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The Influence of Social Media on Business & Communication

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone (Dollarhide, 2022). The most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat. Worldwide, there are over 4.5 billion social media users. The United States alone has over 250 million users. Social media's continuing growth and expansive reach will help shape the future and betterment of businesses and consumers. Social media is essential in enhancing and transforming its effects on businesses and consumers, as well as the communication, marketing, and advertising industries, that would not have been possible before its inception. Social media is used effectively to shape the future of the business environment, communications, and public relations.

Social media is worth researching because it is a valuable communication tool connecting people locally and worldwide, allowing them to share, create, and spread information. Social media is a vital tool for communicating with an audience. Social Media allows people to interact in ways they could have never imagined. It would be hard for the younger generation to imagine life without it. It has become a part of the younger generations' everyday life, including apps to track homework, online classes, grades, and even communication with teachers. It is easy to catch up on someone's life through their posts or a simple message on the computer, mobile

phone, or even email. Social media has an impact on a personal level as well as being an essential form of business communication. It also influences consumers' purchase decisions through reviews, marketing tactics, and advertising. Social media marketing allows businesses to connect with their audience to build and promote their brand, increase revenue and engagement, and drive website traffic. This includes creating compelling content on their social media accounts, listening to and connecting with followers, analyzing data and results, and running social media ads. The negative aspects of social media are essential to touch upon, such as the widespread debate over the legality of algorithms, social media's infringement on privacy, and the impact of social media on personal relationships, self-esteem, and social skills.

Before diving more deeply, it is noteworthy to look at the evolution of social media. It relies on the fact that consumers want what they want and how they want to access it across all services, from Sixdegrees to Tumblr and Myspace to Facebook, Youtube, Spotify, and iTunes. An analysis of the sales data and trends from these services and others shows that the emerging digital entertainment economy will radically differ from today's mass market (Mandiberg, 2012). Mandiberg's analysis remains true even 12 years later; an entirely new economic model for the media and the entertainment industries continues to show its power. In today's online world, not only do users want everything at their immediate disposal, but they also want to be able to track how often they use the program, how many hours they listen to music tracks, what their favorite genre is, what shows they have previously watched and more.

Companies rely on social media as an essential tool to build strong communication and relations. Social media marketing strongly influences customer engagement and consumer purchase intention. Customer engagement is an emotional relationship between a company and customers that focus on these customers' contact and participation. Customer engagement can

contribute to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and company performance. Purchase intention represents consumers willing to buy a product or service in the future. To prevent declining customer engagement on Instagram, the business must improve several aspects of its social media marketing, such as entertainment, customization, interaction, and trendiness.

Entertainment combined with business will lead to advanced economic growth. This is because entertainment and social media can influence the global culture and economy. For example, today's mass media is pivotal in enhancing globalization, facilitating cultural exchange and multiple flows of information and images between countries through international news broadcasts, television programming, new technologies, film, and music. Before the 1990's mainstream media systems in most countries of the world were relatively national in scope; since then, most communication media have become increasingly global, extending their reach beyond the nation-state to conquer audiences worldwide. International information flows have been primarily assisted by the development of global capitalism, new technologies, and the increasing commercialization of global television (Matos, 1970).

Social media is considered a stress reliever after a long work day. Data shows that most respondents find social media exciting and feel happy to see this content. Social media is mindless, relaxing, and does not require users to think much. The entertainment experience can build a connection between customers and a company's brand, strengthen customers' participation in the brand, and increase customers' buying interest. Social media is the primary marketing tool for companies that do not have brick-and-mortar stores. Suppose a company's social media is trendy and modern and provides up-to-date content. In that case, it will be more effective to improve consumers' motivation to increase their understanding of the company's brand, which means that the consumer will quickly recognize the brand's content and be more

likely to engage with it. One prime example is ASOS, an online fashion & beauty retailer based in the UK that sells its brand and 850 other brands. They are a top fashion eCommerce seller in the UK and worldwide. They use all social media platforms effectively to reach different markets, such as; Snapchat to target young adults, Instagram to focus on user-generated content and outfits posted by their customers, cross-posting on Facebook, and TikTok to share fashion inspiration through entertaining and trendy styling videos. ASOS aims to build a solid and positive knowledge of its brand. Another brand that has excelled through its social media strategy is Gymshark, with nearly nine million followers. Gymshark is one of the most visible fitness brands on the platform. The brand's growth is mainly due to a savvy understanding of social media and the fitness influencers who dominate it. Gymshark understands the importance of partnering with big-name fitness influencers to capitalize on their combined audiences. Nikki Blacketter, an influencer with 1.8M Instagram followers, is a famous ambassador for the brand and has even released her own fitness collections with Gymshark. In addition to using influencers, Gymshark also invests in paid social ads. Gymshark has seen a significant increase in sales with paid promotions. For example, from a previous Black Friday paid ad campaign, Gymshark realized an adequate return on the advertisement investment with an increased percentage of its sales from Instagram.

Through the advancement of technology, a company can customize a brand message while maintaining dialogue with customers. It can create a real opportunity for the company to enhance the relationship between the brand and customers. The extensive reach of social media has a positive effect on strengthening the interaction between brands and consumers. Social media content and advertisements motivate consumers to participate in these interactions by discussing the brand's story, attributes, and benefits (Bukhori, 2022). Users can interact directly

with the brand, share stories and posts, comment, enter giveaways, and ask questions to the company via direct message. This form of direct interaction impacts the consumer's loyalty to the brand. As a result of positive social media interactions with a brand, consumers are more willing to recommend a brand to a friend. A high social media following will increase attention toward the company's brand on its website. Consumer participation could create a deep relationship between the brand and customers, encouraging purchase intention, interaction, and participation. On social media, users participate daily by sharing and creating content, further enhancing their relationship with the brand. Customer engagement has a significant influence on repurchase intention.

Social media is an essential need in human life today and a place for social interaction and expanding social networks. Many people may choose Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or other platforms to market their business, while some choose Tik Tok. TikTok is a social media app that allows users to share video content and is used as a promotional medium to influence consumer purchase decisions. The app started as a music-based app on which users lip-synced to clips of popular songs. It later evolved to include talent and comedy-based videos. Uploaded videos are short in form and can only be between three and fifteen seconds long. TikTok continued to grow in popularity into the 2020s and remained the world's fastest-growing social media app. By 2022 the app had an estimated one billion active monthly users.

Generation Z is addicted to TikTok, a stimulation that this generation cannot go without. TikTok's content mainly targets Generation Z and somewhat towards Millennials. TikTok has an exciting format since the users are the content creators. TikTok's style remains familiar, relatable, and funny with its attention-grabbing reels of short clips, even if the content's topic is unfamiliar. The app appeals to this age range's short attention spans and their love of visually-appealing

social media platforms. TikTok has algorithms set up to generate similar videos for users' "For You Page" based on their engagement on the platform, such as views, likes, comments, and shares.

TikTok's ability to offer unlimited videos targeting user-preferred content adds to the app's addictive nature. Users have easily spent countless hours lost in funny clips. This app allows users to freely express themselves in a relatable, motivational, funny, informative, safe community of Gen Zers. Users can be exposed to a wide variety of content, including dance trends, voiceovers, acting, opinions, glimpses into other countries and cultures, and comedy. TikTok was designed to be a light-hearted platform that shares life's happy, funny, moving moments without users having to take it so seriously. Gen Zers have grown up in a wholly digital era. Social media is a mainstream connection and has evolved from Tumblr to Snapchat and Instagram. In the past, users were inundated with content that promoted insecurities, such as; negative body image, low self-esteem, and unobtainable items that affect one's life and general mental health and well-being. TikTok has also been a part of posting harmful content, but usually, the app aims to share a positive message towards and for all users. This is why Gen Z is obsessed with TikTok and its ability to cultivate positivity and acceptance.

TikTok is considered one of the latest trending search engines. In July 2022, a senior executive from Google, one of the world's leading search engines, revealed that up to 40 percent of young users, particularly in the Gen Z demographic, had begun using TikTok and other social media platforms as a search engine. This emerging trend helped Google develop changes to its search engine to compete with TikTok (Caffrey, 2022). Searching TikTok is often more interactive than typing in a question on Google. Having the option of multiple recommendations from TikTok user videos can assist users in finding what they are looking for instead of google

searches. Additionally, users can verify the integrity of recommendations based on comments posted on the videos. The comments section of social media is essential. The comments section usually tells users where to get a product and people's opinions and comments on the item. This searching mode allows users to look for products, ask questions, or find explanations on limitless items. With videos often less than 60 seconds long, TikTok returns what feels like more relevant answers (Huang, 2022).

Social media platforms have transformed users' shopping habits. TikTok is at the top of the list of platforms that have fully enhanced their e-commerce option which increases brand/user engagement. Almost half of the channel's users fall into the GenZ and Millennial categories which have significantly reshaped how these generations connect with online retailers and brands. On average, the majority of TikTokers purchase relatable products they see advertised in a funny manner on the platform. Viral videos contribute to this generation being influenced to purchase products seen on the platform that are considered original and genuine, so having a shopping feature lays the groundwork for limitless potential sales. Users love that they have the ability to engage in this virtual environment with new products, favorite brands, reviews, and immediate access to TikTok's Live shopping experience. Combining entertainment, engagement, and e-commerce, TikTok has been changing Gen Z's perception of buying into a fun and must-join moment (How Tiktok, 2022).

Small and large businesses promote their products on Tik Tok and use the app as part of their marketing strategy to increase consumer desire to purchase. By keeping the information active in users' feeds, consumers will be more likely to act, resulting in immediate sales. Thus, advertising's ultimate goal is to increase sales. TikTok advertising has been shown to increase sales because relevant video ads are an excellent way to reach new audiences. By working with

the best micro-influencers and creating relevant content that fits a firm's niche market, a company can set itself up for success through TikTok Ads. Using analytics can also help avoid the pitfalls of specific video content strategies. Many brands waste valuable time guessing what will work or repeat mistakes due to improper analysis. The popularity of Tik Tok product sales is considered highly effective. Products are often referred to as viral TikTok products. For example, the famous "TikTok leggings." The more informative the promotion on Tik Tok, the more buying interest and ultimately convincing consumers to purchase. TikTok also has ad features that optimize content distribution (Martini, 2022). The ease of use of the TikTok application and its purchasing methods positively and significantly affect consumer buying interest. Users enjoy the TikTok application for shopping because it is quick and free. The newly released TikTok Shop allows users to purchase products without leaving the app. Users like the app for shopping since they can easily recognize the products sold. TikTok users often watch videos containing unique and good music and dance moves. For example, when a popular TikTok is dancing to a particular clothing item, followers are more likely to want to buy that product. Users will search for items seen, and TikTok has the information to track the user's app actions for products purchased. When it comes to purchasing a product, it all comes down to the current trends. (Martini, 2022). Trends are essential to consider because when one person is wearing something, everyone wants one. TikTok trends create an accessible way for brands to connect with audiences on the app. By hopping on popular trends, businesses can expand organic reach, build more meaningful connections, and drive sales.

Social media has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of businesses. Social media affects a business's revenue by letting people know what they offer and what value it can add to their lives. Advertising on social networks can be considered a relatively new marketing method,

but it is evolving faster than imagined. Facebook, the most prominent social network with 2.38 billion users worldwide, is still the dominant social marketing platform but is less popular among younger generations. In the first quarter of 2017, Facebook ads added revenues of over 9 billion Euros, indicating that was just the start of social media marketing's ever-bright future. 90% of marketers see a revenue impact from social media (Williams, 2019). Businesses are aware of the power and influence of a social media presence on brand engagement and sales. Social media marketing increases sales and decreases marketing costs, thus increasing overall revenues. Social media ads are cheaper than traditional advertising methods, such as print media, TV, and radio advertising (POP, 2020). Younger consumers are the primary social media users for these social media ads. Some businesses rely solely on it as a primary source of communication to reach customers, especially the younger generation. For example, specific industries and businesses with frequently-changing schedules, online boutiques, and small start-up businesses can benefit from online marketing platforms. Social media's immediate gratification-type nature fits perfectly with certain brands to increase their followings online.

Businesses can attract and retain customers through social media recommendations, giveaways, and trust. This is a significant factor for consumers to trust the ads and businesses. Consumers rely on reviews when making purchase decisions. Social media makes sharing opinions and reviews easy. Specifically, social media contests attract customers. Online contests attract users to follow the brand, post on its page, share the page with others, or even submit photos. In return, the brand gains new followers.

Public Relations firms have adapted and now offer social media services, as that type of service is a perfect synergy for them. Social media platforms are ever-evolving, and organizations are tasked with finding ways to keep pace. There are multiple platforms that PR

firms must be adept at, such as; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Soundcloud. The medium chosen to reach an audience will vary from client to client, depending on their needs (Firms Adapt to Social Media, 2019). Public relations firms are charged with portraying the image of their clients in a favorable light while reaching their targeted audience and keeping up with the evolving landscape.

On the contrary, one can argue that social media contributes to “cancel culture.” The term “cancel culture” refers to a recent movement that intends to take away the esteem of a particular person, place, or thing based on a perceived offensive action or behavior. Cancel culture is prominent on social media since the information is shared online widely and rapidly. Bad publicity could easily damage one's reputation or business. Most issues that lead to “canceling” are forgotten after a while. Many celebrities have been known to act inappropriately, causing them to be momentarily canceled. This has been happening more frequently. Many people, for example, have tried to cancel Taylor Swift over a series of perceived missteps. However, she is still out there, making music. She is not *really* canceled; in most cases, cancel culture is not permanent. Nevertheless, it does let public figures know that fans will hold them accountable (Asmelash, 2019).

Many consumers are savvy and realize the necessity to be skeptical of advertisements, which makes it difficult for brands to attract and easily influence potential customers. Many marketers turn to online influencers to promote their brands and products on social media. The vast success of influencers has wholly transformed social media marketing. Influencer marketing is a communication strategy in which a firm selects and incentivizes online influencers to engage their followers on social media to promote its offerings. Influencers accumulate followers by sharing content and weaving brand endorsements into their personal stories and posts, resulting

in content that appears authentic and provides value. Influencers have the ability to build an online following that will make them seem as if they were online celebrities without actually being famous. Whereas celebrities have succeeded in some formal settings, such as acting, music, and sports, influencers are not certified by the industry. Influencers' commitment to improving content and reach allows for the potential of making an income through strategic partnerships. Approximately 300,000 people aged 18-26 use social media content creation as a source of income. The majority of marketing firms are dedicating resources to influencer-type marketing strategies, and the related spending is expected to reach \$16.4 billion by the end of 2022 (Leung, 2022).

If one wants to know what new show to binge on or what outfits are trending for the holiday season and where to buy them - don't look further than a favorite TikTok influencer. Influencer recommendations including reviews and shopping links have shown increased traffic to brands that turn into sales. In addition to celebrity endorsements or paid influencers, there is also a growing market of micro-influencers. Although these influencers may have a smaller reach, they usually have a much more personal relationship with their followers. That type of familiar personal social media relationship adds authenticity to the endorsement of brands and products since the micro-influencer is less likely to be perceived as being dishonest.

Marketers can enhance influencer marketing effectiveness by strategically selecting influencers, targeting their followers, or managing content. Influencer marketing features, such as source and post characteristics, affect consumer engagement, brand and influencer attitudes, purchase intentions, and product sales (Leung, 2022). Selecting influencers who transmit more original posts than posts created by others and with more extensive networks of followers, along with incorporating more clickable mentions and links in the sponsored posts, enhances

effectiveness. Although most followers know that influencers receive the product for free or are paid, influencers still need to market the product authentically to their followers. Engagement on social media can be measured by consumer behaviors in response to online content, such as liking, commenting, or reposting content. Brand engagement influences purchasing behavior. People want to buy from brands they follow and engage with on social media. Social media interactions not only establish a foundation of trust it also builds a loyal relationship. These forms of engagement create ripple effects, influence other potential customers, and contribute to firm performance. Brands prioritize the number of reposts an influencer marketing post generates because reposting is a deeper form of engagement than just liking; it implies consumers self-select to propagate the content to their networks (Leung, 2022).

Influencer marketing is a newer and more robust form of communication. Firms use this to communicate and deliver value to consumers in the pursuit of favorable outcomes. Brands entrust influencers to engage and promote their products. The influencer model aligns with direct communications strategies by having a direct content flow from the brand to the consumer. The influencer and brand are the sources of the message through words, sounds, or behaviors transmitted through a channel to a receiver, the audience. The characteristics of the influencer (sender), the influencer's followers (receiver), and the influencer's marketing post (message) are factors that lead to the effectiveness of influencer marketing (Leung, 2022).

With the incredible growth of social media, influencer marketing is no longer an optional marketing tactic but a necessary strategy. Most people are likelier to trust a recommended brand, even if that recommendation comes from strangers. Consumers are more likely to be influenced by people they “follow” and trust. Influencers accumulate large followings, and brands can reach their followers by partnering together. These endorsements and product placements can lead to

new audiences for brands and a highly engaged audience (Wertz, 2022). Purchase choices are swayed by social media personalities. Influencer marketing does this exceptionally well by targeting specific individuals with whom people already share certain opinions, interests, and values or aspire to be them, boosting consumerism. When consumers see their favorite influencer wearing something, they are influenced to buy it. Once they begin following a social media personality, whether a fashion blogger, a health and fitness Instagrammer, or a beauty guru, they automatically become a social group member. Following a particular blogger places a consumer in a social group or community of similar-minded individuals. Consumers are willing to purchase items to fulfill goals to be like the influencer who represents what they aspire to be. So, although they would not have otherwise purchased that item, they do so as it takes them one step closer to being like the group (Karamanis, 2020). Influencers' aesthetically pleasing content allows followers to envision and see that product. Influencers romanticize their life and these products, thus making people want to buy them. Consumers need to consider that influencers are being paid to promote these products, even though they may not always be honest about whether they are being compensated for these brand deals. TikTok users, and younger audiences in general, know when someone is not being genuine. So when brands work with influencers, they must research and ensure that their audience will fit with their brand.

The role of social media has had a significant impact on the sales profession. Salespeople must find the best way to interact and meet their customer's needs. Using technology and social media can significantly affect the buyer-seller relationship and interaction between all involved parties. Organizations spend a lot of time and money to have the proper channel to interact and reach their customers, giving salespeople a positive way to implement these systems. Salespeople must change their thinking and use social media to increase their understanding of

their customer's needs and wants. The option to personalize these interactions is immense and can lead to deeper connections. Users like being part of a brand's world by seeing behind-the-scenes content and an inside look, as well as realizing that the brand has a human-like personality, allowing consumers to feel for the brand, and want to purchase its products. Interacting directly with customers over a social media platform can go far in gaining long-term customers and increasing consumer engagement and purchase intention. A great example of this is the online eyeglasses brand, Warby Parker. Along with sharing aesthetically pleasing, stylized pictures and highlighting their newest styles and accessories, they post many raw behind-the-scenes pictures, such as a time-lapse video of their annual potluck dinner, usually with the hashtag #teamwarby.

There is a positive correlation between technology use and the use of social media. Technology is the bridge to increase online usage and positive engagement, which should create a positive attitude toward the brand and its social media footprint. The closer the sales team is to being involved with the platform's content, the more they will be invested in building an online customer relationship which will lead to increased sales. Understanding the customer; exploring customer needs; adding value; closing the purchase; and post-purchase services can help heighten the employee-customer relationship (Gati, 2018). Besides reinforcing the salesperson/client relationship, social media has increased employee motivation, more efficient communication among organizational departments, and improved company image (Gati, 2018).

After all, all humans seek a sense of safety, belonging, and mattering. A salesperson's use of technology and social media can impact customer relationship performance. Research studies indicate that too much technology may harm salespeople's social skills, specifically social media (Gati, 2018). The use of social media can have a severe impact on the relationship between the

consumer and the salesperson. With people keeping their heads in their phones instead of talking face to face, they are neglecting rudimentary social skills. The way people maintain eye contact, carry themselves, and communicate are all affected by more frequent phone usage. In-person conversations help to understand the non-verbal aspects of communication, indicating the speaker's emotion about what is being discussed. Using too much social media makes it harder to identify emotions expressed and respond appropriately. Many people, especially younger generations, prefer to solve work or personal problems via social messaging systems, which could lead to miscommunication or misinterpretation since there is no in-person communication being portrayed. Using social media excessively can directly affect individuals' social skills.

Social media has replaced print ads, magazines, and commercials. Social media was originally a form of entertainment. However, more recently, social media has become a user's primary source of information for news, keeping in touch with friends, and online shopping. If social media continues, it will have a long-lasting impact on consumers. Social media allows people to interact freely with others and offers multiple ways for marketers to reach and engage with consumers. When considering marketing-related topics and issues, the future lies in social media. Focusing specifically on the consumer, the industry, and public policy is necessary (Appel, 2020). Further, social media has become an integral marketing tool and communication across all industries, establishments, and governments, plus an important function in the current political arena. This area is ever-evolving, and the future of online communication seems boundless. Opportunities will likely increase due to technological advancements coupled with a consumer's need for increased uses, and businesses will adapt their marketing strategies based on consumer behavior. The social interaction aspect of all online platforms positively impacts

marketing outcomes, consumer loyalty, and the ultimate goal of sales. Understanding how users interact on the various platforms is crucial to strategize marketing plans best.

Social media is known as a form of word-of-mouth marketing since users interact with others, such as friends, family, and strangers, sharing details, recommendations, likes, and more. This creates free shared digital content and dramatically contributes to reviews and recommendations. Digital apps like Facebook and others create an informative platform for connections. Social media platforms are constantly evolving and finding ways to enhance suggestions for individuals, whether location, friend, or content based. Some apps even allow people to search for items or friends by location or proximity. The future of social media as a form of communication will continue to be developed as users navigate various platforms through their busy daily lives for travel, work, news, entertainment, food, music, and more. Social media companies have augmented their platforms to provide various functionalities and services. For example, apps like Doordash, Uber, and Lyft. These trends suggest that the modern-day consumer lives in an increasingly “Omni-social” world. An “Omni-social” nature suggests that virtually every part of a consumer’s decision-making process is prone to social media influence. Notably, the way influencers impact purchase decisions is a great example. This trend will continue to manifest, perhaps making the term “social media” outdated (Appel, 2020).

As previously mentioned, influencer marketing is not a new concept, but it does have the ability to morph into its own industry. This marketing strategy allows users to interact and watch it in real-time or have access to recent videos after the fact. Live streaming is projected to increase and grow in popularity. In the coming years, alongside stronger computing power and artificial intelligence algorithms, virtual influencers will become much more prominent on social

media, invariably representing and acting on brand values and engaging with followers anytime (Appel, 2020).

Customer service has also come a long way through innovative technology platforms. Users can connect instantly with brands regarding questions, comments, or problems. Companies can take a proactive approach with their customers and use chat boxes or pop-ups. Even today, companies gain benefits from connecting with customers on social media for service or care-related purposes. Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google are in the process or have already released early versions of such platforms (Appel, 2020).

One can already anticipate the future of social media in terms of sensory richness. Look how far it has come from the original text-based model to now, pictures, videos, and live streams with some platforms specializing in specific content areas. These shifts have had demonstrable consequences on social media usage, and their consequences suggest that image-based posts convey a more significant social presence than text alone. Importantly, however, a plethora of new technologies in the market indicates that the future of social media will be more sensory-rich (Appel, 2020). More Augmented (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) interactions are how sensory-richness will increase. AR allows users to try on items or products before buying, and VR allows users to be fully immersed in a virtual environment. Examples of AR are apps such as L'Oréal's makeup app Makeup Genius, which allows users to see themselves with their makeup on, and more recently, Snapchat filters that allow a user's camera to overlay funny images like bunny ears or filters over their face. The future of AR seems limitless, given that Facebook, one of the industry's most prominent investors in AR technology, has confirmed it is working on AR glasses. Whether viewed through glasses or traditional mobile and tablet devices, the future of social media is likely to look much more visually augmented (Appel, 2020). An

example of VR is the online gaming platform, where users have avatars and interact with others to play various games. Another Facebook-owned company Oculus VR has mainly been focusing on immersive gaming and film; the company recently announced the launch of *Oculus Rooms*, where users can spend time with other users in a virtual world. Social media will inevitably play a role in increasing technology usage (Appel, 2020).

In addition to the visual sensory richness of AR and VR, social media is also growing in the area of audio where users can share audio posts via platforms without having to touch or view the content leaving the user free to do other things while they listen. Users will get more out of the interaction by hearing than reading information. For example, podcasts are more popular than ever, and voice-based search queries are the fastest-growing mobile search type; this communication modality will likely show up more in social media use. Personalized experiences enhanced by VR and AR are expected in the future (Appel, 2020). Specifically, podcasts like “Call Her Daddy,” “Anything Goes With Emma Chamberlain,” and “The Joe Rogan Experience” are examples of these individuals' podcasts, causing them to gain an immense social media following. Podcasts are most definitely a form of social media, as well.

Social media's beneficial impact on businesses and a way of communicating cannot be downplayed. Although, there are some downsides to social media such as privacy concerns. Consumers are concerned about their data privacy and a company's ability to protect their information. Users would prefer less tracking and their data being sold. Some consumers have admitted to removing themselves from certain apps because of the way they handle users' data. If users leave platforms, this negatively impacts the brands that rely on the user-generated traffic. On the flip side, users expect brands that they are putting their trust in to stop the negativity and inappropriate online interactions. Considering that social media has become one of the best

places for brands to engage with consumers, build relationships, and provide customer service, it is not only in the best interest of social media platforms to “do better” in terms of policing content, but the responsibility has been placed on brands to advocate for privacy, trust, and the removal of fake or hateful content (Appel, 2020).

Everyone has heard of social media’s perceived negative impact on its user’s health and well-being. The more one interacts online, the more they are exposed to posts that may cause loneliness, depression, or low self-esteem. Studies have shown that limiting your social media use can decrease the negative feelings of missing out, also known as “FOMO.” Platforms acknowledge the concern for over-usage and have added options for users to set time limits for themselves. Granting all this, social media has many positives, such as; socializing, knowledge, skills, and connections, all of which lead to a positive outlook and benefit for users. These different features seem well-intentioned and are designed to try and give people a more positive social media experience (Appel, 2020).

Behind the scenes, social media platforms run algorithms to keep user content current and relevant to user interactions. Algorithms are supposed to personalize a user’s experience and engage them with brands they might be interested in. Tracking of clicks, likes, shares, and comments can either positively or negatively impact a brand’s online reputation. For example, if a user clicks on something, it is more likely to pop up continuously on their social media feeds. Many users are concerned that algorithms are not discussed enough and can negatively affect users. For example, users can be harmed by negatively targeted ads, political division, risky behavior, and the promotion of problematic products such as tobacco or alcohol. Even the method and timing of sharing information on a user’s feed can be harmful. It has been shown that by Twitter's internal audit, its algorithmic newsfeed promotes certain content inequitably.

These findings show that platforms need greater transparency to continue innovating while staying accountable and building societal trust in their systems. These risks have prompted policy or legal efforts to increase transparency in social media platforms (Imana, 2022). In addition to algorithms, a platform must predict which content or ads its users should be exposed to based on the user's previous online interactions. All of the top platforms rely on algorithms but will not disclose the specifics of their methods or rankings. Although they acknowledge the immense amount of data collected, social media platforms promise to provide a more meaningful experience for users, increasing user engagement and platform revenue (Imana, 2022).

Research has been conducted regarding the power of social media and its effect on businesses from both primary and secondary sources, with a high academic credibility level for both the business perspective and the communications and public relations standpoint. There are practical benefits of social media that can shape the future of public relations. It has been found that the increased use of social media by firms leads to increased sales and revenue. It is recommended that businesses continue to use social media in order to reach much larger audiences. Similar to the recent uptick in forgoing working physically in an office every day to working in a hybrid or fully remote model, individuals can have a full-time career as an influencer. The transition from print ads and the first on-air commercial to the current social media world that consumers currently enjoy has led to a major change in shopping trends. Beginning with brick-and-mortar shopping, catalogs, TV shopping, and online e-commerce has evolved into a fully immersive digital environment where shoppers can immediately purchase with an easy click of a link on a video clip exactly what their favorite influencer is wearing or recommending. The summative conclusion is that social media's continuing growth and expansive reach will help shape the future and betterment of businesses and consumers. Social

media is essential in enhancing and transforming its effects on businesses and consumers, as well as the communication, marketing, and advertising industries, that would not have been possible before its inception. Social media platforms do not end here but continue evolving, and their power and massive impact on our lives must be acknowledged.

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