Optimizing the Marketing Strategies Through Social Media Marketing Analysis

Tingyu Xiao *

School of Humanities and Arts, Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 1210031227@student.must.edu.mo

Abstract. Social Media Marketing (SMM), which refers to the use of social media as a branding strategy, is one of the most prominent study subjects in consumer marketing. Some scholars have studied the development of SMM strategies, but there is a lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the two-sided impact of SMM on brands and consumers, and the coping approaches to negative effects are controversial. This paper analyses the basis of consumer buying behaviour in identifying brand marketing in SMM, discusses the influence of influencer marketing in SMM and suggests the role of SMM in building brand image. The results show that the influence of SMM is twofold and suggests that brands should be positive and avoid negativity when marketing, give full play to the emotional and personalised marketing model in SMM, focus on influencer selection and increase interactive marketing with consumers.

Keywords: Social media marketing; consumer behaviour; brand image; influencer marketing.

1. Introduction

Today, social media marketing is increasingly becoming an effective and economical way for all types of companies to reach potential customers and target audiences. According to statistics, more than 4.26 billion individuals will use social media globally in 2021, and by 2027, this figure is predicted to reach approximately 6 billion [1]. Excellent marketing on social media can bring significant success to business, increase brand loyalty among customers, drive sales of products, provide guidance to your audience and even generate advocacy for your brand. SMM is interactive, accessible and attractive, allowing it to build positive connections with consumers, communicate brand messages to consumers, increase consumer engagement and loyalty, and facilitate more efficient and convenient marketing for a brand or company [2]. It is clear how important a role social media marketing plays in connecting businesses with consumers, and it is worth conducting research into how social media marketing can have an impact.

The impact of social media platforms received more attention in previous studies than the effects of social media marketing on customers and brands, as well as describing how SMM helps businesses to promote themselves and discussing the development of SMM strategies, it was studied that many luxury brands excel in adopting SMM to communicate and interact with consumers on social media, promoting positive connections and reducing the psychological distance from the luxury brand, some studies analysed social fulfilment regarding SMM as contributing to consumer motivation and discussed how consumer attitudes towards social media can also influence attitudes towards brands [3,4].

Furthermore, in a study, the goal of SMM is to produce content that users will find interesting and will want to share with their intended audiences [5]. But the impact of SMM on consumer behaviour, brand personality and social media channels might not be only positive, brands and consumers find it difficult to properly respond to the negative effects, and heavy investment does not always lead to an expected return. It is important to explore more brands to use SMM appropriately for message promotion and image building.

This study explores the benefits and drawbacks of social media marketing's accessibility, interactivity, and attractiveness on brand reputation and profitability as well as on the safety of customer data and experiences; secondly, an analysis of influencer marketing, marketing methods in

SMM in recent years, and the impact of this method on influencer and brand reputation is constructed; then, an analysis of how the role of SMM in influencing brand image is achieved.

Finally, in response to the negative aspects mentioned above, the study gives three suggestions on how brand marketing can provide emotional appeal and customized advertising, how brands and influencers should stick to the bottom line, and how to increase the interactive connection between brands and consumers.

2. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) can be interpreted as marketing in which customers interact through social networks and which brings benefits to the brand, such as increasing customer loyalty, generating a positive reputation and increasing the audience's intention to buy the product. As a communication tool for SMM, social media is essentially a platform for users to promote themselves, and because it has a viral communication nature, businesses and brands find it appealing as a tool for product marketing. SMM is a highly accessible and attractive form of marketing, it can make it easier, simpler and more effective for a business or company to reach its target consumers. Because most social media marketing is free to access and even some social media platforms are free to use for commercial purposes, which effectively reduces marketing costs and expands the number and scope of accessibility. SMM breaks the traditional limitations of time and space, updates and adapts social interaction to empower audiences and provides a two-way communication platform, making SMM more interactive. The increased level of interaction in social media has helped to increase audience engagement and raise more positive attitudes and recognition of the internet. But SMM also has some negative implications for audiences and brands, as well as for the security of personal data. This is due to the fact that information is shared and disclosed on social media platforms, making it simple to access information and increasing many hazards and cybercrimes caused by an absence of monitoring and control [6]. The SMM shopping experience is lacking in comparison to traditional offline shopping, and for brands, SMM brings with it malicious negative feedback and offensive comments. Dissatisfied customers or direct competitors may post insulting or offensive images, comments or videos, but the brand's marketers are less interventionist in preventing such incidents from occurring, and this behaviour has a greater negative reaction to brand marketing because the bandwagon effect has a greater impact on audience psychology.

SMM is an effective way for companies of all types to reach potential customers and target audiences. Excellent marketing on social media can bring significant success to your business, increasing brand loyalty among customers, driving sales of your products, providing guidance to your audience and even generating advocacy for your brand. Social media is a good platform for marketers to develop brand awareness, launch new goods, contact with their target audience, and find qualified leads fast and efficiently because of its inclusive and instant capabilities. SMM has become one of the key areas of marketing strategy, with many luxury brands adapting to SMM to communicate and interact with consumers on social media to foster positive connections, reducing the psychological distance from luxury brands [3].

In addition, SMM is less costly to promote commercially and offers consumers a direct-response opportunity. The increased power of SMM over consumers may enable negative consumer feedback to be disseminated more quickly than in traditional marketing, that is, the negative electronic word-of-mouth. SMM can pose a threat to personal privacy and information security and reduce the sense of personal shopping experience. Fake-influncer recommendations for commercial gain can lead to a reduction in the credibility of products on social media. There can also be malicious competition, with direct competitors using social media to undermine brand perceptions with vicious attacks and slanderous comments.

3. Analysis on SMM

3.1. The Basis of SMM - Consumer Behaviour

3.1.1 Brands' influence on consumers by SMM.

Social media marketing is expanding because of the impact it can have on consumer behaviour (e.g., purchase intent, loyalty, engagement intent), as consumers use social media platforms to access relevant product information and learn about post-purchase attitudes shared by bloggers about products and services. The growing enthusiasm for social media marketing may also be explained by the fact that social media marketing can be effective in influencing consumer behaviour, customers are exposed to brand images, videos, and copy messages that create a direct and interactive connection between the consumer and the brand's products, allowing them to interact and communicate directly in the comments section and generate emotions and feelings about the product, it is clear that social media plays a significant role in influencing consumer perceptions, attitudes, and eventually actions. In a survey, it was discovered that while 49% of customers decide to buy a product and 70% of consumers utilize social media to gather helpful information about it, only 7% of consumers actually complete the transaction of the buying process [7], which means that social media marketers need to have an understanding of consumer intent and behaviour for marketing campaigns to anticipate consumer needs and make full use of the persuasive effect of SMM on consumers.

SMM can generate interaction and connection with consumers and increase sales of branded products. Brands posting messages about their products or services on social media platforms, or Netflix sharing and liking brand messages, it can influence consumers' purchase intentions, purchase decisions and emotional changes. On the positive side of social media marketing, it helps to increase the number of purchases or purchase intentions of consumers for brand products, build a positive brand perception in consumers' thoughts and build recognition and loyalty to the brand; the emotions conveyed by the content of social media marketing tend to infect consumers' emotions and thus influence consumer behaviour.

3.1.2 SMM influence on consumers directly.

On the negative side, the high volume of advertising and marketing on social media platforms may result in ad clutter, competing for consumer attention and perhaps ignoring the content of the ads, which ultimately does not translate into consumer behaviour, and the impact of marketing campaigns on direct consumer purchase behaviour is also weak. And marketing content may evoke negative emotions in consumers, such as anger, disgust, sadness, fear, etc. Cross-cultural brands, for example, may run afoul of local cultural rules when communicating across borders and be mistaken for disrespecting local customs.

3.2. A SMM approach - Influencer Marketing

3.2.1 Positive effect from influencer marketing.

The brand and the influencer go hand in hand. The reliability of the influencer increases brand loyalty. Social media influencers are people who persuade others by promoting and endorsing brands and commercial goods on social media platforms. They are frequently separated into micro-influencers and opinion leaders who receive celebrity endorsements. Based on a survey by Twitter, consumers may have the same level of trust in social media influencers as they have for their friends [8]. Influencer marketing is a sort of advertising in which brands and marketers pay influential people to create or distribute their branded content to both the influencer's own followers and the brand's target market. An influencer is known as a credible source of information, which increases brand loyalty and awareness by spreading product information and increasing product sales through sharing and liking, while for influencers, reliable referrals and increased product sales bring trust and attention to the audience. Active Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) presence on social media helps to increase the appeal of the brand's marketing content, increasing the consumer's intention to purchase

and spend time and experience on reading eWOM. This is also because of the bandwagon effect and buzz marketing that exists in marketing, so brands and influencers play a complementary role.

3.2.2 Negative effect from influencer marketing.

With the involvement of commercial interests, influencers often engage in false advertising of products for the high promotional price offered by the brand, ignoring the true situation and experience of the product, resulting in a negative impact on the platform, the brand and its own reputation degree at the WOM level, as well as negative attitudes, illegal behaviour and unethical violations by the influencers themselves, all of which can cause a detrimental effect on the brand's reputation. In a study, the moderating effects of self-esteem and the mediating effects of influencer credibility in interpersonal supra-social interactions with YouTube influencers were explored, and the study demonstrated the power that social media influencers have and the progress influencers have made in gaining public and brand recognition [9].

The consequences of false marketing are not only the loss of both the brand and the influencer, but also the increase of undue competitiveness in the market. A large amount of false word-of-mouth information is published and spread through the platform, users' trust in the marketing content of the platform decreases, the authenticity of the marketing content is damaged, and the commercial value of the platform no longer exists.

3.3. The Role of SMM- Influencing the Brand Image

3.3.1 Social media marketing establishes and preserves a brand's reputation.

SMM's function is to make it easier to develop a favorable brand image. An increasing number of companies are adopting SMM to communicate their brand messaging, including advertising on social media and blogger endorsements, as marketing campaigns, consumer experiences and social ratings are all factors that influence the brand image in consumers' minds, so brand SMM is all about building relevant brand messages and establishing brand image and brand preference in consumers' minds.

The interactive nature of SMM facilitates the building of a positive brand image. Social media marketing through various platforms, for example, brands will post relevant topics and invite consumers to share videos, participate in online games, engage in challenges and other entertainment activities to build a feeling of closeness and goodwill between a brand and its customers, or brand social media accounts will post interesting and engaging messages, such as sharing brand stories and activities through videos and pictures, which will help build a good brand image and increase the depth of understanding of the brand image, as well as the word-of-mouth generated by the marketing in the audience, consumers will pay more attention to brands with strong marketing, try them out and generate reviews about their experiences, and positive reviews will contribute to the building of a positive brand image.

3.3.2 False marketing can lead to a negative brand reputation.

Online celebrities may review products as a result of brand marketing campaigns, possibly leaving critical comments about the products' quality and design. While this may to some extent damage the brand's reputation and undermine consumer trust in the company, eWOM reviews on social media platforms about goods and services are more powerful to buyers. One study suggests that brand image depends on the impact of social media interactions, meaning that consumers are likely to develop a positive image of a brand when they perceive that social media platform interact with them and that the greater the consumer's perception of marketing interactivity, the stronger the consumer's preferred brand image [10].

Slanderous post responses, in which displeased clients or business rivals are permitted to post disparaging or offensive content, are another aspect of social networking that can be particularly harmful to marketing campaigns. However, there is nothing that marketers can do to stop this from happening. In addition to this, although consumers are exposed to the brand's marketing messages, they are not impressed by any of the marketing content because it has fewer memorable points or is psychologically distant from the audience.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Customising Marketing Content

In the social media ad clutter, most brand marketing messages are still based on rational advertising, but in order to compete for the audience's attention, emotional advertising can be used to infect consumers with emotions; because the marketing message has an impact on consumers' emotions, brands should focus on the emotional impact of the brand message content when marketing their products on social media, but brand marketing content is not only limited to sophisticated copy and images, but can also convey positive emotions and an infectious brand attitude. Emotion-focused content can arouse either positive or negative emotions. Some scholars have studied the impact of information-focused versus emotion-focused advertising on sharing and found that the latter induces more intent to share [11]. Advertisements with positive emotions evoke positive emotions in the audience, and they are more likely to retweet and share positive emotions.

While utilizing social media platforms for marketing, businesses give customers individualized information, such as pricing, product qualities, and features, to make it easier for them to find their preferred brands and items. It promotes an improvement in brand impression, fosters customer trust, and influences consumer behavior favorably.

4.2. Respecting the Bottom Line

In the face of the influencer's own disinformation (the influencer's own malicious promotion of the brand), it was shown that marketers need to pay more attention when choosing influencers whose opinions are widely trusted by their followers. Brands may determine how widely trusted an influencer's opinions are by evaluating the trustworthiness, attractiveness, or similarity of the influencer's fan base. For the brand's false communication, it was revealed that the brand and influencer should stick to the bottom line and show real and true feelings because when the bottom line is touched, it affects the brand's future development prospects and personal credibility. Consumers should have their own judgment and ideas towards the brand's marketing content, not to blindly follow and blindly believe in advertising and promotion.

Influencer marketing is becoming an integral part of social media marketing, which means promoting and selling products and services through people with large followings (influencers), so it is important for brands to allocate a certain budget as well as focus on influencers' selection. To develop a strong and long-lasting business model, platform management should also improve platform management for marketing.

4.3. Increasing Interactive Marketing

Social media marketing needs to be more interactive and connected with consumers, encouraging them to participate in the brand's marketing activities, such as brand discussions, likes, comments and retweets, which promotes the brand's image by encouraging customers to interact with it more frequently, reducing the rate of forgetting, and strengthening their knowledge of the brand's product advantages.

Of course, influencers' positive and negative comments about a brand's products are subjective suggestions, and the brand's attitude in the face of negative comments is also key to the brand's image. When faced with negative comments, it is recommended that the brand treats the consumer's suggestions with sincerity, for example, by accepting valid comments and correcting them, providing a genuine solution, etc. This will build a brand image that is responsible and listens well, while an indifferent attitude in the face of negative feedback will damage the brand's image. The content shared on social media platforms has to be tailored to the attributes of the platform itself and the content shared has to be of high quality and in line with the status of the brand.

5. Conclusion

This study discovered that SMM's reach, interactivity, and attractiveness have both favourable and unfavorable effects on brand marketing and consumer behaviour, and that SMM influences consumer behaviour both as an enabler and a hindrance. Influencer marketing, one type of SMM, has two sides to its own marketing model, and requires researchers to look at it objectively, which can help create a strong and impressive brand image.

The negative impact of SMM on brand communication is evident from the fact that SMM marketing does not only help and promote brand communication but also has the opposite effect when brands make SMM blindly and unrealistically. Firstly, more and more brands are choosing SMM for their communications, resulting in the phenomenon of advertisements cluttering, which makes it increasingly difficult for consumers to compete for attention, and therefore for SMM to be converted into consumer behaviour; secondly, the brand's choice of influencer may be profit-driven and falsely advertised, which may hinder the brand's reputation and future development. SMM may be subject to unhealthy competition from peers, and slanderous and offensive comments, perhaps leading consumers to a misunderstood image of the brand. Finally, SMM can also have a negative impact when the branded content provokes discontent or offensive feelings among consumers.

The study assesses the objective impact of SMM itself, objectively discussing the dual role of SMM on consumer behaviour and brand image and the impact of influencer marketing on brand messages or word-of-mouth, in order to present a clear and objective picture of the effects and impact of SMM. Lastly, the study's division of social media platforms, brand categories, and SMM marketing content is inadequate. Future research may examine the role of various social media platforms, brand content, and brand hierarchies when SMM has a range of impacts. It is suggested that the potential research mentioned above can be analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. In order to encourage more conversation on this area, it is crucial that future studies concentrate on both social media marketing content and the critical roles played by platforms and SMM technologies.

References

[1] Dixon S. Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027(in billions). Feb 13, 2023. Retrieved on March 10, 2023. Retrieved from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/

[2] Cheung M L, Pires G D, Rosenberger III P J, et al. Driving COBRAs: the power of social media marketing. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 2021, 39(3): 361-376.

[3] Chen H, Wang Y. Connecting or disconnecting: luxury branding on social media and affluent Chinese female consumers' interpretations. Journal of Brand Management, 2017, 24: 562-574.

[4] Bae I H, Zamrudi M F Y. CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING & EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE MORE CUSTOMERS: SELECTED RETAILER CASE STUDY. International Journal of Business & Society, 2018, 19(3).

[5] Ziyadin S, Doszhan R, Borodin A, et al. The role of social media marketing in consumer behaviour. E3S Web of Conferences. EDP Sciences, 2019, 135: 04022.

[6] Nadaraja R, Yazdanifard R. Social media marketing: advantages and disadvantages. Center of Southern New Hempshire University, 2013: 1-10.

[7] FMiller R, Lammas N. social media and its implications for viral marketing. Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal, 2010, 11(1): 1-9.

[8] Swant M. Twitter says users now trust influencers nearly as much as their friends. Retrieved from the Adweek website: http://www. adweek. com/digital/twitter-saysusers-now-trust-influencers-nearly-much-their-friends171367, 2016.

[9] Bi N C, Zhang R. "I will buy what my 'friend'recommends": the effects of parasocial relationships, influencer credibility and self-esteem on purchase intentions. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 2022.

[10] Barreda A A, Nusair K, Wang Y, et al. The impact of social media activities on brand image and emotional attachment: a case in the travel context. Journal of hospitality and tourism technology, 2020, 11(1): 109-135.

[11] Akpinar E, Berger J. Valuable virality. Journal of Marketing Research, 2017, 54(2): 318-330.