



Influence of Social Media on Buying Behaviour of Consumers of Organised Retail Markets

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ABSTRACT

Social media marketing had indeed become a critical aspect of the overall marketing strategy for organizations, including Indian retailers. A well-defined social media marketing strategy acts as a blueprint that guides the entire process from formulation of products to implementation and evaluation. The study aimed to investigate and analyse the impact of social media on the marketing of food commodities through organized retail markets. With the rapid growth of social media platforms and the increasing popularity of organized retail markets, it becomes essential to understand the relationship between these two phenomena and their influence on consumer buying behaviour and food commodity sales. Consumers were selected from five selected retail markets using simple random sampling. From each retail market, 20 respondents were selected. The data were collected from various age groups, income groups and gender groups. A total number of 100 customers were interviewed. The results revealed that social media highly influenced 'Alternatives evaluation' component of consumer behaviour followed by 'Information search', 'Purchase decisions', 'Post purchase behaviour' and 'Need Recognition'. The results indicate that the highest mean score was observed for "Alternatives evaluation" with a mean of 3.80, suggesting that social media significantly impacts consumers' evaluation and comparison of different options before making a purchase decision. Following closely, "Information search" and "Purchase decision", both showed substantial mean scores of 3.41 and 3.21, respectively. This signifies that social media plays a crucial role in helping consumers gather information about products or services and influences their behaviour for deciding to purchase. The socio-psychological variables selected for the study *viz.*, Age, Occupation, Annual income had no significant relationship with buying behaviour while Education, Social media readiness, Social media skills and Social media interaction pattern significantly influenced the buying behaviour of consumers.

Key Words: Alternatives, Consumer buying behaviour, Information search, Need, Purchase decisions, Social media.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is made up of modern tools and technology that enable people to interact, aid in developing relationships with customers, and generate fresh opportunities. The effectiveness of social media in retail marketing is enormous as it allows for two-way connection between the retailer and the customer. Consumers seek information from customers with whom they are familiar with, have a relationship, and have built trust. The art of listening first, understanding the consumer, and then engaging the customer in multiple conversations regarding the products and

the company as a whole are key components of social media (Bashar, 2012). Retailers engage their customers and encourage them to join in dialogues using a variety of media like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and blogging in an effort to create a connection that will result in a final sale for the retailer. In India today, the majority of businesses utilise social media to spread their message, interact with, and work with the millions of people that are logged in all the time. Nevertheless, this medium still has a lot of unrealized promise in terms of what it can provide for its audience.

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Influence of Social Media on Buying Behaviour of Consumers

Table 1. Social Media Influence on Buying Behaviour of Consumers. (n=125)

Sr. No.	Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Mean scores
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Need Recognition								
1.	Visual elements attracted towards the product/service	81	81.00	18	18.00	1	1.00	1.30
2.	Freshness of the advertisement on the product/service	80	80.00	19	19.00	1	1.00	1.79
3.	Timely Update of information on product/service	59	59.00	32	32.00	19	19.00	1.56
4.	Interaction on the product (Likes and comments)	76	76.00	18	18.00	6	6.00	1.70
5.	Unfelt needs are sometimes recognised	66	66.00	29	29.00	5	5.00	1.51
6.	Frequency of advertisement	59	59.00	32	32.00	19	19.00	1.56
Information search								
1.	Relevant information on the product/service	90	90.00	8	8.00	2	2.00	2.88
2.	Seeking and collecting information was easier than expected	85	85.00	11	11.00	4	4.00	2.81
3.	Information search can be handled from home or work place	78	78.00	19	19.00	3	3.00	3.75
4.	Information on various models and prices at one time search	73	73.00	19	19.00	8	8.00	3.65
5.	Searching for information was fun and exciting	70	70.00	23	23.00	7	7.00	2.63
6.	Credibility of information that was found	70	70.00	18	18.00	12	12.00	2.58
Alternatives evaluation								
1.	More information is gained while evaluating	89	89.00	9	9.00	2	2.00	3.87
2.	Information needed to evaluate and compare the different options is available	78	78.00	21	21.00	1	1.00	4.07
3.	Comparing the different alternatives is exiting	79	79.00	16	16.00	5	5.00	3.74
4.	Can be done at our convenience	79	79.00	16	16.00	5	5.00	3.94
5.	Availability of numerous alternatives is motivating	82	82.00	8	8.00	10	10.00	3.72
6.	Evaluating and comparing the various options is easy and less time consuming	70	70.00	19	19.00	11	11.00	3.59
Purchase decision								
1.	Provision for offers and Discounts	83	83.00	14	14.00	3	3.00	2.90
2.	Reviews/Opinions can be considered before purchase	83	83.00	13	13.00	4	4.00	2.79
3.	Comfortable Price range motivates buying	78	78.00	17	17.00	5	5.00	3.73
4.	Less time and energy is consumed	76	76.00	16	16.00	8	8.00	2.68
5.	Accurate and reliable information helped me make my purchase decision	62	62.00	32	32.00	6	6.00	2.56
6.	Confidence is more while purchasing online	83	83.00	14	14.00	3	3.00	2.80
Post Purchase decision								
1.	There is provision for return or exchange	85	85.00	13	13.00	2	2.00	1.83
2.	Repeat buying is made easy	84	84.00	11	11.00	5	5.00	1.79
3.	Immediate feedback can be given	80	80.00	17	17.00	3	3.00	2.77
4.	Post purchase evaluation of product can be done	80	80.00	14	14.00	6	6.00	1.74
5.	Purchase points can be scored	70	70.00	24	24.00	6	6.00	1.64
6.	Buying Satisfaction is more	68	68.00	27	27.00	5	5.00	1.63

Table 2. Overall influence of Social media influence on buying behaviour of consumers.

Sr. No.	Factor	Mean
1.	Need Recognition	1.71
2.	Information search	3.41
3.	Alternatives evaluation	3.80
4.	Purchase decision	3.21
5.	Post Purchase Behaviour	2.10

Table 3. Influence of the selected socio-personal characteristics of the respondents on their buying behaviour.

Sr. No	Personal characteristic	r value
1.	Age	0.053NS
2.	Education	0.073*
3.	Occupation	-0.018NS
4.	Annual income	0.025NS
5.	Social media exposure	0.145**
6.	Social media readiness	0.185**
7.	Social media operating skills	0.478**
8.	Social media interaction pattern	0.128**

In view of the growing social media explosion in the retail marketing sector especially in organised retail marketing, it is beneficial to understand the impact generated by social media strategies in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers and its effectiveness in promoting sales in organised retail markets. Hence, the present study was conducted with the objective to study the influence of social media on the buying behaviour of consumers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Andhra Pradesh was purposively chosen for the study. The food retailing sector in Andhra Pradesh has also embraced social media platforms to reach a wider audience and enhance their marketing efforts. Consumers were selected from five selected retail markets in Tirupati city using simple random sampling. From each retail market, 20 respondents were selected. Data were collected from various age groups, income groups and gender groups to study the influence of social media on buying behaviour. A total number of 100

customers were interviewed and collected data. The Influence of social media on the buying behaviour of consumers was studied under 5 different components i.e., Need Recognition, Information search, Alternatives evaluation, Purchase decision and Post purchase behaviour. Different components were analysed on a five point scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (DA), strongly disagree (SD). The data collected through structured interview schedule was analyzed using Likert's scale technique, mean scores and correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data (Table 1) revealed that social media highly influenced 'alternatives evaluation' component of consumer behaviour followed by 'information search', 'purchase decisions', 'post purchase behaviour' and 'need recognition'. This could be due the rising competitiveness in social media marketing, consumers are looking for alternatives with wide price ranges and for more available models. The results also revealed that in

Influence of Social Media on Buying Behaviour of Consumers

the need recognition component consumers were highly influenced by freshness of the advertisement on the product/service (Mean score=1.79) followed by Interaction on the product -Likes and comments (Mean score= 1.70) (Madni, 2014). Social media campaign and advertisements on media tools especially WhatsApp and You tube were attracting consumers towards unfelt needs. With regard to the Information search components, majority were influenced by information search can be handled from home or work place (Mean score=3.75) followed by Information on various models and prices at one time search (Mean score=3.65). This may be because of the convenience felt by the consumers Regarding Alternatives evaluation component, consumers were highly influenced by Information needed to evaluate and compare the different options is available (Mean score=4.07) followed by can be done at our convenience (Mean score= 3.94). This component was regarded the most significant as availability of choices always influences the decision making positively (Ioanas,2020). With regard to the purchase decision component, majority were influenced by comfortable price range motivates buying (Mean score=3.73) followed by provision for offers and discounts (Mean score= 2.90). The consumers felt that online prices are more comfortable than in shops and can be easily accessed. Immediate feedback was rated highest for post purchase decisions with a Mean score of 2.77 because feedback and comments significantly influences the buying behaviour of other customers (Ramanathan,2017).

The analysis indicated that the highest mean score was observed for "alternatives evaluation" with a mean of 3.80, suggesting that social media significantly impacts consumers' evaluation and comparison of different options before making a purchase decision. Following closely, "information search" and "purchase decision" both show substantial mean scores of 3.41 and 3.21, respectively. This signifies that social media plays a crucial role in helping consumers gather information about products or services and influences their behaviour for deciding to purchase.

Need recognition" and post purchase

behaviour factors also receive notable mean scores of 1.71 and 2.10, respectively, indicating that social media has a considerable impact on consumers' recognition of needs and their ultimate purchase decisions (Varghese,2021).

Pearson product moment correlation was used to assess the relation between the independent variables (socio-personal characteristics) and dependent variable (consumer behaviour). Results (Table 3) revealed that the age, occupation and annual income had no significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour while education, social media exposure, social media readiness, social media operating skills and social media interaction pattern showed high level of positive significance. This implied that the social media variables that significantly influenced the behaviour of those consumers who were literate and also exposed to social media especially WhatsApp, You tube Face book, Instagram and Twitter in that order. (Annu Devi Gora,2021)

CONCLUSION

Social media marketing had indeed become a critical aspect of the overall marketing strategy for organizations, including Indian retailers. A well-defined social media marketing strategy acted as a blueprint that guided the entire process, from formulation to implementation and evaluation. In view of the growing social media explosion in the retail marketing sector especially in organised retail marketing, it is beneficial to understand the impact generated by social media strategies in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers and its effectiveness in promoting sales in organised retail markets. The study threw light on the most important areas that influence buying behaviour of consumers such as Availability of numerous alternatives, evaluate and compare the different options is available, It Can be done at our convenience and Comfortable Price ranges. Thus, with proper planning and strategies social media can have a significant impact on consumers buying behaviour.

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