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TOPIC OF RESEARCH: A STUDY ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CUSTOMERS' BUYING DECISION PROCESS

FINDINGS

This thesis explores the influence of social media on the customer buying decision process, with a focus on understanding both the direct and indirect effects of social media and examining the mediating role of customer engagement. Employing a cross-sectional design, the study gathered data from 647 respondents in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, utilizing convenience and snowball sampling methods. The study has theoretically employed two grounded theories, namely UTAUT2 and EKB models. The aspects of social media usage, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, hedonic motivation, and social influence, have been examined in relation to the stages of customer decision-making. The findings indicate that social media usage determinants: namely Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Hedonic Motivation significantly impact the information search phase of the decision-making process. During the evaluation of alternatives stage, while Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Hedonic Motivation remain influential, Performance Expectancy has no discernible effect. In the purchase intention stage, Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, and Hedonic Motivation regain significance, whereas Social Influence loses its impact. The study also highlights the mediating effect of customer engagement between the information search and evaluation of alternatives stages, partially mediating the relationship between these phases. Lastly, the results show that the steps a customer takes to make a purchase decision do not always go in the same order; sometimes they affect one another. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic and interconnected nature of customer decision-making and social media, providing valuable implications for marketers seeking to optimize engagement strategies and influence purchasing decisions.