MANAGING PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: MECHANISMS, EFFECTIVENESS, AND CONSUMER BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

Gabriel Dinu *, Loredana Dinu

Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
P-ta Traian Vuia, No. 1-4, Resita, Romania
* Corresponding author. E-mail: gabriel.dinu@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract: This paper examines social media promotional campaigns as strategic instruments of brand-consumer communication, analyzing the mechanisms through which campaign characteristics translate into consumer behavioral outcomes. The study synthesizes evidence on how social media marketing activities influence purchase intention, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and brand awareness.
Keywords: social media marketing, eWOM, consumer engagement, brand awareness.

1. Introduction

Social media has emerged as the dominant arena of brand-consumer interaction in the contemporary digital economy. With over five billion active users globally as of 2025, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Pinterest constitute not only channels of communication but ecosystems of meaning-making in which promotional messages compete for attention alongside personal content, news, and entertainment [1].

Traditional promotional communications operated within a broadcast paradigm: a sender, the brand, transmitted a message through a controlled channel to a relatively passive receiver, the consumer. Social media disrupts this paradigm at its foundations. Consumers are simultaneously receivers and producers of promotional content; they evaluate, redistribute, critique, and amplify brand messages in ways that escape organizational control [2].

A promotional campaign on social media is therefore not a transmission event but an intervention in an ongoing social conversation, one whose outcomes depend as much on community dynamics and algorithmic amplification as on the original message design. This paper synthesizes the theoretical and empirical literature on social media promotional campaigns, identifying the mechanisms that reliably determine their effectiveness.

Beyond typological classifications, social media represents a social phenomenon of unprecedented scope and complexity in the history of human communication. Understanding it as a phenomenon, and not merely as a set of technological platforms, requires examining how these media reconfigure fundamental categories of social existence: identity, interpersonal relationships, temporality, and spatiality.

Research in social psychology and communication studies has extensively documented how digital platforms transform the construction and management of identity. Goffman had observed, long before the emergence of social media, that identity is essentially a performance, a set of behaviors and presentations calibrated according to audience and context. Social platforms have extended and intensified this dynamic, offering users unprecedented instruments of self-presentation, while simultaneously constraining them through architectures that define what is visible, to whom, and in what form [3].

The user profile, with its profile photographs, biographies, posts, and public interactions, constitutes a deliberately constructed identity representation, subject to continuous social auditing through reactions, comments, and follower counts. Kietzmann et al. include identity as the first functional block of their honeycomb model, defining it as the extent to which users reveal information about themselves in the social space. This dimension varies significantly across platforms: LinkedIn imposes a verifiable professional identity governed by business environment conventions; TikTok enables and encourages performative, creative, and often pseudonymous identities; Facebook combines the pressure of real identity with a wide diversity of self-presentation contexts [4].

The implications for marketing are significant. The brand itself operates in social media as an actor with identity, a profile, a voice, a set of values and visual associations. The perceived authenticity of this identity directly conditions the brand's capacity to build trust-based relationships with its audience. The literature documents that, in 2025, authenticity and reliability are ranked by consumers as two of the three most important desired characteristics of brand content on social media, making the coherent construction of digital identity a first-order strategic priority [5].

2. Theoretical Considerations

Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs)

The construct of Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) has emerged as a productive framework for organizing the diverse actions that brands undertake on social platforms. Kim and Ko proposed a multidimensional operationalization of SMMAs encompassing five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth. This framework has been widely adopted and extended in subsequent research, providing a common vocabulary for studying how different aspects of brand behavior on social media relate to consumer outcomes [6].

Alnaser et al., in a study published in the *International Review of Management and Marketing*, confirmed the multi-dimensionality of SMMAs and demonstrated that entertainment and interaction dimensions exert the strongest influence on purchase intention. Trendiness, the perception that brand content reflects current social and cultural trends, plays a significant moderating role, consistent with the broader theoretical argument that promotional effectiveness depends not on content volume but on perceived relevance.

The eWOM Mechanism

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) represents one of the most theoretically significant mechanisms through which social media promotional campaigns generate value. Defined as any positive or negative statement made by actual or former customers about a product or company, made available to a multitude of people via the internet, eWOM in social media contexts carries the additional characteristic of being embedded in social networks, where source credibility is modulated by the relationship between sender and receiver [7].

Moisescu, Gică, and Herle, in a study published in *Behavioral Sciences* (MDPI, 2022), investigated the relationship between social media brand page engagement and eWOM, mediated by self-brand connection, using PLS-SEM on a sample of Romanian Facebook users. Their findings demonstrate that both passive engagement (consuming brand content) and active engagement (commenting, sharing, reacting) have significant positive effects on eWOM generation, both directly and through the development of self-brand connection [8].

The theoretical mechanism linking engagement to eWOM operates through identity-related processes. When consumers develop a sense of connection between the brand and their self-concept, they become motivated to share brand-related content as an expression of identity. This insight suggests that the most durable effects of social media promotional campaigns are achieved not through reach maximization but through the cultivation of brand communities in which participation carries identity value for members.

3. Mechanisms Linking Campaign Characteristics to Consumer Outcomes

Credibility, Authenticity, and Trust

A consistent finding in the empirical literature concerns the central role of perceived credibility and authenticity in mediating the relationship between campaign exposure and consumer behavioral responses. Sipos demonstrated that transparency in social media communication significantly increases consumer trust, which in turn amplifies purchase intentions, a finding that holds across product categories and platform contexts. [9]

This causal chain from transparency to trust to intention aligns with the persuasion knowledge model, which predicts that consumers who perceive a message as strategically motivated will engage defensive mechanisms that attenuate its persuasive effects. Promotional content perceived as authentic generates significantly stronger engagement and conversion outcomes than content perceived as formulaic or insincere. [10]

Purchase Intention and the Mediating Role of Brand Awareness

The relationship between social media promotional campaigns and purchase intention has been extensively studied, with brand awareness consistently emerging as a key mediating variable. Promotional campaigns increase brand awareness by ensuring repeated, contextually relevant exposure; brand awareness in turn reduces perceived risk and increases the probability that the brand will be included in the consumer's consideration set at the moment of purchase decision.

Ben Ameur and Ben Rached, in a study of TikTok marketing activities in the beauty accessories category, identified brand awareness and self-brand connectedness as significant mediators of the relationship between SMMAs and purchase intention. Their results indicate that the promotional effectiveness of TikTok campaigns operates primarily through identity-related pathways rather than through direct persuasion, a finding consistent with the engagement-to-eWOM-to-behavior chain identified by Moisescu et al. [11].

The implication for campaign design is significant: promotional content that generates brand awareness and identity connection will outperform content optimized purely for reach or impression volume, even when the latter achieves larger nominal audiences. Quality of exposure, defined by its capacity to generate self-brand connection and satisfaction, is a stronger predictor of promotional effectiveness than quantity of exposure.

Influencer Marketing as Promotional Campaign Infrastructure

Influencer marketing has become a structural component of social media promotional strategy, with the global industry surpassing $24 billion in value in 2025. The theoretical rationale draws on parasocial interaction

theory, which describes the one-sided sense of intimacy that audiences develop with media personalities, and on social proof mechanisms, whereby consumers use the behavior and endorsements of others as heuristic guides for their own decisions [12], [13].

A significant evolution in influencer marketing practice has been the shift from macro-influencer campaigns (celebrities with millions of followers) toward micro- and nano-influencer partnerships (audiences ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 followers). This shift reflects empirical evidence that smaller, more homogeneous communities generate higher engagement rates and higher levels of perceived authenticity, the variable most consistently predictive of promotional effectiveness.

The economic logic is equally compelling: the cost-per-engagement of micro-influencer campaigns is substantially lower than that of celebrity endorsements, and the purchase intentions generated tend to be stronger due to the higher trust calibration of smaller communities. Alnaser confirmed that word-of-mouth dimensions of SMMAs are among the strongest predictors of purchase intention, providing empirical support for the inclusion of organic amplification mechanisms within core promotional campaign planning.

4. Measuring Promotional Campaign Effectiveness

The measurement of social media promotional campaign effectiveness presents persistent methodological challenges. The fundamental tension identified by Hoffman and Fodor between the logic of traditional ROI calculation and the participatory, indirect mechanisms through which social media generates value, remains central to this debate [14].

The distinction between vanity metrics, impressions, follower counts, raw like counts, and strategically meaningful indicators is now well-established. Vanity metrics capture exposure but not impact; they are necessary but not sufficient conditions for promotional effectiveness. The empirical studies reviewed in this paper consistently identify engagement quality, self-brand connection, perceived authenticity, and conversion outcomes as the variables that most reliably predict whether a promotional campaign translates into durable behavioral change.

Peters et al. proposed a framework for social media metrics management that recognizes the dynamic, interconnected nature of social media data and argues against simplistic application of traditional media measurement logics. Their framework advocates for the use of counterbalancing metrics, pairs of indicators that capture complementary dimensions of performance, to prevent the optimization of a single indicator at the expense of other dimensions of campaign effectiveness [15].

Technical tools such as UTM parameter tracking, conversion pixels, and CRM integration are now standard in paid social media campaign management. Future research would benefit from the development of mixed-methods attribution frameworks capable of capturing both the direct, traceable effects of social media campaigns and the indirect, identity-mediated effects that operate through eWOM and self-brand connection.

5. Conclusions

This paper has reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature on promotional campaigns through social media, synthesizing findings across consumer behavior, communication research, and marketing science.

Social media has also reconfigured the experience of time in communication. While traditional mass media operated on a schedule-based temporality, broadcasts had timetables, publications had release cycles, social media has instituted a temporality of continuous flow, in which content is produced and consumed in real time, 24 hours a day. Distribution algorithms have added an additional layer of complexity: content is no longer presented in strictly chronological order, but ranked according to perceived relevance, meaning that the temporality of a post's production and the temporality of its consumption can be completely decoupled.

From a marketing perspective, this temporal reconfiguration demands a constant presence and a rapid response capacity. Studies show that responding to user comments within the first 60 minutes of publishing a post is a positive signal for platform algorithms, which interpret early activity as an indicator of content relevance. At the same time, the phenomenon of news jacking, the rapid insertion of a brand into emerging public conversations, has become a frequently used marketing tactic, made possible precisely by the real-time nature of communication on social media.

The effectiveness of social media promotional campaigns is not primarily a function of reach or frequency of exposure but of the quality of engagement they generate. Campaigns that cultivate self-brand connection, perceived authenticity, and community participation produce stronger and more durable behavioral outcomes than those optimized for impression volume.

eWOM represents the highest-leverage mechanism of social media promotional effectiveness. Content that motivates consumers to share, recommend, and discuss a brand extends the campaign's reach organically while simultaneously benefiting from the trust amplification that peer communication enjoys over brand-originated messages.

The evolution of influencer marketing toward micro- and nano-influencer partnerships reflects a broader theoretical shift from reach-based to trust-based models of promotional effectiveness. Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs capable of capturing

cumulative effects of promotional campaigns on brand equity and consumer loyalty, as well as cross-platform comparative studies to identify generalizable campaign design principles.

The use of data and modern communication tools, combined with a well-organized and motivated team, significantly increases the chances [16] of social media.

6. References

[1] Alnaser F., Alghizzawi M., Abualfalayeh G., Omeish F., Alharthi S., Al Koni S.R.: "The Impact of Social Media Marketing Activities on Purchase Intention", International Review of Management and Marketing, Vol. 14, No. 6, pp. 288–300, 2024.
[2] Mangold W.G., Faulds D.J.: "Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix", Business Horizons, Vol. 52, No. 4, pp. 357–365, 2009.
[3] Goffman E.: "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", Anchor Books, New York, 1959.
[4] Kietzmann J.H., Hermkens K., McCarthy I.P., Silvestre B.S.: "Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media", Business Horizons, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 241–251, 2011.
[5] Sprout Social: "Sprout Social Index 2025", Sprout Social Inc., 2025.
[6] Kim A.J., Ko E.: "Do Social Media Marketing Activities Enhance Customer Equity? An Empirical Study of Luxury Fashion Brand", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 65, No. 10, pp. 1480–1486, 2012.
[7] Hennig-Thurau T., Gwinner K.P., Walsh G., Gremler D.D.: "Electronic Word-of-Mouth via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?", Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 38–52, 2004.
[8] Moisescu O.-I., Gică O.-A., Herle F.-A.: "Boosting eWOM Through Social Media Brand Page Engagement: The Mediating Role of Self-Brand Connection", Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 12, No. 11, Art. 411, 2022.
[9] Sipos T.: "Social Media and Sustainable Consumer Behavior: The Role of Transparency, Trust, and Engagement", Frontiers in Communication, 2025.
[10] Friestad M., Wright P.: "The Persuasion Knowledge Model: How People Cope with Persuasion Attempts", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 1–31, 1994.
[11] Ben Ameur H., Ben Rached K.S.: "Influence of Social Media Marketing Activities on Purchase Intention Through the Role of Satisfaction, Brand Awareness and Self-Brand Connected", Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, Vol. 28, No. S5, pp. 1–20, 2024.
[12] Horton D., Wohl R.R.: "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction", Psychiatry, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 215–229, 1956.
[13] Cialdini R.B.: "Influence: Science and Practice", Allyn & Bacon, Boston, 2001.
[14] Hoffman D.L., Fodor M.: "Can You Measure the ROI of Your Social Media Marketing?", MIT Sloan Management Review, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 41–49, 2010.
[15] Peters K., Chen Y., Kaplan A.M., Ognibeni B., Pauwels K.: "Social Media Metrics - A Framework and Guidelines for Managing Social Media", Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 281–298, 2013.
[16] Dinu G., Dinu L.: "The Electoral System in Romania: A Managerial Approach", Robotica & Management, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 54-57.