Analysis of Social Media Marketing Campaign Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model

Mathevi F. Abokiamah

American Public University

COMM304: Communication Theory

Penny Otey

Jun 18, 2023

Analysis of Social Media Marketing Campaign Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model

Introduction

Social media's meteoric (SMM) rise over the last five years has made it the de facto standard for many brands' marketing campaigns. It's hardly unexpected that a growing number of businesses are conducting transactions on social media platforms. But social media is more than just a new channel; it constitutes a revolutionary medium that drastically changes how companies interact with their clients (DURMAZ et al., 2015). Marketers may now utilize SMM networks to anticipate how customers will feel about making a purchase, therefore they are actively investigating persuasive messages to influence customers' emotions online. Words are used in persuasive communication to influence the thoughts and deeds of the listener (Henningsen et al., 2003). The goal of any communication intended to convince another person to alter their viewpoint is to utilize the strength of its arguments to win them over. Numerous studies have been conducted to ascertain the relative importance of various aspects influencing the persuasiveness of a communication (J. Kitchen et al., 2014). The sender, the message, the recipients, and the presenting situation all play a part.

Due to its spectacular ascent over the last five years, social media is now the norm for many companies' marketing strategies. It's not surprising that a growing number of companies are using social media sites as a means of doing business online (Henningsen et al., 2003). But social media is more than just another communication avenue; it's a game-changing tool that fundamentally changes the way businesses engage with their customers (J. Kitchen et al., 2014). Marketers may now use SMM networks to foresee their clients' feelings about making a purchase, thus they are actively researching persuasive messaging to impact their emotions

online. The art of persuasion is the manipulation of another person's beliefs or behavior via the use of words. Persuasive messages attempt to persuade the reader by presenting compelling evidence and reasoning (J. Kitchen et al., 2014). The trustworthiness of the sender, the state of the audience's emotions, the amount of arguments, and so on are only few of the many factors that have been investigated and evaluated in relation to persuasive communications. There are other factors in play, including the sender, the message, the audience, and the context.

There are various factors and avenues of influence that might affect the persuasive process. Social media has been more influential in recent years. The two-way nature of social media platforms means that companies and consumers may have a more genuine and persuasive conversation (Pan & Zhang, 2022). When examining persuasive processes, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a helpful framework. The ELM classifies methods of persuasion into "central" and "peripheral" categories. Independent thinkers with the ability to weigh pros and cons carefully tend to choose the middle ground. When lacking the motivation or mental ability to process information completely, people often turn to the "peripheral path." In this study, I will analyze a social media marketing campaign using the ELM. I will propose that the initiative's apparent success may be attributed to a mix of central and tangential persuasion techniques.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

The ELM is a dual-process model of persuasion since it suggests both an internal and external path to change someone's mind (Yang et al., 2022). Individuals are more inclined to choose the middle ground when they are receptive to argument and possess the cognitive ability to grasp it. Moderates carefully consider messages and evaluate the sender's credibility before acting on them.

ELM operates on the premise that the chance that message recipients would participate in elaboration of the information in a communication is affected by the variations of persuasive message. Consumers' attitudes of an information system may be influenced by the substance of ads, according to the study's authors. To demonstrate how one's perspective might shift, ELM makes use of the core route and the peripheral way (Pan & Zhang, 2023). Individuals make an effort to think, then assess the relative arguments and evaluate the persuasive messages inside the principal route. In the peripheral pathway, people rely on either positive or negative indicators to quickly and easily infer the recommended information. According to research conducted by Bhattacherjee and Sanford (2006), the core route evaluates communications directly related to the situation at hand, whereas the peripheral route handles cues. They also discovered that changes in attitude brought about by the core route are more stable and predictable over time since they are grounded on evaluative and factual judgements. In contrast, changes in perspective brought about by the periphery are less stable and more likely to undergo random shifts when exposed to additional signals (Pan & Zhang, 2023).

A persuasive tour of the topic's edges may be in order if the audience seems uninterested or baffled by the main points. Attractiveness of the source, use of humor or vivid imagery, or the number of individuals who support the message all have a greater impact on those who opted for the margins. In 1993, Eagly & Chaiken claimed that ELM couldn't account for a wide range of granular cognitive operations. The theoretical importance of ELM is disputed by Mongeau and Stiff (1993). But there are advocates for ELM who say it's helpful since it can help pinpoint what causes people to shift their opinions. The ELM is the most well-known theoretical framework for investigating the ways in which one's thoughts and experiences impact their attitudes and values. In contrast to theories that place more emphasis on the preconditions and regulating functions of

social media adoption along with interactions, ELM is seen as a useful model in messages that are persuasive in social media as it explains dual process along with diversified effects on cognitive information processing.

People are more likely to carefully evaluate messages for their relevance when the elaboration likelihood is high, as proposed by ELM. Fewer individuals will try to dig deeply into the signals if they believe there is little room for elaboration (Ragab, 2022). An individual is more likely to be persuaded by a message if it resonates with their own sense of identity. Ads that make a reference to the ad itself are also more convincing. Malaviya (2007) investigated the effect of frequent exposure to a commercial on the function and nature of the elaboration of the ad's message. Both Pan and Zhang contended that ELM failed as a theoretical framework because it ignored subtler aspects of the human mind. According to Andrews & Shimp (1990), ELM ignores a number of warning signs. Others support ELM, arguing that it is useful because it identifies the factors that lead to shifts in viewpoint. ELM is one of the most widely used models in the field of persuasion because it attempts to describe the processes by which people's perceptions of information are altered.

The Application of the ELM to Social Media Marketing

On social media, you may influence consumers in two ways: directly, and indirectly. An important aspect of the plan is to provide relevant and engaging content to clients through social media. For example, a business may publish a well-researched blog post on its offerings (Zha et al., 2018). The firm may also produce videos and infographics that serve to both amuse and inform the target demographic.

Comedic timing, eye-catching visuals, and social proof are all tools that might help you take a more offbeat approach on social media. To attract customers' attention, a business may use

a humorous video (Pan & Zhang, 2023) to promote its offerings. Magnificent images of the company's products or gorgeous surroundings may likewise be used to captivate customers. Finally, the business may use social proof by emphasizing the opinions of satisfied customers or the number of people who have interacted with the brand's content by liking or sharing it.

There are studies in the academic literature that examine the role of influencers in shaping customers' preferences and opinions of brands. A research confirms that people's moods and decisions to buy online are influenced by the information presented on websites. Instagram influencers' visual postings influenced brand attitude, brand transformation, and e-WOM intention more than their verbal counterparts (Teng et al., 2014). It is also said that customers have a favorable opinion of micro influencers (those who have 1,000 or less followers). Customers' perceptions of a brand and their willingness to buy it may shift after hearing positive feedback about it from trustworthy micro-influencers. Influencer marketing also takes into account demographic factors like age and gender when targeting a certain audience. According to research by Sudha and Sheena (2017), influencers do affect young women's propensity to buy. People are more likely to carefully examine messages for their relevance when the elaboration likelihood is high, as shown by ELM (Teng et al., 2014). When the likelihood of elaboration is low, fewer individuals will make an effort to learn more about a given message. When a target's worldview and the message's content are congruent, the target is more likely to be persuaded. Ads that make a reference to the ad itself are also more convincing. The effect of message repetition on the purpose and style of ad copy's development was examined by Malaviya (2007).

The Success of the Social Media Marketing Initiative

With the proliferation of smartphones and SNS, Internet use has reached epidemic proportions throughout the globe. That's why digital marketing is gradually replacing

conventional methods. Companies began using technological solutions to better introduce and promote their goods to customers. Online marketing allows firms to promote their wares while targeting particular people, however in conventional marketing it is difficult to establish a high domain of impact (Salehi et al., 2012). Since then, internet marketing has emerged as a new technical component, and social media has evolved into a new means of expression and interaction. People of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds use social media to communicate, connect, learn, and teach one another. In this light, social media may be seen as a vital marketing tool, and its significance has evolved significantly in recent years. Global social media use is expected to reach 4.48 billion by 2021, up from 2.12 billion in 2015, according to research by Dean (2021). Businesses may use social media to their advantage by setting the stage for repeat purchases (Zha et al., 2018).

As a corollary, social media significantly alters how F&B companies typically connect and communicate with customers. Cankul et al. (2018) found that social media apps were beneficial for Turkey's food and beverage sector. According to the research, F&B companies get the advantages of social media by accelerating their marketing efforts, improving their customer communication, and cutting their costs. According to the study's analysis of the reasons why food and beverage companies use social media, the top five are: to introduce the company (85.3 percent), to increase sales (82.1 percent), to improve the company's public image and promote its products or brands (78.5 percent), and to get customers involved in the product development and innovation process (78.6 percent) (Yang et al., 2022).

Word of Mouth (consumers' feedbacks along with reviews or brands' comments) may be the single most important marketing tactic for generating purchase intent. According to Nielsen's 2012 Global Trust in Advertising study (Pophal, 2016), consumers place a higher level of trust in

recommendations distributed through WOM marketing than in recommendations made via traditional forms of advertising. According to Wigmo & Wikström (2010), social media marketing isn't a one-way channel where you speak at customers; rather, it's a means to build connections with them and put word-of-mouth marketing into action (Zha et al., 2018).

As the usage of social media has grown, word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) has deferred to its electronic counterpart, sometimes known as online or electronic WOM. The significance of e-word-of-mouth is growing rapidly. The hotel industry may significantly profit from the word-of-mouth marketing strategy. Here, we see that favorable feedback on social media has a beneficial effect on the behavior of the target market towards the brand, as shown by actual evidence. Therefore, such venues may be the most effective means of influencing prospective buyers. Uncertainty between customers and the brand reduces as a consequence of access to credible information.

The success of enterprises may be favorably correlated with social network features such as e-WOM, trust, and dedication. As a result, it encourages more purchases, a more positive outlook on continued use, and the development of long-lasting partnerships. As a result, devoted customers take part in community activities like spreading favorable word-of-mouth online, which influences the choices and purchases of other consumers. Therefore, according to the results of the research done by Leung (2012), people's attitudes about visiting, booking in, trying a new F&B company, and buying hospitality goods and services are influenced by feedbacks, reviews, or comments on social networking sites (Yang et al., 2022). As a consequence, customers' perspectives and their propensity to propagate e-WOM may shift in response to the feedback, reviews, and comments they read.

Both central and tangential means of persuasion were used in the campaign. The approach relied heavily on providing consumers with content they found useful and engaging. The blog post promoting the new product on the company's website was detailed and easy to read. The firm also produced entertaining and informative videos and infographics (Zha et al., 2018). Subtle persuasion was also attempted via the use of humor, eye-catching visuals, and social evidence (Yang et al., 2022). The corporation promoted the new product with a humorous video. Brand advertisements often used visually arresting images, such as attractive models posing with the advertised products. Last but not least, the company used social proof by highlighting endorsements from satisfied customers or the number of shares and likes its material had gotten (Yang et al., 2022). Customers were persuaded to purchase the new product using a combination of central and auxiliary persuasive mechanisms. As a direct result of the advertising, sales of the new product increased dramatically. From an ELM viewpoint, source quality may be analyzed in terms of ELM's core and periphery. When shopping for groceries, many consumers place a premium on ensuring the product they buy comes from a reputable source. There is undeniable support for the goods and services promoted by influential people on the internet. Customers are more likely to buy a product if they find the source of information about it to be trustworthy and appealing.

Conclusion

The effects of persuasive communications on attitudes in everyday settings have been examined in previous ELM research. It's reasonable that researchers have trouble collecting real-time data on the persuasive communication's impacts. Lab experiments with tiny samples of participants were all that could be found. Research using the ELM social media framework found that the exceptional growth of social media was influenced by antecedents, the process,

and processing cues. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that this study added fresh insights to

ELM research in the social media setting. In addition, the lack of a categorization framework in

the current corpus of ELM social media studies was uncovered by this research. According to the

authors, a full guide to effective social media communication may be found in the integration of

ideas and models gleaned through a systematic examination of published studies. There are just a

subset of products/services where implementing ELM on social media becomes challenging. The

authors suggested that getting people excited about developing opinions about goods or services

would increase the likelihood that they would absorb and digest the information conveyed in

marketing messages. With the rise of social media, a plethora of new channels opened up, all of

which brought together, in real time, suggestions, reviews, and information about goods and

services. This inspiration was discussed in ELM's main path, and it was this inspiration's relevant

relevance that allowed ELM to be used in the social media setting. More research into dual-route

processing, the authors stated, is not only needed to better understand the central and peripheral

pathways of information elaboration but also to find the links between them. These factors and

cues in the suggested conceptual framework would, instead, have some impact on processing

data, resulting in a different path in cognitive elaboration. Mediating roles for parameters in the

conceptual framework, the authors of this paper think, will be identified and evaluated in future

ELM investigations.

References

DURMAZ, G., SUHER, H. K., & BIR, C. S. (2015). Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) In Print Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Advertisements Which Is Positioned In Special and General Interest Magazines. *Journal of Yaşar University*, *11*(41), 45. https://doi.org/10.19168/jyu.00944

Henningsen, M. L. M., Henningsen, D. D., Cruz, M. G., & Morrill, J. (2003). Social influence in groups: A comparative application of relational framing theory and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Communication Monographs*, *70*(3), 175–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/0363775032000167398

J. Kitchen, P., Kerr, G., E. Schultz, D., McColl, R., & Pals, H. (2014). The elaboration likelihood model: review, critique and research agenda. *European Journal of Marketing*, *48*(11/12), 2033–2050. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-12-2011-0776

Pan, P., & Zhang, H. (2023). Research on Social Media Advertising Persuasion Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model. *SHS Web of Conferences*, *154*, 03024. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202315403024

Ragab, A. (2022). How Do Social Media Influencers Affect Digital Natives 2.0 To Travel Inside Egypt? Integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and Elaboration Likelihood Model. *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, *5*(1), 75–105. https://doi.org/10.21608/ijthm.2022.239638

Teng, S., Khong, K. W., & Goh, W. W. (2014). Conceptualizing Persuasive Messages Using ELM in Social Media. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, *13*(1), 65–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2014.910729

Yang, B., Liu, C., Cheng, X., & Ma, X. (2022). Understanding Users' Group Behavioral Decisions About Sharing Articles in Social Media: An Elaboration Likelihood Model Perspective. *Group Decision and Negotiation*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10726-022-09784-z

Zha, X., Yang, H., Yan, Y., Liu, K., & Huang, C. (2018). Exploring the effect of social media information quality, source credibility and reputation on informational fit-to-task: Moderating role of focused immersion. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *79*, 227–237. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.038