

**A STUDY ON LEVEL OF AWARENESS AND THE PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR IN SOCIAL MEDIA
SITES AMONG THE E - CONSUMERS**

(with reference to Coimbatore city)

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ABSTRACT:

E-marketing refers to the use of the Internet and digital media capabilities to help sell one's products or services. E-marketing is also referred to as Internet marketing (I-marketing), online marketing or web-marketing which creates a strategy that helps businesses deliver the right messages and products /services to the right audience. Online marketing creates various ways to the consumers to make a better decision and purchase wide varieties of things. Consumer behaviour of every individual is different from other depending on buying choices which is influenced by buying habits and choices that are tampered by psychological and social drivers that affect purchase decision process. The research study reveals the level of awareness of e-consumers and their buying behavior in Social media sites.

INTRODUCTION

ONLINE MARKETING

Online marketing is also known as Internet marketing, Web-marketing, digital marketing and search engine marketing (SEM). Online marketing connects organizations with qualified potential customers and takes business development to a much higher level than traditional marketing/advertising. Online marketing synergistically combines the Internet's creative and technical tools, including design, development, sales and advertising while focusing on the primary business models. Online marketing refers to a set of powerful tools and methodologies used for promoting products and services through the Internet. Online marketing includes a wider range of marketing elements than traditional business marketing due to the extra channels and marketing mechanisms available on the Internet.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The study of Consumer behaviour means "the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services,

experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society." Online consumers are always seeking new products, new attractiveness and the most important thing being price compatibility with their budget. They also use internet for comparison of prices of goods and services, news, visit social networks and search information and so on. The recession has so much impact on online consumer behaviour.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rapid and fast developments in information technologies industry with increased competition increases attention of consumer's day-by online shopping. It is very important for an online retailer to know what kind of things and strategies help to increase sales in this fierce competition in market with high expectation of online consumers. The study shows that the sites that perform best in customer experience have a significant advantage in driving online sales. Since online shopping is the new medium of shopping with new demands of consumers, it is very important to know about their behaviour, understand their requirement to analyse their needs to enhance performance and attract more customers. Consumer behavior in online shopping is varied from traditional shopping; both include social, cultural, personal, and psychological factors. Traditional shopping is much more influenced by the above factors as compared to online shopping. Social networking sites will become the primary field for highly targeted marketing and advertising. Hence, it is necessary to study the behaviour of the consumers through social media websites which authorise them to transmit their purchase decisions/e-marketing/preferences and the like.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Park and Lutz (1982)¹ in their work, "*Decision plans and consumer choice Dynamics*", examined individual's choice behaviour at different stages of the choice process in a house purchasing decision. The research was designed to study an individual's choice dynamics by examining three stages of the home purchasing decision on a longitudinal basis, i.e, the pre-search, search and post-search stages. The results revealed bounded stability of the decision maker's initial decision plan. The decision maker maintained much of the original decision structure while accommodating necessary changes arising from market realities and learning.

Raut (1987)² in his study on, "*Consumer attitudes towards advertising*", pointed out that 89 percent of the respondents believed that advertising was useful to the consumers for giving convenient information about the products and to increase consumer

¹ Park,C.Whan and Richard J.Lutz (1982). Decision plans and consumer choice Dynamics, Journal of Marketing Research Vol. XIX

² Raut, K.C.(1987). Consumer's attitude towards advertising. Indian Journal Market.Vol.31(4),10-15.

awareness. It also provided an opportunity to make comparison, and to make shopping easier to the consumers.

Ozment and Morash (1994)³ revealed that delivering quality in services has been shown to be an important strategy for marketers who are trying to differentiate their service offering by establishing customer value and satisfying customer needs.

Fram and Crady (1995)⁴ identified that the ease of use is considered as one of the most important factors to customer on the internet. This concept has been characterized as the customer ability to use as few “clicks” as possible. It also includes the issue of navigation, effective search engines, the ability to easily change or cancel an order, and the ability to inform customer of missing information.

Mohr and Bitner (1995)⁵ demonstrated that service recovery has a direct relationship with factors such as a trust, repurchase intention, commitment and word of mouth, which all play a crucial role in success for e-retailers.

Research Gap

Most of the previous studies were analysed on E-consumer satisfaction, preference and attitude towards online shopping. Most of the studies were concentrated at global level and very few studies were at Tamilnadu level. These existing studies analysed the e-consumer behaviour through online shopping websites only.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Online shopping is considered to be a very helpful way of buying products through the internet especially during the holidays and clearance seasons. It allows customers to enjoy a wide variety of products and items not only from a specific store, but from a diverse storage that includes all kinds of items. Online shopping also provides customers with a good customer service that also occurs online. Social Media Sites are emerging as one of the ways to enhance people to purchase products through online shopping websites. The present study is confined to regular users of social media websites. It also encompasses to identify the role of social media sites in making decisions pertaining to online purchase in Social media sites. In this study the researcher has targeted the urban educated people who have more knowledge on online buying through social media websites and are residing at Coimbatore city only. The study would be helpful to find out which social media sites

³ Ozmen, J., and Morash, E.A. (1994). “The Augmented service offering for perceived and actual service quality”. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 4(22), 352-363³

⁴ Fram, H and Grandy, B. (1995). “Internet buyers: will the suffers become buyers?”, *Direct Marketing*, October, 63-65.

⁵ Mohr, Loss, A. and Mary Jo Bitner. (1995). “The role of employee efforts in satisfaction with service transactions”. *Journal of Business Research*. 32(3), 239-252.

are frequently used by the respondents, the level of awareness created among the users, the factors influencing the usage of social media sites, reasons to purchase product through online social media sites, and the factors considered more at the time of online purchase.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the statement of the problem, the researcher has framed the following objective.

1. To study the level of awareness of social media sites among the e-consumers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The researcher has framed the following hypotheses based on the above objectives of the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the usage of social media sites among the various groups of respondents.
2. There is no significant difference between the factors that influenced in the usage of social media sites and the socio-economic demographic variables of the respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology includes the procedures, techniques and practices adopted to lay foundation, build data base and to furnish with processed information for analysis to accomplish the research objectives.

Research Design

This study is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. The researcher has used exploratory method by individual analysis and field interviews with the online purchasers who helped to include all possible practical aspects of the research problem. The descriptive research helps to know the online buying behaviour of the selected respondent as it exists at present. The researcher has used both Primary and Secondary Data. The Primary data were collected through a Structured and Pre-tested Questionnaire. The Secondary data were collected from the Published Books, Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, websites etc. The study of the relevant literature has been quite useful in the formulation of the research problem. The role of social media sites in buying decisions has brought a new change in the market place.

Target population of the study

Coimbatore is in top among the small metro category with a 40 percent penetration in Internet usage at national level. The present study is based on internet usage. Thus the researcher has selected Coimbatore city for the purpose of the study. The literate people use the social media websites and online shopping websites more when compared with illiterate people. The urban people use the online shopping websites more rather than the suburban people. So the researcher has selected urban literate people from the study area for this study.

SAMPLING DESIGN

The present study is restricted to Coimbatore City. The list of online purchasers is unknown. So the Quota and Purposive convenient sampling method has been adopted for the present study. The researcher has segmented the Coimbatore City into two urban literate areas such as Coimbatore South urban literates’ area and Coimbatore North urban literates’ area. The number of Male and Female respondents has been selected proportionately on the basis of total population of respective area and ward-wise.

City	Male (Urban Literates)	Female (Urban Literates)	Population (Urban Literates)	Sample size		Total
				Male	Female	
Coimbatore North	1,99,127	1,79,342	3,78,469	202	182	384
Coimbatore South	6,47,990	5,98,214	12,46,204	200	184	384
Total	8,47,117	7,77,556	16,24,673	402	366	768

Source: Krejcie and Morgan table (Confidence Level = 95%, Margin of Error = 5%)

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Firstly, owing to the small sample size as compared to the universe, bias or confrontation in the respondents’ responses due to some personal reasons, short of published/unpublished direct literature on the study, time constraints, and recurrent changes in the field could be some restrictions.
2. Secondly, the study has been conducted in the city of Coimbatore and hence the study is valid to this area only.
3. Thirdly, the study is focused on the consumers who are using social media website for online purchase and not on erstwhile websites.

CHI - SQUARE ANALYSIS

The researcher has used Chi-Square analysis to test the significant difference between the average time spent on Social Media Sites and the various socio-economic demographic variables of the respondents.

Ho: There is no significant difference between the average time spent on Social Media Sites and the various demographic variables of the respondents.

Variables	Chi-Square Value	Sig.
Age and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	13.537 ^a	.140
Gender and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	20.940 ^a	.000
Educational Qualification and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	103.750 ^a	.000
Occupational Status and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	74.714 ^a	.000
Annual Income and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	74.714 ^a	.000
Occupational Status and Average time spent on Social Media Sites	74.714 ^a	.000

INTERPRETATION

1. The above table indicates the Chi-Square analysis “p” value which is greater than 5 per cent significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and there is no significant difference between the average time spent on Social Media Sites and the various age groups of the respondents.
2. The study has been depicted in the above table. It is inferred from the results that the null hypothesis is rejected since the “p” value which is less than 5% significance level. Hence, there is a significant difference between the average time spent on Social Media Sites and Gender, Educational Qualification, Occupational Status, Annual income of the respondents.

AGE AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Ho: There is no significant difference between the factors influenced the usage of Social Media Sites and the Age of the respondents.

AGE AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES -ANOVA

Variable		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Easy Navigation	Between Groups	.721	1	.721	1.152	.284
	Within Groups	479.279	766	.626		
	Total	480.000	767			
Appealing Look	Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.003	.958
	Within Groups	538.451	766	.703		
	Total	538.453	767			
Updates	Between Groups	20.574	1	20.574	31.441	.000
	Within Groups	501.239	766	.654		
	Total	521.812	767			

Highlighting Social Issues	Between Groups	.059	1	.059	.166	.683
	Within Groups	269.815	766	.352		
	Total	269.874	767			
Entertainment	Between Groups	7.228	1	7.228	21.445	.000
	Within Groups	258.167	766	.337		
	Total	265.395	767			
Communication	Between Groups	.382	1	.382	.977	.323
	Within Groups	299.648	766	.391		
	Total	300.030	767			
Sharing	Between Groups	1.584	1	1.584	3.501	.062
	Within Groups	346.660	766	.453		
	Total	348.245	767			
Gain new acquaintances of people	Between Groups	7.791	1	7.791	11.180	.001
	Within Groups	533.760	766	.697		
	Total	541.551	767			
Make professional and business contacts	Between Groups	.243	1	.243	.295	.587
	Within Groups	629.662	766	.822		
	Total	629.905	767			
Advertisement	Between Groups	2.450	1	2.450	3.255	.072
	Within Groups	576.486	766	.753		
	Total	578.936	767			

Source: Computed Data

The table represents the ANOVA calculation and its results. It is inferred from the table that the factors *Updates*, *Entertainment*, *Gain new acquaintance of people* have their “p” value less than 5% significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these factors and there is a significant difference between the factors that influenced the usage of Social Media Sites and the Age of the respondents. The other factors, namely *Easy navigation*, *Appealing look*, *Highlighting social issues*, *Communication*, *Sharing*, *make Professional and Business contacts* and *advertisements* have their “p” values greater than 5% significance level and hence the null hypothesis is accepted, where there is no significant difference between the factors that influenced the usage of Social Media Sites and the Age of the respondents.

GENDER AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Ho: There is no significant difference between the factors influencing the usage of Social Media Sites and the Gender of the respondents.

GENDER AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES - ANOVA

Variable		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Easy Navigation	Between Groups	2.838	3	.946	1.514	.209
	Within Groups	477.162	764	.625		
	Total	480.000	767			
Appealing Look	Between Groups	10.274	3	3.425	4.954	.002
	Within Groups	528.180	764	.691		
	Total	538.453	767			
Updates	Between Groups	15.582	3	5.194	7.839	.000
	Within Groups	506.231	764	.663		
	Total	521.813	767			
Highlighting Social Issues	Between Groups	1.407	3	.469	1.335	.262
	Within Groups	268.467	764	.351		
	Total	269.874	767			
Entertainment	Between Groups	6.750	3	2.250	6.646	.000
	Within Groups	258.645	764	.339		
	Total	265.395	767			
Communi-cation	Between Groups	4.038	3	1.346	3.474	.016
	Within Groups	295.992	764	.387		
	Total	300.030	767			
Sharing	Between Groups	2.565	3	.855	1.890	.130
	Within Groups	345.680	764	.452		
	Total	348.245	767			
Gain new acquaintances of people	Between Groups	17.880	3	5.960	8.695	.000
	Within Groups	523.671	764	.685		
	Total	541.551	767			
Make professional and business contacts	Between Groups	6.079	3	2.026	2.482	.060
	Within Groups					
	Total					

	Within Groups	623.826	764	.817		
	Total	629.905	767			
Advertisement	Between Groups	5.968	3	1.989	2.652	.048
	Within Groups	572.969	764	.750		
	Total	578.936	767			

Source: Computed Data

The table represents the ANOVA calculation and its results. It is inferred from the table that the factors *Appealing look, Updates, Entertainment, Communication, Gain new acquaintance of people and advertisement* have their “p” value less than 5% significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these factors and there is a significant difference between the factors influenced in the usage of Social Media Sites and the gender of the respondents. The other factors, namely *Easy navigation, Highlighting social issues, sharing, make Professional and Business contacts and advertisements* have their “p” values greater than 5% significance level and hence the null hypothesis accepted, where there is no significant difference between the factors that influenced the usage of Social Media Sites and the Gender of the respondents.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Most of the respondents belong to the age group between 20-25 with the total number of 402 (52.3 per cent).
2. Among the respondents most of them were Post-Graduates with the total of 346 (45.1 per cent), followed by Under-Graduates with the total of 288 (37.5 per cent).
3. Most of the respondents (55.2%) were students.
4. Most of the respondents (43.8%) were found in the category of having annual income of less than 2 lakh.
5. The respondents get large amount of information for online purchase was collected through friends with the total of 377 (49.1 per cent) followed by media 357 (46.5 per cent).
6. Most of the respondents (45.3%) use the Laptop/Desktop computers for accessing websites.
7. There is a significant difference in the average time spent on Social media sites and gender, educational qualification, occupational status and Annual income of the respondents.
8. There is no significant difference in the average time spent on the social media sites and the age group of the respondents.
9. There is a significant difference between the click the ads on the social media websites and the age, educational qualification, occupational status, annual income of the respondents.

10. There is no significant difference between the click the ads on the social media websites and the gender of the respondents.
11. The other factors, namely *Easy navigation, Appealing look, Highlighting social issues, Communication, Sharing, Make professional and business contacts and Advertisements* have their 'p' values greater than 5% significant level and hence the null hypothesis is accepted, where there is no significance difference between the factors that influenced the usage of Social Media Sites and the age of the respondents.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Creating trust among the e-consumers is the major issue faced by the e-retailers. The e-retailers should remove the fear of risk involved in the online purchase among the e-consumers. In e-shopping the e-retailers make purchase decisions of The e-consumers based on the information provided in their website only. So online retailers should concentrate on not only the products displayed but also on their security, privacy and trustworthiness.
2. Frequency of the online retailer advertisement in social media website is very important. It creates good sign and goodwill for the company among the e- consumers.
3. Online retailers may open their offices for CRM practices in major cities of every state and tie up with the rating agencies. So it creates confidence among e- consumers about after-sales services.
4. The link should be proper and direct to the particular website of the product and should be attractive.
5. The website should have specified and fixed rules and regulations in all the terms and should not be complicated.

CONCLUSION

This study was under taken to analyse the e-consumer's purchasing behaviour through social media sites in Coimbatore City. It is in increasing trend in current scenario. In this research, online consumer behaviour theories are applied such as goal oriented online buyer and experimental motives of online shopping and highlighted the consumer characteristics, online consumer behaviour, factors that influencing shopping and also the opinion of the consumer about online shopping. The online shopping is getting popular among the young generation as they feel it more comfortable, time- saving and convenient. It is analyzed from the survey that when a consumer makes up his/her mind to purchase online electronic goods he or she is affected by multiple factors. The main crucial identified factors are time-saving, the best price and convenience. People compare prices in online stores and then review all feedbacks and ratings about products before making the final selection of product and decision. Therefore, the sellers have to make proper strategies to increase the consumers' level of trust on them.

Social Media Websites plays a significant role in online purchase and the behaviour of e-consumers.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The study may analyse the Buying behaviour and decision-making of e-consumers (Senior citizens).
2. The study may analyse the Savings through online buying behaviour among senior citizens and youth.
3. The study may analyse the shopping behaviour of new and retaining customers.
4. The study may analyze the consumer satisfaction and effects of e-consumers consumers.
5. The study may analyse the impact and its behaviour on e-commerce.

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