

## The Effect of Social Media Advertising Properties on Customer Buying Intention (Case Study: Consumers of Cosmetic Products)

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### ABSTRACT

Social media is a powerful tool for marketing and advertising campaigns. Companies can use social media to target and influence customer attitudes. Social media advertisings are characterized by several properties, including interactivity, informativeness, perceived relevance, performance expectations, and hedonic motivations. These properties can affect customer buying behavior. However, it is especially challenging to design social media advertisings in a way that entices customers to buy something.

This paper aims to study how social media advertising properties affect buying intention. The statistical population includes consumers of cosmetic products in the City of Isfahan/Iran who are exposed to social media advertisings. Given the infinite nature of the population, a convenience sample of 384 people is drawn. A questionnaire is used as the data collection instrument. To analyze the data and test the hypotheses, Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) is applied using SPSS and Smart PLS software packages. According to the results, interactivity, hedonic motivations, performance expectations, and informativeness positively influence buying intention. However, perceived relevance does not affect buying intention.

**Keywords:** Social Media Advertising properties, Interactivity, Hedonic Motivation, Performance Expectation, Perceived Relevance, Informativeness, Buying Intention.

### INTRODUCTION

It in its broadest sense, social media can be described as an almost infinite collection of user-generated content and interactions (e.g., edits, labels, social interactions, and open memberships). This umbrella definition encompasses any number of technologies, including public chat rooms, public wikis, open online communities, social networking sites, and public download groups.

In a more specific sense, social media refers to a group of web-based applications developed based on the ideological and technological foundations of the web to enable the creation and distribution of user-generated content. The concept has become an increasingly integral part of our daily lives. Therefore, modern consumer behavior is inevitably influenced by the myriad of social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, and Twitter (Hawkins and Vel, 2013).

Furthermore, social media has transformed the way individuals interact with friends, private organizations, and government agencies. The effect is so extensive that social media platforms have become virtual locations where people,

organizations, and even governments are able to interact commercially, socially, politically, and educationally to share their thoughts, products, and services with each other (Alalwan, 2018).

Companies can leverage social media in many ways, including advertising, electronic word of mouth, customer relationship management, and electronic branding. Advertising on social media has steadily grown in significance to become one of the most popular and useful tools in the social media marketer's tool box. However, there are growing concerns about the viability of social advertising as a marketing strategy, and social marketers are facing harder challenges in planning and designing successful social media campaigns (Kamboj et al., 2018). Therefore, it is essential to identify effective methods to influence customers on social media.

In recent years, social media has become a significant base for conducting marketing activities. Organizations are now pouring resources into advertising on social platforms. Organizations are continually looking for ways to analyze the performance of social media advertising while striving to design campaigns that maximize customer acquisition and incentivize to buy.

Running social advertising campaigns has become a highly complex task that requires various experts and managers to become actively involved in the project. Therefore, research needs to focus on how customers understand and react to social media advertisings. One of the primary reasons to use social media in the communication process is to inform the consumer's decision-making process. This paper aims to identify the predictors of buying intention in customers exposed to social media advertisings. Moreover, it aims to determine whether or not social media advertising properties influence consumers' buying intention.

## **BACKGROUND**

Social media allows brands to communicate with consumers and promote products faster and at lower costs. The rapid adoption of social media around the world has created a new platform for companies to attract consumers to their brands, products, or services (Farzana et al., 2014). Therefore, advertising, sentiment analysis, public relations, marketing communications, and product and customer management are receiving significant attention from many manufacturers and marketing managers (Aker and Topcu, 2011).

Social networks, and particularly social advertisings, will play a critical role in the future of marketing. Social advertisings are a relatively new phenomenon that must be investigated to gain further perspective and insights (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). According to Knoll (2015), nearly 45% of studies on social media advertising in 2013 lacked a robust theoretical foundation. This figure decreased to 22% in 2014, which indicates the formation of early theoretical frameworks.

Investigating the different aspects of social media advertising is particularly important in predicting customers' viewpoints and intentions about the products and services offered in advertising. This has attracted a great deal of attention from marketing researchers to look at the properties and factors associated with social media marketing. There have been numerous studies on the effectiveness and efficiency of various activities and aspects of social media advertising. Several studies have established the impact of informativeness on the value of social media advertising, which, in turn, has been linked to consumer attitudes (Logan et al., 2012). Another feature of social advertisings

was identified by Jung (2017). The author examined how perceived relevance predicts advertising attention or avoidance. Perceived advertising relevance was highly correlated with increased attention to advertisings.

As a technology, social media is associated with high levels of interaction; therefore, interactivity has been identified as an important feature in social advertisings. Interaction with websites and social networks is one of the advantages of using the internet and its potential for engagement. Therefore, the concept of interactivity in social media has received significant research attention from scholars in various disciplines (Kim, 2011). In fact, two-way communication is defined as a two-way flow of information that allows the user to respond. In other words, social networks provide rapid responses, real-time feedback, and quick processing of transactions.

User control is another fundamental element of the interactive structure. A further aspect of interactivity is "demonstrability," meaning that information is presented using humanlike characteristics (Abdullah et al., 2016). In addition to functional benefits, social media creates motivational and hedonic values. Hedonism is defined as the value that a user obtains from mental experiences such as entertainment and enjoyment. It presents a more holistic appraisal of the user's interactive experience and highlights significant outcomes in the consumption process (Chen et al., 2017).

Moreover, entertaining, delightful, highly visible, or emotional content is more likely to entice conversation and information sharing (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Therefore, emotional messages can incentivize customers to send messages. In online environments, content often represents users' emotional states, such as appraisals and judgments about a topic or product (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Hedonism includes motivations that pertain to the emotional and mental aspects of shopping using social media. Hedonism refers to the social and emotional value derived from shopping. With respect to physical purchases, both utilitarian and hedonic perspectives have been considered (To et al., 2007). Customers are increasingly demanding value not only from the product but also from the shopping process (Allard et al., 2009).

According to Hooli et al. (2005), business performance is composed of three components:

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customer performance, financial performance, and market performance. While market performance emphasizes market share and sales, customer performance cares about customer loyalty and satisfaction, and financial performance works to maximize profit and profit margin (Azizi et al., 2015). Venkatesh et al. (2013) defined performance expectations as the degree to which one expects performance to improve through the use of technological innovations. Other studies define the concept as the perceptions of those who believe performance will improve through system application. For instance, in a study by Faqih and Jaradat (2015), performance expectations were found to have a substantial effect on consumer behavior in mobile commerce. Therefore, it is a strong predictor of buying intention and higher willingness-to-pay when buying cell phones (Sair & Danish, 2018).

Relevance is defined as the degree to which consumers perceive the action or situation to be personally relevant, or whether the action or situation influences them in some way to achieve their personal goals or values (Celsi and Olson, 1988). In a similar vein, relevance in the context of social media advertisings is defined as the degree to which consumers perceive social media advertisings as being personally relevant (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Many studies have reported the significance of creating social media advertisings that are personally relevant to the preferences and needs of consumers. With respect to the importance of perceived relevance, in general, social advertisings and social business must be relevant to the users.

This relevance is determined based on both technical and non-technical factors. For instance, to meet their expectations, consumers need access to product details (Akman and Mishra, 2017).

Each social medium has a specific part to play in providing information to consumers. Informativeness is essential to costumers because it enables them to receive information and messages. The essential impact of this structure on customer attitudes has been noted in other studies (Lee and Hong, 2016).

Online buying behavior and intentions are complex phenomena that are influenced by many factors. The consumer buying decision is a part of the shopping behavior, which has always been a hot topic among researchers (Karimi, 2013). Online shopping is inherently different from its traditional counterpart. The internet affects all stages of the consumer buying process. Indeed, the internet has changed consumer behaviors by offering different benefits such as convenience to search for information and evaluate different options and purchase. Therefore, this environment can have a significant impact on consumer decision-making processes (Choudhury and Karahanna, 2008).

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the previous review of the literature, the conceptual model of the study is shown in Figure 1. The model incorporates the different factors that affect consumer buying intention.

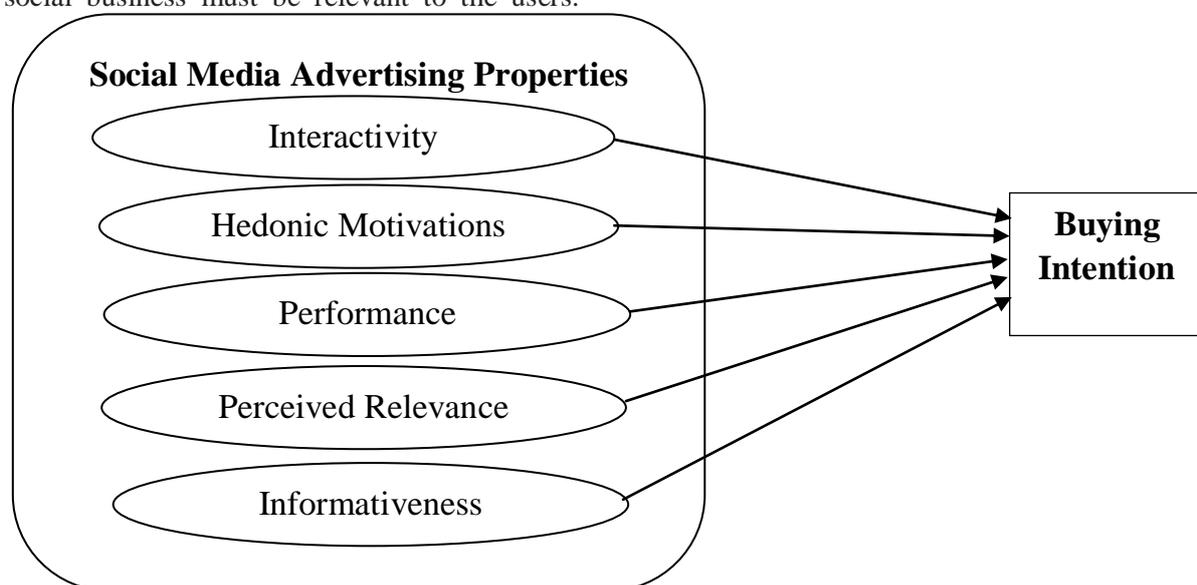


Figure1. Conceptual model

## **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **H1: Interactivity Influences The Buying Intention Of Cosmetic Products.**

Interactivity is a critical aspect of social media. The effective role of technological characteristics increases the horizon of people's perception, thus increasing their ability to further awareness of the information. Interactivity significantly changes the nature of communication, and it can change the information among all the parties (Sundar et al., 2014).

The concept of interaction has been discussed from different perspectives. While some authors define it as a process of engagement and communication between individuals, others are focused on the technological aspect (i.e. interacting with computers, laptops, and smart phones).

Conceptually, engagement is defined as the extent to which one can control the context and information of a media platform (Kioussis, 2002). It refers to the ability of a media platform to offer a simultaneous connection. A large number of studies point to the role of interactivity in social media and its impact on consumer buying intention.

For instance, Lee (2005) reported that interactivity has a significant effect on customer buying intention in mobile commerce.

Furthermore, Abdullah et al. (2016) suggested a significant relationship between perceived interactivity and customer review intentions in accommodation websites.

Similarly, interactivity in social media has an indirect impact on user participation in e-commerce websites. According to Wang et al. (2013), it plays an essential role in shaping online buying behaviors. Also, customers are less likely to trust websites that are not interactive (Chen et al., 2010). Thus, we hypothesize that interactive social media advertisings positively influence customer buying intentions.

### **H2: Hedonic Motivations Influence The Buying Intention Of Cosmetic Products.**

Venkatesh et al. (2012) proposed a novel model to study hedonic motivations based on the customer approach. The model incorporated intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to determine customer buying decisions.

Social media are widely recognized as new entertainment platforms where one can satisfy hedonic needs (Alalwan, 2018). Specifically, customers are more attracted to social media advertisings because of their mood and attraction levels. Therefore, customers can have more hedonic experiences on social media.

Recently, an empirical study confirmed the effect of intrinsic motivation (entertainment) on social media advertising values and customer attitudes (Sharif et al., 2017). Similarly, hedonic motivations are positively correlated with consumer attitudes toward social media advertisings (Can & Kaya, 2016). Therefore, hedonic motivations can play an important role in predicting customer response to social media advertisings.

### **H3: Performance Expectations Influence The Buying Intention Of Cosmetic Products.**

In the context of online studies, if individuals perceive social media as productive, beneficial, and time-saving, they are willing to engage with and adopt these media (Alalwan, 2018). With respect to social media advertisings, individuals with the highest perceived utility and value are more likely to identify with advertisings (Chang et al., 2015). The role of utility as a factor that is similar to performance expectation has been explored, and its impact on customer buying intention has been confirmed (Chang et al., 2015). Online customer buying intention and behavior are mainly predicted based on perceived utility (Ahn et al., 2005). Recently, Lin and Kim (2016) found more evidence to support the role of perceived utility in shaping customer attitudes toward social media advertisings and buying intentions. Moreover, advertising values have been linked to customer attitudes toward social media advertisings.

### **H4: Perceived Relevance Influences The Buying Intention Of Cosmetic Products.**

Using social media platforms, advertisers are better equipped to differentiate and customize the types of messages and content based on customer preferences (Zhu and Chang, 2016). Customers are mainly aware that if levels of personalization are perceived as stated by researchers, they are more loyal toward that product (Laroche et al., 2013).

Zhu and Chang (2016) define relevance in the context of social media advertisings as the extent to which consumers perceive advertisings

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as personal or helpful in achieving their goals and values. Numerous studies establish the significance of using relevant content that is aligned with customer requirements and preferences.

For example, Pavlou and Stewart (2000) examined the impact of personality on customer buying intention, trust and satisfaction. Customers are more likely to show an interest in advertisings and feel a stronger connection if the advertisings are geared toward their preferences (Pechmann and Stewart, 1990). Recently, Zhu and Chang (2016) demonstrated the role of perceived relevance in customer buying intention via the mediating role of self-awareness.

Based on this discussion, we hypothesize that customers value social media advertisings that are relevant to their goals and preference. They are also more likely to respond to such advertisings when buying.

### H5: Informativeness Influences The Buying Intention Of Cosmetic Products.

Informativeness is defined as the extent to which a company can present sufficient information so that customers can make better buying decisions.

The concept of informativeness has been measured as a constructive structure in various studies (Pavlou et al., 2007). Indeed, it pertains to the sender's ability to provide logical

responses to customers because it allows the customer to acknowledge the reception of information and messages (Lee and Hong, 2016). In the context of social media studies, Taylor et al. (2011) reported a positive link between information and customer perceptions. Another study by Phau and Teah (2009) highlighted the role of informativeness in shaping customer attitudes toward cell phone advertising.

In a similar vein, Lee and Hong (2016) demonstrated the positive role of informativeness in customer responses to social media advertisings, as well as buying intention products. Finally, Kim and Niehm (2009) showed a positive relationship between the quality of information available on the website and the intention of selling and customer loyalty.

Therefore, the amount of information in social media advertisings can encourage customers to buy, and it can enhance their buying intentions.

## METHODOLOGY

### Population and Sample

The statistical population in this study includes consumers of cosmetic products in the city of Isfahan who bought as a result of being exposed to social media advertisings. As the population is infinite, a convenience sample of 384 individuals was drawn. Table 1 presents a demographic breakdown of the participants.

**Table1.** Participant demographics

	Dimension	Percentage	Frequency
Gender	Male	38.5	148
	Female	61.5	236
Age	<20	15.9	61
	20-30	42.7	164
	31-40	21.6	83
	41-50	10.2	39
	>50	9.6	37
Education	High school or below	4.7	18
	Undergraduate degree	28.4	109
	Master's degree	51.6	198
	Ph.D. or higher	15.4	59

### Instruments

The required data were collected by conducting a field study using a questionnaire to measure the two variables of the study: social media advertising properties and buying intention. Advertising properties are measured on five dimensions: interactivity, hedonic motivations,

expected performance, perceived relevance, informativeness, and buying intention. The questionnaire consists of six scales and 18 items (Table 2). Answers are given on a five-point Likert scale. Content validity was established by consulting with field experts and university professors. Furthermore, reliability was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha

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coefficient, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Instrument scales and reliability*

Main Variable	Dimension	Items	Source	Cronbach's alpha
Social media advertising properties	Interactivity	1 – 4	Jiang et al. (2010)	0.710
	Hedonic motivation	5 – 7	Venkatesh et al. (2012)	0.823
	Performance expectation	8 – 11	Venkatesh et al. (2012)	0.703
	Perceived relevance	12 – 14	Zheng et al. (2009)	0.823
	Informativeness	15 – 16	Logan et al. (2012)	0.816
Buying intention	-	17 – 18	Duffett (2015)	0.803

### Analysis

Table 3 shows the path coefficients. A negative value suggests that a variable negatively impacts another, while a positive value suggests a positive impact. Given the fact that all path coefficients are positive, all the independent variables positively affect the dependent variable. The highest value (0.328) pertains to the impact of informativeness on buying intention. *H3. Hypothesis analysis results*

Path	Coefficient	Significance	Result
Interactivity → Buying intention	0.134	2.569	Supported
Hedonic motivation → Buying intention	0.191	3.137	Supported
Performance expectation → Buying intention	0.168	2.967	Supported
Perceived relevance → Buying intention	0.047	0.678	Rejected
Informativeness → Buying intention	0.328	4.293	Supported

H1 assumes that interactivity has a significant influence on buying intention in social media advertisements for cosmetic products. Based on the path coefficient (0.134) and *t*-value (2.569), sufficient support for H1 is found at  $p < 0.05$ . Our finding is consistent with Alalwan (2018), Hudson et al. (2016), and Hajli (2014).

H2 pertains to the impact of hedonic motivations on buying intention of cosmetic products. The path coefficient (0.191) indicates that hedonic motivations influence buying intention. Given the obtained *t*-value (3.137), H2 is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . A number of authors, including Anderson et al. (2014) reported similar findings.

H3 focuses on the relationship between performance expectations and the intention to buy cosmetic products. The path coefficient (0.168) and *t*-value (2.967) suggest that H3 is supported. This is consistent with Alalwan (2018).

H4 suggests that perceived relevance positively affects the intention to buy cosmetic products.

intention while the lowest value (0.047) pertains to perceived relevance and buying intention.

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) fit is determined using *t* values. If the coefficient exceeds 1.96, the hypothesis is supported with 0.95 confidence. As seen in Table 3, H1, H2, H3, and H5 are supported ( $p < 0.05$ ), but H4 is rejected.

The path coefficient (0.047) indicates the presence of a positive effect, but given the *t*-value (0.678), the hypothesis is not significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Our findings are in contrast to those of Hudson et al. (2016). This discrepancy can be attributed to the differences in the studied populations.

Finally, H5 pertains to the influence of informativeness on the intention to buy cosmetic products. The path coefficient (0.328) indicates that informativeness positively affects consumer buying intentions. Furthermore, given the *t*-value (2.967), the hypothesis is supported at 0.95 confidence. This is consistent with Mohajeri et al. (2016).

### CONCLUSION

As a result of H1, social media marketing managers at cosmetic companies need to consider adding interactive elements to their campaigns and focus on interactivity as a strategy to engage potential customers.

H2 suggests that individuals with dominant

hedonic tendencies are more likely to be influenced by social media advertisements that focus on hedonism. Therefore, marketing managers at cosmetic companies are recommended to strengthen buying intention by focusing on hedonic motivations. This can be in the form of alluring graphic design or small complimentary gifts.

It is also suggested that cosmetic companies increase their investments on social media advertising and identify innovative ways of promoting their products. These innovations must be geared toward hedonism in order to enhance customer buying intention. Special offers and lotteries on social media can also prove useful. Finally, different products must be promoted to age-appropriate groups.

As suggested by H3, cosmetic brand managers need to focus not only on product quality but also on customer expectations. They must seek constant feedback from customers. This can be achieved by mentioning communication channels in social media advertisements and actively seeking out customer comments.

H4 pertains to the impact of performance expectations on the customer buying decision. Therefore, in addition to focusing on product quality, managers need to seek regular customer feedback. One way to do this is by using social media as a communication channel.

As a result of H5, it is recommended that cosmetic brand managers rely on appropriate methods to distribute information about their products in relevant media.

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