UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, ADVERTISING ON DIGITAL SOCIAL MEDIA AND CINEMA: Opinions of Communication Sciences Students at a Mexican Public University Regarding their Film Consumption Preferences

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Social media advertising *Film promotion* *Audience perception* *Digital marketing* *Persuasive communication* *College students* *Public university*	*It´s analyzed the influence of social media advertising on audience perception and decision-making regarding film consumption. Through a survey-based methodology, data was collected from young adults to assess the persuasive impact of such advertisements. The results reveal that platforms like Instagram and TikTok are dominant channels for movie promotions. Also is highlighted the extent to which digital advertising influences movie selection. These findings contribute to the understanding of contemporary advertising strategies and provide insights into optimizing promotional efforts in the digital era. The study also suggests potential applications in academic curricula and professional training programs.*

1. Introduction

Both teaching and learning processes, and consequently the strategic curriculum design of content for current study plans in Mexican higher education institutions, specifically for students in the field of communication, must remain current each semester and be based on the reality of the professional field and prevailing socio-cultural trends. The practice of global advertising has been digitised, and international companies, including film production and marketing companies, select and structure their most profitable population groups in order to focus their promotional efforts with the intention of increasing the likelihood that their films will be consumed by as many potential users as possible, among whom university students are a particularly attractive and interesting *target group*.

This research identifies the opinions of communication science students at a Mexican public university on whether the advertising messages that international production companies disseminate on social media, which are aimed at an audience aged between 17 and 24, exert any kind of influence on the decision-making process of this population to consume films in the city's cinemas or, on the contrary, whether these digital media are overvalued as commercial instruments of persuasion or whether their impact is rather part of a comprehensive holistic media strategy.

In this logic, the internalisation of academic knowledge and experiences imparted via the content of university courses in the field of business and the students themselves tend to highlight that digital advertising investment should be directed almost solely and exclusively towards social media if the aim is to impact young people of university age.

Consequently, the results and conclusions of this research will also enrich the content of subjects related to the topic, as it provides first-hand information linked to advertising in digital media for the case under study, which, according to Quijandría (2020, p. 18), has been extensively addressed by international researchers to date due to "... the fact that it allows brands to be closer to their audiences, thereby improving their communication possibilities," despite the fact that until 2019, according to the author's citation from the White Paper "... Branded Content and Native Advertising by Interactive Advertising Bureau Spain reveals that, although 36% of Internet users have considered online advertising to be intrusive and annoying, 17% have stated that they consider it useful in deciding whether to purchase a product or brand," which shows, on the one hand, that users notice it despite their dislike and eventually stop to look at it if something catches their attention and/or it is also a point of reference in their daily consumption processes.

Global social networks are highly stratified according to the population groups that are of specific or multi-level interest to advertisers from both a marketing strategy and a consequent digital advertising exercise perspective, a modality that can even be structured in a personalised way, which is in line with Cristancho-Triana et al. (2022, pp. 4-5) since:

> "... this sense, analysing the behaviour of social media users in relation to consumption is a relevant aspect for brands (Harris and Rae, 2009; Lamberton and Stephen, 2016), given that the exchange of information on social media sites can contribute to the development of users' attitudes towards them (Söderlund and Rosengren, 2007; Blomberg, 2012; Ting et al., 2015; Oni et al., 2017) and the emotions generated with respect to value judgements (Wilsony and Gilbert, 2003), which influence consumption intentions (Breckler, 1984; Nedra et al., 2019; Wiese et al., 2020).

The digital form of advertising allows it to be incorporated into the content that users consult while they are connected to it, that is, the totality of information for consultation or visits to which they are exposed. Much of this information is for advertising or promotional purposes, and because it is immersed in the totality of messages that make up a session of use, it is integrated into the audience's virtual experience in an almost organic way as evidenced by the strategy of dataism, as pointed out by Pérez (2020, p. 107) and which consists of "...the use made by digital advertising of internet users' data to segment audiences and create profiles according to their tastes and preferences, in order to send them personalised advertising". This is the case where "...social networks, which enable companies and institutions outside them to exploit them by inserting advertisements" where they in turn create "...shared and self-managed environments, communities of interest, knowledge, entertainment, relationships, exchanges, friendship, shared services, spaces where new content is created, etc., with enormous power to grow and spread," in which the use of the concept of "...advertainment... to provide

added value so that their intrusion is forgiven" to which users may be exposed and which, in practical terms, according to Martínez and Sánchez (2011) and evoked by the same author, "...is a symbiosis between advertising and entertainment whose objective is to attract the public's attention in an appealing way to the values of the brand" (p. 110).

Although the universe of content located on social networks and accessible to young people is infinite, advertising messages are highly distinctive and differentiating, i.e., users easily identify them from the rest of the information to which they are exposed. They remain attractive within the final volume of data with which they interact and have a high level of receptivity from audiences due to their intrinsic entertainment-oriented nature, as Macías emphasises in Méndez and Maldonado (2021, p. 61) "social networks are now considered another channel of communication with customers or potential customers and are no longer optional for a start-up or business; they are a necessity because they allow us to stay connected with our audience. We must have a strategy and know who to reach with our message and what we are going to communicate."

The brevity and audiovisual spectacularity of digital advertising in film material responds efficiently and effectively to the characteristics of social media, capitalising on time to capture and maintain the attention parameters that users expect and demand. As Carrillo-Durán y Rodríguez-Silgado (2017, p. 196) state "in terms of the content of programmatic advertising, it is not advisable to generate more volume of ads for all users, but rather to deliver a different message based on audience segmentation."

The financial success of a film is measured predominantly by its box office takings. The amount of money collected in a specific period determines the profitability of the film production. As a result, companies that produce audiovisual film material have expanded their field of action in terms of techniques for persuading their potential audiences to social media, through the implementation of digital advertising strategies, without forgetting that the campaign must be conceptualised at 360 degrees. In other words, it is a transmedia exercise of mutual reinforcement that leads to a platform of collective persuasion for both the media and real and potential users, where Quispe Fernández (2024, p. 13), asserts that those "... productions backed by large studios with substantial budgets ... allow them to carry out expansive marketing campaigns ranging from billboards to high-quality television commercials and a prominent presence on online platforms. In addition, these films can often leverage connections within the industry to ensure wide and strategic distribution in renowned cinemas and prestigious film festivals," since by researching and studying "...advertising will allow us to understand how the image of films is constructed and how recipients interpret them" (p. 17).

The diversification of the advertising construct and its adaptation to traditional and digital media has not only led to a substantial and significant transformation of its practices and scope, but also the profiles of users of technological devices, their behaviour in terms of film consumption and the multiplicity of current languages have caused a communications revolution in the film industry at all levels of its manifestations, both in terms of image and business model. Adapting to global market trends is a process that has only just begun and whose characteristics continue to be defined and shaped.

2. Design and method.

This study adopts a quantitative approach, as it seeks to systematically collect the opinions of university students regarding the influence of advertising messages disseminated by international production companies on social media on the decisions of university students to consume films in cinemas. This provides an objective view of the relationship between exposure to these messages and decisions to go to the cinema, from the students' point of view.

The research is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Firstly, it seeks to ascertain the opinions of students, as well as certain characteristics of these opinions that will enable the development of a starting point for strengthening academic content in subjects related to advertising and social media communication strategies. To this end, it was decided to conduct the study with a population consisting of Communication Sciences students at the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, aged between 17 and 24. The sample was obtained through non-probabilistic convenience and voluntary sampling, considering those who freely agreed to participate in the study. In addition, the key criterion was that they were students of the degree programme, as they are the ones who can provide guidelines on content adjustments, in a sort of curriculum review of the related subjects. A total of 32 surveys were collected.

To collect the information, an online form was designed that included:

1. Characterisation questions to identify demographic variables such as gender, age and academic level (semester in which they are studying).

2. A Likert scale with statements related to:

*   The frequency of exposure to advertising messages on social media.
*   Opinion on the effectiveness of these messages.
*   The impact of advertising on the decision to go to the cinema.
*   The assessment of social media as a persuasive tool or part of a comprehensive media strategy.

In order to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questions, the form was submitted for validation by communication and marketing experts. This review allowed us to identify areas for improvement in the questions, which were then adapted to fit the research objective. Once the adjustments suggested by the experts had been made, the final form was prepared. The final form was then distributed online via a link shared through institutional emails and social media groups, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, who gave their informed consent before responding to the form. The data was collected over a period of one week (from 22nd to 29th January 2025) and was used exclusively for academic and research purposes. In terms of data analysis, once the data was obtained, the graphs generated by the collection platform (Microsoft Forms) were examined without the use of additional statistical tools. It is important to note that this study is limited to Communication Sciences students at the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, so the findings cannot be generalised to other populations or academic contexts, but the results may serve as an initial approach for future research that expands the analysis to other university environments.

3. Results and conclusions.

Most respondents are between 18 and 23 years old: 41% are 18-20 years old and 43% are 21-23 years old, suggesting that the results mainly reflect the perceptions of young adults, while only 16% are over 24, indicating a lower representation of older people within the surveyed group (Graph 1: age of students):

Graph 1. Age of students

Source(s): Prepared internally based on Forms Office, 2025.

In relation to the frequency of exposure to film advertising on social media (Graph 2), it was found that TikTok and Instagram are the platforms where users most frequently see film advertising; Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) show a more balanced distribution between occasional and frequent exposure responses. X is the network with the most people who rarely see ads. This suggests that film marketing strategies should prioritise TikTok and Instagram if they seek to reach this younger audience.

Graph 2. Frequency of exposure to film advertising on social media.

Source(s): Own elaboration based on Forms Office, 2025.

Graph 3 shows how young university students do consider themselves to be more exposed to advertising messages about film products when spending a certain amount of time on social media:

Graph 3. Exposure of young people to advertising messages.
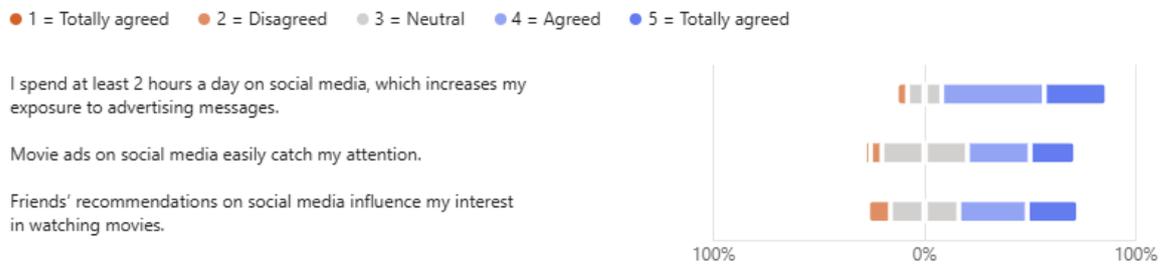
Source(s): Own elaboration based on Forms Office, 2025.

Regarding their opinion on the effectiveness of advertising on social media, it can be seen that the majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that advertisements on social media make them interested in films they did not know about; it is also recognised that these advertisements highlight attractive aspects of the films, although there is a certain level of neutrality. A considerable percentage prefer to watch *trailers* on social media rather than other media, which reinforces the importance of these spaces for film promotion (Graph 4).

Graph 4. Opinion on the effectiveness of advertising on social media.
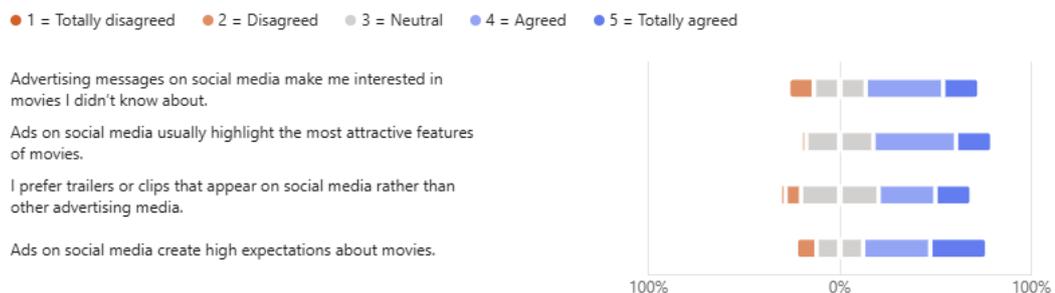
Source(s): Prepared internally based on Forms Office, 2025.

Most respondents agree or strongly agree that advertising on social media influences their choice of films when they go to the cinema. There is a significant level of agreement that promotions and discounts advertised on social media motivate them to go to the cinema, however, there is a slight division in the preference for watching films in cinemas versus waiting for them to be available on digital platforms (Figure 5).

Graph 5. Influence on decision-making
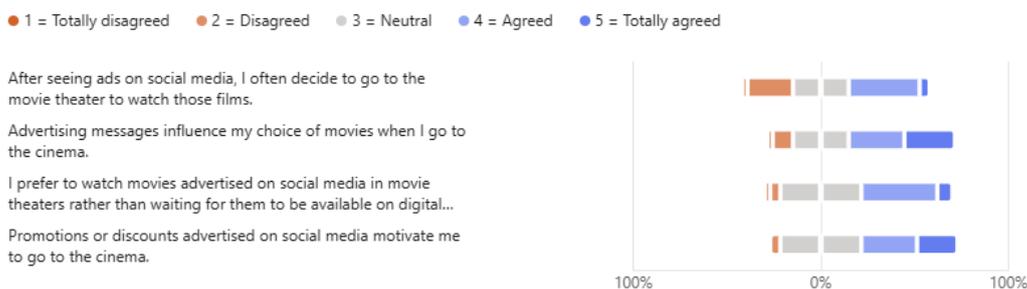
Source(s): Own elaboration based on Forms Office, 2025.

Regarding students' opinions on social media as a persuasive tool, the majority consider social media to be an effective persuasive tool for promoting films. It is recognised that social media advertising is part of a broader media strategy and not an isolated tool. A significant proportion of respondents believe that social media ads have more impact than traditional media such as television, radio or posters. However, opinions are divided on whether social media advertising is overrated, indicating a varied perception of its real influence (Figure 6).

Graph 6. Social media as a persuasive tool.
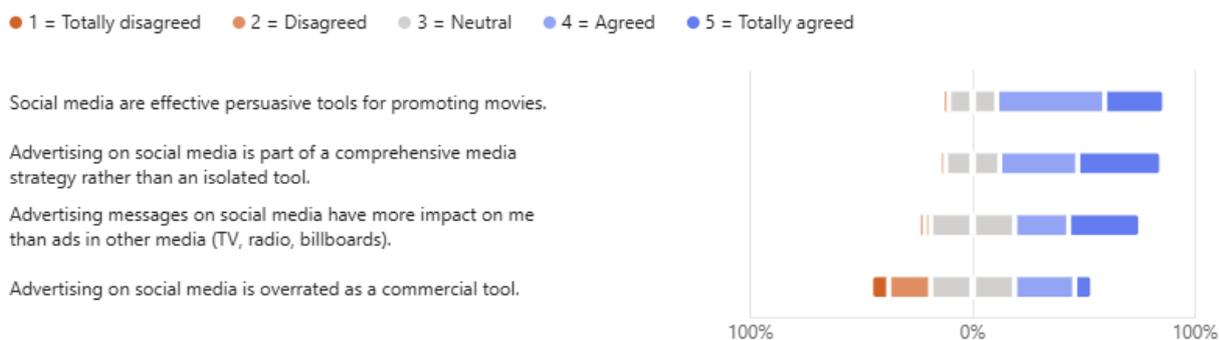
Source(s): Prepared internally based on Forms Office, 2025.

4. Study conclusions

Most participants are in the 18-23 age range, representing 84% of the total, suggesting that the sample is mainly composed of young adults, who are a key audience for digital content consumption and social media advertising. No respondents under the age of 17 were recorded, and the percentage of people over the age of 24 is low (16%), reinforcing the idea that the impact of social media advertising is more targeted at young people.

TikTok and Instagram are the platforms where participants most frequently see advertising messages about films, which shows that digital marketing strategies have migrated to networks with more dynamic and visual content. Facebook and Twitter have less r incidence in terms of frequency of exposure, which may be due to changes in content consumption by younger users. Most respondents agree or strongly agree that social media ads generate interest in films they were previously unaware of. Advertisements are recognised as highlighting attractive aspects of films, and many prefer trailers or short clips posted on social media to other traditional advertising media. There is a widespread perception that social media advertising can create high expectations for films, which could be a double-edged sword, as poorly received content after release can lead to disappointment.

Advertisements on social media influence respondents' choice of films when deciding what to see at the cinema. A significant number of participants prefer to see films advertised in cinemas rather than wait for them to arrive on streaming platforms, reinforcing the idea that digital advertising remains

effective in attracting audiences to cinemas. On the other hand, promotions and discounts advertised on social media are an important motivating factor for going to the cinema.

Most respondents agree that social media is an effective tool for promoting films and that advertising on these platforms is part of a comprehensive media strategy. There is also recognition of the impact of digital advertising compared to traditional media such as television, radio and billboards. Although there is a positive perception of advertising on social media, some respondents consider it to be overrated as a commercial tool, indicating that not all users are completely confident in its impact.

This study shows that social media plays a key role in promoting films and influencing the decisions of younger viewers. Digital advertising on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has succeeded in capturing users' attention, generating interest and motivating them to go to the cinema. However, it is important that advertising strategies are balanced to avoid overly high expectations that could lead to disappointment.

The findings of this study can be a valuable input for the design or redesign of subject programmes and continuing education courses in areas such as communication, digital marketing, advertising, and audience analysis. Below are some ways in which this study can contribute to academic and professional training:

1. Design of Communication and Advertising Courses: This study can serve as a basis for the development of courses focused on the intersection between digital advertising and consumer behaviour. Some courses and/or subject areas that could benefit from these findings include digital consumer psychology, analysing how young people perceive advertising on social media and how it influences their consumption decisions; social media marketing strategies: integrating knowledge about which platforms are most effective for promoting products and services; audience analysis in the digital age: understanding consumption habits and market segmentation based on user preferences.

2. Development of Continuing Education Programmes for Professionals: this study can also provide key information for refresher courses aimed at marketing, advertising and audiovisual production professionals, such as: a course on digital advertising and content strategies: based on the results of the study, modules can be developed on best practices for creating advertising campaigns aimed at young audiences on social media; Workshop on storytelling and advertising for the film industry: addressing the role of *trailers,* clips and social media campaigns in maximising audience appeal. Seminars on Digital Trend Analysis, to assess how social media impacts the perception of cultural products and how this can be applied to other industries.

3. Impact on the Training of Communicators: The study reinforces the need for future communication and advertising professionals to develop skills in: data analysis to measure the impact of digital campaigns; creation of persuasive strategies in digital environments; adaptation of advertising messages to the consumption habits of younger audiences.

This study not only provides relevant, albeit exploratory, data on advertising consumption on social media, but also offers guidelines for the design of educational programmes that are up-to-date and relevant to the dynamics of the digital market.

5. Acknowledgements

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