# The Impact of Social Media on Customer Buying Behaviour

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## Abstract

*With the development of globalization and the increasingly fierce competition in the world market, most companies are seeking new business opportunities on a global scale. The development of information technology promotes the use of social media. The increase in a large number of online users makes social media an emerging purchase channel. For companies, how to use the advantages of social media to attract consumers to buy the company's products and services has become one of the most important challenges. In this light, this research aims to determine the factors that influence the purchase behaviour of consumers on social media. This article studies four basic elements, namely brand awareness, social media word of mouth, social media advertising and social media influencers. By using multiple regression analysis method to analyse 123 questionnaires, the survey results show that social media influencers have a significant relationship with consumers' buying behaviours. The results of this research can help companies use social media to develop strategies and increase consumers' willingness to buy.*

*Keywords: Social media; Purchase behaviour; Brand awareness; Word of mouth; Advertising*

*JEL Classification: M30, M31, M37*

## 1. Introduction

Today, websites and social media have become effective means of communication in the digital age. The use of social media is one of the most popular online activities. Social media has been used by billions of people around the world, and it has quickly become one of the decisive technologies of this era. At the beginning of 2020, there were 3.80 billion social media users worldwide, equivalent to more than 48% of the global population. It is estimated that by 2025, this number will increase to nearly 4.41 billion. (Statista, 2021). The definition of social media is very diverse. Social media is an online media where users can easily participate, share and create content in the form of blogs, social networks, Wikis, forums and virtual worlds. Another opinion is that social media is an online media that supports social interaction. It uses Web 2.0-based technology to transform communication into interactive dialogue (Wijaya et al., 2019). Social media is highly interactive, providing marketers with a variety of ways to contact and interact with consumers. Since a large number of potential audiences spend a lot of time using social media on various platforms every day, social media has become a new marketing channel for businesses (Appel et al., 2020).

Social media is cheap, easy and practical. In addition, social media provides cheap alternatives for analysis, publishing and content management, tracking conversions and target consumers (Ahmad et al., 2019). Websites and social media, as a marketing communication tool, play an important role in influencing customer behaviour (Suryani et

al., 2020). In addition, traditional mass production pursues low cost per product but at the same time sacrifices individualization. Social media is bringing more popular products to consumers and opening up new business space for enterprises with more personalized development, lower cost production, and higher return on investment marketing.

In the non-network era, consumers want to collect product information mainly through commercial sources and public sources, and they are over-reliant on advertisements. And advertising is dominated by enterprises, consumers can only passively accept, and the channels controlled by enterprises are opaque and unreliable. Although personal sources and experience sources are credible and closer to reality, the amount of information is limited. In the Internet age, the "personal source" and "source of experience" for purchasing related information are realized through the Internet. People express their understanding and knowledge of products through blogs, forums, social networks and other social media. Information from "personal sources" and "experience sources" is gathered on the Internet, the amount of information increases, and the authority increases. Once the amount of information and authority are established, its influence on product selection and purchasing decisions is self-evident.

Although scholars and practitioners have conducted research and study on this topic in the past research, the research results obtained are still lacking in this field. And because of the fast-paced and constantly changing nature of social media and the changes in consumers' buying behaviour using social media. As a result, many previous studies are not so time-sensitive. Based on the latest changes and data, this research studies the factors that influence social media on consumer buying behaviour. The research mainly includes four influencing factors; brand Awareness, social media word of mouth, social media advertising and social media influencers.

The main objective of this research is to find out the influence of social media on consumer buying behaviour. This research will adopt the four elements of social media. This is a comprehensive elaboration, collecting data and conducting research and analysis in the form of a questionnaire. Since there are not many studies combining social media and consumer behaviour, this article hopes that the research results can analyse the factors that affect consumer behaviour, and then help companies formulate social media marketing strategies.

This research addresses the elemental analysis of the influence of social media on consumer behaviour. This research collects relevant data through questionnaires so that it can examine the associations between multiple samples and settings to ensure validity and reliability. In addition, through the statistical analysis of the four elements and consumer behaviour, the analysis and research of the data from a new perspective, this research has obtained accurate results. This research provides a more solid foundation for subsequent research, as well as ideas and theories for different research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Brand awareness

The increasing use of social media has led to the pursuit of consumer brand awareness and the establishment of a link between brand awareness and buying behaviours becoming more

and more important. When consumers make purchase decisions, the brand image and reputation of the product is an important factor. A good brand image and reputation can prompt consumers to associate the good quality of the product, thereby reducing the risk of purchase (Weiss et al., 1999). Researchers are increasingly aware of the social nature of brands and the importance of brand relationships in creating value and supporting consumer decision-making (Hutter et al., 2013).

With fierce competition, consumers have many brand opportunities and choices, and social media will affect their perception of different brands when making purchasing decisions. When deciding which product to choose, "consumers first gain knowledge and knowledge about the product, and then have a positive or negative feeling about the product, and finally act by buying, using or rejecting and avoiding the product" (Hutter et al., 2013, p. 344). Consumers tend to hold positive attitudes towards products with high brand image and reputation, and are more inclined to make positive comments. Moreover, consumers are more inclined to recommend brands with good images and good reputations, because recommending a good product or brand to everyone is more likely to be affirmed by everyone on the one hand, and accumulate social capital in the network: on the other hand, it can reduce the recommendation The risk of personal reputation damage caused by mistakes. On the contrary, brands with lower image and reputation are vulnerable to the negative evaluation of these brands because consumers have less awareness of them. Once a company or brand is caught in a certain reputation crisis, consumers are prone to dissatisfaction and spread negative information about the brand. This research attempts to test the application of brand cognition in e-commerce and its influence on user purchasing behaviour. Brand recognition will increase consumer brand recognition and promote consumer purchases. From the above literature review, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Brand awareness is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.

## 2.2 Social media WOM

Word-of-mouth marketing refers to online and offline informal interpersonal communication between consumers about a product or brand (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). According to Kimmel and Kitchen (2014), WOM is the main source of information for consumers to make purchasing decisions and to create attitudes, views and expectations about brands, products and services. It influences the product awareness, selection, post-production and purchase evaluation stages of consumer decision-making. Due to the development of information technology, the relationship between social media and word of mouth ushered in a new development. Online e-WOM is the review and rating of various products, brands and services by Internet users on review sites (Bronner and Hoog, 2010). Online evaluation affects the purchase decisions of many consumers to a large extent, and is also an important element that constitutes a product (brand) reputation.

Interpersonal interaction can change or modify consumers' purchasing decisions by collecting information from others or the Internet. Social media WOM can be distributed in the comment section of social media platforms or e-commerce websites in a variety of ways; gratuitous word-of-mouth that is not published by company advertisements and public relations is considered more trustworthy. Consumer-generated content is generally

considered to have nothing to do with commercial impact, so consumer reviews have great authenticity. This trust enables consumers to access forums, blogs, and other unbiased social media resources to gather information to make purchasing decisions. Through electronic word of mouth, customers can interact more with other consumers and respond faster to product information. When product or service information is not clear, consumers tend to seek information and references from sources other than official product information sources (Sa'ait et al., 2016).

The study of consumer buying behaviour in the social network environment should start from the study of online word-of-mouth. This article analyses the psychological factors that influence consumers to use social media to spread brand (product) information, and extracts the corresponding marketing signals, aiming to help companies formulate marketing strategies suitable for social media. This research believes that e-WOM can spread more information to consumers, thereby affecting consumers' buying behaviours. From the above literature review, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2: Social media WOM is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour

## 2.3 Social media advertising

Brands tend to gain a competitive advantage on influential social media, and the old methods of marketing and advertising rarely apply. Modern consumer groups rarely watch advertisements as they did in the past, and companies must use new marketing strategies. Online research that provides responsive tools to understand consumer perceptions through social media has become an effective mechanism to support new marketing strategies (Fulgoni, 2014). Due to the nature of interactivity and modern technology (Web 2.0), social media advertising has humane elements of communication, interaction, and sharing between enterprises and users. Social media advertising can be defined as "a type of online advertising that contains user interactions that consumers agree to display and share. Social media advertising has become a new way to promote digital interaction. For example, the sports brand Adidas (Adidas) announced that "digital interaction is essential to us" and announced that its marketing efforts will only focus on digital and social channels (McCarthy, 2017). The use of social media for promotion and communication can shape the consumer's decision-making process (Tuten and Solomon, 2017).

Digitization has changed the shopping experience of users, especially the shopping experience of young consumers who have traditionally interacted with customers. As for social media advertising, if people think that targeted advertising is more useful and valuable, they are more likely to be attached (Dwivedi et al., 2017). Therefore, these companies are shifting their promotions online to influence consumer behaviour. Social media advertising provides companies with many advantages that are conducive to influencing customer behaviour and improving relationships with customers, changing their attitudes, perceptions, and brand loyalty. It also helps the company increase its customer base and create a competitive advantage in the market. Obviously, people are using social media extensively. Therefore, consumers are more likely to be affected by the advertisements displayed on their social media pages. Companies broadcast advertisements targeting potential markets by segmenting the market according to various demographic,

geographic, psychological, and behavioural aspects (Riegner, 2007). The convenience of social media advertising, convenient access, innovation, rich information and prices are the key factors that motivate customers to buy. Another study investigating customers' online purchases found that customers' attitudes and intentions in online shopping malls are largely predicted by the perceived usefulness of online advertisements (Ahn et al., 2004). In conclusion, this study found that social media advertising has a positive effect on influencing consumer behaviour. From the above literature review, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Social media advertising is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour

## 2.4 Social media influencers

In the ubiquitous Internet era, social media influencers have become active third-party supporters (Freberg et al., 2011). Social media influencers (SMI) use blogs, tweets and other social media to shape the attitudes of their audiences. Social media influencers are usually users who have millions of followers on well-known social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. There are many studies that recognize the possibility of forming an alliance with SMI to promote a brand or organization. Influential people marketing emphasizes the use of influential people to convey brand information in order to reach target market segments. Social media influencers usually interact with their followers by regularly updating them with the latest information (Liu et al., 2012). Information posted by social media influencers is generally considered more reliable and attractive to consumers. Compared with celebrity endorsement promotion strategies, the use of social media influencers is considered more credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable because they tend to build rapport with consumers.

Social influencers have a great influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by information from many different sources in society. A credible spokesperson usually has a positive impact on consumer perceptions (Goldsmith et al., 2000). In today's society, social influencers, such as Youtubers, celebrities, official account authors, and brand advocates, all influence customers' purchasing decisions and are generally regarded by consumers as experts in their field (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). In addition, the research of Ohanian (1991) shows that influential people who are considered experts are often more convincing and can drive consumers' buying behaviours. Although the research on social media influencers is insufficient, there has been a lot of research in the past. It has been found that there is a positive correlation between source attractiveness and consumer attitudes and buying behaviours (Petty et al., 1983; Erdogan, 1999). Attractive social media influencers can influence consumers with positive results and increase consumers' desire to buy. This research supports this argument and makes a hypothesis.

H4: Social media influencers is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.

As a result of the literature review presented above, three hypotheses were established as follows:

H1: Brand awareness is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.

H2: Social media WOM is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.

H3: Social media advertising is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.

H4: Social media influencers is positive and significantly related to the customer buying behaviour.
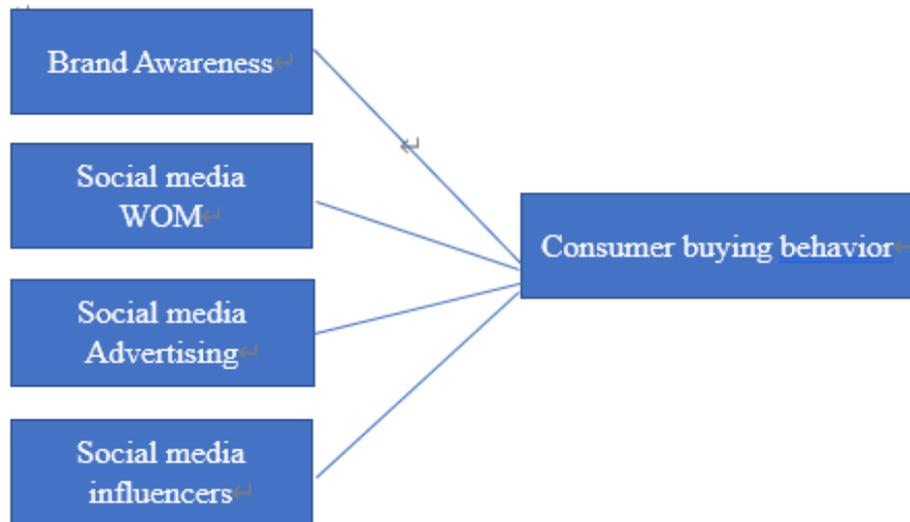


**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework

## 3. Data and Methodology

### 3.1 Sample

The data in this study aims to analyse the impact of brand awareness, social media WOM, social media advertising and social media influencers on consumer buying behaviour. The questionnaire was used as the main data collection tool.

The research team focuses on consumers who use social media. In order to ensure the comprehensiveness of the research, this research has set up a very complete demographic question, aiming to draw samples from different consumer groups. The final data contains 123 samples.

This study adopts a convenience sampling and non-probability sampling method because convenient sampling facilitates sampling. Convenient samples are to make it easier for people to participate in research and to explore the group of study more easily. At the beginning of the data collection phase previously, the interviewees voluntarily participated in the survey. In addition, respondents were told that their data will be highly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. This questionnaire clarifies the importance of the respondents to the current research and asks them to give true answers to the survey items

### 3.2 Measurement

The study is a quantitative investigation study using causality methods. This study uses statistics, mathematics and calculation techniques to examine the influence of brand awareness, social media WOM, social media advertising and social media influencers on consumer buying behaviour. In order to get the most accurate results, this study used SPSS software for data analysis, and used Excel charts to display the results of the data analysis. The questionnaire was rated according to Likert's five-point scale. The anchor points range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Likert's seven-point scales including 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 moderate,4 agree and 5 strongly agree. The questionnaire of this study consists of two parts. The first part is the demographic part. Questions include the age, gender, income level, occupation and education level and of the respondent. This part is a screening question used to determine the basic information of the respondent. The second part is divided into five section includes questions about brand awareness, social media WOM, social media advertising and social media influencers and customer buying behaviour.

## 4. Result and Discussion

## 4.1 Descriptive analysis

In this study, respondents were divided into five different characteristics: income, gender, age, education level, and occupation. According to Table 1, the demographic data of the respondents can be obtained. In terms of gender, as shown in Table 1, 49.6% of the respondents are men and 50.4% are women. The respondents come from four age groups. 84.6% of the respondents are 15-25 years old, 9.8% are 25-35 years old, 4.1% are 35-45 years old and only 1.6% are 45-55 years old. There are no respondents of other ages in this study. The change in age percentage shows that people between the ages of 15-25 and 25-35 pay more attention to social media. In terms of income level, 45.5% of the respondents are below RM1,000, 23.6% of the respondents are between RM1,000-RM1999, 14.6% of the respondents are between RM2,000-RM2999, 9.8% of the respondents are between RM3,000-RM3999, and 6.5% of the respondents are RM4,000 and above. According to the income data, most of the respondents' income is not high, which is consistent with the age and educational background data, indicating that the majority of the respondents in this study are students. In terms of occupation, 74.8% of the respondents are students, 11.4% of the respondents are from private sector, 12.2% of the respondents are doing own business. Only 1.6% of the respondents are from government/semi-government. Educational data show that 11.4% of respondents have a high school degree, 12.2% have a professional degree, 3.3% have a certificate/diploma degree, 68.3% have a bachelor's degree, and 4.9% have a postgrad's degree. The percentage of educational attainment indicates that the main population of this study is the respondents with a bachelor's degree, followed by those with a high school degree and a professional degree. There are fewer respondents with other degrees. This is also consistent with the age stratification of the respondents. Through demographic data, this study will get the basic information of the research group. The descriptive statistic is shown in Table 2.

**Table 1**: Demographics of respondents

| Features | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Gender: | | |
| Male | 61 | 47.30% |
| Female | 62 | 48.10% |
| Age: | | |
| 15-25 | 104 | 80.6% |
| 26-35 | 12 | 9.3% |
| 36-45 | 5 | 3.9% |
| 45-55 | 2 | 1.6% |
| Income level: | | |
| Below RM1,000 | 56 | 43.4 |
| RM1,000-RM1999 | 29 | 22.5 |
| RM2,000-RM2,999 | 18 | 14.0 |
| RM3,000-RM3.999 | 12 | 9.3 |
| RM4,000 and above | 8 | 6.2 |
| Occupation: | | |
| Private sector | 14 | 10.9 |
| Government/Semi-government | 2 | 1.6 |
| Own business | 15 | 11.6 |
| Student | 92 | 71.3 |
| Education level: | | |
| High School | 14 | 10.9 |
| Professional | 15 | 11.6 |
| Certificate/Diploma | 4 | 3.1 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 84 | 65.1 |
| Postgraduate Degree | 6 | 4.7 |

**Table 2**: Descriptive statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | 123 | 1 | 2 | 1.50 | 0.502 |
| Age | 123 | 1 | 4 | 1.23 | 0.598 |
| Income level | 123 | 1 | 5 | 2.08 | 1.258 |
| Occupation | 123 | 1 | 4 | 3.50 | 0.987 |
| Education level | 123 | 2 | 6 | 4.43 | 1.131 |

Reliability analysis was performed to check the internal consistency between variables and check whether variables of the same dimensions measure the same infrastructure (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). Table 3 presents the results of the reliability test. The Cronbach's alpha of the factors in Table 3 could be considered as acceptable since all are above 0.7.

**Table 3:** Reliability statistics of extracted factors

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items | Number of items |
|---|---|---|
| 0.717 | 0.647 | 6 |

Pearson's correlation was performed in this study to estimate the correlation of brand awareness, social media WOM, social media advertising, social media influencers and customer buying behaviour. The results are presented in Table 4. All independent variables have substantial relationship and positive correlated with dependent variable except brand awareness. The correlation of social media advertising to customer buying behaviour is 0.532, the correlation of social media influencers is 0.747 which is high correlated with customer buying behaviour. The social media WOM has weak correlation coefficient which

is 0.109. The brand awareness is negative correlated with dependent variable. The correlation coefficient is -0.076.

**Table 4:** Pearson's correlations

|  | Brand awareness | WOM | Advertising | Influencers | Buying behaviour |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand awareness | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| WOM | -0.090 | 1 |  |  |  |
| Advertising | -0.013 | 0.030 | 1 |  |  |
| Influencers | -0.084 | 0.165 | 0.565 | 1 |  |
| Buying behaviour | -0.076 | 0.109 | 0.532 | 0.747 | 1 |

Table 5 and 6 shows the model summary and ANOVA of the entire relationship. The F-value of 40.050 (p-value <0.001) implies that at least one of the variables of the study is significant. Thus, it confirms the fitness of the model. Analysis shows that the R-squared of the model is 0.576. This can be explained as the independent variable of the test explained 57.6% of the variance, which can be considered moderate. The moderate R-squared also indicates that there is a moderate relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In addition, the adjusted R square is 0.561, indicated that the model represents 56.1% of the total variance.

**Table 5:** Model summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.759 | 0.576 | 0.561 | 0.716 |

a.   *Predictors: Socialmediainfluencers, Brandawareness, SocialmediaWOM, Socialmediaadvertising*

**Table 6:** ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 82.192 | 4 | 20.548 | 40.050 | 0.001 |
| Residual | 60.540 | 118 | 0.513 |  |  |
| Total | 142.732 | 122 |  |  |  |

a.   *Dependent Variable : Buying behaviour*
b.   *Predictors: Socialmediainfluencers, Brandawareness, SocialmediaWOM, Socialmediaadvertising*

This study uses multiple regression to discover the importance of each independent variable in predicting the dependent variable. Multiple regression can also reveal the most important factors affecting the dependent variable. Based on the results, hypotheses 4 is supported. H1, H2 and H3 are not support.

According to the results in Table 7, the p-values of brand awareness, social media WOM and social media advertising are all larger than 0.1. Only the p-value of social media influencers is less than 0.001. This means that only social media influencers are significant, all other independent variables are not significant. The absolute value shown in the table represents the beta coefficient of each variable. The results show that there is a positive correlation between social media influencers, social media advertising and customer buying behaviour. In addition, it can be seen that social media influencers have the highest beta coefficient, which is 0.635. The coefficient of social media advertising is the second strongest factor at 0.190. Based on the results, it could be concluded that only one out of the four hypotheses proposed earlier are accepted. Table 8 summarizes the result of all the hypotheses in this study.

**Table 7:** Regression analysis

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Beta | Std. Error | Beta | |
| Constant | 1.169 | 0.620 | 1.152 | 0.062 |
| Brand awareness | -0.030 | 0.093 | -0.019 | 0.751 |
| WOM | -0.009 | 0.102 | -0.005 | 0.931 |
| Advertising | 0.190 | 0.086 | 0.162 | 0.228 |
| Influencers | 0.635 | 0.072 | 0.655 | <0.001 |

**Table 8:** Summary of hypotheses

| Hypotheses | | Status |
|---|---|---|
| H1: | Brand awareness is positive and significant related to the customer buying behaviour. | Not supported |
| H2: | Social media WOM is positive and significant related to the customer buying behaviour. | Not supported |
| H3: | Social media advertising is positive and significant related to the customer buying behaviour. | Not supported |
| H4: | Social media influencer is positive and significant related to the customer buying behaviour. | Supported |

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Social media influencer is an important marketing method for enterprises. It can promote the company's products and services through the social media influencer's network popularity. Social media influencers are usually users who have millions of followers on well-known social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. They use blogs, tweets and other social media to shape the attitudes of their audiences. Cooperation with social media influencer can usually bring great profits to the company, because they have great user stickiness. In the context of this research, four factors are considered to have an impact on consumers' buying behaviour, namely brand awareness, social media WOM, social media advertising and social media influencers. The multiple regression analysis conducted shows that social media WOM, social media advertising and social media influencers and customer buying behaviour are positively correlated. High brand awareness does not necessarily increase consumer purchases. Nonetheless, the other two factors studied - social media WOM and social media advertising -although the relationship is positive, they have no significant impact on consumers' buying behaviour. And social media influencer has a significant positive impact on consumers' buying behaviour.

Based on the research results, companies may consider some influences and suggestions to strengthen cooperation with social media influencers. First of all, because social media influencers have been proven to play the most important role in influencing consumer buying behaviour, companies must formulate corresponding strategies. As mentioned earlier, from the background of this research, companies first choose the platform to focus on. During the research phase, look at the types of influencers they are interested in. Companies can look for influencers based on budget and product type, such as celebrities with a large number of followers or micro-influencers with fewer than 2,000 fans. Respondents in this study are mostly low-income student groups and mostly use Instagram. Based on this information, companies can choose influencers who have a large number of

followers on the Instagram platform. Secondly, social media advertising is also of great importance to consumers' buying behaviour. Social media advertising is a more effective way to cultivate potential customers and convert them into loyal customers. Social media advertising is more popular than traditional media because, unlike other advertising platforms, social media allows you to interact and interact with consumers. Third, although there is no significant relationship between brand awareness and consumer buying behaviour. But maintaining a good brand effect and social media reputation will usually have a positive impact on consumers' buying behaviour. Consumers will have a good impression of a company with a good brand image (Ambolau, 2015).

This research is not without limits. The first limitation of the study is that the proposed study only considers the positive aspects of the four factors of social media on consumer buying behaviour, while ignoring the negative aspects, which may be very important. Focusing only on the positive side and ignoring the negative side of the construct can be risky, so future researchers need to include this restriction. For example, companies that pay too much attention to advertising effects and celebrity effects while ignoring the quality of their products will result in negative product reputation and reduce consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Secondly, our research also has limitations in terms of research sample. The estimates are based on observational studies that may be biased. There are no respondents who are older than 55 years old. In addition, the percentage of education level indicates that the focus of this study is on respondents with a bachelor's degree, while fewer respondents have a master's, doctoral, and other degrees. Because in our research, it is difficult to find data sources for some older respondents and PhDs. These are the limitations of our research, and we need to find some possible methods in future research to overcome these limitations.

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