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SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECT ON PURCHASE INTENTION: JORDANIAN AIRLINE INDUSTRY

MUHAMMED ALNSOUR

Associate Professor of Marketing, Al-Balqa Applied University, Al-Salt, Jordan

Tel: (+962-79) 5504144;

Email: m.s.alsour@bau.edu.jo

MUSTAFA GHANNAM

German-Jordanian University Amman, Jordan

RAWAND AL-NATOUR

German-Jordanian University Amman, Jordan

YOUSEF ALZEIDAT

German-Jordanian University Amman, Jordan

Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative research is to identify the effect of five social media benefits on purchase intention when buying an airline ticket from Jordanian airline companies. This research studied how functional benefits of social media, monetary benefits of social media, hedonic benefits of social media, psychological benefits of social media and social benefits of social media affect consumers' purchasing intention when purchasing an airline ticket. Based on the literature the operationalization of social media benefits can be divided into five major groups, functional benefits such as efficiency, hedonic benefits such as amusement,

monetary benefits such as special deals, psychological such as affiliation, and social such as involvement. In this study we will examine the five factors to focus on and measure their effectiveness on purchase intention; functional, monetary, hedonic, psychological and social benefits will be studied. These factors will be used as the independent variables. The purchase intention was decided upon as the dependent variable.

The study showed that monetary benefits of social media and hedonic benefits of social media have a positive effect on purchase intention while functional benefits of social media, psychosocial benefits of social media, and monetary benefits of social media have no relationship with customers' purchase intention.

Keywords: Social Media; Purchase Intention; Airline Industry; Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of social media and its spread around the world has affected and still affecting people in terms of behavior. Nowadays, people are spending much more time on different activities in online and specially on social media than before, due to the changes of people's life style [1].

Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Google+ are new media platforms that have affected our lives, our ways of communication and determined our choices [2]. With the revolution of social media recently and bearing in mind that people spend a lot of time on these platforms, Social media has proven to have a direct relationship with the purchase intention, purchase stages and the purchase decision accordingly [3]. Due to the importance of social media platforms as a marketing medium, most of organizations are currently using different social media as a communication tool to reach and communicate with their current and potential customers.

Organizations are utilizing the social media platforms and some of them have a strong presence on at least one or two of these social media platforms to communicate with their customers. Moreover, the use of social media advertising has become a strategic communication tool to directly influence the purchase intention and the buying behavior [4].

Overall, social media is influencing the marketing communication environment in most of the organizations. Not only allowing interacting between customers and the organization, but also among customers themselves [5].

Social media has become one of the crucial tools in the communication strategy in

the airline industry (citation). Most of the airline companies have included social media as one of their marketing communication tools, to create more engagement and strong reputation through different activities that are posted on social media channels. Developing a strategy for the social media is important in order to strengthen the relationship with customers and increase market share. Social media plays a vital role as a key information channel [6,7]. Since customers can create an expectation level from a service provider through the online communication and specially the social media, it is more likely that social media can play an important role in the different purchase stages [5].

Research Problem and Questions

This research attempts to answer the question "What is the role of social media benefits in affecting the consumer's purchase intention when buying an airline ticket?"

Research Objectives

General Objective

To identify which of the five social media benefits affect the purchase intention of customers when purchasing an airline ticket from Jordanian airline companies with frequent worldwide flights among travelers living in Amman and above the age of 18.

Specific Objectives

- To describe and measure the effect of functional benefits of social media on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.
- To describe and measure the effect of monetary benefits of social media on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.
- To describe and measure the effect of hedonic benefits of social media on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.
- To describe and measure the effect of psychological benefits on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.
- To describe and measure the effect of social benefits of social media on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Introduction to Social Media

Social media platforms are considered new media that allow users to interact directly either with each other or with the firms; the two-way communication platforms give

users the opportunity to share information and opinions. Almost every business is using at least one social media platform. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, and YouTube are considered ideal platforms for developing and mandating close relationships with their customers, one of the most popular social media channels is Facebook which is considered a facilitator of interactions and allow users to share experiences and ideas [8]. According to Xiang and Gretzel [6] social media is also called consumer-generated media and they defined social media platforms as internet-based applications with content generated by consumers that is usually related to experience and this content is shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers. The classification of social media platforms has not been agreed upon. However, the most widely cited classification is the one that was proposed by Xiang and Gretzel [6] which divides social media into five main categories, virtual communities, reviews, blogs, social networks and media sharing sites. Elefant [9] has described social media as a technology that facilitates interactive information, user-created content and collaboration.

Users of social media contribute to sharing information by publishing the news or the posts that have been taken from different sources [10]. Social media helps users of similar traits or interests to be connected with each other, share content and news within minutes. Social media is different from the traditional media because the users of social media can modify and choose the content, in addition to giving them the option of choosing people they want to interact with or send information [11].

With consumers spending more time on social media, it started to influence their lives, communication habits, and choices, as a good share of marketing communication happens within social media. Hence, the revolution of social media has changed the way that organizations attract and retain prospective consumers [12].

Customers are utilizing social media to search for information and reviews, and their social media platforms are considered a reliable source of information that customers trust more than traditional media, which made some organizations move from standard advertising such to TV, radio and magazines towards social media [13].

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is defined as the consumer's probability of purchasing a product or a service in the future and it is directly related to consumer attitude and preference. As behavioral intention is based on attitude, bearing in mind that customer relationship and customer retention are highly built on attitude, purchase intention is expected to have a strong relationship to attitude and a person's behavior is affected by intention. Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan [14] definition of purchasing intention was derived from the phrase itself as their definition was evolving around

customers' intention to buy a particular product. Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan [14] explained that customer's decision to buy a product has a direct relationship with what previous consumers share online and especially on social media.

Purchase intention can be operationally defined as the probability of purchasing the product in the future which means it is very likely that someone will purchase the product, and there is a willingness to buy the product the next time there is a need for this product, or by confirming buying the product in the future and recommending it to others which means someone will definitely buy the product if there is a need for this product and will recommend it to friends or family members [15].

Purchase intention and willingness to purchase are two components of the purchasing decision process. A social media account may attract people's interest, create their willingness to check the product or service, and affect their purchase intention consequently. Studies show that social media affects the pre-purchase stage and an advertisement that is shared by users on social media has an effect on purchase intention [16].

Social Media Benefits in affecting Purchase Intention

Social media benefits are classified into five categories, functional, social, psychological, monetary and hedonic. Functional benefits such as efficiency, hedonic benefits such as amusement and monetary benefits such as discounts have affected purchase decision positively. In the previous studies, the examples that were given to measure the benefits of social media were used in online community studies [17].

Most common benefits from the previous studies to examine the effect of social media roles on purchase intention. This study will adopt the five types of benefits of social media, functional, monetary, hedonic, psychological and social benefits [18]. Functional benefits are stated as the availability of information and ability to share this information between users of social media. Monetary benefits are stated to be the savings or special dealings that users may get using social media. Hedonic benefits are stated as positive emotions like entertainment and amusement. Psychological benefits are stated to be the personal feelings including the sense of belonging and association with others. Social benefits are stated to be the various types of help and support that online members can obtain [17].

Customer's purchasing behavior is based on the perception that customers will eventually decide to buy [19]. Therefore, previous studies argued that purchasing experience plays a role in the prediction of purchasing intentions as a person's behavior is affected by intention. This was proved by different theories such as are the theory of reasoned behavior [20] and the theory of planned behavior [21]. The theory of reasoned action, Fishbein and Ajzen discussed that intentions are determined by the person's attitude and there is an association between cognition,

intention and behavior. They also stated that intentions predict behavior, and intentions are determined by the person's attitude and subjective norm.

Social media platforms have also been considered as an effective source to emotionally motivate customer towards purchase intention and behavior [22]. The rise of social media platforms has changed the way airlines communicate with their customers, and pushed them to at least use one or two social media platforms in order to manage public relations and communicate with customers. Although airline tickets are usually bought through the website or by going directly to the travel agent to purchase the ticket, social media has proven to have a strong communication tool to interact with customers and push their sales accordingly.

A previous study showed that almost 90% of airline companies have no less than one social media platform which the company uses to publishes its information. As a well-planned social media strategy can generate positive outcomes with minimum financial costs. In contrast, ignoring social media can lead to a negative image and a negative outcome as a result [23].

It is important for airlines or any other industry generally to capitalize on social media analysis and study how consumers interact with, and respond to social media activities, Low-budget airlines have the lowest adoption rate of social media platforms. However, if we bear in mind that some of the low-budget airlines are in countries that have internet government-bans such as China and Japan the percentage may change [24].

Building Research Model and Hypotheses Development

This study was conducted using the exploratory method to further explore the role of social media benefits in determining consumer purchase intention when purchasing airline tickets in Jordan. As there are many airline companies operating in Jordan. We decided to conduct our study on the Jordanian airline companies with frequent worldwide flights which reduces the sample to airline travelers living in Amman.

This research was focused on exploring the role of social media benefits in affecting the consumer's purchase intention when buying an airline ticket. The following are the research hypotheses:

H0_a: The functional benefits of social media have no effect on customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H0_b: The monetary benefits of social media have no effect on customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H0_c: The hedonic benefits of social media have no effect on customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H0_d: The psychological benefits of social media have no effect on customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H0_e: The social benefits of social media have no effect on customers' purchasing

intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H1_a: The functional benefits of social media will positively affect customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H2_b: The monetary benefits of social media will positively affect customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H3_c: The hedonic benefits of social media will positively affect customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H4_d: The psychological benefits of social media will positively affect customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

H5_e: The social benefits of social media will positively affect customers' purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

Variables Operational Development

Based on the literature the operationalization of social media benefits can be divided into five major groups, functional benefits such as efficiency, hedonic benefits such as amusement, monetary benefits such as special deals, psychological such as affiliation, and social such as involvement. However, in this study we will examine the five factors to focus on and measure their effectiveness on purchase intention; functional, monetary, hedonic, psychological and social benefits will be studied. These factors will be used as the independent variables. The purchase intention was decided upon as the dependent variable.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

General Objective

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- To describe and measure the effect of social benefits of social media on the purchasing intention of airline tickets in Jordan.

Type of Research

This quantitative research was conducted using the exploratory method to further explore the role of social media benefits in determining consumer purchase intention when purchasing airline tickets in Jordan. As there are many airline companies operating in Jordan. We decided to conduct our study on the Jordanian airline companies with frequent worldwide flights which reduces the sample to airline travelers living in Amman and above the age of 18.

Research Population and Sample

The sample was derived from Jordan's total population, which is a total of around 9.5 million. A research that was conducted by Ipsos in 2016 found that 90% of the Jordan populations are internet users, 80% of them are users of social media platforms. The sample participants were exclusively from Amman, which represent 42% out of the total population. Based on the above data, our sample population was around 680,000 and by using convenience sampling the research sample were 311 participants. However, 32 responses were excluded by answering the screening question about using social media by no, or by stating that the city of living is not Amman. As a result, 279 participants completed the survey which is an estimated response rate of 90% and the single cross-sectional data collection was used to collect data for the study bearing in mind that the marginal error is 5% and the confidence level is 95%. The targeted audience was social media users living in Amman above the age of 18.

Data Collection Technique

An online questionnaire of 13 questions was constructed and a special screening question about using social media was included. The questionnaire had five demographic questions, a general social media question, and five questions about social media benefits as each question included items asking about one of the benefits, and a question with four items about purchase intention. The questionnaire's link was sent via social media platforms and via emails.

A four-point Likert scale was used to measure the role of social media benefits in affecting customer's purchase intention with categories of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. In order to test the questionnaire, face validity by a research expert in a local NGO was conducted. Consequently, more elaboration for some of the questions was made.

Data Analysis/Unit of Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS, and a regression analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha test was also conducted

to test the reliability and the internal consistency of the items. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine if there is a positive relationship between customers' purchase intention as the dependent variable and the five social media benefits as the independent variables.

As the relationship between the dependent variable and the five independent variables was aimed to be measured in one direction assuming that there is no relationship in the other direction a one tailed hypotheses testing was employed.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which a research instruments (questionnaire) produces consistent results. In order to measure the reliability in our questionnaire, we have used Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. As shown in the Table 1, we have use the reliability test in SPSS and found that the Cronbach's Alpha score is 0.858, which is above 0.70 that is above the required for the study.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized items	N of Items
0.858	0.935	4

Validity is how accurate is an instrument (questionnaire) is at measuring what it is trying to measure. We measured the correlations between the constructs (variables) in order to measure the validity for the questionnaire. Table 2 showed that we have a significant correlation between the different variables that we have used in the questionnaire, as there is positive correlation between the independent variables (Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11 and Q12) and the dependent variable (Q13).

Table 2: Correlations.

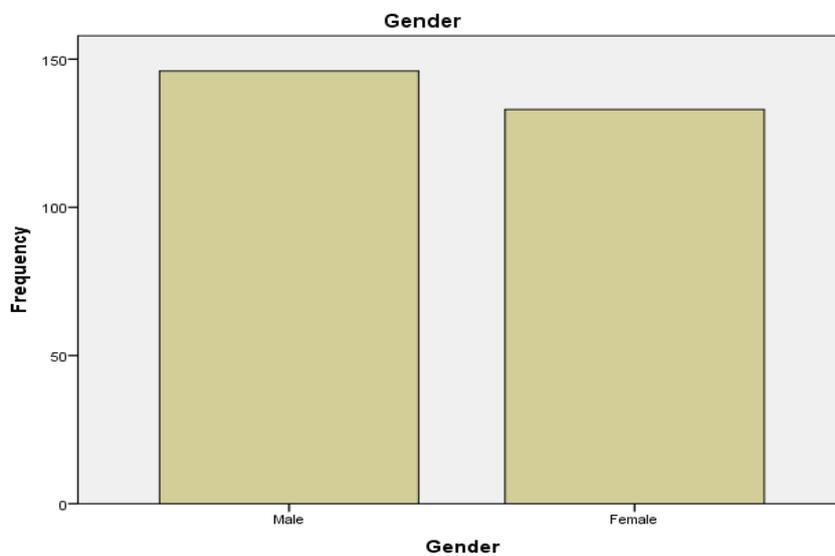
	Q1	Q8	Q9	Q1	Q1	Q1
Q13 Pearson Correlation	1	.397*	.503*	.375*	.328*	.110*
Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.033
N	279	279	279	279	279	279
Q8 Pearson Correlation	.397*	1	.707*	.453*	.538*	.215*
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
N	279	279	279	279	279	279

Q9 Pearson Correlation	.503**	.707*	1	.472	.593*	.192*
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001
N	279	279	279	279	279	279
Q10 Pearson Correlation	.375*	.453*	.472*	1	.550**	.269*
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
N	279	279	279	279	279	279
Q11 Pearson Correlation	.328*	.538*	.593*	.550*	1	.288*
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
N	279	279	279	279	279	279
Q12 Pearson Correlation	.110*	.215*	.192*	.269*	.288*	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	.033	.000	.001	.000	.000	
N	279	279	279	279	279	279
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).						
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).						

Sample Characteristics

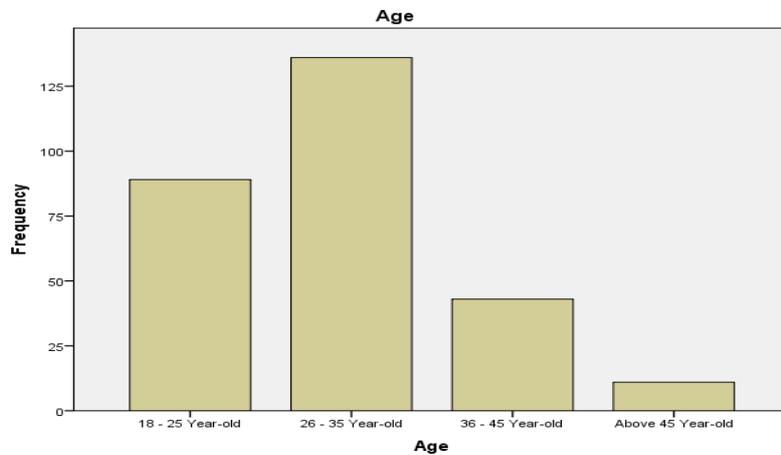
The sample in this research consist almost the same number of the 2 genders, it was 133 males and 146 females (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender.



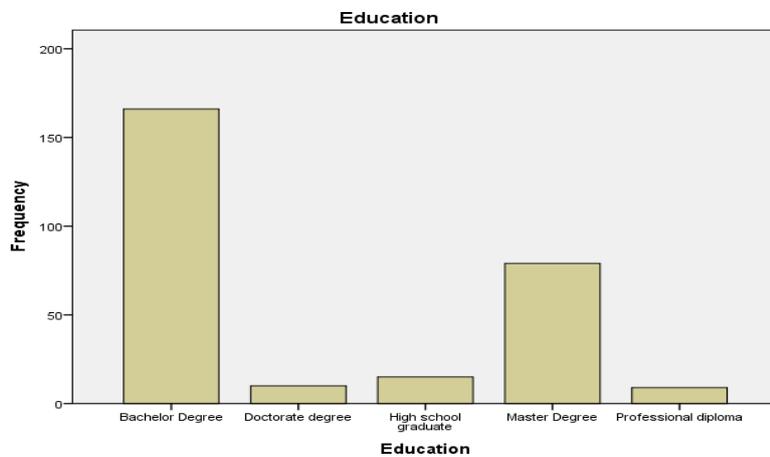
For the age as showed in Figure 1, the majority were the age between 26-35 year which represent 136 respondents from the total 279, 18-25 year 89 respondents, 36-45 year was 43 respondents, and the last category above 45 years was 11 respondents.

Figure 2: Age.



For the education in the research the common was the respondents with bachelor degree with total number of 166 and following was the master degree with 79 respondents, high school 15 respondents, doctorate 10 respondents and professional diploma 9 respondents (Figure 2) and (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Education.



Results Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

As showing in Table 3, the results of Cronbach’s Alpha all exceed the 0.8 level, indicating a good level of internal consistency [25]. Multiple regressions were performed with purchasing intention as dependent variable and the five beneficial factors as the independent variables. Overall, the results as you can see in Table 4, indicated that the model is significant. Hence, H2 and H3 we supported, H1, H4 and H5 were not supported.

Table 3: Results of Cronbach's Alpha.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	
Functional Benefits		.858
Efficiency of Communication	.889	
Availability of Information	.874	
Exchanging & Sharing Information	.895	
Monetary Benefit		.864
Obtaining special deals	.880	
Being offered better prices	.895	
Being given special offers	.938	
Hedonic Benefit		.854
Being entertained	.889	
Having fun	.896	
Being amused	.834	
Psychological Benefit		.841
Creating a sense of belonging	.863	
Establishing relationship	.863	
Having trust	.789	
Social Benefit		.851
Getting involved	.870	
Having trust	.875	
Seeking personal identity	.855	
Purchase Intention		.847
Purchase airline ticket through social media	.916	
Purchase airline ticket through social media next time	.939	
Try to purchase airline ticket through social media	.921	
Recommend to my friends to purchase airline ticket through social media	.930	

Table 4: Significant model.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std.	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.991	.962		3.110	.002
Q8	.078	.116	.050	.673	.502
Q9	.602	.117	.404	5.169	.000
Q10	.284	.098	.185	2.895	.004
Q11	-.056	.110	-.036	-.505	.614
Q12	-.024	.073	-.018	-.329	.742

a. Dependent variable Q13
Coefficients^a

DISCUSSION

In general, this study advises that social media plays an important role in the purchase intention of the purchasing process that supports customers' purchase decisions. The results indicate that the benefits of social media do have a positive relationship with customers' purchase intention, but not all items are vital to a similar extent. Monetary and hedonic benefits from social media were found to have a positive impact on customers' purchase intention (H2 and H3), while functional benefits, psychological benefits and social benefits were found to have no relationship with customers' purchase intention (H1, H4 and H5). The positive effect of monetary and hedonic benefits on purchase intention is consistent with previous literature [18].

Showcasing techniques with monetary factors such as discounts, special prices and better deals through social media have been known to positively affect new customers' purchase intention. As opposed to previous findings, the results of this study did not suggest a significant relationship between psychological and social benefits [18]. Psychological benefits or social benefits were not as crucial as hedonic benefits. However, identifying psychological or social benefits usually takes a longer time than other benefits, and they are typically found through several repeated contacts between the customers and the service providers [26-30].

CONCLUSION

Recommendation

Many industries are lately focusing on the communication with the customers through social media in order to raise awareness about the firms and their products. The most agreed upon social media benefits are functional, hedonic, psychological, social and monetary. However, as our study is conducted in Jordan and as our sample is a social media user living in Amman, this research found that monetary and hedonic benefits are the most relevant to our sample and proved an effect on customer's purchase intention when buying an airline ticket in Jordan. Because functional benefits such as efficiency of communication and availability of updated information had no relationship with purchase intention, our recommendation that airline companies should focus more on updating their social media accounts and provide their customers with the requested information.

In this study, monetary benefits such as special deals and better prices also proved to have no effect on purchase intention. So we recommend that airline companies operating in Jordan should focus more on having more exclusive social media offers to attract more customers.

Research Limitations

As our sample was constructed of 311 participants; data collection was one of this research limitations, other points to consider were time constrains and reachability of the sample, because we used the convenience sampling, the findings cannot be generalized.

Future Research Agenda

For the future studies or reproduction of this research, we recommend using the random sampling technique instead of convenience sampling as it proved to have more reliable results.

We also recommend to include more benefits of social media for any future research and not to limit the research to the five social media benefits that were used in this research. Another recommendation for this research is to include more geographic areas such as Zarqa or Irbid. It is also recommended to use more variable that may affect the purchase intention other than social media benefits. To have more accurate results, future research should focus on one of the social media tools such as Facebook or Twitter.

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