



Master of Business Administration (MBA)

LCMB7035 – Dissertation

Dissertation Proposal

The Role of Social Media Advertising in Shaping Consumer Purchase Decisions Among Young Consumers in the UK

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Social media marketing has influenced today's marketing landscape by allowing organizations to connect with consumers via personalized, interactive and data-driven promotions on digital platforms (Ibrahim et al., 2024). The use of social media has also transformed how consumers search for and purchase products, with younger consumers in particular becoming more active users of platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to find, evaluate and compare products before they make a purchase (Barari, Eisend and Jain, 2025; Filieri, Christodoulides and Nicolau, 2025). In the United Kingdom, there are 54.8 million social media user identities in January 2025, which is about 79% of the total population in the United Kingdom who are active social media users in 2025 (Kemp, 2025). According to previous research, factors such as credibility, informativeness, entertaining and personalisation of adverts have a positive effect on consumer attitude and behavioural intention (Koay et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2024). But as social media platforms and advertising algorithms change all the time, there is a need for ongoing research to fully comprehend how these characteristics of advertising influence young consumers' purchase decisions in today's UK market.

1.2 Research Problem and Gap

As social media advertising has emerged as a primary marketing communication method, existing research reports mixed results about the social media advertising attributes that influence consumers' purchases most (Moradi and Zihagh, 2022). Some research focuses on credibility and informativeness of advertising; others, on entertainment and personalization aspects of advertising on consumer behaviour (Battista, Curmi and Said, 2021; Forbes Makudza et al., 2024). Moreover, most of the current evidence is from Asian and emerging markets where it is difficult to transfer to the UK. However, there is little empirical research that looks at the combined impact of these social media advertising features on the decision-making process of young consumers in today's UK market.

1.3 Aim, Objectives and Research Questions/Hypotheses

1.3.1 Research Aim

To examine the role of social media advertising in shaping consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the United Kingdom.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of social media advertising credibility on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.
- To investigate the effect of advertisement informativeness on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.
- To evaluate the influence of advertisement entertainment on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.
- To examine the effect of advertisement personalisation on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.

1.3.3 Research Questions

- RQ1: How does social media advertising credibility influence consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK?
- RQ2: How does advertisement informativeness influence consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK?
- RQ3: How does advertisement entertainment influence consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK?
- RQ4: How does advertisement personalisation influence consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK?

1.3.4 Research Hypotheses

- H1: Social media advertising credibility has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.

- H2: Advertisement informativeness has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.
- H3: Advertisement entertainment has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.
- H4: Advertisement personalisation has a positive and significant influence on consumer purchase decisions among young consumers in the UK.

1.4 Brief Overview of the Proposed Study

The study will be conducted in a positivist research philosophy, quantitative research and cross-sectional research design. Primary data will be gathered using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to be handed out to around 100–150 young consumers in the UK and the data will be analysed using SPSS software to test the formulated hypotheses.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on the theory of Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). It is believed that external environmental stimuli affect internal cognitive and emotional processes and, in turn, internal processes lead to behavioral reactions. In social media advertising, advertising characteristics, such as credibility, informativeness, entertainment and personalisation, can be seen as the stimuli, consumer perception and evaluation as the organism and purchase decision as the response (Erensoy et al., 2024). Recent research has proven that the S–O–R framework is effective in explaining consumer behaviour in digital marketing contexts and it depicts the psychological process by which attributes of the advertising influence the consumer's online purchase behaviour (Ligaraba, Chuchu and Nyagadza, 2023). Thus, the S–O–R Theory offers a solid and widely accepted theory to investigate the impact of advertising in social media on young consumer purchasing in the UK.

2.2 Theme 1: Social Media Advertising

Social media advertising is a key part of digital marketing, allowing companies to reach consumers with personalised, data-driven, and interactive content. According to Shawky et al. (2019), social media platforms enable a two-way communication which is better to engage the consumer and to enhance the relationship between brand and consumer than traditional advertising. Likewise, Mohit et al. (2025) demonstrated that SMM positively affects consumers' purchasing intentions, which includes enhancing their brand awareness and perceived brand value. But these studies do not target purchase decisions and therefore are not very applicable in practice. Voorveld (2019), on the other hand, argue that, besides presence on social media, it is also about advertisement quality and consumer trust. Similarly, Alfina, Hartini and Mardhiyah (2023) suggests that over-exposing ads to consumers can lead to advertising fatigue, which can result in consumer disengagement and negative brand attitudes. These opposing conclusions suggest a huge potential for social media advertising, but it depends on the nature of the ad and consumer perceptions; it is therefore important for additional empirical research to be conducted in the UK.

2.3 Theme 2: Advertising Credibility and Informativeness

The credibility and informativeness of ads are well-known factors affecting consumers' responses to social media ads. Ghanem et al. (2026) found that credible ads boost trust in the brand, leading to higher purchase intentions. Likewise, Yim, Kim and Lee (2020) find that informative ads help to decrease the uncertainty of the consumers by giving them relevant information of the product and thus enhances the purchase confidence. Nevertheless, much of the research deals with influencer marketing or branded content advertising in social media, and so the results of these are not necessarily transferable to social media advertising in general. On the other hand, Guido (2026) claim that consumers are increasingly sceptical about the authenticity of sponsored ads, especially when they believe there is more commercial than informational content. More importantly, as suggested by Nguyen et al. (2022), high informative ads alone do not necessarily guarantee purchase behaviour, but consumers' perception of the ad source must also be trustworthy. These findings reveal that credibility and informativeness

are highly related to each other but there is contradictory evidence as to which is the more important factor in actual purchases, especially in the younger market of developed countries like the United Kingdom.

2.4 Theme 3: Advertisement Entertainment and Personalisation

The importance of advertisement entertainment and personalisation has become more evident as key factors of engagement on social media (Battista, Curmi and Said, 2021). Zagni et al. (2025) find that entertaining ads boosts emotional reactions and improves consumer interest in branded content. In the same vein, Sari et al. (2026) state that personalised ads make them more relevant, so that consumers will be more enthusiastic about them and make positive behaviour. But these studies need to be interpreted with care and are mostly based on self reported intention to behave and cross-sectional designs. On the other hand, Utami, Ristianawati Dwi and Aimin (2026) argue that over-personalisation can raise privacy concerns and perceived intrusive ads, which lead to less consumer acceptance. Similarly, Hsu, Parry and Ng (2026) discovered that hyper-personalised adverts only work if consumers feel that there is an acceptable trade-off between relevance and privacy. These divergent results indicate that, entertainment and personalisation can not always have positive effects, thus it is important to understand the impact on purchasing behaviour of young UK consumers.

2.5 Theme 4: Consumer Purchase Decisions

Consumer buying decisions can be influenced by both informational and psychological/social factors, and social media is now playing a role in every step of the consumer buying decision process (Dewantoro, Sariani and Suriono, 2025). Gürsoy et al., (2023) contend that digital interactions have a strong impact on consumers' alternative appraisal prior to purchase. In the same way, Erkan and Evans (2016) established that social media boosts consumer confidence with UGC and eWOM, which consequently impact positively on purchasing behaviour. But, Erkan and Evans (2016) study was largely about social commerce, not paid social media advertising. Lăzăroiu et al., (2020), however, believe that purchasing behaviour is still significantly influenced by individual consumer factors, such as trust, perceived risk, and previous online experience, meaning that even advertising does not guarantee buying. The

varying perspectives show that social media advertising is a factor in purchase decisions, but there is still a lack of understanding regarding the role played by the different features of advertising, especially in the UK market with younger consumers.

2.6 Research Gap

There is a consistent body of literature that has shown how social media advertising impacts the behaviour of consumers, but the results on the relative importance of advertising credibility, informativeness, entertainment and personalisation are inconsistent. Further, past research has tended to emphasize purchase intentions, influencer marketing or social commerce instead of actual consumer purchasing decisions (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020; Mohit et al., 2025). Furthermore, most of the empirical studies come from Asian and developing economies, which restricts its applicability in the UK (Nguyen et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2024). As a result, there are few quantitative studies exploring how these advertising attributes relate to young consumers' buying behaviour in the modern social media landscape in the UK.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

This study used a positivist approach to research as it aims to objectively look at the relationships between social media advertising attributes and consumers' purchase decision on measurable data. The positivist paradigm is suitable for hypothesis testing and statistical analysis to help the researchers discover the empirical relationship between the variables (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). In this regard, a deductive approach is used as hypotheses are drawn from the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory and literature and then supported by quantitative evidence (Barroga et al., 2023).

3.2 Research Design

A cross-sectional research design of a quantitative type will be followed. Quantitative research allows us to quantify the relationship between predetermined variables and statistically test out a hypothesis (Ma and Lee, 2026). A cross-sectional design is suitable since data will be gathered

at one point in time from the respondents and it is efficient and is appropriate to examine the current consumer behaviours (Wang and Cheng, 2020).

3.3 Data Collection

A structured online questionnaire will be used to collect the primary data. The use of surveys is suitable as they enable data collection in a standardised manner from a relatively large number of respondents, ensuring greater reliability and minimising researcher bias (Sheikh et al., 2024).

3.4 Sampling Strategy

The target population is young consumers (18 to 34) in the United Kingdom. Convenience sampling method will be used since it helps in the efficient selection of the respondents in a limited period and resources. The number of valid responses collected is about 100-150, which is sufficient for regression analysis in a quantitative business study (Lakens, 2022).

3.5 Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire will consist of two parts. The first will be demographic data, and the second will be obtained through items previously validated with five-point Likert scales from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) measuring advertising credibility, informativeness, entertainment and personalisation and consumer purchase decisions. The use of measurement scales with known validity and reliability supports construct validity and reliability (Koo and Yang, 2025).

3.6 Data Analysis (SPSS)

Using IBM SPSS, data will be analysed. Cronbach's alpha will be used to test the internal reliability, and descriptive statistics will be used to summarise the respondents' characteristics. Pearson correlation will be used to explore the relationship among variables and multiple linear regression will be used to test the specified hypotheses and find the effect of each advertising characteristic on consumers' purchase decisions (Dufera et al., 2023).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles will be upheld during the research. Participants will sign an information sheet and give informed consent prior to filling out the questionnaire. Participants will be informed that they can choose to participate, that their participation will be anonymous and confidential, that they can withdraw at any time before submitting the questionnaire and that all their responses will be used solely for academic purposes in line with the University ethical requirements.

4 Expected Findings

The study will show that advertising credibility, informativeness, entertainment and personalisation have a positive impact on young consumers' purchase decision in the United Kingdom, with credibility and personalisation expected to have the greatest impact. Results should lead to further use of the Stimulus–Organism–Response theory in social media advertising as well as valuable guidance for marketers when formulating better social media advertising strategies to target youths.

5 Limitations

The study could be limited by the relatively small size of the sample, the use of convenience sampling technique, the self-reported nature of responses to the questionnaire, and the cross-sectional research design which does not allow for causal inferences and generalisability of the findings. However, these limitations will be recognized to account for the results in an unhindered manner.

6 Timeframe

The research will take place in a structured timetable which will include literature review, development of the questionnaire, ethical approval, data collection, data analysis, dissertation writing, revision and submission. A detailed Gantt chart will be provided to show the proposed timeline and research milestones.

Activity	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Topic refinement & proposal approval	•	•										
Literature review	•	•	•	•								
Questionnaire development			•	•								
Ethical approval				•	•							
Pilot testing & questionnaire revision					•							
Data collection					•	•	•					
Data cleaning & SPSS analysis							•	•				
Interpretation of findings								•	•			
Dissertation writing									•	•	•	
Proofreading & supervisor revisions										•	•	
Final editing & submission												•

7 Conclusion

This proposal will explore how social media advertising affects buying behaviour of young consumers in the UK. The study will use a quantitative survey and statistical analysis to contribute to marketing theory and practice by offering empirical data to help improve social media advertising practices.

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