



Стопански  
факултет

# Социално- икономическа анализа

Книга 1/2024 (25)

DOI: 10.54664/YGAB1181

Asmae El Gharbaoui\*

Hasnaa Alami\*\*

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND PREFERENCES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

**Abstract:** The progression of social media has posed a challenge to marketing today, and it has changed how we interact and make purchasing decisions. Platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and Google are now integral parts of our daily lives, significantly influencing consumer brand interactions and purchasing behaviours globally.

The undeniable influence of social media on consumer behaviour and preferences has led markets to increasingly acknowledge its important role in effectively reaching and engaging their consumers / target audience. Furthermore, customers are spending more time online, forcing companies to adapt to the new rules of the online environment and to meet them via digital channels.

Social media have increased consumer exposure to products and services, influencing their decision-making through social validation and personalized content based on individual interests and preferences. For companies looking to thrive in the digital sphere, it is important for them to understand the nuances of social media impact on consumer behaviour.

In order to understand the intricate influence of social media on the consumer decision-making process, purchasing behaviour and preferences in the digital era, this paper combines secondary research with an exhaustive literature review.

**Keywords:** social media; consumer decision-making process; behaviour; preferences.

### Introduction

*The Internet and especially social media have changed the way consumers and marketers communicate.*<sup>1</sup>

Social Media Marketing has grown popular worldwide and is quite different from traditional marketing cases. It includes everything from advertising to marketing communication and employs a variety of tools

\***Asmae El Gharbaoui** – PhD student in Management Sciences at the National School of Commerce and Management of El Jadida, Chouaib Doukkali University – El Jadida, Laboratories of Studies, Research in Economic Sciences and Management (LERSEM); email: asmaeelgharbaoui41@gmail.com

\*\* **Hasnaa Alami** – Research Professor at the National School of Commerce and Management of El Jadida, Chouaib Doukkali University – El Jadida, Laboratories of Studies, Research in Economic Sciences and Management (LERSEM); email: alamihasnaa@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Peterson, R. A., Balasubramanian, S., & Bronnenberg, B. J. (1997). Exploring the Implications of the Internet for Consumer Marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25, 329–346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070397254005>

and techniques to promote the content on social media platforms. There has been a huge spike in social media usage in recent years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, the consumer had few ways to know about a product apart from the brand or through advertising.

The reality is that in the current digital age, social media platforms have captivated consumers and have empowered them in a unique way. They have revolutionized the way consumers and brands interact with one another, providing a wealth of opportunities for interaction and engagement. In this sense, platforms like Facebook, Instagram and X (Twitter) open social sites where consumers share experiences and reviews, and launch new products and services<sup>2</sup>. This interactivity has profoundly influenced purchasing behaviours, with consumers increasingly inclined to make purchase decisions based on recommendations and shared experiences on social media<sup>3</sup>.

Social media have not only changed the marketing world but also the behaviour of consumers. Due to the instant feedback, the tools for striking a personalized relationship with customers, and reaching out to the potential customers directly, companies can leverage the reach discussed in point one to get started with the creation of highly personalized marketing campaigns of their own. On the other hand, companies will have to deal with several challenges. Since bad reviews quickly go viral over the Internet, they can severely damage the reputation of a brand. Therefore, managing an online reputation is a must.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive and critical overview of current knowledge, to identify gaps, and to suggest directions for future research. It examines the key concepts and findings from academic databases, and explores the influence of social media platforms on the consumer decision-making processes and preferences in the digital era. This involves analyzing how social media shape consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. By providing a better understanding of this impact, we hope to contribute to valuable insights that guide both academic researchers and marketing practitioners in their efforts to navigate this ever-evolving landscape.

## 1. Literature Review

### A) Classical Theories of Digital Marketing

At the heart of the digital revolution lies digital marketing, which draws upon a comprehensive array of theories and models to illuminate the strategies employed by businesses in this constantly evolving sphere. These theoretical frameworks offer invaluable insights, providing a conceptual roadmap to decipher the complexities of online consumer behaviour and to devise pertinent and effective marketing strategies. This section delves into two fundamental axes: the overarching theories that form the bedrock of digital marketing, and those specifically tailored to the dynamic realm of social media.

#### • The AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)

This model stands out as one of the pioneers of marketing, which is most influential in the field. Developed by E. K. Strong Jr. in 1925<sup>4</sup>, it outlines a four-step process that every consumer undergoes when exposed to an advertising message: capturing attention, generating interest, stimulating the desire to purchase, and then prompting action. This linear progression serves as a valuable guide for designing impactful marketing campaigns.

#### • The Theory of Engagement, Developed by Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo in 2004

It highlights the crucial importance of interaction and engagement between the brand and the consumer in the context of digital marketing. It posits that the more engaged a consumer is with a brand or product, the more inclined they are to loyalty and to repeat purchases. Thus, brands seek to create immersive and interactive experiences to foster this engagement.

#### • The Customer Value Theory, Developed by Reinartz and Kumar in 2000

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, A. M. et al. (2010). Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>

<sup>3</sup> Muntinga, D. G., Moorman, M., & Smit, E. G. (2011). Introducing COBRAs: Exploring Motivations for Brand-Related Social Media Use. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 13–46. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-1-013-046>

<sup>4</sup> Strong, E. K. (1925). Principles of Selling and Advertising (Chapter 3). – In: *Psychology of Selling and Advertising*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

It emphasizes the importance of cultivating long-term relationships with customers rather than solely focusing on one-time transactions. This approach underscores the long-term value of customers for a business and encourages investment in customer loyalty and satisfaction.

### **B) New Theories in Digital Marketing**

In the dynamic landscape of digital marketing, the constant evolution of technologies and consumer behaviours necessitates a deep understanding of emerging theories and models. As we enter the 2020s, new theoretical perspectives are emerging, providing researchers and practitioners with innovative tools to develop effective digital marketing strategies. The article examines the most recent theories in digital marketing, focusing on emerging concepts from the years 2023 and 2024, and explores their relevance and application in a scientific context.

#### **• The Theory of AI in Marketing**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a major driver of innovation in digital marketing. Researcher Silvio Palumbo<sup>5</sup> (2023) have highlighted the growing impact of AI on personalizing customer experiences, predicting buying behaviours, and optimizing marketing campaigns. By harnessing AI capabilities, businesses can better understand and respond to individual consumer needs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

#### **• The Theory of Augmented Reality (AR)**

Augmented reality presents new opportunities for brands to create immersive and interactive experiences for consumers. Lee<sup>6</sup> (2024) examined how AR is utilized in e-commerce to allow customers to virtually try out products before making a purchase. By integrating AR into their marketing strategies, companies can improve consumer engagement and drive online sales.

### **C) Classical Theories of Social Media**

#### **• The Social Network Theory**

This theory, developed by Moreno in 1934 and later by Granovetter in 1973, explores the structure and dynamics of social interactions. It highlights the importance of social ties in the dissemination of information, and the influence of networks on individual behaviour<sup>7</sup>.

#### **• The Social Exchange Theory**

Developed by Homans in 1958, this theory postulates that individuals engage in social relationships based on the principle of reciprocity and on the balance of costs and benefits. It explains how social interactions on social media are motivated by the desire to receive social rewards and benefits<sup>8</sup>.

### **D) New Theories of Social Media**

#### **• The Augmented Reality (AR) Theory**

This theory, studied by Lee in 2024, looks at the opportunities offered by augmented reality in digital marketing. It explores how AR is used in e-commerce to enable consumers to virtually try out products before purchasing them, thereby increasing online engagement and sales<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> Palumbo, S. (2023). Exploring the Evolution of AI in Personalized Marketing. Boston Consulting Group (BCG). <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2023/exploring-the-implementation-of-ai-for-personalization>

<sup>6</sup> Lee, mentioned in: Arunchoknumlap, P., & Jonpradit, S. (2023). The Impact of Augmented Reality (AR) Advertising on Consumer Behavior: A Comparative Study of Traditional and Immersive Marketing Approaches. *Journal of Management Science*, 3(3) (2566). Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. <https://so08.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JMSSNRU/article/view/2181>

<sup>7</sup> Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6). <https://doi.org/10.1086/225469>

<sup>8</sup> Homans, G. C. (1958). Social Behavior as Exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597–606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>

<sup>9</sup> Lee, mentioned in: Arunchoknumlap, P., & Jonpradit, S. (2023). The Impact of Augmented Reality (AR) Advertising on Consumer Behavior: A Comparative Study of Traditional and Immersive Marketing Approaches.

## E) Classical Theories of Consumer Behaviour

### • The Motivation-Opportunity-Capability (MOC) Theory

This theory, developed by Fogg in 2009, proposes that consumer behaviour is influenced by three interdependent factors: motivation, opportunity, and capability<sup>10</sup>.

### • The Cognitive Commitment Theory

This theory, formulated by Festinger in 1957, suggests that individuals tend to seek consistency between their beliefs and behaviours, and are motivated to reduce cognitive dissonance<sup>11</sup>.

### • Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Established by Maslow in 1943, this theory postulates that individuals are motivated by a hierarchy of needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to needs for esteem and self-fulfillment<sup>12</sup>.

## F) New Theories of Consumer Behaviour

### • The Dynamic Personalization Theory

Introduced by Wang et al. in 2024, this theory highlights the importance of personalizing online consumer experiences in real time, using machine learning algorithms to adapt to individual consumer preferences<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. Analysis of Previous Research Studies

Recently, the modernization of innovation has led individuals to spend more time online. Globally, people are gradually adopting web and smartphone technologies. This technological revolution is equipping businesses with the latest and most creative strategies to market and advertise their brands and products. Consequently, individuals today rely more on new technologies to promote their ideas and market their products. Online brand marketing techniques are increasingly effective in raising brand awareness and attracting feedback and attention from consumers compared to traditional advertising methods.

Furthermore, social media advertising on online platforms represent a highly sensitive methodological science, as it evolves dynamically on the basis of societal requirements and advancements. This study reviews recent literature on consumer purchasing intentions influenced by social media advertising.

Previous studies have shown that social media play a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviours and preferences.

According to the new Digital 2024 April Global Statshot Report, published in partnership with We Are Social and Meltwater, there is a wealth of impressive headlines and trends:

- More than half of the world now uses social media (62.6%);
- 5.07 billion people around the world now use social media, with 259 million new users coming online during the previous year.
- The average daily time spent using social media is 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Older teenagers are more inclined than younger ones to utilize a variety of platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Reddit. For instance, while 68% of the teens aged 15 to 17 report using Instagram, this figure drops to 45% among teens aged 13 and 14.

---

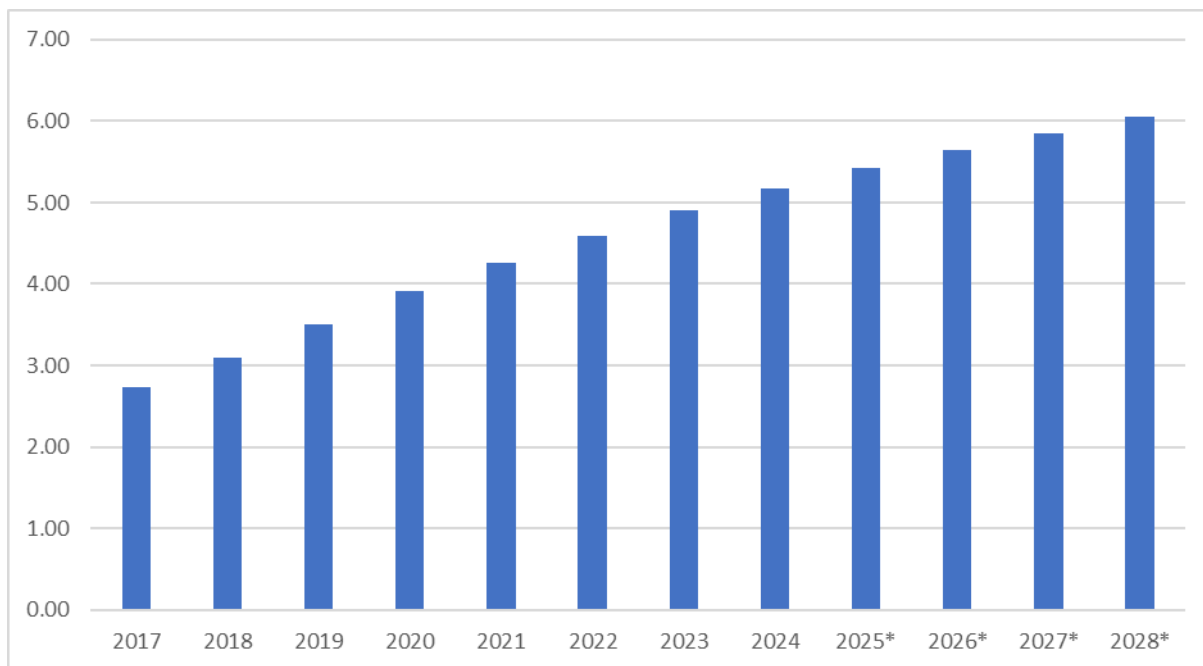
*Journal of Management Science*, 3(3) (2566). Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. <https://so08.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JMSSNRU/article/view/2181>

<sup>10</sup> Fogg, B. J. (2009). A Behavior Model for Persuasive Design. *Persuasive '09: Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Persuasive Technology*, April 2009, Article No. 40, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1541948.1541999>

<sup>11</sup> Festinger, L. (1957). An Introduction to the Theory of Dissonance (Chapter 1). – In: *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. California: Stanford University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4). <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>

<sup>13</sup> Wang, B. et al. (2024). The Power of Personalization: Hosts How to Promote Guest Bookings by Personalized Responses. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 120, 103766. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103766>



Source: Statista, May 2024, Stacy Jo Dixon<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 1.** *Number of Social Media Users Worldwide from 2017 to 2028 (in billions)*

### A) Social Proof

This is a powerful psychological phenomenon that significantly impacts consumer behaviour and preferences. It suggests that people mimic the actions of others, assuming these actions are correct<sup>15</sup>. Social proof can manifest itself as likes, shares, comments, and reviews on social media. Recent research indicates the profound influence of social proof on consumer behaviour. According to a 2024 report, 59% of marketers reported increased social sales in 2023, highlighting the growing role of social media in driving purchases<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, 33% of Gen Z and Millennials discovered new products on social media within the past three months, and 25% made direct purchases through social media platforms, a 39% year-over-year increase<sup>17</sup>.

A study by Nielsen (2023)<sup>18</sup> found that 68% of consumers are at least somewhat likely to buy a product if a brand engages with them in a personalized way, or if it provides relevant, valuable content beyond selling their product. Moreover, 63% of consumers are somewhat, very, or completely likely to buy a product.

Social networking sites provide platforms for consumers to observe others' preferences and purchases. For instance, Instagram users can see the number of likes and comments on a post, indicating its

<sup>14</sup> Dixon, S. J. (2024). Number of Social Media Users Worldwide from 2017 to 2028 (in billions). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/#:~:text=Number%20of%20global%20social%20network%20users%202017%2D2028&text=Social%20media%20usage%20is%20one,over%20six%20billion%20in%202028>

<sup>15</sup> Ajzen, I. (1985). From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior (Chapter 2). – In: Kuhl, J., & Beckmann, J. (Eds.). *Action Control: From Cognition to Behavior* (pp. 11–39).

<sup>16</sup> Iskiev, M. (2024). *The 2024 State of Marketing & Trends Report: Data from 1400+ Global Marketers*. HubSpot. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/hubspot-blog-marketing-industry-trends-report>

<sup>17</sup> Iskiev, M., & Forsey, C. (2024). *The State of Consumer Trends in 2024 [Data from 700+ Consumers]*. HubSpot. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-consumer-trends-report>

<sup>18</sup> Nielsen (2023). *Nielsen Study Reveals Majority of Consumers Actively Avoid Ads Across Podcasts, Streaming, and Live TV Platform*. <https://www.nielsen.com/news-center/2023/nielsen-study-reveals-majority-of-consumers-actively-avoid-ads-across-podcasts-streaming-and-live-tv-platforms/>



popularity. This social proof can influence consumer behaviour and preferences, making users more likely to engage with content that is popular or recommended by others.

### **B) Influencer Marketing**

Since it gained popularity in the last decade, the influencer marketing sector has grown steadily. The industry has grown over time, even though consumers no longer trust influencers. According to an influencer, the industry of influencer marketing has expanded to a value of \$21.1 billion. This is a noteworthy 29% gain over the \$16.4 billion from the previous year.

According to a HubSpot report published in 2023, 33% of Generation Z have purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation in the last three months<sup>19</sup>.

According to study conducted by PWC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) in 2024<sup>20</sup>, seven out of ten customers report being affected by tailored social media adverts while making purchases, demonstrating the tremendous impact of these ads. Personalization gives commercials a more relevant element that increases consumer attractiveness and engagement. Advertisements that are customized to each target audience member's choices, interests, and demographics are more likely to connect with them.

Furthermore, as indicated by 66% of customers, store websites have a significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions. These websites frequently act as online showrooms where customers may peruse merchandise, read product reviews, and evaluate costs. A well-thought-out and easy-to-use website may improve the whole shopping experience and persuade users to buy anything.

### **Methodology**

This paper examined how social media affect consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour through secondary research and a literature review. The sources included (articles, academic journals, reports from consulting firms, books and online resources) covered the influence of social media on consumer behaviour and preferences. The literature review was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar. The sources were analyzed and synthesized to draw conclusions about the impact of social media on consumer behaviour and preferences.

### **Findings**

The results indicate that social media have a significant impact on consumer behaviour and preferences. Increased exposure, social proof, personalization, and influencer marketing have been identified as key factors in influencing consumer behaviour. Social media have opened up new ways for companies to reach and engage with audiences and have changed the way consumers interact with brands.

The result of secondary research explains that social media have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour and preferences. The increase in social media influencers helps companies reach new customers and target their content to specific demographics. Social proof can also influence consumer behaviour and preferences, and social media provide users with a platform to learn what others buy and like. Influencer marketing is a popular strategy that can have a considerable impact on consumer behaviour, especially among young people.

### **Conclusion**

Social media have revolutionized the way companies reach out to and interact with consumers. By having a presence on social media platforms and leveraging various features such as paid advertising, content marketing, and influencer collaborations, companies can increase visibility, attract new customers, and improve brand loyalty. The results of this paper indicate that social media have a significant impact on consumer behaviour and preferences. Marketers must understand the role of social media in shaping

---

<sup>19</sup> Iskiev, M. (2023). *How Each Generation Shops Differently*. HubSpot.

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/howeach-generation-shops-differently>

<sup>20</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers (2024). PwC's Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024: Shrinking the Consumer Trust Deficit. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/c-suite-insights/voice-of-the-consumer-survey.html>

consumer behaviour and preferences and develop effective social media marketing strategies to succeed in today's digital age. As social media continue to grow, it will be interesting to see how they continue to shape consumer behaviour and preferences and how companies adapt to these changes. The literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on purchasing behaviour and consumer preferences.

## REFERENCES

**Ajzen, 1985:** From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann (Eds.), *Action control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11–39). Springer.

**Anderson, M., Faverio, M., & Gottfried J. (2023).** Teens, Social Media and Technology 2023. Pew Research Center. Available at : <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/>

**Brown, D., & Fiorella, S. (2013).** *Influence Marketing: How to Create, Manage, and Measure Brand Influencers in Social Media Marketing*. Indianapolis: Que Publishing.

**Datareportal (2024).** Digital 2024 April Global Statshot Report. Available at : <https://datareportal.com/reports/digi-tal-2024-april-global-statshot>

**Dhingra, A. (2023).** Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behavior and Preference. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(2). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i02.2171>

**Festinger, 1957:** An introduction to the theory of dissonance. In *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford University Press.

**Fogg, 2009:** A behavior model for persuasive design. *Persuasive '09: Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Persuasive Technology*, Article No. 40, Pages 1-7. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1145/1541948.1541999>.

**Hanlon, A., & Tuten, T. L. (2022).** *The SAGE Handbook of Digital Marketing*. New York: Sage Publishing

**Homans, 1958:** Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>.

**HubSpot (2024).** Maxwell Iskiev (2024). HubSpot Blog Marketing Industry Trends Report. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/hubspot-blog-marketing-industry-trends-report>.

**HubSpot (2024).** Maxwell Iskiev and Caroline Forsey (2024). State of Consumer Trends Report. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/state-of-consumer-trends-report>.

**Influencer Marketing Hub (2024).** 17 Key Influencer Marketing Statistics to Fuel Your Strategy. Available at: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-statistics/>

**Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:** Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>.

**Lee, 2024:** The impact of augmented reality (AR) advertising on consumer behavior: A comparative study of traditional and immersive marketing approaches. *Journal of Management Science Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University*, 3(3), September-December 2023. Available at: <https://so08.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JMSSNRU/article/view/2181>.

**Ltd.Haque, M. et al. (2023).** Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behavior: An Analytical Study. *Journal of Propulsion Technology*, 44(4), 3160–3166. Available at : <https://propulsiontechjournal.com/index.php/journal/article/view/1410>

**Maslow, 1943:** A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.

**Moreno, 1934;** Granovetter, 1973 : The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1086/225469>.

**Muntinga et al., 2011:** Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 13-46. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-1-013-046>.

**Nielsen (2023).** Nielsen Study Reveals Majority of Consumers Actively Avoid Ads Across Podcasts, Streaming, and Live TV Platforms. Available at:<https://www.nielsen.com/news-center/2023/nielsen-study-reveals-majority-of-consumers-actively-avoid-ads-across-podcasts-streaming-and-live-tv-platforms/>

**Peterson et al., 1997:** Exploring the implications of the internet for consumer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(4), 329-346. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070397254005>.

**PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2024:** PwC's Voice of the Consumer Survey: Shrinking the Consumer Trust Deficit. Available at: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/c-suite-insights/voice-of-the-consumer-survey.htm>.

**Statista (2024).** Number of Social Media Users Worldwide from 2017 to 2028 (In Billions). Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/#:~:text=Number%20of%20global%20social%20network%20users%202017%2D2028&text=In%202024%2C%20over%20five%20billion,over%20six%20billion%20in%202028>

**Wang et al., 2024:** The power of personalization: Hosts how to promote guest bookings by personalized responses. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 120, 103766. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2024.103766>.

**Yikang, Y. (2024)** The Impact of E-commerce and Social media Personalized Recommendations on Consumer Behavior in the Digital Era from the Perspective of Behavioral Economics. Available at : <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/59/20231136>

**Zhang, G. (2023).** The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Behavior. *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences*, 20(1), 119–124. Available at :<https://aempublishing.org/article/0c5e0a12503c4c0dba7631fc6037085a>