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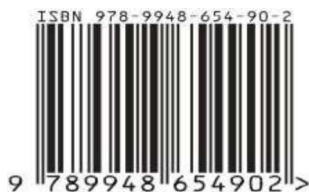
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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN INFLUENCING CUSTOMER INTENTIONS

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Abstract

Social media has become a central arena where brands and consumers co-create value, exchange information, and signal social identities. This paper synthesizes extant theory and empirical insights to examine how Social Media Marketing Activities including content informativeness, interaction, entertainment, personalization, social proof, and influencer collaborations—shape customer intentions (e.g., purchase, word-of-mouth, engagement, and continuance). Drawing primarily on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, and relationship/brand equity perspectives, we develop an integrative model in which SMMAs influence intentions through perceived value, trust, satisfaction, and social identification, with customer engagement as a central mediator and privacy concern as a key boundary condition. We conclude with managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions.

Keywords: social media marketing activities, customer engagement, purchase intention, trust, perceived value, TPB, S-O-R, influencer marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X (Twitter), and Facebook have reconfigured how customers discover, evaluate, and advocate for brands. Unlike traditional one-way communications, social media environments enable real-time interaction, peer visibility, and community building. For firms, the challenge is not merely to “post more,” but to design Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) that earn attention, spark meaningful engagement, and ultimately translate into favorable customer intentions—purchasing, recommending, subscribing, or continuing to follow a brand.

Customer intentions are proximal predictors of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Understanding how SMMAs move the levers of attitude, social norms, and perceived control—and how they work through experiential states such as trust, satisfaction, and identification—helps marketers craft more effective and ethical strategies. This paper provides a concise, four-page synthesis that (a) defines SMMAs and customer intentions, (b) reviews core theoretical lenses, (c) proposes an integrative conceptual model with testable propositions, and (d) distills implications for practice and research.

2. Literature Background

2.1 Defining SMMAs

SMMAs refer to firm-initiated and co-created activities on social platforms that aim to attract, inform, entertain, and involve customers. Common dimensions include:

- **Informativeness & Relevance:** clarity, usefulness, and timeliness of brand content.
- **Interactivity:** two-way communication, responsiveness, Q&As, polls, lives.
- **Entertainment & Aesthetics:** humor, storytelling, music, visual appeal.
- **Personalization & Community:** tailored offers, creator collaborations, brand communities.
- **Social Proof:** reviews, testimonials, user-generated content (UGC), and visible metrics (likes/shares).

- **Influencer Marketing:** endorsements by creators whose credibility and fit shape persuasion.

These activities operate in a public, networked setting where peer observation heightens normative pressures and accelerates word-of-mouth (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.2 Customer Intentions on Social Media

Customer intentions encompass **purchase intention**, **electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)**, **engagement intention** (liking, commenting, sharing), and **continuance intention** (following, subscribing, or remaining in a brand community). Intentions are shaped by cognitive appraisals (e.g., value, quality), affective responses (e.g., enjoyment), and social factors (e.g., identification, norms).

2.3 Theoretical Lenses

- **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB):** Intentions arise from attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). SMMAAs alter these antecedents by improving attitudes (through informativeness and entertainment), strengthening norms (through social proof and communities), and raising control (via tutorials or easy social commerce).
- **Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R):** SMMAAs (stimuli) shape internal states (organism: perceived value, emotions, trust, identification), leading to responses (intentions) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).
- **Relationship/Brand Equity Views:** Consistent, value-adding SMMAAs build **brand knowledge**, **trust**, and **satisfaction**, which cultivate loyalty intentions (Keller, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).
- **Engagement Theory:** Customer engagement—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment beyond transactions—mediates the path from SMMAAs to outcomes (Brodie et al., 2011).
- **Source Credibility & Parasocial Interaction:** Influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, plus perceived intimacy with creators, can heighten persuasion and intentions when there is high brand–influencer fit.

3. Conceptual Model and Propositions

3.1 Mechanisms

We propose that SMMAAs affect intentions through four key psychological mechanisms:

1. **Perceived Value (utilitarian + hedonic):** Informative, actionable content (how-tos, comparisons) boosts utilitarian value; entertaining, well-produced content elevates hedonic value.
2. **Trust:** Transparency, consistent messaging, credible sources (including vetted UGC/influencers), and responsive service build reliability and integrity.
3. **Satisfaction:** Positive cumulative experiences (content + interactions + fulfillment) yield satisfaction that directly fosters continuance and purchase intentions.
4. **Social Identification:** Community-oriented SMMAAs (shared symbols, rituals, co-creation) increase the sense of belonging, amplifying normative support for brand-aligned actions.

Customer engagement (attention, interaction, co-creation) is a central **mediator** linking these mechanisms to intentions. **Privacy concern** and **perceived intrusiveness** are critical **moderators** that can dampen or reverse effects when targeting or data use feels excessive.

3.2 Propositions

- **P1:** Informativeness and interactivity positively influence **perceived value** and **trust**, which in turn increase purchase and continuance intentions.
- **P2:** Entertainment and aesthetic quality increase **hedonic value**, indirectly boosting engagement and eWOM intentions.
- **P3:** Community-building SMMAAs (e.g., UGC contests, creator collabs, membership perks) enhance **social identification**, strengthening normative pressures toward purchase and advocacy.
- **P4:** Influencer credibility and brand–influencer fit raise **attitude favorability** and **trust**, thereby increasing purchase intention; effects are stronger when disclosures are clear and the content is perceived as authentic.
- **P5:** Customer engagement mediates the relationship between SMMAAs and intentions; higher engagement translates value, trust, satisfaction, and identification into behaviors (sharing, subscribing, buying).
- **P6 (Boundary):** Privacy concern and perceived intrusiveness weaken the positive impacts of personalization and retargeting on intentions; transparency and control mitigate this risk.

4. Methodological Approach (for Empirical Testing)

Researchers can validate the model using a cross-sectional survey of active social media users across categories (e.g., beauty, electronics, sustainable products). A typical design would include:

- **Measures:**
 - SMMAAs: informativeness, interactivity, entertainment, personalization, social proof, influencer exposure (multi-item Likert scales adapted from prior studies).
 - Mediators: perceived value (utilitarian/hedonic), trust, satisfaction, social identification, engagement.
 - Outcomes: purchase, eWOM, engagement, and continuance intentions.
 - Moderators: privacy concern, perceived intrusiveness.
 - Controls: age, platform, involvement, prior purchase, ad fatigue.
- **Analysis:**
 - Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess reliability and validity.
 - Structural equation modeling (SEM) for mediation; multi-group or interaction terms for moderation.
 - Robustness checks with common-method variance tests (e.g., marker variable, procedural remedies).
- **Qualitative Extension:** Netnography or interview-based studies could unpack authenticity cues, creator–brand fit, and cultural nuances in identification and norms.

5. Managerial Implications

1. **Design for Value, not Virality:** Prioritize informative, problem-solving content complemented by entertainment. Track saves, profile visits, and time-on-content—not just likes.
2. **Operationalize Interactivity:** Set service-level objectives for reply times; use live formats (AMAs, streams) and structured prompts (polls, quizzes) to elicit participation.
3. **Build Credibility:** Standardize disclosure for sponsored posts; elevate real customer testimonials; implement review verification; address errors publicly.
4. **Foster Community & Identity:** Launch recurring UGC series, ambassador programs, and member-only drops; recognize contributors to strengthen belonging.

5. **Choose Influencers for Fit and Authenticity:** Evaluate audience overlap, content style, and value alignment; allow creators creative control; measure lift in trust and intent, not just reach.
6. **Guard Privacy:** Adopt privacy-by-design; provide plain-language explanations of data use; offer preference centers and easy opt-outs.
7. **Measure the Full Funnel:** Use experiments and MMM/attribution to link SMMAs → engagement → intentions → sales, accounting for lagged effects and halo on search/direct channels.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This synthesis emphasizes mechanisms common across platforms; yet algorithms and community norms evolve rapidly. Future research should: (a) examine creator economy dynamics (e.g., short-form video vs. long-form communities), (b) test causal effects with field experiments (e.g., randomized exposure to disclosure formats), (c) model cross-platform spillovers, and (d) investigate how AI-generated content and synthetic influencers alter trust and authenticity.

7. CONCLUSION

SMMAs influence customer intentions through intertwined cognitive, affective, and social pathways. Informativeness, interactivity, entertainment, personalization, social proof, and credible influencer partnerships increase perceived value, trust, satisfaction, and identification—states that, via engagement, translate into purchase, eWOM, and continuance intentions. Brands that execute SMMAs with authenticity, responsiveness, and privacy respect are best positioned to convert attention into intention—and intention into sustained relationships.

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