THE EFFECTS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to assess the effects of corporate social media marketing on consumer behaviour. Within that, the consumer behaviour of Slovak consumers have been investigated. The theoretical part of the paper is dealing with the importance of social media sites; the social media tools available for organizations, its effects on consumers. The paper also highlights the differences between traditional and social media marketing. Primary research was carried out in the form of questionnaire. The questions were shared with the help of Google Forms. Snowball sampling procedure was used to gather 202 valid responses. The data was processed with the help of Microsoft Office Excel program. According to the results, most of the consumers (39%) ignore the advertisements appearing on social media. Accordingly to this results, 41% of respondents believe that they are not influenced in any way by the advertisements that appear on social media platforms. At the end of the paper the recommendations are formulated based on the research results.

Key words: consumer behaviour, social media, social media marketing, Slovakia

JEL Code: M30, M31, D12

Introduction

Thanks to the rapid growth of the online space, social media can change from day to day. Today, the use of communication interfaces has extended to our everyday life, so we don't just use them for fun, they also play an important role in building relationships and maintaining existing relationships. The pace of change affects not only users, but also companies that extend their marketing activities to these platforms. Various websites play an important role in this, as their use facilitates the monitoring of the attitude of potential customers and the constantly changing needs of consumers and the effective response to them. In addition, information transmitted by companies through social networks facilitates customer decision-making and thereby shortens the decision-making process of customers. Furthermore, through social networks, consumers

can share their opinions with other consumers, thereby influencing them and, by sharing this opinion, the public as well.

1   Theoretical Background

With the continuous growth and innovation of social networking sites, companies are under increasing pressure. In addition to the opportunity to increase brand awareness and consumer engagement from a business perspective, social media has many other benefits. Because social platforms are cost-effective compared to traditional marketing tool, their use results in cost savings for organizations. In addition, the online space gives companies the opportunity to reach a large audience at the same time (Mawarni – Muzammil, 2023). It is important to emphasize the companies can use traditional methods in addition to social media. However, online platforms offer a simpler way to reach customers than traditional methods (Varela-Neira et al., 2022; Herlina et al., 2022).

1.1   Corporate social media tools

The contemporary approach to advertising places great emphasis on two-way communication, greatly facilitated by the proliferation of social media platforms. These platforms have become key to how businesses connect with their audiences and measure the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. In the field of corporate social media, several significant platforms are worth mentioning. For example, blogs serve as online journals where businesses can publish a variety of content, including written articles, videos, audio recordings and images (Varela-Neira et al., 2022). These blogs often allow comments, allowing authors to connect directly with their audience. Businesses often use platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Reddit, and X (formerly Twitter) to effectively promote blogs. Blogs are not only for answering common questions, but also for building trust with potential customers by sharing valuable tips (Rosário – Dias, 2023). Another notable tool is the wiki, which provides a collaborative environment for content creation. In a corporate environment, wikis serve as valuable knowledge sharing tools, especially in small group projects. Participants can edit documents together, fostering a sense of collaboration and information sharing (Jadhav et al., 2023).

Social networks are among the prominent aspects of organizational social media, with platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook leading the way. LinkedIn, which is characterized by its corporate design and professional focus, Facebook, on the other hand, has become an indispensable tool for businesses, boasting the largest user base among social networking sites

(Shafiq et al., 2023). The widespread use of Facebook ensures that the company's message and brand reach a wide audience at the same time. In addition, YouTube should not be overlooked, offering businesses a powerful tool to present their identity and message through comprehensive videos. If the company's specific target group is under the age of 30, it is worth targeting Instagram, where ads can be placed from 2015. Instagram is the best platform if your business goal is image building, not sales (Razali et al., 2023). Finally, another site worth mentioning is X. The popularity of this platform stems from the fact that it provides much more up-to-date information than traditional sources (Varela-Neira et al., 2022).

1.2   Traditional vs. social media marketing

If we want to compare traditional media and social media marketing, we come to the conclusion that in traditional advertising the unit price of advertising space is high and the advertising space is finite, while in social media the advertising space is unlimited and the costs are much lower. In social media, the message itself is the process of creating an image, while in traditional media, emotional images, words and sounds are used to achieve the desired effect (Jadhav et al., 2023). While traditional media primarily affects emotions and the social environment, the primary goal in the social network space is information, cooperation and direct customer contact. In contrast to the one-sided strategic planning implemented in the context of traditional marketing, in the case of social media marketing, we can speak of a sustainable, learning-based approach. As long as public media advertisements can be checked within the limits set by the client and displayed within the set parameters, social media cannot be managed in this regard. In the community space, the emphasis is placed on the development of the communication system, so its preparation must be done with great care (Pascucci et al., 2023).

1.3   Effects of corporate social media on consumers

In social media, consumers value the interaction with the target brand differently depending on the message being conveyed. The perceived risk of the purchase and how much money they are willing to pay for a product/service makes the buyer think more about the product's quality and utility. Even a small amount of negative information from some publication can have a significant impact on consumer attitudes (Haudi et al., 2022). Furthermore, online groups, friends, and acquaintances also have a significant influence on customer behaviour and customer intention. Public forums provided by social media platforms and easy access to product information can be of great help to consumers in making this decision (Li et al., 2022). Social media influences the consumer's post-purchase behaviour in such a way that the

customer writes an opinion about the product/service, expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience of using the product/service (Shafiq et al., 2023).

The influence of social media on consumer behaviour covers a wide range of activities, from informing, sharing ideas and different cultures, to acquiring and understanding knowledge, and imagining post-purchase attitudes without a purchase process (Yang et al., 2023). This encourages businesses to better integrate marketing communications and make products/services more affordable through marketing efforts on social media channels. The purpose of all these activities is to motivate consumers to choose products/services and brands (Zhang et al., 2023). Through the use of individual platforms, consumers' trust and their desire to buy can be influenced, which makes it easier for companies to encourage their followers/customers to share their purchases and post-purchase experiences on the website of their choice (Khoa – Huynh, 2023). It also helps organizations by expanding the boundaries of time and space for interaction with potential consumers, and promotes a sense of closeness. In addition, an important part of marketing is entertainment, which encourages follower behaviour and follow-up, which creates positive emotions and feelings about the brand (Yang et al., 2023).

2   Methods

The data required for the research was obtained in a primary way, using an anonymous questionnaire, and then the obtained data and the obtained results were illustrated in the form of diagrams and tables. As the first step of our investigation, the subjects of our research were defined, who are consumers who are active users of at least one social networking site. A questionnaire for data collection was created with the help of the Google Form editor software. The questionnaire survey is considered a quantitative research method, which is an excellent tool for wide-ranging research and provides systematic and uniform measurement. In the case of the quantitative research method, mathematical-statistical calculations are necessary, therefore the results of the research are reported in numbers.

The research took place between January – February, 2023 in Slovakia. The questionnaire contained 18 questions, in which we addressed, among other things, the presence of consumers in social media, where we were interested in which platforms could enjoy the greatest popularity. Moving on, we were also interested in how much time our respondents spend on each platform, as well as for what purpose they visit these platforms. After that, we discussed the marketing strategy used in social media and how it affects consumers, and then we collected the demographic data of our respondents. The willingness to fill it out turned out

to be high. A total of 205 responses were received, of which 202 could be evaluated. 63% of respondents were female, while 37% were males. Most of the consumers (47%) belonged to 18-25 age group. That was followed by the representatives of the 26-35 (26%), 36-49 (16%) age group and more than 49 years old (10%).

3   Results

During the research, we asked consumers what they think about the advertisements that appear on social media. By processing the responses received, it became clear to us that the majority of consumers ignore these advertisements. The research also revealed that it is mostly typical for females to ignore the advertisements that appear on social media (44%). In the case of males, we can say that they mostly find such advertisements useful (31%). It is important to note that more females participated in the research than male. In numbers: 128 female and 74 males answered. As can be read from Table 1, the surveyed consumers have a negative attitude towards social media advertising.

**Tab. 1: Consumers attitudes toward social media advertising**

	Female		Male	
Answer options	**Answers (N)**	**Percentage (%)**	**Answers (N)**	**Percentage (%)**
I find them useful	23	18%	23	31%
I ignore them	56	44%	22	30%
I find it downright annoying	26	20%	13	18%
I use an ad blocker	23	18%	16	22%

Source: Own processing

The obtained results are in contrast to Fikri - Risqiani (2023) and Yang et al. (2023), in which they managed to prove the exact opposite. Consumers' attitudes towards advertisements appearing on social media were examined from several points of view, and in most cases they received positive feedback.

During the research, we asked consumers to what extent do they think they are influenced by advertisements on social media platforms during their purchases? The answers received are illustrated in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: The influence of advertisements on social media platforms on consumer decisions
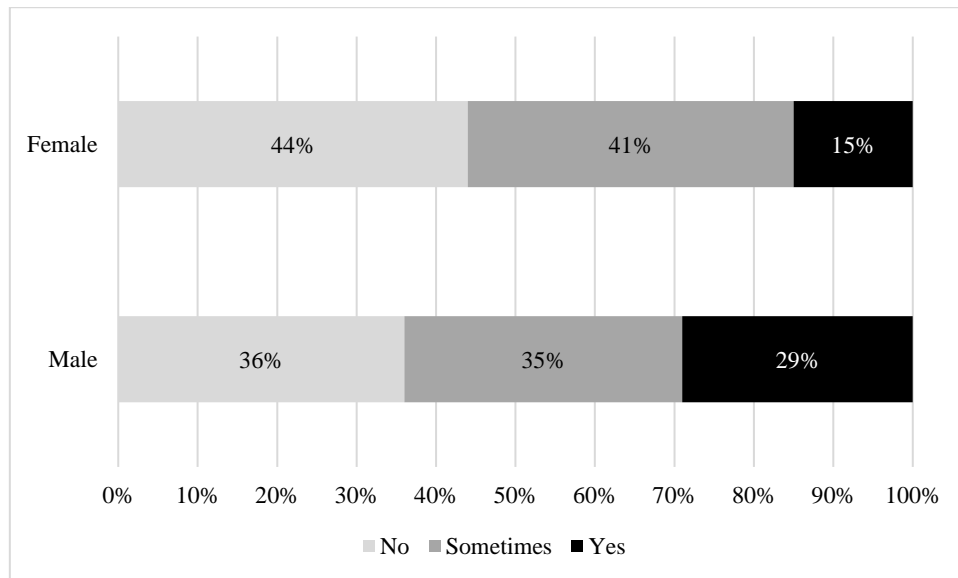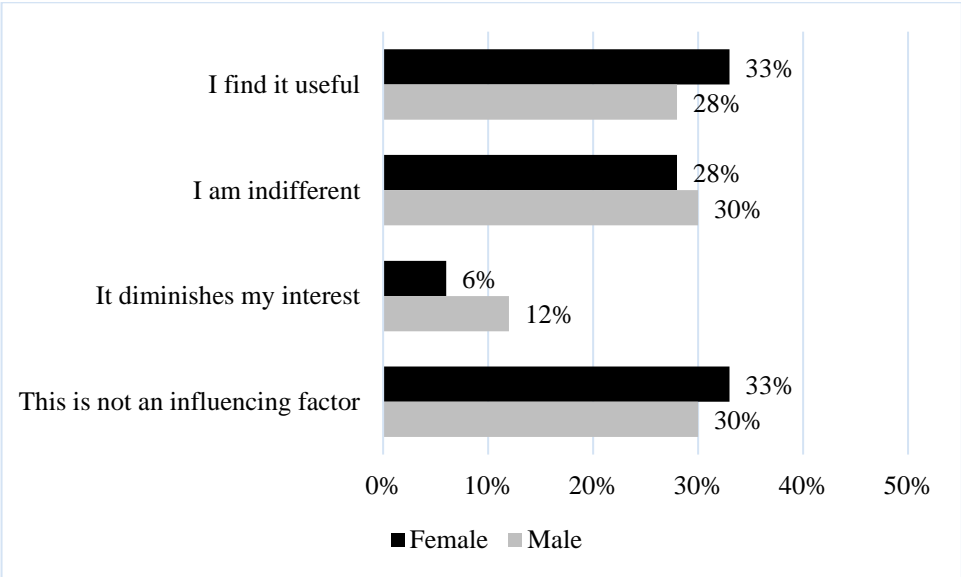

Source: Own processing

As can be seen in the figure above, the majority of consumers do not feel that they are influenced in any way by the advertisements that appear on individual platforms during their purchase, and this is true for both female (No; 44%) and male (No; 36%). Also, we can see that males can be influenced by such advertisements in a higher proportion (29%). Based on the research, we can say that it is easier to influence female's purchase decisions with a social media advertisement. This result is contradicted by the answers to our next question, in which we were interested in whether the surveyed consumers had already purchased something as a result of advertising found on social media? To this question, the majority (45%) chose the option "Never", but the remaining 55% of respondents marked "Sometimes" (43%), "Often" (9%), and "Always" (3%) answer option.

Marketing manipulation has become an important issue in the everyday life of consumers. Companies choose to manipulate consumers whenever their interests do not match the company's goals and thus fail to convince consumers. Advertising manipulation techniques are controversial every time the advertiser wins and the consumer loses (Ljubičić – Vukasović, 2023). Consumers' ability to recognize social media manipulation by marketing strategies can vary significantly depending on their level of awareness, the transparency of the tactics used, and their personal characteristics. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, consumer awareness and education will play a key role in helping individuals make informed decisions about the content they find on social media (Zhang et al., 2023).

Furthermore, during the research, we also asked our respondents how their opinion is influenced if a company advertises its products/services on one of the social media platforms? The answers were illustrated with the help of Figure 2.

Fig. 2: The distribution of consumer opinions regarding online advertising used by organizations

32% of our respondents do not feel that the fact that a company advertises its products/services on certain online platforms is considered an influencing factor. If we look at the figure, we can see that 31% of users find it useful to promote brands' products/services online, 29% are indifferent to the topic, and 8% believe that individual ads reduce their interest towards the given brand. If we observe the difference between the genders in terms of their answers, we can say that it is clearly not considered an influencing factor in the case of male, and that they are indifferent to the question, but if we take a look at the female answers, there is not a complete understanding: 33% of female consider it is useful if a company advertises its products online, but according to the other 33% of female, this is not an influencing factor. Based on an article by Moedeen et al. (2023) about businesses using social media marketing, consumers can be very different depending on their experiences and preferences. Businesses that effectively use social media to provide value, authentic interactions, and align with consumer expectations build strong, positive relationships with their followers and audiences, thereby motivating their customers and promoting success in business (Moedeen et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to examine how advertisements posted using different social media platforms affect consumer behaviour. During the research, it was revealed that consumers have a negative attitude towards social media advertising, but on the contrary, they show a positive attitude. This is supported by our question, in which we asked whether consumers have already made purchases as a result of advertisements appearing on social media.

In the course of our research, we came to the conclusion that the largest proportion of surveyed consumers (39%) ignores advertisements appearing on social media. According to the authors, the reason for this lies in the fact that some advertisements are not attention-grabbing or interesting for users, and therefore they are ignored. In this case, the authors recommend that businesses create ads that are short, to the point, unique, stand out from other businesses' ads, attract attention, and contain creative advertising text. It is important that they are aware of the latest trends, but it is even more important that they stay ahead of trends or even start a new trend in the field of online marketing, but for this it is crucial that they know the current consumer needs. In addition, it is essential that companies spend more time and energy on getting to know their target audience in order to be able to draw consumers' attention to a specific product more effectively. Moving on, the authors also discussed whether the advertisements appearing on social media platforms have an influencing effect on consumers. The majority of our respondents (41%) believe that they are not influenced by individual advertisements. Because the ads don't have enough impact, consumers won't buy. The reason for this lies in the fact that the organization did not target the right group, because after seeing the advertisement, the consumer does not feel the need to purchase/order a certain product/service. Businesses must achieve that the consumer thinks of the given product as a vital product or service, as a result of which the desire to buy develops. An important factor in this process is knowing the needs of the target audience, choosing the right social platform, the continuous existence of two-way communication, and the building, development, long-term preservation and nurturing of trust and loyalty to the brand through these factors. According to the results male consumers can be influenced to a greater extent.

Finally, we also asked our respondents to what extent the fact that a company advertises its product or service on social media platforms influences their opinion. 31% of the respondents considered it useful, 32% believe it is not an influencing factor, and 29% are indifferent about the topic. Indifference may also have been caused by the fact that companies

advertise their products and services on online platforms. In addition, 8% of consumers believe that advertising on social media reduces their interest in a product or service or company. In this case too, we can mention the prevalence of advertising on social media, which can lead to consumers and users being excessively exposed to advertisements and being overloaded. When this happens, users start to ignore the advertisements. To address these challenges and maintain consumer interest, businesses must strive to create authentic, relevant and engaging ads that respect user preferences. Building a strong brand reputation and maintaining an active online presence can also help generate and maintain consumer interest on social media.

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