

# **“Like” A Global Endorsement. How Clicking “Like” Influences Facebook Users Brand Recall and Future Purchasing Intentions**

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*Social media particularly Facebook acts as a global force with over 100 billion connections worldwide. Each day Facebook users flaunt their activities, pictures, and likes. Many of these “likes” represent endorsements where users broadcast their favorite brands. This form of marketing engagement can be effectively measured. The purpose of this study is to conduct a quantitative survey among Facebook users to explore and analyze the impact of friends clicking “like”. This study will test brand recall, particularly global brands, and the impact a friend’s endorsement, “like” has on future purchasing decisions of global brands.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Facebook currently remains the top social networking site on the web and is considered to be no longer in its infancy (Nielsen, 2012). Even more significant, approximately over two billion users participate on the internet in some type of online networking environment (Stats, 2013). With so many users worldwide, brand managers can only begin to contemplate what this exposure could mean for their brand and the benefits that could be achieved. As consumers increasingly obtain their news and connect with friends and family within social networking sites, brands are not only adopting these social networking sites as opportunities to communicate with consumers, but embracing this new found interactive cocktail party where anyone can listen and join the fun (Bushelow, 2012).

Since the advent of the internet, measuring the effectiveness of brand advertising was very difficult and many times would not yield the best results. Display advertising usually in the form of banner advertisements did not achieve the results needed to support many marketing decisions. A phenomenon called “advertising banner blindness,” the tendency in which consumers “ignore and avoid banners or display advertisements, is especially prominent among heavy internet users” (Cho, 2003). Marketing managers already understood the barriers which were present on the web yet needed to seek creative ways to challenge and revise these barriers within social networking environments. This technique employing social media and social influencers to achieve marketing and business goals were coined “social influence marketing” (Singh & Diamond, 2012).

Because Facebook is the largest social networking site to date (Shih, 2011), it has become critical “to examine the factors that influence how consumers process advertising messages which are endorsed (like) by friends within their Facebook network and if these like’s affected future purchase intentions” (Yang,

2011, p.51). To date, there are very few studies addressing the effects of consumer engagement behaviors and its influences on purchasing intentions, especially within Facebook (Gunnerus, Liljander, Wenman, & Pihlstrom, 2012). There is also a significant lack of understanding and support addressing how clicking “like” influences Facebook users brand recall and if it leads to future purchasing intent.

“Facebook introduced their infamous “like” button in April of 2010” (Kerpen, 2011, p. 22). With over 2.7 billion likes per day (Bullas, 2012), expressing the endorsements of photos, fan pages, status updates, articles, news feeds, products, services, and more, brand managers understood they had to develop a method to utilize and capitalize this powerful tool. Managers realized that when a user clicks like, not only does the user display approval of their endorsement, but now anyone and everyone within their network also saw this approval, delivering a whole new meaning to word of mouth (WOM) marketing. WOM is known to be one of the most positive and effective tools in marketing producing satisfactory results for brands (Haque, Momen, Sultana, & Yasmin, 2013).

Current research lacked concrete evidence to whether a friend’s endorsement, clicking like below a brands advertisement impacted Facebook user’s future purchasing decisions pertaining to both global and local brands. There is also a lack of evidence supporting if clicking like influenced Facebook users brand recall and future purchasing intentions. Past research has demonstrated that “managing long term customer equity, brand awareness plays a very important role and awareness is an integral part of brand association in the memory of consumers” (Haque et al., 2013). Connecting with consumers within Facebook provides opportunities for managers to build relationships between their brands and Facebook users (Yu, 2012). Even Kotler and Keller (2012) stated the importance of social factors which included family and friends and the influences these groups have on consumer purchasing decisions. Since much of Facebook is created and used for interactions between friends and families, one can assume these individuals will have influence on future purchasing intentions.

Goodrich (2011) presents a very important question which is the basis of this study. “Does a friends endorsement, like of a brand promote positive recognition of the brand to friends within his or hers social network” (Goodrich, 2011, p. 423)? If positive recognition of a brand is experienced through a friend clicking like, does this action then influence a Facebook user’s brand recall and future purchasing intentions?

Past research by Yang (2011) explored Facebook user involvement and how this involvement may affect purchasing intentions after having exposure to an advertisement message within a friend of family social network. Yang (2011) also suggested advertising messages presented by close friends affect consumer brand attitudes towards the brand. Hof (2011) suggested that individuals view a friend’s recommendation as more credible than marketers. Lastly, Goodrich (2011) suggests consumer awareness of a brand promotes attention which leads to increased brand recall. Ha (2004) found there is a significant correlation between brand trust and motivation; however this trust is created, trust influenced consumer motivation to purchase. Trust was a pivotal factor in influencing purchasing decisions online. Research documented and proved that the action of clicking like in return promoted attention but a gap was found in trying to find a link to whether attention created brand recall (Goodrich, 2011) which would lead to future purchase intent (Yang, 2011). If brand recall was a contributor, was this contribution to motivation founded on trust (Ha, 2004)

The following is a visual representation predicting a Facebook user’s reaction to a friend within their network clicking like. Figure 1 demonstrates if a friend clicks like for a brand within their network, attention (Goodrich, 2011) will be triggered by friends within the users Facebook network. Attention should create future recognition (Yang, 2011) of a brand because a friend’s recommendation is more credible (Hof, 2011) which also creates trust (Ha, 2004) leading to future purchase intent.

**FIGURE 1  
PREDICTS THE BEHAVIOR A FACEBOOK USER MAY HAVE WHEN A FRIEND  
ENDORSES A BRAND BY CLICKING LIKE**



## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design and Sample Size**

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze brand recall and the impact a friend's endorsement; like has on future purchasing intentions of a brand. The proposed research question asked; does a friend clicking like influence a Facebook user's brand recall and future purchase intentions? Several hypotheses were developed to test the relationships between brand recall, future purchasing intent, trust and a Facebook user's friend clicking like for a brand in which the user endorsed.

The research design for this study was based upon the development of a survey containing 23 questions testing Facebook user's friend's reactions to actions of their friend clicking like for a global brand. Facebook users were asked if they noticed when their friends clicked like for a global brand and the impact like had on their future purchasing intents. The study targeted a sample of Facebook users only and no personal information was required for the study. 136 Facebook users completed the survey. Of the 136 surveys completed 113 were considered valid for the study.

### **Study Analysis**

This study tested the relationship between brand recall and a friend's endorsement; like has for future purchasing decisions of a global brand. The study also sought to understand a link between the development of trust (Ha, 2004) by a Facebook friends action of clicking like and this actions contribution to credibility (Hof, 2011) and its perceived impact regarding brand recall (Goodrich, 2011) and future purchasing intent (Yang, 2011). Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. Pearson correlation was used to examine the correlations of the effects of noticing (Goodrich, 2011) brand advertisements through a friend's endorsement of clicking like and the motivational (Hof, 2011) impact it had on future purchasing intent (Yang, 2011).

## RESULTS

### Frequency of Use versus Noticing Brand Advertisements

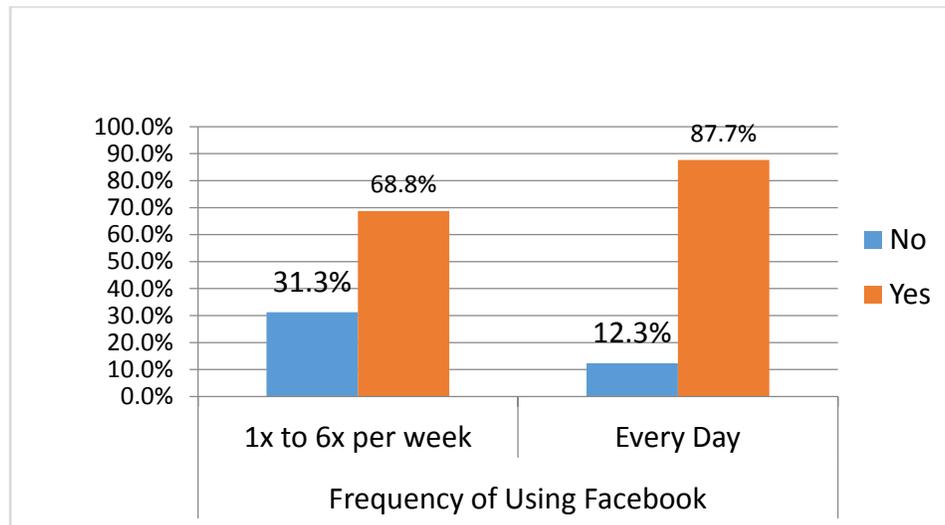
A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine the effects of using Facebook and noticing brand advertisements. Table 1 demonstrates the frequency and percentage of participants who noticed advertisements based on their frequency of using Facebook.

**TABLE 1**  
**FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS WHO**  
**NOTICED ADVERTISEMENTS BASED ON THEIR**  
**FREQUENCY OF USING FACEBOOK**

		Frequency of using Facebook			
		1x to 6x per week	Every Day	Total	
Do you notice brand advertisements on Facebook? Choose Yes or No.	Yes	Count	22	71	93
		% within Frequency of using Facebook	68.8%	87.7%	82.3%
	No	Count	10	10	20
		% within Frequency of using Facebook	31.3%	12.3%	17.7%
Total		Count	32	81	113
		% within Frequency of using Facebook	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The results of the question, do you notice brand advertisements within Facebook, revealed the 22 users who participated in Facebook 1x to 6x per week, 68.8% said yes they notice advertisements within Facebook. The 71 users who participated in Facebook every day, 87.7% said yes they notice advertisements within Facebook (See Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2  
FREQUENCY OF USING FACEBOOK**



A Chi-square analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of participants who noticed brand advertisements compared to frequency of use. Table 2 demonstrates the Chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 5.628, p = .018$ . The proportion of participants who noticed brand advertisements was higher for those who checked Facebook every day (87.8%) than for those who checked Facebook 1x to 6x times per week (68.8%). Overall whether a 1x to 6x per week user or an everyday user both results demonstrated that Facebook users are aware and notice brand advertisements with their Facebook network.

**TABLE 2  
RESULTS COMPARING NOTICING BRAND ADVERTISEMENTS  
WITH FREQUENCY OF USE**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.628 <sup>a</sup>	1	.018		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4.405	1	.036		
Likelihood Ratio	5.199	1	.023		
Fisher's Exact Test				.027	.021
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.578	1	.018		
N of Valid Cases	113				

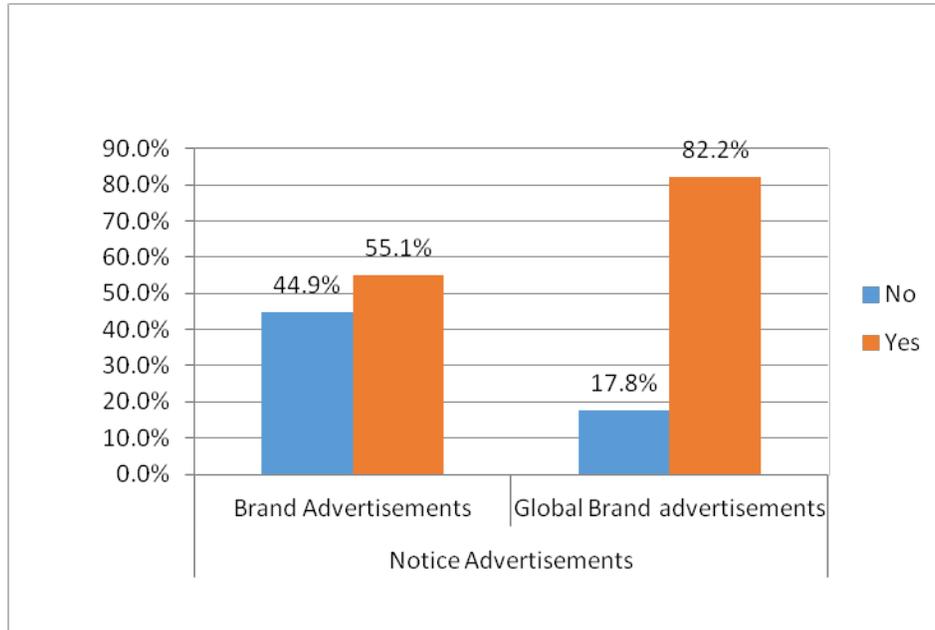
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.66.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

### Global Brand Advertisements versus National Brand Advertisements

The bar graph in Figure 3 shows the proportion of those Facebook users, whether an everyday user or a 1x to 6x per week user, who noticed global brand advertisements compared to those Facebook users who notice national brand advertisements posted by their friends posted within their Facebook network. Results demonstrated 55% said yes they noticed brand advertisements within Facebook, but specifically 82% noticed global advertisements.

**FIGURE 3**  
**FREQUENCY COMPARISON OF USE TO NOTICING BRAND ADVERTISEMENTS**



Once basic information was collected comparing the frequency of use to whether or not the participants noticed brand advertisements, the participants were presented with the following scenario during questioning:

You login to Facebook and begin to read posts by your friends. One of the posts by a friend is of an Italian Roast Espresso Coffee produced in Italy by the international brand “illy”. You notice the picture of the can of coffee and that your friend “likes” (endorses) the international brand “illy”. At a later date you enter a local coffee shop. You are presented with many choices BUT you know you want to try something NEW. While browsing the choices you notice the international brand “illy”. You have never tried this international brand of coffee before. Please answer the following questions based on this scenario.

Since this study is global in nature the scenario needed to reflect a global brand in order to understand if global brands were being noticed when like was clicked by a friend endorsing the brand. We first wanted to understand if there was a difference between genders and what was being noticed.

### Gender Comparison

A Chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if both men and women noticed global advertisements that were liked by their friends and family within their Facebook network. Table 3

demonstrates the Chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 5.187, p = .023$ . Both men and women noticed global advertisements within their Facebook network liked by their friends. The bar graph in Figure 4 demonstrates that both men (79.3%) and women (60.0%) agreed yes, a friend clicking like underneath the picture of the global brand "illy" Italian roast coffee would influenced their future purchasing decisions.

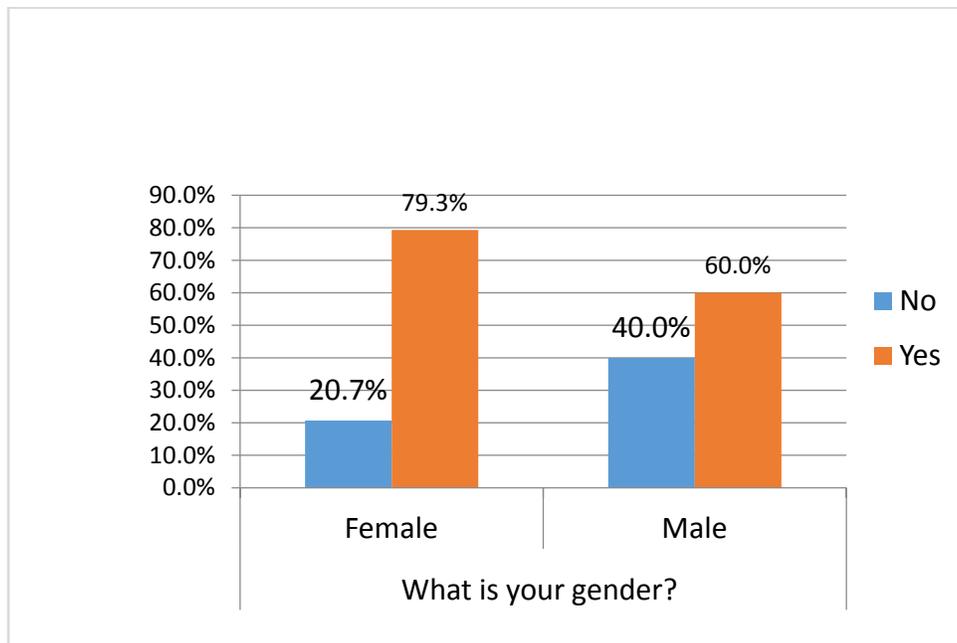
**TABLE 3**  
**COMPARES GENDER TO NOTICING BRAND ADVERTISEMENT**  
**LIKED BY THEIR FACEBOOK FRIENDS**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.187 <sup>a</sup>	1	.023		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4.316	1	.038		
Likelihood Ratio	5.266	1	.022		
Fisher's Exact Test				.028	.018
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.143	1	.023		
N of Valid Cases	118				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.69.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

**FIGURE 4**  
**MEN AND WOMEN FUTURE PURCHASE INTENTIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY A FRIEND CLICKING LIKE WITHIN FACEBOOK**



### Trust and Willingness to Try a Brand

A Chi-square analysis was conducted to understand the linkage between trust, assumed to be developed by a friend clicking like for the global brand” illy” and future purchasing intent of this brand. Table 4 demonstrates the Chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 33.354a$ ,  $p = .000$ . Trust does develop when a friend likes a global brand and contributed to a significant role in future purchasing decisions. The bar graph in Figure 5 demonstrated further how clicking like develops trust and contributes to future purchasing intent.

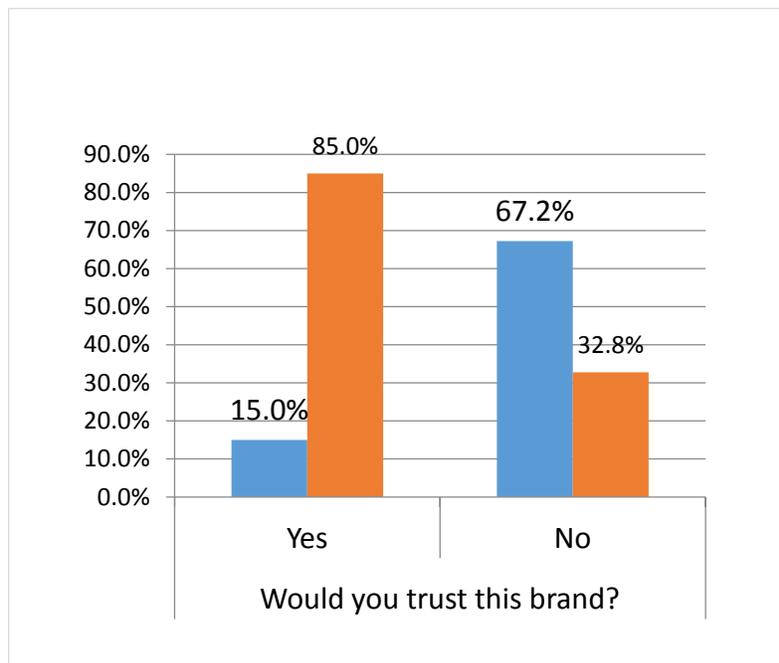
**TABLE 4**  
**COMPARING TRUST TO FUTURE PURCHASE INTENT**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.354 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	31.224	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	35.367	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	33.072	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	118				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.59

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

**FIGURE 5**  
**COMPARING THE IMPACT OF TRUST ON FUTURE PURCHASING INTENT**



Individuals who answered yes to trust that was developed by a friend with their Facebook network clicking like under the picture of a global brand, 85% would most likely purchase the brand and 15% would not. Individuals who answered no to a friend's clicking like under a global brand did not create trust for that brand, 33% would most likely purchase the brand and 67% would not, still indicating a close connection to trust and the action of a friend clicking like on a global brand.

### Future Purchase

Comparing would you be willing to try a brand which was liked by a friend to actually purchasing the liked brand; the results were close for Facebook users that stated yes. A Chi-square analysis was conducted to uncover if actual purchases were made because of a friend's action of clicking like. Table 5 demonstrates the Chi-square test was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 11.253a$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Table 5. Comparing like to an actual future purchase.

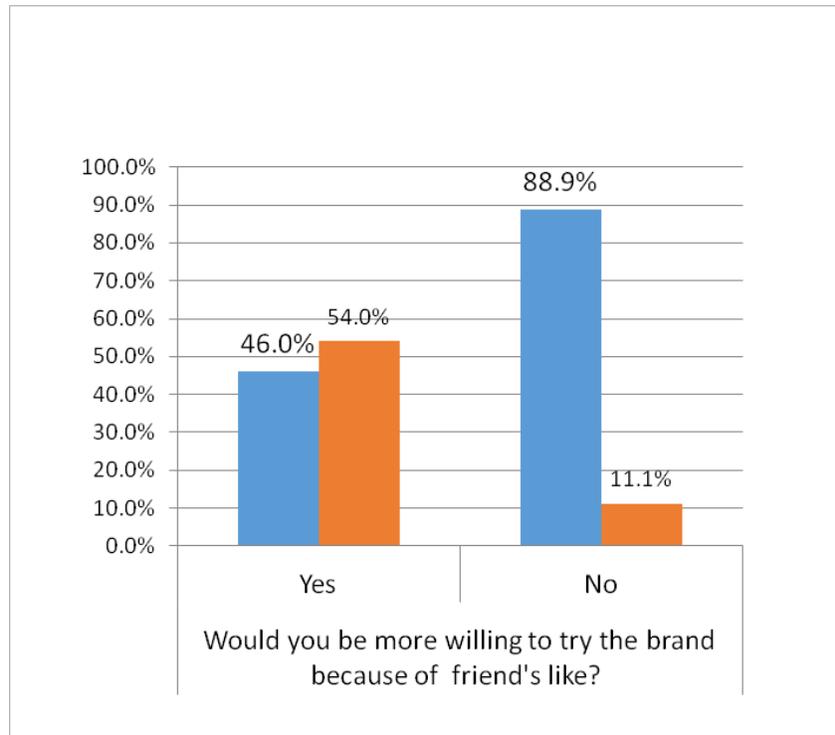
**TABLE 5  
COMPARING LIKE TO AN ACTUAL FUTURE PURCHASE**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.253 <sup>a</sup>	1	.001		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	9.599	1	.002		
Likelihood Ratio	12.731	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.158	1	.001		
N of Valid Cases	118				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.54.

The bar chart in Figure 6 demonstrates individuals that answered yes to the question are you willing to try a brand based on a friend's like, 54% of them actually purchased the brand and 46% did not. Individuals that answered no to the question are you willing to try a brand based on a friend's like, 11% of them actually purchased the brand and 89 % did not. This was a positive result, which revealed if a friend noticed a friend in their network liked a global brand such as the example "illy" provided in this study, the action of liking the brand did motivate a future purchase.

**FIGURE 6**  
**COMPARING WILLINGNESS TO TRY THE BRAND AND ACTUALLY**  
**PURCHASING THE BRAND**



**DISCUSSION**

Although Facebook may no longer be in its infancy (Nielsen, 2012), understanding the interactions between friends within this social networking environment is critical to marketing. Social influence marketing (Singh & Diamond, 2012) seeks to understand the relationships between brands and users within social environments on the internet. This study contributes to social influence marketing because it evaluates factors in these social relationships seeking to understand the impact a friend has within a friend’s Facebook network. The following findings resulted.

First from the survey, 87.7% of participants said they notice advertisements within Facebook. When Facebook first debut it was a challenge to understand and develop marketing strategies that would have impact and provide measured results. Cho (2003) conducted extensive research about banner blindness on the internet due to overexposure of advertisements. This study was conducted in order to move away from the traditional method of internet advertising; the banner and seek a new and alternative approach. Clicking like as a form of advertising revealed the possible impacts this action would have on the consumers’ decision making process. The popularity of Facebook and it’s convenient like button provides something that every brand eagerly awaits; the social endorsement.

Second, the proportion of participants who noticed brand advertisements was higher for those who checked Facebook every day (87.8%) than for those who checked Facebook 1x to 6x times per week (68.8%). It also demonstrated, that both everyday user ands ever so often users, were noticing brand advertisements within their Facebook network. This supports the potential for word of mouth (WOM) marketing and follows from the work of Haque et al. (2013) in the effectiveness of WOM as a positive force for marketing brands and its impact on consumer decision making and their purchasing decisions. Kotler and Keller (2012) understood clearly for many years one of the main influencers that impact

consumer choices and purchasing intent were friends and family. Since Facebook is comprised of just that, friends and family, the potential outreach and influence of a social network is highly relevant to brand recall and future purchasing intent.

Third, 82% of everyday users who participated noticed global advertisements versus 55% who said they noticed national brand advertisements within Facebook. This is supported by Burson-Marsteller's (2012) finding that "the largest global companies were mentioned on Facebook a total of 10,400,132 times in one month. With the average Facebook user having at least 130 friends on their friends list, this type of reach is profound" (p. 1).

Fourth, both men (79.3%) and women (60.0%) are influenced in their future purchasing decisions by a friend clicking like for a global brand of coffee. This study's results indicate clicking like is not gender specific. Both men and women are affected by a friend clicking like within their Facebook network and this click would influence their future purchasing intent.

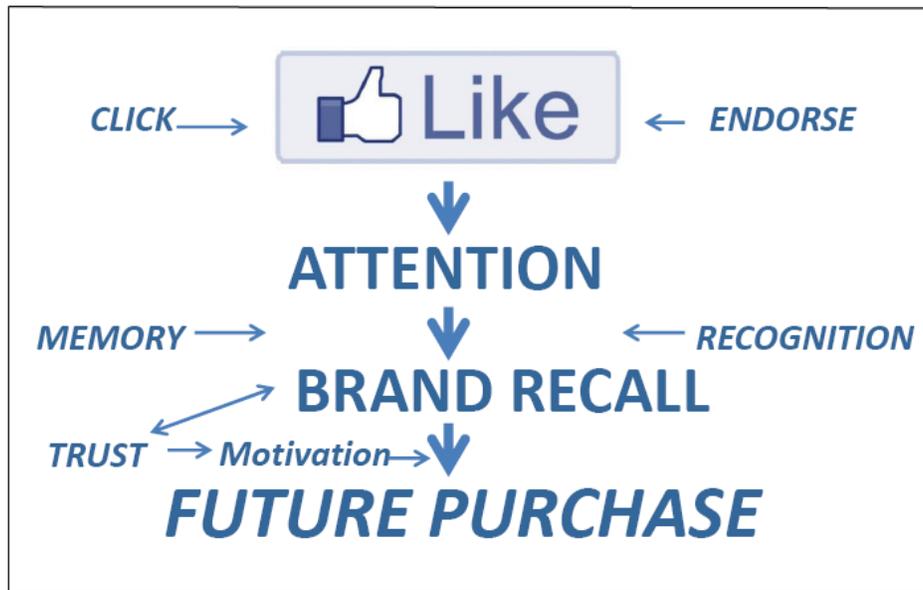
Fifth, trust is fostered when a friend likes a global brand resulting in future purchasing intent. Individuals who trusted a friend in their Facebook network would most likely (85%) purchase the global brand. We also found and established there is a significant connection between a friend clicking like and the willingness to try the brand in the future.

Future research needs to be conducted to understand and reveal the creation of trust (Ha, 2004) is systematic to a friend clicking like for a brand. This study does indicate trust plays a role but what does it contribute and how? This study demonstrated that for those Facebook users who agreed that trust (Ha, 2004) was established, it became a motivating factor which led to consumer awareness promoting attention (Goodrich, 2011) of the brand. Facebook users who perceived trust (Ha, 2004) from a friend liking a global brand would consider (Hof, 2011) and did purchase (Yang, 2011) the global brand in the future. This opens a gap for further research to justify if like is the connection between brands and users (Yu, 2012). The research in this study indicates clear connections are being made between the importance of trust (Ha, 2004) created from clicking like and motivation. It has also been demonstrated that the development of this trust (Ha, 2004) leads to the willingness to try a global brand and actually purchase the global brand.

A consensus can be made that clicking like does contribute to brand recall and future purchasing intent (Goodrich, 2011). Understanding the motivation and contribution that clicking like by friends within an individual's network has on that individual is critical to global brands.

Returning to the original model formed at the beginning of this study, we have added one more variable that would need further research and discussion; motivation. What is motivation's contribution to brand recall and future purchasing intent? It has been established that clicking like does promote attention to a global brand and this recognition and memory of the global brand creates recall (Goodrich, 2011). Therefore it creates a connection with the friend who clicked like (Yu, 2012). This connection with the friend creates trust leading to motivation of future purchasing intent, see Figure 7.

**FIGURE 7**  
**THE ADDITION OF MOTIVATION IN PREDICTING THE BEHAVIOR A FACEBOOK USER**  
**MAY HAVE WHEN A FRIEND ENDORSE A BRAND BY CLICKING LIKE**



**CONCLUSION**

This study provides insight to how powerful a friend’s endorsement “Like” is within Facebook and its connection to consumer attention. The study demonstrates the importance between trust, brand recall and purchasing decisions. In particular, the study found that most everyday users noticed advertisements within Facebook. Out of these the majority noticed global versus national brand advertisements. Both men and women were influenced in their future purchasing decisions by their friend’s likes. This appears to come from the trust engendered by the relationship with friends in their Facebook network that influenced them to most likely purchase a global brand.

However, further research is needed to make a true connection between trust and a Facebook users’ brand endorsement (like) and the role of consumer motivation when making purchasing decisions. Ultimately the use of this global force for word of mouth marketing has and continues to be a viable and effective means of marketing global brands.

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