# Examining the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intentions: Insights from Content, Influencer, and User-Generated Content Strategies

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**Abstract:**

How social media affect the customers behavior plays an essential role for enterprise who aiming to thrive in a competitive market under the rapid digital platforms development and increasing amount of time people spend online. Social media platforms are the main source of information, entertainment and interaction, as well as the significant tool of marketing and customer engagement. The article emphasizes multiple influences of social media to customer determination through analyzing content, influencer and user generated content (UGC) marketing. Content marketing involves generating valuable and pertinent information to engage and sustain a specifically targeted audience, whereas influencer marketing utilizes the influence and credibility of prominent figures to endorse products and brands. UGC, on the other hand, provides authentic, peer-driven content that resonates with potential customers. These strategies comprehensively enhance the brand reputation, emotional resonance and consumer trust to drive purchase decisions and facilitate success. The study reveals that effective social media tactics can improve customer engagement and credibility, further increase the purchase intention, and conversation. These findings underscore the importance of integrating comprehensive social media strategies into marketing plans to positively influence consumer behavior and achieve business objectives.

**Keywords:** Consumer Purchase Intention, Social Media, Content Marketing, Influencer Strategy, User-Generated Content (UGC), Brand Credibility.

## 1. Introduction

Social media platforms have become vital channels for brands to attract and build customer relationships. Customers invest time and effort to learn, share, create, consume and contribute content related to their favorite brands. This customer's engagement can reinforce brand attitude and increase brand profits and market shares [1]. Additionally, digital payments refers to the use of applications on smart devices or internet transactions for the purchase of goods and services [1]. Globally, digital payments are continuously gaining popularity, estimated marketing scale will reach US$9.42 trillion by 2025 [1]. In the context of digitalization, social media plays an essential role to enterprises and brands in marketing. The paper will discuss various social media platforms and their application in digital marketing, including content, influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC). Notably, social media platforms, such as Facebook, You-Tube, TikTok and Instagram each have their own features, attracting customers through different formats. Content marketing utilizes enterprise official accounts to attract customers through transparent content without sales intent [2, 3]. Moreover, Influencer marketing uses third-party brand ambassadors with considerable followers to affect purchase intention through authentic experience and recommendation [4]. Additionally, user-generated content (UGC) enhances product exposure and credibility through interactive sharing, thereby affecting purchase intention [1, 5, 6]. Significantly, the relationship between social media and customers' purchase decisions is explained by Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Credibility theory frameworks. According to CAT, emotional resonance triggered by social media content is a key factor influencing purchase intention [7]. Additionally, the credibility framework emphasizes the impact of the professionalism and credibility of information sources on customer trust [8]. This paper will delve into how these marketing strategies

effectively enhance brand awareness, increase user engagement, and ultimately drive the achievement of business objectives through social media platforms. By examining case studies such as Dove's social media campaigns to demonstrate the practical application and effectiveness of these strategies, providing enterprises with a practical guide in the field of digital marketing.

## 2. Types and Characteristics of Social Media Platforms

The definition of Social Media Platforms is currently diverse and dynamic, instead of defined by a single original feature of being "social". Technological advancements endowed social media platforms with abundant characteristics and functions, including blogs and microblogs (e.g., Instagram), short video platform (e.g., TikTok), virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) and other digital channels [8]. Additionally, the diversity of Social Media also is also evident in theory and conception, encompassing dialogue, engagement, identification, social presence, uses and gratifications, conversational human voice, and other elements [9]. Significantly, this paper focuses on how purchase intent of customers is affected by functional and characteristic dimensions of social media platforms.

### 2.1 Facebook

According to data aggregation company Similarweb, Facebook is the third most visited website in 2024. Facebook has become the mature communication and connection channel for most enterprises, which all attribute to its universality and expediency, as well as its commitment to fostering an inclusive community for the users [10]. Facebook possess 2.9 billion monthly active users worldwide, which attribute to its high inclusivity, catering to a wide age group, diverse post's formats, live-streaming, marketing and other functions [11].

### 2.2 YouTube

YouTube is an online video sharing platform affiliate with Google. Notably, YouTube boasts a user base of 2.68 billion active participants and 80 million subscribers to its premium service, as well as the second most extensive search engine, preceded only by Google [11]. Different from Facebook, the diversity and inclusivity of YouTube focus on content and language. According to the official announcement, YouTube provided local versions in 104 countries and recognised the country or region to tailor corresponding content and language preference, significantly promoting its globalization [12].

### 2.3 TikTok

Compared to Facebook, TikTok primarily consists of

juveniles and preteens, making its user group relatively young. For example, 32.5% of TikTok users are within the demographic cohort of 10 to 19 years old in the United States. The reason why TikTok is one of the most popular social media is because of its short, creative and attractive video formats and content. The most outstanding feature of TikTok is its short video duration. Short videos demonstrate 2.5 times greater engagement compared to long videos, and approximately 34% of consumers recognize and appreciate the authenticity inherent in short videos [11]. Additionally, TikTok's powerful features, such as Duet, Family Safety Mode and others, enhance the diversity and inclusivity of TikTok and further expand its mere sociability to commercial purpose.

### 2.4 Instagram

Instagram is a highly visual social media platform that focuses on graphs and videos [13]. However, the highlight feature of Instagram is the hashtag which gathers like-minded people in the same community. Enterprises can use hashtags to promote their brand and achieve their commercial objectives.

Overall, although most social media platforms currently involve relatively comprehensive functionalities, the different applications still maintain distinct areas of emphasis. Social media marketing leverages these special features to effectively attract and persuade customers, using tailored content and platform-specific strategies to shape customer behaviors and drive commercial success.

## 3. Social Media Marketing Strategies in Customers Decisions-Making

### 3.1 Comment Marketing

Content marketing is used as a digital marketing tool by enterprises to create, distribute and share related, attractive and timely content to attract customers while they make decisions in suitable stages, and further convert customers as business building outcomes [2]. It is vital that compared to other content types, content marketing is typically managed by the companies themselves, using official accounts on social media platforms rather than third-party agents. Content marketing concentrates on transparency, requiring the strategy to be free from overt sales messaging. Additionally, catering to distinct consumer preferences is another crucial component of content marketing [2, 3]. Content marketing is an inbound marketing tool designed to be actively sought out and engaged with by customers [3]. Therefore, content marketing is a more direct and transparent digital marketing strategy compared to traditional advertising channels. It attracts and manages customers through non-profit content, such as brand sto-

ries or public welfare and educational content, to express brand values and naturally connect with customers.

## 3.2 Digital Advertising

Digital advertising involves display, search engine and social media advertisements, all commitment to enhancing brand awareness, increasing traffic and promoting conversion. Display advertisements demonstrate in various formats, such as banners, landing pages, pop-ups and flash advertisements [14]. Display advertising is a low cost, flexible marketing channel meanwhile it can provide valuable marketing information for strategy adjustment of a company. Therefore, display advertising is vital for building a brand image due to its strengths, such as low cost communication, parallel brand digital advertisements testing and effective market-reflective outcomes [14]. Display advertisements can enhance brand awareness and attract potential customers through wide coverage and precise audience targeting, thereby influencing customers' purchase decisions. Specifically, display advertisements provide key message and visual appeal when customers are making decisions, thereby improving marketing performance and sales conversion rates. However, banner blindness negatively affects conversion rates, as customers subconsciously ignore banner advertisements, reducing their effectiveness. Thus, search engine advertising also plays an essential role, combining display advertising and other formats can enhance promotion.

Search engine channel is an effective and dominant advertising format, because it matches the customer's search matching keywords and advertising information, which means search engine advertising is an intent driving channel [15]. The ranking of brands in search engines affects long-term brand awareness and valuation, and is positively correlated [15]. Search advertising with higher rankings have greater exposure rates, which make consumers more familiar with and trust the brand, thereby increasing click rate and further enhancing purchase possibility.

Additionally, Social media channels focus on customer engagement, enabling voluntary, frequent, and real-time interaction with brands. Furthermore, the unique characteristics of entertainment, information, and promotional rewards profoundly influence customers' attitudes and behaviors [16]. Social media advertising enables advertisers to precisely identify their intended demographic by analyzing users' individualized predilections and behavioral patterns, making advertising more relevant and attractive, and reinforcing user engagement and interaction. Personalized advertising strategies can effectively affect purchase decisions, as users are more likely to respond to advertisements that closely align with their needs and interests [17].

## 3.3 Influencer Engagement Strategy

Influencer marketing represents an emergent paradigm within social media marketing that assists corporations and brands in augmenting their image. Influencer marketing is a strategy where enterprises choose and encourage influencers to attract followers on social networks, leveraging the distinctive assets and reach of these influencers to endorse products, with the objective of enhancing corporate performance. Influencers, described as emerging and independent third-party brand ambassadors, shape customer attitudes through blogs, tweets and other social media [4, 18]. They are also recognised as trustworthy trendsetters in one or more fields by building a large network of followers [4]. Significantly, customers browse social media platforms to gather multiple information before making a purchase, making influencers a major driving force in decision-making [4]. As users themselves, influencers can deliver more product information to other customers through sharing their authentic experience. Since influencers typically have vast quantities of followers, their reviews and recommendations can spread rapidly and be widely accepted. Information from influencers is considered as more authentic and trustworthy, further affecting other customers' purchase decisions [18].

## 3.4 User-Generated Content

User Generated Content (UGC) consists of reviews created and shared by users in digital format across a variety of product categories. Potential customers can explore shared content from other customers to gain more authentic and comprehensive product information, while UGC also allows users to contribute their own experiences for others' reference [1, 5, 6]. UGC enables consumers to enhance product exposure through interaction with others, improving the credibility of products thereby influencing their purchase intention [5].

## 4. Credibility of Digital Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention

Social media profoundly affects customer purchase intention in contemporary digital marketing. Customers acquire information, interact with brands, and subsequently make purchase decisions. Credibility plays a crucial role during this process, including authenticity, transparency and consistency three vital aspects. Credibility is a significant factor for consumers when making purchasing decisions on social media. Significantly, credibility consists of trustworthiness and expertise [19]. It is notable that credibility refers to the honesty and integrity of the speakers, while expertise reflects the knowledge and experience of influencers in specific fields [19]. Credibility not only influ-

ences customer attitudes toward brands, but also affects customer purchase intention. However, credibility can be divided into three components, authenticity, transparency and consistency separately, each demonstrating different functions within the relationship between social media and purchase intentions.

## 4.1 Authenticity

Authenticity is a vital element for brands and influencers to obtain trust on social media. The authenticity of brands is demonstrated through interactions with customers, including providing truthful feedback and comments [20]. Brand trust is established through direct purchase experiences; when customers trust and approve of brands, they are likely to make repeated purchases. Customers can browse comments on social media, gaining authentic feedback that promotes purchase behavior and enhances brand reputations [20]. Nonetheless, different from influencer promotion, influencers have the benefit relationship with brands, but user feedback is uncertain and subjective. Therefore, authentic feedback from users can also negatively impact decision-making. Additionally, although there is a benefit relationship between companies and influencers, authenticity still is a strength of influencer strategy, because compared with celebrity spokesperson, influencers are more close to daily life. For example, Influencers share genuine individual opinions, and they can interact with customers promptly [19]. This authentic interaction helps enterprises to enhance their credibility and attraction, thereby actively driving customer purchase intentions.

## 4.2 Transparency

Transparency is another significant component of credibility. Brands that openly share information and address customer questions and feedback demonstrate transparency. For example, brands leverage social media to disclose product ingredients or production processes, which make customers recognize the products more intuitively, thereby reducing purchase concerns and enhancing trust [20]. Furthermore, Kurniadi and Junaid also emphasize the significance of transparency, they mentioned online retailers enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty through transparent information [21]. In influencer marketing, transparency is equally crucial, particularly reflected in the honesty and integrity of influencers when promoting products. Research indicates that when influencer commercial intentions are revealed by a third party, their credibility may be compromised. Therefore, the authenticity of influencers in sharing and self-disclosure is also a crucial evaluation criterion, because influencers have uncertainty, such as their personality and experience [19].

## 4.3 Consistency

Consistency pertains to brands and influencers maintaining consistent communication and behavior across various touchpoints. Brand consistency helps to build and maintain consumer trust [20]. Significantly, enterprises should align official announcements and brand attitudes with social media posts, to further enhance customer trust [20, 22]. Additionally, ensuring coherence between information and behavior when influencers promote products can also increase customer credibility in the brand. Compared to celebrity endorsements, influencers interact with customers more closely, both in their environment and emotionally, making it easier to generate resonance [22]. Consumers are more likely to trust influencers who engage in continuous interactions and exhibit genuine emotions [22].

## 4.4 The Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT)

Having discussed how credibility, encompassing authenticity, transparency, and consistency, shapes consumer trust and purchase intention on social media, it is equally imperative to investigate the psychological mechanisms that underlie these behaviors. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) provides valuable insights into these processes. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) is commonly used to explain negative customer behavior; however, it is currently also applied to research positive customer behavior. CAT explains how individuals are affected when they confront and evaluate stressful situations and events, and how they reflect on these experiences through their behaviors to solve them [23]. A researcher argues that if content or information is novel, pleasurable, and adequate, and aligns with customers' requirements and expectations, it will generate emotional resonance, making the information easier to accept [7]. Therefore, CAT plays an essential role in the relationship between social media and customers' purchase intention. A notable example is Dove's social media campaign, which combines UGC, Key Opinion Leader (KOL), Key Content Leader (KCL) and other marketing strategies to enhance their brand awareness. A representative case is the social media campaign #ShowUs of Dove, which leverages modern social media to break stereotypes in traditional media and emphasizes female empowerment, by showcasing diverse and real female images, thereby enhancing the brand's credibility. UGC is the core tactic in this case. Dove not only enhances their brand exposure but also increases user engagement and sense of belonging, further establishing a community that supports diversity and self-confidence. Furthermore, Dove leverages KOL and KCL to promote their campaign, further expanding campaign scale. The influence and credibility of KOL and

KCL on social media help Dove establish brand recognition and an emotional connection with a broader audience. The increase in credibility is a crucial factor in the success of a social media campaign and significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, social media occupies a pivotal role in contemporary digital marketing. The effectiveness of social media in increasing brand awareness, increasing user engagement, and driving sales conversions can be demonstrated by analyzing the various features and applications of social media platforms, encompassing content marketing, influencer engagement strategies, and the incorporation of user-generated content. Distinctive characteristics inherent in various social media platforms, exemplified by Facebook's extensive reach, YouTube's multilingual support and localization, TikTok's short video appeal, and Instagram's visual impact, providing diverse marketing options. Content marketing emphasizes transparency and non-profit content for building customers trustworthy. Furthermore, influencer marketing utilizes individuals with wide influencers to affect purchase intention. Additionally, UGC enhances product credibility and customer engagement, offering potential customers genuine product insights. Social media significantly influences customer purchase intentions by providing information, facilitating interactions with brands, and helping make purchase decisions, with credibility playing a crucial role in this process. Credibility, which includes authenticity, transparency, and consistency, enhances customer trust and purchase intentions, as demonstrated by effective social media campaigns like Dove #ShowUs, which leverages UGC, KOL, and KCL to boost brand credibility and consumer engagement. Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and the credibility framework provide theoretical support, explaining how emotional resonance and information credibility influence purchase intention. Guided by these theories, enterprises can better design and implement effective social media marketing strategies. In summary, social media marketing strategies play an essential role in brand building and business success. Future research and practice should continue exploring innovative applications of these strategies to adapt to the rapidly evolving digital market environment.

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