

# An Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchasing Behavior in the Digital Age

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## Abstract

This academic paper aims to analyze the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behavior by employing frameworks from digital marketing theories and consumer decision-making models. Key factors influencing consumer decisions are examined, including the credibility of influencers, ease of access to information, and user-generated reviews. Findings indicate that social media facilitates access to relevant information and strengthens meaningful consumer-brand relationships, enhancing purchasing decisions and long-term brand loyalty. Consequently, social media marketing proves to be a vital determinant of consumer behavior in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing Impact; Digital Consumer Behavior; Online Marketing Strategy

## Introduction

In the digital age, where technology and social media are integral to daily life, social media marketing has become a powerful tool for promoting products and raising brand awareness. The ease and speed of information access through social media enable consumers to gather insights from multiple sources simultaneously, such as user reviews, influencer recommendations, and posts or shares by friends or acquaintances. These sources act as motivators and influence consumer purchasing decisions. Social media marketing creates unprecedented connectivity among consumers, transforming brand-consumer relationships from one-way communication, such as advertising or public relations, into interactive engagements where consumers can contribute content or share opinions about products or services. This shift has altered purchasing decisions, which were previously based primarily on information from producers or retailers, by integrating consumer-generated insights as critical factors in decision-making.

Moreover, social media empowers consumers to share their opinions and experiences, leading to rapid information dissemination. In some cases, this can generate

widespread attention or discussions about products or services without incurring significant advertising costs. Additionally, social media facilitates personalized marketing, such as targeted advertisements for specific audience segments and campaigns tailored to individual customer needs, improving effectiveness. These developments have significantly influenced consumer purchasing behavior. Consumers often choose products based on positive reviews from other users or trusted influencer recommendations. Observing products shared or posted by others on social media also stimulates purchasing decisions, especially among consumers who value information received from their social connections.

Social media plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable relationships between brands and consumers. Ensuring customers have continuous access to updates, promotions, and opportunities to engage with the brand through comments, likes, or shares strengthens loyalty and builds long-term relationships. Therefore, social media marketing is a promotional tool and an instrument that directly influences consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era. It achieves this by leveraging fast and effective online connections and integrating consumer and brand interactions.

## **The Importance of Social Media Marketing in the Digital Age and Its Influence on Consumer Behavior**

In the digital era, social media marketing has become a pivotal strategy for businesses to connect with consumers, promote products, and build brand recognition. With billions of users across platforms, social media offers unparalleled reach, enabling businesses to engage with diverse audiences worldwide. This accessibility has transformed marketing paradigms, shifting from traditional one-way communication to dynamic, interactive exchanges between brands and consumers.

Social media marketing is indispensable in the digital age, providing businesses with powerful tools to influence consumer behavior and drive engagement. By fostering interactive and personalized relationships, leveraging consumer-generated content, and utilizing cost-effective strategies, social media has redefined how brands communicate with and impact their audiences. Its ability to shape consumer preferences and decisions makes it a cornerstone of modern marketing strategies.

## **Digital Marketing Theory**

### **Definition of Digital Marketing**

Digital marketing refers to the use of digital technologies and tools, such as the internet, social media, and digital platforms, to promote sales, public relations, and customer interactions through online channels (Ryan, D. 2016). Over the past decade, digital marketing theory has evolved rapidly, driven by advancements in technology and the

changing purchasing behaviors of consumers influenced by digital integration in daily life (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020).

### **Digital Marketing Strategies**

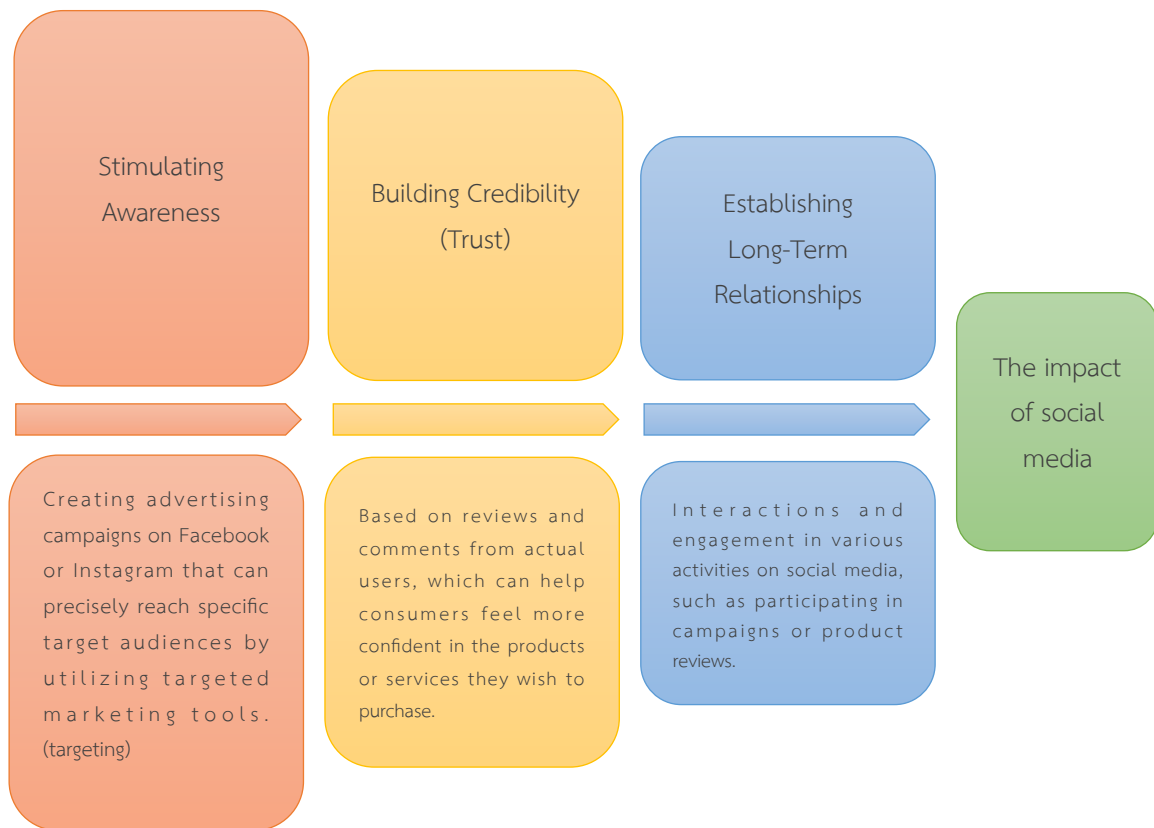
Digital marketing strategies employ various tools to connect with consumers and foster long-term customer relationships (Kotler et al., 2017). Social media is essential for building brand awareness and fostering relationships between brands and consumers. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube are commonly used to advertise products or services, allowing businesses to reach niche consumer segments effectively (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Next, content marketing involves creating valuable and engaging content to attract consumers. Rather than direct advertising, it provides information that consumers seek, such as articles, videos, or posts addressing target audiences' interests (Pulizzi, 2013). Moreover, email marketing targets specific consumer groups with tailored messages, fostering long-term relationships and encouraging repeat purchases. This is especially effective for customers who have previously experienced the brand (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). In addition, marketing analytics tools, such as Google Analytics or online consumer behavior analysis platforms, allow businesses to refine strategies and enhance marketing effectiveness by analyzing data trends (Fader & Hardie, 2009). By integrating these tools, companies can create adaptable and flexible marketing strategies that respond to the dynamic needs of modern consumers in the digital landscape. This comprehensive approach enables organizations to remain competitive and meet consumer expectations in an ever-changing market.

### **The Impact of Social Media**

Social media plays a crucial role in transforming marketing practices in the digital era, particularly in raising awareness and influencing consumer purchasing decisions. This transformation diversifies marketing channels and empowers consumers by providing them with a wealth of information from various sources, such as friends, acquaintances, or influencers, who significantly shape brand perception (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The key impacts of social media include raising awareness, social media enables brands to build awareness rapidly and extensively. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram allow for highly targeted advertising campaigns that can precisely reach specific audiences through advanced targeting tools (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). Social media fosters trust by facilitating authentic reviews and comments from actual users. These user-generated insights enhance consumer confidence in purchasing products or services (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Moreover, recommendations from influencers or reviews shared by friends and other users can significantly impact purchase decisions, especially for products and services with positive reviews (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In addition,

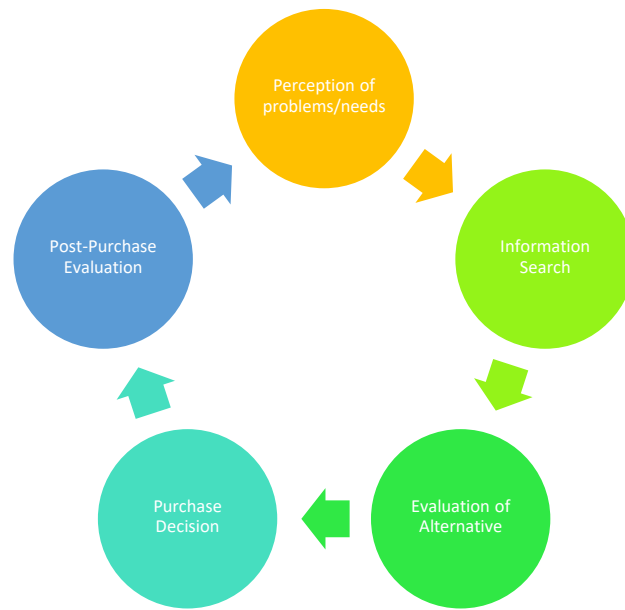
engaging consumers through social media activities, such as participating in campaigns or reviewing products, helps cultivate positive customer relationships. This engagement fosters brand loyalty and encourages repeat purchases (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013).



**Figure 1:** Fishbone diagram illustrating the impacts of social media  
**Source:** *Compiled by the author.*

## Consumer Decision-Making Theory

Consumer decision-making is a complex process that involves selecting products or services that meet individual needs and expectations. This theory focuses on understanding consumer behavior during the decision-making process, particularly in the digital environment where social media plays a critical role in promoting and stimulating decisions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).



**Figure 2:** The Consumer Decision-Making Process

*Source: Compiled by the author.*

### Variables Influencing Consumer Decision-Making

Consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era are shaped by various factors, mainly the information received from multiple sources on social media. Recent studies have highlighted several critical variables influencing consumer product and service decisions. This section reviews the literature on key variables linked to consumer decision-making in social media, including awareness generated through social media, information credibility, user reviews, and ease of access to information.

Social media has become vital for fostering consumer awareness and interest in products and services (Kim & Ko, 2020). A study by Ladhari & Michaud (2021) found that social media effectively stimulates consumer awareness of new products and services, significantly influencing purchasing decisions. Consumers often gain awareness by following brand activities and engaging with opinions shared by other users on social media. This awareness not only enhances product appeal but also expedites consumer decision-making.

The credibility of information sources on social media is a critical factor influencing purchasing decisions (Ladhari & Michaud, 2021). Influencers on social media have proven to play a significant role in reinforcing the credibility of product-related information. Tafesse (2020) demonstrated that consumers are more likely to purchase products recommended by trustworthy influencers. This is because influencers often build close relationships with their followers, instilling confidence in the products or services they endorse.

User-generated reviews are a highly influential source of information for consumer purchasing decisions (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2020). Multiple studies have shown that reviews from actual users are crucial for building confidence in a product or service. Research by Lee et al. (2020) revealed that consumers value detailed and neutral reviews over subjective or irrational opinions. Neutral and in-depth reviews give consumers greater confidence, aiding in more informed decision-making.

The convenience of accessing information significantly impacts consumer decision-making (Bonsón & Ratkai, 2021). A study by Abed et al. (2020) highlighted that rapid and convenient access to information via social media allows consumers to make immediate purchasing decisions without searching for data from other sources. This ease of access accelerates decision-making and enhances the overall consumer experience.

### **Connecting Digital Marketing Theories and Consumer Decision-Making**

Digital marketing has emerged as a critical strategy for promoting products and services in an era where digital technologies are integral to consumers' daily lives. The study of the interplay between digital marketing theories and consumer decision-making has thus become essential for understanding contemporary purchasing behavior. Digital marketing theories emphasize leveraging digital tools to engage and attract consumers through various online platforms, including social media, websites, and digital advertising. These tools aim to establish consumer relationships that stimulate purchase decisions (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Digital marketing plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions through multiple strategies, such as creating compelling content, utilizing social media to build awareness, and employing technology to enhance consumer experiences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Effective digital marketing strategies enable consumers to easily access relevant information about products or services quickly, thereby influencing their purchasing decisions. Chaffey (2020) found that consumers frequently rely on information received through various digital channels, mainly social media, and online reviews, which have a significant impact on decision-making behavior. The study also highlighted that brands that cultivate strong digital relationships with consumers are more likely to foster loyalty and encourage repeat purchases.

The connection between digital marketing and consumer decision-making through social media is particularly significant in the modern era, where social media has become a primary communication and marketing tool for many businesses. The following discussion highlights key points linking digital marketing with consumer decision-making through social media.

## **Key Elements of Digital Marketing Through Social Media Influencing Consumer Decision-Making**

The first element is creating awareness. Social media is a powerful tool for building brand or product awareness through engaging content and advertisements. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube allow businesses to easily target specific consumer groups based on their interests and behaviors. Awareness generated through social media often prompts consumers to seek more information about the advertised products or services. The second element is building trust and credibility. Trust is a critical factor in consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumers frequently evaluate the credibility of a brand or product based on reviews and comments from prior users. Social media provides a platform where users share their authentic experiences, enhancing the confidence of potential buyers. For example, reviews by influencers or expert users in specific domains can significantly boost perceived trustworthiness. The third element is encouraging engagement and interaction. Social media facilitates consumer participation in activities such as voting, commenting, and sharing content related to a brand or product. This engagement strengthens the relationship between brands and consumers, fostering loyalty and increasing the likelihood of purchase. Additionally, prompt responses from brands to consumer inquiries or feedback can further enhance trust and positively influence purchasing decisions. The fourth element is content marketing. Producing valuable content that addresses consumer needs—such as articles, videos, or posts offering insights into products or services—can significantly aid decision-making. Informative or entertaining content captures consumer interest, providing the knowledge or motivation needed to finalize a purchase. The fifth element is influencer marketing and word-of-mouth promotion. Leveraging social media influencers to promote products is an effective strategy for impacting consumer decision-making. Consumers often seek guidance from trusted individuals, such as celebrities, athletes, or industry experts. Furthermore, recommendations and reviews from peers or other users on social media platforms can reinforce consumer confidence and drive purchase decisions. The sixth element is data utilization and behavioral analytics. Social media platforms provide valuable insights into consumer behavior, including interests, search patterns, and preferences. These data can be analyzed to refine marketing strategies tailored to target audiences. Such analytics enable businesses to deliver personalized experiences that more effectively meet individual consumer needs. The seventh element is creating personalized experiences. Social media enables marketers to customize content to match individual consumer preferences. Businesses can deliver tailored advertisements and recommendations by leveraging data on online behavior, such as interests or search histories, increasing the likelihood of purchase. Finally, the eighth element is incentives and promotions. Social

media is an effective channel for promoting special offers or discounts, which can accelerate consumer decision-making. Consumers exposed to appealing promotions, such as discounts or gifts, are often motivated to purchase within a limited timeframe.

## Case Studies in Thailand

### Case 1: Shopee and Lazada (E-Commerce Platforms)

Shopee and Lazada play significant roles in Thailand's e-commerce landscape, employing digital marketing strategies such as online advertisements and promotional campaigns to influence consumer decision-making. According to Sittichai and Krongkaew (2019), Thai consumers increasingly choose to purchase products through these platforms due to features like user-generated reviews and engaging digital marketing content. These strategies enhance consumer confidence and accelerate purchasing decisions.

Social Media Marketing has become a crucial tool for influencing consumer buying behavior, especially in the digital age, where information about products and services is easily accessible via platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Online shopping through e-commerce platforms such as Lazada and Shopee is particularly popular in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. Social media marketing effectively raises consumer awareness and stimulates purchasing behavior.

#### Lazada

Lazada leverages social media marketing to create awareness about promotions and products through systematically supported advertising. Notably, during major shopping events like 11.11 and 12.12, Lazada uses social media to promote discounts and special offers, driving consumers to visit their platform and make purchases.

#### Shopee

Shopee emphasizes deeper consumer engagement through its social media marketing strategies. Activities such as reward-based posting competitions, influencer collaborations, and campaigns focused on direct consumer interaction effectively encourage purchasing decisions.

Social media marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchasing behavior in the digital era. Platforms like Lazada and Shopee use social media to raise product awareness through user reviews, influencer credibility, and promotional campaigns. These efforts significantly enhance consumers' convenience and ease of purchasing, fostering higher conversion rates.

### Case 2: Thai Airways and Digital Marketing

Thai Airways International, Thailand's flagship airline, leverages social media as a pivotal tool to enhance brand awareness and marketing effectiveness in the digital era. Social media marketing is one of the airline's core strategies for connecting with consumers,



especially amidst the intense competition in the tourism and aviation sectors (Phothibin, 2020).

### **Strategies in Social Media Marketing**

Thai Airways employs platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote campaigns and enhance brand visibility among target customers. The airline shares visually appealing travel photos and promotional offers through content marketing, successfully capturing consumer interest. Posts featuring engaging and informative content encourage consumers to consider using the airline's services.

In the digital age, consumer behavior regarding flight bookings has shifted significantly, with online channels becoming the preferred medium for ticket reservations. Social media is critical in influencing purchasing decisions by providing information about promotions, new services, and time-sensitive offers. These campaigns create a sense of urgency, encouraging customers to act quickly. Thai Airways also uses social media to highlight member-exclusive benefits and discounts during peak travel periods, such as holidays and festivals, thereby increasing the likelihood of online bookings.

### **Consumer Engagement and Trust-Building**

Thai Airways' social media presence fosters brand trust and enables real-time communication with customers. Continuous interaction and transparent information-sharing via social media enhance consumers' confidence in choosing the airline's services. Additionally, Thai Airways incorporates influencers to promote flights and special campaigns, effectively appealing to younger, travel-oriented demographics. This strategy often results in quicker purchasing decisions among this audience segment.

### **Impact on Consumer Decision-Making**

Social media marketing has a direct impact on consumer purchasing behavior. Through timely and relevant digital interactions, Thai Airways effectively builds brand awareness and trust. Consumers appreciate the convenience of accessing booking information and exclusive offers through social media, which helps them feel more in control of their decisions.

Furthermore, leveraging influencers to endorse flights or campaigns bolsters the airline's appeal among younger travelers, aligning with current trends in digital marketing. Thai Airways' use of social media also provides a channel for gathering customer feedback, which can be used to improve services and maintain customer loyalty.

### **Case 3: Gentle Woman Clothing Brand**

Gentle Woman is a fashion brand with a distinctive approach, offering modern yet professional apparel focusing on minimalist and sophisticated designs. Originating in Thailand, the brand has expanded domestically and internationally, targeting women seeking elegant workwear that balances style and professionalism.

### **Marketing Strategies and Brand Identity**

Gentle Woman employs unique brand-building and online promotion strategies, primarily through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. These platforms enable the brand to reach its target audience of professional women who favor understated yet refined styles. By presenting products via visually appealing and cohesive content, Gentle Woman has successfully cultivated a loyal customer base and driven sales.

The brand emphasizes quality materials and contemporary designs tailored to the fast-paced lifestyles of modern women. Its clothing is crafted to be comfortable and stylish, catering to individuals who require versatility in their wardrobes—whether for professional environments or social gatherings.

### **Customer-Centric Approach**

Gentle Woman prioritizes customer relationships, offering collections suitable for various occasions, from workplace attire to casual outings. The brand's efficient online shopping services allow customers to purchase items conveniently anytime and anywhere, ensuring prompt responses to their needs.

By conducting market research to identify seasonal fashion trends, Gentle Woman adapts its products to align with customer preferences, considering Thailand's climate and work culture. This adaptability ensures relevance and resonates with its audience.

### **Expansion Strategies**

Gentle Woman has adopted both online and offline market expansion strategies. The brand has opened several branches in prominent shopping malls across Bangkok, increasing accessibility for local customers. This dual-channel approach has contributed to sustainable growth and solidified its position in Thailand's competitive fashion industry.

### **Case Insights**

The Gentle Woman case study illustrates a well-defined marketing strategy emphasizing brand identity, customer service, and responsiveness to digital market trends. The brand has successfully enhanced consumer confidence and purchasing decisions by leveraging digital marketing channels, mainly social media.

This analysis reinforces how digital marketing is critical in shaping consumer behavior, offering businesses the tools to create engaging experiences on digital platforms. Utilizing customer feedback and real-time data, Gentle Woman has built a robust foundation for growth, demonstrating how effective digital strategies can drive success in the fashion sector.

## **Conclusion**

Digital marketing through social media has become a vital tool for influencing consumer decisions in the digital era. It plays a significant role in brand awareness,

connecting with target audiences, fostering engagement, and driving consumer purchases. Social media enables brands to reach customers quickly and efficiently while building positive relationships, which fosters trust and encourages purchasing behavior.

One key factor contributing to the effectiveness of social media marketing is delivering tailored content and offers that meet consumer needs. User-generated reviews, influencer promotions, and time-sensitive offers have proven highly effective in capturing consumer attention and stimulating purchases. The convenience of accessing information and completing transactions directly on social media platforms also enhances the consumer experience. By reducing friction in the purchasing process, social media creates an environment where consumers can make faster decisions, increasing the likelihood of conversion. Strategically, social media serves as both a tool for creating awareness and a catalyst for driving immediate action. Campaigns that pique consumer interest and urgency—such as limited-time discounts or exclusive offers—are particularly successful in turning interest into immediate purchases.

## **New Knowledge**

**Integration of Multiple Digital Marketing Elements:** This study highlights the comprehensive role of multiple elements—awareness, trust-building, engagement, content marketing, influencer marketing, data analytics, personalization, and promotions—in shaping consumer decision-making on social media. It underscores the interdependence of these elements, suggesting that the combination of these strategies enhances overall effectiveness.

**The Role of Data Analytics in Personalization:** Behavioral analytics are pivotal for creating tailored marketing strategies. Insights derived from user data allow businesses to refine their targeting, delivering customized experiences that align with individual consumer preferences and increase conversion rates.

**Influencer Marketing as a Trust Amplifier:** Influencers play a key role in bridging the gap between brands and consumers by acting as trusted intermediaries. Their endorsements have a ripple effect, encouraging word-of-mouth promotion and reinforcing trust through authenticity and expertise. Active participation, such as commenting, sharing, and voting, fosters community and strengthens brand-consumer relationships. Engagement activities build long-term loyalty and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases.

**Incentives and Promotions as Purchase Catalysts:** Limited time offers and exclusive promotions act as psychological triggers, leveraging urgency and exclusivity to drive immediate consumer action. This strategy is particularly effective in converting consumer interest into actual purchases.

**Social Media as a Dual-Phase Tool:** Social media is both a medium for generating awareness and a catalyst for immediate purchase decisions. This dual-phase capability is an indispensable tool in modern digital marketing strategies.

## Suggestions

To maximize social media's potential as a marketing tool, businesses must adopt a strategic approach that integrates data-driven insights, influencer partnerships, seamless purchasing experiences, and community engagement. These recommendations provide a roadmap for leveraging social media to drive short-term sales and long-term brand loyalty. A crucial first step is to utilize consumer behavior data to craft personalized campaigns. Social media platforms provide rich insights into consumer preferences, trends, and purchasing patterns. Businesses can create targeted and engaging content that resonates with their audience by analyzing this data. Tailoring campaigns to reflect the interests and needs of specific consumer segments ensures that marketing efforts are relevant and impactful.

Another powerful strategy is to partner with influencers and encourage user-generated reviews. Influencers can enhance a brand's visibility and trustworthiness with their established credibility and broad reach. Their authentic recommendations often resonate with audiences, driving higher engagement and purchase intent. Similarly, user-generated reviews provide social proof, reinforcing consumer confidence in the quality and reliability of products or services. Streamlining the purchasing process on social media platforms is also vital for enhancing the consumer experience. Features such as in-app checkout and direct links to products minimize the steps between initial interest and final purchase. This convenience improves user satisfaction and increases conversion rates, making it easier for consumers to complete transactions seamlessly.

Moreover, time-sensitive offers, such as flash sales and exclusive promotions, are another effective tactic for influencing consumer decision-making. These offers leverage the psychological principle of urgency, often called the fear of missing out (FOMO). By creating a sense of scarcity and exclusivity, businesses can prompt consumers to act quickly, accelerating the decision-making process. Building community engagement is equally essential for fostering brand loyalty. Social media provides opportunities for interactive relationships with customers through polls, Q&A sessions, and content-sharing activities. Encouraging participation helps create a sense of belonging and connection with the brand, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases and long-term loyalty. Finally, businesses must continuously monitor and adapt their strategies to stay ahead in the dynamic social media landscape. Regular evaluation of campaign performance, combined with an agile approach to adjusting tactics, ensures alignment with evolving consumer trends and preferences.

Innovation and responsiveness are key to maintaining relevance and effectiveness in this competitive environment.

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