



**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS ON PURCHASING INTENTION:
A WEB-BASED CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON THE STUDENTS OF KHULNA
UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH**

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Abstract

Advertisers place their advertisements on several social media platforms to market their products and services. These ads may catch consumers' eyes and influence them to select specific products. To persuade the target population, advertisers need to be aware of how well their messages are received. The purpose of the current study is to evaluate the influence of social media advertisements on purchasing behavior. A web-based cross-sectional study was conducted among students at Khulna University under the following conditions: participants had to be enrolled at the university at the time of the survey, had internet access, and had active social media profiles. A total of 400 valid responses were retained for this study after using Google Forms to deliver a structured e-questionnaire. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 22. Results indicate that 41.5% of students enjoyed viewing social media advertisements (SMA), with the majority of them favoring the creative and humorous types of advertisements. The majority of consumers looked up items or services online or in physical stores after learning about them from social media ads. After seeing SMA, the majority of consumers bought goods and services and told others about them. Even if SMA had a significant impact on their decisions to purchase, respondents gave traditional media advertisements a higher credibility rating. The biggest factor cited for people's dislike of social media advertisements was their irrelevance. This study is anticipated to assist media marketing specialists and advertisers in creating effective SMA to have compelling, long-lasting, and appealing commercials to influence the purchasing decisions of young customers.

Keywords: Social media, Advertisement, Purchasing intention, Students, Bangladesh

Introduction

Mass communication includes advertisement as one of the crucial components of delivering a message to the people. It educates the general public while attempting to influence them by appealing to their emotions and thoughts. Traditional media were typically used in the past for advertisement purposes. To reach consumers and encourage them to make purchases, advertisers use billboards, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other media. In this age of rapid technological advancement, the nature of advertisement to reach consumers is changing.

Digital advertisement comes in the form of social media advertisements (SMA), which are displayed to users on social media platforms. Using social media to advertise products and services is a paid strategy. Various social media platforms differ in their purpose and functionality, including blogs, social networking sites, sharing networks, and content communities (Smith *et al.*, 2012).

Online marketing is becoming more and more commonplace every day. It is an art form to deliver marketing messages to targeted consumers, utilizing the internet as a medium. Social media advertisement is one of the many methods of online advertisement. Social media is a communication medium that is used for user interaction and content exchange. Social media gives companies opportunities to engage with consumers promptly at comparatively low cost and higher levels of proficiency; this makes social media pertinent for large multinational firms as well as for small and medium-sized companies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

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Social media advertisers are spending more on social media advertisement than ever before and enhancing consumers' attractiveness across various platforms as a result of the rise in social media users. Due to changes in the advertising environment, consumers are altering their consumption and viewing habits. Customers' brand attitudes are greatly influenced by perceptual and rational advertisements (Latif & Calicioglu, 2020). Several types of advertisement, such as product evaluation and brand recognition, have the potential to influence consumers' purchasing attitudes and behaviors (Rai, 2013).

Advertisers are concerned about measuring the effectiveness of their ads. Because this is crucial to understand how they should invest their efforts and money in social media to obtain the attention they want from their intended audiences and gain success. Nowadays many advertisers target the young population to persuade them to buy their products or services through attractive advertisements. A sizeable portion of this population is dispersed throughout Bangladesh's universities.

Researchers previously looked into pertinent topics like the influence of social networks on consumers' purchasing decisions, the usefulness of Facebook advertisements, the efficacy of online advertisements, and consumers' perceptions of social media advertisements. There are also some studies available about SMA's effects on consumer choice. These researchers did not pay close attention to the kinds of commercials that influenced customers or how satisfied people were with their purchases of marketed goods. Consequently, there is an investigation gap that has to be looked into. Furthermore, as most studies on SMA are conducted in Western nations, little is known about how these advertisements influence purchasing intention among young people in Bangladesh. Thus, the primary concern of the current study is to expand understanding on the influence of social media commercials on purchasing decisions as well as to ascertain students' opinions about social media advertisements and comprehend their attitudes toward them. In addition to that, the current study focuses on answering the following research questions in order to attain the study objective.

RQ1: What are the common perceptions of the students regarding social media advertisements?

RQ2: To what extent social media advertisements can influence the purchase intention of the students?

This study is significant for both advertisers and consumers because it informs advertisers about the success of their messages in persuading the target audience, assists advertisers in identifying which social media platforms draw consumers' attention, provides an idea about user perception of SMA that may serve as a guide for advertisers and serve as a foundation for further research in this area. It assists consumers to get an understanding of how they are persuaded by social media advertisers in terms of purchasing a product.

Literature Review

Social media platforms are useful for promoting brand and product through online marketing communications. In order to connect with the growing younger generation of consumers, social media marketing has become a crucial tool (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2014). Attitudes of millennials regarding social media advertisement positively influence their intention to make a purchase (Pandey, *et al.*, 2018). Miseda (2012) investigated the efficacy of SMA on college-going social network site users and discovered that 56% of respondents thought about buying something after viewing advertisements on social networks, in addition to having a buying intention, and that 17% of all respondents made a purchase based on these advertisements. When it comes to consumer purchasing behavior, the information contained in a social media advertisement is the most significant factor. Once more, 360-degree view social media advertisements increase interaction, which in turn affects purchase intention (Dash & Piyushkant, 2020).

Alalwan (2018) also found interactivity as an important factor influencing consumers' purchase intention. However, according to a study by Ogunyombo *et al.* (2017), SMA has a limited impact on respondents' purchase decisions (14.3%) but is highly visible in terms of exposure (66.9%) among 383 undergraduates in three Nigerian universities. According to Nazeer (2017), the majority of young and female students among 300 university students in Pakistan are not significantly influenced by SMA. In a survey of 381 undergraduates in the city of Dhaka, Hasan *et al.* (2019) discovered that sponsored advertisements, social networking groups, and brand fan sites all affect consumers' purchasing decisions. In a different study, Oumayma (2019) discovered that the majority of respondents made purchases as a result of their exposure to social media and that nearly all of them thought social media affected their choice to make a purchase. However, Khaleeli (2020) found that social media is overflowing with commercials that users may find offensive and there is no discernible relationship between social media advertisement and online purchase intention.

Consumers' attitudes towards utilizing Facebook as an important consideration in purchasing decisions are influenced by their experiences with the social network's product recommendations, how amusing they find it to use

it to explore products, and how user-friendly they perceive the tools to be (Pietro & Pantanto, 2012). Purchasing intention is significantly influenced favorably by brand perception, interaction, and trust (Hasan & Sohail, 2020). According to a study, Facebook advertisement had a major effect on brand equity and image, both of which had a significant impact on how people made purchases (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015).

Theories Underpinning the Study

This study explores customers' purchasing behavior to see whether social media advertisements influence choices. Understanding how consumers typically think and respond in purchasing scenarios is vital to pinpoint the variables that influence their choices. To explain consumer behavior and purchasing decisions, various models have been developed. This study is based on the uses-and-gratification theory and the technological determinism theory.

Uses and Gratification Theory

People actively use media to satisfy their desires, according to Baran and Davis (2011); as audiences have control over what they will learn from the media, they do not permit it to have a greater impact on them. However, Professor S. Shyam Sundar of Pennsylvania State University thinks that social media and other technologies undermine the idea that individuals use media to fulfill desires that come from inside, but he also says that media technology itself might produce opportunities for satisfaction that people subsequently seek out (Griffin *et al.*, 2018). According to this study, the majority of users use social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others for amusement, chatting with friends and family members, learning, etc. Users select various social media sites to satisfy their requirements and have control over their media consumption, which ties this hypothesis and the study together.

Technological Determinism Theory

Marshall McLuhan supports the ideas of technological determinism and the mass media effect. Marshall McLuhan famously stated that the medium is the message, implying that particular media can restructure human thought (Littlejohn & Foss 2009). He believed that the move from a written culture to a mediated, aural culture was crucial. His concept of technological determinism, which holds that the shape of a technology determines its effects, gained popularity in the 1960s (Littlejohn & Foss 2009). Some people feel that technology is more neutral and that its significance is determined by how people use it; if technologies are neutral, they may be used rationally and deliberately to meet our needs, and their power is determined by how we use them (Baran, 2014). This idea of technological determinism theory is pertinent to this research because it offers viewpoints on how technological advancements affect people's media consumption.

The theory of uses and gratification extended the framework by highlighting the fact that people's satisfaction lies beneath their adoption and usage. Consequently, social media ads may also have an impact on people's desire to take action despite the power of technology.

Materials and Method

Study settings and participants

Using Google Forms, an e-questionnaire was distributed to the students to collect data for this web-based cross-sectional study. Several criteria were used to determine how to approach the participants. They needed to meet the following requirements: (i) they must be current students; (ii) they must be registered at Khulna University; (iii) they need to have access to the internet via a desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone; and (iv) they need to have at least one active account on social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter).

Considering the aforementioned requirements, prospective participants were selected. For the selection of participants, this study uses convenience sampling techniques, also known as non-probability sampling. In this procedure, samples were selected from social media based on ease of access and willingness to participate in this study.

The e-questionnaire was broken up into three modules that were mutually exclusive and primarily addressed socio-demographic data, social media usage, and the efficacy of social media usage. Out of a total of 432 anonymous responses to the questionnaire, which was administered in English from June to August 2022, 400 participants completed the questionnaire and their responses were found to be valid.

Measures

Socio-demographic Features

The socio-demographic data included: age (in years), sex (male, female, and third gender), academic year (honors first year, honors second year, honors third year, honors fourth year, and masters), and residence (urban, suburban, and rural) which helps to understand users' demographic factor and potential consumers.

Social Media Usage

The following questions about social media usage were asked: 'On which social media platform do you have an account?', 'How long have you been using social media?', 'How much time do you spend on social media per day?', and 'What is/are the main purpose(s) of using social media?'

Effectiveness of Social Media Advertisements on Purchasing Decision

Using a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', and 'highly dissatisfied' to 'highly satisfied', the impact of SMA on consumers' purchase decisions was evaluated in this study.

Analysis

Data were analyzed based on the user's fundamental characteristics, social media usage, and the effectiveness of SMA on purchase decisions. Using IBM SPSS software, version 22, variables were measured and later categorized for descriptive analysis.

Results

Socio-demographic features

The socio-demographic details of the respondents are shown in Table 1. The majority of the students (56.5%) were between the ages of 21 and 23. Urban individuals made up more of the total participants (156) than rural ones (143). All of the participants were students of Khulna University, a public university in south-western Bangladesh, and this survey ensured that students from all academic years and schools were included.

Table 1. Socio-demographic features of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Age (Year)	18-20	67	16.8
	21-23	226	56.5
	24-26	98	24.5
	27	9	2.3
Gender	Male	200	50
	Female	200	50
School	Science, Engineering & Technology	75	18.8
	Arts & Humanities	52	13.0
	Management & Business Administration	39	9.8
	Social Science	99	24.8
	Life Sciences	43	10.8
	Law	27	6.8
	Fine Arts	40	10.0
	Education	25	6.3
Academic Year	1st Year	80	20.0
	2nd Year	80	20.0
	3rd Year	80	20.0
	4th Year	80	20.0
	Masters	80	20.0
Residence	Urban	156	39.0
	Sub-urban	101	25.2
	Rural	143	35.8

Social media usage patterns

According to Figure 1, the majority of respondents (382) use Facebook, followed by YouTube (250) and Instagram (219).

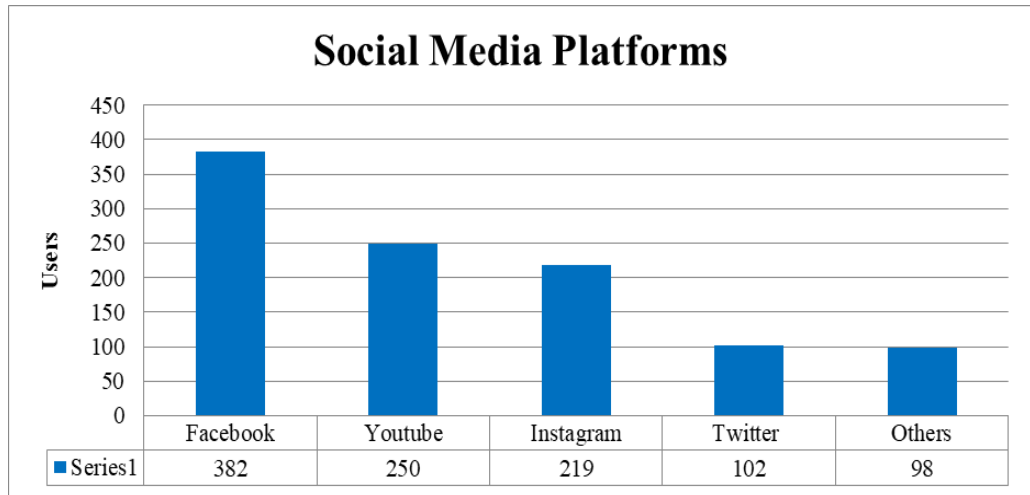


Figure 1. Social media platforms used by the respondents

The Figure 2 displays that, the primary reasons why the respondents use social networking sites are for entertainment (281), followed by communicating with friends and family (241), and education (211).

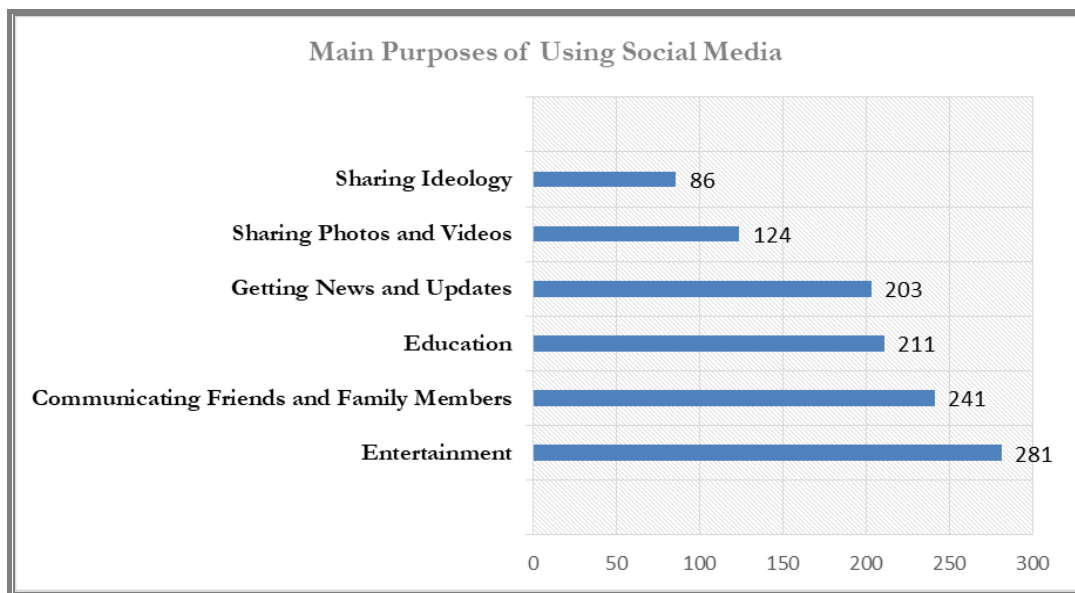


Figure 2. Main purpose of using social media platforms

Analysis of the influence of social media advertisements on purchasing intention

Table 2 demonstrates that the majority of participants (142) have been using social media for 4-6 years, and the majority of respondents (123) spend 2-4 hours per day on social networking sites. The majority of respondents (58.5%) do not like to watch advertisements when using social media. Social media advertisements are occasionally blocked or hidden, according to the majority of respondents (30.5%), while 25% of respondents said they do so regularly; 15.5% of respondents said they do it always (Table 2).

Table 2. Social media usage pattern

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
For how long had the respondents been using social media? (N=400)	< 2 Years	45	11.25
	2-4 Years	105	26.25
	4-6 Years	142	35.50
	6-8 Years	69	17.25
	>8 Years	39	9.75
Time spent on social media (N=400)	< 2 Hours	63	15.75
	2-4 Hours	123	30.75
	4-6 Hours	93	23.25
	6-8 Hours	80	20.0
	>8 Hours	41	10.25
Preference on SMA (N=400)	Like	166	41.5
	Dislike	234	58.5
Tendency of hiding or blocking SMA (N=400)	Never	63	15.75
	Rarely	53	13.25
	Sometimes	122	30.5
	Often	100	25
	Always	62	15.5
Purchasing a product after getting information from SMA (N=400)	Yes	209	52.25
	No	191	47.75

Note. *SMA* Social Media Advertisements

Figure 3 demonstrates that participants preferred creative commercials the most (24.75%), followed by humorous/funny advertisements (21%), as they expressed their appreciation for these types of advertisement.

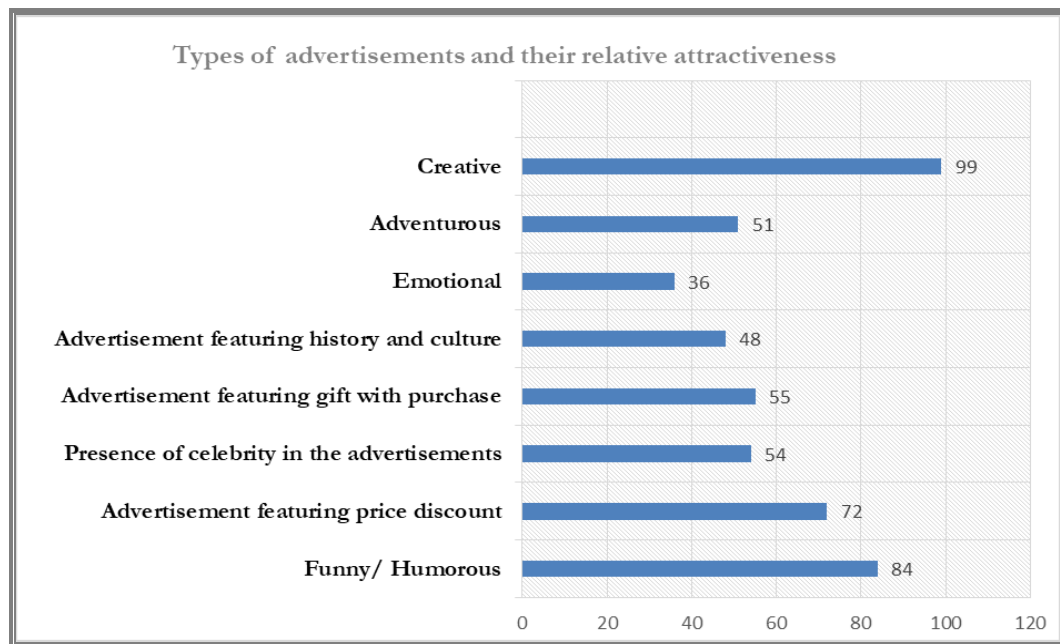


Figure 3. Types of advertisements and their relative attractiveness

As shown in Figure 4, the majority of respondents (33.75%) answered that they dislike social media advertisements that are unrelated to the items. Again, 32% dislike repetitive commercials, 15% dislike inappropriate ads, and 14% dislike badly designed social media ads. Another aspect is that the presence of sensitive content on social media platforms is undesirable to 13% of the respondents.

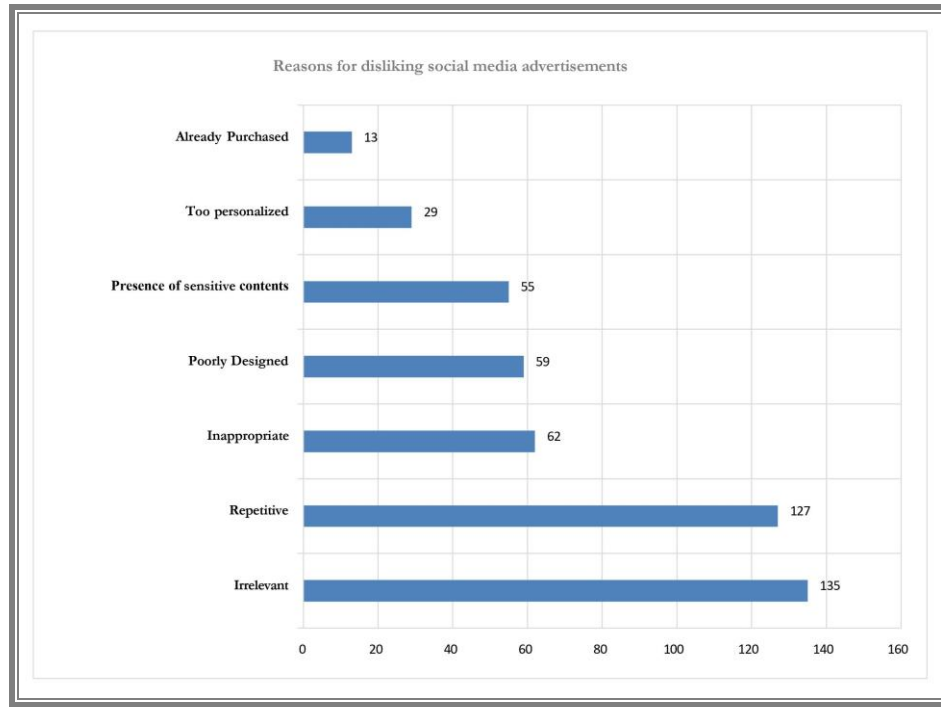


Figure 4. Reasons for disliking social media advertisements

According to Table 3, the majority of the participants had a neutral opinion on the statement that social media advertisements are informative. Once more, 28.75% of participants agreed (27.25%) or strongly agreed (1.5%) with the assertion that SMA provides sufficient information about the products, whereas 37.75% of respondents disagreed (28%) or strongly disagreed (9.75%) with it. Simultaneously, 33% of the respondents agreed (29.5%) or strongly agreed (3.5%) with the statement that they would like to buy a product after viewing SMA, while 38.25% of the participants disagreed (29%) or strongly disagreed (9.25%) with the statement (Table 3).

However, the majority of respondents (62%) agreed (52.75%) or strongly agreed (9.25%) that SMA introduced them to new goods and services that they were previously unaware of. The majority of respondents (50.25%) agreed (43.5%) or strongly agreed (6.75%) that they would search for products and services online or visit showrooms after learning about the products through SMA. A good portion of respondents (41.5%) either strongly agreed (5.5%) or agreed (36%) that they would recommend the products and services to family members and friends after learning about them through SMA. However, 50.5 percent of respondents disagreed (41%) or strongly disagreed (10.5%) with the statement that they felt confident making purchasing decisions based on SMA. Advertisements on traditional media (TV, newspaper, radio, and magazine) are more reliable than SMA for the respondents, as 41.25 percent of the respondents preferred traditional media ads while 29.75 percent of the respondents preferred SMA. However, most of the respondents (44%) agreed (38.25%) or strongly agreed (5.75%) with the statement that all brands should use SMA, while 31.25 percent of the respondents disapproved of it. This study suggests that the majority of the respondents (49.5%) agreed (38.75%) or strongly agreed (10.75%) that they would rather rely on the advice or recommendations of friends and family members than on SMA when making purchases; 17.5% remained in opposition (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondent’s perception regarding the influence of SMA on purchase intention

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information sufficiency of social media advertisements	39 (9.75%)	112 (28%)	134 (33.5%)	109 (27.25%)	06 (1.5%)
Desire to purchase after watching SMA	37 (9.25%)	116 (29%)	115 (28.75%)	118 (29.5%)	14 (3.5%)
Introducing new products and services through SMA	19 (4.75%)	66 (16.5%)	67 (16.75%)	211 (52.75%)	37 (9.25%)
Visiting websites/showrooms after getting product information through SMA	27 (6.75%)	101 (25.25%)	71 (17.75%)	174 (43.5%)	27 (6.75%)
Recommendation about products/services to FNF after getting product information through SMA	37 (9.25%)	106 (26.5%)	91 (22.75%)	144 (36%)	22 (5.5%)
Confidence in making purchase decisions based on information from SMA	42 (10.5%)	164 (41%)	99 (24.75%)	81 (20.25%)	14 (3.5%)
Are traditional media advertisements more credible than SMA?	15 (3.75%)	104 (26%)	116 (29%)	132 (33%)	33 (8.25%)
Respondents’ suggestions on the brands’ presence through SMA	27 (6.75%)	98 (24.5%)	99 (24.75%)	153 (38.25%)	23 (5.75%)
Do respondents prefer to purchase products based on suggestions from FNF rather than SMA?	25 (6.25%)	70 (17.5%)	107 (26.75%)	155 (38.75%)	43 (10.75%)

Note. *SMA* Social media advertisements, *FNF* Friends and family

Figure 5 displays that 22.2% of respondents have bought apparel as a result of learning about it from social media marketing. Based on the information from social media advertisements, 13% of people have bought books, 12% have bought electronics, and 11% bought fashion accessories.

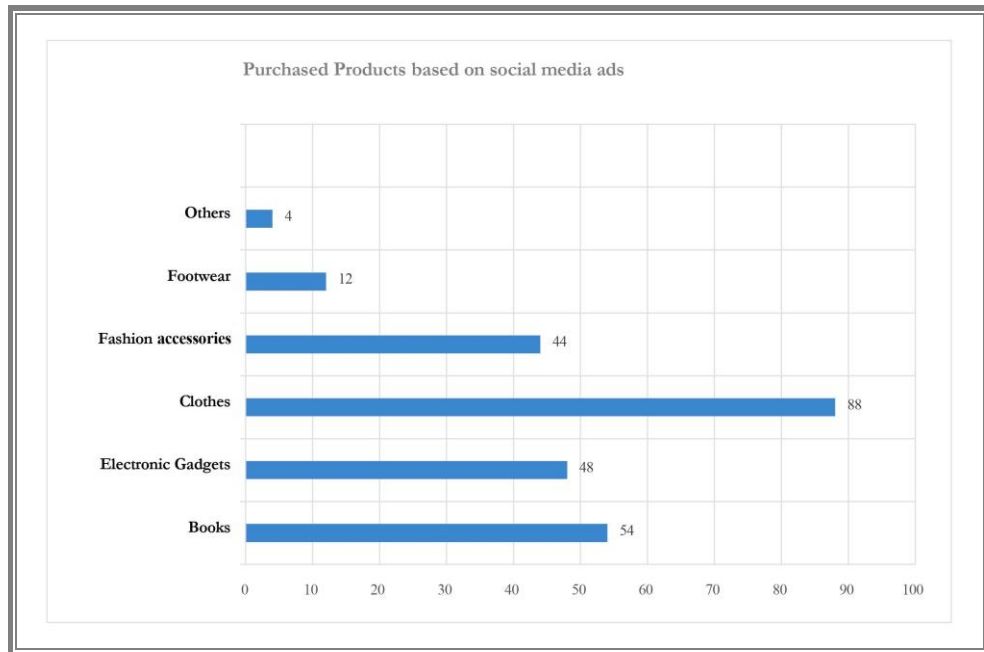


Figure 5. Types of purchased products based on social media advertisements

Discussion

This study aims to evaluate the influence of social media advertisements on purchasing behavior. The outcomes show that SMA can introduce consumers to new goods and services before conventional media. Once more, most consumers look for items or services online or in stores after learning about them from social media advertising. Additionally, studies show that most people watch social media commercials before making purchases or referring others to them. Thus, SMA has a significant impact on respondents' buying decisions.

However, this study identified that SMA do not provide consumers with sufficient information to make informed purchasing decisions. Informative social media advertisements have a great influence on purchasing behavior (Dash & Piyushkant, 2020). Due to the recurrence and irrelevant content of these advertisements, the majority of respondents (58%) do not enjoy viewing social media commercials. When Pikas and Sorrentino (2014) tested how consumers felt about advertisements on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, they discovered that 81% of respondents found them annoying. However, it has been found that 52% of the respondents purchase based on information from social media advertisements. It may mean that some of the respondents' purchase decision is influenced by SMA even though they do not enjoy the advertisements on social media. In addition, considering that some respondents (42%) enjoy watching advertisements on social media sites and they have favorable opinions of these commercials. Customers who enjoy watching social media ads are drawn to the innovative, amusing ads that offer gifts with purchases. These results are in line with the research done by Ogunyombo *et al.* (2017) where the researchers found that inventiveness and relevance are the two criteria most likely to have an impact on how many people view commercials on social media platforms.

In this study, participants were questioned about whether they had made any purchases as a result of seeing advertisements on social media. As the majority of respondents agreed with this assertion, the findings indicated a considerable influence. Following this, the majority of respondents bought apparel, books, and electronics. The results support Miseda's (2012) observation that individuals do not simply observe and absorb information from advertisements; 56% of all students surveyed claim to have thought about purchasing as a result of seeing the marketing on social media. These findings are at variance with the findings of Ogunyombo *et al.*, (2017), as they found out that although some respondents were influenced by this advertisement (14.3 percent), others' purchasing habits were not dependent on advertisement. These variations in the findings provide an area of further interest in this research.

Researcher observed most people use social media for interaction or entertainment, but that social media also decides what people need to know by showing them a variety of advertisements aimed at a young audience that may pique their curiosity and influence their behavior, as most respondents searched for products by going to websites or showrooms, recommending them to others, and making purchases after watching social media.

Limitations

Since this study is cross-sectional, causality cannot be shown. Data were only gathered from students who had internet access, which may limit how broadly the results may be applied to other populations. Due to sampling biases, non-probability sampling's sample selection may further limit generalizability. Students' assessments of the success of SMA could have had an impact. To provide a better understanding, future studies would focus on specific types of advertisements on individual social media platforms and their effectiveness.

Conclusion

With the increasing number of social media users, most of the advertisers target the younger generation in an effort to change their purchasing habits. SMA exposes students to new goods or services for the first time, promoting recognition of the brand. We may conclude that, to improve the success of their commercials, social media advertisers need to implement certain tactics. The majority of respondents do not believe that these commercials are informative enough to help consumers make purchasing decisions; hence, they should be more so. Again, social media advertisements should be trustworthy because the majority of respondents believe that traditional media advertisements (TV, newspaper, magazine and radio) provide more reliable product information than social media advertisements, even though they lack the confidence to base their decisions on that information. Once more, students find innovative advertisement to be more alluring than irrelevant advertisement, which is the main reason why they dislike social media commercials. In order to thrive, advertisers need to create social media commercials that are relevant, reputable, instructive, and innovative.

Acknowledgement

The authors of the study acknowledge the contribution of the respondents who sacrificed their time and efforts to provide valuable data for the accomplishment of the study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical issues

In the first phase of the online questionnaire, participants answered this web-based cross-sectional survey by completing a written informed consent form. All volunteers who responded to the e-questionnaire were given information in the consent form about the study's goals, their anonymity, the confidentiality of their responses, and their freedom to renounce their participation at any time without explanation.

Author contributions

Dola Rani Saha: Field research, data acquisition, writing: original draft; Md. Mahdi-Al-Muhtasim Nibir: Supervision, data analysis, writing: original draft, writing: reviewing and editing, corresponding to editor and reviewers; Sayed Azharul Islam: data analysis, writing: reviewing and editing.

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