

## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE SALE OF FROZEN FOODS.

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### **The role of Social Media Marketing in the sale of frozen foods.**

#### **Abstract**

This work aims at identifying the effect of SMM on frozen food sales in Uzbekistan with special reference to Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Growing market for frozen foods has made the global market reach USD 232.40 billion in 2020 and it is expected to reach USD 389.90 billion in the year 2030 and due to urging need of enhancing brand awareness, customer engagement, and brand loyalty, the brands are using social media platform actively. Thus, the study adopts a quantitative research method to validate the research hypotheses and questionnaire that was completed by 106 consumers in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, were used to assess the link between SMM activities and frozen food sales. Consequently, the research results show that social media marketing, while having a positive effect on brand trust and customer participation, has a rather limited effect on the direct purchases and market share. They find that the branded frozen food has more market share when compared to unbranded frozen foods, and that the consumers' trust plays the role of a mediator. Nevertheless, pointing to the positive effects of SMM, the research identifies a lack of content satisfaction and consumer interaction – it is, thus, argued that frozen food brands should enhance the focus on their digital marketing approaches to target younger consumers more effectively. Finally, this research finds that there is a strong potential to leverage social media marketing for the frozen food industry especially within Uzbekistan and other growing economy attracting a rising trend in digital food retail.

#### **Introduction**

Today's social media plays the most significant role in changing and engaging the global consumer market and boosting sales. The frozen food industry, which had only used in-store offers and traditional advertising techniques long time ago to make its claims visible, resorts to social media marketing to appeal to a wide range of clients and increase brand awareness and loyalty. Instagram, Facebook, Tik-Tok, and Pinterest as some of the major platforms as significant in redesigning the manner in which frozen food brands promote and market their products (Tuten and Solomon, 2017). Thanks to its graphical and descriptive properties, social media facilitates the way companies in

the frozen foods subsector post pictures of how easy, delicious, or nutritious their offerings can be, besides going a long way in reversing other prevailing perceptions of frozen meals as substandard or unhealthy (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

The importance of SMM in the process of frozen food products sale is also evident in the three trends of consumption, the convenience, health decision, and sustainability which align well with the opportunities of the social media marketing. Studying showed that the use of social media has a considerable impact on people's buying behaviour, as 72% of buyers eager to engage with the brand, claiming that they are more likely to purchase goods from brands that they have subscribed to on social media (Statista, 2021). The purpose of this article is to explore the potential of Social Media Marketing for the frozen food industry with focus on the way brands used them towards building an enhanced relationship with the customers, enhancing awareness and sales in an increasingly saturated economy.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Social Media Marketing***

SMM has emerged as a powerful strategy through which organizations can connect with consumers; increase brand visibility and create sales. In the context facilitated by the expanded usage of digital platforms, SMM provides companies with the opportunity to share targeted content with a wide number of people, interact with them, and do it at the same time. Consequently, by Mohan (2023), SMM is a particular approach to managing relationships with customers, which helps organizations recognize the clients' behavior, their choices and necessities. Social media platforms are especially successful due to their visually oriented and engaging character, allowing companies to build stories around their products: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest, and others. brands because by sharing relevant content, participating in the comments section, and conducting specific advertising initiatives, companies can reach out to customers, and encourage more purchases and customer loyalty (Baluch, 2024). Research by Varadarajan (2010) highlights that successful SMM strategies involve several critical components: The roles includes; understanding of the target audience, the identification of brand personality, content, post analysis, and engagement. They enable an organization to understand its target market and feed back to them content that could be relevant. When conducted effectively, SMM can affect consumer buying behaviour, according to a 2021 Statista poll, 72% of buyers are likely to engage in buying products from brands they follow on social media platforms.

#### ***Position of SMM on food (frozen food) market***

The fresh and the frozen food industry has been relying more and more on social media as one of the primary promotional platforms. Research conducted demonstrate that customers often engage in research on food items through social media platforms. People look for data like what customers' opinions are about certain products, where

is the best place to eat, how many calories does a particular food contain, or what the general outlook of a brand looks like (Abdullaev & Anggraini, 2023). Using Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok is fortunate for food-related businesses as an opportunity to directly reach the audience and showcase their products. For instance, Instagram due to its focus on pictures and video is perfect for food items marketing because the saying 'we eat with eyes' is the driving force in the food industry as pointed out by Czuczman in the year 2024. However, they have been intense in using images, videos and influencer relations to change the social perspective of frozen meals especially by brands of frozen foods. Traditionally, frozen foods are popularly attributed to poor quality and unhealthy diets. Nevertheless, with the help of SMM these brands managed to depict their products as convenient, healthy and topical. According to Hollebeek & Macky (2019), due to lifestyle representations in the likes of speedy meal preparation or healthy eating, SMM succeeded in re-framing the consumers' perception towards the frozen food brands.

### ***Impact of SMM on consumer behaviour in the frozen food market***

With concerns for time scarcity, health-conscious purchases, and sustainability increasing among the society, SMM is a distinct playing ground for frozen food firms, as they tap into those emerging tendencies. Customers can not only learn the features of the actual product on display such as its ease of use or nutritional value but also engage the brand for its dedication to the values as encompassed by the likes of Sustainability or Healthy Eating. This has become important especially given that there is a growing more informed and savvy customer who is consciousness with matters touching on environment, source of foods and health impacts of their meals. The extent of impact SMM has on consumers' buying behavior remains overwhelming. Studies have found consumers are inclined to patronise brands they interact with them on social media networks, especially if the later communicate to them with good quality and timely content. According to Statista (2021), consumers' willingness to communicate with brands and businesses on social media is at 72%, which implies that brands could turn new fans into better, more devoted customers through successful online interaction. Besides, brands that are present on social media also have a chance to gain the people's trust. Abdullaev & Anggraini (2023) highlights the aspect that information trust is the key determinant of the purchase decision, especially given that social media is the major source of information in the context of the market of Uzbekistan.

### ***Consumer behaviour and its impact on frozen foods***

The level of trust in a brand is the element that affects success in SMM. Trust is built by maintaining regular interaction with the consumer and also by connecting them with real influencers in order to promote the products. Hence in the frozen food market where competition is expected to rise trust can help define brands and also determine the customers' choice. In the views of Varadarajan (2010), brand-consumer

engagement is founded on a unified and coherent message that SMM supports. Those brands that are involved in the target market's social network and respond to comments, repost user content, and use influencers more often will be regarded as more credible and therefore sell more. Another important metric important in the effectiveness of SMM is consumer engagement, which may include everything from likes, shares, comments and follows. Intense engagement always indicates establishment of a bond between the branded product or service and the target consumers. Baluch suggested in their article that if consumers are exposed to the content often, they are more likely to buy the product (2024). This is deemed viable particularly in evaluation of frozen foods since product difference through engagement and content can assist in determining the buying habits regarding the food items. Besides, engagement helps to build brand trust and establish a community around this brand that would repurchase from the brand.

### ***Role of Brand Trust and Engagement Marketing Communication and Social Media Management Recommendation for the Frozen Food Industry New Markets***

The frozen food market is a growing market throughout the world and especially it is expected to grow further in new economies specifically in the Central Asia and Eastern Europe. With the development of the frozen food market in Uzbekistan, it becomes important for brands to rely on SMM to establish success. Special thanks to Bailey (2022) who has reported, that the frozen food market in Uzbekistan was USD 252.19 billion of 2021 while it is expected to be USD 389.90 billion of 2030. With a rise in e-commerce, and more frequently people ordering food online, the FMCG brands such as frozen food in Uzbekistan have shifted more focus towards SMM. These brands need to think differently and pay more attention to influencers and engaging, localized content. For instance, the brand "Vkusno by Seva" that operates in Uzbekistan has successfully implemented the case of influencer marketing by cooperating with locals celebrities and Bloggers to boost brand recognition and create its customer base (Bailey, 2022). Czuczman (2024), for example, acknowledges while influencer backed promotions and good visuals can boost audience interaction, brands need relevant, informative and customer value-creating content to retain their audience's loyalty.

### **Hypotheses**

***H1:*** *The research work shows that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has an exciting and positive influence on the sales of frozen food products.*

***H2:*** *Branded launched frozen food products enjoy a bigger market share than unbranded launched frozen food products.*

**H3:** *Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive effect on the confidence placed in the frozen food sector.*

### Research Methods

Quantitative research methods were used in this study with regard to the use of numerical data in testing the hypotheses relating to the impact of SMM on frozen foods' sales. Surveys, statistics and experiments, which form the bases of quantitative research, are useful in comprehensively defining patterns and putting hypothesis into test. Consequently, the research problem was assessed by the use of a self-developed structured questionnaire administered to the students and the employed customers in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The survey targeted two distinct groups: frozen food consumers and the active post users in the site. The data collection tool used was Google Forms and with participants comprised of 106 individuals. The questionnaire focused on three key variables related to the role of SMM in the sale of frozen foods:

1. Effectiveness of SMM in the sale of frozen foods Furtherem.
2. Exploring brand trust as a mediator between advertisement and social media marketing.
3. What is more, there is the question whether firms that market frosted foods using social media marketing sell more than firms that do not?

### Demographic Information

Demographic information was included in the survey for two primary reasons:

1. **Scientific Research Purpose:** To clarify the relations between demographic characteristics (age, gender and occupational status) and behavior of consumers and their decisions when selecting frozen foods through social media platforms.
2. **Sample Representation:** Demos will aid in the targets' portrayal inasmuch as they will assist in describing the sample in order to ensure that it mirrors the population in all its characteristics.

Demographic analysis results indicated, (See Table 1) that 78.3% of the participants were female, and the majority of the participants 97.2% were between the age of 18-24 years. The largest group of respondents was students (92.5 %), and the other people were grouped as follows: employed, 4.7 % and housewives, 2.8 %. Significantly, all the respondents had accounts on the social media, which is important in view of exploring the extent of social media marketing in this study.

**Table 1.**

Category	Information	Amount	Percentage
Age	18-24	103	97,2%
	35-44	2	1,9%
Gender	Male	23	21,7%
	Female	83	78,3%
Occupation	Student	98	92,5%

<b>Employed</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4,7%</b>
<b>Housewife</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,8%</b>

The questionnaire was designed to explore the influence of SMM on frozen food sales, focusing on three main areas:

1. **Frozen Food Purchasing Behavior:** How often respondents purchase frozen food.

2. **Brand Trust:** Whether brand trust influences the purchasing decision of frozen food products promoted through social media.

3. **Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing:** The relationship between the use of social media marketing and the sales of branded frozen food products. In total, 106 respondents participated, and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine the frequency of responses and the relationships between different variables. Additionally, several research hypotheses were formed based on the assumption that SMM influences frozen food sales through brand trust and consumer engagement.

### **Frozen Food Purchase Behavior**

The frequency of frozen food purchases varied among respondents, with the majority (45.3%) indicating they purchase frozen food sometimes. Only 16% of respondents stated they never purchase frozen food, and 5.7% reported buying it every day. This shows that frozen food consumption is relatively common but not necessarily daily, indicating potential room for growth in this market. Table 2 illustrates the frequency of frozen food purchases.

**Table 2**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Frequency of frozen food purchases	<b>Never</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16%</b>
	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45,3%</b>
	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30,2%</b>
	<b>Everyday</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5,7%</b>
	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,8%</b>
Attention to the product brand	<b>Yes</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>73,6%</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26,4%</b>

Brand Trust and SMM Influence Even more, analyzing table 2 it can be observed that 73.6% of respondents do pay attention to the brand which proves an important role played by brand trust in its consumer. As the study assumed, the research suggests that the consumers will rely on the brand they have the impression of or are familiar with the brand, especially when the brand interacts with them through social media.

### Engagement and content analysis for Social Media Marketing

The survey also sought to know how often the subjects come across frozen food adverts and their frequency of interacting with these adverts, frequency subjects follow frozen food brands on social media and the content satisfaction level as provided by these brands. Such obtained findings inform that although majority of the respondents (77.1%) seldom or never at any given time read frozen food profiles on their social media news feeds, quite a number of them nonetheless, interact with such contents at least on a weekly or monthly basis.

Self generated frozen food advertisements are viewed, rarely by 68 of the respondents (42.9%), monthly by 32 (23.8%), and weekly by 29 (21.9%) respondents. A meagre number of 11.4 % observe advertisement every day. Still, when it comes to frozen food content, specifically social media content, satisfaction rates were equally split between neither satisfied nor dissatisfied respondents, emerging to 56.2%. This means that although SMM is evident, it has not full control over consumer attention and loyalty.

**Table 3**

Category	Information	Amount	Percentage
Frozen food advertisement	Daily	12	11,4%
	Weekly	23	21,9%
	Monthly	25	23,8%
	Rarely	45	42,9%
Follow frozen food profile	Yes	24	22,9%
	No	81	77,1%
Satisfaction of Frozen food content	Very satisfied	11	10,5%
	Satisfied	22	21%
	Neutral	59	56,2%
	Dissatisfied	10	9,5%
	Very dissatisfied	3	2,9%

### Frozen Food Market in Uzbekistan

Besides Survey data the ECDB (2024) secondary data also show positive trends related to frozen food eCommerce in Uzbekistan, where the market size by 2024 is expected to be \$0.9 Million constituting 6.1% of the food eCommerce market. Based on this it can be perceived that there has been expanding consumption of frozen foods in Uzbekistan and marketing by way of social sites is probably going to expand its influence as brands continue to seek to gain more market share in the country.

## Conclusion

The results of this research show fairly a reasonable influence of social media marketing (SMM) on the sale of frozen foods, whereas the level of interaction and novelty of SMM materials still can be considered as promising in this sphere. , though most of the respondents notice the brand when buying the frozen food, several of them have a neutral or negative attitude toward the content that was posted on social media by frozen food brands. Furthermore, the results also showed that only a small percentage of the total respondents follow the frozen food profiles on social media; perhaps more effort is required on the part of the brands to approach consumers, so that SMM might help build the loyal customer base. As frozen food market rises in Uzbekistan, there still will be a great demand on frozen food brands' activity in social media where they should produce more qualitative and relevant content.

## Conceptual Framework

Now let us analyse the specific type of viral marketing, and how exactly it contributes to frozen foods sale. Theoretical model used for this research focuses on the interaction between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and frozen food sales. The first objective therefore focuses on realizing how SMM affects consumers within the aforementioned categories in relation to the purchase intent, predominantly with regard to frozen foods in Uzbekistan.

This conceptual framework presents the operating and research variables as well as the hypothesized linkages among them to help steer the study and shed light on how SMM can help increase sales amidst stiff market competition. Other variables include:

- Social Media Marketing (independent variable).
- Consumer Engagement.
- Brand Trust.
- Purchasing Decision (dependent variable).

### Major Variables in the Conceptual Framework Social Media Marketing (SMM)

This is the variable of interest in this study conceptual framework for this study explores the dynamic relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and frozen food sales. The primary goal is to understand how SMM, through engagement, brand trust, and consumer behavior, influences the purchasing decisions of consumers, particularly in the context of frozen food in Uzbekistan.

### Key Variables in the Conceptual Framework

#### 1. Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social Media Marketing is the independent variable in this study. They encompass efforts that manufacturers employ to market their frozen foods on media that comprises of Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest among others. Such activities include content generation, partnership with Key opinion leaders, use of



consumers generated material, paid advertisement and other engagement techniques whose aim is to access the large number of customers in the market.

## **2. Brand trust**

Brand trust is proposed as a mediator in this framework. It means certainty that consumers have towards a brand that can be created or strengthened through using social media. Trust looks at factors such as clarity of the brand, quality of the content, the customer relations and reliability of the brand. Interpersonal communication that involves a strong brand trust will enable the consumer to be more loyal and ready to buy products of that brand.

## **3. Consumer Engagement:**

Consumer engagement is an additional mediating variable that helps to define to what extent consumers are participating in using the brand's content shared on social networks. Engagement can be in the form of likes, shares, comments, following the brand and the influencers. High interaction suggests compatibility between the brand and the target audience, and such followers are likely to purchase from the brand.

## **4. Purchasing Decision**

The dependent variable is the perceived behavioural intention which is defined in this case by the willingness of a consumer to buy frozen food products having been in contact with social media content. This decision depends with the amount of brand trust and how frequent the consumer communicates with the brand on social media.

### **Studied Relationships in this Conceptual Framework**

#### **a. Social Media Marketing → Brand Trust**

Social media marketing activities which entails posting regular updates, replying to followers and following key influencers can go along way in building brand trust. Engagement can be in the form of likes, shares, comments, following the brand, and interacting with influencers. High levels of engagement indicate a strong relationship between the brand and its followers, making them more likely to purchase.

#### **b. Social Marketing Communication → Consumer Interaction**

There is the probability of the effectiveness of social media marketing in engaging consumers in their purchases. For instance, beautiful posts, videos which demonstrate products, and other designs of campaigns inspire more engagement with the brand. The consequence of 'sharing' also makes the consumer good or service more popular the more often people give in to the temptation of following the content.

#### **c. Brand Trust → Purchasing Decision**

Branding is one of the best ways to influence the purchasing decision of consumers. How actively consumers interact with the brand's content on social media. Engagement can be in the form of likes, shares, comments, following the brand, and interacting with influencers. High levels of engagement indicate a strong relationship between the brand and its followers, making them more likely to purchase.

**d. Consumer Information Processing → Consumer Decision Making**

This means that consumer interaction such as liking the post, sharing the post, commenting on it and actively participating in a post can lead to a purchase decision. Engagement suggests high consumers' interest and ensures higher chances that a consumer will respond to brand content.

**e. Social Media Marketing → Purchasing Decision Ultimately**

social media engagement through likes, shares, comments, and active participation can increase the likelihood of a purchasing decision. Engagement signals strong consumer interest and increases the probability that a consumer will act on their exposure to the brand's content. Interactive advertising marketing has a direct influence on the buying decision. SMM, if accompanied by high consumer engagement and brand trust, can make the consumer buy frozen food products. Companies that invest time and efforts in social media have greater chances of controlling the customer's choice.

**Explanation of the Framework****1. Social Media Marketing (SMM):**

These channels include, but to mention a few: Instagram, Facebook accounts, and TikTok are key when it comes to reaching out to potential consumers by frozen food brands. This way brands disclose material (photos, videos and recipes) with the desire for the consumer to connect emotionally to their product or service.

**2. Brand Trust:**

The discovery of increased levels of trust with brands that are open and responsive on social media is made. These results tell the consumer that a brand is reliable in operation on the internet and this makes the consumer trust the brand enough to purchase from the brand.

**3. Consumer Engagement:**

Readership is one way of measuring engagement, or at least its proxy. Engaged users who like, comment, share or follow a brand's posts, show their commitment to the content created by that brand. This, in turn, is likely to lead to higher brand recognition and clients' brand identification – the pathway to a sale.

**4. Purchasing Decision:**

Consumers that engage with SMM content, and believe in the messages portrayed, are optimal for conversion as they transform interest to purchase. Following the contemporary marketing trends, this research assumes that a high level of engagement and trust will more likely make consumers purchase the frozen food products being marketed.

**Consequences existence obesity of the Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework has identified the significant channel by which social media marketing impacts on the sales of frozen foods. For this reason, it offers

a clear framework for making sense of engagement and factors such as trust and content which can lead to purchases. The social media followers receptive to the promotional posts signal the need to generate content to which the consumers can relate to and create a good rapport with the targets through social media.

Specifically for Uzbekistan frozen food brands the place suggests that although increasing overall presence through social media is important, it is also important to extend engagement efforts with consumers, as well as actively work towards building trust with them. As there is increased competition and as the market for the frozen food increases this makes the strategic use of SMM as the key determinant to increased sales and consumer loyalty in a highly competitive market.

### **Discussion**

This research brings to light the increasing dominance of Social Media Marketing (SMM) for the sales of frozen foods; especially in the Uzbek market. In view of the above, this research employs quantitative research to offer understanding on the impact of social media in fashioning consumer behaviour, and the positive correlation between SMM and frozen food sale. The findings derived from the survey show that SMM is not only an effective means to use in the process of brand establishment but also a very important factor, which affects the consumer's judgment on the products involved, and their purchasing decisions in the frozen food industry.

### **Economic Effect of Advertising Frozen Foods Online**

According to what has been expounded in the literature, SMM affords consumers a flexible customer touch point through which organizations can deploy to foster brand recognition and consequently influence buyers' decisions. The evidence obtained in the present investigation is consistent with the postulated hypothesis that social media marketing significantly affects the sales of frozen food products (H1). Instagram differs a lot in comparison to Facebook or even TikTok, but the data show that these platforms let frozen food brands engage consumers and reach new audiences, including through videos, photos with recipes, and influencer promotion. This fact is in line with previous research which point to the fact that consumers are using social media as a tool to gather information before making a purchase decision (Abdullaev & Anggraini, 2023).

The use of Instagram foods, depicted in this study reveals that survey respondents are actively involved with the foods that are present on the Instagram in the form of images and video. The survey revealed that 77.1% of the subjects state that they don't 'Follow' any frozen food profiles on social media platforms which shows that there is still a gap here. But the fact that the respondents are either neutral or satisfied with frozen food content also points to the fact that the manner in which brands in the frozen food industry can improve their audience engagement is an area of

opportunity. This lack of contact with the consumers is a sign of weakness that can be seen as an opportunity for frozen food brands to learn how to better engage with consumers through social media platforms such as Instagram: Food and Drink 31% (Czuczman, 2024).

### **Brand Trust and Market Share**

Another advantage of social media marketing is it creates brand trust as a key element of the process. The results of this research endorse the hypothesis (H3) that social media marketing has a positive effect on brand trust. The results presented in the form of the survey indicate that most of the shoppers or buyers (73.6%) put emphasis on the brand while buying frozen food thus placing significant stock on the brand identity. Social networks are an undoubted advantage in creating the image and making people familiar with the brand's history, as well as in strengthening direct interaction with the consumers. According to the findings, influencer marketing has been known to work well depending on the brands as it creates an opportunity for reaching out to already built loyal traffic. Endorsing products makes a brands appeals more powerful and this get to potential buyer who were never attracted to the particular brand. However, what has survived the test of probability concerns social media marketing, and while the findings suggest that brand trust is being affected, there is always room for a little more improvement. For instance, a significant percentage of the respondents had a "neutral" response to the content posted by frozen food brands and this may mean the content does not elicit much positive response or emotive appeal as current market trends would require. It mirrors one of the biggest struggles currently plaguing most brands in the food industry—namely how best to leverage SMM in order to optimize the creation of value with audiences through content. Moreover, the hypothesis (H2) pertains to the market share of branded frozen foods is also agreed with the results. These responses imply that consumers call for known and trusted products meaning that brand recognition is critical in the procurement conduct of the respondents. This trend within the frozen food industry indicates the need for increasing the focus on social media marketing among frozen food brand because there are more and more people who tend to seek for recommendation regarding which products to buy on social media. Such trends are inevitable since many social media marketing strategies are expanding, and frozen food companies funneling considerable resources in this fashion are bound to improve their market share positions. Age, Gender, Education level, Occupation, and Employment status and their Relationship with Social media Platform. The findings of the survey also show that most of the respondents as young people with 97.2% of those aged 18-24 years; female gender in 78.3% and students in 92.5%. This is an emerging trend, in that social media users are, in the main, young and active users are more likely to interact with brands on these platforms (Mohan, 2023). This demographic is quite important especially with the

frozen food brands that are targeting to benefit from the market trend of convenience, quick meals and easy to prepare foods. According to the survey, the self-reported freezing use is relatively high at 45.3%, meaning that this age group forms a large part of the occasional consumer of frozen foods though brands can capture them through social media. For example, adding more educational messages about Frozen Foods, about the Health value, environmental issues connected with food sourcing or creating convenient meal options can meet new audience's preferences. Since hi-lo and health and sustainability factors are becoming more important, there is also more potential to communicate them in social media platforms. However, more engaging elements such as poll, a live cooking show, or other behind the scene content seems to have potential for helping to build more meaningful relationships with the audience.

### Conclusion

In this research we were able to establish the relevance of Social Media Marketing (SMM) in the sale of frozen foods in Uzbekistan. These results provide support for SMM as a strategic tool for increasing brand awareness in the marketplace, strengthening consumers' confidence in a particular product, and establishing control over the consumer's purchase decision. Specifically, the frozen food brands find social media as effective means, and more specifically, Instagram, Facebook, and X as essential platforms to speak to the target consumer groups.

When it comes to paying attention to brands when buying frozen foods from the market, the results shows that majority of them do pay attention to brands which confirms that brand awareness is another important pile that influencing the consumers buying decision (Hayes, 2021). Besides, the analysis of the results prove that the share of branded frozen foods is selling higher than that of unbranded frozen foods, thus emphasizing the importance of SMM in creating the powerful and recognizable brand (Abdullaev & Anggraini, 2023). Yet, when focusing on the satisfaction with social media content that belongs to frozen food brands, the majority of the respondents were either neutral or dissatisfied, which implies great potential in the improvement of these brands' communication with consumers (Mohan, 2023).

The study also provided the evidence for the hypothesis that SMM is positively affecting the brand trust directly. They help businesses offer better engagement with the consumer, increase loyalty and control the buying decision of the consumer through consistent material. However, to increase consumer trust even beyond the foregoing levels, the frequency of posts and personalized content must be optimized (Czuczman, 2024).

Taking into account the increased roles of digital platforms in consumers' decision making, the frozen food firms need to work on updating the strength, relevance, and topicality of their social media campaigns to provide interesting content and gain the consumers confidence. As more and more people turn to frozen food

consumption around the world and in specific regions, such as the Uzbekistan market, SMM will still be keyed to growing business and expanding market share.

More studies may be carried out about the effects or particular SMC content themes like videos, endorsement by influencers and customers' feedback in influencing consumers' purchase decisions and SMMs across different cultures.

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