



An Empirical study of SMM in rural areas with reference to consumer brand awareness, brand recommendation and purchase decision

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ABSTRACT

There is a changing socio economic condition in rural areas due to various reasons. These changes are also seen in the life style of people. The availability of internet facility and the arise of social media increase their connection with outside world. The companies are identified the scope of social media marketing for brand promotion. They are spending billion dollars for advertisements in social media in every year. This paper attempts to determine how much social media marketing has been able to influence in rural consumers brand awareness and brand recommendation and in the end purchase. The result reveals the effectiveness of social media marketing in rural areas. Both descriptive and inferential analysis is used to find out the relationship between variables.

KEYWORDS : Social media marketing, brand awareness, brand recommendation and end purchase

Introduction

Social networking sites form a novel channel in the field of communication. Based on a number of recent research evidence, it is clear that SM becomes a marketing channel and the SMM can change the conventional marketing methods. Brands can receive significant jump start from the viral communication of brand messages, given the diffusion range of advertising messages within social media. Internet based advertising is continually growing while the traditional advertising media such as TV, radio, magazines and newspapers are losing terrain. Every company presently has social media pages to promote their brands. Social media sites can be considered as a new medium for promoting products or services and as a means for increasing consumption and brand awareness (Drury G). In the marketing campaigns social media can contribute to the brand awareness and improve its reputation image. It can also push higher traffic to the brand websites and the overall enhancement of the fundamental marketing strategy (Tutens 2008). Today the online marketing potential, especially in social media such as Facebook, twitter and LinkedIn, is unbelievable. But the reach of SMM is not same in rural areas as that from urban. This study is to understand whether the rural consumer perceive social media networks for brand awareness and a desire to engage in brand recommendation with other consumers. Also examine this brand awareness and engagement in social network sites which drives rural consumers in preferring the brand while making their final purchase.

Literature review

The internet access through telecommunication networks has accelerated the use of social platforms. It create content that attracts attention and encourages users to share their product opinions either positive or negative with one another in social interaction .Today social media platform is gaining increasing importance as it is comparatively cheap platform for the organization in their marketing campaigns. These on-line platforms facilitate accrued communication, brand awareness and infrequently improved client services. The participative communication that happens in real time is the key catch that can have a strong impact on the consumer's attitude leading to purchase intention. Online social networks are such application on internet that has seen an unprecedented growth among users. It can be seen as an extension of web applications that can be helpful in developing relationships among its users.

Studies say that social media platforms are an important medium for impacting consumer decision making. They has stated that brands are viewed as an continuous social process that helps in imbibing values to the brand while the interplay and negotiations are underway by the stakeholders. Majority of organizations use SM to intimate consumers about their brands promote online campaigns and create a virtual community. The ultimate objective is definitely to entice the customers to purchase products and

services. Consumers on the other hand, may feel more comfortable once they established trust on an organization through previous interaction, or the perceived characteristics of the firm as evident from social network sites. Earlier researchers have identified purchase intention as one of the most common consequences of trust in the context of e-commerce. Social network sites allow consumers to build communities around a product, brand or online store.

They have made communication process faster among the participants of online communities by removing barriers of location, time and access that existed in the earlier traditional media. As consumers post their opinions or recommendations about an online store or brand through their social network profiles, they may greatly influence their contacts in various stages of decision making. It is found that the likelihood of recommending products or services of a company by consumers increases proportionately with other consumers purchase intention on it.

Statement of problems

Social media is using for brand promotion. The dimensions of SMM strategies are to create brand awareness, brand recommendation and brand preference. The effectiveness SMM is depended on the result of these dimensions. This study is to understand about the role of social media in creating brand awareness and brand recommendation among rural consumers. And also examine whether this brand exposure creating aspiration for brand purchase among them.

Objective

- To determine whether the rural consumers are influenced by social media.
- To analyze the effectiveness of social media marketing in the brand awareness of rural consumers.
- To determine whether the rural consumers would act as influencers and be willing to recommend brand to other people through social media.
- To examine the effectiveness of SMM in rural consumers through their purchase decision.

Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significance difference between gender with respect to strategies of social media marketing
 H1: There is a significance difference among various age groups with regard to the strategies of social media marketing
 H1: There is a significance difference between families with respect to strategies of social media marketing.

Research Methodology

It was decided that a study using primary data would be appropriate to investigate the objectives. The instrument used to collect the data was questionnaire and the said study was conducted during the

period of August to October 2016

Research Design

The present study comprises of an empirical investigation in which an attempt has been made to determine the existing trend of social media marketing on consumers in terms of its affect in the brand awareness, brand recommendation and also in their purchase

Data Collection

Population of this research is the people from Wayanad district having highest rural population in Kerala state. The sample size comprising of 100 voluntary respondents were chosen using multistage random sampling method. The respondents included post graduate students, people from agriculture sector, academia and industry. Respondents considered from the age group of 20-50.

Tools for data collection

After reviewing relevant literature on the subject, a structured questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was implemented on a 5 point likert scale.

Descriptive Analysis

Percentage analysis is one of the statistical measures used to describe the characteristics of the sample or population in totality. Percentage analysis involves computing measures of variables selected of the study and its finding will give easy interpretation for the reader.

Table 1.1 Influence of Social media sites between gender

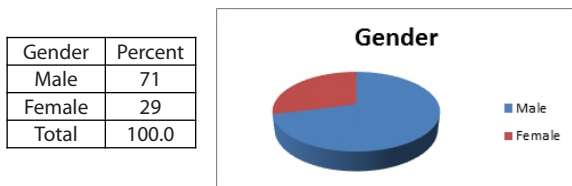


Fig 1.1 Pie diagram represents the influence of social media networks between male and female

The above pie diagram inferred that male is more exposed than the female towards social media networks in the rural areas. Male represents 71% of the total respondents and only 29% by female.

Table 1.2 Influence of Social media sites among age group

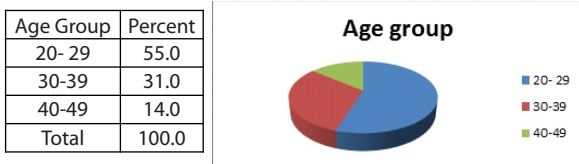


Fig 1.2 Pie diagram represents the influence of social media sites among different age group

The above figure inferred that majority of 55% of people are from the age group of 20-29 are using and influenced by social media marketing. Only 14% of people from the age group 40-49 are responded about the influence of social media marketing.

Table 1.3 Social media networks using in rural areas

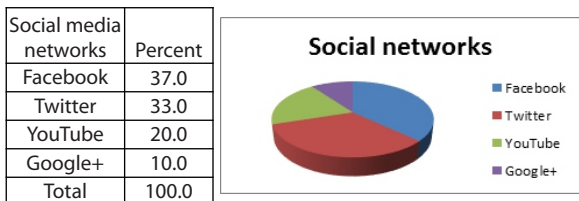


Fig 1.3 Pie diagram represents the social media networks using

in rural areas

The above pie diagram states that majority of people are using Facebook. Among various social networking sites Facebook has the first place in case of usage.

Table 1.4 Time spending in Social media networks

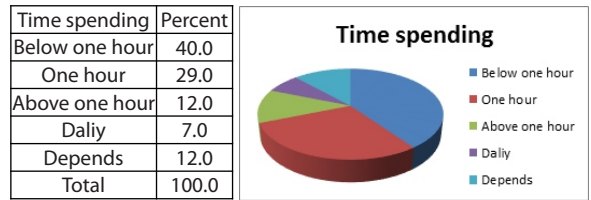


Fig 1.4 Pie diagram represents the time spending in social media networks

From the above pie diagram it is inferred that majority of the people in rural area are using social networking sites below one hour. More over only 7% are using it daily. This results the use of social media sites in rural area is very low when compared with urban.

Inferential Analysis

Differences between two groups in the mean scores of variables are studied using Student t test are discussed in this section. Also ANOVA are used to verify the hypothesis stated in the Paper.

Table 2.1 t test for significance difference between male and female with respect to the strategies of social media marketing.

H1: There is a significance difference between male and female with respect to the strategies of social media marketing.

Strategies of SMM	Gender				t value	P value
	Male		Female			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Brand Awareness	18.04	2.84	15.94	2.66	3.499	0.001**
Brand recommend	17.22	3.11	16.03	2.83	1.812	0.073
End purchase	15.29	3.19	13.87	1.77	1.894	0.061

Note: 1. ** denotes significant at 1% level
2. * denotes significant at 5% level

Since p value is less than 0.01 the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. Here the brand awareness has a 'p' value of (0.001) and there is a significance difference between male and female with brand awareness. This shows the influence level of social media marketing in creating brand awareness. If the 'p' value is less than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level. But in the case of brand recommendation (0.073) and end purchase (0.061) the null hypothesis is accepted and there is no influence between male and female with respect to Brand recommendation and end purchase. The result gives a conclusion that the strategies of social media are not having much influence among rural consumers. Null hypothesis is accepted in this case and there is no significance difference between male and female with respect to the strategies of social media marketing.

Table 2.2. T test for significance difference between families with respect to the strategies of social media marketing.

Strategies of SMM	Family				t value	P value
	Nuclear		Joint			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Brand Awareness	17.57	2.62	17.00	3.57	.888	.377
Brand recommend	16.61	3.03	17.39	3.12	-1.19	.241
End purchase	15.04	4.36	14.13	3.91	1.000	.320

. * denotes significant at 5% level

Since p value is smaller than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level. Here the brand awareness has a 'p' value of (0.377), brand recommendation (0.241) and end purchase (0.320) the null

hypothesis is accepted and there's no influence in families with relation to ways of social media marketing.

Table 2.3 ANOVA test for significance difference among age groups with respect to the strategies of social media marketing

Strategies of SMM		Age Group in years			F	Sig
		20-29	30-39	40-49		
Brand Awareness	Mean	17.94	16.42	17.47	2.703	0.072
	SD	(2.38)	(3.17)	(3.71)		
Brand recommend	Mean	16.92	16.35	17.53	0.837	0.449
	SD	(3.26)	(2.82)	(2.85)		
End Purchase	Mean	15.71	14.90	13.88	2.713	0.071
	SD	(3.18)	(2.37)	(2.85)		

Note: 1. ** denotes significant at 1% level
2. * denotes significant at 5% level

Since p value is smaller than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level. Here the 'p' value of brand awareness is (0.072), brand recommendation (.449) and end purchase (0.071). That the analysis hypothesis is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted. There's no influence of social media selling methods among totally different age teams.

Findings

1. From the empirical study and the descriptive analysis it is understood that, in rural areas males are more exposed to social media than female. Therefore we will reach a conclusion that the influence of social media marketing has smaller amount among feminine.
2. The age group of 20-29 is highly influenced by SMM.
3. From among various social media channels, Facebook holding the highest position in rural areas of Kerala.
4. Time spending in social media channels by rural peoples is very low. Majority is using below an hour and only few are daily using it.
5. Hypothesis 1: The result shows that the complete awareness through social media has associate degree of influence among male and feminine. However there is no brand recommendation of shoppers through social networks and also the influence of social media promoting within the final purchase of shoppers among gender is smaller amount. Therefore during this side it's inferred that the effectiveness of SM strategies isn't effective among genders.
6. Hypothesis 2: The null hypothesis is accepted here. There is no influence of SMM between families. Therefore effectiveness is also less.
7. Hypothesis 3: The null hypothesis is accepted in this case. The brand awareness followed by brand recommendation and end purchase has no influence.

Suggestions

From the results, we will conclude that there's no effectiveness of social media selling within the consumer's behavior outcome towards brands. The most important objectives of corporations outlay billion dollars in social media advertisements are for their product promotion. The effectiveness of social media ways replicate within the return of investment of companies. The less effectiveness of social media in generating awareness, recommendation and preference shows its failure among rural shoppers of Kerala. The points mentioned below are so to extend the effectiveness of SMM:

- a) The social media has an influence in the brand awareness of people but it is failed in promoting brand recommendation and ensuring the end purchase. In order to avoid these, companies should focus more on rural marketing strategies in social media.

- b) India is country with more than 50% percent of people living in villages. Availability of local and affordable products along with the branded will raise the interest.
- c) Accessibility of product is another issue of pulling back rural consumers from purchasing.
- d) Currently the low internet facility reduces brand recommendation through social media sites by rural people. The availability of internet facility in future will raise the interest of people.
- e) Advertise products according to various age groups interest.
- f) Conduct public awareness campaigns to highlight the benefit of SMM in rural areas through social media sites and other websites in order to raise the trust of social media advertisements.

Conclusion

SM is not just about leaving trivial comments or liking pictures on Facebook. It has huge implications for organizations for their external uses such as sales and marketing. In order to use social media to realize higher return on investment from rural components, this text offer a base analysis with brand awareness, brand recommendation and buying decision to gauge the usage of social media and its effectiveness in marketing among the people of rural Kerala.

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