-in engagement metrics that let you know how well you're reaching your audience, the choice of platform depends on your objectives and target audience (Chu et al., 2020). Following best practices is essential to developing a successful social media marketing strategy. These include producing interesting and high-quality content, professionally answering questions and comments, scheduling social media posts, posting at the appropriate times, employing social media managers to assist with your marketing, and understanding your audience and the social media platforms they use most frequently (Jamil et al., 2022; Mohammad et al., 2024; Nilima et al., 2024; Nur et al., 2024; Sanchita et al., 2024; Shahana et al., 2024; Sharmin et al., 2023; Ullah et al., 2024).

Businesses that use pay-per-click (PPC) digital marketing pay a fee each time a user clicks on one of their ads. One of the most popular forms of PPC is Google Ads, where an algorithm ranks each ad in order of priority on a search engine results page based on criteria like bid amount, landing page quality, keyword relevancy, and ad quality. Conversions, which can be transactional or non-transactional, are the target actions that viewers are expected to perform after clicking on an advertisement in each PPC campaign (Manik, 2022; Yin & Xu, 2021). One online marketing strategy that enables someone to profit from promoting another person's business is affiliate marketing. Affiliate marketers receive a commission each time a customer buys the product they recommend, and merchants reimburse the affiliate for each sale they facilitate. This revenue-sharing model is how it operates. Retailers should work directly with affiliates by giving them the resources they need to be successful, such as marketing tools, pre-made materials,

and incentives for excellent performance (Jamil et al., 2022; Tembo et al., 2022).

In order to avoid being overtly identified as advertising, native advertising blends in with the surrounding content. It was developed in reaction to today's consumers' cynicism about advertisements. Native advertisements minimise the "ad" element by providing entertainment or information before anything promotional (Wibowo et al., 2020). Native advertisements should always be properly labelled with terms like "sponsored" or "promoted."

Working with an influencer such as a celebrity, business leader, or content producer in return for publicity is the foundation of influencer marketing. For both B2B and B2C businesses looking to expand their customer base, this is an effective strategy (Ponzoa et al., 2023). However, since they are essentially representing your brand, it is crucial to collaborate with trustworthy influencers (Akter et al., 2024; Eid et al., 2020).

Digital marketing campaigns are powered by marketing automation software, which increases advertising's effectiveness and relevancy. Consequently, companies can concentrate on developing the plan that underpins their digital marketing initiatives rather than laborious and time-consuming procedures (Dolega et al., 2021; Erdmann & Ponzoa, 2021).

In summary, online marketing and content marketing are essential components of any successful marketing strategy. By understanding the unique needs and preferences of each audience, businesses can develop effective strategies that cater to their specific needs and preferences. Social media marketing is a powerful tool for driving traffic and brand awareness through various digital platforms (Dolega et al., 2021). By following best practices, using paid-for ads, and partnering with reputable influencers, businesses can effectively engage their audience and drive growth in their digital marketing efforts (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020).

This paper is based on a survey conducted on the impact of social media and influencers in online marketing and selling products. The study also emphasizes the significance of comprehending real consumer behaviors and the connections between platforms and customer satisfaction by focusing on self-reported social media behaviors. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of doing empirical research to determine how well social media techniques work to raise brand recognition, equity, sales, and post-purchase pleasure.

2. Literature Review

Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, has experienced rapid development in recent years, allowing people worldwide to connect. These platforms are now widely used for product promotion and marketing strategies by businesses, showcasing the rapid growth of information technology (Rahardja, 2022). Online marketing is the use of digital channels to promote brands, products, or services to potential and existing customers, often part of a larger marketing strategy, focusing on understanding their specific needs and using appropriate channels (Le et al., 2022).

Online shopping has increased as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and academics and industry professionals anticipate that this trend will continue in the years to come. According to a Moroccan study on attitudes towards online shopping, trust acts as a mediator between the influence of electronic word-ofmouth and relative advantage. The study also used multigroup analysis to evaluate the moderating effect of gender. The findings indicated that consumer attitudes regarding online shopping are significantly impacted by relative advantage, eWOM, and trust, with trust being influenced by these factors. eWOM had a greater impact on attitudes and trust among female consumers. This study is the first to look into the factors that influence people's opinions about online shopping in an African nation (Chetioui et al., 2021). Shopping experiences have changed significantly as a result of the Internet's transformation of many industries, most notably the retail sector. Cities are experiencing more traffic and pollution as a result of e-commerce transactions (Ayswarya et al., 2019). A study builds an econometric behavior-al model and analyses shopping behaviours using data from the 2016 American Time Use Survey. Additionally, it calculates possible vehicle miles driven and environmental emissions in San Francisco and Dallas. Additionally, the study calculates the effects of basket size, consolidation levels, and rush deliveries. The findings highlight how crucial it is to manage urban freight systems in order to promote a more sustainable urban environment. (Jaller & Pahwa, 2020).

Internet technology enables businesses to conduct various activities electronically, including transactions, operational functions, and sharing information with consumers and suppliers. Effective marketing media is crucial for expanding market share (Kiraz & Başal, 2024). A qualitative research investigates the effectiveness of social media as an online business marketing medium. Results show that social media simplifies business operations with reduced costs, but businesses still need to maintain a preventive attitude when conducting transactions (Infante & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Businesses' use of digital marketing has been greatly impacted by Montenegro's digital transformation, especially in the development of electronic services. According to a survey of 172 businesses, how businesses use digital marketing is influenced by several factors, including perceived cost-effectiveness, management skills, implementation time, effect measurability, and the adequacy of traditional marketing. The most popular form was social networks, and the most popular way to gauge its impact was with Google Analytics (Melović et al., 2020).

Professional and social lives have been profoundly impacted by digital marketing, particularly in the financial industry. Entrepreneurs have benefited from the ease with which the public can now access financial products and services thanks to information technology. Using quantitative approaches and SmartPLS 4.0 software, this study investigates how digital marketing and digital payments affect financial performance. According to the study, 191 employees' financial performance in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, is positively and significantly impacted by digital

payments and digital marketing (Kurdi et al., 2023). Due to a lack of expertise, the construction sector has not been an early adopter of digital marketing. Nonetheless, social media and digital marketing done right can help smaller residential construction firms increase their brand recognition and attract clients from more established rivals. The effectiveness of digital marketing in comparison to traditional strategies, the difficulties SMEs face in implementing digital marketing strategies, and the attitudes and capabilities of SMEs in the residential construction industry are all investigated in this study through qualitative interviews. Suggestions are made to increase the industry's adoption and efficacy of digital marketing (Malesev & Cherry, 2021).

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are being used by effective marketing strategies to promote customer growth, profitability, and long-term business success. These platforms have impacted the lives of millions of people worldwide, drawing the interest of marketers. According to a study looking at Pakistani consumers' purchase intentions, social media influence and trust have a big impact on consumers' intentions (Mason et al., 2021). According to a different study, social media marketing has a bigger impact on purchase intentions through social networking sites than trust. Enhancing the quality of a website increases customer trust, which is important in e-commerce because it directly affects consumers' intentions to make purchases. In today's cutthroat market, trust is crucial for long-term business success, profitability, and customer development (Manzoor et al., 2020).

Social media, especially Facebook, has emerged as a vital marketing tool for institutions, businesses, and organizations all over the world. By 2022, there will be 3.29 billion social media users worldwide, accounting for 42.3% of the world's population, up from 2.38 billion monthly active users and 1.56 billion daily active users as of March 31, 2019. Consequently, social media has been adopted by marketers as a marketing channel. Numerous scholarly studies on social media marketing and associated topics, like online networks and word-of-mouth (WOM), have been produced (Eid et al., 2020). Nevertheless, social media's dynamic and ever-evolving character suggests that its use in marketing may not just be a continuation of past trends. Since social media has emerged as the main platform for people to share content, obtain a wealth of information, and learn about the world around them, it has cultural significance (Appel et al., 2020).

The literature review reveals what online marketing and social media marketing is. It shows how social media influences customers to purchase online and multiple marketing by influencers can increase the online market.

3. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how American consumers use social media to determine their needs, search for product information, compare options, buy products, and express satisfaction or dissatisfaction after making a purchase. The COVID-19 pandemic, as measured by two time periods before and after news

of the worldwide pandemic was the in-dependent variable. A consumer survey that included a questionnaire was used to collect data. With one item measuring behaviours prior to the pandemic and another measuring behaviours since it started, respondents were asked to rate how they use social media in their consumer decision-making. The dependent variables were measured using a total of 5 items, and the respondents' demographic profiles were gathered using five items. The study offers insightful information about how social media influences consumer choices and how the pandemic has affected consumer behaviour.

A Human Intelligence Task (HIT) survey was administered to 227 respondents completing a couple of survey questions in the United States. While 27 observations were gathered from online students at a midsize university in the Midwest, the majority (200) were recruited via social media. With an average age of 25 and evenly distributed income, education, and ethnicity, the sample's demographic profile was varied.

The respondents' educational backgrounds ranged from high school graduation to doctorate degrees, and their incomes ranged from less than 20,000 to over USD 100,000. The subjects' ethnic diversity closely matched the same subgroup percentages found throughout the United States. The goal of the survey was to understand the elements influencing social media purchase behaviour. **Figure 1** is a simple demonstration of the survey for information collection.

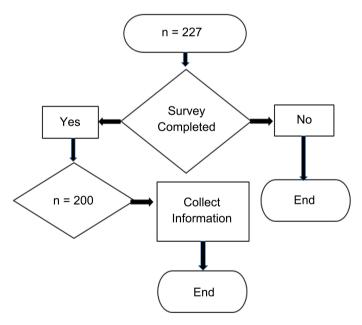


Figure 1. Information collection for survey.

Table 1 provides an overview of the sampled respondents' characteristics. The average age of the respondents is somewhat younger than that of the US population, their educational attainment is marginally higher, and our sample included a greater proportion of men than the US population. Nonetheless, our sample's median income and ethical makeup are quite similar to those of the US population.

Since the sample group as a whole fairly represents the American populace, the results may be applied to American customers.

Table 1. Sample demographics.

Demographic	Sample Characteristics
Age	Average = 25 Years
Gender	39.2% Male; 60.8% Female
Annual Household Income	50,200 USD
Education Level	77% with a High School Degree
	23% with a College Degree
Ethnicity	4.4% Asian
	12.5% African American
	6% Latino
	74.5% White
	2.36% Native American
	0.3% Other

4. Results and Analysis

Influencers are becoming an increasingly important tool for companies and advertising agencies as they collaborate on product launches and gather data on various demographic categories. More and more of these collaborations are long-term. Since influencer marketing has a significant impact on consumer behaviour and purchasing, it is quickly becoming a crucial part of successful marketing campaigns. These strategies include livestream shopping, email marketing, video content, and SEO marketing. Influencer marketing has a big influence on consumers' decisions to buy as shown in **Figure 2**.

Customers' decision-making process has been significantly impacted by the increasing prevalence of influencers and well-known content creators in 2023 and beyond. Every day, consumers turn to influencers and content creators for product evaluations, ideas, and other details that will guide their next purchase. Since influencers have more chances to "influence" customers when their audience is more aware of the brand, longer-term collaborations between businesses and influencers can boost revenue growth.

Influencer marketing plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions for brands online. Influencers are often more trustworthy than traditional advertising campaigns, and their influence can significantly impact consumer behavior. To maintain credibility, influencers should be transparent about their partnerships or sponsorships with brands, ensuring they endorse products or services that align

with their brand and values. Working with influencers in various niches can help identify if a product aligns with their values and interests.

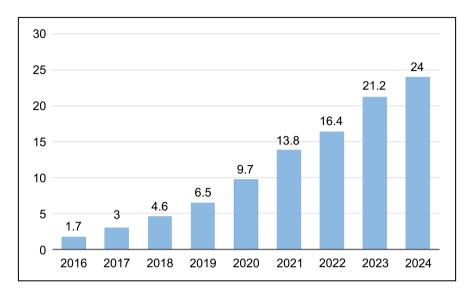


Figure 2. Influencer marketing growth statistics in \$billion from 2016 to 2024.

When influencing purchasing decisions, influencers should consider whether the product or service is relevant to their audience and if it would provide value. However, it is harder to influence decisions when working with influencers without a clear niche. Long-term relationships with certain brands can also lead to longer ongoing influence. Figure 3 shows the most popular brands famous due to influence marketing where it is seen that ZARA, SHEIN and H&M are the most for getting most business due to social media.

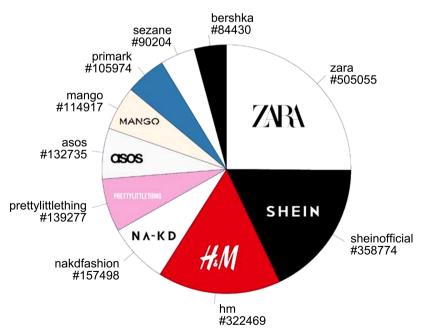


Figure 3. Most popular brands, famous for influencers in online marketing.

To maximize the impact of influencer marketing, businesses should consider using a combination of various marketing mediums with their influencers. The growth in influencer marketing spend is a testament to the importance of influencers in influencing consumer behavior. Content creators have transformed how we shop and become bridges between consumers and brands, allowing brands to streamline the consumer journey and contribute to purchasing decisions.

The future of marketing lies in the hands of influencers, and it is up to businesses to leverage this marketing vertical to their advantage.

5. Social Media and Influencers in Online Marketing

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased consumer use of social media, which can be influenced by outside factors like the S-O-R Theory and the Consumer Decision-Making Model. As a result, marketing implications have been put into practice. Social media is being used by consumers more and more to influence society while they shop and weigh their options. Social media can be used by businesses to increase consumer awareness, determine product needs, evaluate product risks, compare alternatives, and make purchases.

By leveraging market opinion leaders and enhancing brand value, social media can help consumers view a brand more favorably than alternatives. Because users may experience dissonance from bad social media experiences and decide to switch services, businesses need to choose social media platforms that encourage active user engagement. Businesses must exercise caution when using social media platforms that cause users to feel regret or dissonance in order to establish a strong brand image. Businesses should instead make use of social media platforms that encourage entertainment and social improvement. **Figure 4** implements the most popular social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tiktok) for online marketing.

Social media is a powerful tool for businesses to engage with and build brand value. Businesses can increase consumer conversions and establish brand trust by collecting feedback from customers and sharing positive comments. Social media marketing techniques can be used to meet or surpass customer expectations and produce captivating experiences. Stories about post-purchase satisfaction that are shared on social media can be produced through focus group interviews. Creating meaningful business-to-consumer relationships and interacting with customers require the development of positive social network communities. Businesses can encourage customers to participate in offline brand-related activities and share them on social media to combat social media fatigue. Businesses can continue to engage with customers and develop a strong brand image by recognizing the significance of social media in influencing consumer behaviour and utilizing it effectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a sharp rise in social media use in recent years, especially among American adults. By establishing social networks of experts, opinion leaders, and consumers, this expansion has revolutionized the

online marketplace. Social media marketing has played a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes towards products and influencing their purchasing decisions. For a variety of reasons, such as affectional gratification, attention-seeking, habit, information sharing, disclosure, and social influence, users are drawn to social media. Additionally, users may be drawn to social media by cognitive absorption (CA) for novelty, control, heightened enjoyment, focused immersion, and temporal dissociation. Social media fatigue, anxiety, and depression are just a few of the detrimental impacts social media can have on mental health.



Figure 4. Popular social media platforms for online marketing.

5.1. Social Media's Function in Determining Product Needs

Social media is an essential tool for consumer decision-making because it allows companies to stimulate brand conversations, activate product needs, and foster favourable perceptions. For example, Starbucks uses social media to interact with customers and maintain brand recognition. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are used by 93% of American companies to increase brand recognition. Brand awareness is also influenced by posts from peers and opinion leaders, owned media, and paid media, among other platforms. Celebrities and athletes are examples of macro-influencers who have the power to affect consumer choices and raise brand awareness. In general, social media is very important in the United States.

5.2. Social Media's Impact on Product Information Searches

Involving customers in a product's decision-making process is essential. It affects how much weight a customer gives a product; more involved customers process information in great detail, while less involved customers rely on auxiliary cues. While highly involved consumers seek out detailed information from multiple sources and interact directly with potential influencers, low-involvement consumers process information through peripheral routes and rely on cues. Higher levels of consumer involvement are required to increase the impact of messaging. This can be accomplished by having buyers and sellers communicate through a variety of social media channels in a unique, entertaining, or high-quality manner. All things considered, consumer involvement has a big impact on how consumers behave and make decisions.

5.3. Social Media's Function in Assessing Potential Product Options

Consumers use heuristics like lexicographic, conjunctive, and compensatory rules to assess brand and product options during the third stage of the decision-making process. These guidelines help identify the best product based on crucial features like price. Businesses can use social media strategies to address concerns and provide positive information relevant to consumers' criteria. This facilitates two-way communication, allowing customers to leave comments on product posts or contact companies directly. Businesses can also address customer queries and issues on the same post, improving customer satisfaction and decision-making.

5.4. Influence of Social Media on Buying Choices

Social media platforms, which are essential for raising awareness and facilitating direct purchases, are used by American consumers to make purchasing decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has made it more difficult for customers to get in touch with social influencers directly, which impacts how they interact with them and may increase the influence of social media on consumers' decision-making processes.

Consumers create satisfaction or dissatisfaction after purchasing, which is crucial in building relationships and encouraging repeat business. Social media gives companies a rapid and effective way to get customer feedback, enabling them to address issues promptly.

Post-purchase, consumers can show off their new purchases, promote or endorse the company, or express dissatisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has made direct social contact more difficult, hindering businesses' service efforts. However, social media marketing can lower dissatisfaction by satisfying consumers' emotional and cognitive needs.

6. Conclusion

Social media is being used more and more by customers as a marketing tool to

share tips, product reviews, and service experiences. The significance of social media in influencing consumer decision-making has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Any company's marketing strategy should include the effective use of social media, which uses content, images, promotions, and influence from opinion leaders to positively affect consumer purchasing decisions. Because the American economy and culture are so diverse and influential, social media platforms are essential for brand building, particularly in the US. Social media will probably become more influential worldwide as COVID-19 forces consumers to behave online. However, since social media platform preferences can vary, cultural differences should be taken into account when creating social media strategies in other nations.

According to survey data, there has been a notable change in the social media habits of Americans both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, because the data is based on self-reported perceptions, it is challenging to evaluate the results' actual validity. Because the data was collected all at once, pre-pandemic behaviours could be more accurately reflected. The initial findings strongly imply that consumers' social media behaviours are evolving, despite the potential lack of robustness in social media use, underscoring the need for additional study. Future research should take into account detailed comparisons of different consumer segments to understand how these segments may be changing as a result of the pandemic's effects. The findings were based on a macro-level analysis of U.S. consumers.

The study emphasizes the significance of comprehending real consumer behaviour and the connections between platforms and customer satisfaction by concentrating on self-reported social media behaviours. It also emphasizes the necessity of conducting empirical research to determine how well social media tactics work to increase brand recognition, equity, sales, and customer satisfaction after a purchase. To ascertain whether shifts in social media usage since the COVID-19 pandemic have long-term, systematic effects on consumer behaviour, longitudinal research is required. Furthermore, research is required to determine whether social media marketing has a greater impact on particular marketing segments and the moderating effects of different demographics on changes in consumer decision-making behaviour on social media.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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