

Influence of Social Media Characteristics on Buying Behaviour of Youth: A Conceptual Study

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Abstract

Social media became an integral part of our daily life. Now people of every age group are spending a significant time on social media for different purposes and interests. Our daily life decisions are influenced by social media. Along with other lifestyle impacts, social media directly hit to purchasing decisions of people. The present study aims to identify the impact of social media characteristics on buying intention of customers, particularly youth. For this study, the convenience sampling method was used and data has been collated from 148 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The finding of the study revealed that social media characteristics such as eWOM, increased visibility and reviews and rating have a significant positive impact on willingness towards buying the product or services.

Keywords: Social media, Social media characteristics, buying behaviour, buying willingness.

Introduction

Social media has emerged and changed the purchasing habits of consumers due to its power in changing and improving the consumer experience. It has been considered that using social media helps in improving the communication of ideas, shaping of views and modifying purchasing behaviour of the targeted consumers (Safia et al., 2019). This paper focuses on how the youth uses social media platforms for marketing their e-commerce. Social networking is not only a way to communicate and keep up with current events all over the world but also a powerful tool to determine behaviours and integrate new ideas into society. Furthermore, in the age of globalisation, social media has arisen as a viable source of advertising and marketing. Additionally, social media has been used as a powerful marketing method to gain clients and establish trust in online purchases. Digital confidence, from a psychological standpoint, improves the human desire to shop online.

Users of social media typically have strong technical abilities and e-commerce knowledge, and they prefer to research product specifics on various forums. Social media is not only a tool for connecting people but

also has an impact on their life in a variety of ways. Due to the interconnected nature of social media, individuals can connect with a large number of people from all over the world who may share similar goals (Vieira et al., 2020). This enables people to broaden their horizons. As a result, it enables seamless communication with a variety of people, allowing them to share their experiences and perspectives with online social media followers. As a result, consumers may quickly share information about products and services with the community through social media. Social media is the platform for disseminating information, suggestions and buying experiences. The impact of social media characteristics on the behaviour of consumers in e-commerce (Gupta & Chopra, 2020).

Consumer behaviour can have negative as well as positive impacts on e-commerce. It directly affects the profitability of an e-commerce store and also entails how their marketing strategies are being accepted by the consumers. It can be overcome by strategizing according to the needs of consumers and introducing products that not only fulfil consumer requirements but also build brand loyalty (Awobamise, 2018). The youth generally prefer social media websites for online as it helps develop trust towards products and services and reviews and ratings influence the purchase behaviour of consumers. On the one hand, it helps customers find products, while on the other, it helps suppliers engage with customers using social media sites and tailored marketing. These types of social media communications aid in the introduction and promotion of new items (Dwivedi et al, 2021).

This study provides an insight into social media use and its impact on consumers' willingness to buy a product and buying patterns in youth. It focuses on how and why social media is mostly preferred by the youth to market e-commerce. The research method that has been selected to conduct the research has been highlighted. The data that has been collected will be analysed and its findings will be discussed to acknowledge or understand the impact and influences of social media on buying patterns. The study mainly describes the effect of social media marketing and how it influences consumer behaviour.

The research objectives can be demonstrated:

1. To determine the frequency with which young adults purchase things online.
2. To investigate the impact of social media on young adults' purchasing habits.
3. To determine the significance of social media sites in the lives of young adults.

Review of Literature

Social media

According to Safia et al (2019), social media is regarded as the applications and websites that focus on generating and improving communication, interaction and collaboration. Social media platforms are mainly used to interact and access information, news and decision making. It is a valuable communication tool that allows individuals to create, market and share their views and products locally as well as globally. As stated by Vieira et al (2020), it is considered to be the fastest mode of building relationships and connecting with people for socialising and business. Social media allows individuals to interact with each other without any barriers, it creates a more advanced level of conducting business and gaining publicity.

Supportive theories

According to Awobamise (2018), behavioural theories indicate the change in consumer behaviour and their adoption of social media platforms for interaction and other daily activities. Behaviour theories like social cognitive theory and BJ Fogg's model of behaviour change help in observing and understanding the change in consumer behaviour. Social media usage has increased due to several factors like accessibility, ease of use and availability. As opined by Vieira et al (2020), these factors signify that social media has made daily activities and conducting business easier and more convenient. It has influenced and contributed mainly to the implementation of marketing strategies and promotions. The social media platform has made E-Commerce marketing easier and more approachable for consumers.

Social media Characteristics

According to Siregar (2018), there are mainly four characteristics of social media. It is easy to use which also

influences and attracts several consumers to social media platforms. They are easily available and accessible; they make communication possible for a larger number of people without any difficulties. Social media platforms create the ability to share and develop visuals that help individuals to interact more effectively. Moreover, social media platforms help in marketing businesses globally. As stated by Vieira et al (2020), it ensures a global consumer base and allows a company or a business to market their products without any cost. It creates an opportunity for small as well as large businesses to grow and sustain in the market.

Electronic word of mouth on willingness to buy

With the increase in the use of social media and e-commerce, eWOM (Electronic word of mouth) is becoming an imperative reference for online buyers to make buying decisions. Information shared by electronic word of mouth is positively associated with the willingness and trust of the customer towards the product or service, which directly affects to buying intention of the consumer (Zhao, Zhang, Wang, & Tang, 2020). The electronic world of mouth helps users to understand the description of the product from existing users' perspectives, which helps to develop trust and willingness toward the product. Therefore, organisations are focusing on eWOM as an important promotional strategy (Mahmud, Islam, Ali, & Mehjabin, 2020).

Influence of increased visibility of product/services on social media on buying intentions of youth

According to Awobamise (2018), social media platforms help businesses to target a broader perspective of consumers and develop brand awareness among them. It helps them to acknowledge and visualise all the products available in the market so that the consumers can compare those products before making a purchase. It has changed the buying intention of youth as the youth is now more dependent on social media platforms for not only marketing but also purchasing a product or service. As stated by Siregar (2018), social media platforms have enhanced the visibility of products and services which has usually impacted the purchasing intentions of the youth.

Reviews and ratings on willingness to buy

According to Gyenge et al (2021), reviews and ratings are one of the factors that influence consumers to purchase a product online. Social media platforms have made it possible for consumers to access the global rating and reviews of a specific product before purchasing them. It has changed the shopping perspective of consumers as they prefer online shopping over offline nowadays. Online shopping ensures consumers of the product quality and usage. However, as argued by Manzoor et al (2020), reviews and ratings can be misleading and biased which can make a consumer purchase the wrong product.

Hypotheses H1: social media significantly influences the willingness to buy online

According to Manzoor et al (2020), social media influences consumers to purchase online as it has several advantages over offline shopping. It influences consumers positively by allowing them to compare a specific product in brief and research it. However, offline shopping does not allow a consumer to research a product in brief or compare its ingredients or factors with some other products. Social media helps consumers to analyse and choose the right product according to their needs. On the contrary, as stated by Gyenge et al (2021), offline shopping does not provide the consumer to research or compare a product briefly. Social media influences consumers by ensuring them thorough details and specifications of a product.

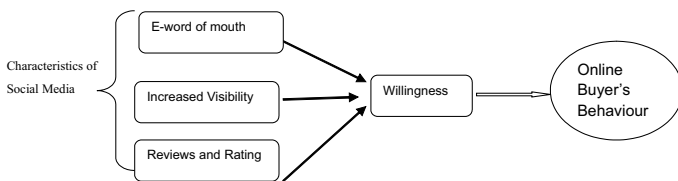
Hypotheses H2: The impact of increased visibility of products on social media creates an intention to buy online

According to Gyenge et al (2021), increasing visibility of products and services on social media has created and intended for consumers to purchase products online. It has initiated the growth of the business through social media platforms that help businesses not only expand their business but also create a loyal consumer base. An increase in visibility of products has increased demand for product visualisation and also influenced several consumers to choose online shopping over offline shopping. As stated by Manzoor et al (2020), social media has created an intention for consumers to buy online and an opportunity for businesses to grow with e-marketing.

Hypotheses 3: social media has a significant association with reviews and rating and buying behaviour of youth

As per Helversen et al, 2018, consumer purchasing decisions are highly influenced by reviews and ratings along with product attributes. Reviews and ratings are crucial aspects that impact positively as well as negative on buying intention of the consumer. Studies suggest that along with product attributes consumers focus on higher consumer ratings and good reviews. Whereas, Negative reviews and low ratings decrease the willingness of buyers and impact purchasing intention negatively.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Methodology

Data Collection

To carry out this research, primary and secondary types of data have been used. For the collection of primary data, a survey method was used. 148 youth have been served from different parts of the country. Books, journals, newspapers and websites were used for the collection of secondary data.

Measurement and research design

A structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section includes demographic information of respondents such as age, gender and educational level. Whereas, the second section comprises information regarding various characteristics of social media and their impacts on buying patterns of youth. Variables of the researcher were electronic word of mouth, trust (review and rating), increased visibility, willingness, recommendation and buying behaviour. SPSS 22 was used to analyse the collected information. Different scales were used to measure all the variables in the research tool.

Reliability testing and sample adequacy

For the reliability of the questionnaire and sample adequacy

Cronbach's alpha and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) were used. In the reliability tests, Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.07 in all acceptable variables (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The values of Cronbach's alpha in all variables lie between .775 to .848 as shown in table 1. Further the Table 1 shows that KMO values of all variables are ranged from .57 to .70. More of them are more than 0.06 which suggests good internal consistency in the scale ((Li, Huang, & Feng, 2020).

Table 1: Reliability and KMO Values

Variable Name	KMO Values	Cronbach's alpha
Electronic word of mouth	.707	.813
Increased Visibility	.605	.841
Trust (Reviews & Ratings)	.595	.848
Willingness	.577	.843
Buying Behaviour	.836	.775

Source: Based on data analysis

Data Analyses and results

Demographic information

Table 2: Demographic data presentation

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	70	47.3%
	Female	78	52.7%
	Total	148	100
	18-25	60	40.58%
	26-40	88	59.45%
Total	148	100%	
Education level	Below Graduation	11	7.4%
	Graduation	88	59.5%
	Masters	45	30.4%
	Any other	4	2.7%
	Total	148	100%

Source: Based on data analysis

The above-given table 1 presents more female participants (52.7%) than male participants (47.3%), which shows that more females were surveyed for the study. This table presents that around 60 % of respondents were between the age bar of 26-40, near 40 % of respondents were in the bar of 18-25, which supports a study by Elkins, 2018 that in the

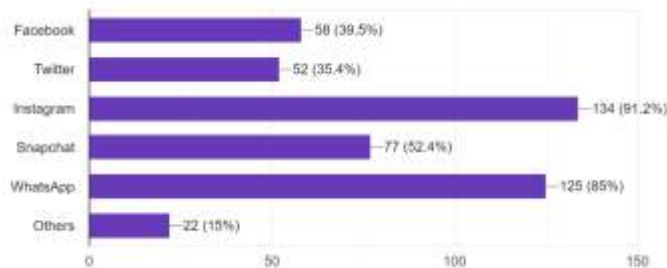
40s people are tend to make more money that eventually increase paying capacity.

Maximum respondents (59.4%) were graduates. 30.4 % of respondents attained the qualification of masters, whereas 7.4 % of respondents were below graduation and 2.7 % were in any other category.

Data Presentation

The below-given figure presents Instagram (91.2%) and WhatsApp (85%) as are most accessed social media websites by youth, followed by Snapchat (52.4%), Facebook (39.5%), and Twitter (35.4%) and 15 others.

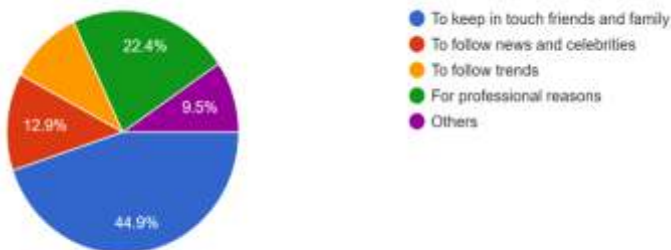
Figure 2: Social media website users



Source: Based on Data Analysis

Below given figure 2 depicts that most of the youth (44.9%) use social to stay connected with their family and friends, which supports Mars, Winstone, , Haworth, & Kidger, 2021 that social media is playing the role of connecting medium for family and friends. 22.4% of respondents use the Social media website for professional reasons and 12.9% go on social media for news and celebrities whereas 19.8 % of youth Follow celebrity trends on social media which further influence their buying behaviour(Hani, Marwan, & Andre, 2018).

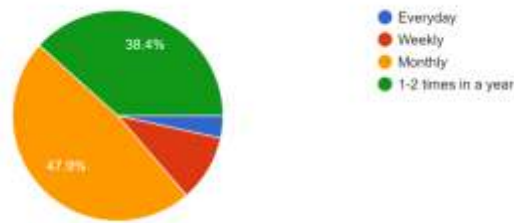
Figure 3: Uses of Social Media website by youths



Source: Based on Data Analysis

In the past few years, the trends of online Shopping are increasing drastically, especially after the restriction on offline shopping due to lockdown. Around 50% of youth shop online once a month whereas 3.4% of respondents shop everyday and 10.3% of respondents are weekly shoppers on various online Platforms. See figure 3.

Figure 3: Frequency of online shopping



Source: Based on Data Analysis

Correlation analysis

The above-given Table 3 above shows the correlation analysis of the dependent and independent variables of the study. As per the given data, all the variables are significantly and positively associated with the buying behaviour of youth. Thep-value is below 0.01 which claims that results are not due to chance. The r- the value of each variable is strong and positive which indicates that the strength of the association is positive and all the variables are significantly correlated.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis (n=148)

Variables name	Electronic word of mouth	Increased Visibility	Trust (Reviews & Ratings)	Willingness	Buying Behaviour
Electronic word of mouth	1				
Increased Visibility	.538**	1			
Trust (Reviews & Ratings)	.496**	.547**	1		
Willingness	.574**	.490**	.435**	1	
Buying Behaviour	.782**	.612**	.676**	.616**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is a useful test for analysing the impacts of independent variables on dependent variables. In the present study, the researcher assessed the role of social media characteristics on buying patterns or behaviour of youth in India. SPSS 22 has been used to proceed with this work along with descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were added to ensure good enough variance on the dependant variables and independent variables. Examining for multicollinearity also initiate no cause for concern, in correlation analysis between

variables, given in table number 3. This was also measured with regression and all VIF values were less than 3.

Results of regression analysis are presented in table 4. In the 1st model of analysis, hypotheses of social media characteristics assumed the influence of social media on buying patterns of youth. In this step, electronic word of mouth, increased visibility and review and ratings were entered, whereas the extended variable was willingness to buy a product or services using social media platforms were entered in models 2 and 3.

Table 4: Regression coefficient analysis model

Variables	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>Sr</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>Sr</i> ²	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>Sr</i> ²
Electronic word of mouth	.626	.088	.483	.582	.704	.070	.543	.647	.825	.075	.637	.679
Increased visibility	.195	.088	.109	.163	.250	.100	.140	.206	.483	.103	.270	.365
Reviews and Rating	.286	.088	.312	.442	.303	.050	.330	.456				
Willingness	.243	.088	.150	.227								
R²	.774				.733				.663			
ΔR^2	.739				.727				.658			
F-value	103.885				129.885				140.540			
Sigp-value	0.001				0.001				<0.001			

β standardised coefficient, Δ =change in values, *Sr*²squared partial correlations *b*= regression coefficient,

To understand the buying behaviour of youth in India, the result of regression analysis depicts that the variable of social media in model 1 reported a significant (75%) of the variance in willingness to make a purchase on various online platforms ($R^2 = .774$, $F = 103.885$, $p < 0.001$). In model 2, identified social media influence on willingness at $\Delta R^2 = .727$ shows changes in the model with (F -value = 129.885). In model 3 increases in buying behaviour of youth. All constructs are significant in model 3 on $R^2 = .663$, F -value = 140.540 and p -value = < 0.001 . The R square changed the results in each model of testing. Hence the Models 2 and 3 show all positive impacts on buying behaviour of youth.

Results explained that model 1 which includes three social media characteristics indicates a 75% variance in online buying behaviour, $R^2 = .774$, F -value = 103.885, p -value = < 0.001 . Which results in that dimension of social media 75 % influence the willingness to buy online? The analytical variables are statistically presented in table 4.

Discussion & Conclusion

The present study gives a conceptual framework of e-commerce through social media. It shows the impact of social media on buying patterns of youth in India. Result derived from data analysis supports the previous findings and theories which say that social media has a positive

influence on buying patterns of youth. Online shopping through various social media platforms has increased extensively over the last few years. In this study, the researcher focused on the influence of electronic word of mouth, review and rating and increased visibility on the willingness of buying products through social media. Willingness is a key variable in online shopping or e-commerce. Hence, the above-discussed characteristics of social media such as electronic word of mouth, review and rating and increased visibility directly hit the willingness of buyers. Especially regarding youth (18 to 40 years) of India.

This given study explained the major factors of social media which are the electronic word of mouth, increased visibility and review and rating that positively influence on buying intention of buyers. Electronic word of mouth through social media, visibility enhancement and reviews and ratings on social media such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram etc. have a significant impact on willingness towards the product or service which influences buying behaviour of people, particularly youth. All the hypothesis that predicts the impacts of social media traits on buying patterns are accepted. Moreover, this study gives analytical and empirical support to the concept that claims the influence of social media on buying behaviour of buyers with reference to the youth of India.

Implication

In this study, it has been observed that youth of the nations are using various social media websites popularly WhatsApp (85%) and Instagram (91.2%), Facebook (39.5), Twitter (35.5%) and Snapchat (52.4 %). Hence it is advised to the seller to use social media websites to increase sales and profit maximization. Choosing a website for product promotion is also a crucial step. This study revealed that Instagram and WhatsApp are the most popular websites so sellers need to alter their market strategies accordingly. Additionally, this study proves a significant association of various characteristics of social media that are electronic word of mouth, increased visibility and review and ratings. Hence, it is crucial for managers of various selling websites such as Amazon, eBay, Flipkart

Mynta etc. to maintain visibility of the products, honest reviews and rating systems and develop electronic word of mouth through various promotional strategies. Along with website managers, e-firms should focus on these informational aspects of social media and consumer's behaviour to improve sales and profit maximization.

Limitations and future scope.

1. Present research is intended to identify the influences of social media characteristics on buying behaviour of youth, particularly in India. In this study researcher surveyed only youth (18-40 years age group) because they are high users of the internet and various social media website. However, other age groups such as adolescents or senior citizens may be targeted for future study.
2. For this study purpose, the researcher has examined only three characteristics (Electronic word of mouth, increased visibility and reviews and rating) of social media. Other characteristics such as live chat and communication, customer support, recommendations etc. may be taken for the future study.
3. Due to the time construct, the researcher took a small sample size (148 responded). For more detailed research, a study on a larger sample size can be attempted.

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