

Chapter 3

Social Media, Marketing Practices, and Consumer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at the phenomenon of social media and its consequences on marketing and consumer behavior. To express an opinion, the authors first define the notion of “social media,” review their different types as well as the decisive moments that marked their history. Then, they focus on the influence of these media on marketing practices by referring to the changes that have affected the marketing approach from the stage of the market study to the stage of control of marketing actions companies. Finally, they are very interested in the changes that have affected the traditional decision-making process and are announcing useful recommendations to respond to this set of changes.

INTRODUCTION

Since Tim Berners-Lee’s shocking invention in 1989, the Web has transfigured the Internet to the point that it has become a synonym for some. Being simple to use, the web has been massively adopted by the general public and its success has generated the need to make it evolve since its first version 1.0 which dates from the 90s. This first version, also called traditional web, is static. It focuses on the distribution of information and does not solicit the intervention of users. Thus, according to this form of the web, the first e-commerce sites were product-oriented sites whose main purpose is to present the products to consumers by offering them online access to information about these products. But the individual consumer of this content could not interact with the website in question. It is compared in its non-interactive design to a television program.

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Nevertheless, in the early 2000s, new applications appeared on the Web giving users the ability to interact and generate content themselves. As an indication, the YouTube app allows everyone to upload a video for free broadcast worldwide. Other media and applications also appeared as blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networks, social bookmarks, microblogging, etc. Through these applications, the web 2.0 has totally changed perspective and has become a social web that favors the sharing and exchange of information and content (text, video, images or other). Therefore, the intervention of consumers is tolerated or even desired and their opinions are now solicited permanently. They then enrolled in a virtual socialization that offers them a growing pleasure. Little by little, social media has become an integral part of the lives of consumers who now use them to connect with friends and family, keep up to date and even entertain themselves. That's why around 4 billion people around the world today use social media.

The interest and commitment shown by consumers to social media has not been without consequences for marketing. Companies have had to adapt their marketing strategies to exploit the potential offered by these media, particularly to inform, seduce, convince and retain their customers. At the same time, these media have had a very significant impact on consumer behavior, in particular their motivations and brakes with respect to buying online and the way in which their decision-making process works. This process seems to undergo a real metamorphosis that should be considered more closely and draw conclusions and useful recommendations.

More research that delve into aspect of consumer behavior and psychology in the digital economy is deemed necessary (Ling Chang, Ling Tam, & Suki, 2016; Nathan, Fook Chiun, & Suki, 2016; Suki, 2016). Accordingly, this study focus on the rise of social media and the consequences of this boom on marketing and consumer behavior. To do this, they first come back to the definition of social media and their classification in order to clarify the reader about what is called "social media". Then, they will focus on the influence of these media on marketing practices and on the various stages of the decision-making process.

SOCIAL MEDIA - DEFINITION, TYPOLOGY AND HISTORY

What is Social Media?

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".

In other words, Social media refers to all sites and web platforms that offer so-called "social" features to users. These platforms are based on the collaborative creation of content as well as the exchange of information between individuals (forums, blogs open to comments, etc.). Social media is understood as the different forms of online communication used by people to create networks, communities and collectives to share information, ideas, messages and other content, such as videos.

From this definition, two important characteristics of social media are to highlight:

1. Social media includes online communication, which means that the story of social media can not begin before the invention and the widespread adoption of the Internet.

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