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The Education University  
of Hong Kong

A project entitled

**Exploring the Influence of social media marketing on the consumption  
behaviors of Hong Kong young adults**

Submitted by

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## **Declaration**

I, Law Chung Hang declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Assistant Professor Dr CHENH Wai Lun, Eddie and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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## **Abstract**

### **Introduction**

Social media is identified as effective means to persuade people to consume and some studies depict that consumers' purchasing behaviors could be influenced. However, little do we know about the influences of social media on the young generation, especially since they are growing up in the digital era. It is supposed that the youth get much more chances in facing social media advertising, being the major users of social media, and hence familiar with promotion on social media could have different perspectives or effects when compared with the adults toward propaganda.

### **Purpose**

This study contributes to bringing practical impacts to the students, businesses, and the government, by (1) the young adults can understand their personal consumption behaviors and review their personal consumer decision-making process. (2) the businesses can understand the interpretation of various social media marketing activities so as to design best-fitted advertisements for young consumers, which are also associated with social responsibility. (3) providing recommendations for the government to implement advanced regulations, such as the Cooling-off Period, to better guard against impulsive buying, especially among the youth.

### **Methodology**

For this study, the researchers utilized the convenience sampling method to select participants and gather primary data through a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires and interviews. A total of 100 respondents were chosen to complete an online questionnaire, which presented statements with a 5-point Likert rating scale to indicate their choices. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in frequencies and an independent sample t-test with gender effect comparison, performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. In addition, four participants (two men and two women) were interviewed via Zoom for main and follow-up questions, and telephone contact was used for cross-checking purposes. The concept of redundancy was applied to determine the optimal number of interviews for this study.

### **Results**

The research conducted on how the younger generation responds to social media promotions revealed a direct relationship between social media promotion activities and consumption. Moreover, the investigation determined the methods by which advertisements affect the purchasing habits of young people and detected notable gender differences in the decision-making process.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study highlights the benefits of using social media as an advertising platform for young people. Viable solutions are proposed to help young adults avoid making impulsive purchases, and recommendations are given to local governments and businesses to fulfill their ethical and social responsibilities. Additionally, future research could expand the sample size to achieve more precise results. Further studies should explore personal characteristics and consumption patterns, as well as

examine the changes in consumer behavior before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This would provide another insight into the effectiveness of social media in personalizing advertising strategies.

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## **A. Introduction**

### ***1. Background: Social Media development & marketing***

Under the advanced information technology development, social media have been deep-rooted in billions of people's daily lives, and also have been overwhelmingly and rapidly transforming the conveyance of information means, which advocates the development of communication, consumption, and collaboration (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, and Twitter, are well-known applications for social networking, sharing knowledge, and multi-media platforms, which allow users to reach diverse information (Marwick, 2015). Social networking sites are also used for promoting products through social media modes, and research papers have established a link between business operations and social media. At the beginning of the development of social media, the researchers and business advertising industries noticed that there is a combination of social media and commercials. The transformation of information technology, therefore, brings about profound changes in commercial advertising and marketing activities. Before the invention of social media, business propaganda and promotion were broadcasted on television. Instead of people being capable of searching for information regarding services and products, the business allocates advertisements and reaches out to the target audience precisely (Ojala, 2012). According to Alice (2015), users tend to develop a habit of searching for information about products and services on social media, which prompts businesses to establish a presence on these platforms for promotional purposes. The papers



suggest that as technology continues to evolve, an increasing number of individuals prefer using social media to gather information about goods and services.

One significant showing that social media has swiftly become a means of business promotion is that marketers spend 60% more on social media in 2021 than in 2020 (Statista, 2023).

## ***2. Background: Adaptation of social media in Hong Kong***

Hong Kong is known as one of the highly digitally connected regions with active social media usage in the world for both leisure and business purposes. The users of the internet hit a historical record, for nearly 88% of Hong Kong's population, comparing 2022 and 2021, increased by 3.7% (Digital Business Lab, 2022). Digital consumption in Hong Kong is also continuing an upward trend. Digital consumption in Hong Kong people rises to 43.1% in 2020, which increased by 18.7% compared to 2012 (Census and Statistics Department, 2021). The young generation is the main user of social media, according to the Hong Kong Legislative Council report, in 2018, Hong Kong people spent an average of 12.9 hours per week. Among all segmentation, people aged 15-24 were the heaviest users who spent an average of 17.7 hours, which surpassed the average number of hours.

Another report results, Digital 2022 April Global Statshot, finds out the reason young adults are habitual in using social media, is that social media merge into our daily route.

Take the habit of those aged 16 to 24 as an example, in this age group, 47.5% are using social media to keep in touch with family and friends. 36.6% use these platforms to fill their free time. 34.8% use it to read news and 31% to search for articles or videos. Notably, users of social networks also turn to these apps for their shopping needs: 27.6% are looking for event inspiration or making a purchase (Digital 2022 April Global Statshot). The report illustrates that social media is now not merely a personal sharing channel, but a multifunctional platform. Moreover, when the dependence on using social media as a platform to do the daily route is getting higher, the more chances for the users to perceive digital advertisements.

Concluding the above findings, it is no doubt that the young generation is the major user of social media, meanwhile being the potential target audience of social media marketing. More importantly, the young generation is the heaviest user of social media which shows that, the youth have received much more digital advertisements than the rest of the age groups. It is supposed that digital advertising activities are affecting their purchase behaviors or different attitudes toward various promotion campaigns and activities.

### ***3. Aims of the project***

There are numerous reports revealing that social media has a role in customers' consumption behavior, increasing intention of consumption. However, most of the studies highlighted all-age group customers and generally targeted the influence of social media on people's consumption behavior. Little do we know about the younger generation on consumption and social media, let

alone the efficacy of social media advertising activities in changing the young consumer's consumer decision-making and computation behaviors. Especially the generations who grew up in the rapid development of technology might perceive digital advertising in other attitudes or meanings.

The core of this research is to focus on young adults, from 18 to 26, and investigate the effectiveness of social media advertising in influencing their consumption behavior, and see how receptive they are towards social media advertising. This study contributes to several stakeholders, **the youth, businesses, and the government**. **First**, assist the young generation to understand their personal consumption behaviors so as to review their personal decision-making process for better consumption patterns. **Second**, the business could understand young consumers' interpretation of various media marketing activities, for the sake of improving their promotion strategies, which are associated with social and ethical responsibility. Third, suggestions are provided to the government for strengthening consumer rights protection regulations, such as the Cooling-off Period, to better safeguard against impulsive purchases, especially among the youth.

## **B. Research objectives**

- 1. To investigate the relationship between social media marketing and the consumption behavior of Hong Kong young consumers.**

Description: To find out the correlation between social media marketing and the consumption behaviors of Hong Kong young adults, is there any connection or implication that arises from social media marketing among young consumers' purchasing decision-making process, and whether their consumption preferences would be altered by social media.

## **2. To examine the effectiveness of social media promotion on triggering young adults to consume, and how it drives them to consume**

Description: The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of social media promotions on the consumption behavior of young adults. This will involve examining the decision-making process that young people go through after recognizing products through popular social media platforms, as well as exploring how consumption patterns are affected by social media advertising content. Additionally, the study will examine whether social media promotions trigger and motivate indulgent or frivolous shopping behaviors among young adults.

## **C. Literature review**

In this section, existing literature studying social media, digital marketing and the effect on consumer behavior will be discussed, and relevant significance will also be accentuated.

## ***1. The correlation between social media advertising and consumption***

In some early studies, the use of social media advertising is considered a complementary benefit to the business and consumers, by fulfilling both needs and desires and having a direct impact on purchasing behavior (Chi, 2011). In general, the advantages of social media promotion are constituted by real-time communication, consumers generating the content, and multimedia content.

### ***1.1 Real-time communication (B2C)***

Social media has become an integral part of real-time communication, both in terms of promotion and consumption. In terms of promotion, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are used by businesses and individuals alike to promote their products, services, or personal brands. These platforms provide a cost-effective way to reach a large audience in real time and engage with them through comments, likes, and shares (Kline, 2011; Duffett, 2017). Social media is also a popular platform for consuming real-time news and information. Users can stay up-to-date with the latest news and events by following news outlets, public figures, and organizations on social media. Social media platforms are also used to share real-time updates and information during events, such as conferences, concerts, and protests. This speed of communication improves the customer experience and speeds up the delivery of product information (Smith, 2011).

In comparison with traditional marketing, advertising on social media is cost-efficient for promoting products and services. More importantly, commercial users are allowed to make use of social media as a platform to announce their information and receive customers' inquiries so as to provide other B2C services purpose (Eldon, 2008; Duffett, 2017). Therefore, social media is not only a mutual communication platform for consumers and businesses, and a proactive marketing strategy to boost consumption, but it also brings about value-added effects, on customer services, and brands' reputation, which shores up consumer consumption.

## ***1.2 Consumer generates content (C2C)***

Consumer-generated content (CGC) has become an important part of social media promotion and consumption. CGC refers to any type of content that is created by users, such as product reviews, user-generated videos, and social media posts. This content can include social media posts, reviews, blogs, videos, and more. In terms of promotion, businesses can encourage customers to create and share CGC about their products, which can help build brand awareness and trust (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). On the consumption side, consumers often rely on CGC to make purchasing decisions. For example, many shoppers read product reviews before making a purchase, and social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become popular places to discover new products and trends through user-generated content (Gretzel, 2006). Social media promotion involves using social media platforms to promote CGC ( Yasmin, Tasneem & Fatema, 2015). It can be done by sharing user-generated content on a brand's social media page, or by encouraging users to share their own content using specific hashtags or social

media challenges. Social media promotion is a powerful tool for brands because it allows them to showcase the positive experiences that users have had with their products or services.

Consumption of CGC is also important for brands because it provides valuable insights into the opinions and experiences of their customers. By monitoring and analyzing CGC, brands can identify trends and areas for improvement, as well as identify key influencers who can help promote their products or services (Grewal, et al 2003).

Therefore, social media is not only a mutual communication platform for consumers and businesses and a proactive marketing strategy to boost consumption, but it also brings about value-added effects, on customer services, brands' reputation, etc (Terry et al, 2008). In some early studies, the use of social media advertising is considered a complementary benefit to the business and consumers, by fulfilling both needs and desires and having a direct impact on purchasing behavior (Goh et al, 2013; Axel et al 2009).

### **1.3     *Multimedia content***

Social media promotion and consumption of multimedia content is a powerful way for brands to engage with their audiences and stand out in the crowded social media landscape. Multimedia content refers to any type of content that uses a combination of different media, such as images, videos, audio, and text. Social media promotion of multimedia content can involve creating visually appealing and engaging posts that feature a combination of different media types.

TikTok is one of the best examples in it that presents the commercial value of social media

(Cheng, 2023). A brand creates a video that includes text overlays and music to promote a new product. They can then share this video on their social media channels to reach a wider audience. In terms of promotion, multimedia content is an effective way to showcase products or services and create a visual representation of a brand's message (Paulienė, & Sedneva, 2019). Videos, in particular, have become a popular way for businesses to promote their products through tutorials, product demos, and behind-the-scenes footage. Multimedia content can also be easily shared and re-shared across social media platforms, which can help increase its reach and exposure.

On the consumption side, multimedia content is a popular way for users to engage with social media content. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become known for their focus on visual content, with users scrolling through a never-ending stream of photos and videos. Multimedia content can also be more engaging and memorable than text-based content, which can help users remember and share the content with their friends and followers.

To sum up, due to the increasing popularity of social media, marketers are increasingly leveraging its significant competitive advantage of engaging with targeted audiences more quickly and effectively than traditional marketing methods. More than half of consumers now discover companies through social media news feeds. Instagram alone enables companies to reach nearly one million customers, while over nine million businesses use Facebook to connect with consumers (Statista, 2021). Social media platforms are also suitable for conducting both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) digital marketing campaigns. Marketers spent 60% more on social media in 2021 than in 2020 (Statista, 2021). Since the



emergence of the first social media site in 2004, the growth of social media platforms and related digital interactive platforms has been remarkable, reaching the same level of popularity as television and radio (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). The number of active users and the penetration rate of digital communication platforms among younger generations continue to expand (Graham & Frebreg, 2016).

## ***2. How social media promotion drives people to consume***

### ***Personalization***

- Social media algorithms are programmed to display content that matches the interests and preferences of users. This information is used by companies to present personalized advertisements that align with users' preferences and interests. By doing so, users are more likely to perceive the ads as relevant to their needs, which can increase the chances of them making a purchase, according to Adamopoulos and Todri's research in 2014.

### ***Increased Awareness***

- Social media platforms offer companies an opportunity to exhibit their products and services to a broader range of individuals. Firms can leverage social media to generate public knowledge about their brand, products, and services. By utilizing paid promotions, sponsored posts, or influencer marketing, businesses can reach out to a larger audience,

including those who were previously unaware of their offerings, as explained by Zarrella's research in 2010.

### ***Discounts and Special Offers***

- Social media platforms often offer exclusive discounts and promotions to their users. These discounts can incentivize users to make purchases they may not have considered before. Social media platforms also allow users to share discount codes with their friends and family, which can create a sense of urgency and encourage more people to make a purchase (Ghanbarpour et al, 2022).

To summarize, the studies mentioned above suggest that factors such as social media interactions, advertising content, and browsing experiences can influence consumers' purchasing intentions. Social media promotions can expedite the decision-making process, leading to increased need recognition, more social interaction with peers and family, reduced individual information search time, faster purchasing decisions, and post-purchase evaluations. Furthermore, social media promotion can impact individuals' online purchasing behavior (Dieguez et al., 2015). Young adults tend to engage in excessive or frivolous consumption practices in many cases.

### ***2.1 Social media influencers (Key Opinion Leaders)***

According to Chae (2018), in the decision-making process for consumer purchases, the opinions of people in one's surroundings are often given greater weight than the features of products promoted by companies. Young people are more likely to purchase brands or products recommended by social influencers (Marwick, 2015), who are viewed as credible and accessible compared to traditional celebrities, according to Djafarova & Rushworth (2017). Additionally, the youth tend to seek out product reviews on social media before making purchases.

Social influencers have millions of followers on their platforms, and their followers view them as both celebrities and experts in specific fields (Lin & Bruning, 2018). They understand customers' needs and are familiar with product features and functions, acting as a connection between both parties by conveying product information and answering consumer questions effectively through customization. By creating relatable and aspirational content, influencers can make products seem more attractive and encourage their followers to purchase them.

In this way, social influencers serve as spokespersons and opinion leaders for brands. According to Cunningham & Kensicki (2004), effectiveness in endorsements depends on expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, which are characteristics that social influencers possess on their social platforms. Therefore, they can effectively endorse brands on their social media channels, making their influence more powerful than traditional endorsements from celebrities or propaganda.

### ***3. Social Media in Relation to People's consuming behavior and Attitude***

According to Chivandi, Samuel, and Muchie (2009), consumers' decision-making processes and final consumption decisions can be significantly influenced by online factors such as their purchasing experience, transaction satisfaction, and social interactions. Generally, online promotions can expedite the decision-making process by increasing the recognition of needs, promoting social interaction with peers and family, reducing individual information search time, enabling faster purchasing decisions, and facilitating post-purchase evaluations. Additionally, online promotions have an impact on individuals' buying behavior in online consumption (Duffett, 2017).

Moreover, Duffett (2017) indicated that social media are capable of arising a higher level of need for identification, may interact with surrounding people for product information and advice, and spend less time searching for product information and evaluation, generally accelerating the time of decision-making. Besides, the whole purchasing experience, including post-purchase review also affects people's consuming behavior and attitude. Some empirical research discovered there is a link between social media intensity (SMI) and impulsive purchasing behavior. Product photos, banner ads, low prices, and exclusive offers are the factors that influence impulse purchase behavior (Dittmar and Drury, 2000). Indulgent and frivolity manner

#### ***4. The rationale of the study***

Most of the above-stated reviews focus on the commercial value of social media and its effectiveness in immersing people's daily lives, especially the youth. However, when reviewing studies on the link between social media marketing and young consumers' consumption behavior and attitudes, and the pitfalls of online shopping, it was found that the literature on the subject is limited. Although there are some research studies on similar topics, the sampling size was associated with all age-group consumers. Apart from that, relatively fewer studies have been conducted to analyze young consumers' purchasing decision-making processes after noticing the advertisement on social media. It is important to discover the impact on young consumers' consumption behavior and attitude towards promotion on social media

The primary objective of the study was to examine the influence of social media promotion on young consumers. Various modes of social media promotion were compared to ascertain their impact. Ramesh and Vidhya (2019) proposed that social media has a significant role in stimulating consumer purchase intentions and online shopping behavior. The data collected in this study regarding the impact of social media product promotion on students' purchase decisions and consumption patterns may be useful for both students and marketers to review, as well as contribute to future research related to cyber consumption content.

## **D. Research Methodology**

### ***1. Research method***

Previous studies have shown there is a certain relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior, however, previous studies mostly set all-age groups as their target population. Young consumers, especially Generation Y & Z, are not taken as the major research target in previous relevant research. As such, the objective of this study is to set Hong Kong young consumers as the target population so as to narrow the academic gap regarding young consumers and social media marketing. Apart from reducing the academic gap, identifying the attractive attributes of social media that influence consumer behavior in their purchase decision-making process. For the sake of the reliability of the study result, the possible variations including time spent on social media and gender also have been put into consideration.

The convenience sampling method was used to obtain data and select participants to be the sample of this study. Primary data would be collected through questionnaires and interviews by adopting a mixed methods approach so as to increase the reliability of the finding. To offset the insufficient design of the research method and generate multi-dimensional information, qualitative and quantitative methods were used together (Hammurbery, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). Quantitative and qualitative approaches would be employed in this study by implementing questionnaires and interviews.

This study aimed to recruit 150 young adults aged 18-25 in Hong Kong who have habitually used social media for over a year to participate in the research. Four participants (two men and two women) were chosen to be interviewed via Zoom and telephone for the main and follow-up questions. The interviewees were asked to answer open-ended questions and provide their

personal opinions on various topics, including the frequency of ordering items and their consumption patterns after reviewing different social media advertising models. This was done to gain insight into their online shopping activities.

## ***2. Questionnaires***

The online questionnaire is designed to collect data to characterize the consumption behavior of Hong Kong young adults during February and March 2023 quantitative questionnaires. Under the concerns of analyzing data effectively and time-limitation, it is possible to set the sample size to 100, who are aged 18 - 26 years old in Hong Kong young adulthood. The questionnaire is distributed to male and female participants in similar quantities. It is a semi-structured questionnaire, which consists of closed and open-ended questions, including ratio scales to collect quantitative data.

Despite the fact that the age of adolescents (13 - 18) are commonly considered as one of the social media primary users, in this study the sample population is limited to 18 - 26 years old. Taking young adults as the theme of adoption of a specific sample population is the fact that young adults have higher levels and amounts of controllable money, also with less involvement of parents about their purchases, which is opposed to adolescence (Kowalska, 2012). Thus, the sample population is set at the age of 18 -26. Therefore, the characteristics of young adults may have an impact on consumers' consumption behavior.

### ***3. Measures***

There are 3 parts to the questionnaire of the survey, the questions are set based on the purpose of addressing the research objectives (see figure 1), and the 5-point Likert scale is applied to measure respondents' comments to the statements about their perceptions of social media, the idea for the variables of differentiate social media marketing activities and the advertising effect on their consumption behavior. The participants were asked to rate the corresponding questions on a scale of 1-5. There are some arguments concerning that the Likert scale may be deteriorated from the middle option, "no opinion", while an equal number of positive and negative statements and two extreme scale options can obviate the problem of bias due to the positive opinion would balance on negative opinion, thus the survey reliably reflects the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents in this study (Dillman et al., 2009).



**Section 1: What is the relationship between social media promotion and the consumption behavior of Hong Kong young adults?**

1. Are you a user of any of the social media platforms listed below? (you can choose more than 1 option)
2. In a week, what is the approximate duration of time you spend using social media?
3. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you see advertisements on social media while browsing the sites?
4. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you observe Key Opinion Leader (KOL) endorsing products or services on social media platforms?
5. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you see Direct Promotion by brands on social media platforms?
6. Watching commercial promotion(s) on social media is something I enjoy
7. I tend to seek out additional details about products or services that promoted on social media platforms
8. Seeing promotional content on social media platforms can positively influence my purchasing intent for the products or services being advertised
9. Promotional content on social media influenced my purchasing behavior
10. Promotions on social media platforms are able to convey their message to consumers clearly and effectively
11. Social media promotion drawn my attention
12. After viewing promotional material on social media, I conduct research to gather more information
13. Seeing promotional materials on social media platforms can boost my motivation to buy the products or services being advertised
14. Promotions on social media platforms can evoke a sense of desire with me to possess the products or services being advertised
15. After buying items that were advertised on social media, I often feel a sense of regret about the purchase

**Section 2. examine the effectiveness of social media promotion on triggering young adults to consume, and how does it drive them to consume**

18. I am attentive to the social media channels or methods that are most effective in motivating me to make purchase
19. The social media platform I choose to use has an impact on my purchasing behavior
20. The social media platform I choose to use is the main influence behind my consumption habits
22. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my friends to get their opinions and advice
23. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my family members to get their opinions and advice
24. Overall I am a thoughtful consumer who considers all factors before making any purchases
25. I am addicted to indulgent or thoughtless shopping.
26. My purchasing decisions are based on reason and rationality rather than emotion or impulse

**Figure 1.** The questionnaire for this study was designed to address the research questions.

After collecting the data, IBM SPSS Statistics 26 was utilized to analyze the data by use of the descriptive statistics in frequencies (refer to Appendix F and G) for all the research questions.

#### ***4. Interviews***

Qualitative research approach has been employed in the interview section. In order to obtain the consent of the respondents to participate in the interview, the telephone number obtained in the questionnaire was used as an invitation platform. Respondents were based on the concept of redundancy was applied to screen the optimal number of respondents for this study. Four respondents (two men and two women) were invited to be interviewed via Zoom for the main and follow-up questions via telephone contact.

The interviews section was designed to further understand and get additional information on the attitudes of young people towards social media advertising and how the interviewees were influenced by social media promotions. Interviewees were set to answer open-ended questions, (see figure 2). Besides, interviewees were also asked to give their opinion on issues such as the frequency of ordering items and their consumption patterns after reviewing different social media advertising models to reveal their online shopping activities.

1. Do you know/notice ads? Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
2. When making a purchase, who do you typically seek advice from - family members, friends, or Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)? What makes you prefer one type of advisor over the others?
3. Do you believe that people often regret purchasing items recommended by advertisements?
4. Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
5. Do you consider your consumption choices to be frivolous or impulsive?
6. Do you agree with the idea that emotions play a significant role in buying decisions?
7. What type of social media advertisements do you find appealing? Do you think social media marketing, such as discounts, can entice you to make a purchase?
8. When buying a product, what is the most important factor for you to consider?

**Figure 2** The interview question for this study were designed to address the research question

## **E. Findings**

### **Descriptive and Inferential Statistics**

The online questionnaires were collected from 100 respondents who are between the age of 18 - 26, with no issues of missing data. Respondents between the age of 22 and 24 years old are the majority (Table 1).

**1. Research question Section 1: What is the relationship between social media promotion and the consumption behavior of young adults?**

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of the respondents

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Valid	Male	42.0	42.0	42.0	42.0
		Female	58.0	58.0	58.0	100.0
		Total	100	100	100	
Age	Valid	18 years old	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		19 years old	4	4.0	4.0	0.0
		20 years old	9	9.0	9.0	12.0
		21 years old	10	10.0	10.0	22.0
		22 years old	18	18.0	18.0	40.0
		23 years old	15	15.0	15.0	55.0
		24 years old	22	22.0	22.0	77.0
		25 years old	20	20.0	20.0	97.0
		26 years old	2	2.0	2.0	100

Total	100	100	100
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There is a positive relationship between social media advertising activities and the consumption behavior of Hong Kong young adults, which is depicted by the results of the questionnaires.

As shown in Tables 2 & 3, the vast majority of respondents spent at least 7 hours per week.

Google, Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube are the most frequently visited social media platforms, besides, it is common for them to help when using social media.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of the respondents on social media using habits (n = 100)

Description	Option	Frequency	Percent
1. Are you a user of any of the social media platforms listed below? (you can choose more than 1 option)			
	Facebook	96	96.0
	Instagram	99	99.0
	Google	100	100.0
	Pinterest	46	46.0
	Twitter	58	58.0
	LinkedIn	63	63.0
	TikTok	41	41.0
	Youtube	99	99.0

---

2. In a week, what is the approximate duration of time you spend using social media?

< 1 hour	0	0
1-2 hour(s)	0	0
3-4 hours	0	0
7-8 hours	27	27
9-10 hours	39	39
> 10 hours	66	66

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**Table 3.** Social media advertisements exposure rate when surfing social media

Description	Option	Frequency	Percent
3. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you see advertisements on social media while browsing the sites?			
	Strongly Often	79	79.0
	Often	21	21.0
	Neutral	0	0.0
	Unoften	0	0.0
	Strongly unoften	0	0.0
4. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you observe Key Opinion Leader (KOL) endorsing products or services on social media platforms?			

---

Strongly unoften	82	82
Unoften	13	13
Neutral	3	3
Often	2	2
Strongly Often	0	0

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5. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you see Direct Promotion by brands on social media platforms?

Strongly unoften	68	68
Unoften	19	19
Neutral	10	10
Often	3	3
Strongly Often	0	0

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Table 4 illustrates that almost all respondents agree social media advertising activities catch their eyes and evoke their desire to buy the product. It means social media advertisements pose a positive effect on provoking young consumers' desire to buy the product.

**Table 4.** How social media promotion has influenced the attitudes of the respondents (n=100).

Influence on attitude	Scale	Frequency	Percent
11. Social media promotion drawn my			

attention			
Strongly Disagree	0	0	
Disagree	6	6.0	
Neutral	3	3.0	
Agree	62	62.0	
Strongly Agree	29	29.0	
8. Seeing promotional content on social media platforms can positively influence my purchasing intent for the products or services being advertised			
Strongly Disagree	0	0	
Disagree	13	13.0	
Neutral	11	11.0	
Agree	57	57.0	
Strongly Agree	19	19.0	

Table 5 showed that a considerable number of participants expressed a positive response towards social media promotion, which ultimately motivated them to conduct research and seek out more product information on social media networking platforms. Additionally, most respondents reported making purchasing decisions after viewing social media platforms.

**Table 5.** Influence of social media promotion on consuming behavior



Influence on consumption behavior	Scale	Frequency	Percent
7.I tend to seek out additional details about products or services that promoted on social media platforms			
	Strongly Disagree	3	3
	Disagree	7	7.0
	Neutral	15	15.0
	Agree	64	64.0
	Strongly Agree	11	11.0
12. After viewing promotional material on social media, I conduct research to gather more information			
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.0
	Disagree	2	2.0
	Neutral	4	4.0
	Agree	62	62.0
	Strongly Agree	30	30.0
14. Promotions on social media platforms can evoke a sense of desire to possess the products or services being advertised			
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	3	3.0
	Neutral	4	4.0

	Agree	81	81.0
	Strongly Agree	12	12.0
<hr/>			
15. After buying items that were advertised on social media, I often feel a sense of regret about the purchase			
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
	Disagree	80	80.0
	Neutral	12	12
	Agree	4	4.0
	Strongly Agree	0	0

## 2. Research question: Section 2. How does social media promotion drive young adults to make purchasing behavior?

According to the data presented in Table 6, nearly 70% of the respondents favoured social media advertising as their preferred promotional activity, while the Key Opinion Leader and shop's product promotion were 22% and 9% respectively.

These results suggest that social media advertising is likely the most effective way to stimulate young consumers' desire to make purchases. This is due to social media advertising abilities to increase their awareness and attention to product details, encourage their shopping desires by informing them of the latest product launches and discounts available, and provide better insight into the benefits and features of the product.

**Table 6.** The type of social media promotions that best prompt people's desire to purchase.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Social media advertising	69	69.0	69.0	69.0
Promotion by Key Opinion Leader (KOL)	22	22.0	22.0	91.0
Direct Promotion by the brand	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

	6. Watching commercial promotion(s) on social media is something I enjoy	7. I tend to seek out additional details about products or services that are promoted on social media platforms	8. Seeing promotional content on social media platforms can positively influence my purchasing intent for the products or services being advertised	9. Promotional content on social media influenced my purchasing behavior	10. Promotions on social media platforms are able to convey their message to consumers clearly and effectively	11. Social media promotion drew my attention	12. After viewing promotional material on social media, I conduct research to gather more information	13. Seeing promotional materials on social media platforms can boost my motivation to buy the products or services being advertised	14. Promotions on social media platforms can evoke a sense of desire with me to possess the products or services being advertised	15. After buying items that were advertised on social media, I often feel a sense of regret about the purchase
Valid (N)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mode	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Disagree

**Figure 3.** Descriptive Statistics (Mode) of questionnaire questions on RO1

Table 7 indicates that social media promotion can influence younger consumers to show interest in advertised products. According to the table, about 80% of respondents agree that social media promotion has a positive impact on their consumption habits. Additionally, Table 5 highlights that almost 90% of respondents consider social media to be crucial in their purchasing decisions, whether it's for gathering product information or prompting them to buy products, which increases their overall consumption. Essentially, these results suggest that social media promotion does have an impact on the consumption habits of younger consumers.

**Table 7.** The effect of social media portion on attitudes and perceptions of the respondents (n = 100)

Statement	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
19. The social media platform I choose to use has an impact on my purchasing behavior	Strongly Disagree	2	2.0	2.0

Disagree	10	10.0	12.0
Neutral	3	3.0	15.0
Agree	62	62.0	77.0
Strongly Agree	24	24.0	100.0

---

18. I am attentive to the social media channels or methods that are most effective in motivating me to make purchase

Strongly Disagree	1	1.0	1.0
Disagree	8	8.0	9.0
Neutral	2	2.0	11.0
Agree	84	84.0	95.0
Strongly Agree	5	5.0	100.0

---

20. The social media platform I choose to use is the main influence behind my consumption habits

Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0.0
Disagree	2	2.0	2.0
Neutral	7	7.0	9.0
Agree	83	83.0	92.0
Strongly Agree	8	8.0	100.0

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21. Using my preferred social media platform increase the amount that I consume

Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	0.0
Neutral	1	1.0	1.0
Agree	82	82.0	83.0
Strongly Agree	18	18.0	100.0

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The questionnaires of respondents found that social media advertising was the most effective social media technique in influencing purchasing behavior of young consumers.

**Table 8.** The types of stakeholders' opinions that will ask and consider before making consumption.

Statement	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
22. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my friends to get their opinions and advice				
Strongly	2	2.0	2.0	2.0

Disagree				
Disagree	6	6.0	6.0	8.0
Neutral	4	4.0	4.0	12.0
Agree	82	82.0	82.0	94.0
Strongly	6	6.0	6.0	100
Agree				

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23. Before consuming anything, I  
typically consult with my family  
members to get their opinions and  
advice

Strongly	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
Disagree				
Disagree	46	46.0	46.0	71.0
Neutral	6	6.0	6.0	77.0
Agree	14	14.0	14.0	91.0
Strongly	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Agree				

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**Table 9.** The effect of advertising on social media in shaping the attitudes and perceptions of respondents (n =100).

Statement		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<hr/>					
24. Overall I am a thoughtful consumer who considers all factors before making any purchases					
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Disagree	51	51.0	51.0	54.0
	Neutral	9	9.0	9.0	63.0
	Agree	29	29.0	29.0	92.0
	Strongly Agree	8	8.0	8.0	100
<hr/>					
25. I am addicted to indulgent or thoughtless shopping.					
	Strongly Disagree	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Disagree	16	16.0	16.0	28.0
	Neutral	9	9.0	9.0	37.0
	Agree	53	53.0	53.0	90.0
	Strongly Agree	10	10.0	10.0	100
<hr/>					

26. My purchasing decisions are based on reason and rationality rather than



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emotion or impulse

Strongly Disagree	34	34.0	34.0	34.0
Disagree	23	23.0	23.0	57.0
Neutral	6	6.0	6.0	63.0
Agree	30	30.0	30.0	93.0
Strongly Agree	7	7.0	8.0	100

---

To examine whether gender is a significant factor on the questionnaire's responses, the independent sample T-test was applied. Overall, figures 1 and 2 (spss file) depicts those male and female respondents had shown a different tendency in certain aspects, which means gender did have a significant impact.

First, the male respondents are more likely to visit the social media platform that fits their using preference ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) than the female respondents ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.867$ ) ( $p = 0.038 < 0.05$ ). Second, the male ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.498$ ) respondents also prefer to consume much more when using their favorite social media platform, than the female respondents ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 0.0$ ) ( $p < 0.001$ ). Third, male and female respondents both show less likelihood to consult their family members before buying stuff, but males are less reluctant to seek family members' opinions ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.409$ ) than females ( $M = 1.83$ ,  $SD = 0.818$ ) ( $p = 0.003 < 0.01$ ). Fourth, males thought they were more thoughtful consumers ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.224$ ) than females ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 0.894$ ) ( $p = 0.016 < 0.05$ ). Fifth, females ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.476$ ) were less

likely to think of their needs and desires on the product before making a purchase decision than males ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.471$ ) ( $p = 0.022 < 0.05$ ).

群組統計量					
	Gender	數目	平均值	標準差	標準誤平均值
1. I am attentive to the social media channels or methods that are most effective in motivating me to make purchase	Male	59	4.12	.930	.121
	Female	41	3.73	.867	.135
2. The social media platform I choose to use has an impact on my purchasing behavior	Male	59	3.90	.736	.096
	Female	41	3.78	.613	.096
3. The social media platform I choose to use is the main influence behind my consumption habits	Male	59	4.03	.524	.068
	Female	41	3.88	.400	.062
4. Using my preferred social media platform increase the amount that I consume	Male	59	4.29	.493	.064
	Female	41	4.00	.000	.000
5. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my friends to get their opinions and advice	Male	59	3.92	.702	.091
	Female	41	3.73	.708	.111
6. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my family members to get their opinions and advice	Male	59	2.66	1.409	.183
	Female	41	1.93	.818	.128
7. Overall I am a thoughtful consumer who considers all factors before making any purchases	Male	59	3.14	1.224	.159
	Female	41	2.59	.894	.140
8. I am addicted to indulgent or thoughtless shopping	Male	59	3.51	1.223	.159
	Female	41	3.07	1.170	.183
9. My purchasing decisions are based on reason and rationality rather than emotion or impulse	Male	59	2.80	1.471	.192
	Female	41	2.15	1.216	.190

**Figure 4.** Means, standard deviations and standard error mean of questionnaire questions were calculated in response to RO2

獨立樣本檢定										
		變異數等式的 Levene 檢定		平均值等式的 t 檢定					差異的 95% 信賴區間	
		F	顯著性	t	df	顯著性 (雙尾)	平均值差異	標準誤差異	下限	上限
1. I am attentive to the social media channels or methods that are most effective in motivating me to make purchase	採用相等變異數	.072	.788	2.103	98	.038	.387	.184	.022	.752
	不採用相等變異數			2.131	89.919	.036	.387	.182	.026	.748
2. The social media platform I choose to use has an impact on my purchasing behavior	採用相等變異數	.000	.996	.842	98	.402	.118	.140	-.160	.395
	不採用相等變異數			.870	94.716	.386	.118	.135	-.151	.387
3. The social media platform I choose to use is the main influence behind my consumption habits	採用相等變異數	.255	.614	1.606	98	.111	.156	.097	-.037	.348
	不採用相等變異數			1.685	97.095	.095	.156	.092	-.028	.339
4. Using my preferred social media platform increase the amount that I consume	採用相等變異數	150.574	<.001	3.736	98	<.001	.288	.077	.135	.441
	不採用相等變異數			4.489	58.000	<.001	.288	.064	.160	.417
5. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my friends to get their opinions and advice	採用相等變異數	.764	.384	1.282	98	.203	.184	.143	-.101	.468
	不採用相等變異數			1.280	85.725	.204	.184	.143	-.102	.469
6. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my family members to get their opinions and advice	採用相等變異數	30.879	<.001	3.000	98	.003	.734	.245	.248	1.220
	不採用相等變異數			3.283	95.373	.001	.734	.224	.290	1.178
7. Overall I am a thoughtful consumer who considers all factors before making any purchases	採用相等變異數	14.357	<.001	2.457	98	.016	.550	.224	.106	.995
	不採用相等變異數			2.597	97.728	.011	.550	.212	.130	.971
8. I am addicted to indulgent or thoughtless shopping	採用相等變異數	.075	.785	1.782	98	.078	.435	.244	-.050	.920
	不採用相等變異數			1.796	88.570	.076	.435	.242	-.046	.917
9. My purchasing decisions are based on reason and rationality rather than emotion or impulse	採用相等變異數	8.021	.006	2.330	98	.022	.650	.279	.096	1.204
	不採用相等變異數			2.411	94.994	.018	.650	.270	.115	1.186

**Figure 5.** Results for the independent sample t-test

## 2. Findings in interviews

The interviews were conducted based on the questionnaire findings, which were mainly responding to examining the effectiveness of social media promotion on triggering young adults to consume, and how it drives them to consume (Research objective 2). The following figures

are going to present the interview questions and the corresponding response from the interviewees.

**Questions:**

Q1: Have you observed targeted advertisements on your social media platforms? How do you perceive customized ads?

Q2: Do you believe that these ads can effectively stimulate your desire to make a purchase?

Q3: When making online purchases, do you think you engage in frivolous or impulsive shopping? What motivates you to make impulsive purchases?

Q4: What type of content associated with social media advertisements appeals to you the most?

Q5: Can social media-based ads related to sales or discounts motivate you to engage in online shopping?

**Figure 6.** Interview Questions corresponding to research objective 2.

Corresponding response of Q1:

*Male 1: “Those advertisements are being part of my social media contents, in a sense, these ads provide detailed product information as well as being less time-consuming.*

*Give me a favor. “*

*Male 2 “personalized advertisements are not objectionable, although I would like to see less use made of the practice.”*

Corresponding response of Q2:

*Female 2” Repeated advertisements on social media, it reminds me to buy those products. It does suggest one of the options when I would like to purchase similar products.*

*Male 2 “ When I want to buy a specific kind of product, the promoted brand would come into my mind. Sometimes, I prefer to purchase the promoted products or find out the alternative in the same brand.”*

**Corresponding response of Q3, 5:**

*Female 2: “Impulse to consume when there is shopping discount, overall I am kind of indulgent shopaholic”*

*Female 1 “Yes, when there is big sales or attractive discount offer, my friends and I will inform each other and consume together,*

*Male 2: If there is an attractive discount, trivial stuff, I would unconsciously think that it is worthy to purchase.*

**Corresponding response of Q4:**

*Male 1” Frequently browse on social media sites to look for the information about product intended to buy”*

*Male 1:” Impulsive purchase might be raised from over attracted by the promoted items without thinking much, especially when the products are introduced by my favourite idol (KOL)*

**Figure. 7** Responds from the interviewees.

## **F. Discussions**

### ***1. Discussion of the main findings***

The main finding of the present study depicts that there is a positive correlation between consumer consumption and social media promotion. It also suggests that young consumers' attention and buying intention towards the promoted items would be aroused.

Current literature found that consumer awareness and purchase intentions are highly influenced by the level of effectiveness of social media promotions and the accessibility of electronic resources (Duffett, 2017; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). In Cox's (2010) research on the relationship between age and attitudes toward social media promotion, it was discovered that social media users between the ages of 18 and 28 had positive views toward online advertisements. These findings support the view that social media promotions are vital in conveying product information which is able to encourage consumers to search for the details and even make a purchase of the promoted products (Kotler & Armstrong 2015).

Multiple studies share the view that the effect of social media can have an impact on the purchasing behavior of younger generations (Chivandi et al., 2019; Dinner et al., 2014; Gossen et al., 2019). A study revealed that young consumers have positive behavioral and emotional attitudes toward what they read in social media content prior to making a purchase can sway their decision-making process (Sahin, Gulmez, & Ersoy, 2019). Cox (2010) suggests that for

social media to be effective, online advertisements should have positive attributes, such as informative product details and an attractive layout. Therefore, social media advertising can significantly affect the formation of positive attitudes and consumption behaviors. Essentially, social media marketing is a useful platform for users to discover the latest products in the market and develop a desire to purchase them.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons why social media advertising is attractive to consumers, research has shown that personalized advertising practices, such as Online Behavioral Advertising (OBA), can enhance the accessibility of products to social media users. These types of advertisements collect data on users' online activities, such as their search engine queries, visited websites, and view videos, to create personalized ads that align with users' preferences. The more personalized the advertisement, the higher the likelihood of users clicking on the promoted products ( Ghanbarpour, Sahabeh & Gustafsson, 2022). Interviews have revealed that social media advertising is aligned with the preferences of buyers, making it an efficient way to transmit messages and capture consumption preferences and recommendations. This showcases the effectiveness of advanced technology in analyzing big data to capture users' personal preferences and the reason why young consumers prefer social media advertising for its efficient browsing and purchasing functions.



### ***1.1 Discussion on Relevant Findings from the interviews***

The use of social media promotion has become a popular strategy for businesses to increase their brand awareness and drive consumer consumption. The purpose of this academic statement is to demonstrate that the interview has similar results on social media promotion, and it has a positive correlation between consumer consumption and social media promotion.

Firstly, interviews with KOLs provide detailed product information, which is less time-consuming for consumers. KOLs are often experts in their respective fields and can provide valuable insights into specific products or industries. By sharing their knowledge and experience, KOLs can provide consumers with a better understanding of the products being promoted. This, in turn, can increase consumer attention and buying intention towards the prompted items.

Secondly, personalized advertisements are not objectionable. Social media platforms have the ability to collect data on users' interests, behaviours, and preferences. This data can be used to create personalized advertisements that are tailored to the individual consumer. Personalized advertisements have been shown to be more effective than generic advertisements in terms of increasing consumer attention and buying intention.

Thirdly, interviews with KOLs can serve as reminders for consumers to buy the products being promoted. Consumers are bombarded with advertisements on a daily basis, and it

can be difficult to remember all the products that are being promoted. However, interviews with KOLs can help to reinforce the message and remind consumers of the benefits of the products being promoted.

Fourthly, the promoted brand would come into the consumer's mind when they would like to consume that type of goods. Interviews with KOLs can help to increase brand awareness and create a positive image of the promoted brand. When consumers are in the market for a particular product, they are more likely to think of the promoted brand simply because it has been consistently presented through social media promotion.

## ***2. Gender (additional findings)***

The research findings in questionnaires and interviews revealed that gender is a significant factor that affects consumption behaviors. This study found that both males and females are prone to put friends' opinions in their purchasing decisions but are reluctant to seek advice from family members. The results show that both male and female participants are more likely to seek opinions from friends or experts than family members may be because they believe that friends have more knowledge about the products. Apart from the knowledge of product and education level, the present study also found that coherence in relationships is one of the major factors to determine whether the consumers would take the opinion of other stakeholders (Simpson et al., 2012 Chivandi et al., 2019). The current study also found that young consumers tend to seek consumer opinions from family members if they have coherence in relationships. These findings

demonstrate the significance of gender in the factors that influence buying decisions and shed light on the role of social relationships in making purchasing choices.

The current study has demonstrated that social media advertising has a crucial role in promoting the value of goods to social network users, particularly among males. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that men are more likely to engage in unplanned purchases and are highly influenced by online advertising content, making them more likely to purchase products displayed in promotions (Haws et al, 2012; Grewal et al, 2003). According to Ghanbarpour et al's (2022) earlier research, ubiquitous social media advertising has increased consumer demand and accelerated the buying process, particularly for low-involvement products. The Zoom interviewees confirmed this by stating that if they come across a product on social media and want to purchase it, they will quickly pay online, especially for inexpensive items. This attitude can be attributed to the concept of instant shopping, which combines social media platforms and online purchases (Song et al, 2021).

Further research has suggested that impulsive buying tendencies are common among young consumers and that both genders tend to be more affected by social media campaigns and advertising, particularly when it comes to unnecessary or frivolous products. (Febrilia & Warokka, 2021). Previous research indicates that it often associates certain products with consumers' personal identity or self-esteem, leading them to make emotional and impulsive purchases. This is consistent with other studies that have found that impulsive buyers are more likely to make sudden purchases when there are discounts or promotions advertised, the

businesses enjoy emotional online purchases (Salehan et al, 2013l; Ozen & Engizek, 2014). Aioa (2018), provides an explanation, Emotional intelligence (EI), on the correlation between impulsive purchases and social media promotion. Emotional intelligence (EI) theory suggests that emotions can affect self-regulation and the control of instantaneous aspirations, and Aioa's research has indicated that individuals with higher EI are less likely to engage in impulsive buying behavior. Previous studies have suggested that generally emotional intelligence varies between males and females, in which males process higher control in emotion than females (Lin and Chuang, 2005; Luo, Chen, Li, Nei and Wang, 2021). Overall, the research suggests that women are more susceptible to emotional buying behavior compared to men and that men tend to exhibit more rational control over their spending. These findings are consistent across both quantitative and qualitative studies.

## **G. Recommendations (Practical Implications)**

The study involves a composition of the reasons, factors, and impact of social media promotion on young consumers purchasing practices. Based on this analysis, the study will provide recommendations to college students, businesses, and the government. Moreover, it will also discuss social responsibility and ethical issues that companies should consider when promoting their products or services through social media.

## ***1. Recommendations for Hong Kong young consumers***

This current study not only provides insights into the advantages of social media advertising but also offers practical value to young consumers. The prominent findings of the study reveal that young Hong Kong consumers are accustomed to social media promotions, and therefore that purchasing intentions to the advertised item are relatively easy to provoke. Gender, in addition, is regarded as one of the variable impacts on rationality and indulgence in the decision-making process. As a result, the study suggests that students should be more mindful of their beliefs about social media promotion and online consumption patterns and should evaluate their digital buying activities.

This result, in line with multiple studies concludes that consumers tend to make impulsive online purchases without careful consideration (Forbes, 2013; Yogesh & Yesha, 2014; Paulienė & Sedneva, 2019). Which highlights that female students are particularly susceptible to products advertised through social media and underscores the importance of buyers differentiating between intentional and impulsive purchases to avoid overspending. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need to consider consumers' wants and prerequisites for products and to raise the time perspective in the product identification and consumption process to reduce impulsive purchases in the long run (Paulienė & Sedneva, 2019).

## ***2. Recommendations for companies about ethical issues in digital promotions***

The research offers valuable insights for potential business ventures seeking to attract young consumers' purchasing inclinations and online consumption patterns in the future. The results of the study provide valuable assistance to companies in comprehending young consumers' perspectives on social media promotion and in evaluating their current social media strategies, with the aim of refining their digital marketing approaches. Chen & Lu, (2018)'s findings suggest that consumers are readily influenced to place an online order if a social media campaign offers a sales promotion or discount. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of personalized marketing tactics, which involve tailoring marketing messages to specific individuals or groups based on their preferences, behaviors, and interests. By personalizing their marketing approaches, companies can increase their appeal to young consumers and create more engaging and effective campaigns to stimulate the buying desire of young consumers and optimize their profits.

Numerous prior studies such as those by Poyry et al. (2017), Sahin et al. (2019), and Yang (2020), have echoed the results of this study, firms creating customized and attractive product strategies, inviting experts related to the products to boost the expert effect, and investing more effort in product packaging and promoting product functions to increase sales. However, these promotions often solely focus on economic benefits and promoting online consumption, potentially leading to over-consumption among university students. As an operating firm, it is essential to not only generate favorable economic returns but also to promote offerings ethically

and adopt social responsibility management firmly (Chen & Lu, 2018; Kozinets et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020).

Whetten, Rands & Godfrey (2002) suggest that firms need to consider how their business decisions and actions will affect their stakeholders and determine whether they align with societal expectations and moral standards to fulfill their corporate responsibility in an ethical manner. Previous studies have established a direct correlation between a company's corporate social responsibility, ethical performance, and customer reactions. Positive attitudes towards a company's ethical behavior can lead to increased customer loyalty, particularly in e-commerce businesses (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Kurucz, Colbert, & Wheeler, 2008; Wei Zhao, 2018). This underscores the significance of building customer allegiance, which has been identified as a crucial factor in achieving business success (Ferrell, Harrison, Ferrell, & Hair, 2019; Galdeano, Ahmed, Fati, Rehan, & Ahmed, 2019; Nwachukwu, Vitell, Gilbert, & Barnes, 1997). Businesses must acknowledge the impact of their decisions and actions on stakeholders and evaluate whether their conduct aligns with societal expectations and ethical standards to fulfill their corporate social responsibility. Studies suggest that e-commerce firms' ethical performance and adherence to social responsibility significantly influence customer reactions, and positive customer attitudes towards these factors can contribute to building customer loyalty. The findings highlight that cultivating customer loyalty is crucial for attaining business success.

One of the main findings of the present study is that gender takes a certain stand in consumption decisions, the result states that compared to females, males tend to be more rational in their

consumption decisions. It is in line with other previous research that gender plays a significant role in online purchasing behavior. Men prioritize product values and trust expert opinions, while women focus more on the product's packaging and usefulness.

As a socially responsible enterprise, marketers should avoid excessive advertising and sensationalism to prevent emotional purchases by consumers (Lee & Shin, 2015). To encourage online purchases, companies should not only promote their products with attractive attributes and promotions but also ensure ethical advertising and promotion practices that accurately reflect the product's message to consumers. It is crucial for e-business firms to avoid making false statements about their products and to seek advice from experts to provide valuable insight on product quality and make necessary improvements (Spoljar et al., 2020). Behaving ethically in promotions can substantially enhance customer confidence and loyalty towards the company (Ferrell et al., 2019; Sharma & Lijuan, 2014). This, in turn, can result in authentic transaction experiences and high-quality offerings through social media promotion.

Ducoffe (1995) suggests that promoting social media advertising products to the most interested potential customers can increase the value of the offerings from a marketing standpoint. Recent studies have demonstrated that advanced technology, such as big data analysis, can help tailor advertisements to individual consumer preferences, making it easier for them to find and purchase promoted items online. This targeted advertising approach can help businesses showcase the positive aspects of their products to a wider audience, leading to higher sales. However, it is important for businesses to ensure the accuracy of their product descriptions and



information presented on social media promotions to prevent any potential distortion. By maintaining transparency and honesty in their dealings, businesses can enhance their brand's credibility and reputation, building a positive image in the eyes of customers and the public (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

### ***3. Recommendation for the Government***

Hong Kong has made efforts to protect consumer rights through various laws and regulations. According to the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (LegCo) in 2021, the only two general laws that protect consumers in Hong Kong from unfair trade practices are the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) and the Sale of Goods Ordinance (Cap. 26). The government has also established the Consumer Council, which provides information and assistance to consumers, as well as conducts research and advocacy on consumer issues. However, in Japan, where their laws and regulations cover a wide range of areas, including product safety, fair trade practices, refunds, returns, cancellations, and consumer dispute resolution, which requires businesses to provide clear and accurate product information, pricing, and terms and conditions of sale. Their law also allows consumers to cancel their orders within a certain period and requires businesses to refund the purchase price. Similarly, the South Korean government has also implemented e-consumer protection laws that regulate online transactions and prohibits businesses from engaging in unfair trade practices, such as false advertising and misleading claims. Their law also allows consumers to file complaints and seek compensation for damages. Overall, Hong Kong's consumer protection laws seem to be limited in scope and may not adequately protect

consumers in the online marketplace, including an absence of specific regulations and standardized policies, may place consumers at greater risk of unfair trade practices.

Therefore, there is room for improvement in Hong Kong's consumer protection laws. The government could consider implementing more comprehensive regulations that specifically address e-commerce transactions and social media promotions. The suggestions are as follows:

1. Strengthening online consumer protection: As mentioned earlier, there are no specific regulations in place for online marketing businesses in Hong Kong, and there are no standardized policies for refunds or returns for online shopping. The government could establish clearer guidelines and regulations to protect consumers who shop online.
2. Addressing misleading advertising: The government could do more to address misleading advertising, such as requiring advertisers to disclose when they are using paid endorsements or sponsored content.
3. Improving access to information: Consumers in Hong Kong may not always have access to the information they need to make informed decisions. The government could work to improve transparency in industries such as finance and healthcare and ensure that consumers have access to unbiased and accurate information.
4. Strengthening enforcement: While there are laws in place to protect consumers, enforcement can sometimes be weak. The government could allocate more resources to

enforcement agencies and increase penalties for businesses that violate consumer protection laws.

This could include requirements for businesses to provide clear and detailed information on pricing, product details, and terms and conditions of sale in a transparent manner. The government could also consider establishing standardized policies for goods refund or returns for online shopping, providing consumers with greater confidence in their online purchases.

Moreover, Hong Kong's consumer education and awareness programs could be strengthened to inform consumers of their rights and how to protect themselves from fraudulent activities in the online marketplace. This could include providing information on how to identify and report online scams, phishing, and other fraudulent activities. Overall, there is room for improvement in Hong Kong's consumer protection laws and policies to better safeguard consumer rights in the online marketplace.

## **H. Limitations and future research directions**

### ***1. Limited sample size***

Although the study shed light on how social media can enhance the consumption of young consumers, there are some limitations that need to be taken into consideration by in-depth research for further investigation.

One of the main concerns is the small size of the sample that was collected and analyzed through questionnaires and interviews. The study targeted the population of Hong Kong young consumers, which would have required a much larger sample size for data analysis.

Kline (2011) suggests that a sample size of at least 200 is required for structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, which is commonly used in marketing research. Similarly, Hair et al. (2014) recommends that a minimum sample size of 200 is needed for meaningful analyses with inferential statistics. Furthermore, the minimum sample size required with a common acceptable marginal error of 5%, a 90% confidence level, and a 50% response distribution is 268. However, due to the time limitation, the study had to rely on a convenience sample, which may have affected the accuracy and representativeness of the sample. Consequently, the effect size and statistical power of the results may have been lower than expected, and the sample may not fully represent the target population of Hong Kong young consumers. To address this limitation, future research should use a random sampling method to obtain a more representative sample of the population. Despite these limitations, the statistical methods applied in the study were appropriate, and the study still provides valuable insights into the topic.

## ***2. Self-reporting***

In addition to the limitations mentioned earlier, another concern in this study is the reliability of the self-report data collected through questionnaires and interviews. As personal judgments and

subjective opinions are involved in self-reporting, respondents and interviewees may express their thoughts in a less-than-truthful manner, which can lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding. However, self-reporting is a common practice in behavioral science projects (Kraut et al., 2004). Despite this concern, the individual scales used in the study and the errors incurred have been deemed acceptable by previous studies (Faber & O'Guinn, 1992; Rosen et al., 2013; Young, 1998), as noted by Moore and Kirkland (2007).

### ***3. Improvements in the Future Study***

According to the findings of this study, social media advertising modes have a strong influence on university students, particularly through online advertising that offers a more convenient selection process before making purchases (Boerman et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017). These results suggest that there is a need for further research to investigate the relationship between online personalization and buying behavior. Such research can provide valuable insights into how online personalization can affect consumer behavior and inform the development of effective marketing strategies for businesses targeting university students.

As previously noted, it is essential for companies to go beyond their own interests and profit maximization when designing and promoting their products on social media. Instead, they should prioritize ethical and socially responsible practices. This is particularly important given that customer loyalty is a critical factor in achieving corporate success, as demonstrated by previous research (Ferrell et al., 2019; Galdeano et al., 2019; Nwachukwu et al., 1997). Future studies

should concentrate on exploring the connection between customers' expectations of business ethics and corporate social responsibility and how these factors influence brand attitude. This would offer valuable insights into how companies can cultivate trust, loyalty, and robust customer relationships through social media promotion. Additionally, investigating moral views in this context would be advantageous.

## **I. Conclusion**

The study conducted on the consumption behavior of the younger generation has empirically supported the idea that social media promotion has a positive impact on their consumption patterns. The study also identified the factors that make social media advertising effective in influencing the consumption behavior of young adults. Furthermore, the study discovered that gender has a significant impact on e-shopper decision-making. The study recommends viable solutions for young consumers to avoid irrational or emotional online purchasing and also advocates for concrete values to be promoted by governments and businesses.

This research is anticipated to make a significant contribution to the current body of research on social media promotion and online purchasing patterns, and also establish a basis for future research into business ethics and corporate social responsibility. Additionally, future studies could increase the sample size to obtain more precise outcomes. Upcoming research should examine personal characteristics and consumption patterns, as well as changes in consumer

behavior before and after the Covid outbreak. This would provide more insights into the effectiveness of social media in personalization.

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Yaakop, A., & Hemsley-Brown, J. (2013). Hedonic pleasure and social image: the effectiveness of Internet Advertising. Asian Social Science, 9(1), 179.

## **Appendix A: Information Sheet**

### **Information Sheet**

#### **< Exploring the impact and causes of digital marketing (social media) on purchasing behaviours of Hong Kong young adults>**

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr CHENG Wai Lun Eddie and conducted by LAW Chung Hang, a student of the Department of Social Sciences in The Education University of Hong Kong.

#### **Purpose of the research**

This study is dedicated to investigating Hong Kong young adults' experiences of consumer behaviour and social media, inquiring into the impact of digital marketing (social media) on young adults' consumer decision process and analyzing post-purchase behaviour.

#### **The Methodology**

This study will invite around 150 participants, young adults in Hong Kong aged 18-25 years old, who live in Hong Kong and also have been habitual using social media for more than 1 year to meet the requirements to participate in this study. All data will be collected in February of 2023.

From the perspective of young adults, this study will collect the data from an online survey (5-7 minutes short questionnaire). and are welcome to take part in a 10-minute follow-up interview, which can be arranged at a flexible time and place. The interviews will be audio-recorded after obtaining the consent of the participants. This study will collect the data from participants' online questionnaires for group interview discussion and analysis.

## **The potential risk of the research**

Your participation is purely voluntary. You have the full right to decide to withdraw from this study at any time, and you will not cause any adverse results as a result of this. All information about you will be kept confidential, and the codes of all information will only be known to researchers. The results of this study will be presented through conferences and workshops. This research will not pose any potential risks.

Permission will be obtained in advance from you to audio-record the interview and collected responses from the questionnaire. All the entered data will be stored in passwords protected folders and computers. All information related to you will remain confidential and will be identifiable by code known only to the researcher. The abstract of academic articles based on this research will be emailed to you to provide detailed information. After the project has been assessed by the supervisor, all data will be deleted.

Should you wish to obtain more information about this study, please contact LAW Chung Hang at the telephone number                      or their project supervisor Dr CHENG Wai Lun Eddie by email:

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at [hrec@eduhk.hk](mailto:hrec@eduhk.hk) or by mail to the Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research.

LAW Chung Hang  
Principle Investigator

## **Appendix B: Information Sheet**

### **Consent to participate in research**

**< Exploring the impact and causes of digital marketing (social media) on purchasing behaviours of Hong Kong young adults >**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr CHENG Wai Lun Eddie and conducted by LAW Chung Hang, who is a student of Department of Social Sciences in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that the material obtained from this study may be used for future research and scholarly publication. However, I have the right to protect my privacy, and my personal information will not be disclosed. The researcher has fully explained the relevant steps of the attached materials to me. I understand the risks that may arise. I voluntarily participate in this study.

The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary. I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.



Name of Participant

---

Signature of participant

---

Date

---

## Appendix C: Questionnaire questions

### Personal information 基本個人資料

1. Are you a Hong Kong resident?

你是否在香港居住或生活的居民?

☐ Yes 是

☐ No 否

2. Gender

性別

☐ Male 男

☐ Female 女

3. Your age: 年齡

☐ Younger than 18 years old 18 歲以下 ☐ 18

☐ 19

☐ 20

☐ 21

☐ 22

☐ 23

☐ 24

☐ 25

## Section 1: What is the relationship between social media promotion and the consumption behavior of Hong Kong young adults?

4. Are you a user of any of the social media platforms listed below? (you can choose more than 1 option?)

您曾使用過以下社交媒體嗎？（可以選擇多於 1 個選項）

☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐ Youtube ☐ Instagram

☐ LinkedIn ☐ Google ☐ TikTok ☐ Pinterest

☐ Other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

5. In a week, what is the approximate duration of time you spend using social media?

您在上面選擇的社交媒體上花費了多少時間？

☐ < 1 hour ☐ 1-2 hour(s) ☐ 3-4 hours

☐ 5-6 hours

☐ 7-8 hours ☐ 9-10 hours ☐ more than 10 hours

6. On a scale of 1-5, how often do you see advertisements on social media while browsing the sites? 在上題選擇的社交媒體網站上是否注意到以下社交媒體內容

*Please read the statement below and select the option that best describes you on a scale of 1-5* 請閱讀以下各題的陳述，並在 1-5 分中選擇最能描述您的選項

*1 = not often seen - 5 = often seen*

<b>Social media patterns</b>	
Social media advertising	1 2 3 4 5
Promotion by Key Opinion Leader (KOL)	1 2 3 4 5
Direct Promotion by the brand	1 2 3 4 5
other: _____	1 2 3 4 5

7. Watching commercial promotion(s) on social media is something I enjoy

我喜歡在社交媒體上觀看商業宣傳活動

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

8. After viewing promotional material on social media, I conduct research to gather more information.

社交媒體促銷促使我尋找促銷商品的更多詳細信息

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

10. Seeing promotional content on social media platforms can positively influence my purchasing intent for the products or services being advertised 社交媒體促銷可以增強我購買在社交媒體上看到的商品的意願

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

11. Seeing promotional materials on social media platforms can boost my motivation to buy the products or services being advertised 社交媒體推廣觸發我的消費行為

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

12. Promotions on social media platforms are able to convey their message to consumers clearly and effectively 社交媒體推廣加強與消費者的良好溝通

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

13. Social media promotion drawn my attention 社交媒體推廣能吸引我的注意力

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

14. I tend to seek out additional details about products or services that promoted on social media platforms 觀看社交媒體宣傳後，我會尋找更多詳細相關物品的信息

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

15. Promotions on social media platforms can evoke a sense of desire with me to possess the products or services being advertised 社交媒體推廣觸發了我擁有推廣物品的慾望

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

16. After buying items that were advertised on social media, I often feel a sense of regret about the purchase 我總是後悔買了在社交媒體上宣傳的商品

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

**Section 2. examine the effectiveness of social media promotion on triggering young adults to consume, and how does it drive them to consume**

17. Social media is the most significant factor that triggers me to consume

社交媒體是促使我消費的最大因素

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

18. The social media platform I choose to use has an impact on my purchasing behavior

社交媒體影響我的消費行為

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

19. Social media prompts me to buy product 社交媒體鼓勵我消費

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

20. I prefer to collect target product information through social media before purchasing

我會在購買前通過社交媒體收集產品信息

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

21. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my friends to get their opinions and advice 消費前會徵求朋友意見

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

22. Before consuming anything, I typically consult with my family members to get their opinions and advice 消費前會徵求家人意見

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

23. Overall I am a thoughtful consumer who considers all factors before making any purchases 在購買之前我已經做了深思熟慮(包括需求和渴望)的考慮

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

24. I am addicted to indulgent or thoughtless shopping 我沉迷於放縱或輕率的購物

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly



25. My purchasing decisions are based on reason and rationality rather than emotion or impulse 我的購買決定是基於理性和理性，而不是情感或衝動

☐ Agree Strongly   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Disagree Strongly

There will be a follow-up interview session. If you are interested in attending the conference, please leave

Your phone number is as follows:

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## Appendix D: Interview Questions

- 1 Do you know/notice ads? Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
- 2 When making a purchase, who do you typically seek advice from - family members, friends, or Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)? What makes you prefer one type of advisor over the others?
- 3 Do you believe that people often regret purchasing items recommended by advertisements?
- 4 Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
- 5 Do you consider your consumption choices to be frivolous or impulsive?
- 6 Do you agree with the idea that emotions play a significant role in buying decisions?
- 7 What type of social media advertisements do you find appealing? Do you think social media marketing, such as discounts, can entice you to make a purchase?
- 8 When buying a product, what is the most important factor for you to consider?

## Appendix E: Interview Summary

9. Do you know/notice ads? Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
- I am aware that some of them are personalized based on my browsing history, preferences, and online behavior.
  - I think this type of digital marketing is effective and convenient, because it shows me products or services that I might be interested in or need.
  - I also like to do my own research and compare different options before buying something.
10. When making a purchase, who do you typically seek advice from - family members, friends, or Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)? What makes you prefer one type of advisor over the others?
- When making a purchase, I usually seek advice from friends who have similar tastes and preferences as me.
  - I trust their opinions and recommendations more than family members or KOLs, because they know me better and they are not biased by any commercial interests.
  - I also like to compare different options and reviews before making a final decision, like family member and friends
11. Do you believe that people often regret purchasing items recommended by advertisements?
- Advertisements can provide information and suggestions, but they cannot force people to buy something they don't want or need.
  - There might be some cases where people buy something impulsively or emotionally because of an advertisement
12. Can you describe your awareness and perception of personalized advertisements on your social media? How do you feel about this type of digital marketing and to what extent do personalized ads influence your purchase decisions?
- I also feel a bit concerned about my privacy and data security, because I don't know how the advertisers collect and use my personal information.
  - Personalized ads do influence my purchase decisions to some extent, but not always. Sometimes I find them useful and relevant, but other times I find them annoying and intrusive.

13. Do you consider your consumption choices to be frivolous or impulsive?

- I try to be careful and responsible with my money and spending habits. I usually plan ahead and budget for my expenses and savings.
- I only buy things that I need or really want, and I avoid wasting money on unnecessary or low-quality items. I also compare prices and quality before making a purchase,
- I look for discounts and deals whenever possible. I think being a smart and conscious consumer is important for my financial well-being and happiness.

14. Do you agree with the idea that emotions play a significant role in buying decisions?

- For example, I bought a pair of shoes online that I didn't really need or like, just because they were on sale and looked nice in the picture.
- I regretted it later when I received them and realized they didn't fit me well and were not comfortable.

15. What type of social media advertisements do you find appealing? Do you think social media marketing, such as discounts, can entice you to make a purchase?

- I find social media advertisements that are relevant, informative, and creative appealing.
- I like ads that show me products or services that match my interests and needs, that provide useful and accurate information about their features and benefits, and that catch my attention with catchy slogans, images, or videos.
- I think social media marketing, such as discounts, can entice me to make a purchase, but only if I am already interested in the product or service and if the discount is significant and genuine.
- I don't like ads that are misleading, annoying, or intrusive.

16. When buying a product, what is the most important factor for you to consider?

- The most important factor for me to consider is the quality. I want to buy products that are durable, reliable, and functional. I don't mind paying a bit more for a high-quality product that will last longer and perform better than a cheap and low-quality one.
- I think quality is more important than quantity or appearance when it comes to buying products.
- I also look for products that have good reviews and ratings from other customers who have used them before.