

ATTITUDE RESEARCH OF THE STUDENT POPULATION ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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Abstract: *By combining technology and social interaction, social media play a role in creating personal value for users. Since they enable the exchange of text, photos and videos, social media attract a large number of users whose communication is based on common interests. Thanks to their characteristics and reach, social media have become very popular in the business world. Considering the fact that they are very easily accessible via mobile phones, social media are becoming an almost indispensable subject of strategic planning of marketing activities of almost every company, regardless of its activity. One of the most commonly used social media, in addition to online communities and blogs, are social networks. The aim of this paper is to research the attitudes of the student population about social media marketing. The survey of attitudes is conducted on a sample of students studying at the Faculty of Economics Brčko in Brčko and the Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina in Bijeljina. There were used methods of generalization, analysis and synthesis, as well as statistical methods.*

Key words: *attitude research, student population, marketing, social media, social networks*

JEL classification: *M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Radical changes in business and the way people collaborate, primarily driven by the development

of personal computers, the Internet, and online commerce, and further accelerated by the emergence of social media and smartphones, provide great benefits for companies that embrace innovative technologies (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). According to Carr and Hayes (2015) „social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others“.

From a business and marketing perspective, social media can be a tool for companies to gain new insights into their brands and provide a basis for innovative ways of implementing marketing programs (Assaad and Gómez, 2011). Thus, according to Drury (2008), social media marketing is the use of existing social media platforms to increase consumer awareness of a brand, using the word of mouth principle. According to Li, Larimo and Leonidou (2023), five directions of research on social media in the marketing function can be found in the literature: viewing social media as a tool for promotion and sales, viewing social media as a channel for communication and branding, viewing social media as a source of information, viewing social media as part of customer relationship management (CRM), and viewing social media as a general marketing and strategic tool.

There is no doubt that social media, as one of the phenomena of today, provide a large number of advantages, both for companies and for users, but one should still be aware of the negative effects that social media can cause for the aforementioned actors. Given this, it can be emphasized that managing social media is a very complex task, and as such, it cannot be entrusted to the management of one person in the company, or even one of its departments (Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch, 2016).

Some of the advantages or benefits that using social media brings to companies include increased brand recognition, increased brand loyalty, greater opportunity for consumer conversion, higher consumer conversion rates, building a higher level of brand authority, increased visits to the company's main website, reduced marketing costs, better search engine rankings, richer consumer experience, and better insight into consumers (DeMers, 2014). On the other hand, although social media bring many advantages for achieving marketing goals, companies and their brands can also have negative consequences, primarily due to security challenges in protecting customer financial data, employee personal information, and trade secrets, and it is especially difficult to minimize potential damage when negative comments start to spread virally instead of positive reviews and comments (Tuten and Angermeier, 2013).

From a consumer perspective, the benefits of using social media can be hedonic, social, psychological, monetary, and functional (Can and Cetin, 2017). Using social media allows consumers to customize their search for information, use hashtags or direct search services provided by companies, and quickly access the latest news and trends about products and services offered by companies (Wibowo, Chen, Wiangin, Ma and Ruangkanjanes, 2020). When discussing the negative effects of using social media for users, the first thing that can be mentioned is the problems related to how consumers perceive the use of their public data from social media by marketers (Jacobson, Gruzd and Hernández-García, 2020). This problem becomes even more pronounced considering the fact that the consumer-brand relationship is built on trust (Fournier and Alvarez, 2012). In addition to the above, there is also an overload of branded content as well as the intrusiveness of branded ads can significantly affect the saturation of social media (Fernandes and Oliveira, 2024).

In this regard, a special phenomenon that deserves attention are social networks, which are web services that allow individuals to create their own profile within the platform, connect with other

users, or profiles, and view other profiles available to them within the same platform (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Although they are often used as synonyms, social media and social networks are not completely the same, although we can say that every social network is, in fact, a social media. The term social media is used as an umbrella term that, in addition to social networks, also describes other services such as blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, business social networks, forums, microblogs, social tagging, social games, video sharing and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). In other words, social network is social media that exists as social networking site (Gligorijević and Veljković, 2022). During the 1990s, certain social networks such as Six Degrees, BlackPlanet, Asian Avenue, and MoveOn appeared, with the primary purpose of enabling people to communicate with each other, and in addition, sites such as Blogger and Epinions were launched, where users can view and write product reviews themselves (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson and Seymour, 2011).

Sheikh (2026) talks about about 5.66 billion active users of social media worldwide, stating that even 93.8% of all Internet users today have at least one profile on social networks, and the most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Reddit, Threads and Bluesky.

In this paper, the research question concerns what attitudes do students from the Faculty of Economics Brčko and the Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina have toward social media marketing and whether there is a positive association between their social media usage and those attitudes. Following this research question, the research objective is to empirically determine those attitudes and examine the proposed positive relationship, thereby providing an answer to the research question.

The motive for the research can be found in the data that the main users of social networks are younger people, and according to Smith and Anderson (2018), as many as 88% of users in the category of people aged 18 to 29 use social media platforms, to which the student population mostly belongs. In support of giving importance to this population cohort in the context of attitudes towards marketing carried out via social networks, the results of the research by the authors Salari et al. (2025) also speak, where it is stated that the global prevalence of addiction to social media among the student population is 18.4%.

The paper continues with an overview of selected papers in which the authors explore topics related to respondents' (students') attitudes towards

marketing via social media (networks), followed by sections of the paper that relate to the methodology, research results and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The papers whose main findings are given below were found by searching Google Scholar. In order to ensure that the papers were as relevant as possible, search criteria were used that related to their citation rate, the requirement that the papers be subject to anonymous review before publication, and that they were published in highly ranked scientific journals and proceedings. The following keywords were used during the search: “attitude”, “consumer”, “student”, “social media marketing”, “examination”, “factors”, “influence”. After the search yielded a certain number of papers, the process of selecting the most relevant papers was initiated. In the end, the ten most relevant papers were selected.

Akar and Topçu (2011) conducted a study to determine which factors influence consumers' attitudes towards social media marketing (e.g. Facebook, YouTube). The subjects of the study were undergraduate students from Turkey. After analyzing the collected data, the authors concluded that family income, social media usage, knowledge and monitoring have a significant impact on attitudes towards social media marketing, while gender and online shopping experience do not affect attitudes. A similar study, conducted in India, investigating the factors influencing consumer attitudes, was conducted by Ahmad and Khan (2017). The sample included secondary, senior secondary, graduates and post-graduate students. After obtaining the results, the authors found that usefulness, reliability and quality of word of mouth are key factors in determining the attitude of social media users towards advertisements on social networking sites.

A study on college students' attitudes towards online advertising on social networking sites in Greece was conducted by Antoniadis, Assimakopoulos and Koukoulis (2019). Based on the data collected and subsequent analysis of the results, one of the main conclusions is that entertainment, information and credibility have a significant impact on advertising value. Investigating the effects of social media features on consumer attitudes in Australia, Arli (2017) conducted a study using students. According to the results obtained, the author concludes that entertainment has the most significant impact on consumer attitudes towards marketing via social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+), followed by informativeness, usefulness and finally irritation. Furthermore, this

attitude affects consumer loyalty, awareness and purchase intention.

Investigating the factors, Hasan and Sheikh (2018) focus their research on factors affecting attitude towards social marketing through social media. For the purposes of the research, the authors formed a sample consisting of undergraduate students in Bangladesh. The research showed that the attitude towards social marketing through social networks significantly affects whether someone will be affected by social marketing campaigns on these platforms. Also, the use of social media and the perception of the reliability of information on social media have a strong effect on the attitude towards social marketing that takes place through social media, while, on the other hand, monitoring social media and concern for privacy on social media do not show a significant impact. Hassan, Fatima, Akram, Abbas and Hasnain (2013) investigate determinants of consumer attitude towards social networking sites advertisement (Facebook) with a focus on the mediating role of advertising value. The research was conducted on a sample of university students in Pakistan. The conclusions reached by the authors relate to the fact that the respondents show a positive attitude towards advertising on social networks. Advertisement value mediates the relationship between infotainment, credibility and irritation on consumers' attitude towards social networking site's advertisement, but it does not mediate the influence of personalized product, price and promotion content on the same attitude. Mir (2014) conducted a study on the effects of pre-purchase search motivation on user attitudes towards online social network advertising (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Google+) on a sample of students in Pakistan. The results of the study suggest that there is a positive influence of pre-purchase search motivation on attitudes on social network advertising. There is also a relationship between attitude towards social network advertising and social networking sites ad-clicking behavior of users.

Jung, Shim, Jin and Khang (2016) conducted a study on a sample of students in South Korea with the aim of discovering factors affecting attitudes and behavioural intention towards social networking advertising. According to the results of the study, the greatest influence on attitude and behavioural intention across all types of social networking advertising is peer influence. Students in the United Arab Emirates are in the sample formed by the authors Kamal and Chu (2012) with the aim of examining beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours towards advertising on social media. According to the conducted study, the authors conclude that beliefs are positively related to

attitudes, which further have the potential to predict behaviours towards social media advertising. Luna-Nevarez and Torres (2015) conducted a study focusing on consumer attitudes towards social network advertising forming a sample of students in the United States of America. The authors state, among other things, that the technology acceptance model can be useful in explaining attitudes and behavior in the context of social networking, and that those users who find social networking useful, important, and helpful generally express a positive attitude toward this method of advertising.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses is formulated and tested in this paper:

H₁: Social media usage is positively associated with attitudes toward social media advertising.

3. METHODOLOGY

The scope of the research is comprised of undergraduate students from Faculty of Economics Brčko and the Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire specifically designed for this research. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 17 questions, organized into four sections. The first section included four general demographic questions, followed by a set of five questions related to social media usage. The final two sections focused on key constructs of the study: social media usage (three items) and attitudes toward social media marketing (five items). The questionnaire items related to social media usage were adapted based on previous studies of Hasan and Sheikh (2018), Can and Çetin (2017), as well as Akar and Topçu (2011). Attitudes toward social media marketing were adopted from prior research on social media marketing (Ahmad and Khan, 2017; Akar and Topçu, 2011; Can and Çetin, 2017; Kamal and Chu, 2012; Luna-Nevarez and Torres, 2015; Falcão and Isaías, 2020; Wiese and Akareem, 2020).

The variables related to social media usage and attitudes toward social media marketing were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Data collection took place during February 2026. An initial screening question was included to ensure that only respondents who use social media were included in the analysis. One respondent indicated that they do not use social media and was therefore excluded from further analysis, resulting in a final sample of 157 respondents. Collected data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 statistical software.

Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Variable		f	%
Faculty attended	Faculty of Economics Brčko	46	29.3
	Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina	111	70.7
	Total	157	100.0
Gender	Male	35	22.3
	Female	122	77.7
	Total	157	100.0
Year of study	First year	53	33.8
	Second year	41	26.1
	Third year	28	17.8
	Fourth year	35	22.3
	Total	157	100.0
Access to social media	Mobile phone	124	79.0
	Computer	1	0.6
	Both mobile and computer	32	20.4
	Total	157	100.0
Frequency of social media usage	Several times a day	150	95.5
	Once a day	5	3.2
	Two to four times a week	2	1.3
	Total	157	100.0
Social media used	Facebook	88	28.8
	Instagram	153	50.0
	X	21	6.9
	LinkedIn	2	0.7
	Other	42	13.7
	Total	306	100.0
Time spent per visit	Less than 1 hour	68	43.3
	1-3 hours	68	43.3
	4-6 hours	15	9.6
	More than 6 hours	6	3.8
	Total	157	100.0
Numer of BLP (Brand Like Pages)	0-50	130	82.8
	51-100	20	12.7
	101-500	6	3.8
	501+	1	0.6
	Total	157	100.0

Source: Authors' calculation

Out of a total 157 respondents, majority of respondents were students from the Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina (70.7%), while 29.3% attend the Faculty of Economics Brčko. The sample was predominantly female (77.7% female respondents and 22.3% male respondents). In terms of the year of study, first-year students are

represented by 33.8%, followed by second-year (26.1%), third-year students (17.8%) and fourth-year (22.3%). Most respondents reported accessing social media primarily via mobile phones (79.0%), while 20.4% used both mobile phones and computers, and only 0.6% relied exclusively on computers. The vast majority of respondents (95.5%) indicated that they use social media multiple times per day. Observing the social networks that are used by them the most, respondents indicate that these are Instagram (50.0%) and Facebook (28.8%), while X (6.9%) and LinkedIn (0.7%) are networks used less. Of the other social media, they use (13.7%), respondents mention TikTok, Telegram, Snapchat, Viber, WhatsApp, and Reddit. In terms of time spent per session, respondents were evenly split between those who spend less than one hour (43.3%) and those who spend between one and three hours (43.3%), while fewer reported longer usage durations. Finally, 82.8% respondents follow between 0 and 50 brand pages, with progressively smaller proportions in higher categories.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 2 provides an overview of the values of means and standard deviations of the degree of agreement with 8 statements about social media usage and attitudes toward social media marketing.

Table 2. Statements about social media usage and attitudes toward social media marketing

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage		
I use social media regularly.	4.69	0.715
Using social media is part of my daily routine.	4.57	0.886
I like using social media.	4.41	0.933
Attitudes toward Social Media Marketing		
Social media represent a good platform for marketing	4.69	.637
Social media marketing is very interesting.	4.54	.738
I like social media marketing.	4.39	.815
I believe it is useful to use social media for marketing.	4.76	.634
I think social media marketing represents the future of marketing.	4.71	.653

Source: Authors' calculation

Analysis of internal consistency (reliability) was performed for the questions related to the

statements about social media usage and attitudes toward social media marketing (table 3). For both constructs Cronbach's alfa coefficient exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) and we can conclude that satisfactory internal consistency was achieved for both constructs.

Table 3. Reliability statistics

Construct	N of items	Cronbach alfa
Social media usage	3	0.882
Attitudes toward social media marketing	3	0.867

Source: Authors' calculation

To examine the first hypothesis, which assumes a positive relationship between social media usage and attitudes toward social media advertising, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, the underlying assumptions were examined to ensure the appropriateness of the method. The diagnostic tests confirmed that all assumptions for linear regression were satisfactorily met. Linearity was assessed using a scatterplot which indicated a moderately positive and approximately linear relationship between social media usage and attitudes toward advertising. Independence of observations was ensured through the use of an anonymous online questionnaire, with each respondent participating only once. Homoscedasticity and normality of residuals were evaluated using standardized residual plots and a Normal P-P plot, respectively, which indicated no substantial violations of the assumptions.

Table 4. ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.057	1	13.057	55.099	0.000
Residual	36.733	155	0.237		
Total	49.790	156			

Source: Authors' calculation

The regression analysis results (Table 4) indicate that the model is statistically significant ($F = 55.099, p < 0.001$).

Table 5. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.512	0.262	0.257	0.48681

Source: Authors' calculation

The model explains 26.2% of the variance in attitudes ($R^2 = 0.262$), suggesting a moderate level of explanatory power (Table 5). Social media usage emerged as a significant positive predictor

($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.378$) indicates that higher levels of social media usage are associated with more positive attitudes toward social media advertising (Table 6).

Table 6. Coefficients

	Unstand. Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.895	0.235		12.301	0.000
Social media usage	0.378	0.051	0.512	7.423	0.000

Source: Authors' calculation

Thus, H_1 is supported, i.e., social media usage is positively associated with attitudes toward social media advertising.

CONCLUSION

Social media has transformed communication between companies and consumers, offering companies advantages such as increased brand loyalty, reduced marketing costs, and richer consumer insights, while providing users with social and functional benefits like customized information access. However, these benefits are in contrast with challenges including security risks, viral negative feedback, consumer privacy concerns, and content overload. The student population with high engagement rate and notable tendency to social media addiction, represents one of the key groups for understanding these social media tendencies. This research on students from the Faculty of Economics Brčko and the Faculty of Business Economics Bijeljina aims to discover their attitudes toward social media marketing. While social media remains an important strategic tool for marketing, communication, and customer relationship management, its successful use requires a balanced approach that lessens intensity of risks and respects consumer trust.

A systematic review of highly relevant, peer-reviewed studies from diverse countries (Turkey, India, Greece, Australia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Korea, the UAE and the USA), reveals that student attitudes toward social media marketing are shaped by different factors. Among other, we can mention that entertainment, informativeness, credibility, usefulness, and word of mouth quality emerge as the most significant positive determinants of attitude, while irritation and privacy concerns show lesser effects. Demographic variables such as gender and online shopping experience are not consistently influential, whereas social media usage intensity, peer influence, and

prepurchase search motivation play important roles. Furthermore, positive attitudes are repeatedly shown to predict higher brand loyalty, awareness, purchase intention, and ad-clicking behavior. Students who perceive social media advertising as useful and helpful tend to respond more favorably. These findings underscore that marketers targeting the student population, should prioritize informative and trustworthy content over privacy invasive tactics in order to foster positive attitudes and achieving desired behavioral outcomes.

The results of the descriptive statistics of this research are largely in line with previous studies that confirm the dominant role of Facebook and Instagram as the most frequently used social networks. In the sample, Instagram stands out as the most represented platform (50%), while Facebook also records a significant presence (28.8%). Similar findings are reported by Arli (2017) and Antoniadis, Assimakopoulos and Koukoulis (2019), who identify these platforms as leading. Such results may indicate a shift in user preferences towards visually oriented platforms, especially among the younger population.

When it comes to the time spent on social media, the results are in line with the findings of the authors Antoniadis, Assimakopoulos and Koukoulis (2019), according to which the largest percentage of users spend between one and three hours a day. In this research, the most represented categories are one to three hours (43.3%) and less than 1 hour (43.3%), while a smaller percentage of respondents (13.4%) spend more than four hours per visit. Compared to the research of Hasan and Sheikh (2018), where a higher proportion of users with a particularly long time of use (five to eight and more hours) was recorded, the results in this paper indicate a more moderate intensity of use. The dominance of mobile devices in accessing social networks is clearly confirmed in this research as well. Most respondents use smartphones (79%), while the use of computers is minimal (0.6%), and combined use is present in 20.4% of respondents. These findings are consistent with Antoniadis et al. (2019), who also highlight smartphones as the primary device for accessing social network sites platforms, confirming the trend of mobile dominance.

The high frequency of using social networks is additionally confirmed by the fact that 95.5% of respondents access social networking sites several times a day, which is in accordance with the findings of Mir (2014). This pattern indicates a strong integration of social networks into the daily activities of users. Finally, the analysis of Brand Like Pages (BLP) shows that the majority of respondents follow a relatively small number of

brand pages (0–50: 82.8%), while a smaller percentage is engaged at a higher level. These results deviate from the findings of Hassan et al. (2013), where the dominant category was 51–100 pages. This difference may indicate changes in user behavior, whereby modern users show greater selectivity in following brand content.

This study results confirm that general social media usage is a significant and positive predictor of attitudes toward social media marketing. This finding is consistent with several prior studies, particularly Kamal and Chu (2012) and Hasan and Sheikh (2018), which report that higher levels of social media usage are associated with more favourable advertising attitudes.

The findings offer few recommendations for managers of the companies targeting the student population. Managers should focus their social media marketing primarily on Instagram and Facebook, as these platforms are the most frequently used. Also, all content should be optimized for mobile devices given that nearly all students access social media via smartphones. Regarding that students follow relatively few brand pages and are sensitive to intrusive advertising, marketers should prioritize credible, entertaining, informative and non aggressive content that respects privacy and builds trust. Positive attitudes fostered in this way are likely to enhance brand loyalty and purchase intention, making authentic, value driven campaigns more effective.

While the findings provide valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. First, the study employed a sample of students from two faculties, which limits the generalisability of the findings to a broader population. For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample to a larger number of respondents, including students from different faculties, in order to improve representativeness and increase the possibility of generalizing the results. The limitation is also that, due to the characteristics of the sample, it was not possible to perform more analyzes and tests, i.e. to set a larger number of research hypotheses (the number of respondents per group was very uneven). Therefore, for future research of this type, it is suggested to create a stratified sample, which would remove obstacles to comparison by group. Finally, the limitation of the research is that the emphasis of the research was placed on social networking sites, as one of the emerging forms of social media. In this regard, the recommendation for future research is that, in addition to social networking sites, research include other forms of social media, such as blogs, social games, video sharing and virtual worlds. Despite these

limitations, the study contributes to a better understanding of how social media usage relate to attitudes toward social media marketing.

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