

[DOI: 10.20472/EFC.2024.021.007](https://doi.org/10.20472/EFC.2024.021.007)

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## **DO SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEWS MATTER? SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES EMPIRICAL STUDY**

### **Abstract:**

In recent years, social media platforms have been increasingly utilised and have become an indispensable communication tool for companies and users. Nowadays, user-generated content is rapidly increasing and users are becoming the main actors by creating and uploading reviews of products and services. The aim of this study is to identify differences between users' motives in relation to their attitudes towards reviews on social media. The data was collected using a questionnaire with a sample of 207 respondents. The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms tool and distributed via social media, Facebook and Instagram. The study was conducted in April and May 2022. Multivariate statistics, factor analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used. In the factor analysis of the SMMA measurement scale, three factors were extracted: the interactivity factor, the informativeness factor and the experiential factor. The analysis of variance showed that there are significant differences between the factors and review intention and the number of reviews posted on social media, which are expected between the informativeness factor and the number of reviews. The results show the influence of reviews and the number of reviews on consumers' purchasing decisions. Further recommendations and implications are discussed.

### **Keywords:**

social media, SMMA scale, purchase behaviour, intention to review

## Introduction

In recent years, most companies have shown an increasing tendency to use social media to engage with their customers. Social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook enable interactive communication between consumers and companies, regardless of time and place. In addition, users share their needs and expectations of their brand with businesses, which could be beneficial for them to build stronger relationships with users that can lead to consumer loyalty (Kim and Ko, 2012). Iankova (2018) stated that the use of social media platforms as additional marketing channels has increased in recent years, fuelled by the ability to reach, and engage with millions of consumers. As a result, many companies are utilising social media for various activities such as brand awareness, reputation building, connecting with existing and potential consumers and promotional activities. Therefore, social media has become increasingly important for companies as an additional platform to show their products (Binwani and Ho, 2019).

Dixon, Martinez & Martin (2015) found that the use of social media to achieve business goals is considered most important tool in digital environment. The increasing use of social media has changed the way companies connect their brand with users. Therefore, Social media marketing allows companies to engage directly with their consumers, build brand awareness and ultimately sell more products. The cross-national use of social media marketing activities (SMMA) has increased in recent years, leading to a better understanding of the differences between cultures and nations. SMMA refers to the process in which marketers achieve engagement, communication and increased sales through social media platforms (Zhang et.al., 2019).

The increasing use of social media marketing activities has attracted many scholars who want to find out what motives drive users' social media behaviour to better explain their use (Kim and Ko, 2010; Kim and Ko, 2012; Yadav and Rahman, 2017; Chen and Lin, 2019). Previous literature has mainly focused on the impact of SMMA on user satisfaction or equity (Kim and Ko, 2012; Seo and Park, 2018; Chen and Lin, 2019). However, there is little research on the role of reviews posted on social media in examining the impact of SMMA on users' attitudes towards review such as number of review and the intention to leave review. The aim of this study is to identify differences between users' motives in relation to their attitudes towards reviews on social media. Therefore, two research questions arise:

- Can social media marketing activities influence users' intention to post a review?
- Can social media marketing activities influence users to give more reviews?

In order to answer previous questions, two hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: Social media marketing activities influence users' intention to review.

H2: Social media marketing activities influence number of reviews and comments posted by users.

The study is organised as follows. The social media marketing activities (SMMA) are analysed in Section 2. In section 3 the research methods used in the study were described, followed by results in Section 4. Finally, the study's contribution to theory and practice, limitations, and recommendations for further research were provided in section 5.

## Literature review

Social media is recognised as an effective platform that contributes to business objectives and strategy, especially in terms of consumer engagement, consumer relationship management and communication (Filo et al., 2015; Saxena and Khanna, 2013). According to Kim and Ko (2010), social media has a strong impact on a brand's reputation, and companies that do not engage in social media are missing an opportunity to reach consumers. Therefore, organisations consider social media as an additional channel for promotional activities and effective communication with their customers (Kohli et al, 2015; Gao and Feng, 2016; Popp and Woratschek, 2016; Harrigan et al, 2017). SMMA offer companies the opportunity to reduce misconceptions about the brand and increase brand awareness by sharing information and ideas from their users (Yadav and Rahman, 2017). Social media also has the advantage of easily recognising consumers who pay more attention to the brand and engaging with them on a personal level (Appel et al., 2020; Bazi et al., 2020). Social media refers to applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, which are fuelled by user-generated content. These applications have a major impact on consumer purchasing behaviour (Kapoor et al., 2018).

Recent studies have found that SMMA can improve customer intimacy, customer trust (Han and Kim, 2020; Kim and Ko, 2010), relationship value, brand value and equity (Kim and Ko, 2012), brand preference, willingness to pay a premium price, loyalty and brand awareness (Kim and Lee, 2019). The functioning of SMMA is based on marketing activities within the social media platform. A study by Kim and Ko (2012) examines the consumer value through SMMA in the context of premium brands and categorises SMMA into five components: Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customisation and E-wom. Yadav and Rahman (2017) developed and validated SMMA scales in five components: Interactivity, Informedness, Personalisation, Trendiness and Word of Mouth and mentioned that these components are best suitable for e-commerce brands in the apparel industry. In the airline's study, SMMA is also examined using the components of interaction, entertainment, trendiness, perceived risk and personalisation (Seo and Park, 2018). In addition, Bilgin (2018) conducted a study on SMMA considering five components to examine its impact on brand awareness, brand image and brand loyalty on social media platforms. Increased consumer awareness and engagement via social media has led to consumers being more powerful and better informed when it comes to making decisions (Brogi et al, 2013). Social media marketing activities have achieved widespread acceptance in business by attracting the attention of companies due to their potential to generate greater consumption (Seo and Park, 2018), as SMMA allow for understanding customers and optimising the company's strategy (Yadav and Rahman (2017); Sharma et al. (2020)).

Social media can be seen as an innovative way for organisations to communicate with their existing or potential consumers in order to build brand engagement with them (Mersey et al., 2010). Communication on social media takes place when users can easily share opinions and comments with other users (Kim & Ko, 2010). Various information posted on social media in the form of reviews or comments have a great influence on consumer attitudes and behaviour. Burmann (2010) and Rialti et al (2017) emphasised that loyal consumers can become brand ambassadors for others who are influenced by the reviews on social media. Therefore, reviews and suggestions posted as recommendations can encourage other users to purchase the reviewed products.

According to Maoyan et al. (2014), the exchange of information on social media is not only from users to users or from users to companies, but companies can also respond quickly to questions or complaints from their existing or potential customers. Consumers can take direct action on social media by providing opinions, comments and suggestions on products or services to help other consumers in their decision making process. Through social media, users can therefore interact directly and share their previous purchasing experiences. Reviews posted on social media can be very helpful to other users as they give them more confidence to make the right purchasing decisions. Consequently, users can be influenced by the content shared by companies on social media, and they will search for detailed information about products that trigger a higher propensity to buy. Social media marketing, which is also determined by consumers' interactions or relationships with companies, can significantly influence and increase consumers' purchase interest (Godey et al., 2016). Many users perceive social media as a valuable platform for obtaining useful information, probably because they consider it a more reliable source of information than corporate-sponsored communication.

Social media helps companies to publicise their local product to consumers at low cost and receive feedback from them (Hanna et al., 2011). Social media reviews are becoming additional resources to support consumer decision making. Social media plays an important role in publishing consumer reviews and recommendations. Consumers use social media as part of the purchase decision process and also to post their own experiences on social media (Drews and Schemer, 2010). Many consumers view social media as an important and credible source of information, especially when considering the purchase of new products (Powers et al., 2012). The high level of interactivity and personalisation in social media could play an important role in customers' attitudes towards companies and their brands. Reviews influence consumer attitudes by providing valuable information about a product or service and increasing consumer confidence in purchasing a particular product (Mulyati & Gesitera, 2020). These reviews can motivate purchases or support consumer decision-making by making them more rational.

The number of reviews is also an important factor in the decision-making process of users on social media. Park et al (2007) pointed out that more product reviews are helpful for the decision-making process of potential consumers. They also stated that users consider the number of reviews as valuable regardless of whether the product is popular or not, and that purchase intention is more dependent on the number of user reviews (Park et al., 2007; Bataineh, 2015). Therefore, the number of reviews can be an indicator of the popularity of a product, and the increase in the number of reviews is associated with an increase in the amount of information (Park and Kim, 2008). In addition, the effect of the number of reviews may depend on the level of expertise, with consumers with low expertise more likely to focus on the number of arguments as they know very little about the desired product. Therefore, the content and conversations that accumulate on social media motivate companies to use social media as a communication tool (Farook & Abeysekara, 2016). It can be concluded that social media creates strong content that consumers value for purchased products. In this context, it is therefore necessary to investigate the importance of review intention and its impact on users' attitudes towards products on social media.

## Methodology

The aim of this paper is to analyse the differences in users' activities in relation to their attitudes towards reviews on social media. For the purposes of this paper, the data was collected by web survey on a sample of 207 respondents. The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms tool and distributed via social media, Facebook and Instagram. The survey was conducted in April and May 2022. The questionnaire was collected using a combination of random sampling and the snowball technique. The Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) measurement scale was created based on a review of the relevant literature, while the other individual statements were modified based on previous literature.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first set of questions related to respondents' characteristics (gender, age, education, and monthly income) and statements about their attitudes towards reviews. Attitudes towards reviews on social media were measured using two statements based on previous literature (Almana and Mirza, 2013, Chetioui et al., 2021). Respondents answered the statements by expressing their agreement/disagreement on a five-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neither agree nor disagree, 4 - agree, and 5 - strongly agree).

The second part of the questionnaire covered users' attitudes towards marketing activities in social networks, which were expressed using a Likert scale. The SMMA (Social Media Marketing Activities) measurement scale with 13 statements was used to analyse respondents' attitudes towards marketing activities on social networks.

Multivariate statistical methods were used in this work, related to the collection and processing of data and the presentation of the statistical data obtained, which were carried out using the SPSS 25.0 computer programme.

## Research results

Before applying a multivariate statistical approach such as factor analysis, the reliability of the SMMA measurement scales must be determined. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the SMMA measurement scale.

**Table 1: Reliability of SMMA measurement scale**

Number of variable	
13	0,917

Source: Research findings (N=207)

The results show high reliability Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.917) of SMMA measurement scale. The following table shows the results of the statistical tests KMO and Bartlett test of sphericity.

**Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test and Bartlett's test of sphericity of SMMA measurement scale**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	,887
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1839,29
Df	78
Sig.	,000

Source: Research findings (N=207)

The KMO value is 0.887 and the Bartlett's test for sphericity was found to be statistically significant ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), indicating that the factor analysis is suitable for implementation. In order to further analyse and group the variables in the measurement scale, the discriminant validity of the measurement scale was assessed using principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation.

To represent a larger number of independent variables with a smaller number of factors, factor analysis was used for the SMMA measurement scale. Table 3 shows the eigenvalues by factor and the explanation of the variance for each factor in relation to the total variance.

**Table 3: Total variance explained for SMMA measurement scale**

Items	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	6,69	51,50	51,50	6,69	51,50	51,50
2	1,53	11,77	63,28	1,53	11,77	63,28
3	1,01	7,78	71,07	1,01	7,78	71,07

Extraction Method: Method Principal Component Analysis

Source: Research findings (N=207)

Three components or variables with eigenvalues above 1 were extracted. Based on the results, it can be seen that 51,50% of the total variance is explained by Factor 1, 11,77% is explained by Factor 2 and 7,78% by Factor 3. Together, these variables explain more than 60% of the total variance. Rotated component matrix is obtained by further analysis. The matrix of rotated factor structure achieves the goal of data reduction and shows the best summary of linear relations. All the manifested variables show significant loading ( $>0.5$ ) that indicate excellent properties of convergent and discriminant validity for SMMA scale.

The results of the factor analysis led to the conclusion that the SMMA measurement scale has properties of convergent and discriminant validity. The purpose of using the factor analysis is fulfilled. From the content of the statements, it can be concluded that Factor 1 is labelled as Factor Interactivity, while Factor 2 is labelled as Factor Informativeness. Factor 3 refers to recommendation functions in social media and is therefore labelled the experiential factor. The purpose of the factor analysis has been achieved and the interpretation of the factors is satisfactory.

After determining the reliability and validity of the measurement scale, the differences between the identified factors and attitudes towards social media reviews that help with purchasing decisions were determined. Table 4 shows the results of the analysis of variance between the factor "compulsiveness" and the socio-psychological variables.

**Table 4: Analysis of variance between factors and consumer intentions to post a review**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
<b>Interactivity factor</b>	83,601	4	20,900	34,493	,000
<b>Informativeness factor</b>	13,245	4	3,311	3,470	,009

<b>Experiential factor</b>	10,453	4	2,613	2,699	,032
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Source: Research findings (N=207)

Based on the research results presented in Table 4, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the factors and the intention to post a review on social media. The results show significant differences between the interactivity factor and the intention to give reviews to help others make purchase decisions ( $p < 0.000$ ,  $F = 34.493$ ). Therefore, users who use social media mainly for communication will post reviews on social media to help other users make purchase decisions. They are likely to believe that posting a review increases trust, reduces perceived risk and creates a positive attitude towards purchasing via social media. The results also suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between being informed and the intention to post reviews on social media ( $p < 0.009$ ,  $F = 3.470$ ). Reviews on social media are reliable sources of information, as users provide details about the features and characteristics of a product, including information about users' actual experiences. Most of these users get the information they need from social media, especially if they already know something about the product or are in the early stages of the buying process. These users are not only interested in the information about the products, but also in the reviews and comments about their buying experience. Therefore, these users believe that they are helping others to reduce the perceived risk of a purchase when they leave a review on social media. The analysis also shows that there is a significant difference between the experiential factor and the intention to leave reviews on social media ( $p < 0.032$ ,  $F = 2.699$ ). There are differences between consumers who search for experiences on social media and the intention to leave a review. This explains that these consumers tend to post on social media, probably because they are aware of the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences about the previous purchase to help other users make a quality purchase decision.

In addition, an analysis of variance (Table 5) is conducted to determine if there is a difference between the factors and the number of reviews that influence the purchase decision.

**Table 5: Analysis of variance between factors and number of reviews and comments**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
<b>Interactivity factor</b>	109,467	4	27,367	57,266	,000
<b>Informativeness factor</b>	9,144	4	2,286	2,346	,056
<b>Experiential factor</b>	17,458	4	4,365	4,676	,001

Source: Research findings (N=207)

The results in Table 5 show that there are significant differences between the extracted factors and consumers' perception of the reduction in the number of reviews on social networks. There is a significant difference between the factor of interactivity and the number of reviews influencing the purchase decision ( $p < 0.000$ ,  $F = 57.266$ ). These customers use social media to have an easy and personalised communication with their favourite brands, so the large number of reviews, comments and opinions from other users seems very useful for the purchase process. Therefore, the purchase decision of these users is essentially determined by the number of revised reviews from other users, as they are likely to perceive such reviews as a credible source of information. The analysis of variance between the informativeness factor and the number of reviews and comments influencing the purchase decision did not reveal any significant differences. Users who perceive social media as a place where useful

information can be found believe that the product they are considering will not influence their purchase decision if there are a greater number of reviews. Furthermore, the results show significant differences between the experiential factor and the number of reviews and comments ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $F = 4.676$ ). From the results, it appears that users have a need to see as many reviews as possible about the desired product when they visit social media for experience and motivation. These users will consider the opinions of other users as they are more inclined to post reviews and recommendations for purchased products to help them take the risk of freely choosing products. It is evident that social media users are more inclined to leave a review about their previous purchase experiences, regardless of the motives for using social media. The number of reviews also has an influence on the purchase decision, except for users who only use social media to get the information they need.

### **Concluding remarks**

Social media has become an effective tool for companies to promote their products and services. They allow businesses to interact easily and quickly with their consumers and achieve greater engagement with their consumers. Not only do they allow companies to communicate with their target audiences, but they can also be used to build brand awareness and increase product sales.

The research findings suggest that the use of social media is influenced by three main factors, namely interactivity, informativeness and experiential factor. The results of this research indicate that there is a difference between the intention to post a review and the extracted factors. The analysis of variance between the extracted factors and the number of reviews and comments shows that there is a significant difference only between the factors interactivity and experiential factor and the number of reviews. There is no significant difference between the informativeness factor and the number of reviews posted on social media. The results show that users intend to post reviews on social media and share their knowledge, beliefs, and opinions about the products they buy. By posting reviews and comments on social media, users can customise their reviews to add value to the user and bring about a positive attitude of the user towards a particular product. Therefore, users provide user-generated content that helps other users to make a well-considered purchase decision. In addition, research shows that many reviews can influence the purchasing behaviour of other users on social media platforms, with the exception of users whose main purpose in using social media is only to obtain the most relevant information. When users provide multiple opinions about a product, they create shared value for other users and obtain more useful and valuable information, which can increase users' willingness to purchase on social media. The findings of our research are in accordance with previous empirical researches (Park et al., 2007; Park and Kim, 2008; Bataineh, Drews and Schemer, 2010; 2015; Mulyati & Gesitera, 2020).

The study contributes to the existing literature by extending the understanding of the impact of reviews and comments on users' buying behaviour on social media. However, there are some limitations in this study. The main limitation of the study was the sample size. Future research should expand the sample and use a random national sample, for example. In addition, the sample was collected using an online questionnaire, which makes it difficult to generalise the results to different regions of the country. Future studies could also include users with different socio-demographic characteristics to see how socio-demographic characteristics influence purchasing behaviour on social media in relation to rating effects. No specific accounts from social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. were used for the study. Therefore, we



cannot distinguish which review on different social media platforms has the most influence on consumers' decisions. Furthermore, the study could include different social media platforms to comprehensively investigate how reviews posted on social media influence users' purchasing behaviour. Future studies may include additional variables to explain consumer behaviour on social media, such as the source of information or the quality of information. Furthermore, studying a wider range of different industries can lead to a deeper analysis to determine the need for ideal forms of communication in different markets.

The results show that reviews and recommendations on social media have an impact on users' purchasing behaviour, which is an indication for companies to develop their communities and activities on social media. The most important business applications are related to the publication of reviews and their impact on purchasing behaviour. For both users and businesses, social media reviews can be an influential source of information on which to build social media brand communities. Companies should also encourage their consumers to share feedback and reviews of their brand on social media to increase brand awareness, generate public interest and increase sales. Therefore, companies need to implement marketing strategies to encourage users to create user-generated content after purchase.

It can be concluded that companies need to understand where users get their information from, how they perceive it and how they communicate on social media. Therefore, social media must be seen as a valuable additional communication channel for companies to achieve their goals and do successful business.

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## Appendix

The measuring scale of SMMA (Social media marketing activities) is shown in table 1.

**Table A1: SMMA measurement scale**

INFORMATIVENESS	Social networks offer accurate information.	Yadav and Rahman (2017); Sharma et al., (2020)
	Social networks offer useful information.	
	Social networks offer comprehensive information.	
PERSONALIZATION	Social media ads provide personalized search for information.	Yadav and Rahman (2017), Sharma et al., (2020)
	Social media ads recommend products based on my needs.	
INTERACTIVITY	Social networks allow me to share and update my content.	Kim and Ko (2010), Cheung et al., (2019)
	Communication via social networks is simple.	
	Communication via social networks is possible anywhere and anytime.	
TRENDINESS	Content on social networks provides up-to-date information.	Yadav and Rahman (2017); Kim and Ko (2010), Cheung et al., (2019), Sharma et al.,
	Content on social networks is	

	trending.	(2020)
	Shopping through social networks is in trend.	
E-WOM	I would encourage friends to buy via social media	Yadav and Rahman (2017); Sharma et al., (2020)
	I would share my shopping experience on social media with my friends	