

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PALAYAMKOTTAI ,TIRUNELVELI, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

Social media has occupied an important position as a communication tool. People across the globe use social media to connect to other people or organisations. Social media can be defined as "consumer-generated media that covers a wide variety of new sources of online information, created and used by consumers' intent on sharing information with others regarding any topic of interest." Globally, people have started to use social media such as Facebook, ,Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to share their experiences. More buyers are now on social media networks than ever before. Consumers are looking for reviews and recommendations. As customers, people share product reviews, information about a service, advice on food or health, warnings about products, tips on using certain products, and much more. People have many 'connections' on social media. Therefore information is consumed by many people. This information becomes a source of influence on consumers and their buying behaviour. Research studies have shown that many people rely on the information and reviews on social media as a guide for planning their future purchases.

Introduction

The organisations are exposed to a wide range of information on social media, including information about customers and current happenings. So the Social Media is

a means of giving consumers a voice. Social media is a platform where many users from different places worldwide can interact and be connected through the internet simultaneously. The internet has changed the way of connecting people, doing business and socialising. The internet has become an inherent part of today's young generation. This generation does not think of this world without the internet. The modes of communication are changing from face-to-face communication to social networking on the virtual platform. Social media deals with the exchange of information, content, ideas, etc., with the help of electronic communication. On the other hand, social networking is related to sharing common interests with individuals or groups. Social media enables these organisations to recognise their prospective customers' viewpoint and also coordinate with them. On social media platforms, organisations can easily engage with customers through social media groups, chats, direct messages and comments section. The organisations are exposed to a wide range of information on social media which includes information about customers and current happenings.

Review of Literature

Sudharani Ravindran. D, Hari Sundar.G. Ram, Reji Kumar. G (2015)The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. A study was conducted to investigate the decision-making styles of Indian Shoppers in shopping malls. Six consumer decision making styles were extracted – Price consciousness, Quality Consciousness, Recreational, confused by over choice, Novelty conscious and Variety seeking – in the Indian environment. The variations in consumer decision making styles across different demographic variables were also investigated in this study.

Thiruvankadam. T, Dr N. Panchanatham. N (2017) aimed to determine whether there is any difference in the retail patronage behaviour of Chennai shoppers in their decision-making style. They classified the respondents as rational, intuitive and flexible. They concluded that reasonable customers go by brand image, flexible type decision-makers are influenced by store patronage factors, and personal values influence intuitive decision-makers. While research has shown that decision making styles varies among countries, it is yet to be found out how globalisation and economic liberalisation impact these styles as a less developed country becomes more advanced.

Steven Lysonski and Srinivivas Durvasula (2019) conducted a study to determine if decision-making styles have changed in India over the last 15 years and whether psychological variables are associated with different decision-making styles.

The results of their study illustrated that Indian consumers are now more modern in their decision making profiles. Other psychological variables (time pressure, shopping opinion leadership, shopping self-confidence, interpersonal influence and materialism) have also impacted the consumer decision making styles.

Deepa Tanksale, Netra Neelam, Rama Venkatachalam(2019)⁹⁷ Young adult consumers in the age group 18 – 21 years today form a significant part of the market segmentation in India. Therefore, it is necessary to study the psychology of these consumers, which affects their shopping behaviour and their decision making styles. Because of this, conducted a study among undergraduate college students. The results confirmed the presence of six decision making styles (Recreational, quality conscious, Novelty Fashion-conscious, Brand conscious, brand loyal and confused by over choice) in the context of young Indian consumers. Yet, a new style emerged from their study (shopping Avoidance – Timesaver).

Arvind Kumar(2020)⁹⁸ conducted an exploratory study on the poor's consumer decision-making styles for five FMCGs (bathing soap, cooking oil, tea, tooth care and washing soap). It was found that the poor are quality conscious, brand conscious, brand loyal but not price-conscious. Hence, FMCG marketers should work out their brand strategies to position themselves as popular brands in the minds of poor consumers. It will increase the bottom line for the existing marketers and create new avenues for the new entrants. The reviews on decision-making styles show that the consumers' psychology determines the pattern of exhibiting the types while purchasing the products.

Statement of Problem

Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable users to maintain great connections among themselves and others by achieving more than one task and facilitating communication and sharing different information, i.e. comments, thoughts, videos, and images. Social media is playing a significant role in various aspects of our lives.⁷ It supports users in several sectors, such as business, marketing, advertising and education. From a business perspective, companies and buyers can interact directly and thereby find whatever products and services are looking for; today, consumers progressively utilise technology, particularly Social Media, as an effective tool in their decision process.

Scope of the Study:

Social media is a medium that is growing quite prevalent nowadays because of its user- friendly characteristics. The present study is undertaken by analysing the impact of social media on consumer behaviour concerning the Palayamkottai. The researcher considering the factors Social media has more relied on individual's involvements and tastes, Personal experience and feedback in the first case. Apart from these two-way communications, the reliability of information is more outstanding in social media than mass media, and Social media gives more truthful information. Moreover, Social media allows knowing a lot of different opinions of real consumers and word of mouth.

Significance of the Study:

Nowadays, social media has become part of a person's life. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn has a numeral number of users and keeps growing every day. It is estimated that over 500 million people are interacting with social media. The number of social media users growing has attracted marketers. Marketers have recognised that social media marketing is an integral part of their marketing communication strategies. Also, social media helps organisations to communicate with their customers. These interactions help marketers determine customer needs and understand what their market might look like. Social media's key business factors allow consumers to estimate products, make recommendations to contacts or friends, and share any purchases through their social media. Communication through social media has found an impact on consumer decision-making and marketing strategies. Consumer socialisation theory predicts that communication among consumers affects their cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes. Also, the advertising on social media pages has built new consumer's behaviour. Consumers tend to make purchases or conduct business on social media. Recommendations by friends or connections on social media also could help consumers in decision-making.⁹

Objectives of the study:

The study is planned with the primary objective to analyse the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. For that, the following definite goals have been framed.

- To identify the demographic profile of social media users in the Palayamkottai .

- To analyse the respondents' opinion about social media as an effective business promotion tool.

Selection of sample size for the study

Sl.No	Sample Units	Questionnaires	Responses
		Distributed	Received
1.	Palayamkottai	152	134

Table 1

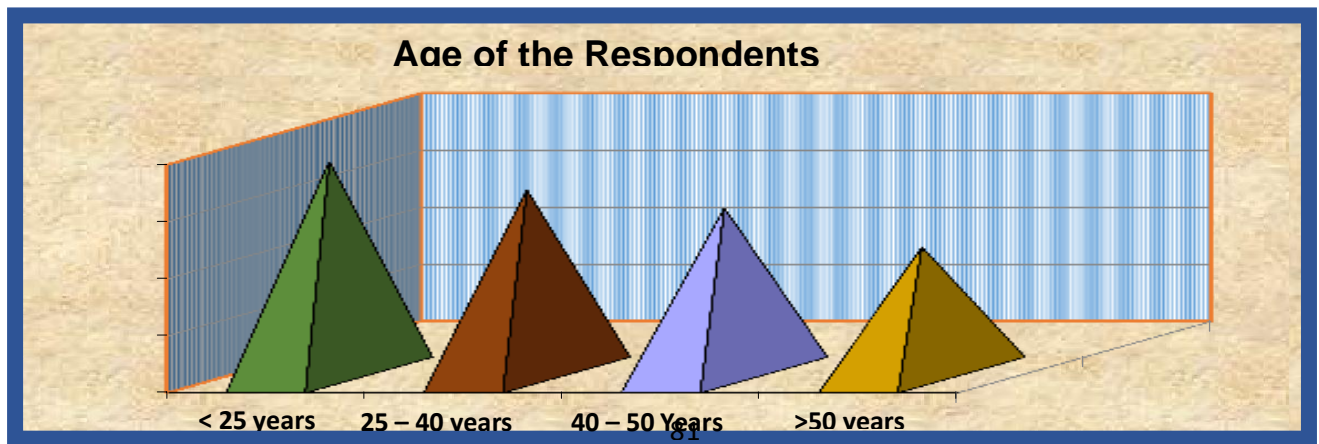
Age of the Respondents

Sl.No	Age of the Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	< 25 years	47	30.92
2.	25 – 40 years	41	26.64
3.	40 – 50 Years	37	24.01
4.	>50 years	28	18.42
Total		152	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 1 reveals the age of the respondents selected for the study. It is noted that a maximum of 47 respondents (30.92 per cent) belonged to the age group of below 25 years, followed by 41 respondents (26.64 per cent) 25 – 40 years, 37 respondents (24.05 per cent) 40

– 50 Years, and 28 respondents (18.42 per cent) belonged to the age category of above 50



years.

Fig 1

Gender of the Respondents:

Gender roles are changing, and males and females differ in consumer traits, information processing, decision-making, and buying patterns. Gender influences purchase and consumption situations as physiological differences between males and females may lead to specialized service/product needs. Evidence suggests that gender differences exist in the time spent on social media, considering the reviews and giving like an option or vice versa. The consumption pattern of males and females may also differ. Hence this variable is considered for the study.

Table 2

Gender of the Respondents

Sl.No	Gender of the Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Male	69	45.39
2.	Female	83	54.61
Total		152	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 2 discloses the gender-wise classification of respondents. It is found that a maximum of 83 respondents (54.61 per cent) were female, and 69 respondents (45.39 percent) were male.

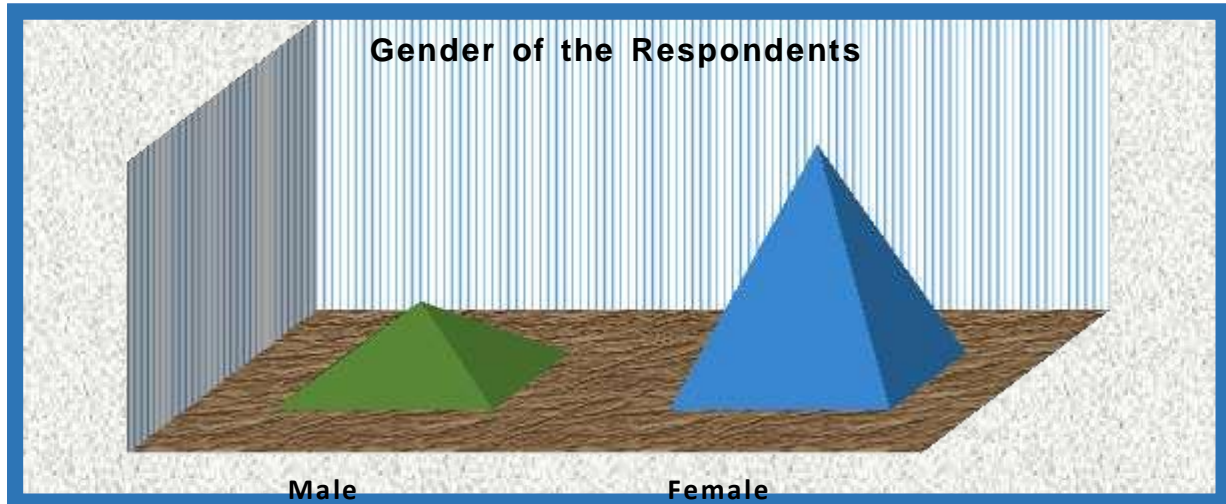


Fig 4.2

Educational Qualifications of the Respondents:

Respondent's needs and preferences may depend on educational Qualifications. The level of literacy provides essential knowledge to respondents to consider the information posted on social media. Education has a powerful influence on consumer behaviour, attitude, perception and intention to purchase. In this research, the researcher classified the respondents by Higher secondary level, Graduate, Postgraduate and "Others. The following table gives the educational qualification of the respondents.

Table 3 Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Sl.No	Academic Qualifications of the Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Higher secondary	25	16.45
2.	Graduate	64	42.11
3.	Post Graduate	48	31.58

4.	Others	15	9.87
Total		152	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Fig 4.3

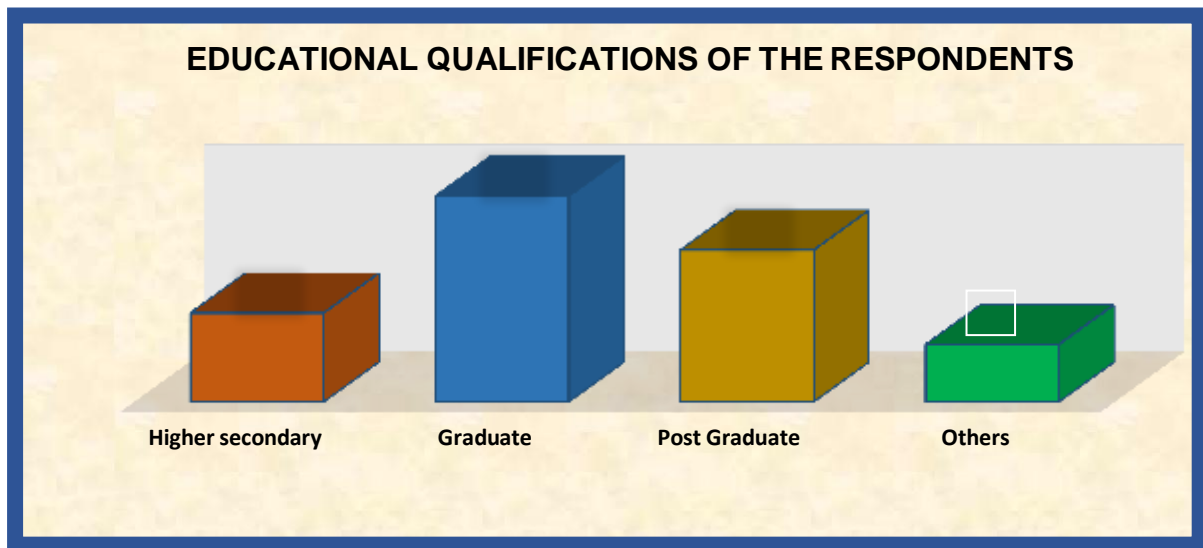


Table 3 and fig 3 expose the educational qualifications of the selected respondents. It is noted that the majority of the respondents (42.11 per cent) are graduates, followed by 31.58 per cent postgraduates, 16.45 per cent completing higher secondary, and only 9.87 per cent of the respondents having professional (other) qualifications.

Religion of the Respondents:

Religion helps in creating an ethical framework and also a regulator for values in day to day life. This particular approach helps in the character building of a person. In other words, religion acts as an agency of socialization. Thus, faith helps in building values like love, empathy, respect, and harmony. The respondents' belief may influence their attitude towards the products or services, and they have a difference of opinion regarding social media and their functions. So this variable is added.

Table 4

The religion of the Respondents

Sl.No	The religion of the Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Hindu	99	65.13
2.	Muslim	28	18.42
3.	Christian	25	16.45
Total		152	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 4.4 discloses the religion of the respondents. It is understood that 99 respondents (65.13 per cent) are Hindu, 28 respondents (18.42 per cent) are Muslim, and 25 respondents (16.45 per cent) are Christian.

Social Status of the Respondents:

The social status in Indian society is determined by the caste in which they have born. It is a deciding factor of a person's position in traditional Indian culture. A caste is an endogamous group that provides a person with definite roles, responsibilities, and disabilities. Though, in conventional social stratification, the family of origin determines a vital role. In Indian society, caste has been an essential and rigid factor in deciding the status of a person in the community. So it is included in the present study.

Table 5

Social Status of the Respondents

Sl.No	Social Status of the Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	OC	36	23.68
2.	OBC	88	57.89

3.	SC / ST	28	18.42
Total		152	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 4.5 divulges the religion of the respondents selected for the study. It is perceived that a maximum of 88 respondents (57.89 per cent) belonged to the OBC category, 36 respondents (23.68 per cent) OC, and 28 respondents (18.42 per cent) belonged to SC/ST category.

Social media is a very effective business promotional tool:

Exploratory Factor Analysis:

Social media impacts consumer behaviour through the different stages of the decision-making process. Consumers recognise the necessities on social media when they look out for pictures of products displayed over social networks. The information stage in social media starts when the users of social media research products and get their peers and experts' advice. The users of social media go through the review and opinion platforms that allow them to make comparisons. The consumers get an idea about the products when they go through the ratings and reviews regarding products, services and the company. In addition to interaction with peers, consumers also interact with the brands to get more information regarding products and services by engaging with the brand on social media. So the social media is a very excellent business promotion tool. The researcher studies the respondents' opinions regarding social media as a very effective promotion tool.

Table 6

Rotated Component Matrix							
Variables	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Business people can learn more about their customers	.876	.106	.037	-.135	-.044	-.066	-.059
Retains existing customers and creates new.	.848	.247	.021	-.083	-.085	-.017	-.034
Customer and audience	.664	.597	-.095	.007	.180	-.003	.072

engagement							
Stay on top of industry news	.643	.466	-.256	-.094	.150	.008	.075
Easy for targeted advertising	.599	.162	.436	.202	.297	.035	.019
Boost sales	.530	.017	-.518	-.135	-.260	.030	.144
Companion with influencers	-.037	.776	.050	.093	-.160	.050	.077
Keep their eye on the competition	.090	.767	.082	-.113	-.261	.070	.076
Promote content	.356	.703	.197	-.370	.082	-.014	-.020
Customer service and customer support	.212	.693	-.269	.442	.144	.017	.012
Gauge sentiment around the brand	-.011	-.114	.801	.136	.039	-.069	.152
Go viral	.212	.333	.514	.449	.271	.023	.047
Reputation management	-.192	.042	.057	.873	.076	.008	-.012
constructs brand loyalty	-.345	-.093	.409	.666	-.026	-.047	-.079
Social media differentiates the	-.040	-.019	-.001	.117	.832	-.030	-.003
Crisis communication	.391	-.299	-.347	.183	.519	.038	.022
Increase website traffic	-.039	-.015	-.084	.022	-.031	.657	.174
Generate leads in the markets	.083	-.027	.064	.049	.033	.580	-.009
Humanise the brand	.164	-.010	.240	.110	.089	.578	-.425
Increase brand awareness	-.123	.116	-.019	-.038	-.259	-.256	.679
Stay top of mind	.060	-.104	.012	.077	.160	.160	.571
Establish the brand as a thought leader	-.084	-.070	-.213	.113	-.007	-.157	.522
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. \Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							

The values in this panel of the table represent the distribution of the variance after the Varimax rotation. Varimax rotation tries to maximise the variance of each of the factors, so the total amount of conflict accounted for is redistributed over the seven extracted factors.

Hypothesis Testing:

H₀: Profile variables of the selected respondents are not influenced by their attitude about the

Social Media is a business promotion tool – Factor “Know Your Consumer.”

Table 7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Social Media is a business promotion tool – Factor “Know Your Consumer.”					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	552.661 ^a	50	11.053	36.526	.000***
Intercept	129.568	1	129.568	428.165	.000***
Age	.543	4	.136	.448	0.774*
Gender	30.595	4	7.649	25.275	.000***
Educational Qual.	10.254	3	3.418	11.295	.000***
Error	168.252	556	.303		
Total	8450.000	607			
Corrected Total	720.913	606			
a. R Squared = .767 (Adjusted R Squared = .746)					

***Significant at one per cent level. **Significant at five per cent level.

*Not Significant at either at one / five per cent level.

Table 7 reveals the two-way ANOVA between the selected respondents’ profile variable and their attitude about Social Media as a business promotion tool – The factor “Know Your Consumer.” “R squared 0.767 and adjusted R Squared = .746 indicate the goodness of fit of the distribution. The “F” value of the profile variables are more than the critical value of 1.96. (except for the age of the respondents). The significance value (P-value) of the independent variables are less than 0.01 / 0.05. Hence it is concluded that their attitude about Social Media influences the Profile variables of the selected respondents as a business promotion tool – Factor “Know Your Consumer.”

Table 8

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Social Media is a Business Promotion Tool - Extracted Factor					
Loadings of the Variables under the Factor “Influence the Consumer”					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	714.770 ^a	51	14.015	115.189	.000***
Intercept	139.128	1	139.128	1143.481	.000***
Educational Qual.	32.329	3	10.776	88.570	.000***
Religion	10.355	4	2.589	21.277	.000***
Error	67.527	555	.122		
Total	9249.000	607			
Corrected Total	782.297	606			
a. R Squared = .914 (Adjusted R Squared = .906)					

Table 8 discloses the two-way ANOVA between the selected respondents’ profile variable and their attitude about Social Media as a business promotion tool – The factor Influence the Consumer” “R squared 0.914 and adjusted R Squared = .906 specify the goodness of fit of the model. The “F” value of the profile variables educational qualifications, religion, marital status, type of family, domicile area, occupation and annual income are more than critical value 1.96. The significance value (P-value) of the independent variables are less than 0.01 / 0.05. Hence it is concluded that their attitude about Social Media influences the Profile variables of the selected respondents as a business promotion tool – Factor “Influence the Consumer.”

Suggestion

- ✓ Social media gives more truthful and reliable information.
- ✓ Posted product photos and videos go viral, so the respondents should be cautious.
- ✓ Information shared over social media raises expectations of the product.
- ✓ Social media is cheaper for product advertising and provides high exposure for the products/brands.
- ✓ Both positive and negative comments of the products contribute to critical thinking on the purchase decision.

- ✓ Social media reduces risk-taking and paves the way for quick decision making.
- ✓ Social media enables the respondents to purchase unique products.

Conclusion

Even many individuals have agreed that through Social media, they can share their opinion and talk to other users and the establishments more effectively. Social media has bridged up the gap between brands and consumers. Moreover, companies are now making each possible effort to make the buyer feel connected with the brand and put their views, opinions, feedback, and reviews.

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