

**P. U. Shtaniuk**

*Belarusian National Technical University, Minsk, Belarus*

*Scientific supervisor – L. V. Soloveva, Candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor*

## **INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

*Abstract. In the modern world, social networks are actively used for business purposes when communicating with customers and promoting new products or services. Since there is a direct link between communication and promotion, social networks were easily integrated into the marketing sphere. The massive growth of social media use is affecting consumer behavior. For example, the opportunity to consult with each other has been created, which has affected the relationship between the consumer and the brand, with the consumer being in a better position. Social media has influenced marketing by changing the ways in which consumers share, evaluate and choose information. This article describes the main changes in consumer behavior with active development of social networks.*

**Keywords:** *social networks, consumer, buying, advertising in social networks*

We live in a modern, dynamic world, a world where something changes at every moment. If a few years more person had not a great variety of goods, had no difficulties in choosing a particular brand or type of product, in our time going to the supermarket, which are found at every step, People experience difficulty in choosing food products or any other commodity, eyes part from such a variety, sometimes it is difficult to decide what you need. As a result, the consumer is at a loss, based on this, you can deduce the advice that you need to go to the store with your list of products that you should buy. Even at the very beginning, literally in the first couple of years of the 21st century (at the end of the 20th century), the media became widespread. The media put advertisements on the radio, showed them on TV, and released numerous editions of newspapers and magazines with various advertisements. There were other ways to promote products, but these were among the most effective. However, now humanity is already tired of the endless stream of advertising banners, from the constant imposition of goods by brands. The advertisement has not retreated, but has partially changed its form. In our world, social media has come into play. First people find the product they like in the store or elsewhere, then there is a collection of reviews on the chosen product. If the product rating does not meet the consumer's expectations, the product is likely not to be purchased. Also, there is a comparison of prices, the same product in different stores will have different prices, then competition manifests. The consumer starts searching for the lowest price and the most preferred terms of purchase. Now it is very difficult to please a person, sometimes the person himself does not know what he wants. In addition to the price and reviews in the game is a component of marketing as advertising. In some cases, people are willing to overpay for the product they want, provided that the second product, perhaps not the most needed, they will receive as a gift. And, most of the time, this scheme works quite well. With such high competition between brands, it is very important to operate, to exist not only in the real, physical world, but also in the virtual one. The virtual world exists in various forms, such as social networks, WWB and others. When running a brand life in this form, the firm has the opportunity to distribute a large amount of different information about the product, company or services.

Turning to official statistics, in the Republic of Belarus as of 2024, the number of Internet users was 8.43 million, which represents about 86 % of the total population of the country. 60 percent - that's the percentage of Belarus population who are users of social networks. Looking at the age of social media users, it can be seen that the most active is in the 16-24 age group, with 11-15 years being the second most active with a small gap, and in third place with similar performance was the

group between 24 and 55 years old. It is noteworthy that women account for more than half of all social media users.

Let's look back at 2020. 2020 is the pandemic period. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a powerful catalyst, dramatically accelerating the shift of numerous aspects of life from the physical to the digital realm. While the initial impact focused on survival – procuring essentials, maintaining social connections – its lasting effects have reshaped online habits in profound ways, permanently altering consumer behavior and industry landscapes. One of the most significant changes is the widespread adoption of online food delivery and grocery shopping services. Confined to their homes by lockdowns and quarantine measures, people turned to these services not just out of necessity, but out of convenience. This wasn't simply a temporary adjustment; the convenience factor proved compelling enough for many to maintain these habits even after restrictions eased. The ease of ordering groceries from the comfort of one's home, eliminating travel time and parking hassles, along with the abundance of choices and competitive pricing, solidified online shopping's position as a mainstream preference. Similarly, food delivery apps, already experiencing growth, exploded in popularity, offering a solution for both meal preparation and social dining in the absence of restaurants. This transition to online platforms wasn't limited to food and shopping. The pandemic forced a mass migration to the digital world across the board. Communication, once predominantly face-to-face, shifted to video calls and messaging apps. Learning moved online, with schools and universities adopting remote learning models. Dating apps saw a surge in activity as people sought connection amidst isolation. Even personal life, fitness routines, and professional work adapted to online environments. Before the pandemic, the average daily time spent on social media hovered around 2-3 hours. This figure skyrocketed to 5-6 hours during the pandemic, reflecting the increased reliance on online platforms for all aspects of daily life. This substantial increase highlights the extent to which people adapted to, and in many cases embraced, the digital environment. The long-term implications are far-reaching. Businesses have had to adapt, investing in e-commerce infrastructure and digital marketing strategies. Consumers have developed new expectations regarding convenience, accessibility, and online experiences. The pandemic didn't just accelerate existing trends; it fundamentally altered the relationship between individuals and the digital world, creating a new normal where online interactions are deeply interwoven with everyday life. The increased comfort and familiarity with online services suggest that these habits are likely to persist, continuing to shape the future of various industries and societal interactions.

The human psyche and social networks are closely related. You may have noticed a connection: you come home in a bad mood after a hard day's work, do some chores at home and when you're completely exhausted, you take your phone and go to social networks like Instagram. Watching short videos improves your mood, you relax and it seems that everything is fine, all the problems are gone. In this case, social networks have a positive effect on the human psyche. Or the example of the opposite action: a child on the same network watches videos with violent content, unconscionable actions. Thus, the child becomes irritable, insolent. It can be concluded that you should sort the information passing through you and try to protect yourself and especially children from unnecessary and incorrect information.

It has long been the case that a person trusts a person. When choosing between trusting a site on the internet, or getting information from customer reviews, the consumer will most likely take into account the feedback of real customers, rather than unverified information from the internet. Accordingly, it can be said that reviews with a low rating force the buyer to refuse to choose this product, while writing positive reviews helps to attract the customer's attention and, consequently, the choice falls towards the product with the highest rating. Negative reviews are not subject to de-

struction by the seller. The review can only be corrected or deleted by the author himself, so the selling company should try to reorient the client to a positive comment. In no case should you leave bad comments without a reaction. Such a gesture can cause the customer to feel indifferent, that is, when the seller does not care about the customer. Such an action is not acceptable, it can have a negative impact on business activities.

There is a concept as an advertisement for the barter. This means that a company enters into cooperation with someone popular in social networks for the purpose of advertising, review of the organization's goods, while the company sends out products to that person free of charge and leaves them for personal use in the future. As a result, the company receives advertising and the blogger - goods. Not always by this type of advertising the buyer can objectively evaluate the advertising products, as we cannot check the accuracy of the information given to us only on video, especially if both parties were interested in the exchange. However, social media users are most likely to listen to a blogger or celebrity who advertises on the barter or has sponsored posts on their page. Despite the credibility of the information presented in social networks, the consumer is more likely to be perfect buying products from advertising. But you should also always remember the second side of advertising through famous personalities, because not everyone is perfect in their behavior and there were cases when a fairly famous person showed himself not in his best way, becoming a scandalously well-known star. Accordingly, advertising from such a person will have a negative impact on the consumer and will discourage him from buying the advertised product.

There is another advertisement. You probably noticed that after a telephone call or an internet request for a certain topic, your internet or social networks start to appear advertisements on the exact topic you were interested in. This kind is called contextual advertising, it is based not on preferences and interests of the user. If you look again at official statistics, 3 out of 5 social media users made purchases of products that they once «liked» or «reposted». It can be concluded that targeting and positioning have a significant influence on the purchase.

Another topic should be considered, related to the social and purchasing. There is a so-called «social proof effect». The essence of the effect is that the consumer buys, not by his own will, but under social pressure. It is often the moment when an individual is not ready to make an independent decision about buying a product or there are any doubts in the choice, then the person seeking help focuses on examples of other consumers. This scheme works mostly with children and adolescents. You can give an example: in social networks there is a new trend, a trend related to the object of clothing, food or toys. If a child sees a post or video on the internet with a new product, parents immediately receive a request from the child to buy. And this advertising really works.

It happens quite often that small purchases are made spontaneously. In part, this is due to the "flashy" advertising, which actively affects the emotions of the buyer. There is a certain emotion in shopping. The science that studies consumers' reactions to advertising incentives is called neuromarketing. Based on this science, marketers can manage your choices, your purchases. Long before you go to the store, predict your grocery basket. With the help of neuromarketing, a large number of manipulations can be carried out on clients.

This science serves as an assistant in the preparation of advertising campaigns. This creates the most appropriate image of a new or old product.

The topic of promoting products and services in social networks is topical today, as the number of users of social networks with is growing.

So, in the modern world we cannot ignore social networks, because they help us in various aspects, primarily informational. Based on statistics, it can be concluded that a large part of the world's population uses them. At the moment, I think you can't ignore creating your own personal

social media page as you will be less aware of various aspects of life. If we talk about the company, about business, then building a marketing strategy from the part based on the release of advertising in social networks is an integral part of the development, reputation and profitability of the company. You have to know that social media has a very strong influence on consumers, even when the buyers do not think about it. Both companies and consumers need to know how to use networks correctly and then such use will be for the benefit of both.

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