

Influence of Social Media Marketing on Brand Choice Behaviour among Youth in India: An Empirical Study

Bernadette D'Silva

Roshni Bhuptani

Sweta Menon

bernadette.dsilva@gmail.com

bhuptaniroshni@yahoo.com

s_sweta@hotmail.com

K.G. Mittal Institute of Management & Research

Stephen D'Silva

st.dsilva@gmail.com

Jamnadal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies

With the growing importance of internet in day to day urban life, social media has gained rapid acceptance in the minds of youth. Most of the companies ensure to have their presence felt on social media websites to attract large number of potential customers. The basic objective of paper is to understand the usage pattern of social media among youth in the city of Mumbai. It also aims at assessing the influence of social media on the consumer buying behaviour. Thus the research justifies the corporate spending enormous funds behind advertising of their brands on social media websites.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth, Brands, Marketing, Companies, Usage, Etc.

1. Introduction

Social Media is a popular mode for social communication. The 21st century uses social media networking in their day to day life. In the busy urban life, people don't have time to meet or even call up their near and dear ones. Social media helps to bridge this gap. Millions of youngsters use social media websites to search their friends online and communicate with them, chat, share information, videos and photos. People seek to meet new people through social media, who share common interests and aspirations. Visiting a social networking site has become a habit for most youth, one which they cannot easily give up. This growing importance of social media has translated into its increasing use in marketing also.

In today's competitive world, brands are fighting for space in the minds of consumers. Though the traditional modes of advertising and marketing like television, print media and outdoor media still contribute to a major chunk of the advertising budget, they cannot be solely relied upon to ensure reach to the target audience. Using social media like blogs and networking sites for marketing of products is fast increasing its importance. Social media marketing is the latest 'fad' and here to stay.

With sites like Face book, Orkut, LinkedIn, Twitter, You tube, etc. attracts more than 5 million users every day. Having a presence on these sites is a must for all marketing organisations. Besides attracting a large number of prospective customers, the cost of social media for advertising is comparatively much lower than the other mass media options. Hence it is a value for money proposition.

Social media websites help generate interest in the brand and also to build trust in the company. This goes a long way in the brand building exercise. Besides, one can reach the relevant target audience and avoid clutter. It helps the company stay in constant touch with its customers, know their preferences and upgrade their products and services accordingly. It gives them enough room to receive prompt feedback from them. It thus leads to one on one interaction, leading to customer satisfaction. A satisfied customer spreads positive word of mouth for the brand and thus enhances the brand equity. All in all, it helps a company increase awareness of its brand, generate leads, build its customer base, improve sales and market share. If planned and executed properly, social media becomes a very cost effective mode of online promotions.

2. Literature Review

Murdough (2009) have positively agreed on the potential of social media but like any other marketing tool it is difficult to gauge the kind of impact that it lays on the masses. According to Winterberg (2010), social media websites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter come with unbelievable techniques to communicate with family, colleagues and friends. Benson, Filippaios, & Morgan (2010) have studied the usage of social networks in career development of students and also building the relationship with their employers and have concluded on some

better understanding of motivations as an effective application of these networks on businesses. Backer (2010) have investigated the usage pattern in adoption of new technologies like Facebook and Smart phones on students and found that such applications create a sense of motivation and responsibility as well as it enriches their learning experiences. Donna and Fodor (2010) have found out that instead of using companies' investment for calculation of returns on investment, managers must assess consumer motivations for using social media and measure customer's investments in calculation of ROI. Sara Tye (2010) have analysed the impact of advances in technology and how it transformed the traditional business procedures in communicating to their target audience. Chan & Prendergast (2007) have perceived Materialism and social comparison as important issues, amongst adolescents and found that Social comparison with friends and with media figures were both positive predictors of materialism.

3. Research Methodology

Research Objective

The basic objective of the paper is to understand the usage pattern of social media among youth in the city of Mumbai. It also aims at assessing the influence of social media on the consumer buying behaviour. The study also explores the preference of the youngsters regarding various social media web sites.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire that was distributed among youth in city of Mumbai. The questionnaire contained multiple choice questions as well as it also incorporated various parameters that were identified for analysing the preferences of youngsters towards various social media websites.

Sample Size

Primary research was done through distribution of structured questionnaires amongst 121 youth in the city of Mumbai. Convenience sampling technique was used for period of two months (Dec 2010– Jan 2011).

Research Design

The research is basically focused on the understanding the usage pattern of youth and their preference towards various social media websites. The data was analysed by using statistical packages like SPSS 16. Different statistical tests like chi square, factor analysis; ANOVA, Friedman test of Ranking etc were performed on the data collected for the purpose of testing the hypothesis.

4. Findings & Analysis

H₀ (1): There is not significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

H₁ (1): There is significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

Custom Table 1

		Brand Awareness	
		Yes	No
		Count	Count
Brand Preference	Yes	45	5
	No	32	38

Table 2 Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Brand Awareness
Brand Preference	Chi-square	24.878
	df	1
	Sig.	.000*

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it has been found that the chi value stands at 24.878 and its p value is 0.00 which is quite lesser than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we reject null hypotheses and accept the alternative

hypotheses. It has been derived that nearly 68% of respondents believe that brand preference depends upon brand awareness. It means that if there is lower awareness about the brands, may result in lower preference for those particular brands and vice versa. Thus social media can be regarded as effective tool in creating both awareness and preference of products and brands to the customers. Therefore we accept the alternative hypotheses that there is significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites.

H₀ (2): There is not significant relationship between brand preference created and the actual product purchased through social media websites.

H₁ (2): There is significant relationship between brand preference created and the actual product purchased through social media websites.

Custom Table 3

		Purchase of Product	
		Yes	No
		Count	Count
Brand Preference	Yes	24	27
	No	10	60

Table 4 Pearson Chi-Square Tests

Brand Preference	Purchase of Product	
	Chi-square	15.685
Df	1	
Sig.	.000*	

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is inferred that the chi value stands at 15.685 and its p value is 0.00 which is quite lesser than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we reject null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. It has been found that nearly 70% of respondents feel that only those people, who develop brand preference towards a particular brand, actually end up buying the same brand through social media websites. It means that if people do not prefer a brand they will not buy it and vice versa. It can thus be said that social media has far reaching effects for marketers to make their presence felt on social media sites in order to ensure brand preference for their products, resulting in increased sales. Therefore we accept the alternative hypotheses that there is significant relationship between brand preference created and the actual product purchased through social media websites.

H₀ (3): There is not significant relationship between people seeking information about products and brands on social media and the actual buying behavior for the same.

H₁ (3): There is significant relationship between people seeking information about products and brands on social media and the actual buying behavior for the same.

Custom Table 5

		Purchase of Product	
		Yes	No
		Count	Count
Brand Information	Yes	26	40
	No	8	47

Table 6 Pearson Chi-Square Tests

Brand Information	Purchase of Product	
	Chi-square	9.168
df	1	
Sig.	.002*	

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is inferred that the chi value stands at 9.168 and its p value is 0.002 which is quite lesser than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we reject null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. It has been found that nearly 60% of respondents feel that only those people, who surf the various social media sites in order to seek product or brand information, actually end up purchasing the products through them. It shows a direct relationship between the buying behavior of a product and the information gathered about the same through social media sites and vice versa. Social media thus is a useful tool to provide information about various branded products, create its awareness, resulting in increased usage of the same. Therefore we accept the alternative hypotheses that there is significant relationship between people seeking information about products and brands on social media and the actual buying behavior for the same.

H₀ (4): There is not significant relationship between the reason why people join a social media network and their working status.

H₁ (4): There is significant relationship between the reason why people join a social media network and their working status.

Custom Table 7

		Reason of opening an Account			
		Educational Need	Being in Touch	Peer Pressure	Recruitments
		Count	Count	Count	Count
Job Status	Working	2	32	0	3
	Non Working	18	63	1	2

Table 8 Pearson Chi-Square Tests

		Reason of opening an Account
Job Status	Chi-square	6.901
	Df	3
	Sig.	.075 ^{*,a,b}

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it is inferred that the chi value stands at 6.901 and its p value is 0.075 at 90% confidence levels. Thus we reject null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. Nearly three-fourth of the respondents open a social media account mainly to be in touch with family and friends. However, nearly 21% of the non-working respondents use social media for educational purpose. A few respondents admit using social media for recruitments. Almost none of the respondents visit social media websites due to peer pressure. Thus it can be inferred that, today social media is gaining growing importance in the minds of people who use it on a regular basis to be in touch with others. Therefore we accept the alternative hypotheses that there is significant relationship between the reason why people join a social media network and their working status.

H₀ (5): Educational qualifications do not have significant impact on category of people with whom you communicate.

H₁ (5): Educational qualifications do have significant impact on category of people with whom you communicate.

Table 9

		Whom to communicate			
		Family	Friends	Business Associates	Unknowns
		Count	Count	Count	Count
Education	Undergraduate	0	3	0	0
	Graduate	7	47	1	0
	Post Graduate	7	49	6	1

Table 10 *Pearson Chi-Square Tests*

		Whom to communicate
Education	Chi-square	4.870
	df	6
	Sig.	.561 ^{a,b}

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it has been found that the chi value stands at 4.870 and its p value is 0.561 which is quite greater than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we accept null hypotheses and reject the alternative hypotheses. It has been derived that nearly 80% of respondents including graduates, undergraduates and post graduates use social media websites to communicate with their friends. Thus academic qualifications do not have any impact on kind of communication done by the respondents. It has been found that whether respondents are highly educated or not, their basic objective of joining social media website is to stay connected with their friends and then family. Very few respondents use social media tool to communicate with professional associates or to unknowns. Thus we accept null hypotheses that Educational qualifications do not have significant impact on category of people with whom you communicate

H₀ (6): There is no significant difference in perceptions of males and females with respect to the duration of time they surf on social media.

H₁ (6): There is no significant difference in perceptions of males and females with respect to the duration of time they surf on social media.

Table 11

		Male	Female
		Count	Count
Time to surf	30 Minutes	32	25
	1 Hour	23	16
	2 Hours	10	3
	More than 2 Hours	5	6

Table 12 *Pearson Chi-Square Tests*

		Gender
Time to Surf	Chi-square	4.783
	df	6
	Sig.	.572 ^{a,b}

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it has been found that the chi value stands at 4.783 and its p value is 0.572 which is far greater than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we accept null hypotheses and reject the alternative hypotheses. It has been derived that nearly 50% of the respondents do not surf the social media website for not more than half hour. Thus website surfing is not subjected to gender bias. Hence whether it's a male or female, it does not affect their duration of time in visiting social media website. Thus we accept null hypotheses that there is no significant difference in perceptions of males and females with respect to the duration of time they surf on social media.

H₀ (7): There is no specific preference indicated by respondents for different social media websites.

H₁ (7): There is specific preference indicated by respondents for different social media websites.

Table Ranks 13

	Mean Rank
Facebook	2.17
Orkut	3.50
My space	4.81
Bharat Student	5.13
Twitter	4.02
LinkedIn	4.50
Youtube	3.87

Table 14 Test Statistics

N	121
Chi-Square	155.568
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. Friedman Test	

Data Interpretation

From the above analysis, it has been found that the chi value stands at 155.568 and its p value is 0.00 which is quite lesser than 0.05 at 95% confidence levels. Thus we reject null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. Friedman Ranking test has been used to derive mean ranks on the basis of respondent's preference towards different social media websites. Table (13) has ranked different social media on basis of their mean scores. The social website with lowest rank i.e. Facebook has been preferred most by the respondents whereas My Space has been preferred least by the respondents since it has lowest rank. Thus the analysis continues to remain same for the other websites too. In Table (14), it has been explained that respondents do have their own particular preferences while joining a social media website. It means that every respondent have different idea and reasons in signing up for any social media website. Thus it can be said that respondents do have specific and heterogeneous preferences towards selecting a social media website for purpose of networking.

Table 15 Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	1	2
Profile Viewing	0.699	
Gaming	0.676	
Downloading Videos	0.659	
Chatting	0.649	
Checking Messages		0.708
Getting Knowledge		0.699
Recruitments		0.671
Connecting with Friends		0.576
Eigen Values	2.213	1.854
Cumulative Percentage	27.662	50.838

From the above table, Factor 1 has the Eigen value of 2.213 and explains 27.662% of variance. The Eigen values and percentage of variance for other factors are shown respectively in the table. The Total Variance accounted by 2 factors is 50.838% is acceptable & thus establishes the validity of study.

Table 16 KMO & Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.638	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	158.258
	Degrees of Freedom	28
	Significance	0.00

Table (16) shows that the data is suitable for Factor analysis. The KMO measure for sampling adequacy should not be less than 0.5 which indicates that results from Factor analysis is not useful. Similarly the values in Significance level should be less than 0.05 which indicates that our data is suitable for Factor Analysis.

Table 17

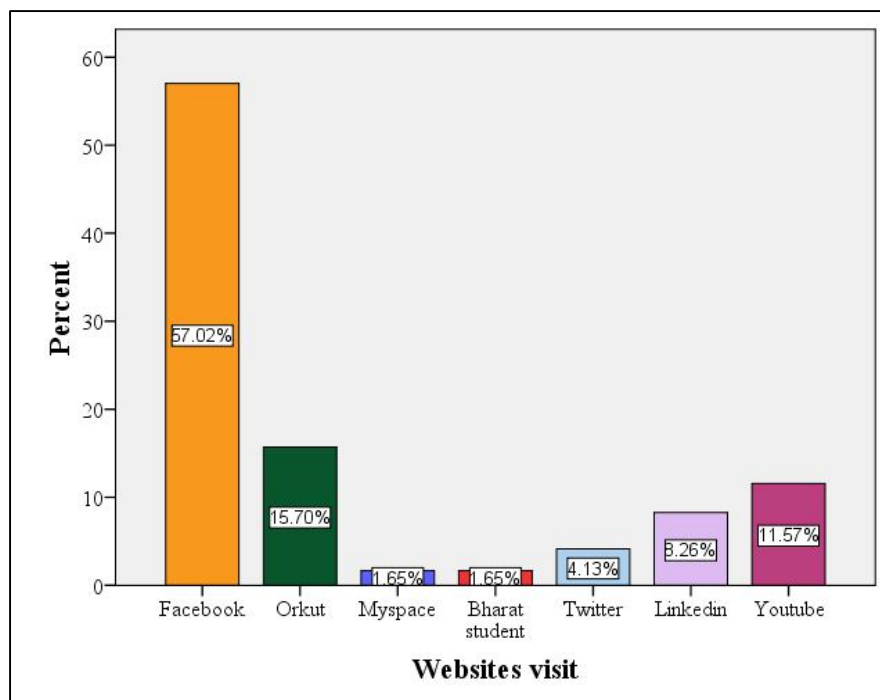
Factors	Networking Applications	Staying Connected
	Profile Viewing	Checking Messages
	Gaming	Getting Knowledge
	Downloading Videos	Recruitments
	Chatting	Connecting with Friends

The above table states that social media is basically used for major two purposes:

- **Networking Applications:** The major reason behind increase in usage of social media websites is its unique application features. These applications include profile viewing, downloading, gaming and chatting. Such kinds of features are not found in other website engines like Yahoo or Google. Thus teenagers are increasingly opening their account on social media websites since they offer variety of fun applications to the user that not only gives them sense of enjoyment but also merges their gaming pleasures with their peer groups and other social media communities.
- **Staying Connected:** Another important reason for joining these websites is to stay updated in relation with getting knowledge on different arenas on the website. These websites help the user to stay in connection with their long distance friends and relatives. Through these social networking, the user also gets in touch with the business and professional associates which helps them to build their career. They are not only useful in delivering messages, but these messages can be shared to the millions of people if the user is active on social media account.

Table 18

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	69	57.0	57.0	57.0
	Orkut	19	15.7	15.7	72.7
	My space	2	1.7	1.7	74.4
	Bharat Student	2	1.7	1.7	76.0
	Twitter	5	4.1	4.1	80.2
	Linkedin	10	8.3	8.3	88.4
	Youtube	14	11.6	11.6	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	100.0	



Data Interpretation

The above data table shows the list of the social media sites, which are visited frequently by the respondents. It clearly indicates that Facebook is the most frequently visited website as confirmed by 57% of the respondents. The second more frequently visited site Orkut is far behind with only about 15.7% of the respondents using it often. The third website which is used frequently is you tube with 11.6%. Linked in is also often used, especially by working class and is ranked fourth with 8.3%. Twitter, which is more popular among teens does not find a high frequency usage among youngsters and is fifth with only 4.1%. The remaining two social media sites,

Bharat student and My Space have hardly any preference with only 1.7% of the respondents agreeing to use it often. Thus the clear winner is Facebook, which has attracted youngster not only to open their accounts on Facebook, but also spend a good amount of time on Facebook very frequently. A few years back the sites like Orkut and Twitter, which were very popular, seem to have lost out in the long run to Facebook.

5. Conclusions

Results from the analysis indicate that social media is a very important tool for networking among youngsters. Youth are increasingly using these websites to stay connected with their friends and family. These websites also help in building professional contacts and provides the user with various networking applications that makes them hooked on to these social media websites. Unique features of social media websites like Facebook, Twitter etc have created huge impetus on the communication platform. Social media is also used as a marketing tool in creating brand awareness and brand preference among the consumers. Social media is the cheapest medium for seeking information. Hence it is widely used by majority of customers for evaluations of brands and products. There is an increasing trend among youngsters to buy products online through these websites. Marketers have realized the importance of social media website as an essential component of integrated marketing communications. Every company aims to have their presence felt on these websites for the sheer reach to the target customers. Companies with their promotional strategies advertise their brands on social media websites so as to influence the brand preference among the youth. It also encourages constant interaction with the customers, gaining an insight on their likes and preferences and problems associated with the product. This helps the companies to take corrective measures in a timely manner and modify their products as per the customer needs. It can be used as a growing platform for launching new products. This ultimately can lead to higher sales and helps in increasing the market share of the product. Further analysis of the paper indicates that the youth have their own set of preferences for different social media websites. It means that youngsters have different expectations and opinions behind joining a particular social networking site. Results from the factor analysis have brought into light two important Parameters that were crucial for usage of social media websites. Thus these factors can prove to be useful to the media websites to attract maximum users for joining their sites.

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