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Social Media Marketing a Study of Consumers and Marketers

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Abstract:
Social media has become a crucial platform for marketers, enabling businesses to reach and engage with their target audiences, promote products and services, and achieve marketing goals. Social media marketing involves using tactics and technologies to analyse consumer behaviour and understand their preferences and interests. This research aims to understand the profile of consumers using social media, their demographic characteristics, and the most widely used platforms. It also investigates consumer awareness, confidence, trust, and influence on purchase decisions. The study categorizes businesses using social media marketing into various segments based on their usage patterns, online activities, and benefits. It also explores how businesses use social media marketing in their practices to enhance customer relationships. The research is explorative and descriptive, focusing on the Haryana region's social media users and 426 advertisers. The study uses exploratory factor analysis to explore the benefits consumers derive from social media marketing, including functional, hedonic, socio-psychological, and monetary benefits. The study suggests strategies to help social media platforms better understand consumer needs and design platforms for better user adaptation.

Keywords- Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Trust, Purchase Decisions, Haryana, Businesses, Advertisers

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Chapter The purpose of this study is to investigate social media marketing, a brand-new instrument in the marketing industry that has the potential to alter how customers buy and how businesses market their goods. The title of the study is ―social media marketing – a study of consumers and marketers‖. The first chapter of this study gives a general introduction and conceptual framework of the topic. This chapter begins with the background of the study. Then, a brief about the concept of marketing & how it amalgamates with social media has been discussed. Further, it highlights the benefits of social media marketing. Additionally, the Social feedback cycle and tools available for SMM have been discussed. The study then discusses social media engagement, factors affecting consumer social media engagement and measures to improve the S.M. Engagement rate. The study extends to explain social media as a Modern age electronic marketing tool. Moreover, the study goes into detail about the history of business through social media and the different social media marketing channels. Finally, an overview of global social media has been given in the last section.

1.2 Background of the study

Social media (SM) has become a crucial platform for marketers, supporting them in all facets of marketing. With over 63% of the world's population now using the Internet, SM users are approximately 4.7 billion individuals. SMM serves as a digital platform that facilitates direct interaction between customers and companies, enabling discussions about services and goods offered by the firm. India, the 2nd most populated nation in the world, has embraced social media like a duck to water, with an average of 2 hour 38 minutes per day spent on SM platforms.

SMM refers to the utilization of tactics and technologies by marketers to analyze consumer behavior and acquire knowledge on their preferences and interests via diverse social media platforms. It offers various advantages to businesses, including precise targeting, clear-cut segmentation, personalization of messages, scope for experimentation, budget-friendly and instant feedback. Small businesses can easily fill niches, benefiting start-ups and business owners.

India currently has 658 million internet users, and by 2026, that number is projected to double to 1200 million. By 2026, it is projected to double to 1200 million. The introduction of new applications for phones and other devices has made everything from shopping for clothing to paying utility bills online.

Online social media platforms allow users to communicate and exchange information, fulfilling the basic human desire to connect with others. Understanding SMM from both consumers' and marketers' perspectives is crucial, as both parties are present online within the same social media ecosystem. However, social media has some significant flaws, such as linguistic and cultural barriers, and some businesses are still cautious to integrate SM in their marketing strategy due to a lack of reliable information on SM platforms. As marketers continue to experiment in the area, SMM will undoubtedly grow and develop.

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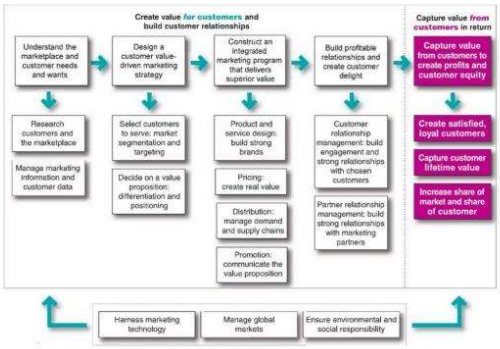
1.3 Concept of Marketing

The study discusses the concept of marketing, a dynamic and ever-evolving business activity that relies on the income generated through product or service sales. The proper marketing strategy significantly impacts sales. There is no single, widely-accepted definition of marketing, with most operational definitions being contextual. Some definitions include the American Marketing Association's definition of marketing as both a functional aspect within an organization and a series of procedures aimed at crafting, conveying, and dispensing value to clients.

Phillip Kotler's definition of marketing is a social and managerial progression through which individuals and collectives achieve their needs and desires by generating and trading products and value. Converse and Still's definition focuses on collective business functions focused on stimulating and fulfilling demand within the business enterprise. Hansen's definition involves transforming consumer needs into precise product and service specifications, generating interest and amplifying demand. Converse, Duddy, Reizan, Converse, Huegey, and Mitchell's definition encompasses every endeavor linked to the establishment of utility in terms of place, time, and possession. Kotler and Armstrong's definition focuses on businesses generating value for clients and cultivating strong customer connections to obtain reciprocal value.

Figure 1.1: Model of marketing process



Source: Kotler et al.(2010), *principle of marketing*, edition 2010 .

1.4 Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is a digital marketing strategy that uses various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to analyze consumer behavior and gain insights into their preferences and interests. It has revolutionized the marketing industry by offering an alternative to traditional strategies for targeting specific target audiences. SMM plays a crucial role in enabling two-way communication and enables businesses to interact with customers worldwide. It involves creating compelling content that grabs users' attention and encourages them to share it on social media, resulting in e-WoM, which is more effective than paid or sponsored advertisements or promotions. SMM has emerged as a fast-growing avenue for businesses to effectively engage with their intended customer base, and its current state is in its early developmental phase, with expectations for the next marketing revolution in this domain.

1.4.1 Benefits of Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is a popular and cost-effective marketing strategy that enhances brand recognition, conducts market analysis, and facilitates marketing efforts. It offers benefits such as increased brand visibility, targeted traffic, leads generation, improved customer engagement, market insights, customer interaction, cost-effectiveness, and public relations and human resources. SMM increases brand awareness, improves customer engagement, and enhances market research and competition monitoring. It also allows businesses to communicate with customers through social media channels, improve the consumer experience, and be executed effectively without extensive time or expensive advertising budgets.

2. Literature Review

Hudson and Hudson (2013) examined the influence of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer decision-making at music events, highlighting proactive use of social media and better consumer decision-making. Milewicz and Saxby (2013) predicted organizational leaders' intentions to use SMM for in-bound consumer communications about political marketing, focusing on overall satisfaction, customer normative expectations, perceived ease of use, and perceived value for customer relations. Gupta et al. (2013) discussed the use of online media advertising in health advancement and education, highlighting the potential for web-based media to improve health-related practices and issues, especially during emergencies. Chikandiwa et al. (2013) examined

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social media adoption and implementation models in South African banks, finding that SMM activities are at the beginning stage. Durkin et al. (2013) investigated the challenges faced by SMEs in adopting SMM for competitive advantages, finding a wide range of ways to deal with web-based media selection, often influenced by authority settings and staff competency levels.

Hutter et al. (2013) found that social media (SM) activities, specifically Facebook pages, positively impact brand awareness, word of mouth (WOM) activities, and purchase intention in car producer MINI. However, dissatisfaction with fan pages negatively affects commitment and engagement, indicating that SM activities significantly impact the decision-making process related to purchasing.

Bayne et al. (2013) examined the viability of online media advertising on undergraduates in a grounds entertainment setting, finding that SM marketing was viable in expanding mindfulness. Scott Rader et al. (2014) evaluated the cutting edge in social media and pharmaceutical marketing using online shopper discussions. Lorenzo-Romero et al. (2014) studied the SM uses pattern of users and non-users, using 2.0 technologies for company size. Ol of Lagrosen and Grunden (2014) examined the use of SM as marketing in the wellness industry, finding that the connections between social media and the SDL have not been studied in other industries.

Campbell et al. (2014) investigated how shoppers were divided into passive, talkers, hesitant, active, and adverse segments, finding significant correlations.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the extent to which social media influences consumer purchase decisions.
2. To investigate consumers' perception, attitude and satisfaction towards social media sites and effectiveness of communication through social media platforms.
3. To identify, compare and contrast businesses using social media for marketing in terms of social media used, activities, usage pattern, benefits envisaged and suitability to business
4. To identify the social media platforms most used by Businesses to target specific audience.

4. Research Methodology

The study follows a **descriptive and exploratory design**. Both **primary** and **secondary data** are used. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire from consumers and businesses, along with interviews of marketing professionals. Secondary data is sourced from journals, reports, and websites.

A **purposive and convenience sampling technique** is applied. The sample consists of around **150 consumers** and **50 businesses** active on social media.

The questionnaire covers four areas: influence of social media on purchase decisions, consumer perception and satisfaction, business usage patterns, and platforms used to target audiences.

Data is analysed using **descriptive statistics** (percentages, mean, and frequency) and **inferential tools** (chi-square, correlation, regression). Qualitative data from interviews is studied using thematic analysis.

The scope of the study is limited to consumers active on at least one social media platform and businesses using social media for marketing, focusing on platforms like **Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), LinkedIn, and YouTube**.

Data Analysis

The responses were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentages and frequencies were used to measure consumer perception and satisfaction, while Chi-square and correlation helped examine the relationship between social media usage and purchase decisions. Business data was compared through cross-tabulation, and qualitative responses were thematically analysed.

1. Influence of Social Media on Purchase Decisions

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Social media influences my purchase decisions	40	35	15	7	3
I trust reviews on social media while buying	45	30	12	8	5
Advertisements on social media impact my choice	38	33	17	8	4

2. Consumers' Perception, Attitude and Satisfaction

Factor	Satisfied (%)	Not Satisfied (%)
Reliability of information	62	38
Trustworthiness of reviews	58	42
Effectiveness of communication	70	30
Overall satisfaction with social media	75	25

3. Businesses' Social Media Usage Patterns

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Platform	% of Businesses Using	Common Activities	Perceived Benefits
Facebook	80	Advertising, customer feedback	Wide reach, brand awareness
Instagram	72	Product promotion, reels	Engagement, visual appeal
LinkedIn	60	B2B networking, hiring	Professional outreach
YouTube	55	Video ads, tutorials	Consumer trust, product demos
Twitter/X	45	Announcements, trends	Quick updates, trend adoption

4. Most Used Platforms for Targeting Audiences

Target Audience	Most Used Platform	Reason for Use
Youth (18–25)	Instagram, YouTube	Visual, trendy, engaging
Professionals	LinkedIn, Twitter	Networking, knowledge sharing
General Public	Facebook	Wider reach, community groups

Discussion

The study reveals that social media significantly influences consumer behavior, with 75% trusting reviews and 71% acknowledging the impact of advertisements. However, a small section remains skeptical, highlighting the need for authenticity and credibility in online information. Consumer satisfaction is high, with 62% expressing satisfaction with information reliability and 58% trustworthiness of reviews. Businesses use Facebook and Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter/X for marketing, while targeting audiences varies. Youth prefer Instagram and YouTube, professionals prefer LinkedIn and Twitter, and the general public remains connected to Facebook. The data suggests that social media is a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior and achieving marketing, communication, and engagement objectives.

5. Recommendations and Suggestions

1. **Focus on Major Platforms**
   Businesses should prioritize marketing efforts on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, as they collectively account for nearly 75% of consumer usage. These platforms offer wider reach and better engagement opportunities.
2. **Platform-Specific Strategies**
   - **Facebook & Instagram:** Visual content, influencer collaborations, and interactive ads.
   - **WhatsApp:** Personalized communication, customer service, and promotional messages.
   - **YouTube:** Product demonstrations, tutorials, and storytelling through video marketing.
3. **Niche Market Utilization**
   Platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Telegram, though less popular overall, can be leveraged for targeted campaigns. For example, LinkedIn for B2B communication, Twitter for real-time updates, and Telegram for community building.
4. **Content Diversification**
   Different platforms demand different content styles. Businesses should adapt content (text, images, short videos, reels, long videos) based on the platform to maximize effectiveness.
5. **Consumer-Centric Approach**
   Monitoring consumer preferences and feedback on each platform will help refine strategies, ensuring that marketing remains interactive, engaging, and customer-oriented.
6. **Scope for the Study**

The study on social media marketing in Haryana districts highlights the need for further research in other parts of the country to generalize results. It also suggests that future studies should consider different strategic requirements for different business scales and examine the right mix between social media and traditional marketing. It also suggests that future studies should examine SMM strategies based on industry types and the consumer perspective on negative reviews and other social media issues. Overall, further research is needed to understand the evolving landscape of social media marketing.

7. **Conclusion**

Based on the findings and the above recommendations, it can be concluded that businesses should prioritize high-engagement platforms to maximize consumer reach while selectively integrating other platforms for specialized purposes. Overall, social media continues to be a vital tool for consumer engagement, brand visibility, and business growth. Social media marketing has revolutionized the interaction between businesses and consumers. This study, focusing on Haryana, highlights the dual perspectives: consumers derive functional, hedonic, socio-psychological, and monetary benefits, while businesses leverage SMM for outreach, brand building, and engagement.

The findings suggest that consumer trust and awareness significantly shape purchase decisions. Businesses must design strategies that not only promote products but also build long-term relationships. SMEs, in particular, can benefit immensely from cost-effective and targeted social media campaigns.

Future research may extend beyond Haryana to compare inter-regional differences, study platform-specific strategies, and evaluate emerging trends like influencer marketing, AI-driven personalization, and social commerce.

Ultimately, social media marketing is not just about selling products, but about creating experiences and communities that resonate with modern consumers.

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