An Investigation on How Social Media Influences Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Case Study of

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1.0. Introduction

Today, business organisations cannot ignore the influence of social media because social media is a proven tool to influence customer behaviour. Just two decades ago social media has emerged. Today, 93.2% of people in the UK have daily access to the different social media platforms for sharing thoughts, messages, videos and images, etc. (Allden and Harris, 2018). The rapid expansion of internet and smartphone technologies is working behind the flourishing social media excess of a vast number of adult people. Nowadays, people are passing a significant amount of time on social media whether at home or outside. The consumer is the powerful stakeholder of every organisation because the services and products of a company are manufactured to satisfy the target consumer needs. Wang (2016) expressed that a revolution has happened in promotional activities after social media emerged as a powerful tool for influencing customer behaviour. Social media is an excellent media that helps companies to understand the customer response through evaluating the comments and opinions shared by the target customers. Costa Coffee is a popular UK based coffee house chain to which consumer behaviour of buying is a core concern. The company is used different media to influence the buying behaviour of people to achieve target sales and business growth. Costa Coffee is spending millions of pounds on promotion campaigns so that it is essential for the company to understand the effectiveness of social media influence on customer buying behaviour. Therefore, an investigation is required to understand how social media influence the target customers of Costa Coffee to decide to have the company's products.

2.0. Literature Review

According to Zinkhan (2015), consumers are considered the most vital stakeholder for all companies because the perception of consumers towards particular service or product of a firm is essential to achieve business objectives. Hanaysha (2016) argued that companies are using different media to influence consumer perception so that target consumers are encouraged to purchase the product or service of a firm. Different methods are used by companies to influence consumer buying behaviour such as TV ads, newspapers, internet ads, digital platforms, radio ads, magazines, and social

media. Traditional mass media like electronic and print media is mainly used by companies for changing consumer perception and influence buying behaviour. Harris and Rae (2017) argued consumers today are preferred to communicate more about a product or service before making a purchase decision. Traditional media cannot properly assess customer feedback whereas social media is helped companies to assess consumer feedback.

Social media concept

Social media was emerged to build networking among people. Social media refers to the mechanism of building connections and relationships between individuals online (Eraut, 2018). Social media is a rapidly expanded invention that gained popularity among people of all ages and gender. Some highly familiar social media platforms are Facebook, tumbler, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Reddit, and LinkedIn etc. Hapsari and Dean (2017) argued that social media is not only used for communication with friends but also is used to express information, share videos and photos, share product reviews and interest etc. Social media is the less costly and highly effective tool to connect with communities across the world through online all the time at home and outside. Bradley (2015) claimed that social media facilitates and increases communication and information flow through online to the vast number of audiences. Thus, conversion can happen on social media has impacted domestically and internationally. According to Dayal (2016), perception, attitude, behaviour, and activities of individuals that visit online for sharing knowledge, opinion, experience, and information publicly using social media. Related interest people are engaged with that information so that the perception of people can be understood.

In the present business environment, networking is not limited to individuals. Churchill (2017) claimed that all companies are wanted to create strong networking with the customers for the intention of creating a potential range of customer pool. In this circumstance, social media is the first choice for all companies because attachment with the target customers can be done closely by social media. Burrow (2016) argued that traditional media is only expressed the product features to the customers for influencing buying behaviour. But customers want to get some answers that cannot be possible to

answer through traditional media like TV and radio ads, newspaper or flyers, etc. Since social media is a communication and networking tool so target customers can easily ask questions through comments and companies can reply to customer feedback. Also, social media helps companies to gather knowledge about the expectation of customers from the company's product and their user experience about a particular product. The popularity of social media is increased to the companies regardless the size of the business has happened for the advantage whereas companies cannot understand the customer perception or opinion from traditional media (Edward, 2018). The popular social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. where almost all companies have an official page to communicate with customers through publishing product information. According to Smith and Zook (2018), the expenditure of companies on the social media platform to communicate with target customers was increased by 33% last three years. A recent survey indicates that 87% adult people in the UK have social media account on Facebook and Twitter, 76% UK people visit social media at least one time per day and 47% UK people are taken buying decision from the user experienced shared in the social media platforms (Hoque, 2018). Costa Coffee has verified page on different social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook those are used to create networking with customers and understand the customer response of their products and services. Social media is also used by Costa Coffee to identify and reach the target customers easily at a low cost.

Consumer buying behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour is a complex issue for all companies because the perception and expectation of consumers are changed over time. According to Kweskin (2015), consumer buying behaviour is indicated the process of deciding to purchase or consume specific products or services. Consumer buying behaviour analysis is a key issue for a company because if a company fails to meet consumer expectations, consumers will reject the product or service offered by the company. In other words, consumer buying behaviour is one of the key issues that decide how consumers will react towards the products or services of a company. Consumer buying behaviour decides the success or failure of a product or service.

Factors affect customer buying behaviour

Lewis and Shoemaker (2016) expressed that consumer buying behaviour is involved with different factors such as cultural factors, perception of customers, economic condition, social factors, personal factors, and others. Cultural factor is a considerable factor that affects consumer buying behaviour. Weber (2017) argued that culture is influenced the customer perception towards a product and companies need to focus on the culture where the company is selling products. For example, people in some countries prefer to drink tea mostly and some countries people prefer to drink coffee. The UK people prefer to drink coffee every day so that they frequently visit coffee shops to drink coffee. Costa Coffee is using social media to influence customer behaviour to taste the variety of coffee flavours of the company.
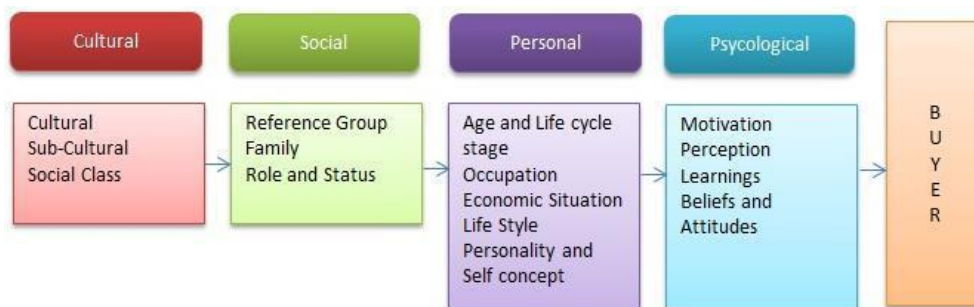

Figure: Factors affecting buying behaviour

Source: (Slideshare.net)

Arslan and Zaman (2018) claimed that the economic condition of individuals is highly affected by buying decision making of products or services. When people have good economic conditions, they can make quick decisions to purchase compared to the time when people have a weak economic condition. Allden and Harris (2018) argued that influence the customer buying decision is comparatively difficult in low economic condition because customers generally buy essential products in low financial condition. In this circumstance, Costa Coffee provides price-off offers on social media to influence the buying decision of target customers. Social factors are also considered to companies that affect consumer buying behaviour. Wang (2016) argued social factors like status, family, friends, and reference groups have powerful roles to influence the

buying decision of customers. Social media is playing the role of the reference group to influence consumer buying behaviour. For example, a common behaviour of the majority of people is sharing their experience on social media they get from different activities. As a result, when a customer visits Costa Coffee shop, drinks coffee and shares a post on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, it has influenced significantly to take the buying decision of customers. A good post of a customer on social media will increase the positive perception about a product or service and a negative post will give a bad feeling about a product or service. According to Zinkhan (2015), personal factors e.g. age, occupation, gender, etc. influence the buying behaviour of customers. A common belief is that kids or adolescents are not buyers because they are involved in earning activities. But, kids or adolescents are a big influencer in buying behaviour because they influence their parents or elderly family members to buy desired products. Also, the age of customers is a powerful factor that influences buying behaviour. For example, Coffee is generally drunk by adult people so that Costa Coffee is targeted the adult customers on social media and attempts to influence target customer's buying behaviour through sharing different posts and information.

Consumer buying process

The consumer buying process is followed by some steps. Harris and Rae (2017) expressed that consumer buying decision starts with need recognition. That means a consumer feels particular needs and wants to meet the needs. After identifying the needs, a consumer search information about the product or service that may fulfill their needs. Hanaysha (2016) argued that the success of a product or service of an organisation is mainly decided in the information search phase. Companies are like Costa Coffee's active presence on social media helps customers to gather information easily because customers today are using social media as a major tool for gathering information. After that consumers evaluate the information and develop alternatives that can fulfill their needs. In the next phase, consumers make buying decisions from the alternatives. And finally, consumers conduct an assessment of the purchase and evaluate the level of satisfaction from the purchase (Eraut, 2018). It is considered that social media has a big role in every stage of buying decisions. Often an individual needs

are created by companies through social media activities. For example, an individual may drink coffee at home but an attractive post of Costa Coffee on social media can create the need to visit the shop of the company and drink coffee.
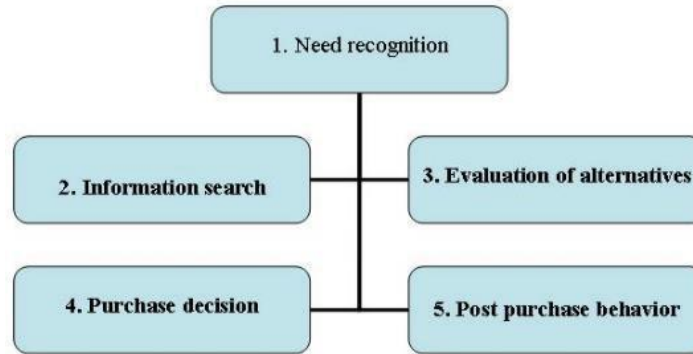

Figure: consumer buying process (Kotler, 2011)

Social media influence on buying behaviour of consumers

Today, all companies including Costa Coffee are investing a large amount of money to promote their products and services through a social media campaign. Companies are founded on social media to reach target consumers than other traditional print and electronic media. Bradley (2015) argued that consumer buying behaviour is an important concern to all companies because the success or failure to create appeal about a product or service is highly dependent on consumer behaviour. Companies are taking various strategies to influence consumer buying behaviour whereas social media is considered a significant tool. Churchill (2017) explained that people today are actively influenced by social media about different products or services where people share their experience of particular product or service use. Thus, consumer buying behaviour is influenced by those reviews expressed by different users of products.

3.0. Research aim and objectives

Aim: Research aims to express the main intention of conducting a study. This research aim is to investigate to understand how social media influence the target customers buying behaviour of Costa Coffee.

Objectives: From a research work, different additional outcomes can be achieved that are expressed by research objectives. Dayal (2016) argued that the objectives of research must be achievable and consistent with the research aim. The key objectives of the research work are:

- To learn about the consumer buying behaviour and social media.
- To understand the relationship between consumer buying behaviour and social media.
- To know about the potential influence of social media of Costa Coffee's business activities.
- To understand how social media influence the buying behaviour of consumers of Costa Coffee.

Research questions and hypothesis

Research questions: This research will find out the answer to the following questions:

- Is the consumer buying behaviour of Costa Coffee impacted by social media?
- Is consumer perception is shaped through social media?
- Is Costa Coffee's sale increased through social media influence on consumer buying behaviour?

Hypothesis: The research hypothesis is given below:

H1: There has a direct influence on social media on the buying process of the consumer of Costa Coffee.

H0: There has not the direct influence of social media on the buying process of the consumer of Costa Coffee.

4.0. Research Methodology

The research methodology is the method of doing a study scientifically to ensure the validity and reliability of the research outcomes (Cooper and Schindler, 2016). The methodology of this research is explained below:

Research philosophy: According to Jogulu and Pansiri (2016), research philosophy is indicated the way to gather, analyse, and use of data about a phenomenon. Epistemology and ontology are two philosophical dimensions. Epistemology indicates the beliefs to make, understand and knowledge use that is seemed to valid and reliable. Epistemology is used observable phenomena to gather data. According to Castro and Kopak (2014), ontology philosophy indicates the way of reflection and interpretation of reality and its nature with fact. The ontology includes social actors to meet objective or subjective intentions.

Interpretivism and positivism are two dimensions of ontology. Interpretivism develops social phenomena that are created perceptions and consequent actions of social actors. Johnson and Christensen (2013) argued that the basis of interpretivism is a subjective interpretation that includes reality related ideas and theories. On the other hand, positivism considers the reality of social actors of the external and independent social entities for fulfilling the objective purposes (Saunders, 2016). Positivism is used statistical factual data to investigate the research questions. Therefore, the positivism philosophy will fit and will take in this research work.

Research method: Qualitative and quantitative are the two most used methods of research. Weber (2017) said that the qualitative method of research is exploratory, subjective, and fit for theory-based research works. Qualitative method is unstructured or partially structured that uses theories, non-statistical data, group discussion, observation, interview, and others.

The quantitative method is included in statistical data to measure social phenomena and explore facts (Arslan and Zaman, 2018). The quantitative method follows a scientific and structured process and analyse primary data collected from the sample in the population. Therefore, this research will include a quantitative method for getting reliable findings.

Research approach: According to Saunders (2016), the research approach shows the sequence of data gathering, data analysing and interpret the result. Inductive and deductive are two research approaches. Inductive approach is followed by subjective

judgment and suitable for qualitative research. Inductive approach uses secondary data in research activities to develop models, concepts, and themes.

Deductive approach is followed by objective judgment and suitable for quantitative research. Hoque (2018) expressed that the hypothesis is tested in the deductive approach based on gathered primary data to explore the answer to research questions. Therefore, deductive approach will take in the study for reliable findings.

Sampling: To conduct research work, it is mandatory to collect data from the area of the research subject. Population and sampling are two sources of data collection. Population indicates the total set of social actors or entities in the research area (Kweskin, 2015). Use population in research is a costly process and needs a long time. For example, the population of this research includes all target audiences of Costa Coffee, employees, and shareholders of the company.

Sampling refers to the subset of population which is less costly, less complex, and realistic for small scale research. Churchill (2017) argued that determine the sample needs special consideration to avoid bias and condense in a particular category. To avoid bias in data collection, a random sampling method is ideal for this research. Random sampling is the technique of primary data collection in which the sample is collected from every group of population considering different characteristics (Bradley, 2015). As a result, the appropriate data can be collected from different population group and more realistic findings can be gotten.

This is a small scale research work so that a random sampling technique will be used to collect primary data from the population. The size of the sample will be 100. The sample will be included customers of Costa Coffee, employees of the company at different job positions and top-level management of the company. Random sampling will be helpful to explore the actual impact of social media on Costa Coffee's consumer buying behaviour.

5.0. Accessibility

Accessibility is the way of interacting with the organisation, people, and documents in social, psychological, and physical environments (Hanaysha, 2016). There are mainly two types of accessibility in research such as traditional access e.g. face-to-face and internet-based access. The combination of both types of access is called hybrid access. In this research, hybrid accessibility will be followed because due to time limit physical access cannot be possible in all cases and it will be needed to take internet access also.

The accessibility will be required mainly for data collection from the sample. The accessibility will be included organisation access e.g. visit Costa Coffee office and shops for interacting with the employees, management, and customers for data collection. Internet access will be required when physical access will be restricted for data collection. In this circumstance, data will be collected from internet sources, interact with the sample through email communication.

6.0. Ethical issues

Ethics refers to the set of standard behaviour that guides a researcher to protect the rights of subjects included in the study. Smith and Zook (2018) claimed that ethics in research is a vital part to ensure the data protection, research subject information and avoid data manipulation to ensure reliability and validity. Ethics is important in this research for moral reasons, instrumental reasons and pragmatic reasons (Weber, 2017). Moral reasons confirm that the information collected for this study from the participants of samples, stakeholder community and organisational confidential data will be protected strictly and will not be disclosed publicly. Instrumental reasons confirm that this study will be followed appropriate risk management such as legal risks, economic and social risks, data protection risks and physical risks so that the interest of the stakeholders in the research will not be harmed. Pragmatic reasons confirm that this study will not be questioned about the ethical standards of the objectives, aims, and methodologies. This research will be followed by all ethical issues very strictly to meet academic purposes only. The participants of the research will be voluntary and their

data will be protected according to the data protection law. This research will be confirmed that the code of ethics set by BPP University will be followed strictly.

7.0. Significance

Since the development of social media, people are passing a considerable time on social media. On social media, people share their personal feelings, experience and opinions publicly that have a direct and indirect impact on the mind of social media users. Castro and Kopak (2014) argued that traditional media like billboards, TV ads, magazines, radio, sponsorship etc. are useful to express the features of a product or service and companies cannot properly understand the actual feedback of target customers. But, social media has lifted this restriction of traditional media. Thus, it is necessary to explore what level of extent social media influences customer perception and their buying behaviour. Therefore, the significance of this research topic is very relevant in the current competitive business environment.

8.0. Deliverables

This research will be conducted to achieve different objectives. The research topic is investigating the social media influence on the buying behaviour of consumers regarding Costa Coffee. The usefulness of this study are many for instance; the perception of people about social media can be understood, what level of extent social media users are influenced from the opinions of others and posts of Costa Coffee can be influenced target customers buying behaviour, the impression of customers about social media can be measured. Also, it is expected that this research will explore the effectiveness of social media in the current business environment to change customer behaviour so that organisations can be benefitted to set effective social media strategies.

9.0. Required resources

To conduct the research, some essential resources are required for data collection, data analysis and prepare the research report. For data collection, the essential resources are internet access, a communication device such as a smartphone. For data analysis,

there are many statistical tools in which SPSS is ideal for processing primary data in a graphical presentation (Saunders, 2016). This research will use SPSS for data processing and analysis. Also, this research is needed to interpret the analysed data and develop the final report. So, MS Word is the appropriate resource for the study. Also, the voice recorders are needed for data collection from the participants so that the primary information can be retrieved at any time.

10.0. Time Table

All research work has included a specific time frame because the validity and reliability of data are getting older over time. So, a specific time-frame is required to complete the research to achieve research objectives and aims. To complete this research, the allotted time frame is 10 weeks. The schedule of this research is shown below using the Gantt Chart:

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Establish research background	■									
Develop aim and objectives		■								
Research hypothesis and questions			■							
Literature review				■						
Methodology development					■					
Data collection						■	■			
Analyse data and interpretation and findings								■		
Formulate final report									■	■

11.0. Evaluation of the research plan

The research design is aimed to ensure consistency and connected with this proposed research plan. The valuation of the research plan is justified below:

Positivism philosophy: Positivism is used statistical factual data to investigate the research questions. This research has developed a hypothesis to examine the influence of social media on Costa Coffee's consumer buying behaviour that needs to be tested so positivist philosophy will fit and will take in this research work.

Quantitative method: Quantitative method is included statistical data to measure the social phenomena and explore facts. Primary data is analysed scientifically in the quantitative method. In this research, primary data will be collected from customers and employees of Costa Coffee. So, this research will include a quantitative method for appropriate analysis.

Deductive approach: Deductive approach fits when a study is developed based on objective judgment and uses a quantitative method. The hypothesis of this research will be tested based on gathered primary date. So, deductive approach will take in the study for reliable findings

Sampling: Random sampling method will be used to avoid bias in sample collection. Random sampling ensures gathering data from all groups in the population. Random sampling will be done from employees, customers and management of Costa Coffee.

Data collection strategy: Close-ended questionnaire survey will be appropriate for this research to collect data from the samples. The participants will be answered some questions that include specific options and they will give the answer within the options. The questions will be related to social media and buying behaviour to ensure validity with the research aim.

Validity and reliability: To ensure the proposed research plan, it is considered to ensure the reliability and validity of the research plan. For external validity, the obtained findings in this research will not be applied to the industries and research situations. To

avoid the bias of participants, specific questions will be asked that may not harm participants' interest but will meet these research purposes.

Reliability issue comes forward in the time of data collection through a questionnaire survey. The data will be collected at the time when the participants are free and will not be felt disturb to answer. This research will not be allowed subjective views and the data will be interpreted based on the collected data and analysis.

Quality sources: The quality of the literature review is essential to understand the theoretical knowledge of this research topic. The sources of the literature review will journal articles, published books, and newspaper articles.

The quality of the data source is primary data and secondary data. Primary data will be collected from samples and literature review data will be collected from the secondary sources e.g. journal articles, published books, and newspaper articles.

Research Limitations: This research will be taken all possible measurements to fulfill the research quality and acceptability. Despite all efforts of the researcher, some limitation may exist such as:

- The answer to the survey by the participants cannot be examined whether they are given the answer right or mislead. If it happens, the research findings will be affected.
- This research is conducted for the small-time period so that large scale data collection and processing will not be possible. Thus, external users may arise a question about the findings of this research.
- Costa Coffee will not expose the confidential organisational information so that the actual impact of social media on the company's consumer buying behaviour cannot be effectively measured.

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