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A quantitative investigation of social media and its impacts on consumer buying habits

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to conduct empirical study on the function of social media in consumer decision-making processes. Customer emotions about items and administrations are now becoming more influenced by outsiders in advanced spaces, which has an effect on conclusions in the unconnected environment. Because marketers have no influence over the content, timing, or frequency of online dialogues among customers, web-based social networking has engaged them. According to the findings, social media use increases customer happiness through the phases of information search and alternative assessment, with satisfaction increasing as the consumer progresses through the process to the final buy decision and post-purchase review.

Keywords: social media, consumer buying, consumer buying habits, web based buying

Introduction

Consumer social interaction has a huge effect on marketing efforts since marketers must be aware of the aspects that influence the consumer's buying choice. Marketers must participate in online marketing techniques and use social media marketing to influence customer purchasing choices. (Huang, Benyoucef, & Benyoucef, 2017) ^[1]

Recently, internet trends have evolved in a commercial context as observed by consumers from various perspectives. Its growth has turned users into customers. Social media has transformed the way customers and advertisers connect with one another. Consumer decision-making and product assessment are influenced by the information society. In current times consumers have access to multiple sources of information that in turn has been aided by other customers' recommendations. The customer is an important factor in social media marketing. Through peer communication, social media offers a new way to get product knowledge. Social media helps customers to maintain positive relationships with one another and with others by completing several tasks and supporting numerous modes of communication and information exchange (comments, thoughts, videos and images). With the growth of social media in recent years, a study of consumer behaviour on digital platforms is an emerging subject of research since social media helps organisations establish marketing strategies via trust-building approaches and encourages people to purchase online items. The purpose of this research paper is to look at the function of social media and how it may affect a consumer's purchase intention as well as a user's trust in a social commerce environment (Liu, *et al.*, 2013) ^[2].

Social Media and Consumer

Social media is being utilised to provide customers with a voice. Companies are interacting in order to raise brand recognition, engage current consumers, drive traffic to other marketing domains, and expand the number of channels. Each social media platform has a function to play in spreading, receiving, and sharing information without regard for borders, and as previously said, social media allows for an interactive exchange of knowledge. Online life provides a new layer of potential outcomes and problems for advertising (PR) and businesses all over the globe. It rebrands the network notion and reclassifies the modes of communication between customers and brands. Prior to the advent of the internet, customers had few options for taking their complaints beyond calling customer service or notifying others in their neighbourhood. As a consequence of web-based social networking, this has

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changed. Customers may now freely criticise firms in seconds (Islam, *et al.*, 2017) ^[3].

Another section that has perplexed the noble buying conduct process concept is online networking, in which buying views are impacted not only by conventional channels but also by online stages. Inclinations and decision checks are based on information sources supplied by parties not under the control of online advertising, such as peer audits, recommendations, websites, interpersonal groups, and other types of client-created content. Peer communication through web-based existence, a different kind of consumer socialising, has an influence on dynamic and hence advertising tactics. According to buyer socialisation theory, correspondence among buyers has an impact on their psychological, emotional, and behavioural states.

Word of Mouth and the Internet

Virtual worlds provide a platform for both formal and informal connection between consumers and enterprises, and the virtual business environment is an important aspect in competitiveness. Today's client is an inquisitive consumer, and internet users can provide crucial cultural and commercial information to marketers (Park, & Lee, 2017) ^[4].

To understand consumer behaviour in the virtual world, first understand how people make purchase decisions. The internet's evolution into an information economy influencing social, economic, commercial, and political life, with consumers in continual communication, is crucial to understanding consumer decisions. Consumers' online product selections are influenced by online recommendations based on the experiences and motivations of millions of other users. Messages are continually screened, posted to online marketplaces, and disseminated to users, who then filter and transmit these messages to peers and other personal user groups, building connectedness. Connectivity refers to a consumer's access to and capacity to engage in online communications life through eWOM; electronic word of mouth that is more successful than earlier traditional sources of recommendations. eWOM is a consumer-dominated online marketing channel that has a significant impact on the consumer's information search, alternative evaluation, and final decision to purchase a product. The internet's popularity has changed 41 eWOM into a network with the emergence of social media. Customers may now engage with one another in the virtual world and voice their ideas and opinions on brand value, thanks to the advent of social media (and, by extension, eWOM). eWOM allows consumers to connect with one another and share ideas, experiences, and research about consumer products and services in online situations (Ramanathan, *et al.*, 2017) ^[13]. As a consequence, social media is fast transforming WOM marketing by expanding communication channels and facilitating effective discussion between marketers and customers. This promotes and strengthens customer-brand interaction in an online consumer community. eWOM (through social media) is a speedier means of communication that refers to informal connectedness and involvement among persons in online contexts about goods and/or services. Collaboration, both formal and informal, is particularly prominent on social media platforms. Thus, the internet enables marketers to provide clients with richer and more personalised information, as well as to improve

personalization tactics. eWOM is quickly emerging as a kind of social interaction in online situations, and it has a substantial impact on product evaluation, criticism, and praise. This means that consumers may now influence the final purchasing decisions of other consumers. The most common sort of internet marketing is social media marketing. Because of the growth of social media and consumers' need for social engagement and customer care, marketers must focus on the issue of online interaction, since the bulk of corporate operations increasingly revolve around human and technical communication (Alshurideh, *et al.*, 2012) ^[5].

Consumer Buyers' Behavior

A huge proportion of customers sought suggestions, peer counsel, and product information via Facebook reviews and ratings ("likes"). In conclusion, social networks were recognised as the most essential social media platforms since they served as a "all-purpose" medium for connecting with consumers at all stages of the consumer decision process (Richa, 2012) ^[9]. The influence of social media on contact points along a consumer's purchase decision path. The following main conclusions emerged from this research:

- Consumers thought that sharing information, cooperating, and developing connections were necessary for continuing communication.
- Through social media marketing, firms were able to give extra sources of information on product advantages and features, as well as real-time feedback to consumers.
- Because many consumers depended on social recommendations, social networks, particularly Facebook, were determined to be the most suitable information sharing platform at the outset of the consumer purchase decision; and

The phases of consumer behaviour are as follows:

Problem identification- A customer recognises a considerable difference between the intended and actual condition of things that is not large enough to alert and activate the decision-making process. When a person is engaged remotely, for as by seeing a TV commercial for a vacation, the upgrades generate meditations or thoughts about the prospect of producing. When a consumer recognises a need, they must gain information in order to understand how to meet that need, which leads to step 2.

Information search- Buyers inquiring about their alternatives depend on both internal and external influences, as well as both positive and negative historical connections with an item or brand. People seeking information may study alternatives in person or utilise online assets such as Google or customer audits (Godey, *et al.*, 2016) ^[7].

Alternative's evaluation - After acquiring the data, the client analyses and evaluates the alternative item selections in order to make a purchase decision. However, the optional assessment and data search stages, which were presented independently, are surprisingly interwoven throughout dynamic, and customers alternate between the two on a frequent basis. Elective assessment involves the selection of choice alternatives as well as the formulation of evaluation measures. When a choice is made, the display of the considered choices is understood to be a choice.

The final decision or choice made on the thing to buy is referred to as a buying choice. The act of purchase is the last significant step, in which the customer determines what to buy, where to buy it, and how to pay. Purchase choices are impacted by goals, context, and personal circumstances. The amount of time available for decision making, the availability of information, and the retail environment are all elements that may influence a purchase decision. The attitude of family and friends, as well as unforeseen circumstances such as product availability (size, colour, and stock-outs), may cause a re-evaluation (Gupta, 2011) [11].

Post-purchase decisions- Following consumption, the consumer expresses varying degrees of enjoyment, which results in new behaviour. This step of the process requires initiative from both the buyer and the seller, since the product must completely meet the buyer's expectations, and the vendor must secure continued involvement and repurchase by the customer.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To find the reasons for the use of social media and its impact on consumers buying habits
2. To ascertain the significance of the reasons for the selection preferences of customers' retail store

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive in nature in which the reasons for use of social media and its impact on consumers

buying habits have been studied. The sample size of the study is 150. The data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire on a five-point scale and analysed with the help of the mean values and t test.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Number of respondents	% age
Gender		
Male	45	30%
Female	105	70%
Total	150	100%
Social media platforms used		
Instagram	65	43%
Facebook	40	27%
Snapchat	45	30%
Total	150	100%
Whether they shop online or not		
Yes	80	53%
No	70	47%
Total	150	100%

Table 1 presents demographic profile of the customers who use social media. There are 30% males and 70% females in the study. Among the respondents 43% use Instagram, 27% use Facebook and 30% use Snapchat. Out of these 53% respondents shop online and 47% do not shop online.

Table 2: Mean Value of the use of social media and its impact on consumers buying habits

Sr. No.	Social media and its impact on consumers buying habits	Mean Score
1.	Internet helps people connect easily and share information with one another	4.23
2.	Social media is one of the easiest way to connect with each other	4.62
3.	Social media is the latest way to communicate with each other and it is also fast changing consumer behavior	4.54
4.	Consumers find it easy to learn about different products through social media	4.43
5.	Social media has completely transformed the way consumers communicate with marketers	4.39
6.	Marketing strategies by companies are developed considering social media	3.95
7.	Social media has given a voice to the consumers	4.67
8.	Social media give additional information to the customers regarding the benefits of the products and features of the product	4.68
9.	Social media platforms, especially Facebook is one of the easiest ways of sharing information	4.24
10.	Consumers use the feedback on the social media platforms for seeking recommendations	4.35

Table 2 shows the impact of social media on consumers buying behaviour. It shows that Social media give additional information to the customers regarding the benefits of the products and features of the product with a mean value of 4.68. It is followed by Social media has given a voice to the consumers (4.67), Social media is one of the easiest way to connect with each other (4.62), Social media is the latest way to communicate with each other and it is also fast changing consumer behaviour (4.54), Consumers find it easy to learn about different products through social media (4.43), Social

media has completely transformed the way consumers communicate with marketers (4.39), Consumers use the feedback on the social media platforms for seeking recommendations (4.35), Social media platforms, especially Facebook is one of the easiest ways of sharing information (4.24), Internet helps people connect easily and share information with one another (4.23), Marketing strategies by companies are developed considering social media (3.95) were considered to be important.

Table 3: Impact of social media on consumers' buying habits

Sr. No.	Impact of social media on consumers' buying habits	Mean Score	t-Value	Sig
1.	Internet helps people connect easily and share information with one another	4.23	9.098	0.000
2.	Social media is one of the easiest way to connect with each other	4.62	13.128	0.000
3.	Social media is the latest way to communicate with each other and it is also fast changing consumer behavior	4.54	11.888	0.000
4.	Consumers find it easy to learn about different products through social media	4.43	9.080	0.000
5.	Social media has completely transformed the way consumers communicate with marketers	4.39	9.119	0.000
6.	Marketing strategies by companies are developed considering social media	3.95	5.200	0.000
7.	Social media has given a voice to the consumers	4.67	14.047	0.000
8.	Social media give additional information to the customers regarding the benefits of the products and features of the product	4.68	15.669	0.000
9.	Social media platforms, especially Facebook is one of the easiest ways of sharing information	4.24	9.350	0.000
10.	Consumers use the feedback on the social media platforms for seeking recommendations	4.35	10.810	0.000

Table 3 shows the results of t-test. It is found from the table that the significance value for all the statements is below 0.05, hence all the statements regarding social media and its impact on consumers buying habits are significant.

Conclusion

Understanding how digital and social media are utilised in the purchase selection process, their impact on buyer behaviour, and their position as a marketing tool is a critical problem for marketers right now. Those who loved the decision-making process were happier with the three steps and the final purchase. High levels of trust and confidence lead to higher levels of satisfaction with the stages and the purchase. Satisfiers were happier with their information search than maximizes. When compared to those who relied on other sources of information, social media users perceived decision-making to be simpler and more enjoyable. Throughout the process, they also felt more confident and satisfied. Those who regarded social media information to be of better quality and quantity than expected were happier overall. This shows that customer happiness with social media was not affected by information overload.

When compared to those who relied on other sources of information, social media users perceived decision-making to be simpler and more enjoyable. Those who regarded social media information to be of better quality and quantity than expected were more happy overall. Overall, the findings indicate that Social Media has a significant influence on customer decision-making.

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