

MKT-337

3/26/14

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Title: The Effects of Social Media on Online Consumer Behavior.

Qualitative Study

I. Introduction

Does social media have an effect on online consumer behavior? Social media is now used to market many companies, brands, and products. This study provides data that will conclude if social media has a major effect on online consumer behavior. Other studies have been done that support and look at a part of our issue. Most articles were based on consumer buying behavior dealing with online social media. Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko, and Snyder 2012 studied passive shopping and the role of social media, which they described as “ the information and advice consumers need to make a purchase comes to them unsolicited and is absorbed in the normal cause of events, this could be in the form of a comment from an acquaintance on a social media site” (Powers, 2012). David Taylor, Jeffrey Lewin, and David Strutton composed another article that supports and looks at our research topic. Their article discusses the effectiveness of online advertising regarding how often it should be presented and what kind of advertising that consumers respond positively to, which they went on further to explain, “It was found that consumers reacted most favorably to advertising which was perceived as offering entertainment or information value.”(Taylor, 2011)

The research described that information people subconsciously receive through social media advertising/promotions play a large role in the purchasing process. The other article

explained the proper formatting of advertising and how often the advertisement should appear in order to make sure customers do not get annoyed with the advertising and abandon interest in the advertisement.

The purpose of this study was to interview consumers to see what their opinions were on social media and its effect on their online shopping experiences. The study provided the researchers with a better understanding of how online consumers view and use social media.

The importance of this study for a company would be to determine whether or not social media marketing is successful for brands, products and the company's image. The research also provided information on the effects that social media has on customer loyalty and consumer relationships with companies that advertise on social media and the Internet. This study will be highly beneficial for any business looking to advertise in social media in order to penetrate their target market. The research will give the companies a better understanding of how consumers view social media advertisements and the emotions that are stimulated by the advertisements. This research will allow businesses to understand how to properly compose and place advertisements in social media in order to get optimum success. Knowing this information will save businesses a lot of money because they will not pay for advertising in social media while testing the consumer audience, which could cost a considerable amount of money, the companies will already have enough information at hand to be able to compile a successful advertising campaign in social media with confidence

II. Body

Sample Size

The main target population for our interview sample were college students from eighteen to twenty-six years of age. The researchers choose this group based on the fact that current college students tend to spend more time on social media than the older generations. The researchers also made sure that the sample was balanced in regards to gender, half the sample population was female and other half was male.

The interviews were conducted at two main locations on campus. The locations were situated at Southern New Hampshire University; the first was located in the Academic Complex in one of the conference rooms. The second location was in an unused classroom in Webster Hall. Before the interview commenced the researchers informed the participants that the interviews were voluntary, and that the interviewees could leave at any time. Once the researchers had received confirmation from the interviewees that they understood the interview was voluntary the interview started. Overall the interviews went well and all interviewees seem to understand the question with a few exceptions. The participants showed interest in the study and did not have any issues answering the questions.

In the first stage of the analysis the researchers broke down the survey by keywords. While tabulating the results of the surveys the researchers grouped similar responses, along with the more unique views. In stage two the information was placed into twelve categories that aligned with the questions on the survey. In the end the researchers narrowed the categories down to five important areas.

The first category of time, depicted how often the participants used social media and if they ever viewed the advertisements on the social media sites. The second category grouped the experiences of the users and information about the interviewees experience viewing advertisements on line, this category also including purchasing habits after viewing products on

social media advertising. The third category collected information on the interviewees experience with social media and whether the information provided on the advertisements were useful, meaningful and pertinent to the products being advertised. The fourth category looked at the behavior of the interviewees and what was the most common reaction to the advertisements and promotions offered on social media. The fifth category dealt with the main reason the interviewees used social media and the Internet.

Conclusion

III. The First category of “time” grouped interviewees by how much time the participants used social media and if they ever viewed any of the advertisements on the social media sites. The researchers found that some of the interviewees took the time to look at advertising and/or promotions on social media. The participants spent one to two hours on social media each day, the time participants spent on the Internet range from one to five hours. In the second category “experience” interviewees made comments on their experiences viewing advertisements this was complied along with information on whether the interviewees had purchased products after viewing advertisements on social media, only a few interviewees had made purchases after engaging advertising on social media. Good experiences were most likely when participants engaged with advertising that stimulated their interest or were funny. The third category collected information on the interviewee’s experiences with social media and whether the information provided on the advertisements had meaning, was useful or pertinent to the products being advertised. The researchers attempted to gather information from participants that clicked on advertisement to learn if the information gained was good or if the participants learned more about that product or service offered in the advertisements. The second part of the

questions asked if the participants thought that social media was a credible source for information. The interviewees believed that social media could be a credible source of information, they trust their friends and if a large number of people are saying that a product was not good they would not buy it. The fourth category collected information on what the participants' opinions were regarding the reactions they had to advertisements and promotions being offered on social media. The researchers found that the most common opinion and reaction that the interviewees had to social media advertising was that they found the advertising annoying and completely disregarded the advertising because they had no interest in the advertisements or the participants did not trust the advertisements. The last category obtained the main reason the participants used social media and the Internet. The interviewees stated that their main use of social media was to keep in contact with their friends and families. The participants stated that if they made a purchase of a product or service the participants would use the main website or a website that they trust instead of clicking on an advertisement and making a purchase on social media.

- IV. In conclusion the researchers have come to an agreement that based on the current sample that the research was not conclusive, the sample is relatively small and a larger sample could give different results. There was one fact that the participants agreed on, the overall behavior towards social media advertising was that the participants had no interest or they completely disregard advertising on social media and the Internet.

Appendix

References

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