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“The Role of Digital and Social Media Marketing In Consumer Behaviour”

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Abstract

Using the internet, social media, mobile apps, and other digital communication technologies has become part of billions of people's daily lives. For instance, the current rate of internet use among American adults is about 87% and is closer to 100% for demographic groups such as college-educated and higher-income adults [1]. Younger people — the next generation of mass consumers — have similarly high levels [2]. People also spend increasing time online. For example, in the UK, over the last decade the number of hours spent online by adults has more than doubled, and now averages 20.5 hours per week [3]. Social media has fueled part of this growth: worldwide there are now more than 2 billion people using social media [4], and Facebook alone now has approximately 1 billion active users per day [5].

Clearly, people are exposing themselves to more and more digital and social media. This is for many purposes, including in their roles as consumers as they search for information about products, purchase and consume them, and communicate with others about their experiences. Marketers have responded to this fundamental shift by increasing their use of digital marketing channels. In fact, by 2017 approximately one-third of global advertising spending is forecast to be in digital channels [6]. Thus, future consumer marketing will largely be carried out in digital settings, particularly social media and mobile. It is therefore necessary for consumer research to examine and understand consumer behavior in digital environments. This has been happening over the last decade, with increasing amounts of research focusing on digital consumer behavior issues. The literature is still relatively nascent, however, and more research is of course needed — particularly given the ever-changing nature of the digital/social media/mobile environments in which consumers are situated and interact with brands and each other. This article attempts to take stock of very recent developments on these issues in the consumer behavior/psychology literature, and in doing so hopes to spur new, relevant research.

This review is based on articles published in between January 2013 and September 2015 in the four leading consumer research journals: Journal of Consumer Research (JCR), Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP), Journal of Marketing (JM), and Journal of Marketing Research (JMR). Articles related to digital marketing, social media, and online word of mouth are featured in this review. In total, 29 articles were published on these topics in the consumer behavior literature in the last few years, suggesting that this is an increasingly popular domain within consumer research. In addition to these articles, there were three review articles worth mentioning: (i) Berger's review of word-of-mouth and interpersonal communication research [7], (ii) You et al.'s meta-analysis of online word-of-mouth effects [8], and (iii) Yadav and Pavlou's review of marketing in computer-mediated environments [9].

RESEARCH THEMES AND FINDINGS

Five distinct research themes are covered by the recent consumer research on digital marketing and social media

The five themes are

- ✓ Consumer Digital Culture
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Impacts Of Digital Environments
- ✓ Mobile
- ✓ Online Wom and Reviews.

The most popular themes were online WOM, which was covered by almost half of the articles, and advertising, represented by slightly over one-quarter of the articles.

- ✓ Consumer Digital Culture

Consumer culture goes far beyond the consumption of material products as it encapsulates the practices, identities and symbolic meanings embedded within people's daily lives, constituted by the individual and collective perceptions and lived experiences of the consumption. Consumer culture denotes the social arrangement defined by the interrelationship between a community's lived experiences and their material surroundings mediated through marketplace interactions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). In

- ✓ Advertising

Consumer behavior refers to how a customer interacts with your brand either before or after making a purchase decision. Consumer behavior is how someone acts or feels after watching an advertisement.

Although different customer demographics respond to advertisements differently, they generally behave the same way towards the brand after seeing the advertisement. It mostly depends on the structure, message, and branding that a company uses in the advertisement. It's critical to comprehend how people make purchases. You can create advertisements using the direction given by their behavior.

Digital advertising is a major topic in the marketing literature and, with respect to consumer behavior, considers how consumers respond to various aspects of digital ads. A number of recent articles considered behavioral aspects of digital advertising from various perspectives. One interesting perspective taken in a few articles [13– 15] was based around how to overcome (assumed) psychological reactance due to personalization of digital ad targeting. Schumann *et al.* [13] considered how negative reactions to personalization could be overcome with normative reciprocity appeals (instead of utility appeals).

Lambrecht and Tucker [14**] studied ad retargeting, which is when personalized recommendations based on prior web-browsing history are made when a consumer returns to a website. Negative responses to retargeting are found, but this is mitigated when consumers' preferences have become more refined. Tucker [15**] found that personalized website ads are more favorably received when consumers have a higher perception of being in

- ✓ Impacts of digital environments

A still-emerging theme in recent years is how digital/ social media environments impact consumer behavior [21–23]. The consequences can be thought of as environment-integral (i.e., digital environments influence behavior in those environments) or environment-incident (i.e., digital environments influence behavior in other, unrelated environments). It is interesting to see how the various informational and social characteristics of digital/social environments, such as being exposed to other consumers' opinions (e.g., reviews) or choices (e.g., bids in online auctions), or even just to friends' lives through social media, can impact subsequent behaviors.

For instance, with respect to environment-integral consequences, Lamberton et al. [21] and Norton et al. [22] considered learning from others in digital environments and identified how such observations can affect individuals' decisions in those environments as well as the inferences they make about strangers. Adopting a different perspective, Wilcox and Stephen [23] examined an environment-incidental response with respect to how using Facebook affected self-control. They found that when exposed to closer friends on Facebook, consumers

subsequently exhibited lower self-control in choices related, for example, healthy behaviors (e.g., choosing a healthier snack over an unhealthy option). This was only for people who were exposed to closer friends on Facebook, however.

✓ Mobile

Consumer behavior in mobile settings is increasingly important, as consumers use mobile devices more frequently. This is particularly interesting in shopping contexts. In an in-store shopping setting, Hui et al.

[24] studied how consumers respond to mobile offers when in physical stores, by seeing how mobile coupons can change paths consumers take. In an online shopping setting, Brasel and Gips [25] focused on shopping on mobile devices (e.g., tablets) and specifically on how touching products (instead of clicking with a mouse) can increase feelings of psychological ownership and endowment. This is an interesting contribution because work on how consumers physically interface with mobile devices and how that influences

decision making is scant but, as this article showed, important. Unrelated to shopping, is work by Bart et al. [26] that considered how mobile display ads — which are very small and carry very little (if any) information — influence consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions. They found that in many product categories mobile display ads have no effect, but that they do lift attitudes and intentions for high-involvement, utilitarian products.

✓ Online WOM and reviews

This was the most-represented topic across all articles in this review, which is unsurprising given the reliance consumers seem to have on socially sourced online information. A number of subthemes were covered recently. First, an interesting set of articles considered linguistic properties of online WOM and/or reviews [27,28,29,30,31,32,33], generally showing how perceptions of reviews and therefore how influential they are can depend on subtle language-based properties. For instance, Kronrod and Danziger [27] showed that figurative language in online reviews positively affected consumer attitudes and choice for hedonic goods. Moore [28] considered explanatory language in online reviews, finding that whether consumers explained actions or reactions affected perceived review helpfulness. Hamilton et al. [29] considered negative WOM, finding that using softening language when conveying negative opinions increases perceived reviewer credibility and likability. Tang et al. [30] considered two kinds of neutral language, mixed (positive and negative) versus indifferent, showing that neutral WOM strengthens the direct effects of positive and negative WOM on purchasing if it is mixed. Ludwig et al. [31] studied affective language in reviews and if a review's linguistic style is consistent with the typical linguistic style used for that product group, finding that positive affect increases conversions (but at a diminishing rate), negative affect decreases conversions, and congruent linguistic styles are beneficial. Chen and Lurie [32] examined temporal contiguity language in online reviews (i.e., reviewers indicating

Recommendations for future research

The digital/social media consumer behavior literature is fast-growing and largely focuses on phenomena that are practically relevant and theoretically interesting. Researchers have mostly considered how consumers use information (e.g., online WOM, reviews) available to them in digital/social media environments. Future research should continue this approach, although in a more expanded fashion. Consumers' behaviors other than those related to online WOM/reviews should be considered, and other types of information found (and inferences made) in online

References and recommended reading

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