

Influence of Social Media on Consumer Buying Behavior

- Gharte P. V. *

Asst. Prof., B.Y.K. (Sinnar) College of Commerce, Nashik

Today, Social media is one of the most popular and widely utilized forms of communication. The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has significantly altered the landscape of consumer buying behavior, particularly among the younger generation. This study investigates the influence of social media on consumer decision making processes, Brand perceptions, and purchasing patterns in individuals. People have been using social media to discuss their experiences in recent years. This also includes experiences using product or service or platforms. These product reviews posted by social media users are read by thousands of people every day and they have become a source of influencing consumer buying behavior. It explores how factors such as social media influencers, online reviews, peer recommendations, and targeted advertisements shape purchasing preferences. Social media is being used today to effectively market products and services and to attract a wide demographic of audience. This paper aims at identifying how different aspects of social media can impact consumer buying behavior.

Key Word : Social media, consumer buying behavior, digital marketing, Online reviews

Introduction:

Social media allows exchange of ideas, opinions, stories, and facts among individuals who may be living in different parts of the world. In recent years, social media has experienced unprecedented growth, becoming an integral part of daily life of billions of people across the globe. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, You tube have revolutionized how consumers interact with brands, making it easier for companies to reach their target audiences. There are currently 3.88 billions users of social media worldwide and by using media brands can target this huge audience and generate significant leads. Popular social media platforms that are used by companies to target their customers are

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Twitter
4. Telegram
5. You Tube

From a customer's perspective social media is a vital tool for researching companies and making purchase decisions. According to Global Web Index 54% social media user's use social media to research product and 71% are more likely to purchase goods and services based on social media referrals.

Before making a purchase, over 77% people examine customer evaluations. If company has reviews, it quickly establishes credibility and confidence. Online reviews

give potential buyers, the impression that your company is authentic and offers a genuine product or service.

Through this study I have tried to understand to how much social media advertisements can impact a consumer's buying behavior.'

Literature Review:

1. The beginning of social media usage:

Social media was popularized in the year 2004 after the creation of Facebook. Web 2.0 was later discovered which meant that users could collaboratively work on one platform; this led to the advent of blogs, Wikipedia and other collaborative working tools. For instance, Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia, is one of the most popular platforms and has the facility for users to collaborate on information sharing. Social media provides a platform for customers to interact with each other, give advice, suggestions and share experiences. This enabled consumers to have a lot of information at the click of a button that wasn't possible initially. Social media can be categorized into: collaborative projects (Wikipedia, blogs), content communities (YouTube), social networking (Facebook), virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (Second Life) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

2. Emergence of social media as a mode of advertisement: In the late 90s the most

popular mode of advertisement used was Word-of-Mouth wherein the organization would attempt a good word about themselves through customers and employees. Word-of-Mouth is a primary source of information for consumer buying decisions, shaping perceptions and expectations of brands, products and services and impacting all phases of consumer decision-making from product awareness to selection and post-purchase evaluation. Today this Word of Mouth can be used electronically where if one person says something good about the product it can reach hundreds and even thousands of users.

Consumer Decision Process

Consumers are individuals that purchase or consume products and services that are offered to them. The consumer buying behaviour can be mysterious and complex at times. The openness and straight forwardness of data have significantly impacted the dynamic procedure, along these lines, it is critical to at what are the obstacles and fiction focus that hold possibilities turning out to be buyers or keep buyers dithering from repurchasing. Hence, the consumer decision-making process shows the critical aspects of individual consumption behaviour.

Consumer behaviour can be classified into five stages:

1. Problem recognition
2. Search of information
3. Evaluation of alternatives,
4. Final decision
5. Post-purchase decision

Social Media

Social Media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media is accessible and enabled by scalable communication techniques. As social media become more and more prevalent, connecting people and facilitating the exchange of information, consumer behaviour is shifting. Through social media, consumers now can easily watch an interesting advertisement on YouTube, while posting their own opinions on Twitter and sharing it with friends on Facebook. Social media differ from paper-based media (e.g., magazines and newspapers) and traditional electronic media such as Radio, TV in many ways, including quality frequency, interactivity, usability, and performance.

Types of Social Media

In this discussion regarding different categories of social media, 4 distinct types of social media outlets are focused on:

1. Social networking sites
2. Social news Website
3. Media sharing Sites
4. Blogs

Each of these social media platforms unique features-

1. Social networking sites¹

A social networking site is an online platform that people use to build social networks or social relationships with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Interpersonal interaction locales, as a rule, have another client input a rundown of individuals with whom they share an association and afterward permit the individuals on the rundown to affirm or some interpersonal interaction sites like LinkedIn are utilized for setting up proficient associations, while destinations like Facebook ride the line among private and expert.

2. Social news Website

Social news websites are communities that encourage their users to submit news stories, articles, and media and share them with other users. These stories are ranked based on popularity, as voted on by other users of the website. Users and comments and share these stories too.

3. Media sharing sites

A site that empowers clients to store and offer their interactive media records (photographs, recordings, music) with others. The media is played/seen from any Web program and might be specifically accessible by means of a secret key or to the overall population.

4. Blogs

A blog is a discussion published on the Web consisting of discrete, informal diary-style

text entries called posts. A blog allows you to post your views on a particular topic. On February 16, 2011, there were over 156 million public blogs in existence. (Wikipedia)

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the impact of Social media marketing on consumer buying decision process
2. To measure the change in perception of the consumers through the content and engagement on Social media.
3. To understand how business businesses can engage more customers to increase the brand value.
4. To measure the positive influence of products and services social media advertising
5. To study the factors influencing the consumer for the purchase of products through social media advertisement.
6. To know which product is most suitable for social media marketing.
7. To find out which is the best social media preferred by consumers.

Scope of the Study:

The scope of the study covers the general public, the study will help us to understand the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. Social media has an important role in influencing buying decisions of consumer. This study has made an attempt to understand the influence of social media on consumer behaviour. Social media has the power to influence potential consumers from the start until the stage of a purchase and beyond as well. The study is greatly significant because in today's world social media has an important role in day-to-day activities of people. The study will also reveal how social media will affect buying decisions of general public and the factors that motivate general public to purchase through social media platforms².

Data Collection Method

The data collection method used is primary as well as secondary. We collected the primary data through surveys using the platform of Google forms, which is a free surveying web-based application. For secondary data we talked to some people about their buying decisions and went through other research papers having similar topics. Exploratory research is characterized as an examination used to examine a difficult which isn't plainly characterized. It is led to have a superior comprehension of the current issue, however won't give convincing outcomes. Such an examination is generally done when the issue is at a primer stage

Sampling Design

- Sample Universe: The sample universe includes the people of Nashik region.
- Sample Size: The sample size of the participants was of 136 people

Data Analysis

1. Background

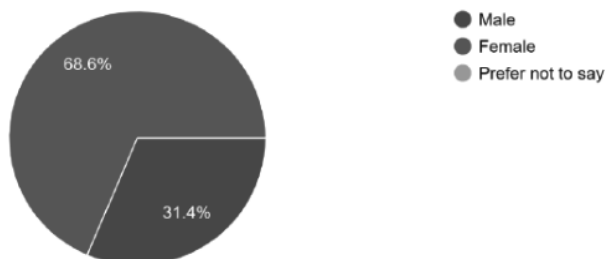
The following section presents analysis made on the data collected from the

questionnaire. The set of questions were sent to individuals who are currently living in Nashik, Maharashtra. Since the survey was sent to 150 individuals, and the number of participants was 136, therefore the total percentage of responses was 90.66 (%) In total the questionnaire contains 10 questions

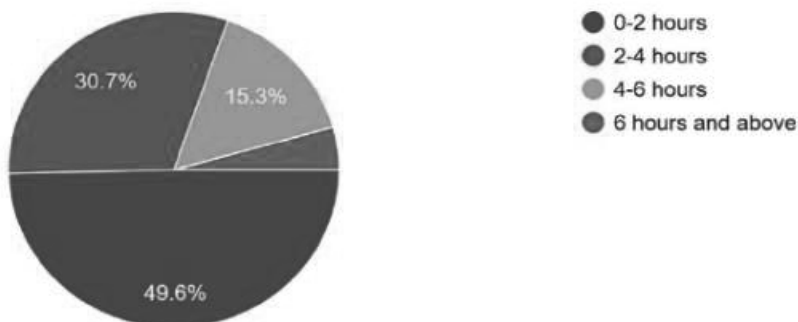
1. Gender

Gender

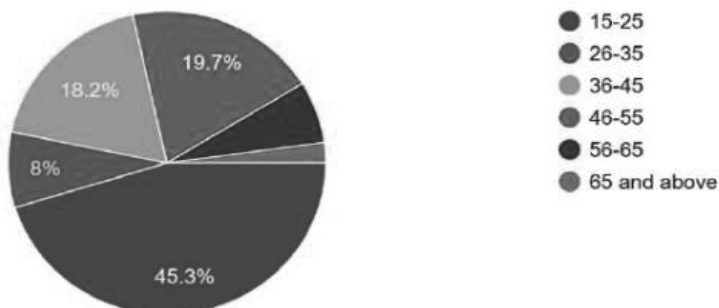
137 responses

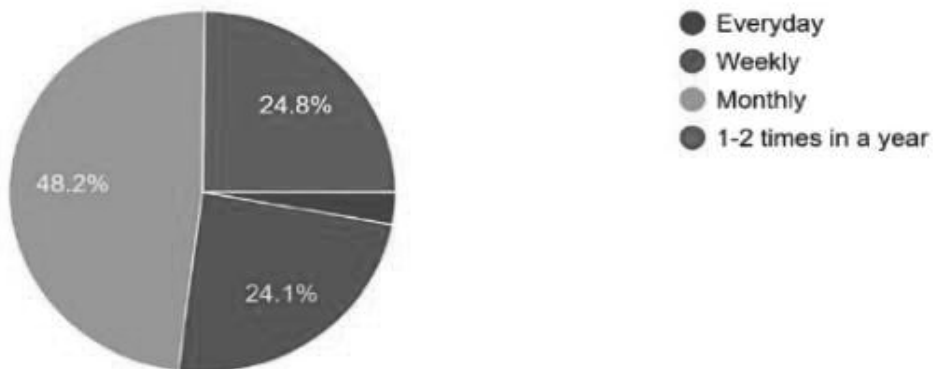
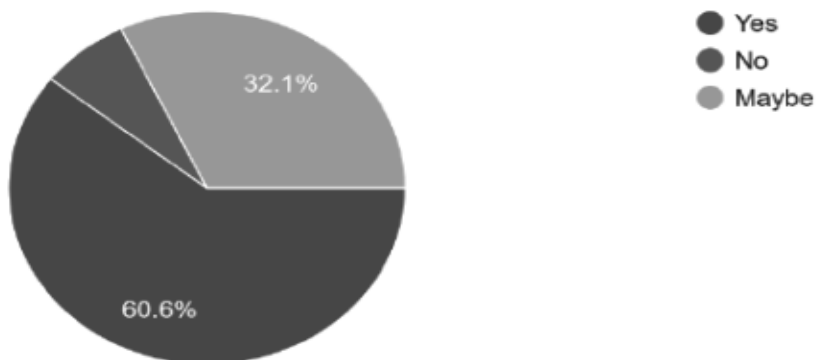
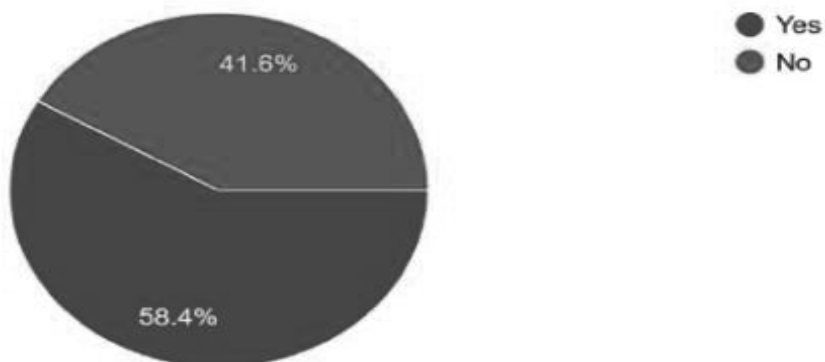


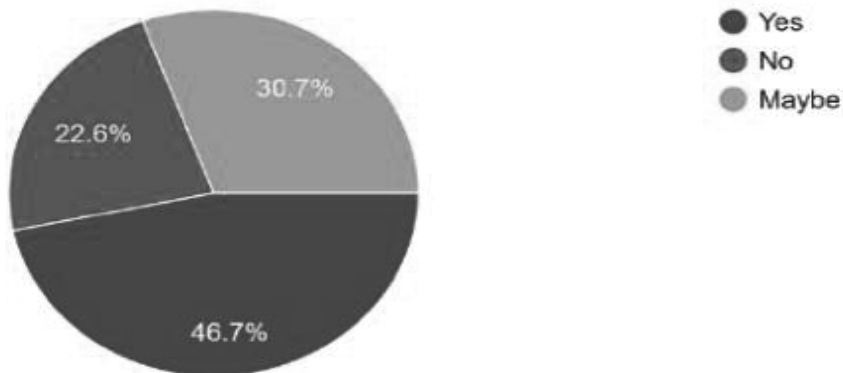
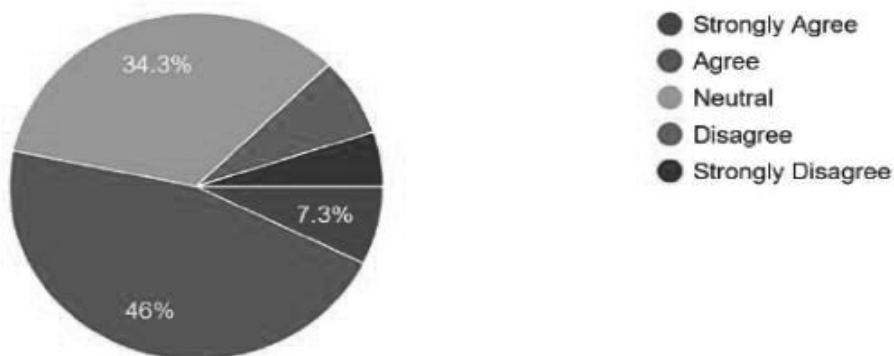
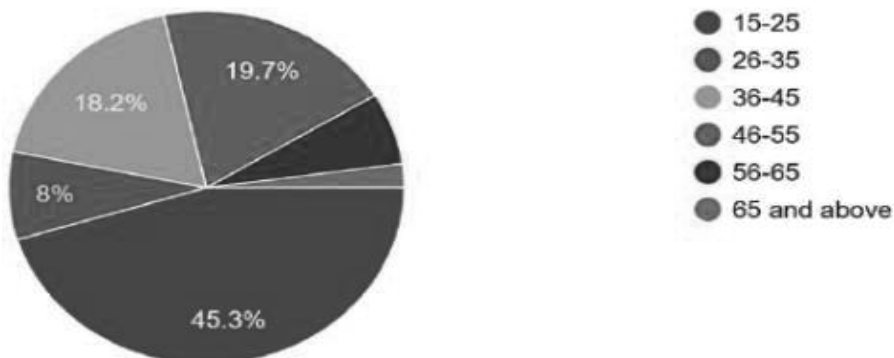
2. Time spent on Social Media Websites on a typical day

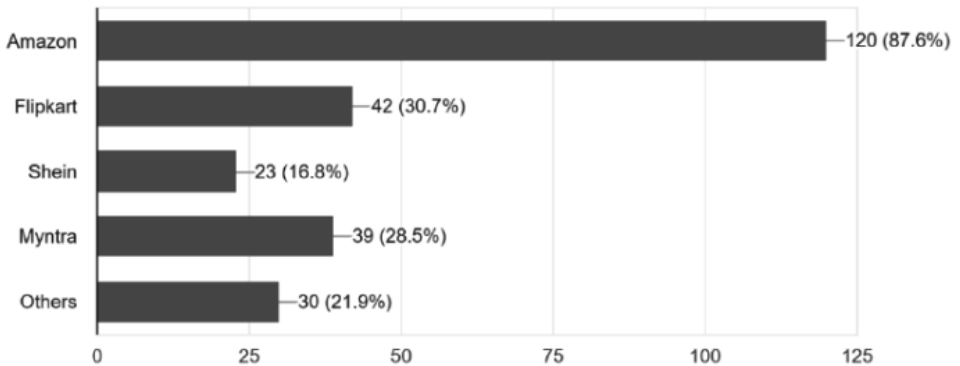


3. Age Distribution



4. Frequency of online shopping done by people**5. Do you take social media as electronic word-of-mouth?****6. Do people follow brands on social media?**

7. Does social media affect your vision of the brand?**8. Do you feel that your purchase is influenced by social media?****9. Do you think social media plays an important role in promoting a brand?**

10. Apps and Websites used most for buying products online:**Findings**

1. The maximum numbers of respondents were from the age group of 15-25 as this is the age group which spends maximum number of hours on Social Media³.
2. Data from survey shows that nearly half of the people tend to do online shopping once or twice in a month. This may suggest that they belong to working class which do not have a lot of free time and they tend to buy in large quantities but less frequently from Online platforms.
3. The data from the survey shows that almost half of the people spend 0-2 hours every day on Social Media
4. Platforms. Social Media plays a crucial role in connecting people and developing relationships which enables us to grow in our careers and have more opportunities.
5. The data from the survey shows almost 60% of the respondents follow brands on Social Media. People follow brands on Social Media as they want to know about sales, new products etc.
6. The data from the survey shows that almost 61% take Social Media as the Electronic word of mouth as many people make purchase related decisions according to Social Media referrals.
7. The data from the survey suggests that almost 47% of the respondents believe that Social Media page/website affected their vision of the brand. As most of the consumers who shop online read reviews about the brands of the products, they are buying which might affect their vision of that particular brand.
8. The data from the survey shows that 46% of the respondents believe that their decision was influenced by Social Media. It is because many people tend to see online reviews and comments about that particular product to choose the perfect brand and price.
9. The data from the survey shows that almost 88% of the respondents believes Social Media plays an important role in promoting a brand as it helps increase the amount of exposure which enables the brand to generate leads and increased sales.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from this research that consumers in New Delhi, India are actively utilizing social media platforms as a tool in validating their purchase decisions. Social media is taken as the electronic word of mouth by majority of the respondents. Reviews and preferences by the past consumers on Social media platforms affect the decision process of potential customers. Social media users found decision-making to be easier and enjoyed the process more, when compared to those who used other information sources. Those who perceived the information on social media to be of higher quality and greater quantity than expectations were more satisfied overall⁴. The results overall show that Social Media has a strong impact on the consumer decision making process.

Limitations

The findings and conclusions of this research hold validity exclusively within the chosen population, and cannot be universally applied due to divergent environmental influences and individual respondent viewpoints. To establish results reflective of broader consumer social media behavior and the extent of its impact on purchasing, amore expansive and quantitative geographical study is imperative. Given the constrained time frame and scope, numerous theories pertinent to social media and consumer purchasing behavior were explored, albeit in a generalized manner. This approach aimed to offer readers overarching understanding of the subject matter.

References

1. Keller, K.L. (2001) Strategic Brand Management: Best Practice Cases in Branding: Lessons from the World's Strongest Brand. Prentice Hall, USA. http://brandabout.ir/wp-content/uploads/Keller_Strategic_Brand_ManagementBookFi.pdf.
2. Forushani, S., Mohammad, R. and Kuhgilani, N. (2004) Electronic Impact in the Early Third Millennium. Trading Publication Company of Trading Researches and Studies, Germany https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320288026_A_study_on_factors_influence_towards_e-commerce.
3. Bronner, F. and Hoog, R. (2010) 'Consumer-generated versus marketer-generated websites in consumer decision making', International Journal of Market Research, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp.231–248. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.2501/S1470785309201193>.
4. Kaplan, A. M. and Haenlein M., (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media, Business horizons 53 (1), 59-68.