



AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING USAGE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN TIRUCHIRAPALLI DISTRICT

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ANSTRACT

Social media is an inextricable part of life and a means of communicating thoughts, feelings, and ideas to a larger audience. It is expected to be a formidable instrument for attracting new clients because of its tremendous potential and speed in reaching others. People frequently visit social media websites daily or weekly as they have integrated them into daily life. User involvement is rising as social media usage becomes more frequent. The study reveals that the majority of people utilise various social media platforms numerous times every day. Because social networking sites enable easy contact, users frequent them frequently, and this increased dedication influences their behaviour and thought. Social media is heavily consuming users' time, which demonstrates their dedication to the same activity. The purpose of this study was to analyse and investigate how social media marketing is used to influence consumer purchasing behaviour in the Tiruchirapalli district. This study focuses on the factors that influence purchasing decisions and the important role that social networking sites can play in supporting a brand. The results and recommendations of the statistical analysis performed on the primary data gathered for the study are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Social Media, Buying Behavior, Communication, Social Networking, Marketing Etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of social media in marketing has been one of the most important developments in the field of marketing since it became a distinct discipline. Social media, which began as a means to connect people, has developed into the most significant platform for marketers, supporting them in all facets of marketing (Gopinath, 2019a). With more than 1.5 billion users across numerous social media platforms, social media has defied all growth models and currently accounts for more than one sixth of all people on Earth. It is a very effective database that may be utilised for a variety of important purposes, including marketing, due to its numerical majesty. Social media is used to identify customer needs, connect and engage with customers, help them remember companies, and influence their decision-making and post-purchase satisfaction processes (Gopinath, 2019b). All types of businesses, including small firms, non-profit groups, and even political parties, are embracing this most effective marketing tool to reach their target audiences.

WebPages on the internet, which were first introduced to construct platforms for online partners, are now entry points for brand building and customer relations. Every day, they are generating new business and marketing chances for organisations (Gopinath, 2019c). Therefore, it is essential to first analyse what these platforms are, how they fit into society, and how they affect brand preferences and customer loyalty.

Researchers are likewise interested in social media use, and they are looking at its implications and use from a variety of perspectives. Numerous research are carried out abroad, and now studies are being carried out on Indian consumers. From its impact on customer decision-making to its efficacy, ROI, data mining, sentimental analysis, etc., social media has been the subject of marketing research. Because it enables customers to look for alternatives, branding is crucial to consumer decision-making. Social media has developed into a significant tool for encouraging consumers to recognise and recall brands (Gopinath & Kalpana, 2019). Social media also enables customers to verify their references and improves the effectiveness of companies. This study looked at how social media affected customers' decisions about which companies to buy because of the enormous use and potential of social media in brand building.

The goal of this research is to better understand how social media marketing influences consumer behaviour and brand preference. As a result, this study on social media marketing must clearly explain the phenomenon that is social media, social networking sites, and social media marketing. This chapter's goal is to define and describe social media and the Internet. It demonstrates how fundamental ideas are theoretically connected in this study. The theory, history, use, and evolution of social media are all covered in this part, along with how they can be used for marketing.

SOCIAL MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

According to Mayfield (2008), the term "social media" refers to a class of new media with features including openness, culture, connectedness, engagement, and dialogue. "Social media can be characterised as a platform for social interaction used for data gathering, communication, etc. It is a technique for leveraging interactive internet dialogues to socialise discussion.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), social networking sites are web-based services that enable users to (1) create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of the other users with whom they are connected, and (3) view and cross their list of connections as well as those made by other users within the system. The nature and terminology of these relationships may differ from one location to another.

Today's movement and global phenomena is social networking. Organizations have created websites and applications to address societal requirements, enabling individuals, groups, and society at large to communicate, concentrate on their needs and desires, and participate productively in media production by creating material for them (Gopinath, 2011). The World Wide Web serves as the foundation for many of these internet technologies, including online tools like social media, social networking sites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, content aggregators, and content communities (Karthick et al., 2020a). Between the aforementioned tools, blogs and social networking sites (SNS) experienced the most significant growth. These websites are referred to as "social media." Social media is a web-based platform that facilitates and encourages connections between individuals through the sharing and consumption of knowledge (Kavitha & Gopinath, 2020). Most people with access to the internet use it to stay in touch with their loved ones. As a result, the concept of social media marketing emerged. "Marketers remained behind" they saw this as a more affordable and successful way of establishing relationships with their clients and future customers."

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING BENEFITS

"Social networking is a terrific way to stay in touch with people and meet new people." Your joys, life events, professional changes, and other details can be shared with friends and family. People are always able to communicate with one another, even when they are in other nations. People can connect on social media by creating their own interest-based accounts (Karthick et al., 2020b). People can support social causes by becoming followers, showing interest, or joining various communities.

Platforms throughout society assist people in using technology to the best of their abilities. It makes people more tolerant of technology. People can comprehend, adapt to, and get ready for future new applications thanks to social media (Usharani & Gopinath, 2020a). Social media users of all ages discuss the study with their friends. Study is another advantage that social media may provide to a person. On social media platforms, members can offer assistance with issues involving their connections. People have access to a new universe on social media websites where they can briefly contact with many. Social media allows people who cannot physically meet distant people to connect with their friends and family. "Friends and fan groups can be formed on several social media platforms."

SOCIAL NETWORKING: RISKS

Personal information and photographs uploaded on social media will be used by the wrong people. It is easily copied and used for malicious reasons. Cyber bullying is a crime in today's world, just like any other. If it goes offline, it may be the most dangerous risk that the person faces. Another social networking risk is permanence. When information is exchanged online, it remains available. If a user decides to delete any posted photographs or content, it remains on social media servers.

SOCIAL MEDIA: TYPES AND WEBSITES

"Social media" is defined as "electronic means of communication through which people create their online communities to share information, ideas, personal information, and other content, such as websites and websites for social network and micro blogging (as videos)" in the online Merriam Webster dictionary. The phrase "social media" refers to two methods of interaction with others that involve the transmission and reception of information. The term "media" refers to channels of communication, particularly the internet and web-based networks and portals that are used to advertise social media.

An online forum that allows users to create public profiles and interact with other website users is what Technopedia defines as an online technology dictionary. "Social networking websites often keep a list of the people they are connected to, and the people on the list can approve or reject a new user's request to connect." The new user will search his network connections for other links after making connections. "A social website or social networking site may also be used to refer to a platform for social networking."

There are many different kinds of publicly accessible and partially publicly accessible websites that are targeted at certain user bases based on social, cultural, corporate, or business associations (Usharani & Gopinath, 2020b). They consist of fan pages, dating websites, business blogs, and other websites. Just a few examples include Facebook's support for both personal and professional relationships, Orkut for social connections, and LinkedIn for professionals. Therefore, an SNS or social media platform features profiles and connections that make it simple to share various types of online material using mobile devices. People utilise a variety of social media platforms for a variety of purposes, and these platforms have risen in popularity over time. The distinctions between their collections of features continue to morph and merge quicker than most people can read and comprehend the changes as more and more sophisticated network functions are added.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The concept of social networking sites is not new, contrary to what many people believe. In the 1990s, people used to establish personal web pages and connect through blogs, chat rooms, and online communities. However, the introduction of the "friendster.com" website in 2002 led to a significant transformation. Following that, numerous social networking websites were created. Growing home internet access, increased accessibility brought on by broadband, and the capacity to create individual profiles with audio and video content are the driving forces behind the expansion of social networking services.

Today, everyone has easy access to their social networking site from a laptop, tablet, or phone to receive messages, exchange movies and images, make their own blogs, and leave comments on other blogs. At the end of the 1990s, social networking websites were widespread. Launched in 2002, Friendster.com was the first social networking site to significantly influence people. Then came a deluge of social networking sites. However, according to Boyd and Ellison, the first social networking site was launched in 1997.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Numerous figures on the "growth of the Internet and social media," particularly social media users, "show that Internet users are rising exponentially." This increase attracts a range of analysts, advertisers, and brand specialists who are interested in learning more about customer preferences and deciding factors. Here are some significant and wonderful statistics about India and other significant locations.

INDIA – SECOND LARGEST INTERNET USER BASE GLOBALLY

Worldwide Internet usage varies greatly in terms of both volume and rate. Internet access rates increase by 80% in more developed countries, compared to roughly 50% in less developed nations. In addition, the top 20 internet users in the top 20 nations account for a total of 3.24 billion users, compared to 1.33 billion people in the rest of the globe and 4.57 billion internet users overall. India is slightly behind China, which currently has the second-largest web user base in the world, despite having internet penetration of only 50%.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The analyst reviewed several studies in the literature on "The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Customer Brand Preference," which were carried out by 12 researchers from different geographical areas. However, there are no research that examine how social media marketing affects consumer brand preference, particularly among social media users in the Tiruchirapalli area. As a result, the researcher decided to undertake research in the Tiruchirapalli district.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate the social media usage pattern among Tiruchirapalli District users.
2. To provide suitable recommendations to improve the usage of social media among the consumer for better experience of buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research technique is a methodical approach to gathering information and data for the aim of making business decisions. The methodology can include using Google form surveys, interviews, publication analysis, and other techniques that provide both recent and historical data. The reason for conducting the research and the relevant problem statement are both identified at the outset of this article.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the planned research approach and structure for addressing research problems. The use of social networking for marketing and its effects on customers have been examined from a variety of angles. In light of the available literature and the stated study objectives, a combination of descriptive and exploratory research designs were selected for the thesis. The study details the amount and purpose of the sample's use of social media. These objectives guide descriptive research architecture. Consumer expectations on the usage of social media in brand awareness, recall, recognition, and selection are addressed through exploratory research technique. The paper goes on to explain how the variables relate to one another, making it a design for diagnostic research. These research designs outline the architecture and technique of the entire study to accomplish the study's objectives.

The goal of this study is to determine how social media marketing initiatives effect consumers' brand preferences among online users in the Tiruchirapalli area. As a result, descriptive and causal research designs will be used to gather data, with primary data being generated through the use of survey and questionnaire administration. In order to provide data that is interesting to researchers, several writers suggest utilising descriptive design.

All study is partially descriptive in nature insofar as the descriptive aspect defines and explains the researches who, what, when, where, why, and how, which are some of the questions posed in the analysis. A research design is the description of the overall research plan or technique used for a certain project. The core of planning is this. The client's expectations will be satisfied if the design adheres to the study purpose.

STATISTICAL DATA USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

In addition to the outcomes from the use of questionnaires, pertinent analysis techniques were used. The completed replies were gathered, and master data sheets were then outfitted and brought into the SPSS. After that, the data was computed and rated. The validity and reliability of the data were examined, and IBM's SPSS 21 software was used to perform descriptive statistics, an ANOVA, and a ranking analysis.

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Table: 1- Frequency table of social media accounts

S. No.	Social Media	Frequency	Percent
1	Facebook	396	88.99
2	Twitter	12	2.70
3	Instagram	79	17.75
4	Linkedin	214	48.09
5	Youtube	79	17.75
6	Pinterest	13	2.92
7	Tumblr	9	2.02
8	Flickr	7	1.57
9	Snapchat	289	64.94
10	Whatsapp	428	96.18
11	Others	12	2.70

The most chosen social media account by respondents is shown in the figures above. According to the research, 96% of the respondents identified WhatsApp as their preferred social media account. The second-placed Facebook is favoured by 89% of respondents, while Snapchat is the third-placed choice. Accordingly, WhatsApp is the most popular social media account among respondents because it enables users to share messages, photographs, documents, locations, and more. Additionally, it now offers its customers an online payment system.

Table: 2- Frequency table of time spend on social media

How much time do you spend on social media? (Per day)					
Parameters		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More than six hours	28	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Five to six hours	22	4.9	4.9	11.2
	Four to five hours	31	7.0	7.0	18.2
	Three to four hours	111	24.9	24.9	43.1
	Two to three hours	97	21.8	21.8	64.9
	One to two hours	84	18.9	18.9	83.8
	Less than an hour	72	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	445	100.0	100.0	

The replies to the question of how much time respondents spend each day on social media are shown in the graph above. The majority of responders (25%) spend 3–4 hours every day on social media, according to data gathered. 22% of people were found to spend 2-3 hours, whereas 19% spent 1-2 hours. This suggests that the majority of respondents spend 1-4 hours per day on social media. These statistics are encouraging an increasing number of businesses to go digital in order to build a sizable consumer base through social media. Marketers of social media marketing firms already in existence can also take advantage of these numbers. Customers spend 1-4 hours a day on social media, which means that social media can be used to influence their purchasing decisions.

Table: 3- Frequency table of accounts on social media spending time

Parameters	Frequency	Ranks
Facebook	238	3
Instagram	102	7
Twitter	43	8
LinkedIn	289	2
You Tube	155	4
WhatsApp	409	1
Pinterest	37	9
Snapchat	129	5
Others	124	6

The above table summarises responses when respondents were questioned about the social media accounts they have. According to data, 409 of the 445 people who were chosen have installed and are using WhatsApp. Facebook is in third place with 238 users, while LinkedIn is in second place with 289 users. Twitter has been identified as the least popular social media platform. Since Twitter's app has a complicated user interface and is challenging to use, the majority of its users are passive users. Therefore, marketers must advertise primarily on Facebook and Whatsapp in order to market a product and develop brand preference among consumers.

Table: 4- Frequency table of access of social media

When do you access social media?			
	Parameters	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Smart phones	234	95.5
	Personal Computer or Laptop	206	84.1
	Tablets / iPad	197	80.4
	Smart Watches	89	36.3
	Smart TV	97	39.6

The information above demonstrates the method of accessing social media. When asked how they access social media, respondents indicated that 65.5% do so using their cellphones, 84% do so through laptops and desktop computers, 80% do so through tablets and iPads, and only 36% do so through smart watches. Due to the ease of use anytime, anywhere, cellphones have been highlighted as the most favoured method of accessing social media.

Table: 5 ANOVA table of use of Social Media Marketing

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. Gender	Between Groups	2.974	4	.744	3.077	.016
	Within Groups	106.320	440	.242		
	Total	109.294	444			
2. Age	Between Groups	168.514	4	42.128	13.204	.000
	Within Groups	1403.814	440	3.190		
	Total	1572.328	444			
3. Education	Between Groups	104.799	4	26.200	20.808	.000
	Within Groups	554.001	440	1.259		
	Total	658.800	444			
4. Marital status	Between Groups	8.049	4	2.012	4.386	.002
	Within Groups	201.870	440	.459		
	Total	209.919	444			

The significant value of the parameters, i.e., gender, age, marital status, and education, is less than 0.05. Let's talk about the ANOVA table above for all the variables, i.e., demographic factors under examination (p-value). This supports the Levene Statistic's findings that there is a significant use of social media marketing for consumer brand preferences across a range of respondent age groups, gender groups, marital status groups, and educational groups, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis.

FINDINGS

WhatsApp was ranked as the most popular social media account by respondents, according to analysis of their responses, with 96% of them choosing it as their favourite. The second-placed Facebook is favoured by 89% of respondents, while Snapchat is the third-placed choice.

When questioned about how frequently they post on social media. The findings shown show that 31.5% of the respondents post frequently. 26.1% make multiple posts each month. Additionally, numerous people (8.3%), (10.3%), (16%), etc. post once a week, several times a week, or even once a day.

When questioned about how much time people spend each day on social media. The majority of responders (25%) spend 3–4 hours every day on social media, according to data gathered. 22% of people were found to spend 2-3 hours, whereas 19% spent 1-2 hours. This suggests that the majority of respondents spend 1-4 hours per day on social media.

The analysis's findings indicate that social media marketing is significantly used to influence consumer brand preferences across a range of respondent age, gender, marital status, and educational groupings. This can also be seen as a unanimous agreement among all respondents, regardless of their age, gender, education level, or marital status, that social media marketing can be utilised to influence consumer brand preferences.

SUGGESTIONS

Researchers may further investigate the effects of various social media campaign formats, including the effects of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) analysis, on brand recognition, brand commitment, and brand loyalty. Social media will continue to develop annually, so it is important to investigate and assess the effectiveness of new technology in this field. Social media has the power to change the way businesses run. The effects of big data analytics, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence on brand awareness, brand engagement, and brand loyalty in India's servicing companies can be further investigated by practitioners and researchers.

Only 445 Indians participated in the survey, and the Tiruchirapalli district was chosen as the study location. It only performed an intersectional analysis once, and it did not calculate these variables across time. This research did not examine any potential purchasing intentions, which could be a result of brand loyalty on social media.

By examining each social media networking site separately, the impact can be thoroughly examined in order to investigate their significance and effects on service sector firms.

Big data in the context of social media provides a wealth of insight. Businesses must make advantage of this knowledge resource to comprehend their customers better. You ought to be aware of your viewpoints, interests, and influencing sources. This aids in improved product and service development as well as more effective feedback delivery.

CONCLUSION

A growing and inevitable market is social networking. Businesses perceive social media as a marketing opportunity to cut out the conventional middlemen (traders, dealers, wholesalers, and retailers) and create direct relationships with customers. As a result, almost every company in the world—from large corporations like Reliance Trends & Genpact to independent coffee shops—is searching for social media marketing strategies to use in their advertising campaigns. Regarding a year ago, the organisation had a lot of questions about social media. But things have significantly changed now, and businesses quickly adopt SMM. The expansion of internet access for the nation's inhabitants is anticipated to increase at the same rate as the internet SMM revolution, which began in the early 1980s. With the advent of 4G, it is now more convenient for people to participate in social networking on their smartphones, and businesses are exploiting this to market their products on social media.

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