ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

"ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PURCHASE DECISION OF CONSUMERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BRANDED SMART PHONES"

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ABSTRACT

Interacting with friends and family across long distances has been a concern of humans for centuries. As social animals, people have always relied on communication to strengthen their relationships. When face-to-face discussions are impossible or inconvenient, humans have dreamed up plenty of creative solutions. From this study identifies the outcomes of using social networking sites in promoting the business. In this research, we intend to further know how social media play a role in purchasing branded mobile phones, and also to study the gap between consumer expectation from social media and its performance.

INTRODUCTION:

Social media and web technologies facilitate customers to interact and communicate. Companies are now using social networks to promote information about their brands. Big brands seek to connect with their customers by using social media channels. Online social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace etc. have a significant impact on customer's life. This social media has a direct impact on how the users communicate, share information, maintain their profiles and establish links with their friends. As social networking sites continue to grow, firms no longer solely rely on traditional mediums to enforce public perception of their product. Organization uses social networking information to help to identify their most influential consumers, drive participants in product development and improve brand sentiment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Simsona Vinerean, Iuliana Cetina, Luigi Dumitrescu & Mihai Tichindelean (June, 2013) in their exploratory research work **The Effects of Social Media Marketing on Online Consumer Behavior**, The authors concluded stating that in order to be successful in the social media environment, companies must undergo continuous online marketing research and should be sensitive to the changes in consumer behavior patterns and should be able to identify new areas of customer interest.

RESEARCH GAP

The marketing landscape has significantly changed in the last decade. Before it, companies and their customers had no direct link to each other's respective worlds. The emergence of Social Media has altered the way consumers interact with each other. New form of media has arisen, which due to its social features seems to have a great power of influence on consumer's purchasing decision making process.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Social media marketing is the way through which information communicated to and from people around the world. The rapid use of SMM, organizations have to change their way to respond consumer's needs and wants and changing the way they respond to their competitors. SMM provide better communication opportunities for marketers to reach extensive viewers and allows for marketers to use valuable information which will helpful to building and maintaining consumer relationships. The growth of SMM and electronic word of mouth has allowed consumers to interact with each other in the virtual world and to share their perceptions and feelings towards garments brand which are available on social media sites. Hence the research study is entitled as *"Role of Social Media on Purchase Decision of Consumers with special reference to Branded Smart Phones".*

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

• To know the factors affecting the purchase decision of consumers.
• To know the impact of social media on consumers.
• To find out the most influential social media for purchasing the branded mobile phones.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is to examine the persons who use the social networking sites, like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram for purchasing branded mobile phones. The study was conducted at Bangalore city only.

OPERATIONAL DEFINTIONS:

a) **Consumers**: An individual who buys the products or services for personal use and not for manufacture or resale. A consumer is someone who can make the decision whether or not to purchase an item from store or online.

b) **Social networks** These sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication. The biggest social networks are MySpace, Facebook and Instagram.

c) **Blogs** Perhaps the best known form of social media, blogs is online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first.

d) **Wikis** These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia which has over 2 million English language articles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
A) TYPE OF RESEARCH

The research is Exploratory in nature. The study chose exploratory research method due to little empirical research and prior knowledge of existence of the relation between social media and brand. Exploratory method involved survey of literature on social media and brand.

B) SAMPLE SIZE

178 respondents were selected for study purpose.

C) METHOD AND TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

1. **Primary data:** Primary data are the first hand information collected through interviewing and with the help of the Google questionnaire, which was prepared to collect information pertaining to the study.

2. **Secondary data:** Secondary data is the information that already exists for another purpose. The secondary data obtained from documents of journals, web links, books and also research papers.

D) SAMPLING METHOD:

Convenience Sampling was adopted.

E) PLAN OF ANALYSIS
Data was analyzed with the help of tables and graphs.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The study is restricted to Bangalore city. Since the study is conducting in Bangalore only the findings at other places may be different. Due to time constraint a small sample size was used.

PLAN OF ANALYSIS:
The data was analyzed keeping objectives in the mind.

Objective 1: To know the factors affecting the purchase decision of consumers with reference to smart phones

The below table shows the most significant factors that influences and motivate to buy mobile phone.

Table No:1 Table showing factors affecting the purchase decision of consumers

Most Significant Factors	Response	Percentage
Brand	33	18.53%
Quality	67	37.64%
Price	42	23.59%
Technical specification	26	14.60%
After sale service	10	5.61%
Total	178	100%

(Source: Primary Data)

From the above table we can analyse that Quality has strongly influential the respondents buying behavior followed by Price.

Objective 2: To know the impact of social media on consumers buying decision

The best way to define social media is to break it down. Media is an instrument on communication, like a newspaper or a radio, so social media would be a social instrument of communication. This interaction can be as simple as asking for your comments or letting you vote on an article. Social Media sites are characterized by the inherent functionality that facilitates the sharing of information between users within a defined network. The nature of Social Media allows for the initiation of conversation by either party. From this we can say that awareness of social media has grown rapidly.

Social Media plays a very important role in influencing the purchase decision of the consumer can be known very clearly from the following table

Table No.2

Decision	Response
Yes	106
No	72
Total	178

(Source: Primary Data)

Table No.3 Table representing factors affecting the purchase decision regarding smart phone in social media

Factors affecting	Number of respondents
Reference groups/genuine info	65
Product reviews	46
Following trends	44
Certified sellers	15
Technical advertisers/expertise	8
Total	178

(Source: Primary Data)

Objective 3: To find out the importance of social media for purchasing the branded mobile phones.

Social media today consists of thousands of social media platforms, all serving the same – but slightly different purpose. Of course, some social media platforms are more popular than others, but even the smaller ones get used by a portion of the population because each one caters to a very different type of person.

Table No.4 Table representing characteristics based on impact of social media marketing for building a relationship

Characteristics	Number of respondents
Consumer information privacy	68
Getting information to earn more points for online shopping	16
My reviews/feedback/ratings are always considered	39
Social media helps the constant monitoring and real time feedback to ensure consumer brand engagement	4
Clarity about information of guarantee and warranty of products	51
Total	178

(Source: Primary Data)

FINDINGS
1. The study shows that major users of smart phones lie in the age group of 15-25 years.
2. From the analysis, majority of them were degree graduates who are techno savvy i.e 55.05%
3. 99.4% respondents own a smart phone.
4. It is found that majority of the respondents are active on social networking sites and usage of mobile phones.
5. Majority of the respondents have opted for other branded mobile phones like LE2, Redmi, One plus, Lenovo, oppo, this may be due to the fact that mobile phones available at cheaper prices with better specification.
6. From the analysis majority of the respondents have ranked Facebook as first preference with 24.86% and flicker as least with 3.86%.
7. From the analysis 59.2% of the respondents are influenced by social media while purchasing branded mobile phones.
8. From the analysis it is found that quality will strongly influence the respondents buying behavior.
9. From the analysis it is found that Reference groups/genuine information is the strongly influential factors affecting purchasing decision because other users opinion, belief, trust will play a significant role in purchasing decision of smartphone in social media.
10. From the above analysis it is found that out of 100%, 38.12% respondents do strongly agree and feel that networking sites do maintain secrecy in consumer private and personal information. And 2.23% of the respondents do strongly disagree that Social media does not help in the constant monitoring and real-time feedback to ensure consumer brand engagement.

CONCLUSION
Social media and social networking technologies have greatly changed the way information is created and transmitted. Additional product information, product recommendation, reading/writing reviews, comments and feedback, receiving promotional offerings, viewing ads, staying on top of current fashion and product trends, associating with particular brands or retailers, purchasing products directly via a social media channel are the activities that influences to buy the branded mobile phone in social media.

Social media began to be one of the ways in which internet marketers and website owners would boost the visibility of their websites. The benefits of social media marketing for business began to become quite clear to business owners large and small. Social media bookmarking became quite popular and there were services that would bookmark a post or a website across dozens or even hundreds of social media services.

Although it is impossible to know what the future of social media

holds, it is clear that it will continue. Humans are social animals and the more ability to communicate with each other on the level that each person likes best, the more prevalent social media will become. With new and exciting technologies just around the corner, social media will be interesting to see in the coming decades.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Social media provides for customers clarity about information related to guarantees and Warrantees of products and services as well as it provides genuine product reviews, Ratings, and feedback on sites which will lead to purchase repetition.
2. The main drawback of social networking sites are privacy theft or identity theft, in order to safeguard and avoid the leakage of customer information, online portals must install latest and advanced firewall to safeguard the privacy theft.
3. It is suggested that social media and mobile phone companies should monitor continuously and must provide real-time feedback to customers about the products in online this leads to brand engagements which are a good step for customer relationship building.
4. The reviews and complaints raised by the customers on the social networking sites should be effectively managed and proper actions should be taken by the companies and the action was taken should also be communicated to the customer.

People gather information from mixed sources i.e. using a company website, promotions/ads in social media, and even people consult family and friends for purchasing decision. Consumers are nowadays thinking broadly for purchasing the products and they were shifting from traditional to a modern buying decision. The company should hold the customer opinion, belief, trust and privacy to build the customer relationship and also when the buyer and seller relationship fosters there we can expect reduction or evasion in consumerism.

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