Social media are “internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlen 2010, p.61). Web 2.0 and social media:

- As social networks of consumer knowledge, affect consumer behaviour (De Valck et al. 2009).
- Complicate the buying behaviour process described in Inputs – Processing-Response models (Constantinides and Fountain 2008).
- Gradually replacing commercial sources of information and evidence limited replacement of reference groups (Jepsen 2006).
- Seen that are changing dramatically (a) the traditional mass media communications, and (b) the ways consumers communicate and exchange information with each other.

Mass media and the interpersonal communications are so far considered as the cornerstones of information collection, a function of significant importance in the consumer decision making process.

The Cognitive approach, as the dominant theory on the study of consumer behaviour (Foxall 1990; Marsden and Littler 1998) focuses on “consumers’ information processing mechanism, mental process, storage, retrieval and use of marketing information in the decision making process” (Marsden and Littler 1998, p.6). As a result of all the above:

- Do social media change the ways consumers’ are making decisions?
- Do social media, due to their impact, substantiate a redefinition of the structure and the constructs involved in the decision making process, as depicted in comprehensive consumer behaviour models?

Although there is a plethora of studies on social media, most of them focus on a specific, at a time, type of social medium, employing a micro, rather than a macro approach.

Aim & Objectives

**Aim:**

To develop a comprehensive framework / model describing the impact of social media on the purchase decision making process.

**Objectives:**

1. To investigate the relationship, and describe its nature, between social media and each of the stages described in comprehensive consumer behaviour decision making models.
2. To examine whether the use of social media transforms, both in context and in content, the traditional role of the “information search” construct as depicted in comprehensive consumer behaviour models.
3. To describe the impact of social media in terms of use and influence during each of the stages in the travel planning process.

**References**


