Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.6 No.3 September, 2023; p.g. 279 – 294; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON BRAND AWARENESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness among undergraduate students. It explores the strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand visibility and examines the types of content that effectively resonate with this demographic. Additionally, it delves into the psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions. The study carried out a survey of Redeemer's University students. The Questionnaire was the instrument for data gathering. Data showed that the social media marketing strategies on brand awareness and loyalty among undergraduates include targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and interactive content. Additionally, findings showed certain types of content on social media platforms, such as relatable and visually appealing posts, resonate more effectively with the undergraduate student demographic. Furthermore, psychological factors such as social proof, personal relevance, and emotional appeal play a significant role in driving engagement and influencing brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing. The study thus concludes that the findings from this study provide valuable insights for businesses to tailor their social media marketing strategies, create relevant content, and establish meaningful connections with undergraduate students, ultimately enhancing brand awareness in this target audience.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing, Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced digital era, social media has emerged as a powerful tool that revolutionizes communication, interaction, and information dissemination. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn have transformed the way individuals connect, share, and engage with content (West, 2021). This shift has also significantly impacted the marketing landscape, leading to the rise of social media marketing as a crucial strategy for businesses to enhance brand awareness and engage with their target audiences.

Among the various segments of the population, undergraduate students represent a unique and influential demographic. These students are digital natives, who have grown up with technology and are deeply immersed in the online world. Consequently, they play a pivotal role in shaping trends, influencing buying decisions, and contributing to the virality of content. Understanding how social media marketing influences brand awareness among undergraduate students is paramount for businesses seeking to establish a strong market presence and cultivate brand loyalty (Ahmad & Guerrero, 2020).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide valuable insights to marketers, business owners, and academic researchers. Understanding how social media marketing affects brand awareness among undergraduate students can inform marketing strategies that effectively target this demographic (Ahmad & Guerrero, 2020). Moreover, this research can offer insights into the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in the digital age, contributing to the body of knowledge in marketing, communication, and psychology.

This study seeks to investigate the various social media marketing strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students, to examine the types of content on social media platforms that resonate most effectively with the undergraduate student demographic and also to explore the psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing.

In an era dominated by the digital landscape, Lawler (2023) noted that social media marketing has emerged as a pivotal tool for businesses to connect with their target audiences. For undergraduate students, who wield significant influence and purchasing power, understanding how social media marketing impacts brand awareness is crucial. This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the intricate relationship between social media marketing and brand awareness among undergraduate students, ultimately providing insights that can shape effective marketing strategies in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is any social media action you take that is unpaid. Social media is at the center of today's business strategy and the popularity of social media, cost-cutting measures, and activities of competitors on social media motivate marketers to carry out social media marketing activities. Social media marketing has been considered entertainment, interaction, trendiness, advertisement, and customization. Social media marketing offers significant opportunities to build brand-consumer relationships in marketing. In recent years, many businesses have seen social media as one of the most effective ways to communicate and empower consumers to create distinctive identities of the brand and increase consumer-brand communications. Also, has noted that social media marketing creates a leverage effect between brand and consumer.

Experiences generated by marketers on social media platforms, which are perceived by customers as exciting and lively, can be considered an entertainment element of Social Media Marketing. Entertainment helps companies to create positive feelings by which they can motivate customers to continue following up with the brands. Customers are believed to always seek enjoyment and amusement acquired on social media networks through sharing information such as photos and news about their brand.

Interaction can be described as providing the customers to have a two-way interaction with the brands as well as exchanging information with other users. Unlike traditional marketing methods, social media marketing enables companies to stay interactive and acquire special

requests, product suggestions, or complaints from consumers. Social media marketing helps build the relationship between the brand and the customer and promotes common topics for discussion. Such interactive activities will help engage customers in enhancing brand loyalty, and brand awareness and remove uncertainties among consumers when making purchases. Trendiness is another component of social media marketing which means introducing the latest/current information on products for customers. Trendiness refers to the latest topics that attract great interest or trendy information that brands find related and interesting to deliver to their customers. This trendiness can consist of information relating to the companies, product feedback, recommendations, upcoming trends, etc that help to enhance trust among customers and build brand awareness at the same time. Information that companies can offer to customers is varied to different categories. First is the updated trends that are popular and discussed among users, which can be any topic as social or entertainment, etc. Another type can be brand-based educational content that gives more additional information to customers such as product origins or production process, environmentally beneficial goals that companies are trying to achieve, and so on. Also, customers prefer to gain information through product reviews and feedback from other users so that they are aware of different perspectives. Through social media marketing, updating customers with the freshest, newest, and trendiest information creates opportunities for a company to raise and add more value. This explained that this particular activity not only helps to ease the great effort that customers putinto information searching but also helps to increase the brand awareness and brand loyalty of the business.

The advertisement as a component refers to promotional campaigns that businesses have made through social media marketing to develop customer portfolios. Findings on the effects of social media marketing on the awareness of customers have shown that advertisement is one of the significant parts of social media marketing activities. Customers are often encouraged to make purchase decisions not only on the quality of brands' products and services but also on the advertisement that brands offer. Advertisement is a method to boost consumption via short-term campaigns to persuade targeted consumers to engage. Marketers apply advertisements on social media marketing with a view of increasing brand awareness and brand loyalty both to already loyal customers and occasional buyers. Applying advertisement as a promotion effectively in social media marketing helps the business to enhance brand awareness as well as product consumption rate.

Customization is built via the collaboration between brands and individuals to raise customers' satisfaction by pleasing them based on their tastes. It refers to the degree to which brands offer products and services that are tailored to different personal likings and demands to meet the consumers’ expectations and gain retention. Businesses' social media marketing can transfer the uniqueness of the product and brand to the customers through peer-to-peer communication. And they can deal with their problems and can be influential on product and brand preferences by making touches that will make them feel important. Customization as a social media marketing activity provides an opportunity for the business to approach its potential customers. Also, this explained that customization helps the business to increase its brand awareness and brand loyalty.

Social media content strategies

Social media content strategies are crucial for effectively using social media platforms to achieve your goals, whether they are brand awareness, engagement, lead generation, or sales. Here are some key steps and elements to consider when developing a social media content strategy:

1. Set Clear Goals: Define what you want to achieve with your social media efforts. Are you aiming to increase brand awareness, drive traffic to your website, generate leads, boost sales, or foster community engagement? Your goals will shape your content strategy.
2. Know Your Audience: Understand your target audience's demographics, interests, behaviors, and pain points. This information helps you tailor your content to resonate with your audience and establish a meaningful connection.
3. Choose the Right Platforms: Focus on the social media platforms that align with your audience's preferences and behaviors. Each platform has its unique characteristics and user base, so choose the ones that best fit your brand and goals.
4. Content Mix and Themes: Diversify your content to keep your audience engaged. Mix up your content types, such as educational posts, entertaining content, behind-the-scenes glimpses, user-generated content, and promotional materials. Develop content themes that align with your brand identity and resonate with your audience's interests.
5. Content Calendar: Create a content calendar that outlines what type of content you'll post, when, and on which platforms. Consistency is key to maintaining audience engagement and staying top of mind.
6. Quality Over Quantity: Focus on creating high-quality content that provides value to your audience. Well-crafted content is more likely to be shared, liked, and engaged with.
7. Visuals and Branding: Maintain a consistent visual identity across all your social media platforms. Use your brand's colours, fonts, and design elements to create a cohesive and recognizable presence.
8. Paid Advertising: Consider using paid advertising to amplify your reach and target specific audiences. Social media platforms offer various ad formats and targeting options to help you achieve your goals.
9. Experiment and Adapt: Social media is always evolving. Be open to trying new content formats, platforms, and strategies. Regularly assess your strategy's effectiveness and make adjustments as needed.

Remember that a successful social media content strategy is one that aligns with your brand's values, resonates with your audience, and adapts to changes in the digital landscape. It's an ongoing process that requires monitoring, analysis, and continuous improvement.

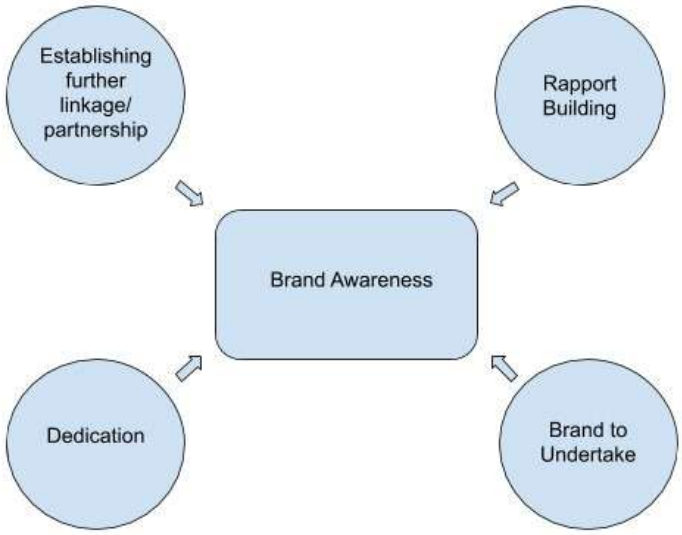
Brand Awareness

In marketing, brand awareness refers to the strength with which any brand is present in a consumer's mind (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005); it occurs when there is an association between the brand and the type of product, where the potential consumer recognizes or associates the brand as a member of a certain product category. With that, awareness can be

simply from brand recognition to brand recall or just a memory of the product; being dominant, if it's the only brand remembered by the consumer (Hakala, Svensson&Vincze, 2012). Although many do not consider this concept as a source of brand value creation, Aaker (1992) states that many firms already see this dimension as important. Brand awareness has been studied extensively by many authors who recognize its benefits and repercussions for brands, focusing mainly on their measurement and taxonomy. However, there are different perspectives of this concept, but the ones that stand out the most are: its usefulness as an advertising approach (Miller & Berry, 1998), and its influence on consumer behavior (Ratneshwar& Shocker, 1991). The existence of a specific brand that offers specific kind of products and market audience must be aware of it is known as brand awareness (Kotler et al., 2005).

According to Jin& Villegas (2007), they define that brand and product have a link between them because it makes the consumer to get capacity of recognition or remembering a specific brand, only because of brand awareness that it is differentiated between a brand from others in the market. Furthermore, they talk about the importance of brand awareness in brand equity as it is an important component (Jin& Villegas, 2007). They stated further that purchasing intention and attitude towards brand is developed only through brand awareness (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, he discussed the factors that add awareness values in different ways that include establishing further linkage/ partnership, rapport building, dedication and brand to undertaker. All these factors add values when brand becomes top-of-mind among the customers (Gautam & Shrestha, 2018).

In Figure 1, the factors that add value to brand awareness are illustrated.



According to Sasmita& Mohd Suki (2015) brand association affects the brand images that are valuable for any business in the market and helps to add value in brand awareness. Moreover, establishing a link to get recognition when a new product is introduced in the market, because there are less chances for being purchased by consumers without having knowledge about

the new release as without having any identity. Huang, Rong &Sarigollu (2014) argue it would be difficult for consumers to become aware of the characteristics of the product; only possible to have good recognition in the market by providing or adapting a brand switcher and creating product trials from previous experiences. This will help enhance brand awareness and an identification to a new product in order to develop relationships between them.

Kumar & Moller (2018) claim, brand familiarity motivates customers to adopt the brand products when they release something new with brand name. It is common that customers like to be familiar with the products as people have their experiences and have better knowledge about the product or service because brand knowledge and past experiences of the consumers make the brand and product well known (Kumar & Moller, 2018). It is mostly common when consumers are familiar with the product, they make decisions without knowing about other products because of their preferences (Aaker, 1991). However, commitment with brand adds value to brand equity which is also linked to brand awareness.

As Tuskej, Golob&Podnar (2013) claim, there is a relationship between brand commitment and brand values as it has a positive influence on customers to keep themselves loyal to the brand. This happens after having the awareness in the customers about the product of the company as consumers will continue to buy the product even if they do not have better knowledge about it. Because of the better awareness about the brand and its product, consumers become committed and loyal with the brand name of the company (Tuskej et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is natural in consumers' buying mentality that when it comes to purchasing a product, they consider three or four different brands as they have different experiences with them in the past. Wang & Zhang (2009) explain that customer behaviour towards selecting a brand is influenced by the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction from past experiences from their point of view.

Social media and Brand awareness

Social media has become a powerful tool for building brand awareness and connecting with audiences on a global scale. It provides businesses with an opportunity to create, share, and engage with content that resonates with their target audience. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, and others offer diverse user bases and cater to different types of content. This diversity allows brands to choose platforms that align with their target audience demographics and preferences. Brands can create various types of content, including images, videos, articles, info graphics, and more. By consistently producing high-quality and relevant content, brands can establish themselves as thought leaders and authorities in their industry.

Social media enables direct interaction with the audience through comments, likes, shares, and direct messages. Engaging with users in real-time helps build a sense of community and strengthens the brand's connection with its followers. Utilizing relevant hash tags and participating in trending topics can increase a brand's visibility and attract a wider audience. This approach can help the brand's content appear in searches and discussions related to those hash tags or trends. Partnering with influencers who have a significant following in the brand's niche can expose the brand to new audiences. Influencers can effectively promote

products or services to their followers, increasing brand visibility and credibility. Social media platforms offer paid advertising options that allow brands to target specific demographics, interests, and behaviours. This precision targeting ensures that the brand's content reaches the right audience, increasing the chances of engagement and conversions. Maintaining a consistent brand voice, visual identity, and messaging across all social media platforms is crucial. This consistency helps in reinforcing the brand's identity and making it easily recognizable.

Encouraging users to create and share content related to the brand can significantly amplify brand awareness. User-generated content serves as authentic testimonials and endorsements from real customers. Brands can use social media to tell their story, showcase their company culture, and share behind-the-scenes content. This humanizes the brand and fosters a deeper connection with the audience. Most social media platforms provide analytics tools that offer insights into the performance of posts, engagement rates, reach, and more. Analysing these metrics helps brands refine their strategies for better results. Social media is a dynamic and versatile platform that allows brands to build, nurture, and expand their brand awareness. By crafting compelling content, engaging with their audience, leveraging trends, and using paid advertising effectively, brands can increase their visibility and create a strong online presence.

Theoretical Framework

Social media marketing theory is the study of monitoring and facilitating the customers' interaction, participation, and sharing through digital media to encourage positive engagement with a company and its brands leading to commercial value. Interactions may occur on a company site, social networks, and other third-party websites. One of the leading classifications of social media marketing activities has been carried out by social media marketing theory, they have categorized social media marketing activities for brands as entertainment, customer interaction based on the goals of the business, trendiness, and customization. In regards to the role of each examined component of Social media marketing activities, entertainment is the most considered component for the consumers; interaction and trendiness involve a moderate level of influence on consumers' loyalty, followed by customization and advertisement that also has certain impacts.

Brand performance theory in marketing is a strategic use of branding not as an individual tactic, but as the foundation for company growth. This brand performance theory is also a methodical alignment of all branding concepts with a company's growth goals including brand awareness and brand loyalty. Brand performance theory believed that brand performance should be assessed by an internal measure: customers (loyalty and awareness). This pointed out that one of the most important themes of brand performance theory is the relationship between a customer and a brand, a relationship that results in brand loyalty.

From the Review of related literature and theory, the conceptual framework of the study is shown in figure 2.

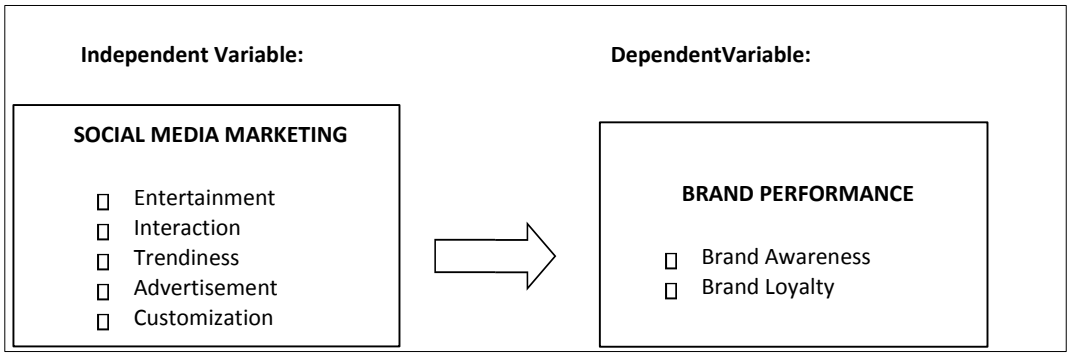


Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of the study. It presents the relationship between the two variables, social media marketing as the independent variable and brand performance as the dependent variable. Social media marketing is an independent variable that enables to promotion and marketing of the products and services of a company by scouting social media platforms or social networks through unpaid advertisements alongside its underlying factors which are entertainment, interaction, trendiness, advertisement, and customization. Social media provides an advantage for businesses to reach intended prospects and potential customers. In addition, social media marketing allows businesses to develop a marketable identity. And it is the most powerful tool to promote and build a network of customers that helps to increase brand awareness and brand loyalty through social media.

On the other hand, brand performance refers to the measuring of the result or outcome of the brand by using different kinds of marketing strategies or activities like social media marketing. For small online businesses, social media marketing is an important tool to promote their brand that can also help them to have brand awareness and brand loyalty to their customers. Therefore, brand performance consists of the two indicators such as brand awareness and brand loyalty. Brand awareness is when the customers recognize the brand or have the ability of the customers to remember the brand to be able to make a purchase. Furthermore, brand loyalty is when the customers are loyal to the brand and they repurchase the same brand of products and services despite the efforts of the other competitors.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The research method to be employed for this study is the survey research method. Survey is a type of research method with research situations where the research subjects run into hundreds or even thousands, spreading across a large area. Tejumaiye (2017, p 58) explains that survey research method scientifically samples and interview people to analyse and report what they say. Questionnaire is considered as the most appropriate method of gathering statistical data for the research because of the nature of the population for the study. This method will allow the researcher to sample the influence of social media marketing on brand awareness among undergraduate students with the use of copies of well-constructed questionnaires. It will investigate the various social media marketing strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students and also examine the types of content on social media platforms that resonate most effectively with the undergraduate student demographic.

Sample: Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size of this study;
$n = N/1+N(e)^2$
where: n= sample size
N = population
e = margin of error (0.05)
In the light of the above, the sample size for this research purpose is shown below:
= 5157 /1+ 5157 (0.05)*2
= 5157 /1+ 5157 (0.0025)
= 5157 /1 + 12.8925
= 371.2

Data elicited based on research questions are presented and analyzed using the SPSS statistical tool. Responses are either accepted or rejected based on the value of the weighted mean for each response. A mean of 2.51 and below is accepted, a mean of 2.50 to 3.50 is indifferent, while a mean of 3.51 and above is rejected.

DATA ANALYSIS

Three hundred and seventy one (371) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. Out of the 371 copies distributed, only 364 copies were retrieved and they were all found useful. Thus, the presentation and analysis was based on the 364 copies. This is considered adequate because it represents 98.1% of the return rate of the questionnaire. Data elicited based on research questions are presented using the Likert scale and analysed using the SPSS statistical tool. Responses are either accepted or rejected based on the value of the weighted mean for each response. A mean of 3.51 and above is accepted, a mean of 3.50 to 2.50 is indifferent, while a mean of 2.51 and below is rejected.

Table 1: Gender

Variables	Frequency	Percent %
Male	165	45.3
Female	199	54.7
Total	364	100%

Table 1 shows the respondent's representation base on gender. Female represented 54.7% of the population studied.

Table 2: Level of respondents

Level	Frequency	Percent %
100 level	137	37.6
200 level	56	15.4
300 level	81	22.2
400 level	49	13.5
500 level	41	11.3
Total	364	100%

Table 2 shows the level of respondents.100 level students amounted for majority of the respondents with 37.6%, 200 level students amounted for 25.4%, 300 level students amounted 22.2%, with 400 level students amounting for 13.5%, while 500 level students and above accounted for 11.3%.

Table 3: Social media platforms you use most frequently

Level	Frequency	Percent %
Facebook	71	19.5
WhatsApp	93	25.5
Twitter(X)	59	16.2
Instagram	99	27.2
others	42	11.5
Total	364	100%

Table 3 shows the level of respondents. Those who use Instagram frequently amounted for majority of the respondents with 27.2%, WhatsApp users amounted for 25.5%, Facebook amounted 19.5%, with Twitter(X) amounting for 16.2%, while other platforms accounted for 11.5%.From the open ended category provided for others respondents majority mentioned Tick Tok and Threads.

Table 4: Various social media marketing strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students

statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Influencer marketing,	109 (29.9)	172 (47.2)	34 (9.3)	31 (8.5)	18 (4.9)	**3.89**
User-generated content	91 (25)	191 (52.5)	37 (10.2)	26 (7.1)	19 (5.2)	**3.61**
Social media contests and giveaways	121 (33.2)	163 (44.8)	28 (7.7)	21 (5.8)	11 (3)	**4.01**
Targeted advertising	118 (32.4)	189 (51.9)	11 (3)	26 (7.1)	20 (5.5)	**3.99**
Storytelling.	86 (23.6)	193 (53)	32 (8.8)	29 (7.9)	24 (6.6)	**3.62**
Social Listening	89 (24.5)	161 (44.2)	51 (14)	37 (10.2)	26 (7.1)	**3.57**
Grand Mean						**3.84**

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree -5; A-Agree -4; U-Undecided -3; D=Disagree -2; SD-Strongly Disagree -1.

Table 4 shows responses on Various social media marketing strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students. Majority of respondents agreed with the statements made. Thus, going by the grand mean 3.84,all statements are therefore accepted since the mean is above 3.51.

Table 5: Types of content on social media platforms that resonate most effectively with the undergraduate student demographic

statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Memes and humour	113 (31)	187 (51.4)	14 (3.8)	29 (7.9)	21 (5.7)	**3.94**
Educational and how-to content	109 (29.9)	191 (32.7)	15 (4.1)	26 (7.1)	23 (6.3)	**3.93**
Behind-the-scenes content	122 (32.4)	181 (51.7)	8 (2.2)	35 (9.6)	18 (4.9)	**3.97**
Inspirational and motivational content	118 (32.4)	189 (51.9)	11 (3)	26 (7.1)	20 (5.5)	**3.99**
Sharing exclusive promotions, discounts, or giveaways	141 (38.7)	167 (45.9)	21 (5.8)	25 (6.9)	10 (2.7)	**4.06**
creating interactive content, such as polls, quizzes, or challenges	121 (33.2)	163 (44.8)	28 (7.7)	21 (5.8)	11 (3)	**4.01**
Grand Mean						**3.97**

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree -5; A-Agree -4; U-Undecided -3; D=Disagree -2; SD-Strongly Disagree -1.

Table 5 shows responses on Types of content on social media platforms that resonate most effectively with the undergraduate student demographic. Majority of respondents agreed with the statements made. Thus, going by the grand mean 3.97,all statements are therefore accepted since the mean is above 3.51.

Table 6: Psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing.

statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean
Social media marketing influence your awareness of different brands	103 (28.3)	176 (48.3)	19 (5.2)	39 (10.7)	27 (7.4)	**3.80**
I have purchase from a brand solely because of their social media marketing efforts	111 (30.5)	186 (51)	14 (3.8)	31 (8.5)	22 (6)	**3.91**
I am likely to become loyal to a brand after being exposed to their social media marketing	121 (33.2)	183 (50.3)	4 (1)	37 (10.1)	19 (5.2)	**3.97**
social media marketing has a significant impact on my brand loyalty as an undergraduate student	119 (30.5)	181 (49.7)	12 (3.2)	28 (7.7)	24 (6.6)	**3.94**
engage with brands on social media platforms due to their marketing efforts	109 (29.9)	172 (47.2)	34 (9.3)	31 (8.5)	18 (4.9)	**3.89**

I have recommended a brand to others solely because of their social media marketing efforts	91 (25)	161 (44.2)	56 (15.4)	45 (12.4)	11 (3)	**3.61**
Grand Mean						**3.90**

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree -5; A-Agree -4; U-Undecided -3; D=Disagree -2; SD-Strongly Disagree -1.

Table 6 shows responses on Psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing. Majority of respondents agreed with the Psychological factors statements made. Thus, going by the grand mean 3.90,all statements are therefore accepted since the mean is above 3.51.

Discussion of findings

The findings from the study provide valuable insights into the social media marketing strategies employed by businesses to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students. The study identified the various approaches and techniques used by businesses to effectively reach and engage this specific demographic. The study revealed that businesses use social media marketing strategies to raise brand recognition among undergraduates, including: Influencer Marketing, User-Generated Content, Social media contests and giveaways, Targeted Advertising, and through Storytelling. Business can also use strategies such as Social Listening, where they are monitoring and responding to undergraduate student mentions, comments, and messages on social media to create relationships and address concerns. This finding is in line with Kumar & Moller (2018) who avers that some businesses use social media strategies for Cross-promoting products and services on social media with other firms or organisations that target undergraduate students.

Additionally, the research shed light on the types of content on social media platforms that resonate most effectively with undergraduate students. Some types of content that resonate most effectively with the undergraduate student demography on social media platforms include: Memes and Humor, Educational and How-to Content, Behind-the-Scenes Content, Inspirational and Motivational Content, Social Causes and Activism. Other types of content on social media platforms resonate most with the undergraduate demography are creating interactive content, such as polls, quizzes, or challenges, to allow undergraduate students to actively participate and share their opinions or experiences, increasing engagement and interaction. Also Content featuring collaborations with popular social media influencers who have a strong influence on the undergraduate student demographic can be highly effective in capturing their attention and engagement. Content that focuses on personal growth, self-care, health and wellness, or lifestyle tips can resonate with the holistic needs and interests of undergraduate students. Also Sharing exclusive promotions, discounts, or giveaways specifically targeted towards undergraduate students can create a sense of exclusivity and encourage them to engage with the brand. This finding correlates with Lawler (2023) who noted that social media marketing has emerged as a pivotal tool for businesses to connect with their target audiences. For undergraduate students, who wield significant influence and purchasing power, understanding how social media marketing impacts brand awareness is crucial. Particularly engaging this demographic, which primarily consists of individuals from

the digital era, can be achieved by employing humour and tailoring content to their preferences. Also From the theoretical perspective, Social media marketing theory classifies brand social media marketing operations as entertainment, consumer connection based on business goals, trendiness, and personalization. Entertainment is the most important component of social media marketing for consumers, followed by interaction and trendiness, customization, and advertisement.

Furthermore, exploring the psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing the study found that Social Identity, Social Proof, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and Emotional Appeal are major factors. According to Wen, Qin & Liu (2019) emotions play a significant role in driving engagement and brand perceptions. Brands that evoke positive emotions such as joy, excitement, or nostalgia are more likely to resonate with undergraduate students and create a lasting impression. This study agrees with that of Wen, Qin & Liu (2019) whom asserts social media marketing campaign must be tailored in other to appeal to the psychological appeals of the young buys. They also recommended Gamification. According to Wen, Qin & Liu (2019) incorporating game-like elements into social media marketing campaigns can increase engagement among undergraduate students. Brands that offer interactive quizzes, challenges, or rewards can create a sense of fun and competition, driving participation and brand loyalty. Although these psychological factors can vary among individuals, but understanding and leveraging them can help businesses effectively engage undergraduate students and shape their brand perceptions through social media marketing strategies.

Overall, the findings from this research can inform businesses about effective social media marketing strategies, content preferences, and psychological drivers for undergraduate students. This knowledge can guide businesses in developing targeted and engaging social media campaigns that effectively enhance brand awareness, engage the undergraduate student demographic, and positively influence their brand perceptions.

Conclusion

Based on the research objectives, it can be concluded that businesses employ various social media marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students. These strategies may include targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and interactive content. Additionally, certain types of content on social media platforms, such as relatable and visually appealing posts, resonate more effectively with the undergraduate student demographic. Furthermore, psychological factors such as social proof, personal relevance, and emotional appeal play a significant role in driving engagement and influencing brand perceptions among undergraduate students exposed to social media marketing.

Recommendations

1. Businesses should consider implementing a mix of social media marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness among undergraduate students. This could include utilizing targeted advertising campaigns, collaborating with popular influencers among this demographic, and creating interactive and engaging content.

2. It is recommended for businesses to conduct thorough research and analysis to identify the types of content that resonate most effectively with undergraduate students. By understanding their preferences and interests, businesses can tailor their content to align with the needs and desires of this demographic.

3. Understanding the psychological factors that drive engagement and influence brand perceptions among undergraduate students is crucial. Businesses should invest in research and analysis to gain insights into these factors and use them to develop more impactful and persuasive social media marketing strategies.

4. Continuous monitoring and analysis of social media metrics, such as engagement rates and sentiment analysis, can help businesses evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies and make necessary adjustments to optimize their campaigns.

5. Businesses should also prioritize building authentic and genuine connections with undergraduate students through social media. This can be achieved by actively engaging with their audience, responding to comments and messages, and incorporating user-generated content into their marketing efforts.

Overall, businesses should leverage the findings from this research to inform their social media marketing strategies, create relevant and engaging content, and establish meaningful connections with undergraduate students. By doing so, they can enhance brand awareness, engage this demographic effectively, and positively influence their brand perceptions.

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