

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE MARKETING IN ALBANIA IN 2019–2023

Elona Fejzaj✉, Gerta Gogo

Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania

ABSTRACT

Aim: In recent years, social media has become a very popular tool for companies that want to advertise their products and services and attract the right number of customers. This article aims to indicate how social media and digital marketing in Albania influence consumer behavior using marketing techniques. **Method:** To achieve the aim desk research and survey research were used. The information required to address the study questions was gathered via a semi-structured online questionnaire with nine questions, most of which were single-choice. Young and middle-aged Albanians were sampled in October 2023 using a purposeful random method. The questions included in the questionnaire allowed us to indicate, how users react to advertisements on different social media platforms and to the content found on these networks. **Results:** According to the findings, social media influences digital marketing, with Instagram being the primary platform for online product purchases. Older individuals use websites less for online shopping (even because they need to use a foreign language). In contrast, younger or middle-aged people use social media more for marketing or purchasing. While its use is not yet a habit for many people, it is a noticeable trend. Also, the visual part of an advertisement increases the chances of spending money on the product that is being advertised. **Conclusions:** During 2019–2024, online marketing in Albania has become more important and this trend would be increasing in future. It adds to company revenue and influences economic development on a larger scale. However, certain limitations prevent making definitive recommendations for the future, as the number of responses was restricted to just 50; this study acts as a guide for additional related research in the coming years.

Key words: consumer, digital marketing, social media, promotion

JEL codes: M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

During and after the pandemic, people in Albania began using social media more frequently than usual to find health-related information and even to create amusing movies that they could share with others. Therefore, social media is used to obtain

the most recent information, interact with individuals across the globe, and purchase goods and clothing without ever leaving the house. This paper aims to comprehend how social media affects consumer behavior, how they respond to information on social media, and how they respond to various business pages – that is, how they are promoted on various

Elona Fejzaj <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8771-5521>, Gerta Gogo <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4945-9459>

✉ efejzaj@ubt.edu.al

social media platforms. The primary study question is the impact of social media on consumers' decisions to purchase various goods online.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The value of marketing extends to society in general. It has helped to introduce new or improved products that make life easier or more prosperous for people. Successful marketing helps build demand for products and services, which, in turn, creates jobs [Kotler and Keller 2016]. Most of us spend more time buying and consuming than working or sleeping. We consume products such as cars and fuel, services such as haircuts and house repairs, and entertainment such as television and concerts. Given the time and energy, we devote to consuming, we should strive to be good at it. Knowledge of consumer behavior can be used to enhance our ability to consume wisely [Hawkins et al. 2004]. Marketing is a social and managerial process through which individuals and groups benefit from what they need and want through the creation, offering, and exchange of products that are valuable to others [Kotler and Keller 2016].

The present context of the digitalized business era reshapes marketing promotional strategies, and social media plays a pivotal role in this [Dissanayake et al. 2019]. Digital marketing, or online marketing, is one of the most common concepts of this century and is part of marketing products and services using digital technology, mobile phones, social media, display advertising, and other digital channels. Digital marketing began in the 1990s, but it developed much more during 2000–2010 because the spread of new technology devices increased the role of the media and digital advertising. Digital marketing has enabled removing geographical, ethnic, and religious barriers that were once only an illusion to achieve this type of interaction [Kotler and Keller 2016].

Consumer behavior primarily focuses on consumer learning processes from internal phenomena such as motivation, ritual phenomena, moods, personality, lifestyles, and attitudes as well as from external factors – such as marketer endorsements and group behavior considering family, associative, and aspi-

ration group influences. It also examines different demographic indicators, including social class, religion, household influences, and cultural attributes [Shareef et al. 2016].

The effect of the Internet on public relations is the single most significant subject of current conversation in the public relations industry. As the world of communications changes beyond recognition, those seeking to communicate must revise and revolutionize their approach. Public relations and the social web explore communications change and look at what this means for communicators working across industries, from entertainment to politics [Brown 2009].

It has been noticed that during the last few years, people have been using digital media a lot, which is why firms must also use digital marketing techniques to reach target markets [Ryan 2020]. In 2020, Internet users were 4.9 billion, or 69% of the world population. Also, online marketing has become essential for promoting products and services due to increased competition and changes in customer demand. Firms invest in digital marketing to get closer to customers, and it has also been reported that 60 billion USD has been spent in recent years [Ryan 2020].

Digital marketing allows businesses to increase the number of customers due to its availability at a distance. Today, this kind of modern marketing has ample space, and enterprises have more accessible possibilities to expand, as customers are more comfortable shopping online and see online marketing as safer than traditional marketing [Ryan 2020].

The increasing focus on customer experience arises because customers now interact with firms through multiple touch points across various channels and media, resulting in longer, complex customer journeys. Firms face accelerating fragmentation of media and channels, and omnichannel management has made this the new norm. Moreover, customer interactions through social media create significant challenges and opportunities for firms [Lemon and Verhoef 2016].

Due to its dynamic and emergent nature, the effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication channel has presented many challenges for marketers. It is different from traditional marketing channels. Many organizations are investing in their social media

presence because they appreciate the need to engage in social media conversations to build their consumer brand [Siriwardana 2020].

Weinberg [2009] refers to social media marketing as an enabling process for individuals to promote their products or services through social media and enter a larger community than traditional channels offer. Nowadays, globalization changes not only the process of commercialization and marketing but also the way people behave and communicate with each other. Their pace of life is getting faster and faster; people want to deal with more and more things as quickly as possible and often simultaneously. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the implementation of the hybrid work model in many sectors – not only in business but also, for example, state administration and education [Pomianek and Muça 2024]. Social media is becoming more and more popular all around the world, offering social and marketing possibilities to consumers. At the same time, businesses use social media to promote and sell their products, converting the platform into marketing instruments [Pomianek and Muça 2025]. Contemporary entrepreneurs, being aware that a lack of trust among customers resulting from a lack of digital trust may cost money and lead to the collapse of a company, try to assure customers of the security of data stored in their databases. Moreover, the globalization process is making customers more and more dependent on digital technology. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden revolution in education at all levels and in the professional work of many people. Therefore, digital trust concerns many areas of life: social contacts, work, finance, entertainment, health, travel, administration, etc. [Pomianek and Muça 2023]. Social media represents a new sophisticated and uncontrollable element influencing consumer behavior. They have also dramatically changed how businesses and consumers communicate [Pjero and Kerçini 2015].

Social media is becoming an essential intermediary for interaction between governments, governments and citizens, and governmental agencies and businesses due to the unique characteristics of social media: openness, participation, and sharing. However, despite rapid adoption, a growing concern and skepticism regarding the use of social media exists in the public sector [Khan et al. 2014].

Social media is a ‘place’ where people with common interests gather to exchange ideas, meaning traders can listen and respond to the community, receive feedback, and promote products or services. Although social media marketing is a developing concept, the basic idea of marketing remains the same, which is to be liked by consumers, which has been aimed at since the design of the product/service and to maintain a stable relationship with the group or expand it with time [Weinberg 2009].

Social media is a relatively new player in the online labor market, with an increasingly important role among the younger generation [Karacsony et al. 2020].

Along with the popularity of social network sites, social commerce, such as Facebook, has rapidly become a promising platform for online advertising and business activities [Chen et al. 2019].

Consumers started to use the Internet and web tools more today thanks to the rapid development of technology and communication channels. The most important one of these tools is social media. Consumers access information they need about goods and services to be primarily purchased using social media. It is clear that today, especially the popular social networks of social media elements such as Facebook and Twitter, have been great consumer markets [Hayta 2013].

Undoubtedly, changes in the consumptive patterns of media have led companies to shift their focus from products to people and information delivery to information exchange [Shen and Bissell 2013].

Facebook advertising has a nominal positive influence on behavioral attitudes among Millennials, which is in congruence with the communications of the pyramid effect model established through traditional advertising research [Duffett 2015].

Motivations differentially drive social media goal pursuit, and users with different primary social media goals differ in perceptions of well-being [Hoffman and Novak 2012].

Specifically, consistent with past online impulse buying research, website quality manifests as an environmental cue that directly influences the likelihood that a consumer will experience an urge to buy impulsively. Further, highly impulsive consumers can be positively and negatively influenced by varying degrees of website quality [Wells et al. 2011].

AIMS AND METHOD

This paper aims to comprehend how social media affects consumer behavior, how they respond to information on social media, and how they react to various business pages – that is, how they are promoted on various social media platforms. A questionnaire was used as part of the research approach for this investigation. The information required to address the study questions was gathered via a semi-structured online questionnaire with ten questions, most of which were single-choice. Young and middle-aged individuals were sampled in October 2023 using a purposeful random method. Explaining how social media affects consumer behavior and what factors influence customers’ decisions to make purchases online was the goal of the questionnaire that was employed. Because Google Forms was used to conduct the poll electronically, respondents’ anonymity was ensured. A total of 50 responses were gathered. Considering this, the following research questions were developed:

1. Does social media influence Albania’s usage of level of digital marketing?
2. How advanced or underdeveloped is Albania in terms of using the Internet for commerce and advertising?
3. Are younger individuals using social media at a higher or lower rate than older individuals?
4. Do consumers react to social media in the same way?
5. Is social networking occasionally tedious and exhausting?
6. Is shopping online a trend or a habit?
7. What are the most important aspects of online purchasing?
8. Does consumers’ decisions to make an online purchase depend on social media advertising?
9. What causes the increased use of social media?
10. Do people have any preferences for the social networking site that they use most frequently to shop online?

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

The study’s primary goal is to determine how social media affects customer behavior and whether they use digital marketing, particularly during and after the pandemic. This survey was completed by 50 customers of various ages and educational backgrounds. Some of the interviewees’ demographic and personal traits are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Features of the population

Variable	Value	Number	Share [%]
Gender	male	20	34
	female	30	66
Age [years]	18–25	20	54
	26–33	10	23
	34–41	10	16
	42–50	5	7

Source: authors’ estimation.

Based on the information in Table 1, most respondents were female, with a slight difference in representation compared to males. When we examine the age demographics of the respondents, we find that most fall within the range of 18–41 years old. In addition, we analyzed the outcomes generated by each question asked to the interviewees to better understand the factors that impact their personal decisions when purchasing goods and services, influenced by the information or advertisements they encounter on the social media platforms they frequently use.

Only 16% of respondents spent less than 30 minutes on social media each day, indicating a lack of interest in social media. Even less (10%) of the respondents used social media for 30 minutes to an hour. People who were active on social media for over three hours amounted to 18%, while the largest group of interviewees were online for one hour to three hours, making up 56%.

The pandemic has affected how much time people spend on social media, and with this increase in usage, online shopping has also become more common (Fig. 1).

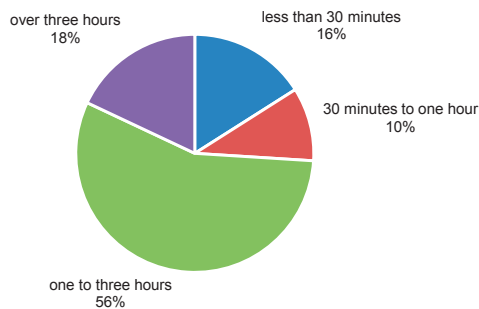


Fig. 1. The intensity of social media use during the day
Source: authors' estimation.

Exactly 40% of the interviewees used Instagram, whereas 24% preferred Facebook (Fig. 2). Although most users use WhatsApp for communication and the advertising is less blatant, only 10% of respondents use it to buy goods and services, making it less popular than other social media platforms. This conclusion interacts with some of the results mentioned in the literature review [Pomianek and Muça 2025].

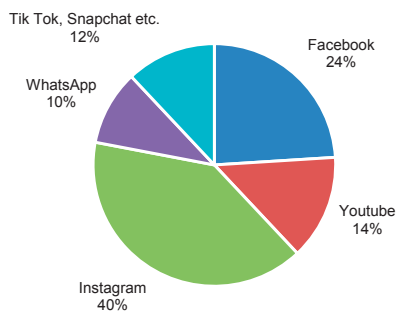


Fig. 2. Most used social networks.
Source: authors' estimation.

The next question asked whether lengthy content in a social media advertisement irritated the respondent. Lengthy content bothered 64% of interviewees, 10% were unconcerned, and 26% were neutral. It implies that social media advertising ought to be succinct and unobtrusive (Fig. 3).

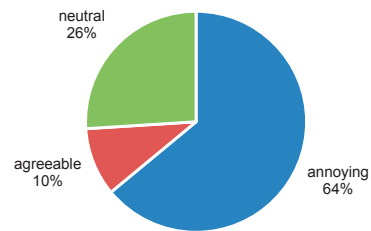


Fig. 3. Attitudes towards lengthy content on social media
Source: authors' estimation.

As many as 62% believed that images are the most viewed part of a social media advertisement. Videos were more engaging and entertaining than blogs and lengthy posts (Fig. 4).

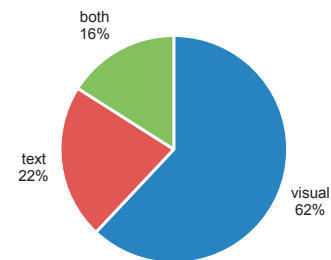


Fig. 4. The most eye-catching part of social media advertising
Source: authors' estimation.

Most respondents (46%) purchased online once or twice a year, while another third (34%) did so monthly. Therefore, people have become more accustomed to social media and the online shopping it offers as the years pass (Fig. 5).

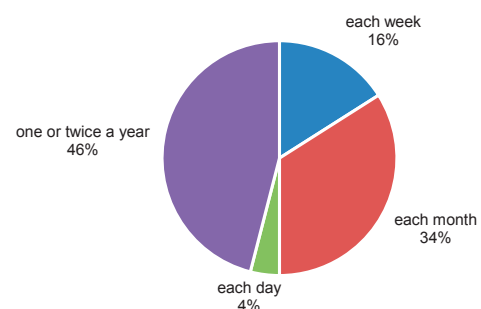


Fig. 5. Frequency of shopping online
Source: authors' estimation.

Therefore, social media has significantly impacted consumer behavior in recent years. Specifically, consumers who answered were influenced by the distribution of influencer posts about their prior experiences with products and services (36%), followed by comments and forums on various websites (18%) when deciding whether to place an order. Their brand knowledge (16%) was given less weight than the information gleaned from friends' and family members' experiences, remarks, and information (30%) (Fig. 6).

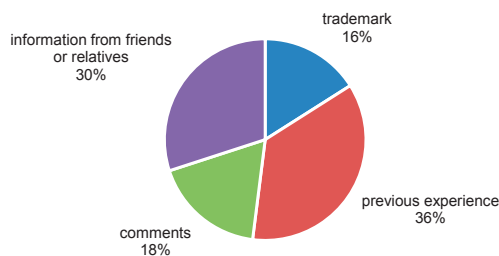


Fig. 6. The most important factor influencing the decision to purchase a product on social media
Source: authors' estimation.

Online shopping is still relatively new in Albania, where 60% of the respondents tried it occasionally, 34% did it more frequently, and 6% had never done it after only seeing an advertisement on social media (Fig. 7).

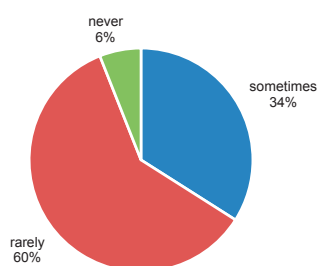


Fig. 7. Frequency of making an online purchase because of social media advertising
Source: authors' estimation.

People interviewed used social media for various reasons, but the most popular ones were related to goods and services: buying (24%) or learning about them (20%). Other reasons are meeting new people, establishing a social network (24%), finding a job (20%), as mentioned in the literature review part [Karacson et al. 2020], and promoting goods and services (12%). It mainly occurs in companies of all sizes. Therefore, everyone uses social media at different times to find the information they need, and many people use it for all the purposes mentioned earlier (Fig. 8).

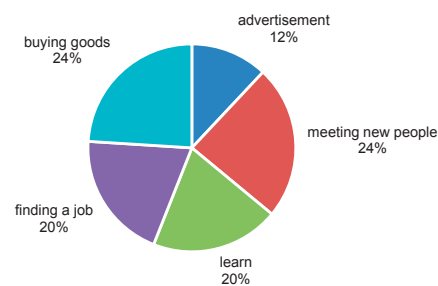


Fig. 8. The purpose of using social media
Source: authors' estimation.

Most of the purchases happened from posts made by friends, influencers, or businesses' pages on social networks such as Instagram (52%) and Facebook (16%). Also, other media, such as YouTube or Twitter, influenced the purchase of products by different visitors (Fig. 9).

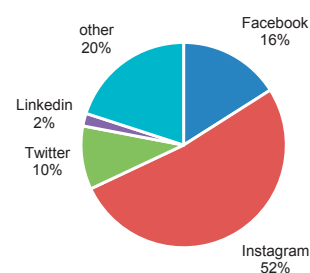


Fig. 9. The social media platform with the biggest impact on online shopping
Source: authors' estimation.

In Albania, in the last five years, the role of online marketing has increased significantly, as shown by the results of the questionnaire presented above.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to understand the relationship between social media usage among some consumers in Albania and its influence on the decision to make online purchases. Because of this, we created a questionnaire based on a few questions we thought were crucial. Even with a small sample size, we could still draw some inferences. Based on the number of respondents, it was evident that young individuals were more likely to use social media, with a higher proportion of respondents between 18 and 41. We posed a few research queries. According to the findings, social media influences digital marketing, with Instagram being the primary platform for online product purchases.

Another research question compared Albania's Internet use for marketing purposes to those of other nations. According to the results, most of the respondents now make monthly purchases online. It can translate into increased dependability on social media, not just for social reasons. The age distribution of social media users is another intriguing subject. Although there is no specific question about it in the survey, we may infer from earlier research that both younger and older people utilize social media nowadays, albeit for different reasons. While older people in Albania may mostly use Facebook or WhatsApp, younger ones are more accustomed to using all social media platforms.

Older individuals use websites less for online shopping (because they need to learn, how to use them or use a foreign language). In contrast, younger or middle-aged people use social media more for marketing or purchasing. Elderly people began using social media more after the pandemic.

The other research questions we posed are about how familiar customers are with online shopping and what factors affect their propensity to purchase online. Throughout the questionnaire, this topic was answered, and it became clear that while internet use is not yet a habit, it is a trend. Also, the visual part

of an advertisement increases the chances of spending money on the product that is being advertised.

The prior online purchasing experiences of friends or family members also play a role in making an online purchase. Their recommendations raise the likelihood that digital marketing will be used as a new shopping tool.

Over the past five years, Instagram has become increasingly popular in Albania, not just for social media but also for finding information about online stores and companies.

In Albania, many companies mainly utilize social media to advertise their goods. Even the final question we asked the interviewees made this outcome abundantly evident.

Social media facilitates the development of new connections, the strengthening of existing ones, and the discovery of social support during trying times. Nowadays, most of us utilize social media to stay in touch with our loved ones. Social media significantly impacts our everyday lives. Connecting with your ideal clients is simple. Digital marketing has advanced significantly in Albania over the past ten years, particularly in the last five years. People today use internet marketing differently depending on their culture.

Due to advancements in technology, digital marketing is increasingly surpassing traditional marketing. Even in Albania, marketing assists companies, particularly online ones, in showcasing their products and services, drawing in customers, and boosting sales. It adds to company revenue and influences economic development on a larger scale. However, certain limitations prevent making definitive recommendations for the future, as the number of responses was restricted to just fifty; this study acts as a guide for additional related research in the coming years.

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ROZWÓJ MARKETINGU ONLINE W ALBANI W LATACH 2019–2023

STRESZCZENIE

Cel: W ostatnich latach media społecznościowe stały się bardzo popularnym narzędziem dla przedsiębiorstw, które chcą reklamować swoje produkty i usługi oraz przyciągać odpowiednią liczbę klientów. Celem tego artykułu jest wskazanie, w jaki sposób media społecznościowe i marketing cyfrowy w Albanii wpływają na zachowania konsumentów za pomocą technik marketingowych. **Metoda:** Aby osiągnąć cel, autorzy wykorzystali badania desk research i badania ankietowe. Informacje wymagane do odpowiedzi na pytania badaw-

cze zebrano za pomocą częściowo strukturyzowanego kwestionariusza online z dziewięcioma pytaniami, z których większość była jednokrotnego wyboru. Respondenci to Albańczycy, młodzi i w średnim wieku, wybrani w październiku 2023 roku przy użyciu metody doboru celowo-przypadkowego. Pytania zawarte w kwestionariuszu pozwoliły na wskazanie, jak użytkownicy reagują na reklamy na różnych platformach mediów społecznościowych i na treści znajdujące się w tych sieciach. **Wyniki:** Z badań wynika, że media społecznościowe wpływają na marketing cyfrowy, a Instagram jest główną platformą do zakupów produktów online. Osoby starsze rzadziej korzystają ze strony internetowej do zakupów online (może dlatego, że muszą używać języka obcego). Z kolei osoby młodsze lub w średnim wieku częściej korzystają z mediów społecznościowych do marketingu lub zakupów, chociaż korzystanie z nich nie jest jeszcze nawykiem dla wielu osób, to trend jest zauważalny. Ponadto wizualna część reklamy zwiększa szansę na wydanie pieniędzy na reklamowany produkt. **Wnioski:** W latach 2019–2024 marketing internetowy w Albanii stał się ważniejszy, a ten trend będzie nasilać się w przyszłości. Trend ten powoduje zwiększenie przychodów firmy i wpływa na rozwój gospodarczy na większą skalę. Jednak pewne ograniczenia uniemożliwiają formułowanie ostatecznych rekomendacji na przyszłość, ponieważ liczba odpowiedzi została ograniczona do zaledwie 50. Badanie opisane w artykule stanowi przyczynek dla kolejnych badań powiązanych w nadchodzących latach.

Słowa kluczowe: konsument, marketing cyfrowy, media społecznościowe, promocja