SOCIAL NETWORK ADVERTISEMENTS AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS: A CASE OF MOBILE FACEBOOK USERS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of this research study was to analyze the relationship of mobile Facebook homepage impressions, social impressions and organic impressions with purchase intentions of mobile users. The researchers applied an 'Analytical Research Design' to determine the strength of relationships between independent and dependent variables by engaging a total number of 1152 respondents from Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi/Islamabad in Pakistan. It is found in the study that there is positive and significant association of homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions with purchase intentions of mobile Facebook users. Firstly there is a tendency of rapid changes in Facebook page composition and format of the ads thereon. Undoubtedly, more sophisticated methods will be used by the advertisers for posting ads on Facebook. Secondly, peer influence may have impact on the effectiveness of ads on Facebook which needs to be checked. Thirdly, all types of social network advertisements on Facebook have different effect on purchase intentions; so a comparison of effectiveness of three types of web version and mobile version Facebook advertisements is needed to distinguish between them.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Network Advertisement, Facebook, Homepage Impressions, Social Impressions, Organic Impressions, Purchase Intentions

BACKGROUND

Social media and social networking websites are perceived to be an opportunity for organizations to reach potential customers through social networking advertising which is considered as interactive and viral means to inform, persuade, and remind the customers about the company's offerings (Priyanka & Srinivasan, 2015). Through social networking websites and social media, an organization can upload advertising contents to attract target audience and obtains reviews of products or services (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin, & Tao, 2015). Social networking websites provide two way communication through which marketers can avail the opportunity of advertising and get feedback and customers can analyze and purchase products or services (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2015).

The impact of social networking advertising can be judged from the example of Taco Bell's 'native advertising' using Instagram. Native advertising is centered on consumer experience in which user experiences are shared to acquire and retain customers. Taco Bell used social advertising campaign on Instagram and reached 12.5 million customers of ages between 18-44 years old in United States (US) in four weeks. Taco Bell reported a four times higher ad recall in groups that were exposed to native advertising content on Instagram relative to control groups (Allen, 2014).Likewise, Air Asia launched a Facebook campaign "gave away a plane" by offering a prize of a trip to Kuala Lumpur if they select 302 of their Facebook

contacts for improving its brand awareness among Australian customers and reached 2.2 million new Australian customers on Facebook (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2015).

Social media marketing and advertising are one of the most effective tools to gain customer attention (Koch & Dikmen, 2015). The users of social networking sites do not realize that they are being marketed by the companies on Facebook and they also have a positive attitude towards Facebook advertising campaigns (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2015). They have not only positive purchase intentions towards campaigns but also share or promote it among their social contacts (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2015).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although the practice of social media marketing is increasing in current age, there are mixed claims of studies regarding purchase intentions and perception of customers towards Facebook advertising campaigns (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2015).In the study of Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang (2015), the researchers analyzed impact of social impression advertisements; homepage advertisements; and organic impression advertisements on the attitudes of Facebook users on personal computers. They found that organic impression advertisements were preferred by users because they had friend names liking/buying/trying a product/service on their news feed relative to paid advertisements that were not available on homepage but posted on sidebar of Facebook profile.

Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang (2015) highlighted a research limitation that their study did not cover the customers using Facebook on their mobile phones. It is worth mentioning here that Facebook users on mobiles have grown to more than half of the Facebook (Koch & Dikmen, 2015). Their study provided us an opportunity to fill this gap by conducting study in this direction. Furthermore, users may use both computer and mobile platforms for Facebook like and the difference of appearance of advertisement on mobile version of Facebook advertisement and computer version of Facebook advertisement necessitates this study. Other differences between computer and mobile version of Facebook include; time available to sit, read, and write long replies; type of messenger used for communication; difference in the homepage and newsfeed; and frequency and size of advertisements.

By using this grey area in the body of knowledge regarding social networking advertisements, the researchers would fill the gap by analyzing the differences between effects of examined factors such as ad values and Social Network Advertising (SNA) characteristics on attitudes and behavioral intentions of computer and mobile users of Facebook. This study will be extending the study of Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang (2015) by using same factors, ad values, SNA characteristics to measure their effects on intentions and attitudes on computer and mobile users of Facebook.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social media and networks are considered as important tools of advertising in modern business world. Social media refers to a group of online applications that are based on technological and ideological foundations of Web 2.0 used to generate and exchange users' own content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media contains all those software tools that encourage sharing of user generated content (Sinclaire & Vogus, 2011).Social networks or social networking sites (SNS) is the platform which facilitates contents of social media. The features of social networking sites include: (1) containing and supporting user profiles, (2) allowing and encouraging sharing of user generated contents (3) connecting users or their social contacts, (4) allowing users to comment on the content of other users or post content on each other's profiles or pages, and (5) allowing users to establish and join user groups

based on common interest, goals, and tastes such as career, industry, politics, and fashion etc. (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013; Luna-Nevarez & Torres, 2015; Ellison, 2007; Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Hence, it can be deduced that all kinds of SNS are social media but all kinds of social media are not SNS.

This research study is concerned about advertisements placed on SNS specifically and not about advertisements placed on social media as a whole. According to Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang (2015), Social Networking Advertising (SNA) refers to advertisement content placed on SNS that inform, persuade, remind, and engage users with the brand or offering of the organization. They further write that SNA has a segmentation strategy like traditional marketing. Traditional marketing segmentation include segmenting customers on the basis of psychographics, demographics, and geographical segmentation. Similarly, SNA segments and targets their audiences on the basis of users' social networks (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2015).

In SNA, an organization uses user interactions that users are willing to share. It may include personal information, interests, tastes, names, groups, and activities on SNS. Using this interaction data, users are segmented and SNA is targeted to desired target audience or users (Jin & Feenberg, 2015). There are several advantages of SNA for organizations. Firstly, SNA are the cheapest advertising opportunities for organizations. Secondly, SNA is an important tool of viral marketing that generate word of mouth communication among the customers and users (Adamopoulos & Todri, 2015). Thirdly, organizations are able to visualize users as segments which makes it easy for them to identify their target market and focus their marketing efforts on their desired customer segment (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2015). For example, users having common interest would create and join a similar group on Facebook. Similarly, trending on SNS also act as an effective source information for organizations seeking to identify their target market segment. Personal information of users such as user location, age, and interests act as psychographics or demographics values that enable the firms to identify their target markets (Jin & Feenberg, 2015). Therefore, SNS are completely marketing tools for organizations and they are not merely advertising tools. One of the most dramatic effect of SNA is that customers or users never realize that they are being marketed or targeted by corporations. This generates a 'buzz' among users while increasing advertising effectiveness (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

FACEBOOK AS A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE (SNS) ON MOBILE PHONES

From the above discussion, the researchers conclude that all features of Social Networking Sites (SNS) are present in Facebook which is also the most widely used and most popular website as 71% of the social media users are Facebook users and 70% of the Facebook users check their profile pages at least once daily while 45% of the users check their profile pages several times a day (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). The study would analyze factors affecting user attitudes and behavioral intentions towards advertising and social media marketing campaigns on mobile version of Facebook which is one of the most widely used social networking websites for social media marketing (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2015).

In 2013, there were more than 10 million users of Facebook in Pakistan comprising of 8 million male and 3 million female; and approximately 6 million users between the ages of 18-24 (Nasir, 2013).According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), there were 136.4 million mobile phone subscribers in January 2015 out of which 10.34 million users were reported as 3G users in February 2015. Out of 10.34 million 3G users, 3.41 million users (33%) use Facebook on their mobiles (Prime Minister's Office Board of Investment, 2015).

SOCIAL NETWORKING ADVERTISEMENT (SNA) ON FACEBOOK

The advertisement through social networking sites is referred to Social Networking Advertisement (SNA). One of the most important features of SNAs is that they are not distinguishable by the users which make them different from traditional online advertising where sponsored links are easily recognized by users as advertising (Bickart & Schindler 2001). Contrary to this, official Facebook page of an organization or posts of a corporations and its CEO might be SNA. It is also interesting to note that majority of SNA have commercial messages embedded in the content in such a way that users never realize that these content are commercials (Luna-Nevarez & Torres, 2015). This is one of the major reasons for which SNA is considered as one of the most effective tools for viral marketing.

According to Gibs & Bruich (2010), SNA can be classified in three categories which are: homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions. Homepage impressions are located in the sidebar of Facebook that contain creative content including text and image. They also provide the users an option to access and like the page. In social impressions, an advertisement is shown to the users mentioning name of the friends that have already become a fan or like a page. Finally, in organic impressions, social stories are exposed to users in the news feed showing the other users on Facebook becoming a fan of a particular brand or liking its page. This study was done in 2010 but this is still active in 2015. The researchers of this paper closely examined and testified the three types of SNAs are still present on Facebook and they work in similar ways for desktop users. According to Gibs & Bruich (2010), homepage ads are paid advertisements while organic and social impressions are 'earned media'. In 2015, all the three types of advertisements have become paid and, nowadays, organic and social impressions are being charged by the Facebook.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a central characteristic of consumer behavior which refer to the decision of a customer to purchase goods or services (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991),chances of a person to purchase goods or services(Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009) and making a buying choice by assessing various substitutes of the product or service (Zeithaml, 1988; Karimi, Papamichail, & Holland, 2015).Various studies argue that when customers evaluate goods or services positively, then they have tendency to buy a specific product or service which is termed as purchase intention of the customers(Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1996; Hausman, 2000; Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982).

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL NETWORK ADVERTISING AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Dodds & Monroe (1985) argue that purchase intentions of customers are driven and motivated by a relationship of price, quality, and perceived value associated with the brand. According to traditional literature, it is crucial for an advertisement to match the company offerings with the needs and wants of the target customers (Pollay & Mittal, 1993) that results in stimulating purchase intentions of potential customers (Ducoffe, 1996),Brown, Pope & Voges,2003, Dahlen, 2001). Likewise, SNA has positive impact on purchase intentions provided SNA informs the customers regarding the relationship of price, quality, and perceived value associated with a brand (Chu & Kim, 2011). An SNA successfully relating the company offerings with the users' needs and wants, creates positive associations of a brand and purchase intentions (Van-Tien Dao, Nhat Hanh Le, Ming-Sung Cheng, & Chao Chen, 2014).

Dao et al., (2014) and Jung et al., (2015) report that informative SNA that meet the entertainment needs of users on social media are more likely to boost purchase intentions among users. Jung et al., (2015) narrate that mostly an SNA match company offerings with customers' needs & wants more effectively than to traditional advertising because it is easier to customize SNA than to traditional advertising.Yang (2012) and Leung et al. (2015)found a positive relationship between SNA on Facebook and purchase intentions.

SUPPORTING THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Theory of planned behavior (TPB) postulates intention of human behavior as a result of the desire to obtain favorable outcomes and perceived behavioral control by meeting expectations of others. Hence, theory of planned behavior (TPB) can be used in predicting the purchase intentions of customers. After going through supporting theory and critical literature review, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive association of mobile Facebook homepage impressions with purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive association of mobile Facebook social impressions with purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive association of mobile Facebook organic impressions with purchase intentions.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The researchers applied an 'Analytical Research Design' to testify the hypotheses and determine the strength of possible relationship of mobile Facebook homepage impressions, social impressions and organic impressions with purchase intentions. Keeping in the view both the financial and time constraints, the researchers selected three big cities of Pakistan; Karachi 682,000 (20%), Lahore 409,200 (12%), and Rawalpindi/Islamabad 272,800 (8%) comprising of 40% of Facebook users on mobile phones in Pakistan. The researchers selected 1152 user, 384 users from each city, as sample size by using "Sample Size Table for Given Population" given by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) from the population of 3,410,000 users using mobile phone for Facebook. The researchers gained 42.8%, 49.1% and 64.6% response rates from Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi/Islamabad respectively comprising an average of 52% response rate. The researchers applied simple random sampling technique in this study.

The researchers used questionnaire as a tool for primary data collection. The questionnaire was adapted after an extensive review of related literature and measurement scales of dependent and independent variables. The researchers used nine-item purchase intention scale to measure intention-to-purchase of mobile Facebook users for particular product that is being offered at a certain conditions adapted from the studies of Putrevu & Lord (1994) and Taylor & Hunter (2002) with five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and Nielsen's(2012) classification of social networking advertisements (SNA).The researchers used SPSS 20.0 to process collected data collected and apply appropriate statistical tests.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Purpose of this study is to measure the strength of relationship of homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions with purchase intentions of users using mobile version of Facebook. The following table shows the results of correlation analysis:

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

Variables		Purchase Intentions	Homepage Impressions	Social Impressions	Organic Impressions
Purchase Intentions	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Homepage Impressions	Pearson Correlation	0.423	1	0.293	0.325
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
Social Impressions	Pearson Correlation	0.509	0.293	1	0.416
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
Organic Impressions	Pearson Correlation	0.518	0.325	0.416	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

Correlation matrix shows that all types of social network advertisement (SNA); homepage impressions, social impressions and organic impressions have strong and significant association with purchase intentions of mobile Facebook users.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

After analyzing and fulfilling the assumptions of regression analysis; true representativeness, normally distributed data, absence of multi-collinearity, and homoscedasticity, the researchers applied regression analysis to determine the degree to which homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions can explain purchase intentions of users using mobile version of Facebook. Purchase intentions was regressed with all the independent variables; homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions to assess the goodness of fit for the model and asses the collective impact of these predictors.

Following is the regression model:

Purchase   Intentions $= \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{Homepage impressions} + \beta_2 \times \text{Social   impressions}   + \beta_3 \times \text{Organic impressions} + \varepsilon$

Table 2. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	P-value
Regression	32.35	8.278	272.969	0.01
Residual	5.43	0.030		
Total	37.78			

This model fitted 'good' in the data set and tested the normality of residuals. The results of 'ANOVA' (analysis of variance) showed that there was no significant discrepancy between the means and variances of the variables. The researcher accepted the model with the Significance value (p=0.01). The model showed total deviations (37.78) took place in purchase intentions of the users using mobile version of Facebook from which deviation (32.35) was caused by the independent variables; homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions. These results are further verified by the values of R and R-Square as follows:

Table 3. ESS/TSS Ratio

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.747	0.558	0.412	0.215

The results show a value of R^2 0.558 showed that 55.8% of deviation from the mean in the dependent variable was explained by the model. The 'Adjusted R-Square' (.412) measured

41.2% variance in purchase intentions of the users using mobile version of Facebook was explained by the independent variables; homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions. The value of 'Std. Error of Estimates' (.215) measured 21.5% unexplained portion caused by some other variables.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t-Value	P-Value
Purchase Intentions		6.234	.000
Homepage Impressions	0.670	4.030	.001
Social Impressions	0.864	5.231	.000
Organic Impressions	0.779	9.893	.000

These results showed that all the null hypotheses were rejected as the (standard) beta coefficients were not zero. Hence, it can be inferred that homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions significantly affected purchase intentions which is further confirmed by their t-values which were more than 2 and P-values less than 1 for all independent variables.

CONCLUSIONS

In light of the results obtained from correlation analysis and regression analysis, the researchers conclude that there is positive and significant association of homepage impressions, social impressions, and organic impressions with purchase intentions of mobile Facebook users. If they are more exposed to the advertisement on social networking sites like Facebook, they will have more likely to purchase that particular product or service. Marketing departments can seek guidance from these conclusions and target mobile Facebook users to advertise their products and services. Hence, all the hypotheses developed by the study are proven to be true.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Effectiveness of social network advertisements (SNA) and their impact on purchase intentions of social networking sites' users need further empirical evidences. As all other studies, this study has also some limitations which are opportunities for future researches. Firstly, there is a tendency of rapid changes in Facebook page composition and format of the ads thereon. Undoubtedly, more sophisticated methods will be used by the advertisers for posting ads on Facebook. However, all types of ads tested in the study are verified and exist on Facebook. Secondly, peer influence may have impact on the effectiveness of ads on Facebook which needs to be checked. Thirdly, all types of SNA on Facebook have different effect on purchase intentions; so a comparison of effectiveness of three types of web version and mobile version Facebook advertisements is needed to distinguish between them. In spite of above listed limitations, this study would play its fundamental role in developing future research in social network advertisement (SNA).

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ISSN: 2223-9944, e **ISSN: 2223-9553**
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