



The Influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Purchase Intention: A Study of the E-Commerce Industry

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Abstract

This paper sought to examine the impact of perceived Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) on customer purchase intention via brand awareness in an online context. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 188 samples. The data were analyzed using the structural equation modeling approach, and the research hypotheses were examined using SEM. The study measured SMMAs through personalization, customer community, and live video. The results revealed that SMMAs were insignificant towards brand awareness and purchase intention. The result also stated that brand awareness does not mediate the relationship between SMMA and purchase intention. However, brand awareness was found to affect purchase intention positively. The current study introduces the stimulus–organism–response model as a theoretical support to examine SMMAs of e-commerce to customers' purchase intention via brand awareness.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness.

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Introduction

Social media marketing is a subcategory of digital marketing that utilizes multiple prominent social media platforms to achieve branding and marketing-related objectives (Appel et al., 2020). Social media platforms have various options for exchanging information and forming business connections. Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs), on the other hand, are a marketing solution that use many social media networks to attract more business customers. Many people believe that social networking is simple and easy to use, but it is not always the case. It is not about uploading something new daily, as many think. They believe it is about hipness and making the most of those superficial metrics. The reality is that many people have no clue what they're doing. As a result of tough competition, businesses are now required to accord their social media strategy a high level of importance to remain competitive. However, it is not as easy as it seems from the success story of industry players (Oberoi et al., 2017). Building brand awareness is a complex process that requires the constant upkeep of a company page, adding photos, videos, and stories about the company, and responding to comments from potential customers (Li et al., 2021).

Most people who sell their businesses on social media and business owners know that developing consistently engaging material is not always easy (Marchand et al., 2021). This is especially true if sellers are forced to post once daily to keep up with the competition and engage with the people they are trying to reach. Customers are getting more complicated and highly demanding. Past research revealed that customers in the 21st century differ from those of past generations (Wang & Gao, 2019). They are fond of using digital media platforms in their daily matters (Odeh & Tareq, 2021). In addition, the number of people who own mobile devices is increasing alarmingly. Hence, this demonstrates that by utilizing appropriate techniques, businesses can access millions of prospective clients who are actively engaged on these sites.

Literature Review

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention, also known as buyer intent, is the degree to which a consumer intends to acquire a product or service from a seller within a specified time frame (Majeed et al., 2021). Their purchase intention denotes the propensity of a buyer to buy a product (Renu et al.,

2020). Purchase intention has often been employed as a predictor of consumers' future shopping behavior when evaluating customers' buying behavior (Savitri et al., 2021). Purchase intention is commonly used to measure consumers' current shopping behavior. The consumers' objective preference for a particular product or brand can be described as their intention to acquire that product or brand (Gupta et al., 2021).

In certain research, purchase intention to acquire a product is measured by the time between awareness. Hence, it might be challenging to determine and keep track of whether a certain action (such as a purchase or a referral) took place in empirical investigations (Dalangin et al., 2021). When consumers purchase goods, they hunt for information pertinent to their needs based on previous encounters and the world around them (Reviglio & Agosti, 2020). After acquiring a given amount of information, consumers examine, consider, and compare products, ultimately leading to their purchasing behavior.

Purchase intention, which measures a consumer's subjective desire for a certain brand or item, is usually used to measure the consumer's behavioral intentions (Savitri et al., 2021). The possibility that a consumer will buy a particular product is known as a consumer's willingness to acquire that product; a greater willingness to purchase is equivalent to a higher purchase probability (Aji et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that a consumer's desire to make a purchase can be a critical indicator of the consumer's actual behavior and subjective tendency to make purchases (Pauliene & Sedneva, 2019). Therefore, this study looked at how social media marketing activities affected people's propensity to purchase intention. Every marketing activity will always revolve around whether customers will be interested in buying the product or not (Onofrei et al., 2022).

Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is the process by which a business advertises its goods and services through social media sites and applications. Businesses of all sizes can benefit from social media marketing to reach new potential audiences or customers (Li et al., 2021). There are many advantages to social media marketing, and social media may be a gold mine for finding new leads and customers (Wibowo et al., 2021). In addition to marketing goals, social media allows sellers to communicate with customers or audiences in ways that are not as readily available through traditional channels (Li et al., 2021). However, the performance is unpredictable or rather difficult to predict due to its inherent variability (Felix et al., 2017).

Social media marketing, at the same time, also refers to a style of marketing centered on the internet and tries to achieve marketing targets through social media available on various platforms (Dubbelink et al., 2021). When a company uses social media to run its operations, it encourages more interaction with customers. It raises their interest in buying the seller's products.

Personalization

One of the most effective methods to grow one's customer base and strengthen one's connection with existing customers is to provide them with a more personalized experience (Oberoi et al., 2017). This can be accomplished by learning customers' preferences through questionnaires, displaying only those products pertinent to certain customers, tracking customers through emails, and directing them to land on messages when they search for a particular product (Irshad & Ahmad, 2019).

Personalization offers a big opportunity for brands that are developing content relevant to the audience they are trying to reach to do so successfully (Aydin, 2018). On the other hand, individualism is sometimes misconstrued and regarded as a silver bullet by some people (Lin et al., 2017).

According to Neal & Lyons (2021), relevancy is the most important factor. There is a correlation between more pertinent communication to the circumstance and an increased possibility of a reaction. On the other hand, although thousands of personalized content are exposed online (Winter et al., 2021), most of the time the audience will ignore the vast majority of it and will not even bother to click on it.

Nowadays, it takes more than just relevancy to stand out in the digital age. To turn relevancy into compulsion, sellers need the capacity to divert attention away from the power that is creating things (Chen & Lin, 2019). A unique transformation is created when data and creativity are joined, and personalization is a good way to grab someone's attention and keep it (Paatelainen et al., 2021). In contrast, the online content featured in individualized app experience is more overt, emotionless, and computer-generated. Specifically, this disparity can be observed in the different approaches of businesses to the creative process (Metz et al., 2019).

According to Oberoi et al. (2017), experiences centered on the customer and driving engagement and conversion are the products of brands that place a high value on creativity and combine creative thinking with the analytical use of data and media to produce those experiences. The most effective way of thinking about engagement is not to approach it with a mentality of running a campaign but rather with an approach that is more long-term and creatively driven by interactions (McGregor, 2018). The processes used need to be extremely flexible, quick, and open to scrutiny (Mukherjee, 2020). The teams representing the customers and the content creators must work together as a unified and empathic entity.

Customer Community

Customer brand communities are groups of people who share an affinity for a certain brand and its associated products and values (Touni et al., 2020). People who follow the brand on

social media interact with the posts, spread the updates, and appreciate that sellers are part of the brand's community.

It was reported that some of the initial online communities were established by brands within social media platforms. The key to building a strong online community is still providing opportunities for members to interact with one another (Cao et al., 2021). As a result, building a presence online is crucial to attract a loyal following for any given brand. For this reason, social media, websites, and online forums all fall within this category.

Marketing using social media platforms is rapidly becoming one of the most efficient methods for reaching clients through the communication channels they are most familiar with (Chi et al., 2022). There are so many widely used social media platforms that it can be difficult for sellers to determine the most effective communication with their target audiences. Some may claim that a strong community strengthens a seller and that having devoted customers is the most effective way to market a brand. This may be both a continuous process and an endless loop. Sellers will have an easier time building a solid community around their brand if the brand image is crystal clear, and the members of their community will help further enhance the brand.

An online community for a certain brand brings together all of the seller's devoted customers. These customers have a platform to communicate with one another and the business through brand communities, which the brand provides. Brand communities can also take the form of anything from a Facebook group to a discussion forum hosted on the brand's website. A brand community might also consider interactive loyalty or rewards programmes that provide a platform for customers to engage in conversation with one another (Tran et al., 2022). With the correct strategies, time, and effort, sellers can build a thriving online community for their powerful and successful products (Yasin et al., 2020).

Brands have a unique opportunity to engage with the customers most loyal to them when they participate in brand communities. This helps the seller to retain customers and creates loyalty for the brand, which benefits the business. Customers who feel emotionally connected to a certain brand will most likely develop a community around that brand (Islam & Rahman, 2017). They use the products, follow on social media, interact with branded content, and spread the word about the products to their peers.

It is not sufficient for the success of a business to monitor its number of followers on various social media platforms. Businesses must establish communities for prospective and current customers to raise brand awareness, increase purchase intentions, and win customers' loyalty. Customers can better engage with businesses, address problems they've had with products and services, and share their ideas and preferences with the help of these online communities (Niedermeier et al., 2019). In general, businesses can better serve their customers' needs directly from the feedback received through online forums.

The power of social media lies in its ability to captivate its users. It serves as a growth engine for a robust community surrounding a brand. Businesses must maintain a presence on social media for them to take part in the discussions that are taking place on each platform and for them to acquire new members for their community (Carlson et al., 2021).

One of the most important tenets of branding is that a firm's brand should accurately reflect the organization. Therefore, the value of a brand is a function of both the company that produces it and the community that grows around it; consequently, building a strong brand community can provide substantial benefits for a corporation operating in the digital domain (Touni et al., 2020).

Live Video Streaming

Recent developments suggest that live video marketing is the new approach, and its effectiveness is expected to increase (Heo et al., 2020). Video content marketing is currently the single most essential content marketing technique. The use of video content has fundamentally changed marketing strategies across all platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube (Gilbert, 2019). Video has evolved from a unique marketing strategy to a comprehensive company approach thanks to the proliferation of video advertising (Zhang et al., 2020). One of the most effective ways to raise brand awareness at the top of a marketing funnel is via video. Several studies have found that after seeing an explainer video, most customers buy the marketed service or goods (Wang & Chou, 2020).

Businesses can establish a direct connection with their customers and assist them in better understanding the business by publishing live streams related to it (Ram & Xu, 2019). Businesses must emphasize creating content to which customers can relate, become involved, and be inspired (Hu et al., 2017). Customers anticipate viewing the live video at every stage of the evaluation process. Forward-thinking businesses are discovering new applications for marketing software applications such as LinkedIn Live, Facebook Live, and YouTube to keep up with the ever-increasing demand. A live video strategy can engage viewers in fundamental and genuine ways that are not possible with other formats of social media (Payne et al., 2017).

According to Agustina (2018), customers anticipate viewing the live video at every stage of the evaluation process. Customers can understand the product or service quickly. Videos are often brief, simple to comprehend, and pleasant to watch for the most part. Due to its immediate engagement and the ease with which it can be accessible, video is the greatest option for any organization that wants to educate its customers or exhibit its brand potential to its target audience (Zhao et al., 2021). This is because video can do all of these things simultaneously. Customers are attracted, and as a result, sales go up, and consumer satisfaction goes up.

Viewers and potential buyers can be given a solid sense of confidence in a video's authenticity. Since many customers are wary of making purchases online, videos help purchasers feel more comfortable taking the next step in the buying process (Sun et al., 2021). Customers will have a stronger perception of the physical existence of the business after watching a video advertisement, which is a significant leverage that can help the seller win them over. After getting a viewer's attention, it is important to keep that focus throughout the delivery of the seller's message (Shang et al., 2022). Therefore, crafting a cleverly structured presentation to lure visitors into your marketing and sales funnel is essential.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is a social media indicator that measures the likelihood that individuals are familiar with a brand (Lee et al., 2019). Tracking the amount of attention a brand receives online through mentions and engagement can accurately measure brand awareness for any period (Chakraborty, 2019). Brands continue to find success in marketing their products and services with the help of social media. However, over half of the marketers believe that developing a social media strategy compatible with their organization's objectives is their most difficult challenge.

Brand awareness refers to the degree to which an audience segment is already familiar with a product or service and can identify it just by hearing its name. Therefore, a strong marketing strategy focusing on increasing brand recognition is the single most helpful thing sellers can do to promote their brand (Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016).

There may be no clear definition for "brand awareness," but since there is no "one size fits all" solution, there are numerous distinct meanings. Regardless, marketing that focuses on increasing brand awareness is necessary for making a brand popular. This is how it operates and the reason why it is so important.

Branding has become such a buzzword. The concept of branding can be broken down into its parts: (1) everything people encounter about a brand in public, (2) everything that makes them want to conduct business with the brand, (3) Individuals' desire to purchase a product or use a service (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020).

During challenging circumstances, such as economic recession, branding is even more important than usual. In these difficult times, inflation drives up the cost of maintaining one's standard of life. Social media is essential to increase brand awareness successfully; however, to do so, it is necessary to have a solid comprehension of the potential and target audience (Du et al., 2020). This gives the ability to provide relevant content, which should not be just centered on making sales but provide the appropriate customer support level (Mujica-Luna et al., 2021).

A business must put in the effort to increase brand awareness on its chosen social media platform. However, because there are so many different alternatives, it can be difficult to determine how to improve brand exposure using social media. When it comes to increasing people's awareness of a brand via social media channels, sellers need to generate material that is not only authentic but also high quality and engaging (Foroudi, 2019). Besides providing something valuable to the audience, the content should be relevant to that audience. In addition, its writing and presentation should be of high quality.

Content creation is only half the battle that will need to be fought to improve brand awareness on social media channels. Developing a brand marketing plan and putting that strategy into action to achieve marketing objectives is the most crucial aspect of any business's effort to increase brand awareness (Ilyas et al., 2020). A marketing team should continuously use the valuable insights gained from each post to monitor the amount of buzz generated by each article and change the plan as required.

It is also important for the sellers to encourage their audience to share their material on social media to spread the message to a larger audience and raise brand awareness (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). It is expected that the number of sales will increase for goods and services that continue to retain a high level of brand recognition. Even more importantly, the popularity of a brand serves to ingrain the brand into consumers' purchasing habits and lifestyles.

Methodology

This research was carried out in Malaysia. A questionnaire was the tool used to collect information from respondents. Respondents were screened using two questions in the questionnaire to determine their eligibility for the study using the purposive sample method. The questions focused on whether or not they follow the social media page of a brand on any platform and whether or not they shop online. The survey invites were sent out through email to students attending a private university. The respondents were not offered any monetary compensation for their participation. Students in colleges and universities are a good choice for a target sample because they are engaged members of social media and frequent purchasers of goods online.

The questionnaire contained three sections all: introduction and screening questions, construct-related questions, and demographic questions. Both the research objectives and the facts on data privacy were discussed. The demographic questions asked respondents about their gender, age, and the things they most frequently purchase. The questionnaire was filled out by 201 participants, with 188 providing usable responses. In total, there were 90 female responses and 98 male respondents. The average age of the respondents was 22.4 years.

Measures

The items in the questionnaire were established from previous research. A Likert scale, with five points each, was used to record the responses (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). SMMA (8 items) was modeled as a higher-order (reflective-reflective) construct for personalization, customer community, and live video. Brand awareness (5 items) and purchase intentions (2 items) were also included as part of the hypotheses.

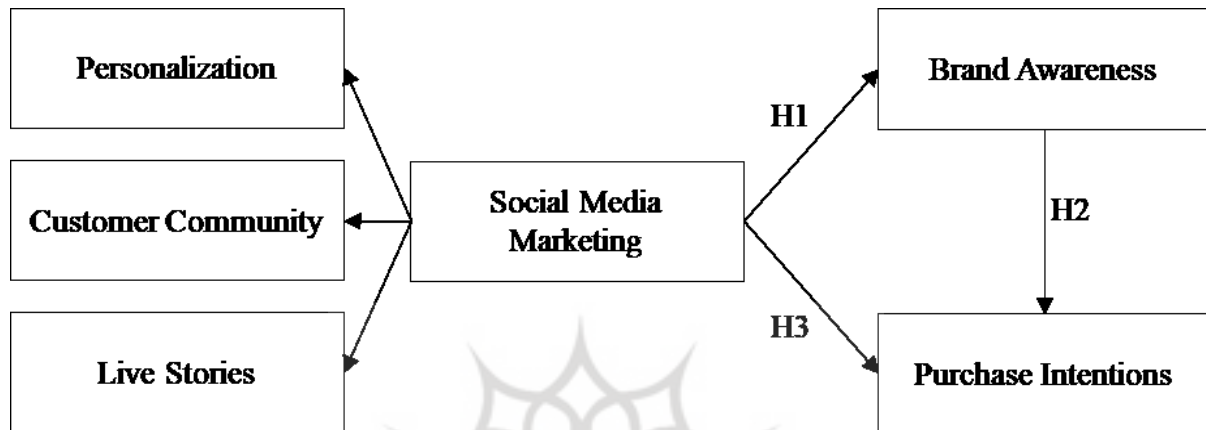


Figure 1. Research Figure

Results

SmartPLS v.3.2.7 was utilized to carry out partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM is an excellent method for analyzing data sets with small sample sizes. PLS-SEM was chosen because it was deemed appropriate due to the sample size of just 188, non-normal data, and a higher-order independent variable (Hair et al., 2019). To evaluate both the measurement and the structural model, the 5,000 bootstrap method advocated by Hair et al. (2016) was utilized. The scores of the latent variables from the first-order model were collected and applied to the second-order construct. The loading for every single item was determined by the score of the corresponding latent variable.

Table 1. Construct Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Awareness	0.895	0.923	0.706
Customer Community ^a	0.784	0.870	0.691
Live Video ^a	0.795	0.904	0.824
Personalization ^a	0.872	0.921	0.795
Purchase Intentions	0.607	0.832	0.714
SMMA ^b	0.706	0.821	0.711

Note (s): ^a first-order construct, ^b Second order construct

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model showed that all the item loadings were adequate (> 0.784 , except for Purchase intents, which were equal to 0.607) (Table 1). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were satisfactory for both first- and second-order constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) was analyzed to verify the convergent validity of the constructs. The results showed that all scores exceeded 0.691, which is more than the suggested level (0.50). The Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was applied. The results showed discriminant validity for both first- and second-order notions (Hair et al., 2016). The validity of the discriminant analysis was also demonstrated by a more conservative HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio. There was not a single HTMT value of a first- or second-order construct over the 0.90 threshold (Hair et al., 2016).

Structural Model Assessment

R², the coefficient, p-values, and t-values were displayed in the structural model shown in Figure 2. R² demonstrated the capability of the conceptual model used in this investigation to explain the data. The model explained 19.6% of the variance in brand awareness and 36.1% in purchase intentions, which is higher than the recommended benchmark ($R^2 > 0.10$). (Chin, 1998). The result does not support H1 because the impact of SMMA on brand awareness was positive but insignificant ($\beta = 0.443$, t-value 1.023, $p > 0.05$). The effect of brand awareness on purchase intentions was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.557$, t-value = 5.096, $p < 0.05$), supporting H2. While exploring the mediating role, brand awareness does not mediate the relationship between SMMA and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.246$, t-value = 1.021, $p > 0.05$).

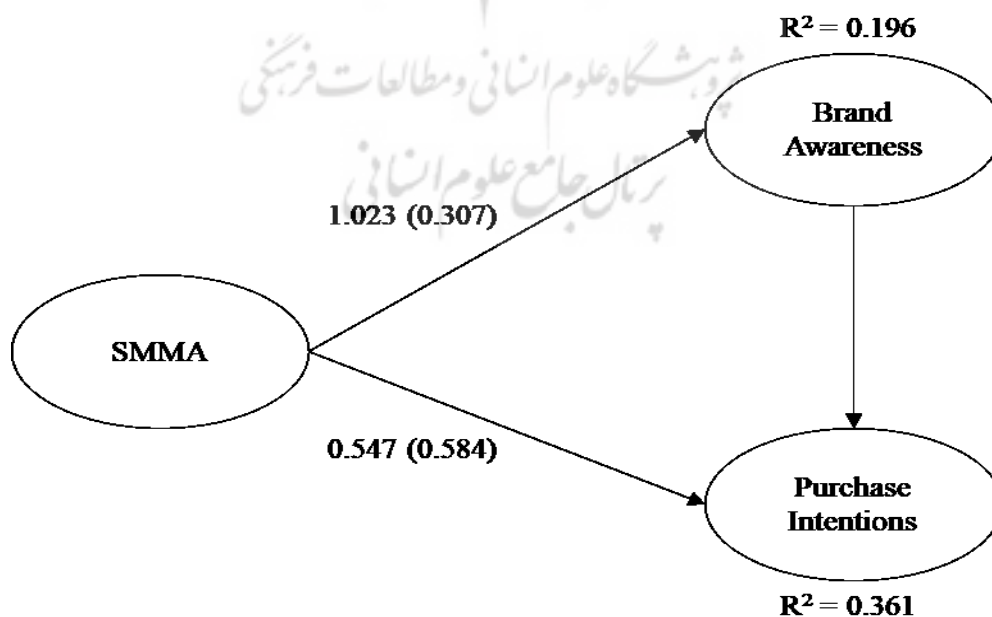


Figure 2. Research model with results

Conclusion

The result revealed that brand awareness is important for purchase intention. Brand awareness plays a positive role among the customers to drive their interest, desire, and action towards the purchase decision. There is no doubt that the role of brand awareness remains imperative in the marketing industry. Despite the changes in customers' behaviors, buying patterns, purchase trends, and purchase attitudes, the role of brand awareness remains primordial. Brand awareness and its functions can be concluded as being essential and therefore must be given priority by any single entrepreneur, marketer, or solopreneurs with the sales intention of their products or services.

SMMA was not found to be significant towards brand awareness and purchase intentions. The result could vary from any other past research. It is important to realize that SMMA is a new marketing platform and must be done with knowledge and skills. SMMA is not only about posting but must be done correctly. Implementation of SMMA shall be made by only looking at the success of specific brands in the market. It should go beyond the set-up of the teams that may consist of a group of people with creative thinking, technology savvy, and market senses.

SMMA should be done with knowledge. Some level of scientific methods should be applied. Understanding basic information such as what shall work and what shall not or what things should or should not be posted is among the basic rules underpinning the SMMA. In addition, an expert in SMAA knows the best time and the storytelling tone that may attract attention. The success of SMMA is not just referring to the amount of effort but the accuracy of identifying and implementing the activities on the relevant target market and segments. It can be concluded that SMMA is just a new and modern marketing method. Still, the basic knowledge of principle marketing should always be the pillar of all efforts to ensure success and effectiveness.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and, or falsification, double publication and, or submission, and redundancy have been completely witnessed by the authors.

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