

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PURCHASING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

The impact of social media over consumers' purchasing behaviors has been dramatically increased. Consumers' commentaries, contentment or dissatisfaction on social media about a specific product or a service strongly affect the sales rate. On the other hand, the concept of digital marketing, which is predicated on mutual interaction of business enterprises and consumers have also attracted the attention of researchers nowadays. The aim of this research is to investigate the role of social media on purchasing behavior of consumers through digital marketing. Therefore, 383 social media users have been involved in the scope of this research.

Keywords: social media, digital marketing, consumers, purchasing behavior, Turkey

1. Introduction

Conventional communication methods and strategies have been dramatically decreased with the emergence of internet-based social media which provides a virtual network place that people find opportunity to express their feelings and emotions about goods or service. Negative or positive comments of consumers over social media against a good or service substantially affect consumers' purchasing process. Another important concept is "Digital marketing" which can be described as the usage of internet and information technology to develop and extend traditional marketing functions. Firms' marketing efforts have been re-organized with the emergence of internet, social media, digital marketing, e-marketing, and their related tools. Marketers in order to gain competitive advantage have to designate their 4P (marketing mix) activities in accordance with consumers' expectations and recommendations by social media. Therefore, digital marketing efforts as an interaction of customers and marketers can be significantly and rationally taken into account by considering customers' suggestions about products and service.

This paper has focused on investigating the impact of social media on purchasing behavior of consumers through digital marketing. Therefore, 383 social media users have participated in our survey.

2. Social Media and Digital Marketing

Improvements in internet usage, chat rooms and social media tools have deeply transformed both the ways organizations conduct their business and customers' purchasing behaviors. Therefore, this transformation process requires firms to rearrange and rethink their marketing strategies to gain competitive advantage. The number of internet users has increased tenfold from 1999 to 2013. The first billion was reached in 2005 while the third billion was reached in 2014. (www.internetlivestats.com). According to Statista (www.statista.com), it is estimated that in 2018, there will be around 2.55 billion social network users around globe, up from 1.87 billion in 2014. Hennig-Thurau et. al. (2010), denotes this new decade as the rise of new media which is consisted of websites and other digital communication and information channels in which active consumer engage in behaviors that can be consumed by others both in real time and long afterwards regardless of their spatial location. Therefore importance and development of "Electronic commerce" has rapidly increased. Wen (2000) describes electronic commerce as the buying and selling of products, services or information via computer networks, mainly the Internet.

Tiago and Verissimo (2014) emphasize the migration of real-world social relationship to the virtual world, resulting in online communities that bring people together from across the globe. Lesidrenska and Dicke (2012) also highlight that the way social networking websites and social media enables individuals to communicate in real time with thousands of total strangers as with a single close friend. Mangold and Faulds (2009), on the other hand, stress how social media tools such as blogs, chat rooms, e-mail and social networking websites influence various aspects of consumer behavior including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behavior, and post-purchase communication and evaluation. In addition, Mayzlin (2006) emphasize the importance of chat rooms, recommendation sites and customer review services which allow customers to overcome geographic boundaries and to communicate.

Introduction of web-based social networking and social media tools have created a virtual network place where people freely express their feelings, opinions and messages about a specific product or service (Chung and Austria, 2010). Former studies have proved the importance of consumers' comments on social media over purchasing behaviors of new consumers. On the other hand, Leeflang et. al. (2014) keynotesthat firms are exposed to tremendous challenges with the introduction of digital revolution in society and marketing.

3. Research Methodology

The main focal point of this research is consisted of the latest developments in internet usage and the role of social media and digital marketing on purchasing behaviors of consumers. Social media tools and digital marketing strategies have been vital for marketing strategies in order to gain competitive advantage. Therefore, 383 social media users have been involved in our survey to observe the role of social media on purchasing behavior of consumers through digital marketing.

Convenience sampling method has been used in this research. In addition to demographic questions, 84 expressions have been selected in our survey. Hypotheses of our research are as follows:

- **H1:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and gender.
- **H2:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and gender.
- **H3:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and age.
- **H4:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and age.
- **H5:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and education level.
- **H6:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and education level.
- **H7:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and monthly income level.
- **H8:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and monthly income level.
- **H9:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and level of internet usage.
- **H10:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and level of internet usage.
- **H11:** There is a significant difference between pre-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.
- **H12:** There is a significant difference between post-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient has been used in this research in order to measure the reliability analysis of each expression involved. On the other hand, One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test has been chosen to measure whether the scales of this research fit the normal distribution.

4. Research Findings

Results of reliability analysis of expression of the research according to Cronbach's Alpha coefficient are shown on Table 1. According to the results of reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with the level of 0,70 is accepted to be adequate. Therefore, Table 1 indicates that the expressions involved in this research appear to be higher than 0,70 which proves that scale is accepted to be strongly reliable.

Table1. Reliability Coefficients of Scales of the Research

SCALE	Number of Expressions	Cronbach's Alpha
Social media tools usage level	9	0,68
Blog usage level	4	0,85
Microblog usage level	5	0,93
Social Networks (Facebook, Google Plus) usage level	10	0,88
Media sharing websites (You Tube, Flickr, Slideshare)	5	0,78
Wiki usage level (Wikipedia)	3	0,65
Social marking and labelling websites usage level (StumbleUpon, Reddit)	3	0,85
Online communities (Forums and dictionaries)	3	0,80
Podcast usage level	3	0,80
Artificial worlds (Knight Online, Wow, Second Life) usage level	3	0,84
Expressions to measure pre-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.	10	0,86
Expressions to measure post-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.	9	0,91
Impact of social media tools on purchasing process	9	0,82
Total Expression	75	0,82

According to the results of One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, none of the expressions show a normal distribution characteristics. Thus, non-parametric tests have been used in this research to analyze the data.

Table 2. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and gender.

GENDER	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
Men	192	3,4229	0,81536	0,903
Women	191	3,4131	0,75741	
Total	383	3,418	0,78598	

According to Table 2 it is identified that there is no significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and gender. Therefore, H1 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and gender.

GENDER	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
Men	192	3,4229	0,81536	0,004
Women	191	3,4131	0,75741	
Total	383	3,418	0,78598	

On the other hand, it is clear from Table 3 that there is a statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and gender. Thus, H2 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and age.

AGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-17	6	3,6333	0,72019	0,46800
18-25	353	3,4295	0,75906	
26-35	21	3,1762	1,16357	
36-45	3	3,3333	0,98150	
Total	383	3,4180	0,78598	

There is no any statistically significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and age. Therefore, H3 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and age.

AGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-17	6	3,7593	0,63408	0,49400
18-25	353	3,1763	0,95687	
26-35	21	3,1217	1,25014	
36-45	3	2,9259	1,49209	
Total	383	3,1804	0,97387	

Table 4 shows that there is no any statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and age. Therefore, H4 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and education level.

EDUCATION	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
Primary School	2	4,2500	0,91924	0,07300
High School	11	3,2727	1,00109	
Assoc. Degree	171	3,3164	0,78461	
University	174	3,5356	0,74267	
Masters	24	3,2875	0,90521	
Ph.D	1	3,4000		
Total	383	3,4180	0,78598	

According to Table 5, there is a statistically significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and education level of consumers. Therefore, H5 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and education level.

EDUCATION	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
Primary School	2	4,1667	1,17851	0,03900
High School	11	2,9394	0,92478	
Assoc. Degree	171	3,0507	1,00444	
University	174	3,2867	0,94290	
Masters	24	3,2870	0,83465	
Ph.D	1	5,0000		
Total	383	3,1804	0,97387	

It is visible from Table 6 that, there is a statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and education level of consumers. Therefore, H6 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 7. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and income level.(Turkish Liras)

INCOME	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-500	182	3,3582	0,83017	0,38600
501-1000	142	3,4746	0,68824	
1001-1500	25	3,3880	0,76285	
1501-2000	13	3,2923	1,21275	
2001-2500	10	3,6100	1,71872	
2501-3000	4	3,2750	1,04363	
3001 and more	7	3,9714	0,40708	
Total	383	3,4180	0,78598	

There is no any statistically significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and monthly income level of consumers as shown in Table 7. Therefore, H7 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 8. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and income level.(Turkish Liras)

INCOME	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-500	182	2,9518	0,96082	0,00005
501-1000	142	3,4077	0,88669	
1001-1500	25	3,3911	0,66056	
1501-2000	13	2,9829	1,53280	
2001-2500	10	3,3889	1,20042	
2501-3000	4	2,5833	1,221180	
3001 and more	7	4,1746	0,40500	
Total	383	3,1804	0,97387	

Table 8 identifies that there is a statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and monthly income level of consumers. Therefore, H8 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 9. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and level of internet usage.

INTERNET USAGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-5 hours	81	3,2383	0,77307	0,19312
6-10 hours	59	3,6017	0,73660	
11-15 hours	47	3,5234	0,87755	
16-20 hours	81	3,4309	0,77728	
21-25 hours	18	3,4778	0,78782	
26-30 hours	42	3,3643	0,72543	
31 hours and more	55	3,3982	0,81046	
Total	383	3,4180	0,78598	

Table 9 shows that there is no any statistically significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and internet usage. Therefore, H9 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 10. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and level of internet usage.

INTERNET USAGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-5 hours	81	2,9753	0,97008	0,898
6-10 hours	59	3,2599	0,92010	
11-15 hours	47	3,3570	0,91944	
16-20 hours	81	3,2579	1,06325	
21-25 hours	18	3,2407	0,89235	
26-30 hours	42	3,0952	0,98240	
31 hours and more	55	3,1778	0,95620	
Total	383	3,1804	0,97387	

According to Table 10, it is clear that there is no any statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and internet usage. Therefore, H10 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11. Relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-5 hours	95	3,3663	0,81288	0,63500
6-10 hours	56	3,4589	0,69590	
11-15 hours	53	3,2792	0,84611	
16-20 hours	64	3,4750	0,78760	
21-25 hours	30	3,6067	0,89556	
26-30 hours	22	3,4545	0,70083	
31 hours and more	63	3,4159	0,74794	
Total	383	3,4180	0,78598	

As indicated in Table 10, it is clear that there is no any statistically significant relationship between pre-purchasing process of social media users and social media usage. Therefore, H11 hypothesis is rejected.

Table 12. Relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and level of social media usage.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value
0-5 hours	95	3,1415	0,94704	0,89800
6-10 hours	56	3,2242	0,92198	
11-15 hours	53	3,0650	1,02704	
16-20 hours	64	3,2708	0,97084	
21-25 hours	30	3,2845	0,97989	
26-30 hours	22	3,0606	1,06172	
31 hours and more	63	3,1993	1,01092	
Total	383	3,1804	0,97387	

According to Table 12, it is clear that there is no any statistically significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and social media usage. Therefore, H12 hypothesis is rejected.

5. Conclusion

It is clear that the impact of social media over consumers have been dramatically increasing with internet usage, smart phones, personal computers, mobile devices etc. Thus, consumers have been involved in the process of production and marketing mix of companies as important decision-makers. Customer reviews on internet blogs and reports have been vital for new customers' purchasing decisions.

This research demonstrates the impact of social media and digital marketing over customers' purchasing behaviors. Thus, there is a significant relationship between post-purchasing process of social media users and gender. In other words, marketing departments of companies should focus on gender while deciding their marketing and promotional activities. In addition, educational level and monthly income level of customers have also been statistically significant on social media users' decisions. Therefore, it is essential for companies to realize the social media and other e-marketing tools in order to gain competitive advantage. Results of this research figure out the necessity to focus on gender, educational level and monthly income level of consumers.

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