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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE PAINTING INDUSTRY

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Purpose of the article: In the digital world, the power of social networks is becoming increasingly evident in mass communication. Companies that capitalize on the advantages of this phenomenon are making their presence felt on social media platforms through company and brand pages. Hence, the purpose of the research is to investigate how social media, and specifically related platforms, affect paint industry customer behavior and to examine how paint companies use these platforms to adapt to changing market conditions.

Methodology: In order to provide a thorough knowledge of the phenomenon, the present research uses exploratory and qualitative approaches for the theoretical analysis of the influence of social networks on customer behavior in the painting industry.

Originality encompasses a focused examination of how social media affects painting industry customer behavior, emphasizing the ways in which platforms like Instagram can affect the choices consumers undertake and the advertising tactics used by businesses in this industry.

Conclusions: Social media consumers increasingly follow more and more brand accounts, getting a fast flow of information, allowing them to express their ideas more effectively, research brands and interact with them.

Key words: Social media, consumer behavior, paint manufacturing industry, digital management marketing.

Introduction

To fully understand the dynamics of this expanding market and its influence on customer behavior in the painting industry, it is imperative to analyze the ways in which social media affects painting businesses globally. As technology develops quickly and customers become more proficient with it, it's critical to monitor how these shifts impact consumer behavior and digital marketing tactics.

Increased interaction on social networks and smart exploitation of the data collected can lead to more effective marketing campaigns that boost both brand recognition and customer loyalty. In addition, social networks offer the opportunity to monitor customer feedback in real time and respond quickly to customer concerns, which is key to maintaining a positive image and adapting quickly to market demands and costumer behavior (SSRN, 2022).

An important trend in social network management is the use of artificial intelligence and automation to personalize the user experience. These technologies enable companies to create effectively targeted content and campaigns that resonate with the specific interests and behavior of different audience segments. On the other hand, excessive personalization or improper use of data can become an anti-trend, leading to decreased customer trust and engagement.

Results and discussions

Social media management, also called digital management or e-management, involves the use of social media platforms to gestion websites, increase sales, and build branded companies. This involves users sharing information on these networks (Hayes, 2023).

In addition to targeting existing customers, SMM provides managers with specialized information that helps them monitor the success of their market efforts and identify opportunities. Interactive digital

channels have caused social media to surpass television and radio in the 20 years from 2004 to 2024, with MySpace being the first social networking site to have one million users. It has reached a level beyond the scope of inquiry. As of the beginning of 2023, there are 4.76 billion social media users worldwide, in 2024 the number of users reached 5.22 billion people, see figure 1, which is more than 60% of the world's population.

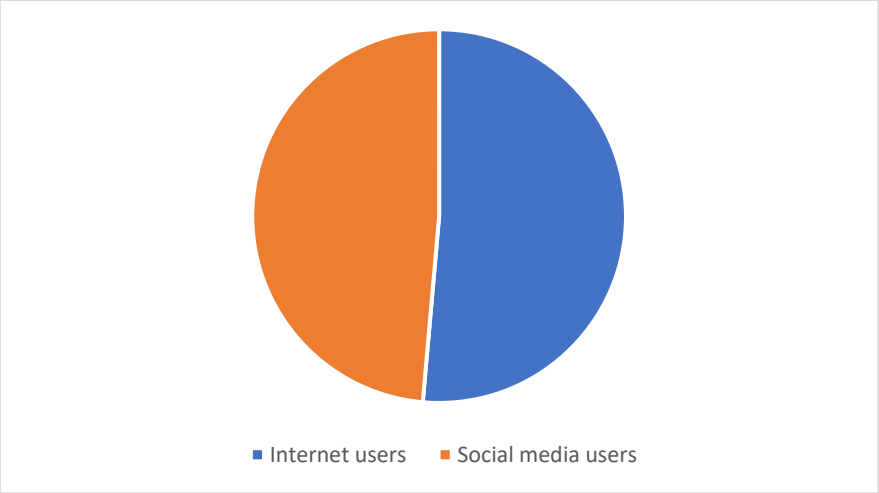


Fig.1 Worldwide digital population 2024
Souce: Statista, 2024

The figure above highlights the proportion of internet users and social network users, highlighting the significant impact of social platforms on consumer behavior, which become the main channels of influence and decision making in the purchasing process.

The social media sites with the highest number of active users (in millions) worldwide in 2024 are displayed in the chart below. The popularity of several social networks and their applicability in the current digital environment are highlighted by this comparison. The platforms that are part of the analysis give insight into the most powerful online communication channels by reflecting user preferences and worldwide trends.

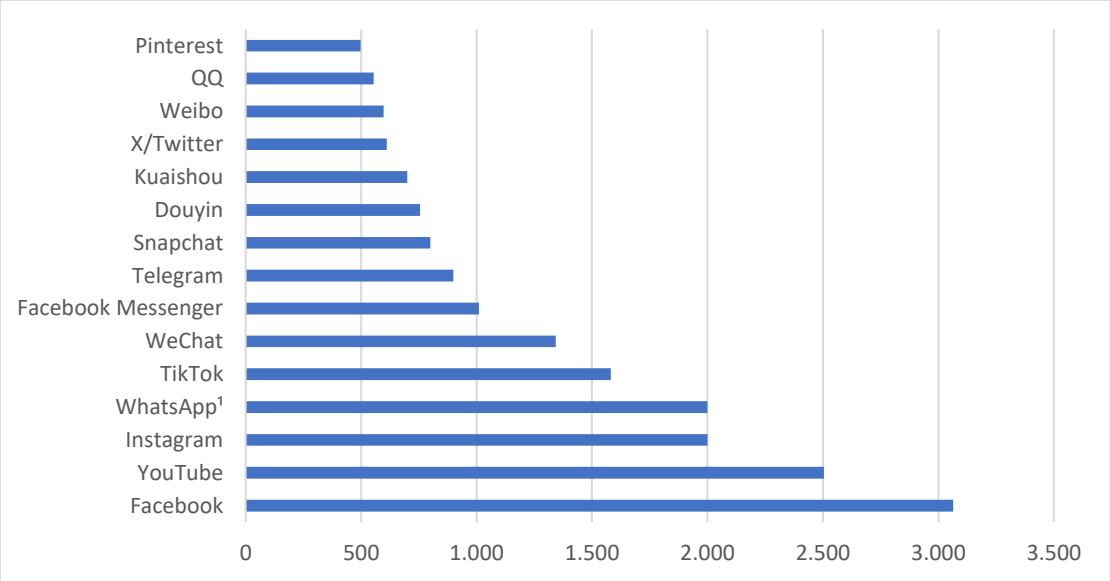


Fig 2. Most used social networks 2024, by number of users
Souce: Statista, 2024

In 2024 (Statista, 2024), Facebook will have about 3 billion users, followed by Instagram with 2.5 billion, TikTok with 2 billion, Facebook Messenger with 1.5 billion, and Snapchat with 1 billion, according to Figure 2. Facebook continues to hold the top spot as the most widely used platform worldwide.

The prevalence of influencer content on social media platforms, which impact consumer buying behavior by over 80%, prompts marketers in diverse industries to shift their focus from being the only tool to providing more comprehensive information.

The strength of SMM lies in its ability to use the power of social media in three fundamental areas: connection, interaction, and customer data.

Painting business can now connect with customers in unprecedented ways through social media, as well as utilize various channels to reach audiences, such as YouTube and Facebook.

Painting businesses use social media to generate feedback through eWOM (*consumer-generated, consumption-related communication that employs digital tools and is directed primarily to other consumers*) recommendations among existing and potential customers, because of the dynamic nature of interactions. The measurable nature of eWOM interactions makes them an effective means of driving consumer decision making, in addition to the positive contagion effect.

Having a strong social media marketing plan can also help drive marketing results by collecting customer data. This is a valuable resource. Overwhelmed by the 3Vs (volume, variety, velocity) of big data, SMM tools can go beyond just extracting customer data to converting that money into actionable market analysis or crowdsourcing the data.

Moderncommunication strategies rely heavily on social media advertising to reach and appeal to audiences, providing businesses with many opportunities to promote their offerings. Every strategy is designed to capitalize on the features and potential of several social media platforms, each with its own audience demographics and methods of interaction. Businesses need to be knowledgeable about and use these tactics in order to establish a strong online presence and encourage meaningful interaction with the target audience (Brafton, 2022).

One of the most important components of social media management is content. This entails creating worthwhile and pertinent material that is disseminated on social media. This information can be in the form of interactive posts, podcast episodes, videos, infographics, and articles, among other formats. Getting the audience's attention, offering them useful information, entertaining them, and resolving a problem that is pertinent to the target audience are the objectives of content marketing. Painting brands seek to increase awareness and foster loyalty through narrative, visually striking content, and emotionally stirring images.

Influencer marketing is a popular tactic that involves using influencers with significant social media following to promote products and services. The engagement of influencers can be used by brands to connect with their audiences and capitalize on their credibility and authority within a particular target audience. This form of marketing is highly effective in reaching a target audience, promoting credibility, and generating brand advertising. Creating authentic and relatable content often requires partnerships, sponsorships, and endorsements.

Figure 3 shows the evolution of the average daily time spent on social networks by global internet users between 2012 and 2024, measured in minutes.

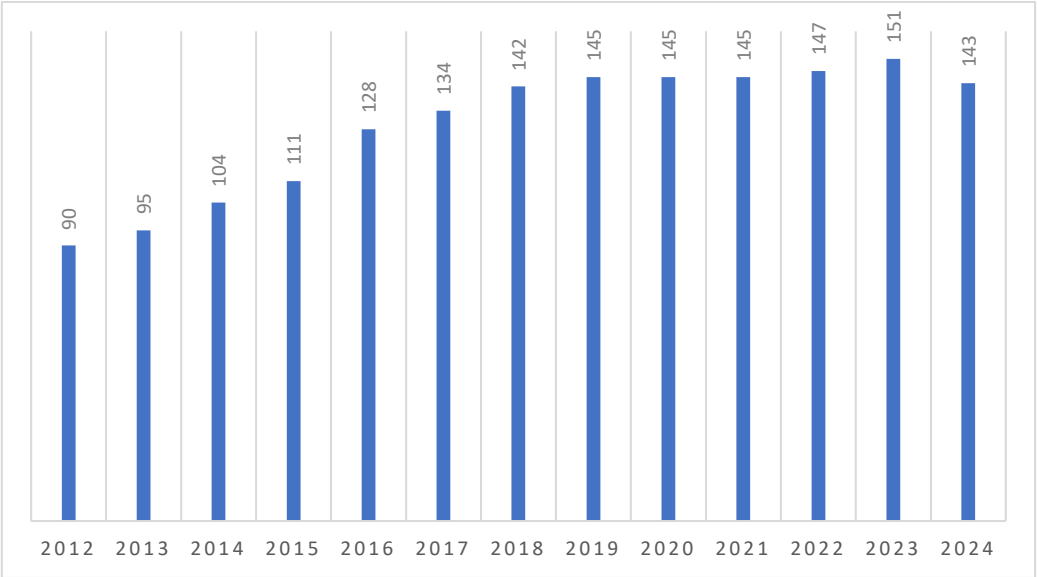


Fig. 3. Average daily time spent on social media worldwide 2012-2024
Souce: Statista, 2024

Over the last five years, time spent on social media has ranged between 145 and 151 minutes per day, peaking at 151 minutes in 2023, followed by a drop to 143 minutes in 2024 (Statista, 2024). This trend highlights the importance of effective social media marketing strategies that emphasize active user engagement. Replying to comments, starting conversations, organizing contests and promoting user-generated content are just some of the way's painting brands can create an engaged and loyal community. By creating an atmosphere of connection and belonging, companies can build chemistry with their audience and support long-term loyalty.

Painting businesses can use analytical tools to track the performance of their social media campaigns. Metrics such as the engagement rate, reach, impressions, click-through rate, and conversion rate provide valuable insights. By reviewing these metrics, companies can gain insight into audience behavior and content optimization strategies, while also improving their performance.

A company's marketing strategy requires a constant improvement in user experience across all social media channels. This involves enhancing the company's profile, maintaining a consistent brand message, incorporating interactivity, and creating content that resonates with the audience's preferences. A smooth and pleasant user experience is the driving force behind engagement, sharing, and conversion.

The process of social media monitoring involves analyzing conversations, mentions, and debated topics about the brand on different social networking sites. By using monitoring tools, businesses can check brand reputation, find emerging trends, and quickly address customer concerns and feedback. This approach enabled us to check a brand's reputation and understand customer feedback. Data on audience growth on social media platforms Figure 4 underlines the importance of actively monitoring brand-related discussions and mentions. By analyzing conversations on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, which have the highest growth rates, companies can identify emerging trends and preferences of their target audience.

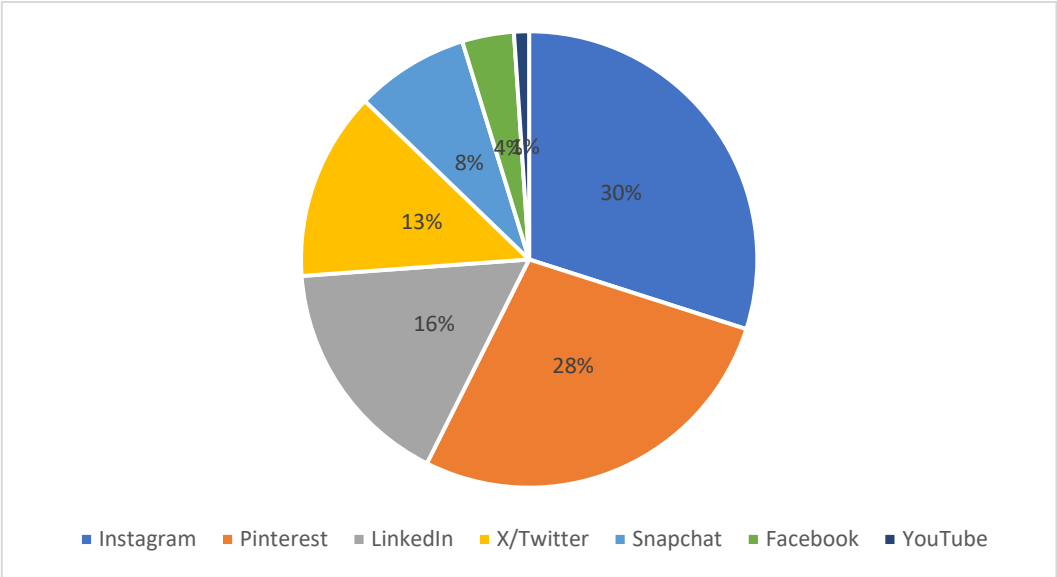


Fig. 4. Global year-on-year social media audience growth 2024
Source: Statista, 2024

For paint manufacturers, this monitoring process provides a valuable opportunity to check brand reputation and respond quickly to customer concerns or questions. Visual platforms, where users frequently share interior design projects and creative ideas, can serve as essential sources to understand market needs and create strategies tailored to consumer requirements. The local marketing approach focuses on a particular geographic area or community. This involves adapting content, promotions, and campaigns to the cultural differences and preferences of the various regions. Localized marketing promotes a sense of community and personal connections among a company's target audience.

By integrating these diverse social media strategies, painting businesses can create impactful campaigns, establish a strong online presence, and build meaningful connections with their audiences. Employing a strategic mix of these approaches that aligns with brand goals, audience preferences, and platform nuances is critical to marketing success.

Social media marketing offers a range of dynamic strategies that can be tailored to engage the target audience, promote brands, and advance business objectives. Successful implementation involves a strategic combination of these strategies to meet brand goals, audience preferences, and digital trends.

In a dynamic industry such as interior paints, consumer access to information plays a key role in the decision-making process. In the digital age, multiple sources of information, influence consumer preferences and choices. In this context, analyzing the sources from which the public learns about paint information provides important insights into consumer behavior and the relevance of digital platforms for effective communication.

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of these sources of information, based on a sample of 1008 respondents, and highlights the weight that different channels play in guiding purchasing decisions on painting brand Caparol.

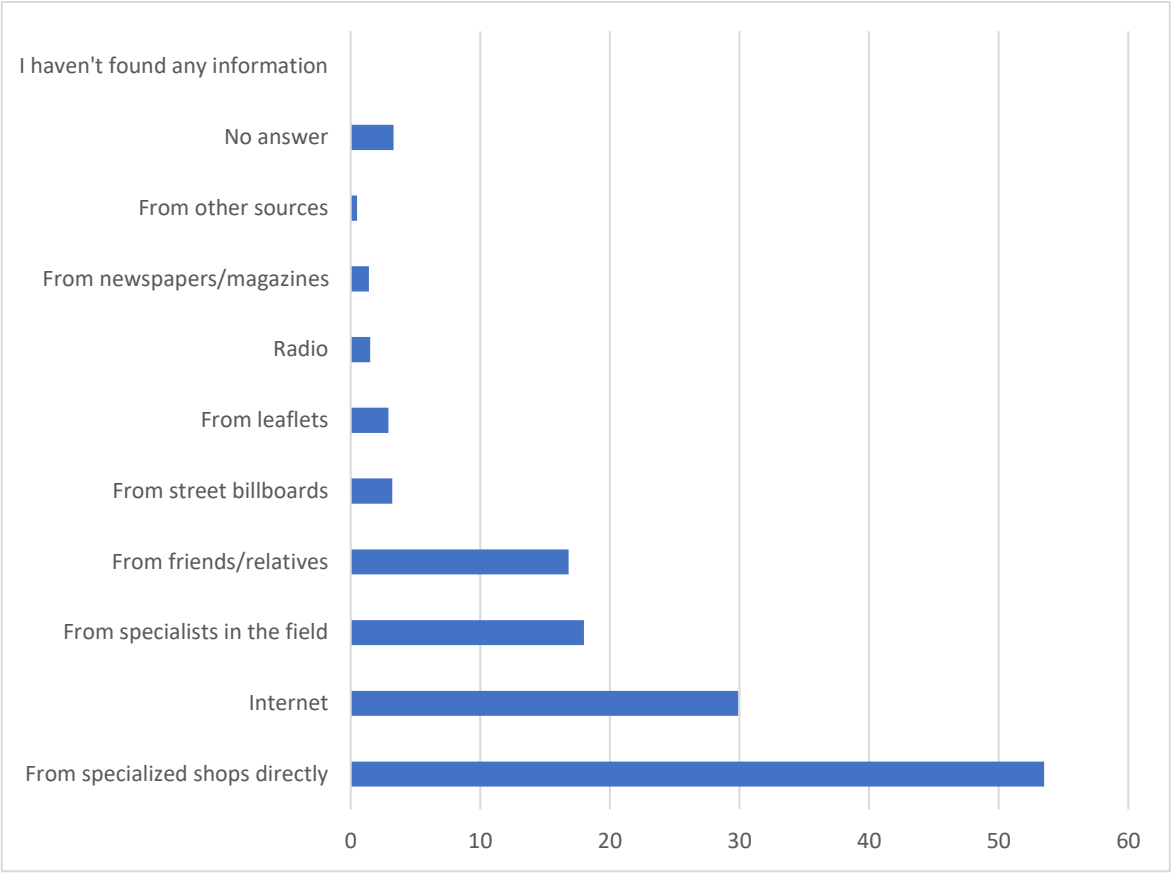


Fig 5. From which sources do you learn about interior paints? %, N=1008
Source: Elaborated by the author

The overwhelming majority of respondents (more than half) obtain their information on interior paints directly from specialized shops (53.5%). Consumers prefer to see and touch products, consult samples and get advice from store staff. In-store consultants have a significant influence on the purchase decision, emphasizing the importance of training and detailed knowledge of Caparol products.

Almost a third of respondents use the internet to get information. Caparol needs to provide an informative, easy to navigate website with up-to-date product information, guides and inspiration. Investment in SEO and social media presence can increase visibility and attract potential customers. Influence of experts and personal recommendations. From specialists in the field: 18.0%, From friends/relatives: 16.8%. Advice from professionals and trusted people has a strong impact on consumers. Caparol can benefit through partnerships with craftsmen, interior designers and referral programs between customers.

Traditional advertising channels such as TV (6.3%), billboards (3.2%), leaflets (2.9%), radio (1.5%), and newspapers/magazines (1.4%) demonstrate low effectiveness. This indicates that consumers are less influenced by these mediums, highlighting a shift in preferences towards more engaging or digital approaches.

Figure 6 shows the presence of the Caparol brand on the main social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, while it is absent on Twitter. This strategic decision suggests that the brand prioritizes visual and interactive platforms, which is ideal for promoting its products, such as paints, through engaging visual content, video tutorials or design ideas.

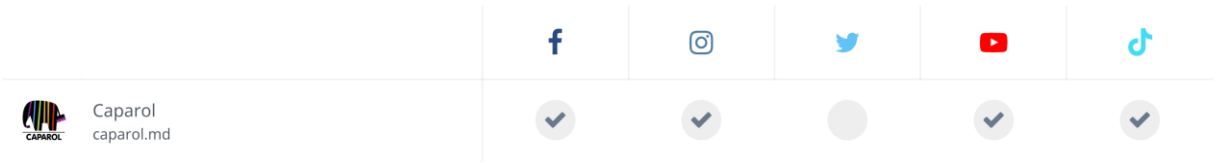


Fig. 6. Caparol brand presence on social media platforms
Source : Rival IQ, 2024
https://app.rivaliq.com/companies

Investment can be directed towards higher-impact channels such as online platforms and points of sale, which offer more direct engagement with consumers. Leveraging data-driven strategies and personalized marketing within these channels can further enhance their effectiveness and drive better results.

In the context of what has been analyzed in this article, Caparol's investment in online channels and visual social media is in line with current trends in social media management. The platforms chosen, such as Instagram and TikTok (Sprout Social, 2024), allow for better connection with the target audience through creative content, while YouTube can be used for detailed tutorials and DIY projects, which are high-impact for consumers interested in interior design and renovations.

Conclusions

Social media offers painting companies a multitude of purposes, from building brand awareness and engagement to generating leads and sales, conducting market research and building thought leadership. Through the effective use of social media, companies can reach and engage with customers in new and innovative ways, influencing consumer behavior and remaining competitive in today's digital landscape.

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn, have the potential to significantly influence consumer behavior, especially in the paint sector. They provide opportunities for creating engaging content, using relevant hashtags, collaborating with influencers, paid advertising and direct interaction with customers, which can shape consumer perceptions and inspire them to choose certain products or solutions for renovations and interior design.

In particular, paint companies can leverage visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to highlight new colors, DIY projects or creative demonstrations. YouTube can also be used for in-depth tutorials and educational videos to support consumers in their decision-making process. Choosing the right channel should consider business objectives, target audience preferences and online behavior.

At the same time, the costs and effectiveness of each platform should be evaluated and testing before a significant investment is essential. Platforms offering free trials or demonstrations allow companies to explore the interface, tools and integration possibilities. By taking a strategic and tailored approach to consumer behavior, paint companies can influence purchasing decisions, increasing customer engagement and loyalty.

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