
A STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: A STRATEGIC TOOL TO ANALYZE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR DURING THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT:

Social media has been broadly used to search for data and have hypnotised the population to assemble data concerning COVID pandemics from various perspectives. During this lockdown, individuals are constrained to stay at home and social media has maintained care and upheld mindfulness and pandemic updates. On this note, social media marketing has been a significant subject of conversation during this pandemic. Social media marketing is an amazing route for associations to arrive at prospects and customers. The most prominent and more associated with people is utilizing social media networks, the less complex it will be for the organization to achieve every other promoting objective on the rundown. Today, more than later in continuous history, social media platforms have become the basic wellspring of information beating print and other computerized media stages. The persistent COVID-19 pandemic influences each part of our lives, from how individuals contribute their energy, search, find, and buy things, to the way organizations, brands, and sponsors/advertisers broadcast and promote their products or services. At the point when people began contributing more energy at home, due to pandemics, they furthermore began using the web more, which achieved an abrupt extension in web-based media engagement. Keeping this as a focus, the current study shows how well social media marketing can help analyse customers' buying behaviour, especially during this great pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Social media, COVID - 19, Marketing, Consumer buying behaviour

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND:

Marketing refers to activities a corporation undertakes to promote the buying or selling of a product, service, or good. It's one of the primary components of business management and

commerce. Marketers can direct their product to other businesses (B2B marketing) or on to consumers (B2C marketing). irrespective of who is being marketed to, several factors apply, including the attitude the marketers will use, remarked as market orientations; they determine how marketers will approach the look stage of promoting.

Therefore, the term **Social Media Marketing** refers to the employment of social media and social networks to showcase an organization's products and services. Social media marketing furnishes organizations with an approach to draw in existing customers and gain new ones while permitting them to plug in their ideal culture, mission, or tone.

Social media advertisers have expected to manoeuvre quickly to control the effect of COVID-19 enhancing their financial plans and rotating to new substance systems to stay associated with their secured customers.

TECHNOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS:

With innovative progressions, the market has seen a huge change in buyer behaviour. In regards to knowledge innovation, buyer behaviour is by all accounts more affected by the internet-enabled cell phones and tablets. Innovation has set the force within the customer's hands.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR:

Social media, which has the content, visuals, promotions, discounts and influencers, can impact the purchasing behaviour of buyers. This behaviour is usually called internet decision making. It is described by, in addition to other things, information overload. Current customers are besieged with a good many snippets of information a day over the web, and their capacity to focus has weakened quickly. This means that a median purchaser's assessment cycle is cut from a phase of several days or hours to merely minutes or perhaps seconds, which is critical for the advertisers to understand because the traditional promoting communication techniques don't work to any extent further.

The modern buyer's decision process is substantially more unique. It begins with the underlying thought set, the same as within the conventional model, started by the required acknowledgement. It is trailed by data gathering and dynamic assessment of the other alternatives. Social media and Internet promotions have permitted a general buyer today to approach data about the products and services on a world scale. A report featured that buyers who are impacted by social media are 4 times bound to spend more on purchases. Also, the impact is high to the purpose that 29% of shoppers are absolute to purchase round the same day by utilizing social media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Dr M Saravanakumar and Dr T SuganthaLakshmi (2012) in their paper studied the importance of social media marketing for an organization as a whole. They found that social media marketing is not only about generating money for the company, but also the way of promoting a company and its products or services, attracting and interacting with the customers effectively. They also stated that in the days to go social media marketing can be used as an effective tool and a better platform to increase and build the customers and their interest.
2. Simona Vinerean, I. Cetină, L. Dumitrescu, M. Țichindelean (2013) in their study aimed to answer this question based on a study regarding the online activities of 236 social media users, by identifying different types of users, a segmentation of these users and a linear model to examine how different predictors related to social networking sites have a positive impact on the respondents' perception of online advertisements. They discovered how to engage with different types of audiences to maximize the effect of the online marketing strategy.
3. Mahmoud Alghizzawi (2019), in his study tried to shed light on the role digital marketing plays on consumer behaviour with a specific focus on the tourism sector. It also tried to add the body of knowledge and help in guiding future developments of digital marketing in tourism. The study found that digital marketing through mobile technologies, social media platforms, become a part of our global lives and serves as the new way for communication and marketing. It also found that with the revolution in technology and the habits of the new generation, it is clear that people today need to adopt the new way to communicate with consumers, especially in the tourism sector because the choices of destination are not like before.
4. Sayabek Ziyadin, Raigul Doszhan, Alex Borodin, Aizhan Omarova, and Aigerim Ilyas (2019), in their study examined how consumers experience, are influenced and are influenced by the digital environment they are in as part of their daily lives. They found that Social media demand: the information field of people and enterprises is expanding significantly, the costs of searching, exchanging and storing information will decrease, as well as the role of information as a resource in the economic management system will be strengthened, it will help the company to reach a larger number of consumers, increase the volume of income and increase the competitiveness of the enterprise.
5. Shaista Arshad (2019) in his study tried to identify the influence of different predictors that can control consumer behaviour. A quantitative research methodology was employed. The primary source of data collection was a questionnaire with 250 respondents using a convenient sampling method, which shows that all these variables put a very positive and conclusive impact on consumer behaviour. The study found

that the impact of Information satisfaction and Entertaining Content is quite strong while the vividness of social media marketing content is also having a significant impact but at a lesser level than others i.e. Information Satisfaction and Entertaining Content. The study suggested that marketers keep their social media posts as much as interesting, colourful, and entertaining and provide the required information properly rather than only casual and plain content.

OBJECTIVES:

In the present scenario of the pandemic, social media users are growing and even the buying behaviour of the customers has changed, because of the impact of social media marketing. Hence, on this view, this research is being conducted with the subsequent objectives:

1. To understand the importance of social media
2. To analyze social media marketing activities during the pandemic
3. To evaluate how the customers' buying behaviour has changed during the pandemic and the reason for the change
4. To determine the impact of social media marketing on customers' buying behaviour
5. To investigate the effectiveness of social media marketing during the pandemic

METHODOLOGY:

The current scope of the study is extended to grasp the impact of social media marketing on customers' buying behaviours during the pandemic only. Further, 50 samples of all age groups from Bengaluru North who are using social media are taken under study to know the impact of social media marketing on customers' buying behaviour during the pandemic.

This study is descriptive. It tries to bring out the amount of impact social media has on consumer buying behaviour during this pandemic.

This paper focuses on both primary as well as secondary data.

- Primary data has been collected through samples using structured questionnaires.
- Secondary data has been collected from various internet sources.
- This paper considers people of all age groups who use social media.
- As the population is heterogeneous, the sample is drawn from the population. 65 samples, which is a combination of all age groups are drawn through a convenient sampling technique.

HYPOTHESES:

The following hypotheses were tested using Paired t-test:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the means of positive consumer buying behaviour through social media before and during the pandemic ($\mu_1 = \mu_2$)

H₁: The means of positive consumer buying behaviour during the pandemic is significantly higher than the means of positive consumer buying behaviour before the pandemic ($\mu_1 < \mu_2$)

ANALYSIS:

Based on the results of the questionnaires, a complete summary of data is as below:

Table 1: Table showing the primary data summary

Statements	N	Buying behaviour before pandemic	Buying behaviour during pandemic
Advertisements	65	56	60
Product description	65	50	55
Prices	65	47	50
Comparability	65	42	45
Purchase decision	65	45	51

Source: Researcher's Calculation

Correlation

For the above primary data, a correlation tool was applied and analyzed using the below formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum(x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2 \cdot \sum(y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

The analysis gave the following calculated statistic:

$$r = 0.973137$$

Since the r-value > 0.5, the data is positively correlated. Hence, it can be said that social media and consumer buying behaviour during the pandemic have a relationship.

Paired t-test:

Table 2: t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means ($\alpha = 0.05$)

	Y	X
Mean	52.2	48
Variance	31.7	28.5
Observations	5	5
Pearson Correlation	0.9731366	
Hypothesised Mean Difference	0	
df	4	
t Stat	7.2029406	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0009846	
t Critical one-tail	2.1318468	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0019691	
t Critical two-tail	2.7764451	

Source: Researcher's Calculation

Since, the test statistic $7.2029406 > 2.1318468$ (one-tailed critical value), the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that the mean of consumer buying behaviour during the pandemic is significantly more compared to the consumer buying behaviour before the pandemic.

RESULTS

From the above correlational analysis, the following findings can be drawn:

1. More than 50% of people have been highly attracted to advertisements seen on social media.
2. More than 50% of people have highly felt social media marketing has helped them to purchase products or services efficiently during this pandemic.
3. Approximately 50% of people have found social media has the right place to purchase the products or services they need during this pandemic.
4. More than 45% of people have found better products or services on social media compared to traditional platforms of advertisements.

5. More than 50% of people have a high overall impact on them due to social media marketing.
6. T-test results show that the pandemic has increased the positive impact on consumer buying behaviour through social media.

DISCUSSIONS:

From the above findings, the following suggestions are derived:

1. Few people are still not aware of the impact social media can create on their lives. It depends on how they create and use the data available to them. Hence, if people are educated about social media marketing, increased positive buying behaviour can be observed.
2. There is still a negative perception of both marketing and social media marketing amongst the people. To overcome this negative perception, the organizations should also strive towards creating awareness through better advertisements that can dive into their minds at first sight itself.
3. Negligence of advertisements is another barrier for any product or service, which can again impact the buying behaviour of consumers. To eradicate this, again there should be enhanced advertisements popped to keep the focus of the consumers high.

CONCLUSION:

With the regressive analysis, it can be concluded that people are spending longer time online and using social media regularly. Thus, more people are engaging with online ads. They are even buying online. Therefore, social media marketing has definitely a greater impact on consumer buying behaviour, especially during this pandemic. Hence, social media marketing has evolved more and has also started changing to satisfy the wants of the customer. This study is additionally evident that social media marketing will be a booming tool within the near future to reach customers in the global market.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A post-pandemic study can be made considering a rich amount of data. It would be interesting to explore the correlates of this forced consumer behaviour with other variables such as learning from crisis, simplicity, changing needs, personality, nationality, culture, frugal behaviour and age. Further other interesting issues like 'will this trend of online marketing continue even after the end of pandemic' will be helpful to explore the possibilities of new segments exhibiting new behaviour. Similar studies can be done in future to measure the actual change in behaviour. These are unprecedented times, and further studies from different countries are required to obtain insight into consumer feelings and understand if the

behaviour displayed by consumers in different countries is the same or different from our country.

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