Social Media- Predominant role in shaping consumer perspective

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Abstract

The social networking sites created an environment where users could connect maximum people around the globe without compromising the intimacy of person to person communication. Today there are various types of social networking sites wherein each moment of life gets captured in words, pictures, videos and shared across the globe. This drastic change in technology has modified the entire personality of man and his multifaceted roles. The main purpose of this paper is to examine what makes people as a consumer drive towards social media as it is not just for fun or entertainment they use this media but many valuable services they derive out of it.

KEY WORDS**:** Social media, consumer behaviour, factors, social networking.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

A consumer can be viewed in various angles.We have a handful of theories that speaks of consumer behaviour from the year 1966 onwards. Each of the theoriesgives importance to one or the other factors like consumer attributes, product attributes, stimuli, rational thinking, learning, information processing means etc. Why do we have so much of theories? There is only one answer for it – ie, to predict how he makes the purchase decisions. This answer facilitates business concerns to choose the best marketing strategy and to capitalize.

India has been witnessing tremendous changes in the consumer profile since the intervention of social networking sites in common man's life. In 2005 came the youtube and in 2007 facebook
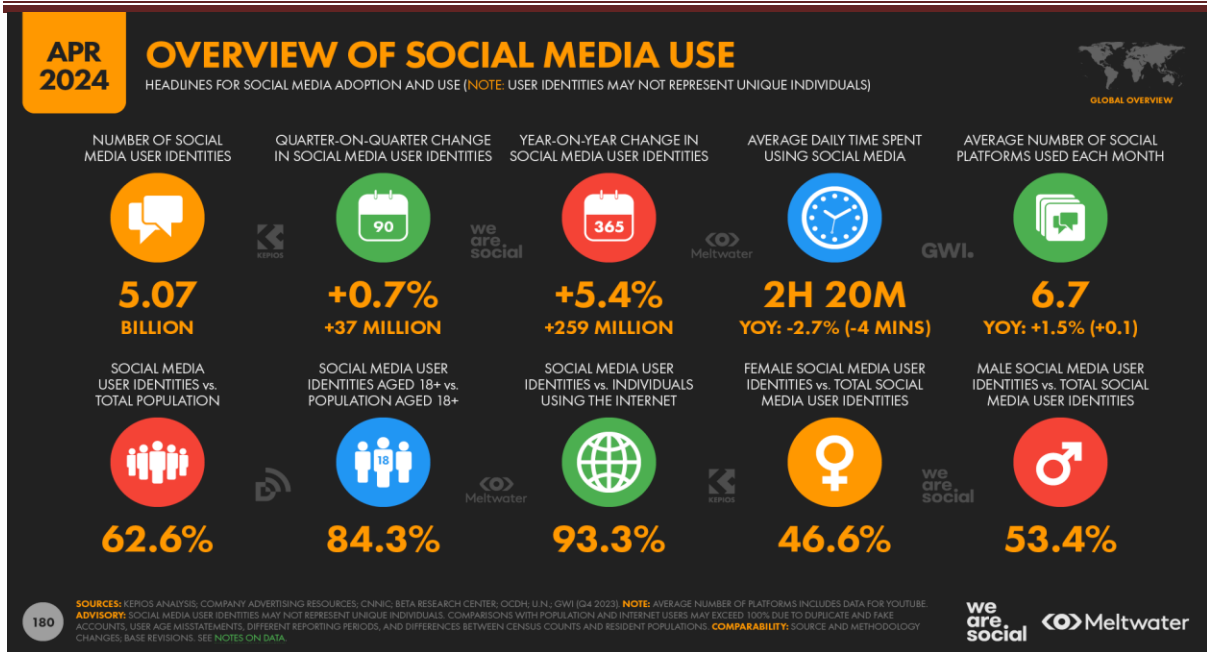
and twitter became popular among common people. These sites created an environment where users could connect maximum people around the globe without compromising the intimacy of person to person communication. Today there are various types of social networking sites wherein each moment of life gets captured in words, pictures, videos and shared across the globe. Technology has brought down miles and miles into a fingertip inch far. This drastic change has modified the entire personality of man and his multifaceted roles. This study focuses on his role as a customer and how that customer is influenced by this networking. Social networking has not only connected people to people but to business as well. The whole economy is staying connected in all spheres of life.

In such a scenario, a change in the behaviour of consumer is not only difficult to learn but is inclusive of lot of complexities. But companies should try to grasp the pulse of their customers and capture their position. It's not an easy task for companies to beat the competition and continue as a good player in the market. Consumers today not only talk or compare different products but they watch corporate's plans, vision, activities, services, social commitment, ethics, value added services, customer care policies, response and attitude towards customer grievances and many more.
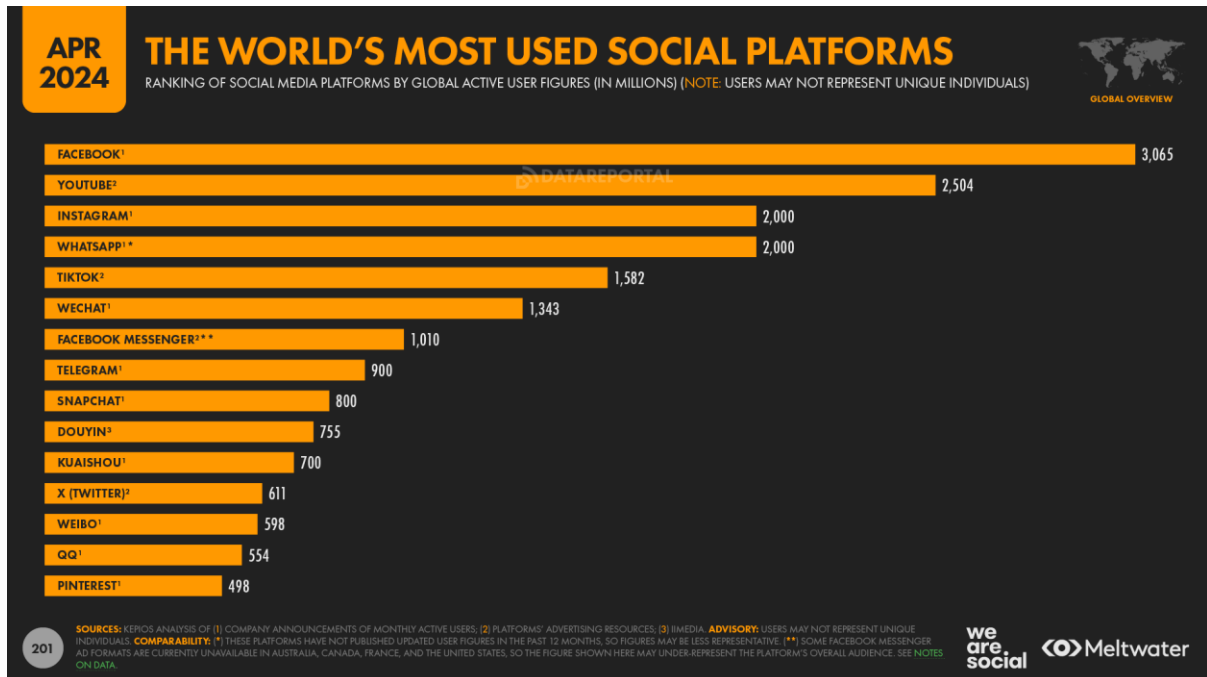
The users engaged in social media around the globe are on a rise over the years. The number of users of various social media has risen from 1.8% in 2014 to 3.4% by 2019 and right now in 2024 (Diagram No:1) it is 5.07 billionie, the increase is to 5.4%. This mean to say the 8.2 new users are opening their account in every single second. Among the many platforms the most demanded social platforms in the world are (Diagram No: 2)facebook and youtube.

Diagram No:1

Source: https://datareportal.com/social-media-users.

Diagram No: 2

Source: https://datareportal.com/social-media-users.

The rapid increase in the usage of user friendly technology and instant accessibility to any kind of information has empowered consumers to demand what they want and speak their experiences, be it good or bad with the public. This has made an alarming need to understand their behaviour in social media.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study focus on the following objectives;

1. Toanalysevarious factors and identify the principle factorsthat motivate youngsters to get engaged in social media
2. To understand the most preferred social media platform and e-shopping site of youngsters.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies were found on social media as it is the most relevant and emerging topics in consumer behaviour.

There are many decision making models which explains how consumers behave in various environments. All these models if re-evaluated can be seen as still fitting the digital culture too. EKB model can be a useful tool to marketers in understanding the digital participation of people and also help consumers in each stages of their decision making process (Ashman et al 2015). Users of social media continuously use the website to gain social support. They get informational and emotional support which makes them involve more on social commerce. Relationship quality and website quality enhance this intention in continuing to engage in conducting social commerce (Liang Tin-Peng et al 2019). Online activities of social media users can be classified into mainly four categories. Engagers, expressers and informers, networkers, watchers and listeners. These categories of users play a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour by actively participating on online platforms by providing reactions to online advertisements and information (Vinerean.S et al 2013)

Purchase of an item is mainly based on the recommendations of a peer or contact through social media like facebook and twitter. Though they consider recommendation on social media they don't see them as opinion influencers or leaders but they can definitely influence future purchases (Lukas and Eve 2013). Informations provided in the social networking sites are reliable and trusted upon. Among the trust factors, honesty of SNS highly influences consumers by providing information in SNS.Frankness in opinion and reliable recommendation in SNS also gives high significance in influencing the buyer behaviour.(Sarulatha and Dr.Sasirekha 2018).Behavioural intention towards actual usage of social media is also backed by social pressure along with trust (Akman et al 2017). The main online tools that e-marketer should focus on to increase the web experience of users include functionality of the website, trust and credibility of the online vendor and their website and the aesthetic aspects of the presentation of content (Constantinides E 2004). Males are found to be purchasing more through online than females and the primary purpose of engaging in social media is entertainment and information about new products (Arul and Mohmadraj 2017).When men value faster and more convenient shopping experience, women shop online for lower price offers. 25-35 year old people are more engaged in e-shopping for availing services like the price offers, variety of products and facility of comparison (Bauboniene et al 2015). There is a strong positive relationship exist between variables of user generated content and consumers attitudinal purchase behaviour (Dr.Helal 2015) Increase in user generated content has an increased relation with the usage of sales and promotional offers by consumers ie, those consumers who received user generated content take more advantage of sales promotion offers.

4.0   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Thrissur district of kerala among the age group 20-40. Samples of 114 customers were selected using random sampling technique and questionnaire of 5 point Likert scale was distributed to collect primary data. Data were then analysed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis. Questionnaire was tested for its reliability and validity using Cronbalch alpha and KMO Bartlett's test. Some data were also collected from various secondary sources like published articles, research thesis, websites, statistical reports published etc.

5.0   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The details of data collected are analysed and given below:

5.1   SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The survey shows that the most preferred social network site by our respondents is Facebook (96%),Whatsapp(93%) and Youtube (90%). If you observe the world wide data (Diagram 1)we can understand that this result is almost in accordance with the survey report published in datareportal above.

Table No: 1Most preferred social network

Rank	Social Media	%of respondents
1	Facebook	96%
2	Whatsapp	93%
3	Youtube	90%
4	Instagram	82%
5	Linkedin	76%
6	Twitter	69%

Source: own study

From the survey it was also found that the most preferred e-shopping site is Amazon (86%) and Flipkart (85%) being the youngsters shopping platform. Bookmyshow being film ticket booking site is youngsters main entertainment zone took third by 83% share.

Table No: 2Most preferred e-shopping site

Rank	E-shopping site	% of respondents
1	Amazon	86%
2	Flipkart	85%
3	Bookmyshow	83%
4	Snapdeal	79%
5	Shopclues	67%
6	Myntra	62%
7	Makemytrip	60%

Source: own study

5.2 RELIABILITY TEST

Reliability test is used to understand the stability and consistency of the research instrument that measures the whole construct. Table below shows that 30 questions were used to collect data and alpha value is 0.870 which is above the limit of 0.60 indicating the inter item consistency of each factor included in the questionnaire is very good.

Table No:3 Reliability Statistics

RELIABILITY STATISTICS	
Cronbach's Alpha	**No: of Items**
0.870	30

5.3 VALIDITY TEST FOR FACTOR ANALYSIS

The KMO test of sampling adequacy is an index indicating as to whether the sample size is appropriate for doing principal component analysis and here we can see in the table (Table No:4) that KMO test value is 0.706 which is higher than permissible value of 0.5. This ensures sample is adequate. Looking further at the table given below we can also see that the Bartlett's Testis significant as the p-value shows0.000 which is less than 0.05.

Table No:4KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.706
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1409.972
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

5.4 PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

PCA is a technique used for reducing the dimensionality of datasets and thereby increase the interpretability without losing any information.Total variance table (Table No:5)give us Eigen value or amount of variance in the original variable accounted for by each component.Scree plot (Graph No:1)give us line plot of these Eigen values that fall above the value 1 and Rotated component matrix (Table No:6)give us loadings i.e., the main output of PCA.

Table No:5   TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
varied experiences of users	6.66	22.21	22.21	6.66	22.21	22.21	3.07	10.23	10.23
self-image	2.66	8.85	31.06	2.66	8.85	31.06	2.50	8.34	18.57
follow brands to buy in future	1.96	6.52	37.58	1.96	6.52	37.58	2.41	8.03	26.60
strong belongingness	1.89	6.30	43.89	1.89	6.30	43.89	2.39	7.96	34.56
discounts and promotions are known	1.75	5.82	49.70	1.75	5.82	49.70	2.29	7.63	42.20
customised products	1.54	5.14	54.84	1.54	5.14	54.84	2.17	7.22	49.42
explain what I want	1.46	4.86	59.70	1.46	4.86	59.70	1.95	6.52	55.93
recommend product to friends and relatives	1.29	4.32	64.02	1.29	4.32	64.02	1.93	6.43	62.36
tempting to purchase	1.08	3.59	67.61	1.08	3.59	67.61	1.57	5.24	67.61
all countries products and usage pattern	0.94	3.13	70.73						
confident in sm responses and feedback	0.87	2.91	73.64						
inform problem to service provider	0.85	2.83	76.48						
feel important as customer	0.82	2.74	79.22						
better product decision	0.73	2.44	81.66						
warm relationship	0.63	2.09	83.75						
convenient platform	0.57	1.90	85.65						
put up experienced service	0.53	1.77	87.42						
more satisfied in co-creation process	0.46	1.52	88.94						
discuss improving service	0.45	1.50	90.44						
trust comments and reviews of users	0.44	1.48	91.92						
brand communication effective	0.36	1.20	93.12						
involvement result in better product	0.35	1.17	94.29						

brand loyalty	0.29	0.98	95.27						
enjoyable and relaxing time	0.29	0.96	96.23						
comment good service	0.25	0.84	97.07						
entertaining and creative	0.24	0.80	97.87						
information on new offerings	0.21	0.68	98.55						
support other members	0.17	0.57	99.12						
rating is necessary	0.14	0.47	99.59						
enhances knowledge about product usage	0.12	0.41	100.00						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

SCREE PLOT

Scree plot is a line plot of eigenvalues of the number of factors or principal components in the order of extraction. The below graph shows that there are 9 factors which have Eigen value greater than one based on the whole 30 variables. This is used to determine the number of factors that need to be retained in an exploratory factor analysis while going for factor reduction and regrouping in Principal component analysis.

Graph No:1 Scree Plot
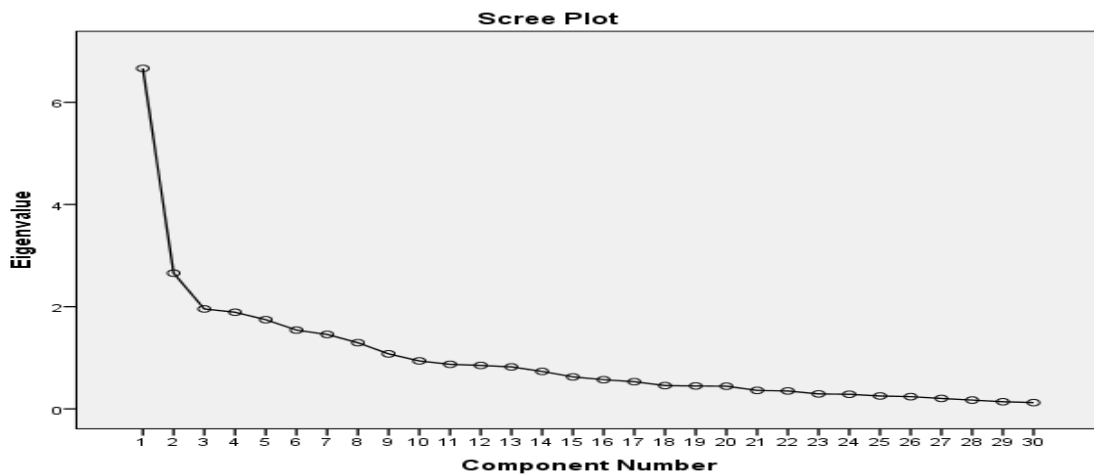
ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

From the table given below we can understand that the 30 variables were grouped into 9 factors according to their contribution towards the subject matter i.e., the main output of PCA. These

factors have to be labelled and will be considered as better predictors of purchase behaviour of social media users.

Table No:6   Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]									
	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Variedexperiencesofusers	.708								
Allcountriesproductsandusagepattern	.650								
Discountsandpromotionsareknown	.602								
Followbrandstobuyinfuture	.587								
Putupexperiencedservice	.570								
ExplainwhatIwant	.539								
Self-image		.836							
Strongbelongingness		.796							
Feelimportantascustomer		.765							
Warmrelationship			.804						
Involvementresultinbetterproduct			.639						
Trustcommentsandreviewsofusers			.629						
Moresatisfiedinco-creationprocess			.513						
Convenientplatform				.832					
Brandloyalty				.772					
Betterproductdecision				.600					
Informproblemtoserviceprovider					.751				
Temptingtopurchase					.666				
Discussimprovingservice					.647				
Recommendproducttofriendsandrelatives					.546				
Commentgoodservice						.740			
Brandcommunicationeffective						.635			
Enjoyableand relaxing time						.570			
Entertainingandcreative						.542			
Confidentin social media responsesandfeedback							.726		
Enhancesknowledgeaboutproductusage							.708		
Supportothermembers								.754	
Informationonnewofferings								.729	
Ratingisnecessary									.778
Customisedproducts									.554
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.									
a. Rotation converged in 18 iterations.									

6.0   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the analysis using PCA,variables that got grouped are classified into various components as follows.

Component 1: Varied experiences of users, all countries products and usage pattern, discounts and promotionsare known, follow brands to buy in future, put up experienced service, explain what I want. – These factors explain the user's social interaction with other members.

Component 2: Self-image, strong belongingness, feel important as customer. – These explain user's perception about themselves in the community.

Component 3: Warm relationship, involvement result in better product, trust comments and reviews of users, more satisfied in co-creation process. – These variables address user's involvement with other users and marketers.

Component 4: Convenient platform, brand loyalty, better product decision. – These factors enquire their taste in making unique choices of purchases.

Component 5: Inform problem to service provider, tempting to purchase, discuss improving service, recommend product to friends and relatives. – These factors show their level of communication with other social media users and companies.

Component 6: Comment good service, brand communication effective, enjoyable and relaxing time, enjoyable and relaxing time, entertaining and creative. – These factors well indicate their various ways of getting engaged in social platforms.

Component 7: Confident in social media responses and feedback, enhances knowledge about product usage.– These factors can explain their confidence in the users comments about product quality.

Component 8: Support other members andinformation on new offerings. – These factors indicate their expectation on the services available from other members.

Component 9: Rating is necessary and customised products. – These factors explain their validation on the competency of the manufacturer.

The factors identified from rotation are re-grouped under new labels and is shown below.

The new factors are:

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY   : for Component 1
LIFESTYLE   : for Component 2
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP   :for Component 3

BRAND CHOICE   : for Component 4
INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION : for Component 5
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT   : for Component 6
PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE   : for Component 7
KNOWLEDGE SHARING   : for Component 8
PRODUCT COMPETENCY   : for Component 9

Table No:7 GROUPING OF VARIABLES ANDRE-NAMING THE FACTORS

Labelling of factors		
Factor	**New factor**	**Variables**
FACTOR 1	SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY	Varied experiences of users, all countries products and usage pattern, discounts and promotions are known, follow brands to buy in future, put up experienced service, explain what I want
FACTOR 2	LIFESTYLE	Self image, strong belongingness, feel important as customer
FACTOR 3	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP	Warm relationship, involvement result in better product, trust comments and reviews of users, more satisfied in co-creation process
FACTOR 4	BRAND CHOICE	Convenient platform, brand loyalty, better product decision
FACTOR 5	INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	Inform problem to service provider, tempting to purchase, discuss improving service, recommend product to friends and relatives
FACTOR 6	CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	Comment good service, brand communication effective, enjoyable and relaxing time, entertaining and creative
FACTOR 7	PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE	Confident in social media responses and feedback, enhances knowledge about product usage
FACTOR 8	KNOWLEDGE SHARING	Support other members, information on new offerings
FACTOR 9	PRODUCT COMPETENCY	Rating, customised products

7.0   CONCLUSION

Social media serves many purposes in this digital era. It has evolved as an integral part of common man's lives. As a consumer social media provides us with an easy and reliable source of information about different brands, products and services. Today as many customers are choosing to make their purchases online, the nature of decision making itself has changed. These make it necessary for companies to incorporate social media as their primary marketing communication media and focus on various marketing techniques there. This paper provides with a handful of factors that attract the attention of social media users which can give an insight to the marketers to make a study on.

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