

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour - A Case Study of M&S, UK

Research Proposal

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1. Introduction

In a global and competitive market, many organisations are adopting methods of digital marketing to attract a diverse range of customers and consumers. The study of Chaffey and Smith (2017) refers that digital marketing is an effective technique to improve sales and engage with the customers cost-effectively. Furthermore, digital marketing also provides several opportunities for brands to grow their presence at a global stage and gain prosperity. Similarly, different brands in the UK are also adopting techniques of digital marketing to influence buying behaviours of consumers (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Therefore, this research will study the digital marketing techniques used by M&S to impact the procuring decisions of their customers. According to the study of Baltes (2015) social media and content marketing is the most imperative characteristic of digital marketing that enables brands to effectively analyse purchase intentions of their buyers.

1.1 Theoretical Background and Research Focus

According to Nizar and Janathanan (2018), the process of consumer buying is based on different social, psychological, and personal factors. Similarly, the study of Pappas (2016) states that consumer buying behaviour and process assists the organisations and brands to identify their market niche. Furthermore, the study of Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch (2017) discusses that through smm strategies brands are capable to identify the process and journey of consumer buying behaviour from recognition to purchase. Buying processes of a consumer is often influenced by a variety of factors such as economic conditions, buying power, and personal likes or dislikes. However, the study of Ashley and Tuten (2015) states that social media can impact the buying behaviour of consumers by utilising the power of content creation. Content creation is a method

which is used creatively to gain interest with the customers and engage them with a specific product. Furthermore, the study of Baltes (2015) also mentions that content creation assists the buyer in purchasing processes and provides a certain level of engagement with the brand. Therefore, the focus of this research is to assess consumer buying behaviour by analysing the case of M&S. According to the study of Dwivedi, Kapoor and Chen (2015) different retail brands are now using methods of digital marketing to connect with the consumers and increase their product sales.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to the study of Kannan (2017), major organisations are now focusing on building their relationships with the customers on digital platforms. Therefore, study regarding DM and its influence on consumer buying behaviour is becoming a necessity (Shaw, 2018). Furthermore, the study of Chaffey and Smith (2017) highlights that major aspect of digital marketing that influences buying behaviour of consumers is social media. However, the problem identified in this study is that literature regarding the effect of SM is limited. Similarly, according to the study of Baltes (2015), content creation and advertisements are known as the most influential tool and technique present in the concept of digital marketing. Therefore, the main focus of this research is to understand the works of literature associated with social media and digital marketing. The study will focus on past researches and will use appropriate methodologies that apply to this study. Moreover, by combining studies from different authors and researches this study will bridge the literature gap regarding digital marketing and create opportunities for researchers and organisations to study the influence of DM on consumer buying behaviour. The study of Järvinen (2016) mentions that analysis regarding the field of DM is required to effectively study its

influence on buying behaviour. Furthermore, the study regarding content creation and marketing significantly lacks academic research because the topic is constantly evolving and maturing (Baltes, 2015).

1.3 Justification and Contextualisation

In a globally competitive and digitally-enabled market today, invariably the footprint of digital outreach has enhanced, where the consumers are increasingly preferring to experience and buy products online (Dasgupta and Grover, 2019). During the past two decades, there has been a swift transition of organisations from traditional marketing to the new digital marketing landscape. Consumer choices and preferences are changed by digital marketing (Rasool, 2015). World over and especially in developed countries like the United Kingdom, where the internet and other digital platforms are in abundance, the consumers are exposed to an extensively high number and qualities of products and online services.

In light of the aforementioned comments by Dasgupta and Grover (2019), the study aims to identify, analyse and evaluate the imprint of digital marketing on consumer behaviour. It is pertinent to assess what are the factors in digital marketing that influence the consumer decision-making process, ultimately altering the consumer buying behaviour. Mahalaxmi and Ranjith (2016) argue that new communication tools have emerged and with the development of new technologies, where these can be termed as digital marketing. They point out that digital channels which are now being used to sell products include social media platforms, for instance, Facebook, Instagram and similar social networks, in addition to the websites of the companies.

1.4 Hypothesis

As evidence for the literature and Research, the impact created by digital marketing on the consumer behaviour needs to empirically assessed, in line with this, the proposed research draws following hypotheses:

H₁: SMM and content marketing lead to increased sales.

H₂: SMM and content marketing creates consumer loyalty.

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The research aims to analyse the impact of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour, with a focus on the case study of M&S, in the UK.

- 1) To identify the benefits of social media marketing on consumer behaviour.
- 2) To determine the impact of social media marketing and content creation on consumer behaviour.
- 3) To assess the challenges of social media marketing faced by Marks and Spencer (M&S).
- 4) To provide recommendations for future strategies of social media marketing related to Consumer Behaviour.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions which this study will attempt to answer, are as follows:

- 1) What are the benefits of social media marketing and content creation on consumer behaviour?
- 2) What are the impact of social media marketing and content creation on consumer behaviour?

- 3) What are the challenges of social media marketing faced by Marks and Spencer (M&S)?
- 4) What future strategies of social media marketing related to consumer behaviour can be opted by M&S?

1.7 Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 of this proposal conducts a brief introduction of the topic and highlights the impact of digital marketing on the buying behaviour of the consumers. Furthermore, chapter 1 also includes the theoretical background and the focus of the research, this section provides detailed background and the focus of this research. Moreover, the section of problem statement identifies the problem present in the research. Furthermore, the justification and contextualisation descriptively provide a detailed justification and purpose of the research. Besides, chapter 1 also provides the hypothesis of the study. Moreover, the aims and objectives of this research define the purpose of this research. Research questions are also developed by using the aims and objectives.

Furthermore, chapter 2 of the literature review provides a detailed discussion of consumer decision-making and buying behaviour. Moreover, the literature review also discusses the digital marketing techniques used by M&S to influence the buying behaviour of consumers. Furthermore, chapter 3 of this proposal describes the research methodology that will be applied in the research. Therefore, the section of methodology descriptively discusses the research philosophy, approach, and design that will be used in this study. Furthermore, the methodology also provides details of the sampling method, technique, and size. Moreover, data collection and data analysis methods are also discussed. Besides, the methodology also highlights the research limitations and ethical considerations of the research. Furthermore, chapter 4 of this study will focus on the thematic analysis for this research. Moreover, chapter 5 of this study will provide a conclusion of the study

and offer proper recommendations for the future strategies of digital marketing that influence consumer behaviour.

2. Literature Review

The study of Grover and Dasgupta (2019) highlights that digital marketing in this day and age is considered as the key factor in influencing product sales. Similarly, according to the study of Shaw (2018) brands often use different digital marketing strategies and methods to attract customers and create brand loyalty among them. Among different aspects of DM, SMM and content creation are the most effective techniques used to attract customers Kannan (2017). According to the study of Ashley and Tuten (2015) buying behaviour of consumers can be subjected to different social media channels. Various brands now offer shopping services on social media websites such as Facebook and Instagram (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Companies and brands use social websites to attract customers by creating engaging content in the form of videos, podcasts, images, and online surveys. Study of Alalwan et al. (2017) mentions that by marketing their products on different social media channels brands can reach a diverse range of customers and consumers across the globe. As per the study of Dahl (2018), social media has a strong global reach and brands are using different approaches to capitalise the medium. However, the study of Stephen (2016) argues that even though social media is a competent tool to attract customers, but consumers often get influenced by their buying processes. Furthermore, the study of De Mooij (2019) also states that consumer buying behaviour is often influenced by experiences gained from their environments. Study of Murphy and Dweck (2016) states that purchasing behaviour of the consumers is based on their emotions and reasoning. The economic situation of a country or a market is more likely to influence the purchasing behaviour of the consumers. The study of

Taufique et al. (2016) suggests that in a positive economic environment consumers are more confident in their buying and purchasing decisions. Similarly, personal preferences, values, likes, and dislikes are also a key factor that influences buying behaviour of the consumers. According to the study of Godey et al. (2016) social media campaigns and content might influence purchasing behaviour, but likes and dislikes are more influential in determining the buying processes.

Study of Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) discusses that engaging content can create an influence on the buying processes of the consumer. Content creation can be in the form of advertisements and videos that can catch the attention of the audience and influence their buying behaviour (Kee and Yazdanifard, 2015). Similarly, social media posts and content that can connect with personal, social, and psychological areas of buying behaviour can generate increased levels of sales. According to the study of Pažėraitė and Gedvilaitė (2016) impact of engaging content can influence the social factor of buying behaviour among consumers. Furthermore, influencing each of the consumer buying processes from need recognition to post-purchase evaluation often guarantees increased return on investment (Andaç, Akbiyuk and Karkar, 2016). Different social media tools and techniques can engage with the customer constantly which results in increased levels of interest among buyers and consumers (Kilgour, Sasser and Larke, 2015). Reviews from social media connections and influencers are also essential in impacting the buying processes of consumers (Grover and Dasgupta, 2019). Study of (Khamis, Ang and Welling (2017) mentions that SM influencers have a robust following on different social mediums and by mentioning about a certain brand can increase sales and following of that particular brand.

In light of the facts aforementioned, the study will focus on the case of Marks & Spencer's (M&S), one of the biggest and most affluent retailers in the UK. This will help to understand the practical implications of digital marketing and the way it helps to influence consumer behaviour.

M&S Strategic Report (2019) suggests that it has made significant progress to digitalise marketing and has particularly focused on the shopping content on its website and thereby has made a conscious effort to improve its e-commerce. The digital marketing turnover started when M&S moved away from the Amazon platform, to completely revamp the website, its digital tablet and mobile application. The M&S Strategic Report (2019) agrees that the digital capabilities of the M&S have in the past not been able to keep at par with the digital marketing, and therefore special attention is being paid to improve online consumer experience and digital outreach.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy often adheres to the basic and pragmatic needs of research (Pham, 2018). This study will utilise pragmatism paradigm because it aims to view objective as well as subjective research assessment. According to the study of Stuhr (2015), the pragmatic philosophy refers to the mix of different philosophies, with objective and subjective interpretations. Pragmatism philosophy will be used because the study comprises of the consumer behaviour and its change with the regards to digital marketing, it will seek the opinion of the consumers and the Digital Marketing Managers.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Hashemnezhad (2015), there are two methods to express 'reason', consisting of the inductive and deductive approach, the inductive approach is to reach general from more specific research, while the deduction starts with the more general and ends with the specific. This research will utilise the deductive approach. Since the research will seek the opinions of the

consumer and managers to determine the impact of DM on customer behaviour so the theory of positivism will be implicated. Rubin and Rubin (2011) mention that naturalistic researchers, come with the presumption that reality is not stagnant but rather constantly evolving and this can only be known and understood indirectly, using interpretations from the people with different perspectives of the truth.

3.3 Research Design

The central categorisations of research design are qualitative or quantitative. Rahman (2017) points out that the qualitative approach is based on constructivism, referring to gather non-numeric data. This type of data may be collected from various sources, previously available in the domain of the research, for instance, research studies, and literature reviews. Whereas the quantitative research design primarily seeks statistical data analysis, for establishing a connection between the known factors and ones discovered during study. The proposed methodology for this research will be a mix methods approach, where both qualitative and quantitative designs go parallel to reach the empirical conclusion, as it is often seen as a much rigorous methodology to meet objective and subjective ends for the research. Zohrabi (2013) affirms that when the main instruments used in the mixed method researches consist of closed or open-ended questionnaires, interviews and observations, these different methods of data gathering and acquiring information need to supplement each other so that to significantly enhance the validity and dependability of the data.

3.4 Sampling Method, Technique, and Size

Ott and Longnecker (2015) argue that researchers should draw representatives or

Specific samples from the target population, with similar characteristics for the research purpose. The sampling methods mainly comprises of a) probability and b) non-probability. While within the non- probability sampling, there is a convenience sampling technique. This study will utilise convenience sampling to convene this examination. Convenience sampling is an appropriate technique as it permits the researcher to collect the data while being considerate of the times and resource constraints (Etikan et al., 2016). In this study, 100 consumers, exposed to digital marketing with 10 managers from M&S are the potential research participants, which will respond to the research queries set forth by the examiner. The total sample size for the research will be 110 participants, where 100 consumers will be surveyed through a questionnaire and, 10 Managers will participate in the individual interviews designed for the participants.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary data collection method will be used in the study. The data gathered first hand or which is new in totality; is collected through primary methods, for instance, interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Furthermore, if the data is available in previous research studies and databases e.g. journals, articles, publications and other online sources, it may be collected through secondary sources. Lampard and Pole (2015) suggest that the collected data should be adequate and under the data analysis requirements, for authentic and rigorous results. This research proposal will use mix methodology, whereby data will be collected by the mentioned sources.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study will apply both mixed method data through open/close-ended questionnaires and interviews. For the quantitative data, different statistical tests including regression and correlation will be put forth by the researcher to analytically assess the relationship between the variables, whereas SPSS will help to aid in reaching a meaningful conclusion. The qualitative data will be collected through interviews of the research participants, for this purpose common themes will be derived from within the responses, with the help of the thematic analysis.

3.7 Research Limitations

The proposed research study has certain limitations, which will be taken into account by the Researcher. Only a limited number of Managers and consumers can be surveyed and interviewed because of the demographical, geographical, time and resource constraints. Furthermore, transformation of data is also required for the integration of mixed data during data analysis. Research was also limited because of the inequality between both methods would result in inadequate data for the study, which can be damaging for the results.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial to any research study, the researcher exercises ethical considerations while conducting this research. To collect responses from the research participants by structured/semi-structured interviews, a consent form will be designed, for ensuring voluntary participation from the respondents. The research participants and their respective responses are kept confidential at all times, to allow their independent opinion to be reflected. In this study, the data will remain confidential and the participant information is to be kept anonymous. The research

participants have a choice to withdraw from the research at the time of choosing, without any prior terms of conditions. Lastly, at the research participants will be kept aware of these ethical practices and their rights, as granted by the researcher.

4. Time Scale (Gantt chart)

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10
Topic Research										
Proposal										
Chapter: Introduction										
Chapter: Literature Review										
Chapter: Research Methodology										
Chapter: Data Collection										
Chapter: Data analysis										
Conclusion and Recommendation										

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Interview Questions

- In your opinion why do you think that digital marketing is capable of attracting customers?
- As a Marketing Manager do you consider content creation and social media marketing as an operative method of communication with the consumers?
- As a consumer do you get influenced by the quality of content used for marketing by the brands?
- How is M&S preparing to innovate its marketing strategies to attract consumers with their social media content?
- What is the specific thing that attracts you or catches your attention as a consumer which influences your buying behaviour?
- What are the particular strategies which you as a Marketing Manager think that are important in Digital Marketing?
- Do you prefer shopping online or in physical stores?
- How much influence does content marketing and social media marketing have on consumer buying behaviour?
- Do you prefer buying products from brands that are active on social media and produce engaging content?
- Is social media marketing considered as a key factor in improving product sales and reaching consumers?