

# Social Media and its Impression on Consumers Behavior during Their Decision-Making Process

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## Abstract

On a daily basis, 100,000 tweets are sent, 684,478 pieces of content are shared on Facebook, 2 million search inquiries made on Google, 48 hours of video uploaded to YouTube, 3,600 photos shared on Instagram, and 571 websites created. The appearance of social media has created a new aspect which puts a new grid of personal communication. Businesses see great chances, whereas consumers are set back to the center in the business world because of the social media. There are many studies explaining reasons to take advantage of the social media and to help companies to gain a better status in the changeover. Often, consumers feel different from what marketers think, for instance what “brand connection” via social media looks like to consumers may not be fairly what marketers think. The objective of this research is to clarify why, when and how the social media impacts consumer decision process, and explains how individuals are attending, processing, and selecting the information on social media before a purchase. The results indicate that individuals are actively involved in the search for information on social media compared with the mass media; yet exposure to information is selective and subjective when searching for information. The inquisitive part of the research attempts to provide vision to any organization trying to move to or is currently contributing in the new marketing trend.

**Keywords:** Social Media; Consumer Behavior; Marketing; Decision Making Process.

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## **1. Introduction**

Traditional marketing is not dying – it's dead!" [17]. "Traditional advertising as we know it is over dead, most marketers do not realize it, and the technology has given a lot," says Sergio Zynman [17], former chief marketing officer of Coca Cola. Of people and choices more than in the past, has created a consumer democracy where people around the world are constantly using social networking platforms to seek and share information from consumer products to organize political movements. The emergence of web 2.0 (Online Technology) is one of the most dramatic developments in the history of commerce. Social media, and other buzz words that came along with, is a web 2.0 based evolution, where they not only encourage the user-generated content, but also extend the focus on users by allowing them to view the contents and sharing them among networks. Over the last decade, this special technical uprising has revolutionized the traditional marketing methods and brought professionals to a new era. In the new marketing era, social media is likely to transform the relationships of marketers with the sellers, distribution channels, end consumers, and others. It is the information age, flooding consumers with huge amounts of information on a minute to minute basis. Based on [10] it has been discovered that when companies do their business and cooperate with individuals, they generate a remarkable amount of digital consumer data. Social networking sites, smart phones and other consumer devices have allowed billions of people worldwide to contribute to the huge amount of data available. By considering the sheer volume of social media campaigns, e-commerce sites, sales, emails, and opportunities. It seems that companies of all sizes have been translating their marketing approaches to the internet accessibility, the target audience, and the money required to do so. In comparison, the traditional advertising approach of mass media communication, for instance, newspaper, magazines, and television, aims at carrying messages to a wider group of audience in the hope of reaching the few interested ones.

With more motivation, individuals are more careful and skillful in allocating attention to information. Therefore, it is necessary for marketers to find the reasons that speak to particular customers concerned and to seek ways to talk to customers in small communities. Nowadays, and through social media, marketing is an alternative view of communication; yet the most influential application of social technologies in the global economy are largely untapped.

Social media enables consumers to return to the center of the business world and marketers provide a new set of tools to interact with consumers and incorporate them into brands through innovative ways. Therefore, marketers should understand how social media influenced consumer buying behavior.

### ***1.1 Objectives of the research***

Consumers and companies around the world have been more closely connected than ever. Average internet users have 669 social relationships [22]. Facebook has more than 600 million active users per day, with more than 1.5 million business pages (Facebook 2013), 30 billion pieces of content shared on a monthly basis [21].

Nearly 500 million Tweets sent per day, at about 600 Tweets per second (Tweeter 2012). LinkedIn has more than 225 million professionals worldwide, including all Fortune 500 companies (LinkedIn 2013). The average

time spent per person on social networking sites is 6.9 hours per monthly [20]. There have been many changes in consumer behavior because social media is one of the most motivating features of modern marketing. Recognizing that consumer behavior is quite general and wide topic, it will be difficult for the researcher to collect, examine and complete all the necessary data and results in a single research.

Thus, the aim of this research is to explain why, when, and how social media influenced consumer decision making. Besides, with this viewpoint we could identify what opportunities and difficulties companies face with this impact on consumer decisions in order to capture and embrace the possibilities in the new marketing era.

## ***1.2 Problem Statement***

According to [18], the growth of social media has provided many electronic activities for consumers such as blogging, chatting, gaming and messaging. Social networks on the internet are a good platform for consumers to gather information and advice, and rapid growth of social media and social networking sites, especially, in developing country is providing marketer a new opportunity to connect with customers [18].

The development of communications in today's world has been reflected in the area of advertising and websites, including social media that has spread rapidly with remarkable speed and began to clear affected society and behavior [18]. Reference [26] speak out that social media is widely used in the source of information for perceived comfort, effectiveness, and perceived credibility. However, the tendency to share experiences after purchase is surprisingly low. Chishman and his colleagues (2008) suggests that the emergence of social media on the internet affects people in different ways, so the problem statement herewith covers the impact of social media on consumer-making decision lack of information, noting that the social media has created a new platform to provide social and viral capabilities to consumers by increasing their participation and interaction on the web. A plethora of communication channel level has been created, thus consumers are affected, independently, and with less corporate dominance.

The most evasive consumer segment and the most interesting to study, safe to say, is the segment of university students, they are the generation Y who are pre-occupied with technology, adopting it as a second nature to them, sharing knowledge among them and, in return, this knowledge affects others' opinions and buying decision making. University students in Lebanon are no different.

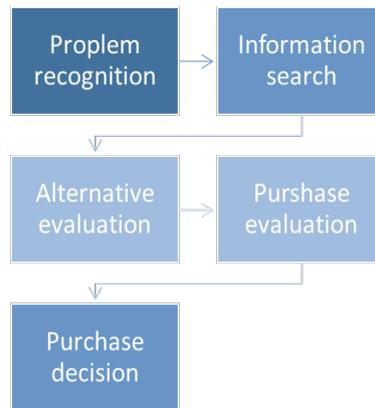
## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 The process that shapes the consumer's purchasing decision making***

Today, access to and transparency of information has had a profound impact on decision- making, so it is important to examine what the obstacles and fictional points are, those that prevent consumers from becoming consumers unenthusiastic to repurchase [13].

Hoyer, and MacInnis, clarified that 'the process that shaped the consumer's purchasing decisions, involves four stages: problem (need) recognition, information search, decisions making, and Post purchase evaluation, the

second stage can be divided in two parts, 'information search' and 'evaluation of alternatives'.



**Figure 1:** The 5-Stage Decision Making Model.

## ***2.2 Problem Recognition***

Recognizing the problem is the first step in the process of making decisions for consumers that may occur because the consumer has a desire for something new [8]. Consumers' purchasing decisions start with the result of problems or a single problem. There are those decisions which simply are recognized, defined, and solved but there are other factors as well which might be indistinct to capture. [6] confirm that there are various factors that influence the recognition of the problem, such as social factors, cultural factors, reference groups and environmental factors.

## ***2.3 Information search***

Once the problem is recognized, consumers begin to search for relevant information through internal and external information search. Internal research includes consumer memory about products, and includes external search of word of mouth, visit stores, trial and social networks over the internet and social media [4]. Social media provides an information display where consumers can get information from their friends, but also from brands about products and services through the pages they like on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter [7], they also argue that consumers are information search stage undertake an internal and external search. This means that consumers who seek information about products, services or brands can use social media platforms and tools to understand or request information from their friends. Social media has a great impact on consumers specially when they are purchasing a product for the first time or when the product is luxurious because these factors tend to make consumers behavior more research and search for [10]. Today, online environments are actively involved in the process of making additional purchase decisions and the internet has become an important tool for information search [7].

## ***2.4 Evaluation of Alternative***

This is the last step in the making- decision as described by [1]. that consumers begin to compare and evaluate

many alternatives in terms of product features, their desire and their needs in this step. He describes that consumer choices are sometimes based on a simple decision such as “buying cheaper products” but there are some complex decisions made up of different processes and stages. In this stage, consumers also consider which alternative will be the best to meet their needs.

To evaluate different alternatives, consumers seek to compare products, services, or brand together to make choices that best fit their needs, consumer reviews and ratings websites, appear as a good place to get value information and allow communication with other consumers.

### **2.5 Final Decision**

Reference [9] has been suggested that in the context of the evaluation, the consumer ultimately constitute a preference between the brands in the choice desk, However, there are two factors which can interfere between the purchase intention and purchase decision – attitude of the others and unexpected decision situational factors.

The positions of others are over another negative attitude towards the preferred alternatives or to refrain from fulfilling support the intention of buying conditions, and this may lead to modifying the intention of the consumer to buy [9]. Unexpected decision situational factors indicate those that may release to change the intention of buying for example, there may be an unexpected purchase more compelling when compared to first time consumer stimulated to buy in the other words, preferences and purchase intentions cannot be served as completely reliable analysts of purchase behavior [9].

### **2.6 Post Purchase Decision**

After consumption, the consumers then test certain levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and assesses the wisdom of the choice made in choosing the alternative. The potential outcomes of this phase derive from satisfaction or dissonance. When consumer’s experience with the purchasing become counterproductive, the value of the option is reduced.” Consumers begin to search, obtain information, and evaluate other options for future purchasing decision, which lead to new behavior [12].

## **3. The Influences of social media on Decision Making Process**

Finding relevant information through internal and external information search is important, so once consumers find and evaluate their relevant alternatives, they must choose between these alternatives [6]. Consumers choose certain products because the product appeals to them. Selection can be influence by information gather from different sources, thus social media are effective tool in making- decision [4].

As the business world re-focuses on and is pleased with customer’s service, CMOs are confident that social media influences sales, brand awareness, and loyalty [24]. As a result, social media data influence their decisions with predictions or expectations. According to the social media marketing report, the world of social media is not just an innovation in which marketers are increasingly attracted, and 83% place high value on social media of their businesses [25].

As a new element social media has further complicated theory of long-term purchasing behavior. Shopping positions are not only influenced by traditional channels, but also extend to platforms online. Preference and decision-making are based on inputs provided by parties outside the control of online marketers such as reviews, referrals, blogs, social networks, and other forms of user-generated content.

Reviews and user-generated contents such as rate movies, books, music, brands and other things on social media are embrace a high degree of personal taste and personality to users, in which these reviews have one control feature that gives their influence on consumers' purchasing decision – trust [13].

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### ***4.1 Introduction***

In recognizing the impacts of social media on consumer's decision making, the study has identified the population and the sampling design to come up with a representative sample. This part clarifies the sampling procedure, research design, data collection methods and data analysis methods that were used in this study.

In essence, the fundamental approach in this research involves the development of the theory which is subject to a strict testing, where the theoretical framework provides the basis for clarification, allows prediction of phenomena, is expected to occur, and thus allows them to be controlled. The theoretical framework of secondary data is intended to respond to research objectives and provide evidence to support secondary data. The primary data for this research were collected through questionnaires of students as consumers in Lebanese universities.

Theoretical part of the phases and components that make up the consumer decision-making process has shown a systematic approach in purchasing stages in which individuals participate in a potential market transaction before, during, and after purchase. On the other hand, it has identified the essence of social media marketing that has made it clear on the changing of today's marketing approaches and its effects on the purchasing decision.

The experimental part focuses on how University students in Lebanon handle information on social media before buying, post-consumer actions, and their view on the new marketing era, particularly with social media. By gaining a general perspective on current purchasing behavior in Lebanon, this research also aims to provide new insights into the effects of social media on different demographics (age, income, education and gender) in the decision-making process. In the Lebanon market, gender, income have little impact on whether an individual has adopted social media networking as an activity. But age and education dose remain a factor, young university students tend to be more likely to engage in social media networking overall, and adopt specific social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

##### ***4.2 Research Design***

Explaining research design as a blue print for the research process [2]. It shows exactly how the study was conducted technically, it shows how the researcher conducted sample selection, data collection tools used and research procedures among other specific tasks. On the other hand, Reference [3] identifies research design as

clearly defined structures within which a research study is carried out. This descriptive research design, which includes the study of direct exploration and the analysis and description of phenomena, has been adopted as free possible from unjustified assumptions, which aim at maximum intuitive presentations [2]. According to [11] descriptive design is used to document the phenomenon of the study and its real reality, without intervention of the researcher to identify and describe the characteristics of the study community, and their relationships.

## 5. Data Analysis

This study adopted random sampling technique to sample the university students from Lebanon County who are the target population.

The sample used for the study is made up of 300 questionnaires distributed to Lebanese university students, 289 were completed and returned representing a 97.25 % response rate. The high response rates in this study are due to the impact of social media on the decision-making process of university students in Lebanon to data collection methods used and how to manage data collection tools. Self-administrated questionnaires were distributed by the researcher for many departments of Lebanese universities.

**Table1:** Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Responded	288	96%
Not responded	12	4%
Total	300	100%

## 6. Conclusion

The research was motivated by personal attention to how consumer behavior changed in the digital age, especially with the social media the amount of information available to us increase every new day, and as a result, we are dramatically exposed to different aspects of information across the social network. The accessibility and transparency of social media has led to changes in how consumers position themselves in today's market, which are inevitable and necessary for companies to equip a new marketing approach. The central attraction of research was to explain how social media impacts consumer decision-making process, the findings led to a conclusion that there was a positive and significant relationship between recognition of the problem and the search for and the evaluation of information as key factors determining how social media affect this stage among consumers. This means that social media stimulate one to recognize the need for something before buying it. Searching for product information is easier in social media than in other mass media.

In addition, the research perhaps, can help the company to gain new insights from this perspective and identify pitfalls and potential opportunities across social media, for example to develop appropriate methods of

tabulating in the decision-making process in time or to have a better understanding of why it may not be implement their social media marketing campaigns as expected.

Therefore, social media are winding up more utilized each year by consumers and more research is expected to comprehend the impact that can have Social Media on.

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