

Consumer Behavior in the Digital Era: Assessing the Role of Social Media Marketing

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to research empirically the role of social media in consumers & decision-making processes. A quantitative survey investigates up to what degree experiences are altered by the use of social media. Customer sentiments on items and administrations are currently progressively overwhelmed by outsiders in advanced spaces, which thusly impact conclusions in the disconnected space. Web-based social networking has engaged purchasers, as advertisers have no control over the substance, timing, or recurrence of online discussions among shoppers.

Keywords: Social Media, Consumer Behaviour, Decision making Process

Introduction

In the past, humans could communicate with one another without using a language. The way people communicate in the modern era has drastically changed. Social media has developed into a practical tool for communication across age groups. The way that consumers and marketers communicate has changed as a result of the Internet, especially social media. Some of the features of the Internet are: large volumes of data may be cheaply stored at several locations; strong search engines; data can be organized and distributed; software can operate as a physical distribution medium; and prices are comparatively low. With the internet and a variety of social media platforms, businessmen can now connect with clients anywhere in the globe with only a few clicks.

We are grateful for internet technology, which enables shoppers to look up products online and compare reviews and ratings from previous buyers before making a purchase. Customers make advantage of.

The usage of computers by many people has led to an excessive amount of technology these days, including online marketing. Social media influences

consumer purchasing decisions by facilitating group conversation. The online platform represents a novel approach to business development. Social media alters the ways in which buyers and sellers communicate. Consumers are influenced by e-commerce when making purchases. Social media communication offers a new means of exchanging information about goods and services.

Since the majority of consumers use the internet and online social media platforms, the primary activity for selling goods and services is the analysis of consumer behavior. Social media has grown in importance as a platform for product introduction, marketing, and surveying. Social media is a crucial marketing tool these days for advertising campaigns. Therefore, understanding how social media is influencing customer behavior becomes essential.

Definition

Social Media: The phrase refers to the gathering of diverse online communication among users, including community-based or individual interactions, intercommunications, content sharing, websites, and many more. While different social media experts define social media and base their ideas on different aspects:

- An online social communication tool driven by the internet. a channel for two-way communication.
- A media that enables information creation and exchange. a format made possible by online technology services.
- Are social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, social bookmarking, and so on.

Consumer Behaviour

The behavior that consumers exhibit when looking for, acquiring, utilizing, assessing, and discarding goods and services that they believe will meet their requirements is defined as consumer behavior. The study of consumer behavior focuses on how people choose which consumption-related products to purchase using their available resources, such as time, money, and effort. This covers the items people purchase, their motivations for doing so, when and where they do so, how frequently they buy and use it, how they assess it after making the purchase, how those assessments affect their ability to make future purchases, and how they dispose of it.

History and Classification of Social Media

The phrase "Social Media" gained popularity with the launch of social

networking sites like MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004. During this same period, the phrase "Web 2.0" was also coined to refer to the new usage of the internet as a platform where content is continuously modified by many users in a participatory and collaborative manner rather than being created and published by people (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Wikis, interactive blogs, and collaborative projects were made possible by Web 2.0, which made it easier for people to connect with one another and share ideas, expertise, and information (Constantinides, 2014).

The Influence of the Internet on Consumer Decisions

The increased variety and amount of information available on the Internet has improved the ability of consumers to make better consumer choices (Aksoy and Cooil, 2006) and has opened new opportunities for information seeking due to low search costs. (Jepsen, 2007).

Today, search engine results are often dominated by user content and opinions (Smith, 2009).

The influence of the Internet varies at different stages of decision-making. Initially, the Internet only supported the information search phase (Karimi, 2013), but recent trends in social media, online decision support and recommendation systems have extended the influence of the internet to all decision phases.

Factors affecting the quality of online decision making include perceived risk, product familiarity and trust, in addition to time and cognitive costs associated with acquiring and processing information. The Internet, or online skills, have also become important: the more consumers use the Internet, the more likely they are to use it to make decisions (Jepsen, 2007).

According to Punj (2012), a significant difference in the quality of offline and online decision-making stems from the technology available online, including access to various information sources and decision aids, which can help consumers make better quality decisions.

Social Media and Consumer Decisions

A few creators have as of late examined the impact of social media on buyer conduct, in spite of the fact that for the most part not from the point of view of the choice prepare customers utilize social media for the good thing about quick get to data at their comfort (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), Online customer audits have been appeared to have a causal affect on item choice and

buy conduct by customers (Yayli and Bayram, 2012).

Social media has brought on a 'participatory culture' where clients organize with other like-minded people to lock in an unending circle of sharing data, checking overhauls, and asking suppositions and evaluations on all sorts of items, administrations and exercises (Ashman et al., 2015). The quality of online item surveys, characterised by seen usefulness and influence, at the side the seen number of audits, are found to have a critical positive impact on consumers' buy eagerly (Zhou et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). Social media is seen as a more dependable source of data when compared to corporate communications and promotions. Agreeing to Constantinides (2014), there's a common feeling of doubt towards standard media. Subsequently, buyers are turning absent from conventional media such as tv, magazines, and daily papers as sources to direct their buys (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Objectives of the Study

To study the impact of social media marketing on consumer buying decision process.

- To measure the change in perception of the consumers through the content and engagement on social medias.
- To understand how business businesses can engage more customers to increase the brand value.
- To measure the positive influence of products and services social media advertising.

Review of Literature

Bikhchandani et al., (1998) in their research describes whether or not shoppers shall purchase a product and whether or not they suggest product to others. These are normally used as parameters for purchase intention. The study additionally reveals the result of knowledge cascades on social media by different product attributes is unconditional with different involvement strengths by shoppers. It concludes that the shoppers try to show totally different levels of involvement in different situations wherever they face with brand buying and recommending to others.

Garima Gupta (2013) in her paper analysed the influence of social media on product buying. The results proved of the actual fact that social media have an effect on product buying intentions. Particularly, there's a powerful impact of 3 factors called information about product, peer communication and the level of product involvement on shoppers purchase intentions with respect to social

media. The author infers that, because the product is sold through on-line, it can't be examined; perceived data shared about the product on social media and information sharing among peer teams facilitates consumer's analysis on the product and makes decisions accordingly.

Geetanjali Naidu et al., (2013) in their study analyses the influence of social media in purchasing behavior of customer in Raipur. According to the survey result 75% of Indian youth uses internet for sharing their opinion, views and comment in numerous websites. The analysis concludes that people use social media widely for collecting information regarding product.

Nima Barhemmati et al., (2015) in their study found that Social Network Marketing is becoming the most successful model in advertising. This study aims at how Social Network Marketing influences the shopper buying behavior among consumers who use social networking sites. The study also analyzes the relationships between customer engagement, social media selling activities and shopper purchase behavior. A survey was conducted among fifty students of Malaysian National University. The results showed positive relationships between consumer engagement of social media and their buying behaviors.

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Elenica Pjero et al., (2015) the researchers conducted the study in Albania reality sector. Their article targeted on Social Media and its capacity to effect buying behavior of customer. The researchers discussed the growth and adaptability of Social Media networks by numerous users in the world. The researchers made a multifaceted analysis on the impact of social media on consumers and buying intentions. The samples are selected from users of social media in all dimensions and the result depicts the significant behavior of consumers.

Tayyaba Noreen et al., (2015) the researchers conducted the study about the Social media impact in Pakistan and Korea. This study investigates the impact of social media on the buying behavior of consumers. This study focuses on e - word of mouth, social media publicity and social media. The findings indicated that consumers of Korean consumers have higher intention to buy a product using social media platforms when compared to customers in Pakistan. The results 49 proved that e - word of mouth have a bigger impact on buying intention when compared to publicity on social networks.

Sakkthivel et al., (2015) in their analysis makes an attempt to check the influence of social media sites over young woman consumer's shopping behavior from Islamic faith countries. This study employs structural equation modeling to check out the influence of young woman consumers and the results disclosed that brand, society and reference teams exert additional influence over

young woman consumer's shopping behavior through social media.

Belch and Belch et al., (2003) described in their study that at some situation during the purchasing process, shoppers stop looking out and evaluating data before going to the next stage. At this stage, shoppers decide whether or not they can obtain products or not. The buying decision depends on the motivation and influence of other shoppers through reviews and recommendation.

Young Ae Kim et al., (2007) Explains in their study that buying choices are powerfully affected by people who the buyer knows and believes. Several internet buyers ask for the 50 opinions before buying a new product. Internet social communities allow chatting among trusting members, allow customers to share their experiences by means of writing reviews and rating others reviews. Ecommerce websites have started to obtain information on the interaction between customers in their websites, to understand and investigate social influence on purchase process, to boost CRM and improve sales.

According to McKinsey Company (2010) in his study, Social Media has a notable influence on customers particularly who are first time purchasers of a product. It has a greater influence on high priced products because the consumers want to conduct additional analysis and to get opinions for buying the product. This indicates that Social Media has an impact on customers in their data search stage of buying a product and as a result, customers will use Social Media to get data concerning the product and services.

Forbes et al., (2013) made an analysis with a study of around 240 sample consumers on their purchases in relation to the type of the product bought and its costs. The conclusion shows that the purchase decision is influenced by the suggestion of the consumers on-line friends. The study reveals that fifty-nine percent of the sample uses Face book and used public media to receive product information from contacts or friends. These result shows that there is an influence on shopping behavior by social media.

Michel Laroche et al., (2013) in their research say that the brand communities supported by websites impact the client Centric model and brand trust. The study aimed to show the relationships between client and brand, product, company and different customers. A study was conducted on four hundred samples through survey method. The result of the study disclosed that brand communities available on social media have a positive impact on customer-brand, customer-product, customer customer relationships and client- company . The research also concludes that brand trust plays an negotiator role in changing the consequences of relationships in brand community to brand loyalty.

Research Methodology

Need for the Study

Social media utilization impacts buyer fulfillment within the stages of data look and elective assessment, with fulfillment getting intensified as the consumer moves along the method towards the ultimate buy choice and post purchase assessment. Social media permits marketers to put through and lock in potential clients where they are at; LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and indeed a few of the more youthful stages like TikTok. With a solid social media technique and the capacity to make locks in substance, marketers can lock in their group of onlookers.

Population: Random Customers

Sample Size: 137 respondents

Sampling Technique: Random sampling technique

Source of Data: The data were collected from the primary data.

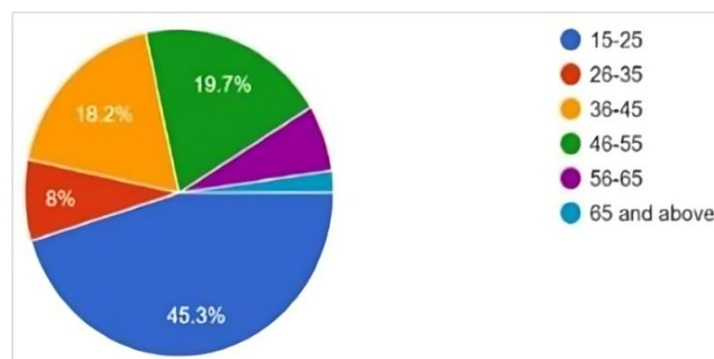
Research Method: Qualitative research method used in this study

Qualitative data is the descriptive and conceptual findings collected through questionnaires, interviews, or observation. Analyzing qualitative data allows us to explore ideas and further explain quantitative results.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

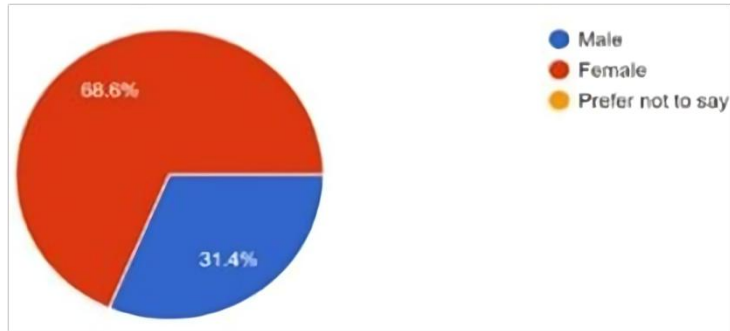
Percentage Analysis Age of Respondents

The following pie chart shows the age distribution of people into 6 different age groups who filled out questionnaire.



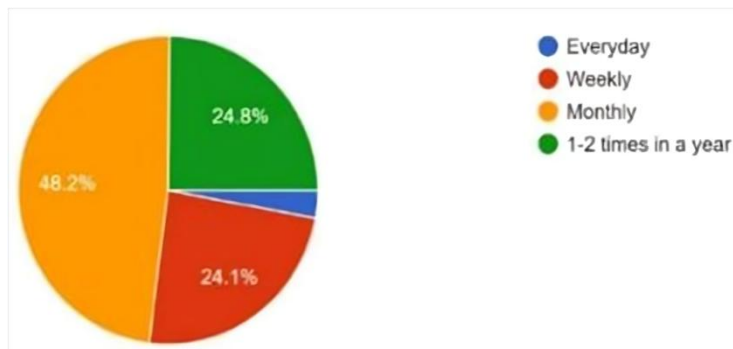
Gender

The following pie chart shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

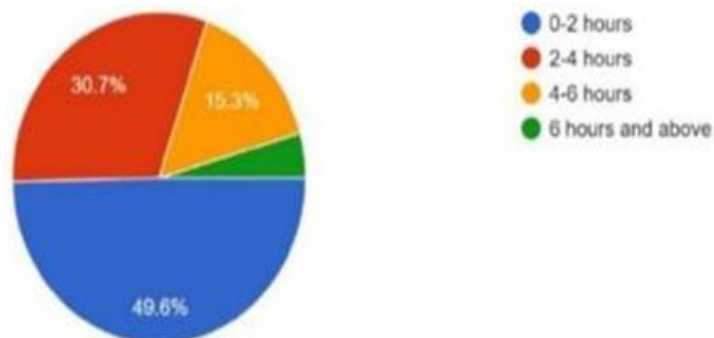


By asking these two general questions we are able to identify the diversity of the responses, which will help us give a more generalized analysis. Six different age groups are covered by collected data, they are 15 - 25 years old 45.3(%), 26 – 35 years old 8(%), 36 – 45 years old 18.2(%), 46 – 55 years old 19.7(%), 56 – 65 years old 6.6(%), 65 and above 2.2(%).

From the received responses, 31.4(%) of the respondents were female, and 68.6(%) were male. Since the collected data covers people from different age groups, preferences, and gender, therefore the following analysis is carried out in assessing the general consumer behaviour in Gwalior Region.

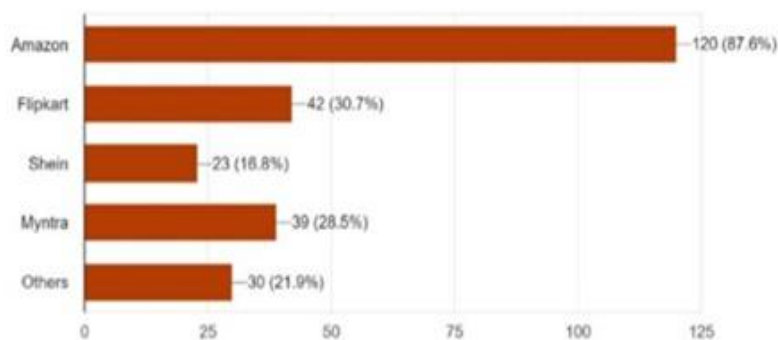


Frequency of online shopping done by people the above pie chart shows the frequency of online shopping done by people. It shows that 48.2(%) of the people did online shopping monthly, 24.1(%) of the people did online shopping on a weekly basis, 2.9(%) of the people did online shopping every day and 24.8(%) people did online shopping 1 or 2 times a year.



Time spent on Social Media Websites on a typical day.

The fourth question of our survey was to find out about the number of hours spent by people on social media per day. Through this we got to know that major chunk of population spent 0 - 2 hours of their time on social media i.e. 49.6(%) of people. Furthermore, 30.7(%) of population spent 2 - 4 hours on social media, 15.3(%) of people spent 4 - 6 hours on social media, with the least number i.e. 4.4(%) spending 6 hours or more on social media. The emergence and popularity of social media have made it easy for an individual to communicate in real time with different people. So one can extend their hover of online companions to any degree with the utilization of internet-based life.

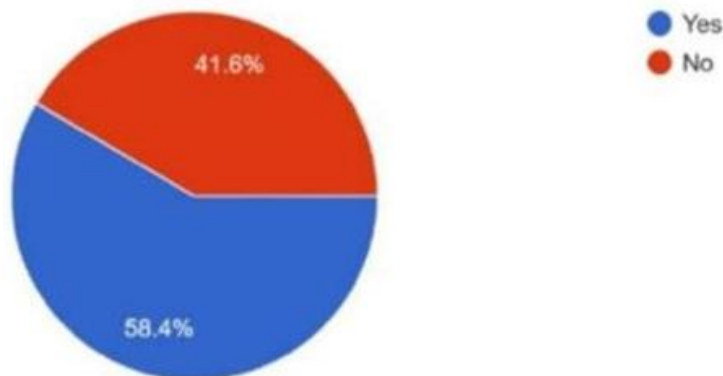


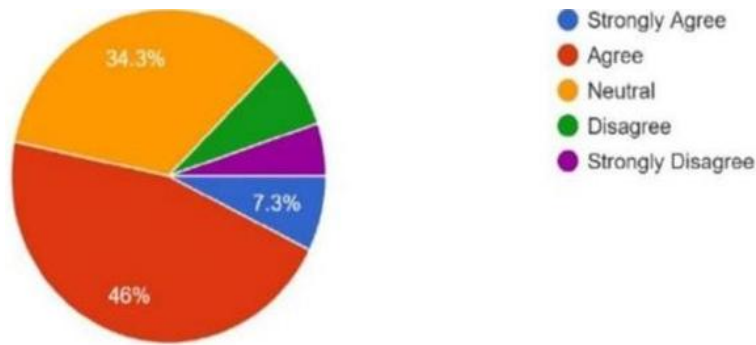
Apps and Websites used most for buying products online:

According to the survey Amazon is the most preferred platform to do online shopping with 87.6(%) of the votes. The comes Flipkart 30.7(%), Myntra 28.5(%), Others 21.9(%), Shein 16.8(%). Amazon is to be considered as a leader of online networking sites these days as stated by the majority of our respondents.

Do people follow brands on social media?

Do you feel that your purchase is influenced by social media?





Businesses of all stripes are using social media to identify and establish connections with their target audience. Promotions on social media have an impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. 46% of respondents agree that social media influences consumer decisions, compared to 34.3% who are undecided and very few who are in disagreement.

Findings and Suggestions

1. Since this age group spends the most hours on social media, the majority of responders were from the 15 to 25 age range.
2. According to survey data, about half of the population shops online once or twice a month. This could imply that they are members of the working class, who typically purchase in bulk from online platforms yet do not have a lot of free time.
3. According to study statistics, approximately 50% of consumers use social media platforms for between one and two hours each day. Social media is essential for fostering connections and building relationships, both of which help us advance professionally and take advantage of new opportunities.
4. According to survey data, about 60% of participants follow brands on social media. Consumers follow brands on social media to stay informed about new products, sales, and other updates.
5. According to survey data, nearly 61% of respondents saw social media as an electronic kind of word-of-mouth recommendation, with many consumers basing purchasing decisions on recommendations from social media.
6. According to survey data, over 47% of participants thought that a social media page or website had an impact on their perception of the brand. Since the majority of internet shoppers read brand evaluations before making a purchase, this could have an impact on how people perceive a given brand.
7. According to study data, 46% of participants said that social media had an impact on their choice. The reason for this is because a lot of consumers look at internet reviews and comments about a product before deciding on the best brand and pricing.
8. According to survey data, nearly 88% of participants think social media is crucial for brand promotion since it increases visibility, which in turn helps a brand generate leads and boost sales.

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