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Marketing management and the impact of social marketing on the Iraqi market

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Abstract. While the number of people using social media continues to rise, there is surprisingly little academic study that examines the possibilities marketing's use of social media in terms of both communication and promotion. This article presents the findings of a pilot research that surveyed 150 students at a major university in Iraq to investigate the potential impact of social media on the purchase decisions of young people. It was discovered that the respondents (young people) had a good understanding of computers and use social media sites, which boosts their value as clients. These young people are also increasingly avoiding traditional forms of advertising in favour of social media, and they frequently make purchases based on information gleaned from these sites because they find it to be sufficient for making decisions, reliable, convenient, and wasting less of their time. Marketers aiming their products towards the young market may want to take the results into account when formulating marketing and public relations plans.

Keywords. Social media, marketplace for young people, consumerism, web surfing, Communication in Advertising

1. Introduction

The "online" tools and practises that people use to share ideas, thoughts, experiences, and viewpoints with one other have an effect on marketers' capacity to connect with and interact with customers and, eventually, influence their purchase choices.[1]. Social media, which can take the form of anything from social networks and wikis to blogs and vlogs and content communities and podcasting, is helping to bring about a significant shift away from the traditional, objective, rational, institutional perspective and towards the subjective, emotional, individualised, human one. Social media has become a ubiquitous and important part of people's communication, friendships, awareness of current events[2], and connections to the world at large over the past few years, thanks in large part to technological advancements that have helped it gain widespread recognition and acceptance. Among 38 nations with a representative sample of Internet users aged 16–54, the following information was uncovered about the use, attitudes, and interests of consumers about various social media outlets. Over 394 million individuals watch videos [3]. "online" 346 million read blogs/weblogs; 321 million read personal blogs/weblogs; and 307 million visit a friend's social network website. As a bonus, 303 million people will send a link to a video they found online, 272 million will update their

profile on a social networking site, 248 million will post photos, 216 million will subscribe to a video podcast, 184 million will create their own blog or website, and 183 million will upload a video [4]. By the end of 2022, the number of people using social networks will have surpassed 6 billion. Also found: 52.8% of iraqi use Facebook; 25% of iraqi Internet users have contributed movies to social media sites; 2 million have encountered at least one social website. With the advent of social media, the Internet has gained a whole new interactive platform, allowing businesses and consumers to connect and share information about products and services, which has shown to be an effective marketing and communication tool as well as a potent sales generator[5]. Consumer reviews and ratings posted on social media sites have rapidly become one of the most trusted means of marketing today therefore social media is expected to revolutionise the way many marketers do business in the next years (Social Media Marketing Industry Statistics, 2020)[6]. found that 95% of marketers believe social media to be worthwhile , and 75% of those same marketers want to raise their media investment in 2021. Marketers point to improved brand recognition and two-way communication with consumers as the main advantages. The 2020 Social Media Marketing Industry Report claims that[7], a whopping 88% of marketers cite more visibility as the primary advantage of social media marketing. According to research conducted by Awareness Networks on the status of social media marketing, 70% of companies aimed to increase fifty percent of marketers intended to improve social media management procedures and instruments in the next year, and the majority expected their social media presence to increase in the following year, 2022. With an estimated 272 million subscribers and 307 million people who have visited a friend's social network page, In terms of content distribution and creation, social media networks are rapidly gaining ground.

The remaining sections of the paper are organized as follows: The evidentiary context is discussed in the second section. In the third chapter, the impact of social media on buying behavior in the Iraqi market is described. The fourth section delves into the research methodology and data collection and analysis process. The fifth section also included a discussion of online communication between adolescents and the overall reasons for adolescents' use of social media shopping. The sixth section contained a set of conclusions about the potential of social media for youth marketing. The conclusion is in the seventh section.

2. The Context and the Reasoning

Young customers, those in the age range of 18 to 24 years old, make up a significant portion of the market, and social media is fast evolving to become an increasingly important part of their life [8]. Due to their upbringing in a technologically advanced society, today's youth are more likely to incorporate new media into their daily life. For the last decade, advertisers have aimed their products squarely towards the teenage market because of the demographic and economic advantages it presents. In Iraq, for instance, it has been estimated that the purchasing power of the country's youth, defined as those between the ages of 8 and 22, When trying to reach the younger demographic, businesses have had to become creative by using channels like social media to reach out to young people[9]. And since young people are so open to trying new things and so active on market, young people are actively engaging in social media a particularly fruitful one to pursue. It's clear that South African marketers haven't made the most of this opportunity, as evidenced by their reluctance to use despite the vast advertising potential, expanding use, and rapid development of social media, it is still mostly untapped as a medium for influencing buyer behaviour and carrying out marketing. Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies that concentrate on young marketing through social media. Given the above, the purpose of this exploratory study was to determine: - how and why young people use social media to

inform their purchases; - how effective social media may be as a promotional technique for reaching young people; and the impact the use of social media to young people's buying decisions[10]. Educating iraqi marketers about the potential power of social media as a tool for prompting and influencing purchase decisions and behaviour among customers is critical, which is why research on the influence of social media browsing on adolescent consumer behaviour is crucial[11]. A further benefit of this research is that it will help the Iraqi businesses already active on social media improve their profiles.

3. The Effect of social media on Buying Behavior

The effectiveness of every marketing campaign relies heavily on the marketer's knowledge of customer behaviour. The formation of consumer preferences and choices is primarily reliant on information given by parties beyond the control of "online" marketers. Users of social networking sites may significantly affect the choices and actions of their peers in the marketplace without ever meeting them in person. Brand marketers don't have as much sway as they used to on their products' messaging[12]. To attract other users, such as with Facebook profiles or Twitter updates, consumers on these networks must create such goods.

With customer tastes and opinions driving the market, shoppers give more consideration to the reputations of various companies and items before making a final decision. Several shifts in consumer behaviour, particularly among young people, may be attributed to the proliferation of social media. This has opened several doors for marketers, who now have the chance to deploy promotion efforts on social media sites that really help people out [13]. Few studies have been published on What effect does social media have on young Iraqis' propensity to shop. This paper's goal is to make a preliminary contribution towards filling that void.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Methods of Sampling and Sample Size

Due to the preliminary stage of the study and sample size constraints, a convenient sample of 150 participants was chosen sufficient. Students aged 18 to 24 enrolled at one of the several campuses of the University of Baghdad in Iraq were utilised as a sample frame[14]. The respondents, both male and female, were representative of those currently enrolled in higher education at the university level.

4.2. Collecting Data

In September of 2022, 150 students (youth) in the age range of 18 to 24 were given a systematic and carefully created questionnaire. The surveys were distributed at the university coffee shop, to students in two media studies tutorial sessions, and on campus computer networks. Participants were picked at random and simply checked for eligibility based on their age, as per our definition of the young population. Because five surveys were spoiled, their responses were not included in the final tally.

4.3. Creating a Questionnaire

There was a total of 24 questions on the survey, which were broken up into the following five categories. To guarantee if the sample is really representative of the population at large, a screening question was asked asking If they were looking for company and product knowledge through social media. Any time a participant responded negatively, the interview was ended and a new one was chosen.

The first part of the questionnaire (Section A) included two questions designed to elicit personal details. Three questions on the respondent's social media habits made up Section B. Section C had a total of 37 questions, with responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" on a 5-point Likert scale. The survey consisted of 28 questions, the first four of which aimed to gauge respondents' opinions on social media's potential as a marketing tool, the next eleven on the motivations behind respondents' purchases based on social media content, and the final 22 on the ways in which social media affected their purchasing decisions. In Section D, we asked 11 questions designed to uncover the motivations behind respondents' social media shopping habits. Section E, which comprised of four questions, aimed to learn how respondents' social media surfing influences their buying decisions.

4.4. Analyzing the Data

Quantitative methods such as the chi-square test, cross-tabulations, and cluster analysis were used to dissect the data using the SPSS programme.

4.5. Determinations from the data

Although a total of 150 interviews were done, only 145 questionnaires were valid since five of them were damaged. Seventy-five (50%) of the responders were female, whereas 70 (47%) were male. When asked how they choose what to buy, 92% of respondents said they looked up reviews and recommendations on social media sites. In addition, the great majority of respondents (78%) said that they were affected in some way by social networking sites while making purchases. reporting that 50% of shoppers examine reviews from other customers before making a purchase, and that 16% had been swayed by the recommendations of others. In addition, said that the contemporary customer places a high value on prepurchase support and makes frequent use of social media search engines, which in turn affects the consumer's buying behaviour. Seventy-four percent of respondents moreover said that seeing what their friends had bought on social networking sites affected their own "online" shopping habits. This back up the idea that consumers use "online" purchases of products, brands, and services to create and cultivate an image of themselves that increases their favorability with their online networks of friends, family, and acquaintances. 73% of respondents also said that recommendations from friends who use social media affected their shopping decisions. Meyer backed up this idea by arguing that the reason people put their faith in recommendations from their friends was because they knew the referrer had their best interests at heart.

Unlike marketers, who just care about making a profit, friends really care about each other and aren't hiding anything. Another interesting fact is that "faith in a person like me" went from 20% to 68% in a recent survey of global opinion leaders.

These results have important implications for marketers since they suggest that social media groups have an impact on consumer decision-making processes including brand preference and product selection. platforms, and therefore it's helpful for marketers to comprehend the characteristics of these communities.

5. Online networking among teens

All respondents utilised social media at least 97% of the time, with 122% using blogs, 120% using vlogs, 114% using content communities, 76% using wikis, 69% using podcasts, and 64% using audiobooks. The findings are consistent with what has been reported in the literature, including that social networks are the primary force behind the expansion of the social media industry, that they have attracted billions of users from around the world, and that the

user bases of some social networks are larger than the populations of entire countries. On top of that.

Ninety-seven percent of respondents said they use social media often, and more than 62 percent said they use it constantly.

Internet-based social	Incidence	%	Total percentage
Connectedness in Societies	1	85.3	8
Blogs	9	64.7	6
Communities of Content	9	64.7	6
Vlogs	9	64.0	6
Wikies	7	47.3	4
Podcasts	3	23.3	2

Table 1. Reliability of data obtained from social media sites.

Over the last week, respondents averaged over 21 hours spent on social media. This increased engagement also suggests that marketers may use social media as a powerful communication and marketing tool to influence the purchase decisions of young customers. It was shown that almost all respondents (95%) rely heavily on social media for making shopping choices since the information they get there is trustworthy, namely that customers utilise information found on social networking platforms when making purchases since because it's straightforward and sincere [15], current and accurate found that 66% of customers believed that social media content is important, reliable, and might affect their product/brand perceptions and purchase behaviour. Aside from saving time and having all the information they needed in one place, respondents' young age and the prevalence of social media were other factors in their decision to make purchases online. All the above explanations line up with research from many sources. Respondents are college students; thus, it is logical to conclude that they (youth) appreciate little purchase "effort," ease, trustworthy information, and shorter interactions, all of which make social media a perfect marketing communication medium. Furthermore, It was found that the respondents had a high level of computer literacy and everyday, unrestricted access to the internet at their institution, which means they can readily access social media platforms to seek for information, enhancing the potential of these young people as purchasers through social media.[16].

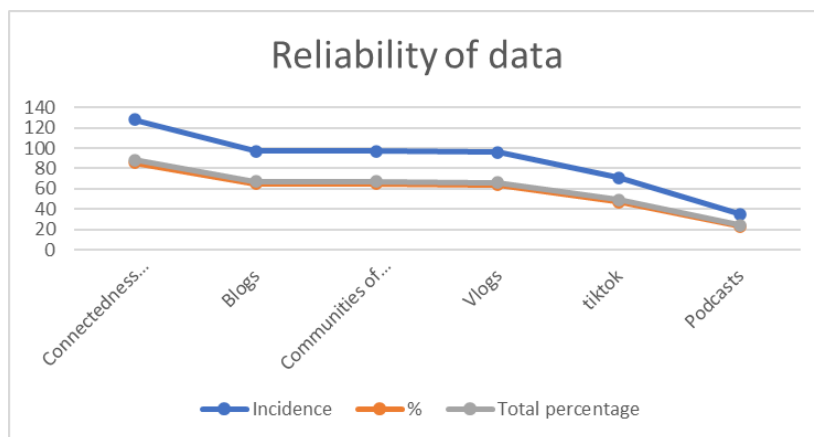


Chart 1. Data reliability scheme

5.1. Why teenagers use social media to buy.

Data from Table 1 demonstrates that most respondents (85.3%) trust social networks like Facebook and Twitter the most for product recommendations, followed by other online media including content communities, blogs, videos, short-form platforms like TikTok, and podcasts. [17]. According to the conclusion, consumers heavily relied on social media for research and insight since it offered them immediate access to relevant, trustworthy information[18]. In addition, the World Wide Web's success as a commercial platform stems from it enabling of the worldwide distribution of knowledge and materials. Table 1 also shows that customers do not trust podcasts as a credible source of buying information. This may be since podcasts are still a relatively unproven form of online communication, and hence their target audience has not yet been used to them. Research also shows that podcasts do not have the same level of popularity as other networks, lending credence to the notion. Moreover, participants were asked to rate the benefits of utilising social media to guide purchasing decisions on a 5-point Likert scale, transitioning from "highly agree" to strongly disagree with "strongly agree" being the most common response[19]. "agree" and "strongly agree" have been combined it would indicate that young customers like college students, frequently use social media platforms to learn about products and brands despite their busy schedules. This is because doing so is more efficient, convenient, reliable, and provides enough information to make an informed purchase.

He said that people are having shorter, more frequent interactions on social media because of time zone changes, an increase in the number of available channels for communicating, constant connection[20], and an overwhelming amount of available information.

5.2. Youth shopping behaviour and social media surfing.

Eighty percent of respondents said that social media influenced their buying habits; 43 percent said they had made more than eight purchases on social media; 23 percent said they had made between five and eight purchases; 10 percent said they had made between two and four purchases; and 4 percent said they had only made one purchase[21]. There is evidence to back up the statement, which shows that social media.

5.3. Youth social media use

A substantial percentage of respondents (62%) spent more than A total of 21 hours in the last month were spent on social media, indicating that they are spending excessive amounts of time there. The great majority of respondents (81% using blogs and 80% using vlogs) accessed social media. Content communities, wikis, and podcasts were shown to have lower but still significant use patterns (76, 69, and 64% respectively). These results provide credence to some who have said that the enormous success of social networks is directly responsible for the meteoric rise in popularity of social media[22]. The population of certain nations is said to be bigger than the user base of other social networks, according to other study. estimates that the number of South Africans actively using social media already exceeds five million, and that this figure is only expected to rise.

6. Social media's potential for young marketing

Using a cluster analysis, the young market was broken down into broad categories. the 24 items that were given ratings ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) on a Likert scale. Respondents were clustered using K-Means according to factors that might increase social media's effectiveness as a marketing tool for young people. Two groups of 123

people each answered questions about each of the things. totaled just 22 participants. The centres, or averages, of the clusters are shown in Table 4. Cluster 1 has means mostly between 1 (highly agree) and 2 (somewhat agree) (agree). Therefore, the vast majority of respondents (85%) belong to cluster 1, which consists of a market segment of consumers who value social media as a promotional tool because it affords them pleasure, convenience, anonymity, affordability, value, reliable information, sufficient information, ease in accessing this information, discussion and conversation around products and brands, a wider selection of products, and empowerment and encouragement to engage i. Variables 7, "electronic word of mouth," "8," "encourages purchasing activity," "9," "engage in urchase activity," "10," "advertisement," "12," "13," "14Cluster 2 had mean values lower than 2 for all questions tagged with "," "19," "talk and conversation," "20," "empowered," "22," "favourably," "23," and "value for money." (variety). The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 15, 18, and 21 correspond to the following scales: responsiveness (2), reliability (3), salesperson (3), ease (4), contentment (5), and utility (6).all had mean values of 2 (agree) in cluster 2. (cheapest). There are just two variables in Cluster 2 that have neutral mean values, and they are 16 (costs surpass my budget) and 17. (compulsive shopper). 15 percent of respondents, or Cluster 2, are sceptical and unconvinced that social media can be an effective advertising tool. Their mean responses range from 3 (neutral) to 5 (strongly disagree). Conclusions about social media's promotional potential may be drawn from cluster 1, which indicates the emphasis respondents put on it. This is consistent with the findings of other studies, and Kichatov . Furthermore, Forrester Research predicts that when compared to other forms of online advertising including email, search engines, banner ads, and mobile apps, social media marketing is expected to have the greatest ROI.

7. Conclusions

This preliminary study established that young people routinely seek out social media networks and spend significant amounts of time on them, making them more vulnerable to the persuasive efforts of advertisers. However, marketers that utilise social media platforms must take a different strategy than they would with conventional media to take use of features like social media's search features and the capacity to "gather" customer feedback and archive it. The most crucial step is for them to learn how to use the different social media sites. There are now established norms for diverse sorts of behaviour that are sanctioned by various social media, and social etiquette has spread into this new arena. Marketers in South Africa can't Social media has become the preferred route of direct connection with young consumers and a crucial element in determining their purchasing choices; businesses can no longer afford to "downplay" or overlook its importance. This is due to the fact that young people are more easily addressed via these channels. For marketers, there are always fresh difficulties and possibilities presented by the ever-evolving media ecology and the preferences of target consumers. Since the use of social media has skyrocketed, marketers have had to rethink their strategies. We hope that by doing this, we can maintain a strong presence among the next generation. When young people voluntarily spend a lot of time on social networking platforms, they put themselves in a position where they might be easily swayed by marketing messages.

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