

## **Research Question**

How has advertising benefited from social media?

## **Historical Discourses**

I am taking the position of social constructionism. Social constructionism is the idea that people and our collective understandings are the ones to shape reality. When it comes to technology, this means that humans are the ones to shape technology to fit our needs. The position of social constructionism impacts how I see my question because I have to look at it through the lens that humans have formed social media and advertising to react in this way. This essentially means that I am looking more into the way society has shaped social media to advertise more effectively. It is also important to remember that technological determinism is a viewpoint to consider, and it is very possible that technology has determined the evolution of advertising.

## **Method**

One of the methods to study this question could be content analysis. Content analysis is described by the book as “a method of systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting textual or visual data online, usually with the intent of quantifying patterns for comparison or to draw inferences across time.” This method is great for looking at actual statistics and comparing them, which is exactly what needs to be looked into when considering how advertising has benefited after the introduction of social media.

The genre of social media I would use is social networking sites. Social networking sites are the genre of social media that are designed to interact more with friends and family. These sites include a number of different ways to interact with others, and mostly focus on sharing aspects about our life. They also can be useful for information sharing, but that is not necessarily required. Sites I could use that fit this genre include Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (Twitter).

The sample of this question really only needs to be narrowed down to people who use social media. The question is about how advertising has benefited, and the best way to go about answering that is looking at how the average person interacts with social media. Narrowing down the sample too much may lead us to draw conclusions that cannot be said across the board. For example, if we narrow it down to a very small sample and they buy products from advertisements all the time, it may lead us to assume the average person does the same, which may not be the case.

Some affordances of social media that must be considered include shareability and the endless stream of content. Shareability is about how easy it is to share something and have your friends and family see it, and the endless stream of content is about the ability to scroll on social media for ages and still find things to entertain you. Shareability is relevant to advertising because anyone can share advertisements and have those around them see the ads, meaning that more people are exposed to the product and may purchase it. The endless stream of content is relevant because the fact that people are able to scroll and be entertained endlessly means that they will see many advertisements through their scrolling, which means they are exposed to more ads to purchase from or share.

The kind of data that would be the most useful to measure is pay-per-click. Pay-per-click is a measure of how often someone buys something after clicking on an advertisement. This is the most useful because being able to compare the rate at which someone bought something now through social media versus the rate at which someone bought something from television commercials 20 years ago would help answer the question of how much social media has benefited advertising.

### **Privacy Concerns**

As with anything relating to social media, there are many issues of privacy that are important to consider. The idea of looking at people's spending habits and interactions with advertisements is inherently invading the privacy of these people. While looking at it on a broad

scale and using data to understand the benefits of social media to advertising, I feel that looking into individual people and their lives can be unethical, especially when using the findings to target advertisements at these people.