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An Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Individuals' Attitudes and Perceptions at NOVA Community College

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON INDIVIDUALS'
ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS AT NOVA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Nya Gibson
B. S. December 2016, Old Dominion University

A Research Study Presented to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of
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OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

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Approved By
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ABSTRACT

Social media has become prominent in the 21st century. Companies are persistently looking for ways to utilize this new platform within their marketing strategies to increase business growth. Since social media is a networking and communication platform, it is important for companies to create a voice to humanize the business and maintain foot traffic. Although there are studies on how to use social media marketing within a business, there is minimal corroboration available of how social media marketing activities influence a consumer's buying behavior. This study investigated the effects of social media on consumer attitudes of social media marketing and purchasing behavior from the perspective of Northern Virginia (NOVA) Community College students. A survey that inquired about the perceptions toward social media marketing were given to 20 participants from Northern Virginia (NOVA) Community College.

Responses to the survey showed that 95% of the participants use social media platforms on a daily basis. The most used social media platforms are Facebook and Snapchat with 22.7% of participants having an account in these platforms, and 70% of participants indicating using more than 3 social media platforms. The results showed that 55% of the respondents say that online visibility would affect their purchase. The most important factor for a business using social media was customer engagement and the least important factor was the timing of posts. The survey also revealed that only 55% of the respondents post about products or services a business. However, 95% of the respondents believe that a business will receive better results when it comes to customer loyalty and profits if social media is integrated into marketing and 75% of the respondents believe that social media is the best way to reach a business's targeted audience. The results also suggest that people are more likely to share and experience they have had with a business rather than sharing sales or promotions a business is offering. According to the results from this study, purchasing behavior is more likely to have a positive effect for a business when using social media platforms for marketing strategies. This

conclusion emphasizes the importance of social media marketing for a positive increase in brand loyalty, brand recognition, and foot traffic.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Social media is the new communal gathering place for many Americans and others around the globe. Users rely on social media avenues to receive and share information about their communities, businesses, politics, lifestyles, and for pure entertainment. For example, the 2016 presidential election flooded Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. In fact, former President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump have used these social media outlets, particularly Twitter, to share updates on policies and upcoming events in the country. According to Pew Research Center, nearly two-thirds (65%) of American adults now use social networking sites (Perrin, 2015). With social media being prevalent amongst the younger generation, businesses have refocused their organizational structure specifically on marketing through social media. Social media websites and blogs reach about 80% of all Internet users in the United States (Emow, 2012). With such a vast majority of the population using the internet to connect with each other for entertainment, networking, and business, one can ask the following question: How does social media affect sales in a company? More specifically, this research is interested in the impact of social media avenues on customer perceptions and attitudes. The impact of social media on business revenue will be explored, analyzed and discussed in this study. The study will also explore the value of social media, how social media is utilized by consumers, and how businesses can use social media to their advantage.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's society, the use of social media has become extremely prevalent amongst young individuals. The increase of social media usage has presented as an opportunity for businesses to direct marketing efforts, but also as a challenge on what is the best way to reach out to customers. The problem with this growth of social media activity is that the vast majority

of individuals who use social media, specifically for news and product or business reviews, has the capacity to positively or negatively influence a business's reputation and profits. Such activity has now made an impact on business functions. Studies (Edosomwan, 2011 and Taneja, 2014) have shown that businesses getting involved in the social media world may help build customer loyalty, avoid social media attacks, and most importantly, drastically increase their profits and foot traffic. With the widespread use of social media, it seems like business should adapt to its use in order to thrive in the 21st century.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this present study is to investigate the impact of social media marketing on individuals' attitudes and perceptions. More specifically, this study will examine the perceptions of social media marketing and how it affects purchasing decisions. Although several researches that have been conducted on the effects of social media marketing on financial gains, the study's interests are specifically geared towards the examined effects of the use of social media on brand awareness and customer loyalty, which essentially could lead to an increase in business revenue. The study will be conducted via surveys on social media presence of businesses with participants being students at NOVA Community College.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How do individuals perceive the usage of social media?
- What are the attitudes toward social media marketing?
- How has social media impacted customer loyalty and purchase decisions?
- How can companies use social media to improve customer interaction?
- What are the most important factors in making social media marketing effective?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will contribute to the development of technology marketing structures throughout businesses, considering that social media plays a vital role in customer equity and profits in businesses today. With technology and social media being so prevalent in today's society, it is important for businesses to keep up with the current trends that could potentially have their businesses booming. The results from this study may aid businesses in their social media marketing efforts, and potentially support future success. This study may help discover areas that may be weak when using social media marketing for business. For business owners, this study may serve as a guide for stronger approaches in social media marketing.

ASSUMPTIONS

In conducting this study, the following assumptions were made. It was assumed that:

1. Everyone has some type of access to social media
2. Individuals use social media to find or research a new service provider or new products
3. Individuals are influenced by social media to make purchasing decisions

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations, which means the findings need to be carefully analyzed.

- Only 20 participants who use social media regularly will be evaluated
- Not enough time is devoted to each respondent
- The research is limited to NOVA Community College students

DELIMITATIONS

- The researcher chooses to only evaluate individuals between the ages of 18-30
- The study is limited only to individuals that reside in Northern Virginia

- Each of the respondents are given a questionnaire consisting of 16 inquiries to answer
- The questionnaire was designed to obtain the demographic profile and behavioral ratings related to social media marketing.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Social media: Computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks

Social networking: An act of engagement as people with common interests associate together and build relationships via the internet community

Return on investment (ROI): A performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments

Social media marketing: The process of gaining traffic or attention through social media sites

Customer equity: The value of potential future revenue generated by a company's customers in its lifetime

Customer relationship management (CRM): Practices, strategies and technologies that companies use to manage and analyze customer interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle, with the goal of improving business relationships with customers, assisting in customer retention and driving sales growth

Instant messaging (IM): An electronic message sent in real time via the Internet and therefore immediately available for display on the recipient's screen.

NOVA: Northern Virginia

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

This study will examine how individuals perceive the use of social media and their attitudes toward social media marketing, in an attempt to address the gaps social media marketing literature. Chapter I introduced the reader to the statement on the problem which is to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of businesses utilizing social media marketing and how it affects purchasing decisions.

A review of literature is provided in Chapter II in attempt to identify the current state of social media usage and marketing. The gaps in the literature justifying further research are also presented in Chapter II. Chapter III discusses the methods and procedures used to collect the data required to complete the study. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V is a summary of the research, in addition to the conclusion and the recommendations of the study.

Chapter II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has captured the attention of many young adults in the 21st century and is becoming a valuable source amongst the youth. Businesses have found that social media has a favorable impact on foot traffic and revenue because the younger generation is looking to the internet to verify the quality and legitimacy of businesses before they spend their hard-earned money. Theoretically, if upcoming businesses incorporate social media into their business functions, especially in the 21st century where technology is prevalent, business revenue will increase significantly. Therefore, it is important to answer the following question: How does social media impact purchasing decisions? In this modern age and the current technology era, social media has shown to make an impact on a business. For example, United Airlines had received a lot of backlash on the internet following the incident where a passenger was forcibly removed from an overbooked plane. According to CNN, after thousands of socialites shared the brutal video around the internet, United took a hit on the stock market, with shares slipping by 4% and their market value plummeted by \$1 billion (McKirdy, 2017). The question becomes more specific: What can social media tell us about people's attitudes toward businesses and their products or services?

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Edosomwan (2011) believes that the fastest way to grow a business entity is through social media and networking. This study discusses the history of social media. Although there are many speculations of the birth of social networks, earlier discoveries found written information spread by telegraphs in the late 1700s. Telegraphs were used to transmit and receive messages over long distances. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist and Ferdinand Tonnies, a German sociologist, are considered the pioneers of social networks during the late 1800s (Edosomwan, 2011). Although the internet was not introduced until the 1990s, social

networking was utilized through telephone and electronic-mail (e-mail). It was e-mail that changed how modern society communicated on the computer, allowing one to send someone a message at any time of the day or night (Morrow, 2014). E-mailing required computers that have online access and this early form of the “internet” made connecting online possible, although it was quite expensive for most. ARPANET, an early network of time sharing computers that formed the basis of the internet, was created in 1969. Over several years, ARPANET was then developed into the World Wide Web (WWW) which opened the door for hundreds of viral communities. Along with the WWW, the 1980s introduced The WELL, GENIE, Listserv, and the IRC (Edosomwan, 2011). Later, instant messaging (IM), which was similar to e-mail but instead used real time via the Internet, had gained popularity amongst the youth and became a distraction of many high school students who were IMing instead of studying (Morrow, 2014).

Many social media sites were established in the 1990s and in the early 2000s, the use of social media skyrocketed. MySpace (2006), Facebook (2004) and YouTube (2005) have become the most popular platforms for viral communication and networking globally and have integrated themselves into people’s everyday lives. Viral communities have created other communities such as Twitter and Instagram, which are used for leisure activities such as microblogging and pure entertainment. In recent times, social media has impacted many aspects of human communication, thereby impacting business (Edosomwan, 2011).

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Since the rise of social media, businesses have taken upon themselves to adapt to newer marketing strategies, specifically social media marketing, for their benefit. Social media marketing is an essential component of business in the 21st century. Small business leaders are using this marketing strategy to promote their business to gain visibility, viability, and sustainability to survive in the current competitive era (Taneja 2014). Social media marketing is

defined as “the process of gaining traffic or attention through social media sites”. For social media marketing to be effective, Zhu (2015) argued that marketing efforts need to be congruent and aligned with the different needs of social media users. Marketing objectives of social media marketing are awareness, brand values or reputation, development of relationships and sales. However, the most important objective that businesses should reflect within their social media campaigns is effective communication and engagement with their consumers.

Taneja (2014) analyzed the importance of small businesses incorporating social media into their marketing efforts. In order for businesses to sell products or services through social media effectively, they must build a relationship with their targeted audience. Effective customer relationship management begins with properly identifying, maintaining and developing good relationships with customers and providing value in an effort to properly allocate marketing resources to relationship developing (Taneja, 2014). In order to build brand loyalty, it is essential that businesses move from a product-oriented approach to a customer-oriented approach.

SOCIAL MEDIA’S IMPACT BUSINESS

The wide spread generation and consumption of content has created an extremely competitive online environment where different types of content vie with each other for the scarce attention of the user community (Asur, 2012). Social media had first developed popularity due to the number of users interacting amongst themselves. Businesses soon took note of the amount of online attention social media sites began to attract and realized the potential of attention that social media can generate (Asur, 2012). Thus, online traffic turned into monetary value. Social media marketing has since become a popular brand of online marketing.

Businesses have taken advantage of the many marketing strategies that social media have to offer. One strategy is structuring their business model on ads that are similar to Google. When Google began to dominate online searches in the early 2000s, it did not take long for them to discern a then unique model of monetization of search, through online advertising

(Asur, 2012). This method is profitable because people on average spend ample amount of time searching the web. The number of users constantly on the internet has been amplified by the availability of social media platforms. Businesses have also created their own social media pages so that consumers can subscribe to their feeds and essentially be a forum for consumer-to-business communication. This can provide an opportunity for businesses to not only interact with their consumers, but to also see what their competitors are doing and how they are engaging with their customers.

As an example of how organizations can use mobile marketing and social media, Flat Tummy Tea has proven month on month growth since its establishment in 2013 at a rate of over 400% annually (Synergy, 2015, para. 5). Flat Tummy Tea is a uniquely formulated two-step herbal detox tea that works naturally help speed metabolism, boost energy and reduce bloating to flatten the user's belly. They have accomplished this growth rate through embracing the internet and utilizing social media effectively as a key part of their marketing. The company's secret is a very specific process and ROI based algorithm used on various online platforms, specifically on Instagram (Synergy, 2015, para. 6). One of their key activities were simply using individuals with a strong social media following, such as celebrities. Flat Tummy Tea has built a social media following of over 500,000 on Instagram, many whom are new customers (Synergy, 2015, para. 6).

SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY

Before technology was developed, data was difficult to grasp. Now information is readily available in present time. Currently, today's society is living in what is known as the Information Age, defined as "a period that will be characterized by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously" (Asur, 2012). Since technology is rapidly evolving, adaptation is becoming more strenuous. Juxtaposing this fast-paced change on business, marketing,

communication, research and content, however, is not seamless (Lalwani, 2012). Social media has become the gathering grounds for users all around the world. More and more users are drawn to social media every day and that broad user base has made social media platforms into social and commercial successes (Hunsinger, 2013).

Given that social media has become predominate in the 21st century, it is vital for businesses to utilize social media and take advantage of its marketing opportunities. Social media marketing is a useful brand of marketing that connects with the targeted customer and reaches a broader audience. Since 2008, the number of small businesses using social media has doubled as their leaders seek to create visibility and awareness, to identify and attract new customers and to reinforce or change their companies' respective perceived images (Taneja, 2014). The Small Business Success Index (SBSI) conducted a survey of 500 small business owners in December 2009 and discussed their findings as follows (Number of small businesses using social media doubled, 2010):

- 75% of small businesses have a company page on a social networking site
- 61% use social media for identifying and attracting new customers
- 57% have built a network through a site like LinkedIn
- 45% expected social media to be profitable in the ensuing 12 months (Taneja, 2014).

Lalwani (2012) quotes "It is a new world - a world where everyone has the ability to influence opinion; a world where everyone has the ability to influence purchase; a world where distances are down to zero; a world where voice has speed greater than light; a world that pushes away any attempt to regulate it, except through mechanisms of self-regulation; the world that is today, is a world shaped by social media and the free flow of conversations that the phenomenon enables and endorses."

SUMMARY

Chapter II provided a review of the history of social media including the evolution of social media, social media marketing, and social media's impact on business and social today. Social media can sway how consumers view a company and ultimately affect purchasing decisions. After the United Nations incident went viral all across every social media platform, the company's sales plummeted. Social media has proven to have a relatively huge impact on business. However, businesses such as Flat Tummy Tea have learned to utilize these platforms by using high profile users to promote their products to entice potential consumers and build brand power. Chapter III will discuss the methodology and procedures used to collect the data required to complete the study. This methodology will address the research question: What impact does social media have on consumer attitudes and perceptions on businesses utilizing social media marketing?

Chapter III:

METHODOLOGY

The following sections detail the research design, the participants of the study, and the methods and procedures to conduct the study. The study's methods and procedures were assessed by the Old Dominion University College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee (see Appendix A for the Letter of Determination of Exempt Status).

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to determine the impact of social media marketing on individuals' attitudes and perceptions, a descriptive correlational survey method was used. This method was used to assess the demographic profiles, such as sex and age, of each of the participants, along with their social media use. Additionally, each respondent was asked to fill in a survey questionnaire in order to determine the factors that may affect their attitudes and perceptions when using social media to connect with businesses. The purpose of the study was to answer the following research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do individuals perceive the usage of social media?
- What are the attitudes toward social media marketing?
- How has social media impacted customer loyalty and purchase decisions?
- How can companies use social media to improve customer interaction?
- What are the most important factors in making social media marketing effective?

PROCEDURES

There were 20 respondents within this study, each with similar backgrounds and social habits. Participants were administered a questionnaire to complete in depth. In Section I of the

questionnaire, there are questions related to demographic characteristics of the participants. Section II focused on the participants' attitudes toward businesses using social media marketing. This is to determine how these behaviors can affect customer perceptions and purchasing decisions. The questionnaire is divided into two parts (see Appendix B for full questionnaire). For a higher response rate, the researcher administered the questionnaire to participants. Prior to the questionnaire, the purpose and significance of the study was briefly explained. The respondents were given 30 minutes to complete the survey. After the questionnaires were completed, responses were compiled to be analyzed.

RESEARCH SETTING/CONTENT

The study was conducted at Northern Virginia Community College Woodbridge Campus (NOVA).

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were full-time NOVA students between the ages of 18-30. This age group spend ample amounts of time on social media and are specifically targeted when it comes to social media marketing. There was a total of 20 participants in the study. Participants were chosen through random sampling. After the overview of the study was explained, the participants were given the option to accept or deny participation. All participants agreed to participate and answer each question truthfully. A maximum of 30 minutes was allotted for the participants to complete the questionnaire.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection technique used in this study are survey research. After each respondent was selected, they were each given a different time slot to come into the facility at NOVA Community College and complete the survey questionnaire. There were 2 participants appointed in each session. The participants were seated apart, and the questionnaire was

distributed by hand, along with a pencil and/or pen. The researcher was available in case any questions need to be clarified. After the survey was completed the participants were free to leave.

DATA ANALYSIS

After retrieval of the completed questionnaires, responses were tabulated and the results were compiled. The results were analyzed to uncover factors or social behaviors toward social media marketing. The study used descriptive analysis to understand the impact of social media marketing on participants' attitudes and perceptions. Observations were made using the compiled results from the survey.

SUMMARY

Chapter III provided a discussion of the chosen research design in order to answer the research questions of this study. The descriptive correlational survey method was used to assess the demographic profiles, such as sex and age, of each of the participants, along with their social media use. In order to analyze the factors that may affect the participants' attitudes and perceptions when using social media to connect with businesses, each respondent was asked to fill in a survey. The study was conducted at Northern Virginia (NOVA) Community College, with 20 students being the participants. Survey research technique was then used to collect the data and compile the results. Descriptive analysis was used to understand the impact of social media marketing on participants' attitudes and perceptions.

CHAPTER IV:

FINDINGS

To discover the relationship between of social media and customer purchase decisions and equity, the responses of 20 participants who were between the ages of 18 to 30 years to a questionnaire about their attitudes towards businesses using social media marketing were analyzed. A response rate of 100% was achieved in this study. The following section represents the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire administered in this study.

Gender and age of respondents

From the results of the questionnaire, most of the respondents were young females. From the total 20 respondents, 11 were females (55%) whereas 9 were males (45%). Of those percentages, the survey revealed that 70% of the respondents were under the age of 25, predominately female. The other 30% of the respondents were above the age of 25. Table 1 shows the gender distribution of participants in the study. Figure 1 shows the age of the participants.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Female	11	55
Male	9	45
Total	20	100

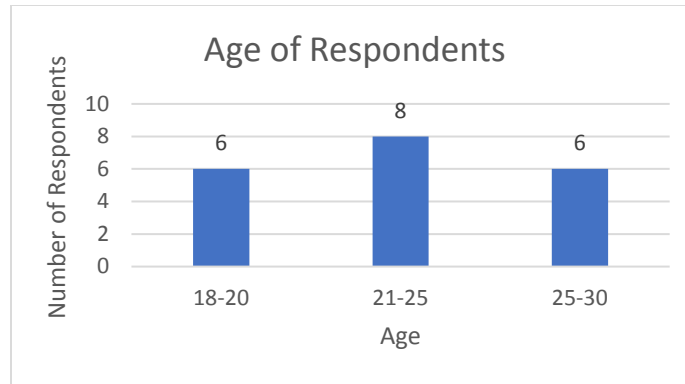


Figure 1: Age of Respondents

Social media usage

All of the respondents have a social media account, confirming the assumption that everyone is engaged in some sort of social media. From the 20 respondents in the study, 70% have three or more social media accounts, whereas the other 30% has at least one social media account. In Figure 2 the analysis of social media platforms that are used by the respondents is shown. Since most of the respondents use more than one social media platform, the percentages are reflected differently. Figure 2 also shows that the social media platform that was most used by the participants were Facebook and Snapchat (both at 22.7%).

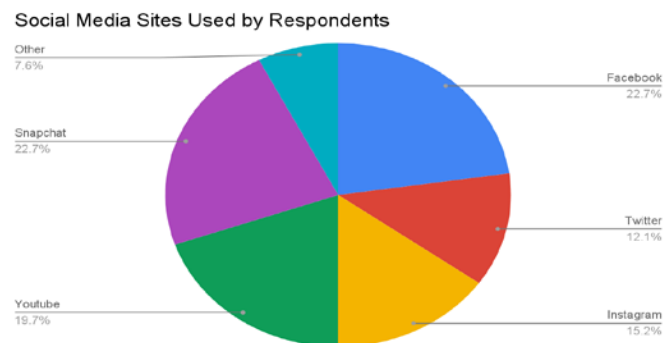


Figure 2: Social Media Platforms Used by Respondents

Time Spent on Social Media

The respondents reported how often they use social media and the amount of time they spend on social media per day. Results show that 95% of the respondents noted that they connect every day to a social media platform. The other 5% of participants reported connecting to a social media platform once a week (see Figure 3). Of the 95% that connect every day, 63%, reported that they spend 3 or more hours a day on social media periodically (see Figure 4).

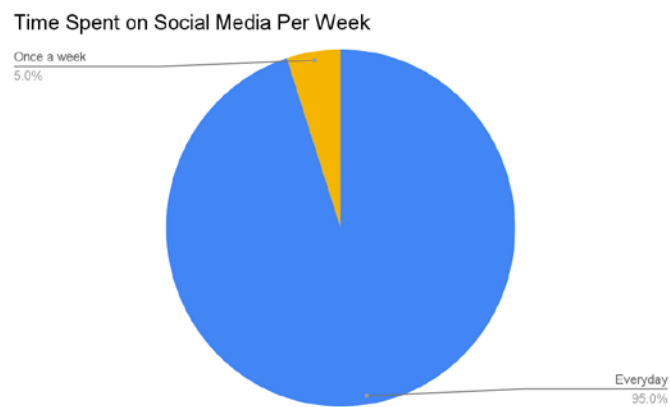


Figure 3: Time Spent on Social Media Platforms According to Respondents

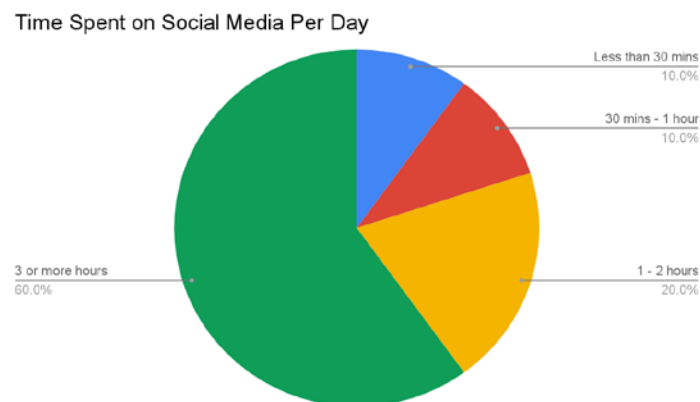


Figure 4: Time Spent Daily on Social Media Platforms According to Respondents

Online Visibility

Responses to the questionnaire show that 95% of the participants use social media on a day-to-day basis. This figure may be important when deciding whether it is necessary for a business to opt into social media as a selling strategy. The participants were also asked if the online visibility of a business would affect their purchase. Results show that 55% of the respondents says that online visibility would affect their purchase, while the other 45% says that it would not (see Figure 5).

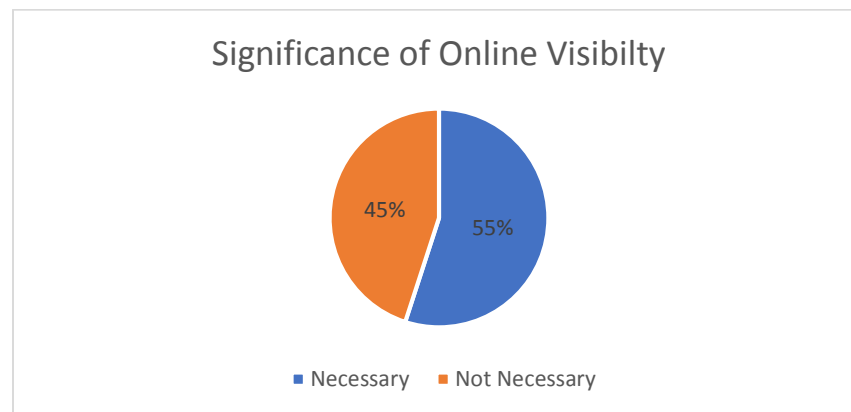


Figure 5: Significance of Online Visibility

Descriptive Analysis

The participants were asked to rate what are the important factors for a business using social media on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. The variables in this rating question include consistency of posts, type of content, customer engagement, online promotions and timing of posts. A descriptive analysis was conducted after tabulating the results of the question, specifically focusing on the most important and the least important. The least important factor was the timing of posts and the most important factor was customer engagement. The results are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of What the Participants Believe are Important Factors for a Business Using Social Media

	Rating Responses							
	Most Important			Least Important		N	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation
Variables	1	2	3	4	5			
Consistency of posts	1	3	3	5	7	19	3.73	1.28
Type of content posted	7	5	3	2	3	20	2.45	1.47
Customer engagement	9	7	1	2	1	20	1.95	1.19
Online promotions	3	4	5	3	4	19	3.05	1.39
Timing of posts	0	1	6	8	5	20	3.85	0.87

Social Media Marketing

Results show that 55% of the respondents post about products or services a business offers while the other 45% of the respondents do not. Although the participants may or may not post about the products or services a business is offering, 95% of the respondents believe that a business will receive better results when it comes to customer loyalty and profits if social media is integrated into marketing. Since social media is integrated into everyday life, it is important for businesses to utilize this avenue of marketing. The results also show that 75% of the respondents believe that social media is the best way to reach a business's targeted audience, whereas the other 25% believe that there are other useful ways to reach a target market.

Social Media Activities

Since new technologies have been dominated by social media, businesses have decided to expand their horizons by joining this social movement. Businesses have set up their profiles online in hopes of attracting members in the online community. Out of the 20 participants in this study, results show that 80% of the respondents follow a business on social

media. Of the 80% of respondents, only 35% (7 of 16) keep up to date with sales and promotions by using social media (see Figure 6). Results show that out of the other 20% that do not follow a business on social media, less than 5% (1 of 4) keep up to date with sales and promotion (see Figure 7). The responses of the questions suggest that although people are not likely to share promotions or keep tabs on a business via social media, they do pay attention. Despite of this hypothesis, the results show that 90% of the respondents have taken advantage of a sale they heard about via social media.

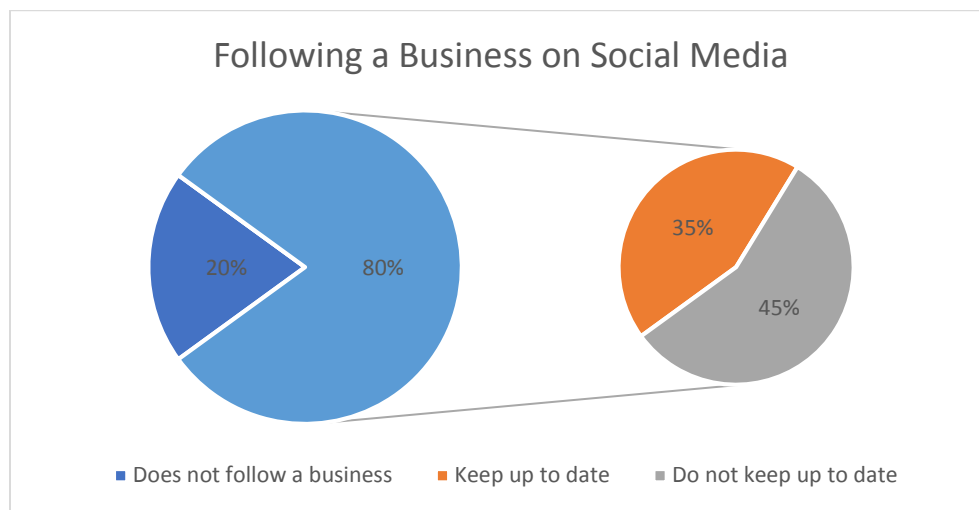


Figure 6: Respondents Following a Business on Social Media

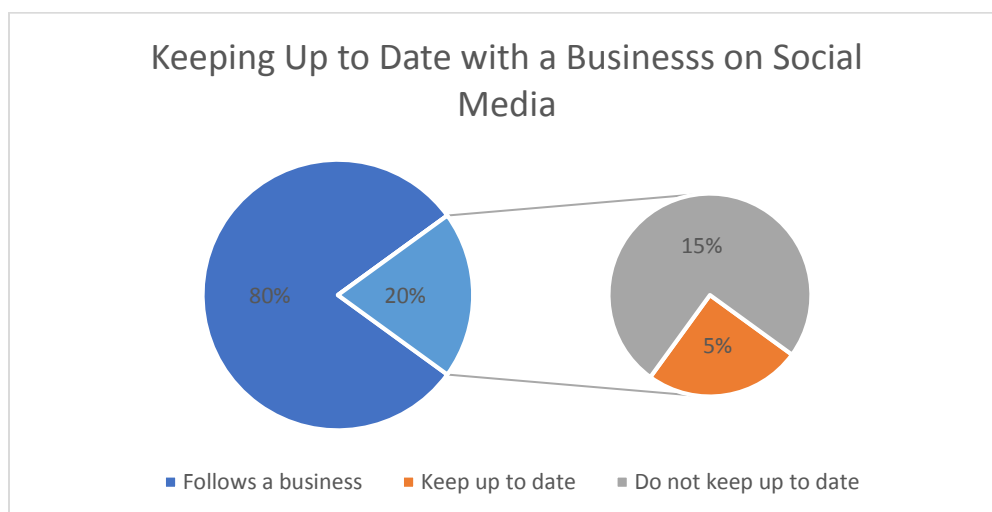


Figure 7: Respondents Keeping Up to Date with a Business on Social Media

Social Media Experience

The participants were asked about the likeliness of sharing an experience they have had with a business on their social media accounts. The results show that 10% of the respondents are very likely to share an experience had on social media, 55% of the respondents are somewhat likely, and 35% of the respondents are unlikely (see Figure 8).

The participants were also asked about the likeliness of sharing sales or promotions that a business offers on their social media accounts. The results show that 10% of the respondents are very likely to repost a sale or promotion codes to friends, 40% of the respondents are somewhat likely, and 50% of the respondents are very unlikely (see Figure 9). Responses to the questions suggest that people are more likely to share an experience they have had with a business rather than sharing sales or promotions a business is offering.

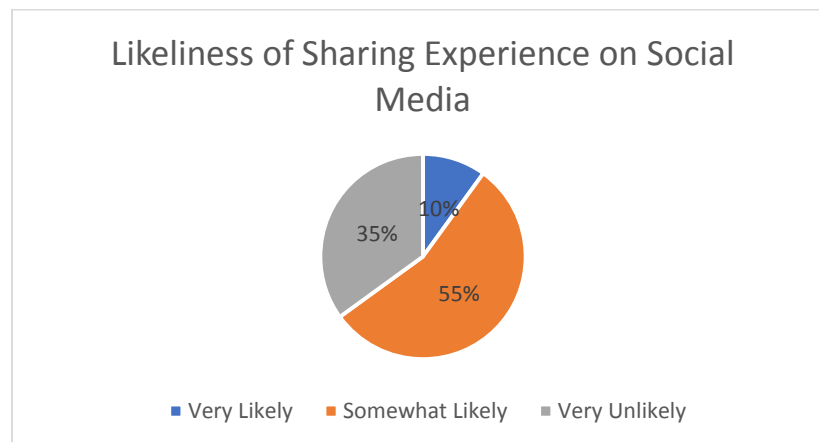


Figure 8: Likeliness of Sharing an Experience on Social Media

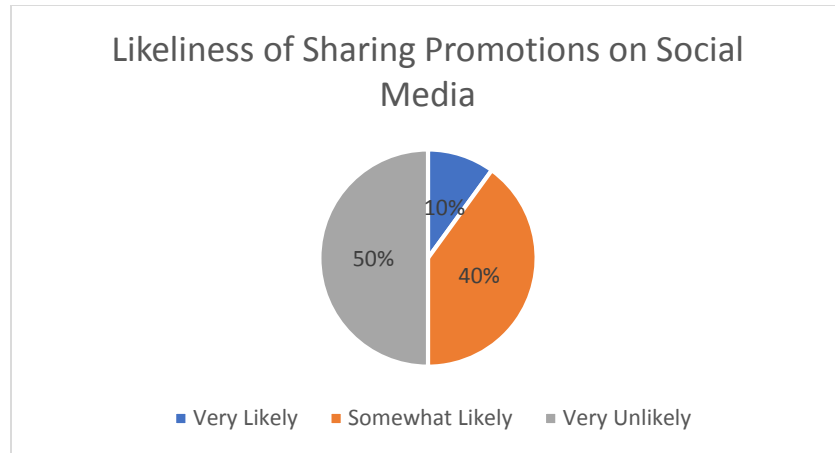


Figure 9: Likeliness of Sharing Promotions on Social Media

SUMMARY

Responses to the questionnaire with 20 participants from NOVA Community College show that 95% of the participants use social media platforms on a daily basis. The most used social media platforms are Facebook and Snapchat with 22.7% of participants having an account in these platforms, and 70% of participants indicating using more than 3 social media platforms. The results showed that 55% of the respondents say that online visibility would affect their purchase. The most important factor for a business using social media was customer engagement and the least important factor was the timing of posts. The questionnaire also revealed that only 55% of the respondents post about products or services of a business. However, 95% of the respondents believe that a business will receive better results when it comes to customer loyalty and profits if social media is integrated into marketing and 75% of the respondents believe that social media is the best way to reach a business's targeted audience. The likeliness of the respondents sharing an experience they have had on social media are 10% very likely, 55% somewhat likely, and 35% unlikely. The likeliness of the respondents reposting a sale or promotion codes to friends are 10% very likely, 40% somewhat likely, and 50% very

unlikely. These results suggest that people are more likely to share and experience they have had with a business rather than sharing sales or promotions a business is offering.

CHAPTER V:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to examine the effects of social media on consumer attitudes and perceptions of a business using social media marketing. The findings in Chapter IV indicate that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand awareness. Social media can be used to reach customers as 95% of participants responded to use of social media on a daily basis and 70% using more than 3 social media platforms. Also, 75% of the respondents believe that social media is the best way to reach a business's targeted audience. The following sections discuss the conclusions of the study and recommendations for future research.

CONCLUSIONS

The observations from the responses to a questionnaire from a sample population show that businesses that have a social media presence have the potential to essentially affect business revenue. While some participants do not actively participate in all of the business propagandas that are extended to them via social media, a high percentage of participants notice their efforts and take advantage of the opportunities that are beneficial to them. Businesses should partake in social media marketing for a number of reasons. Some of the reasons may include online exposure, brand awareness, customer-to-business communication, valuable feedback, and the ability to see what customers, prospects, peers, and competitors are saying. The findings of this study revealed that social media not only provides direct interaction with customers, but it also rewards businesses with customer loyalty. It can be concluded that social media can help maintain the relationships built between businesses and their prospective customers and guide them into profitable ventures.

- Most consumers look to social media for products or services a business offers
- On average, people spend 3 or more hours on social media on a daily basis

- Social media marketing is an important factor for customer loyalty and purchasing decisions

Although business can survive without social media, in the 21st century, having a social media presence has proven to improve customer loyalty, purchase decisions and business revenue significantly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The responses to the study and the interpretation of the data collected have led to several recommendations and suggestions. With the assistance of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions can be made:

- A business should concentrate on the content and timing on their social media posts
- A business should use social media to view competition
- A business should focus on customer engagement and feedback to update business functions
- A business should use social media marketing to update customers on sales, promotions and new products and/or services

The objective of this study was to provide an understanding of how consumers use social media as a communication platform and how businesses can use this understanding for effective marketing. Some recommendations for future research are:

- Increase the size of the sample, include participants from diverse backgrounds, not only community college students
- Explore the specific impact of social media marketing on financial gains
- Look into specific businesses that are currently using social media marketing to promote their businesses and engage with their customers

By participating in the social media movement, businesses can communicate and engage with potential consumers all around the globe and make word-of-mouth promotion profitable. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be useful as they provide businesses with targeted exposure within their social network. The more social media exposure a business creates, the higher the potential of attracting more customers.

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Appendix A

IRB Form



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

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DATE: August 29, 2017

TO: Karina Arcaute, Ph.D.
FROM: Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee

PROJECT TITLE: [1110243-1] THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON
COMPANY SALES: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND COMPANY SALES

REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: August 29, 2017

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 6.2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Jill Stefaniak at (757) 683-6696 or jstefani@odu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee's records.

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please place a mark in the box next to the answer of your choice or write in the space provided as the case may be.

Section I

Name (Optional): _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Section II

Do you have a social media account? (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

How many social media sites do you use?

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ More than 3

What social sites and/or services do you use regularly? (Check all that apply)

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Instagram

- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Other

How often do you engage in social media?

- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ Three times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

How much time do you spend on social media?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes to an hour
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ 3 or more hours

Does the online visibility of a business affect your purchase?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

In your own opinion, what are important factors for a business using social media marketing?

Place a number between 1 and 5 beside each response by importance, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

- ☐ Consistency of posts
- ☐ Type of content posted

- ☐ Customer engagement (i.e. customer service)
- ☐ Online promotions
- ☐ Timing of posts

Have you ever posted about products or services a business offer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How often have you posted about something you dislike about a product or service you liked/disliked?

- ☐ Everyday
- ☐ Three times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

Do you currently follow any businesses on social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you believe that business will achieve better results when it comes to customer loyalty and profits if social media is integrated into marketing?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you believe that social media is the best way to reach a business's targeted audience?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you keep up to date with sales and promotions by using social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you ever taken advantage on a sale you heard about via social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How likely are you to post about an experience you had with a business on social media?

☐ Very likely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Not likely

How likely would you be to repost or retweet a sale or promotion codes to your friends?

☐ Very likely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Not likely