

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the influence of social media marketing on consumer buying behavior in Uzbekistan. The rapid expansion of internet access, social networks, electronic commerce and digital payment systems has changed how consumers discover, evaluate and purchase products.

Keywords: social media marketing, consumer behavior, purchase intention, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer marketing, social commerce, Uzbekistan.

Аннотация. В тезисе рассматривается влияние маркетинга в социальных сетях на покупательское поведение потребителей в Узбекистане. Быстрое распространение интернета, социальных сетей, электронной коммерции и цифровых платежей изменило процессы поиска, оценки и приобретения товаров.

Ключевые слова: маркетинг в социальных сетях, поведение потребителей, намерение совершить покупку, электронные рекомендации, инфлюенсер-маркетинг, социальная коммерция, Узбекистан.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ijtimoiy tarmoqlardagi marketingning O'zbekistonda iste'molchilarning xarid qilish xulq-atvoriga ta'siri ko'rib chiqilgan. Internet, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, elektron tijorat va raqamli to'lovlarning jadal rivojlanishi iste'molchilarning mahsulotlarni izlash, baholash va sotib olish jarayonini o'zgartirdi.

Kalit so'zlar: ijtimoiy tarmoq marketingi, iste'molchi xulq-atvori, xarid qilish niyati, elektron tavsiyalar, inflyuenser marketingi, ijtimoiy tijorat, O'zbekiston.

Social media marketing has become an important component of business strategy in Uzbekistan. Companies use Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, Tik Tok, Facebook and other digital platforms to advertise products, communicate with customers, and demonstrate product features and direct consumers to online or physical stores. Unlike traditional advertising, social media enables two-way communication: consumers can comment, ask questions, compare alternatives, publish reviews and share their experiences with other users.

Consumer buying behavior includes the processes through which individuals recognize a need, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make a purchase and assess

their satisfaction after consumption. Social media can influence every stage of this process. A short video may create awareness of a product, an influencer review may reduce uncertainty, comments may provide social proof, and a direct purchasing link may convert interest into an actual order.

The digital environment in Uzbekistan creates favorable conditions for this influence. The expansion of social media marketing is closely connected with the growth of electronic commerce. Official statistics show that Uzbekistan's e-commerce trade volume increased from UZS 13.264 trillion in 2023 to UZS 15.212 trillion in 2024, representing growth of approximately 14.7%.

According to the U.S. International Trade Administration, Uzbekistan's e-commerce market was valued at approximately USD 1.2 billion in 2024 and accounted for around 3.8% of total retail trade. Appliances and electronics represented 35% of online consumer purchases, while fashion products accounted for 19%. These indicators show that digital channels are increasingly influencing not only communication but also actual retail transactions.

Social media and e-commerce perform different but interconnected functions. Social networks generate awareness, interest, engagement and product recommendations, while marketplaces and online stores provide product comparison, payment and delivery. Therefore, social media marketing should be regarded as an element of the complete consumer journey rather than simply an advertising instrument.

Social media algorithms enable brands to reach consumers according to their age, location, interests and online behavior. Targeted advertisements can introduce products to individuals who have not previously searched for them. Visually attractive posts, short videos, demonstrations and stories increase brand recognition and improve consumers' ability to recall a brand during the purchasing process.

Repeated exposure may move a consumer from awareness to consideration. However, excessively frequent or irrelevant advertising can create irritation and advertising avoidance. Effective targeting should therefore prioritize relevance and value instead of simply maximizing the number of impressions.

Electronic word-of-mouth includes comments, ratings, reviews, recommendations and discussions published by consumers. Positive comments can reduce perceived risk, while negative reviews can discourage a purchase even when the brand's official advertising is attractive.

Social proof is particularly influential when consumers are unfamiliar with a brand or cannot physically inspect a product. The number and quality of reviews, customer photographs, video testimonials and responses from the seller help consumers evaluate product reliability. Nevertheless, fake reviews and manipulated comments can weaken trust and damage a company's reputation.

Influencers can affect purchase decisions through their perceived expertise, attractiveness, similarity and relationship with followers. Consumers may consider an influencer's recommendation more personal and believable than a conventional advertisement. Lou and Yuan found that the informative and entertainment value of influencer content, together with influencer credibility, strengthens trust in branded content.

For businesses operating in Uzbekistan, local micro-influencers may be valuable because they often communicate with more specific audiences according to language, region, and lifestyle or product interest. However, follower numbers alone do not guarantee marketing effectiveness. Audience relevance, authentic engagement and the influencer's reputation are more important than total reach.

Paid partnerships should be disclosed clearly. Hidden advertising may generate short-term sales, but it can reduce consumer trust when audiences discover that a supposedly independent recommendation was sponsored.

Consumers are no longer passive recipients of advertising. They create photographs, videos, unboxing materials, product comparisons and usage recommendations. User-generated content can make products appear more authentic because it demonstrates their use in real-life situations.

Brands can encourage participation through competitions, hash tags, customer stories and reposting consumer content. Such interaction strengthens a sense of community and can increase loyalty. Social media allows companies to answer questions about price, delivery, product characteristics, availability and payment options in real time. Fast and accurate responses reduce uncertainty and increase the probability of purchase. Personalized offers based on previous interactions can also improve relevance.

Nevertheless, personalization requires responsible data management. Consumers may react negatively when advertisements appear intrusive or when they do not understand how their data were collected. Companies should use customer information transparently and obtain appropriate consent.

Short videos, limited-time discounts, countdowns and influencer endorsements can create urgency and fear of missing out. They shorten the period between product discovery and purchase. One-click links, mobile payments and rapid delivery further reduce the effort required to complete a transaction.

Although these techniques can increase conversion rates, excessive use may encourage impulsive and financially harmful purchasing. Ethical marketing should provide accurate product information and avoid artificial scarcity, misleading discounts and exaggerated claims.

The effectiveness of social media marketing in Uzbekistan depends on local market characteristics. Content may need to be produced in Uzbek, Russian or both languages

depending on the target audience. Literal translation is insufficient when cultural meanings, humor and communication styles differ. Locally relevant examples and familiar situations often generate stronger engagement than standardized international advertising.

Trust is another critical factor. Consumers may hesitate to purchase from an unfamiliar social media page when the seller does not provide a legal name, address, return conditions or reliable contact information. Businesses can reduce perceived risk by displaying transparent prices, authentic customer reviews, payment security information and clear delivery and return policies.

Social media does not influence every consumer equally. Age, income, education, digital literacy, geographic location and previous online-shopping experience can moderate its impact. Younger consumers may respond more readily to videos and influencers, while other segments may attach greater importance to detailed product information, recommendations from relatives and the possibility of inspecting goods offline.

The growth of social media marketing produces several challenges:

- false or exaggerated advertising claims;
- fake reviews and artificial engagement;
- information overload and advertising fatigue;
- impulsive purchasing caused by psychological pressure;
- Unequal digital access and literacy.

These risks can reduce consumer confidence in both social media advertising and e-commerce. Businesses, platforms and regulators should therefore promote advertising transparency, personal-data protection, effective complaint procedures and consumer education.

It is also important to distinguish purchase intention from actual behavior. Likes, views and comments may indicate interest but do not necessarily result in sales. The available national statistics demonstrate the expansion of social media and e-commerce, but they do not establish a precise causal effect of social media advertising on purchases. Such an assessment would require representative consumer surveys, campaign experiments, conversion data and comparisons between exposed and non-exposed groups.

Companies in Uzbekistan should develop social media strategies based on the complete customer journey. The following measures are particularly important:

1. Segment consumers by age, region, language, interests and purchasing experience.
2. Adapt content to the characteristics of each platform rather than publishing identical materials everywhere.
3. Combine informative, entertaining and interactive content with clear purchasing links.
4. Use credible influencers whose audiences correspond to the target market.
5. Encourage authentic reviews and respond professionally to negative feedback.

6. Integrate social media with marketplaces, websites, payment systems, delivery and offline stores.
7. Protect customer data and disclose sponsored content transparently.
8. Measure conversion rate, customer acquisition cost, repeat purchases and customer lifetime value instead of relying only on followers, views and likes.
9. Conduct A/B testing to compare advertisements, messages and offers.
10. Maintain consistency between the product promised on social media and the product actually delivered.

Social media marketing has become an influential factor in consumer buying behavior in Uzbekistan. It shapes product awareness, information search, and evaluation of alternatives, purchase intention and post-purchase communication. Targeted advertising, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, user-generated content and direct interaction can reduce information costs and strengthen consumer trust.

Businesses should treat social media as part of an integrated Omni channel strategy. Responsible use of consumer data, honest advertising and systematic performance measurement will allow social media marketing to influence purchasing decisions while supporting long-term customer trust and loyalty.

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