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The Influence of Social Networking Sites (Sns) on The Shopping Behavior of Urban Youth

J. S. Syed Mohamed Sadath^{1*} and S. Shanmugasundaram²

^{1*, 2}Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar,
Chidambaram- 608002, Tamilnadu, India

ABSTRACT

In this digital era, the use of social media has become a part and parcel of everyone's routine life. Many businesses have reached out for Social Media Marketing (SMM) with an intention of promoting their products, raising brand awareness and increasing their business. SMM is considered to be one of the cheapest and most effective strategies to reach and attract consumers of all age groups, particularly youngsters. This study aims to identify the effective social media channel to market products among the urban youth community (Chennai city) and to identify the forms of Social Media Marketing medium that interests them. The study is descriptive in nature that utilized a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. Non probability sampling techniques were deployed. The study would be helpful to the companies in projecting an effective Social Media Marketing strategy for the urban youth segment, thus increasing their sales and profits.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Marketing, Youth, Promotion, Branding, Consumer Behavior

*** Corresponding author:**

J.S. Syed Mohamed Sadath,

Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration,

Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar,

Chidambaram- 608002, Tamilnadu, India

Mobile: 91 9600510538

Email: syedsadath436@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-moving world, Social media are measured to be the most interactive computer-mediated technologies that assist the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression virtually¹. Social media provides a virtual network place where people can enjoy expressing and exchanging opinions disseminate and control messages reach out to friends or family through social media, sometimes on a daily basis². It is deliberate that Social Media Marketing is used to promote social media platforms and websites to uphold a product or service³.

Social Media sites are used by millions of people to meet virtually and are liable to be great markets for communication and interaction. The dissemination of marketing messages, creating a wider product representation and company administration is done at ease by Social networks⁴. Boyd and Ellison (2006) discuss that the top ten social networking sites developed with the passage of time, and its number of users increases from 46.8 million to 68.8 million⁵. The ability to address inquiries, rectify comments, and revise online marketing approaches competently are the major advantages of Social Media Marketing. A study conducted by Altaf (2014) agrees that advertisements through social media are more interesting than traditional advertising². This means social media advertisement have been able to influence the buying decisions of consumers to a large extent than traditional advertisement.

The invention of smartphones and striking low priced internet data usage deals introduced by various telecommunication companies has increased the use of social media among all age groups, particularly with youngsters.

With the rapid increase in the usage of social media by consumers, the companies have instigated focus on Social Media Marketing approach besides continuing promotions and advertising through traditional marketing approach. Many companies have a sensible allocated budget for Social Media Marketing and they have their own recruited units to handle social media advertising.

Social Media Marketing can benefit companies in several ways like increasing their brand identity, targeting the right customers and receiving instant feedback about their products from shoppers. According to a survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in the year 2016 and quoted by (Barker, 2017) 45% of global respondents said that reading reviews, comments, and feedback influences their shopping behaviour. The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly with the emergence of social media; therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan⁶.

Though social media is being used by people of all age group, youngsters tend to be the most active and vibrant users. Formerly, many studies have been steered to investigate the consumer behaviour influenced by the social media; this study particularly focuses on consumer behaviour of youngsters in the urban areas in relation to social media impact. According to the National Youth Policy of India 2014, it was stated that as per census 2011 there were around 33 crores of youth (between age group 15-29 years) population in India constituting 27.5% of a whole population and as per a UN report in using people2014 India has the world's largest youth population⁷.

A study conducted in January 2018 gives a statistical report from a UK based marketing intelligence company states that more than 3 billion people around the world now use social media each month, with 9 in 10 of those users accessing their chosen platforms via mobile devices⁸. Hence, it is turned out to be fundamental to distinguish the social media tool which youths are intensely engaging with and their preference of advertisement forms. So that companies can effectively create awareness about their brand and increase their business.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The following reviews were found to be crucial associated with this study.

Dr Helal Alsubagh (2015) studied the impact of social media tools on consumer's purchasing decision. In particular, he analyzed if the user-generated content (UGC) and marketer generated content (MGC) in social media influences the buying decision of consumers and the results indicated a strong relationship between the UGC and the buying behaviour⁹.

Ates Bayazit Hayta (2013) piloted a descriptive research in turkey among 688 student social media users of the age group 18-24 years to study the effects of social media on the buying decision of youngsters. Demographic factors of the students that include gender, age, and educational qualification, the study disciplines such as arts, sciences or humanities etc., and income level were analysed and the study concluded that the student perception towards purchasing behaviours and social media relations differs by age groups and also educational level. The researcher also provided certain recommendations that the businesses should consider during their Social Media Marketing process. Further, he acclaims :

Social media use has become one of the most rapidly growing activities worldwide since the invention of television. Within 30 years, radio reached 50 million listeners, while it took only 13 years for television to reach 50 million viewers. Strikingly, the internet reached 50 million users in only four years, indeed, Facebook reached that figure in one and half years¹⁰.

Dr A. Kumudha and S. Thilaga (2016) analysed the social media influence on buying decision of consumers between the age group of 19-35 years. The chosen sample included social media using consumers from various demographic backgrounds. The study was conducted with few objectives that include finding the most preferred social application among consumers, the reason for preferring social media advertisements over mass media and finally to examine the influence of social media in the buying decision. The studies revealed that the consumers are inclined more towards Facebook amongst all other social media applications. When the researcher examined the intention of social media usage by the respondents under five different categories (Communication, entertainment, News, personal productivity and purchasing), the results concluded that the use of social media for shopping-related activities was the least preferred purpose. The observation also stated that in comparison to social media the majority of respondents were attracted to mass media advertisements and television was the most favoured medium among them¹¹.

Bashar, Irshad and Mohammad (2012) carried out a survey research among the respondents of all age group limited to Delhi and NCR (National Capital Region) to understand the effectiveness of social media as a marketing strategy. The attained interpretations specified that Facebook was used widely by the respondents as a social media platform with most of the respondents spending more than an hour in social media on a single day. Only one-fourth of total respondents acknowledged that they use social media for interacting on views regarding the products and brands. It is also noted that social media influences 78% of consumers in their purchasing decision and social media is used most efficiently by youngsters¹².

Bernadette, Roshni, Sweta and Stephen (2011) conducted a study with the youths of Mumbai city as a sample to investigate the motive for using social media, their preferred social media platform and analyze their purchasing behaviour under the influence of social media. The study concluded several findings like social media can be regarded as an effective platform to create awareness about products among youngsters, both men and women spend almost equal amount of time in exploring social media, Facebook was the highly preferred social media application and there is an increase in tendency of youths in buying products through online¹³.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is descriptive in nature as it attempts to describe the impact of social media applications on the purchasing behavior of urban youth.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the social media platform on which the urban youths spend more time and to analyse their purchasing behaviour under various platforms so that the effective platform for Social Media Marketing can be identified.
- To identify the form of advertisements used in social media that is of great significance to the city youngsters.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data from 111 respondents.

DATA COLLECTION

Some of the prevalent social media applications used worldwide include Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. Among them, the researcher decided to choose four of the most eminent and commonly used social media applications (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) for the study purpose.

The age group of youths for the study was restricted to remain between 20-29 years. The youth from Chennai city were besieged for the study believing that city youngsters have more exposure towards social media and online shopping. The researcher created an online structured questionnaire and the questionnaire link was sent to family members and friends in Chennai and they circulated the survey among their friends to respond.

STATISTICAL TOOL USED

For the purpose of the study percentage frequency and cross-tabulation have been used to analyze and interpret the results.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The below analysis provides us with the demographic information about the sample frame used in this study.

Table 1.1 Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Male	87	78.4
Female	24	21.6
Total	111	100

Out of 111 respondents, the majority 78.4% were male participants while 21.6% were females (Table 1.1).

Table 1.2 Age group of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Per cent
20 to 21	11	9.9
22 to 26	60	54.1
27 to 29	40	36
Total	111	100

9.9% of respondents were of between age group 20 to 21, the majority of participants 54.1% were of the age group between 22 and 26 whereas 36% of respondents belong to the age group between 27 and 29 (Table 1.2).

Table 1.3 Marital statuses of Respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Per cent
Married	25	22.5
Unmarried	85	76.6
Divorcee	1	0.9
Total	111	100

22.5% of the total respondents were married whereas the majority of 76.6% of participants were unmarried and a negligible 0.9% was divorcee (Table 1.3).

Table 1.4 Educational qualifications of Respondents

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percent
Grade 12 Passed	2	1.8
Diploma holder	3	2.7
Graduate	63	56.8
Post-graduate	27	24.3
Professional degree	15	13.5
Others	1	0.9
Total	111	100

56.8% participants from the adopted sample were graduates, 24.3% were post-graduates followed by professional degree holders constituting 13.5%.

Table 1.5 : Employment status of Respondents

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Not Applicable (Still a student)	8	7.2
Self Employed	6	5.4
Government employee	2	1.8
Private company employee	77	69.4
Unemployed	18	16.2
Total	111	100

The majority respondents 69.4% worked in private companies, 16.2% were unemployed, 7.2% were still pursuing studies, 5.4% of participants were self-employed and finally the rest 1.8% of respondents were government employees (Table 1.5).

Table 1.6: Income level of Respondents (Per month)

Income level	Frequency	Per cent
Not Applicable (Still studying)	25	22.5
Less than Rs.10,000	1	0.9
Rs.10,001 to Rs.25,000	27	24.3
Rs.25,001 to Rs.40,000	24	21.6
Rs.40,001 to Rs.60,000	21	18.9
Rs.60,001 to Rs.75,000	6	5.4
More than Rs.75,000	7	6.3
Total	111	100

24.3% of respondents were earning between Rs.10,001 to 25,000 per month, 21.6% of participants were drawing monthly income between Rs.25,001 to 40,000, 18.9% respondents were under the income slab of Rs.40,001 to 60,000. 5.4% of participants earn between Rs.60,001 to 75,000 whereas 6.3% of total respondents drew a monthly income of more than Rs.75,000. A trivial 0.9% of respondents earn less than Rs.10,000 in a month and 22.5% of respondents were under the category not applicable {Studying /Unemployed/Home maker}(Table 1.6)

From the above demographic analysis, it is clear that the majority respondents of the sample used in this study have good educational and financial background.

The following analysis is made in order to discover the social media platform on which the respondents spend more time and to analyse their purchasing behaviour under various platforms.

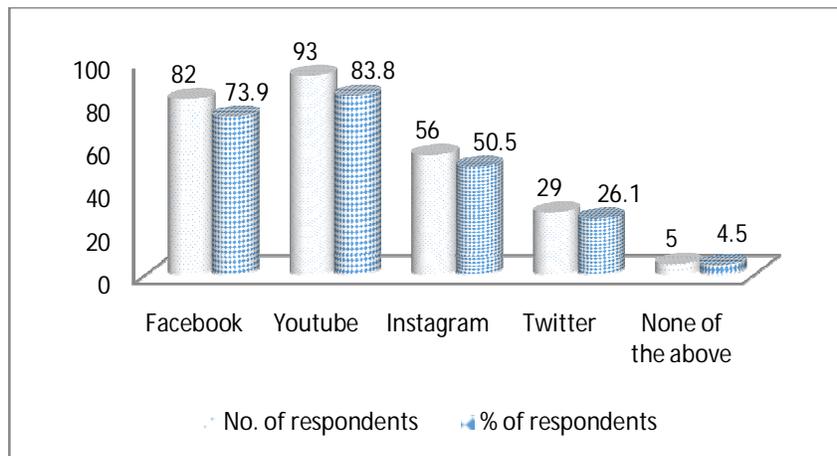


Figure 1. Number/ Percentage of Respondents using various social media applications

Figure 1 clearly states that the majority 83.8% of total respondents use YouTube and 73.9% of respondents engage with Facebook. Instagram was used by 50.5% participants whereas twitter had the least number of users (26.1%) out of four social media applications which were used for this

study. It is to be noted that 4.5% of respondents did not use any of the above mentioned social media applications.

Table 2. Time actively spent by youngsters in using social media on a single day

Time spent on social media	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram		YouTube	
	Frequency	Valid Percent						
< 30 Minutes	14	16.9	16	53.3	24	42.1	17	18.1
30 - 60 Minutes	26	31.3	7	23.3	7	12.3	33	35.1
1 to 2 hours	17	20.5	1	3.3	7	12.3	28	29.8
> 2 hours	12	14.5	-	-	15	26.3	12	12.8
No daily usage	14	16.9	6	20	4	7	4	4.3
Total	83	100	30	100	57	100	94	100

From the above analysis, it is noticed that 77.7%, 66.3% and 50.9% of respondents use YouTube, Facebook and Instagram respectively for more than 30 Minutes daily, whereas Twitter is used for more than 30 minutes only by 26.6% of respondents. This trend indicates that the respondents are more active in using YouTube followed by Facebook and Instagram on a daily basis and they are less active on Twitter.

Table 3. Purchases made out of the viewed advertisements/promotions in various social media

No of items purchased	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram		YouTube	
	Frequency	Valid Percent						
Nothing	52	62.7	26	86.7	31	54.4	72	76.6
Less than 5	23	27.7	4	13.3	21	36.8	19	20.2
6 to 10	4	4.8	-	-	3	5.3	1	1.1
More than 10	4	4.8	-	-	2	3.5	2	2.2
Total	83	100	30	100	57	100	94	100

45.6% of respondents using Instagram, 37.3% Facebook, 23.4% YouTube and 13.3% of Twitter users have purchased products inspired by the advertisements or promotions they noticed while using their social media application. It is evident that people using Instagram have purchased actively whereas purchasing behaviour of people who use Twitter has been low.

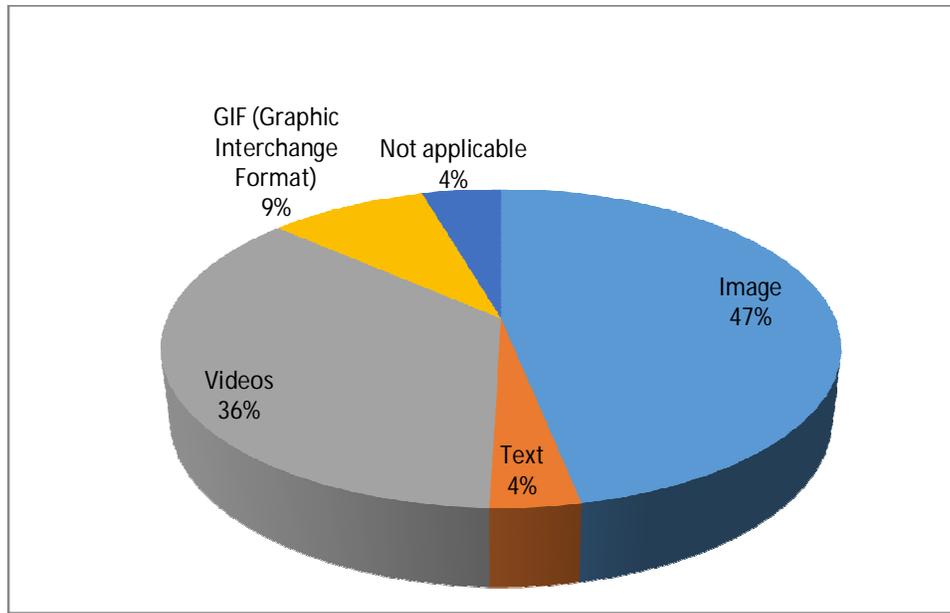


Figure 2. Form of social media advertisements that is of great interest to the urban youngsters

Figure 2 clearly indicates that the Image form of advertisements promoted in social media tools attracts majority of 47% of respondents. 36% of respondents preferred videos whereas 9% of participants loved to see advertisements in the GIF (Graphic Interchange Format). 4% of respondents under not applicable category are those who don't use any of the four social media applications we considered for this study.

Table 4. The reaction of urban youngsters towards advertisement videos on YouTube

Reaction	Frequency	Valid Percent
Always annoyed	35	37.2
Depends on my interest in the product	58	62.7
Always interested	0	0
Total	94	100

Table 4 shows the reaction of young urban consumers towards advertisements that cannot be skipped while watching YouTube. No participant is always interested to watch such enforced advertisements, 37.2% of respondents said they were always annoyed and 62.7% of participants stated that it depends on their interest in the product

SUGGESTIONS

From the above findings, it is evident that a good majority of the young population have access to social media applications, they are aware of the products marketed through social media channels and many of users are following business/product pages. It is recommended to the businesses to recruit highly dynamic personnel to be involved in working with advertisements in the social media platform. These recruits should be creative and possess innovative skills to catch the

fancy of the young minds. The companies could try to attract more followers in the social media which can induce consumer's purchasing intentions.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of the study were to identify the social media platform on which the urban youngsters are extremely active, to analyse their extent of purchasing behaviour through the involvement in these social media applications and also to find what form of advertisements influences their interest with a positive vibe. With the above findings, it is obvious that majority of respondents use YouTube (84%) and Facebook (74%), the percentage of respondents who didn't use any of the mentioned popular social media application was insignificant (4.5%). It is also noted that respondents who use YouTube and Facebook for more than 30 minutes on a daily basis were of high numbers. Though YouTube is used by most of the respondents, Image form of advertisements is favoured by a majority of youngsters. None of the respondents was always interested in watching video advertisements on YouTube which cannot be skipped and around 37% of respondents found it always exasperating. When it came to urban youngsters social media influenced purchasing behaviour, a majority of 46% respondents who used Instagram had purchased products. Majority of Instagram promotions are made using images and the application does not allow videos longer than 60 seconds. On the other hand, twitter the application that is being used most prominently by all the celebrities has a very less number of urban youth users compared to other social media. Thus, the findings allude to conclusions that in order to reach out effectively to city youths the marketers and businesses are recommended to concentrate more on Facebook as a tool for promoting their products, provided they use image format as a medium to advertise. The limitation of the study is it is limited to the geographical location of Chennai metropolitan city.

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