

A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA IN DEVELOPING A BRAND IMAGE POST-COVID-19 IN MAHARASHTRA (INDIA)

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study has been made to understand customer perception towards social media in developing a brand image post covid-19 pandemic in the state of Maharashtra in India. The previous studies on this title focused on how to prevent this deadly disease from spreading over; and very little focus was given on how Covid-19 pandemic has been affecting the customer behavior post covid-19 scenario. In order to bridge this gap, the Customer Decision Making Model has been used to understand the influence on customers due to social media, which influence their purchase decisions. Assessments of variance have been made and influence of social media on purchasers. The findings of the research work confirmed that customers have been influenced by social media for understanding, comparing and analyzing products with regard to its quality and price. Thus the findings focus on increased influence of social media advertising post Covid-19 pandemic period. Since this pandemic is of international concern, the findings may be beneficial internationally. We have also given some suggestions to support organizations for changing customers' social media behavior, as it has direct relation with the decision making process of customers.

Keywords: Customer behavior, Covid-19, Brand image, Social media, Pandemic, Purchasing, Maharashtra

Introduction

Covid-19 is derived from its full form CoronaVirus Disease and 19 stands for 2019, the year when the pandemic has started. Since the disease started spreading internationally, it was named as Covid-19 pandemic. In the year 2020, many people showed signs of the pandemic in Maharashtra state in India, During this period focus was given as to how to prevent this pandemic to affect common people and hardly any focus was given on its impact on consumer behavior. Hence the Consumer Decision Making Model was used to build this gap. This model was used to study the changes in the behavior pattern on consumers and the influence of social media on them. It was observed that the pandemic has a structural impact on the purchase behavior and decision-making processes of consumers. As far as Maharashtra State is concerned Covid-19, pandemic changed the product needs of consumers, their shopping and purchasing behaviors and post-purchase satisfaction level. Due to intervention of the government to prevent this pandemic to all possible extent and since mostly people were indoors, social media became very vital especially when social distancing was a common norm everywhere. Hence the role of social media and its impact on people are very significant; and people could interact with each other without physical contact. As such, businesses found new opportunities to gain competitive advantage through the effective use of social media marketing strategies.

It was observed that marketing research is required to understand the healthcare and macro-economic of Covid-19 pandemic, to examine the relationship between Covid-19 pandemic situations on the behavior of consumers. To cite an example, due to social distancing rules, consumers may change their decision-making processes in shopping and product acquisitions. Consumers' post purchase behavior also needs to be studied. Since Covid-19 pandemic is a new disease, many publications are not available as to its impacts on social media marketing behavior in Maharashtra. This research paper focuses on the role of social media in the decision making processes of consumers. The hypothesis of the research work is that social media marketing behavior shifted due to Covid-19 pandemic. This research focuses on the economy of Maharashtra because it is the largest spending economy in the world and the pandemic has largely influenced the healthcare in Maharashtra.

Problems

The new trend of today is online marketing, which is one of the easiest ways to market the products and reach consumers. The problems observed in this research work are as under:

- 1) What are the brand image factors that enhance the online marketing among students?
- 2) What is the relationship between factors of brand image and individual purchasing in online marketing?

Literature Review

Fianto (2014): Market place or value opposition has association with brand image for its users especially with regard to the service industry. Brand image and purchase behavior are interrelated. Challa, Anute (2021) Brands are using Instagram to drive engagement and connect with the targeted markets and audience. Each and Every company is coming up with unique content, by using quality images, Videos. Though some companies are unable to create post quality content, having a strong fan base in their social media platforms.

Zhang (2015): Brand image has changed the recommendation, as it has a prominent role in advertising and marketing activities. Brand image has a direct relationship between brand assets and brand performance; and some researchers also feel that brand image and customer equity are interrelated. Padival (2019): the increase in the use of social media has influenced the people of Maharashtra. However there are some challenges. The lower reputation of commercials is a major challenge faced by marketers. Hence, it is essential to understand the mindset of customers. This mindset is influenced by popularity of the product, emotional attachment, creativity and characteristics. Sharma (2020): In this virtual generation, the net, and Social Media(SM) have had an intensive effect on the purchasing behavior of “customers”. The SM gives a platform in which “customers” are exposed to the quality product with the quality price along with critiques and opinions about the products. So, we are able to turn our heads and study a brand in a way as if the brand is talking to us. Brands sincerely support the connection with customers and inspire buy intention. Furthermore, SMMA has a robust application in growing an advertising and marketing strategy for businesses. It has to turn out to be a significant device that collaborates with agencies and people. It is concluded that the “customer”-brand dating does have a superb and statistically massive effect on consumers’ purchase intention through SM. Vijaya (2019): Understanding consumer’s perceptions of social media marketing has constantly been one of the goals of advertisers. Advertisements that are successful in delivering their messages to their audiences can assist to promote and construct attention to the corporation’s services. With the speedy improvement of information technology worldwide within the past decade, social media advertising and marketing are increasingly counting on various modes of interactive technology to market and promote their products and services. The effective characteristic can be visible as a destiny of advertising and can become extra figurative in consumers’ minds than television advertising. Hoque (2020): Internet has played a pivotal role and played a dominant role for online purchasing and selling their products. Therefore, companies are in contact with social media, which includes Facebook, Instagram, Myspace and others for reaching out to customers to cater to their needs. It has been observed that in social media the age group of customers are between 21-30 and 31-40 years. Choudhary (2019): In the recent past researchers and advertising agencies are trying hard to influence the consumers through effective advertisements, for the brand loyalty of customers. The factors which affect brand loyalty are: (1)Accessibility; (2) Informative; (3) Brandimage; (4) Customer-care services; (5) Advertisements; (6) Relationship constructing; (7) Convenience; (8) Feedback. The belief of consumers toward exclusive social media practices used by entrepreneurs. Extra-ordinary strategies can be designed through social media for brand image and brand loyalty.

Research Methodology

The scope of this research study is limited to Maharashtra state in India.

Independent variables – Various social media platforms, social media communications through brand ambassadors

Dependable variables – Consumer satisfaction

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To understand the variations in consumer satisfaction, in the course of influencing through social media.
- 2) To understand the effect of multiple social media platforms while developing brand image
- 3) To understand brand ambassadors’ role for influencing brand products through social media.

Hypothesis of the Study

H0: No major changes are seen in satisfaction of consumers due to social media platforms

H01: Major changes are seen in satisfaction of consumers due to brand advocates

H02: No major changes are seen in satisfaction of consumers due to brand advocates

H03: Major changes are seen in satisfaction of consumers due to brand advocates

Sample size: For this research work 115 samples were selected.

Sample method: Simple random sampling

Statistical test used:

Correlation test is used as there are grouping variables.

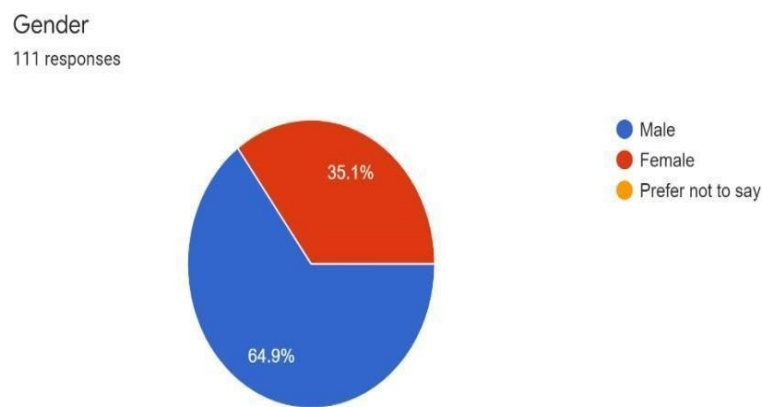
One-way ANOVA is used to determine the difference between the Means.

Data collection

Primary data is used for this study.

Questionnaires were designed according to different variables.

Data Analysis



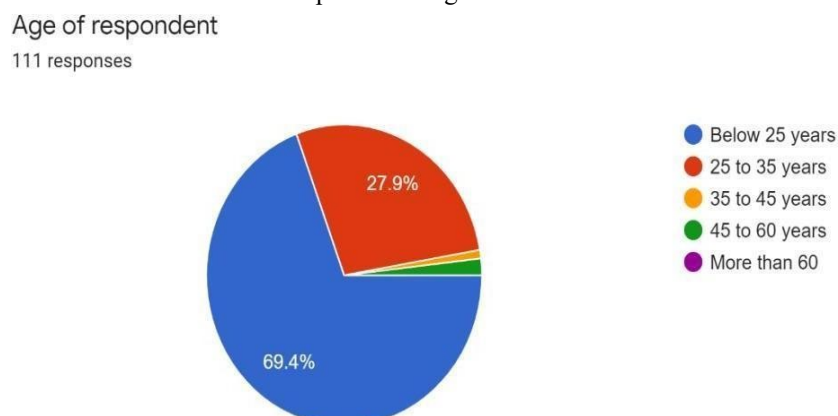
Graph No: 1- Gender

Gender	Frequency
Male	65
Female	32
Other	14

Table No: 1- Gender

Based on the above, we can understand that out of 111 respondents, 65 respondents are in the male group 32 respondents are in the female group 14 respondents are in the other group.

Graph No: 2- Age



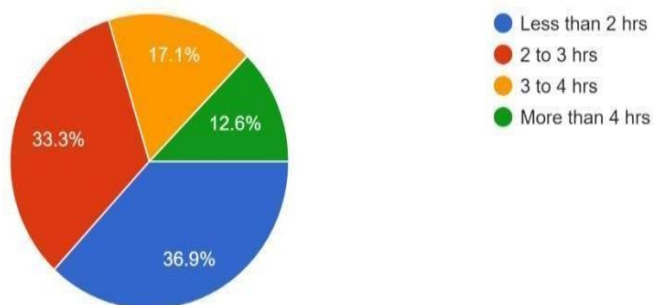
Age Group	Frequency
Less than 25 Years	69%
25-35	28%
35-45	2%
50 & Above	2%

Table No: 2- Age

Based on the above, we can understand that out of the respondents numbering 111, 69% ages less than fall 25, 28% ages between 25-35, 2% ages between 35-45, and 2% ages 50 & above.

How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

111 responses



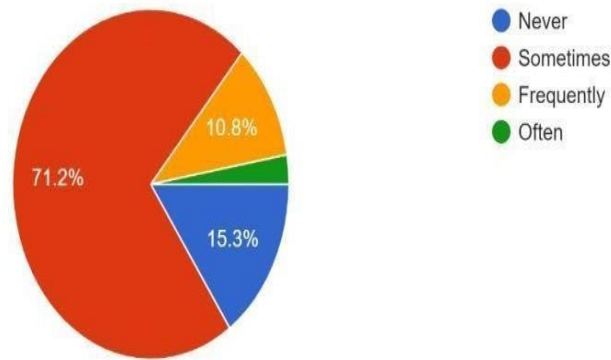
Graph No: 3- Time spent on Social media

Hours	Frequency
<2	37%
2 to 3	33%
3 to 4	17%
>4	13%

Table No: 3- Time spent on Social media

Based on the above, we can understand that out of the respondents numbering 111, 37% fall below 2 hours, 33% fall between 2 to 3, 17% fall between 3 to 4, and 13% are in the age group of more than 4

111 responses



Graph No: 4-Social Media Analysis

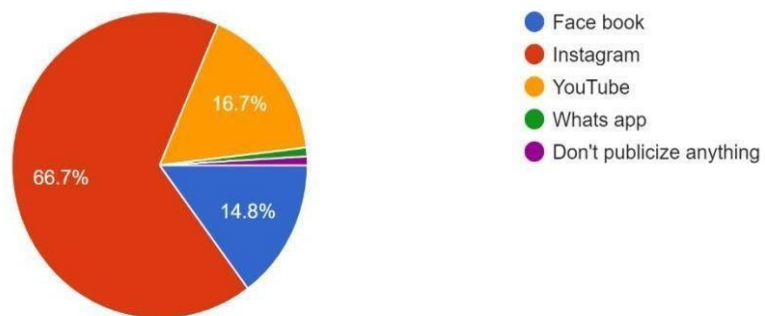
Variance	Frequency
Never	15 %
Sometimes	71 %
Frequently	11 %
Often	4%

Table No: 4-Social Media Analysis

Based on the above, we can understand that out of the respondents numbering 111, 15% mentioned never, 71% mentioned sometimes, 11% mentioned frequently, and 4% mentioned often.

How do you publicize a particular brand among the network on social media?

108 responses



Graph No:5- Platforms of Social Media Used

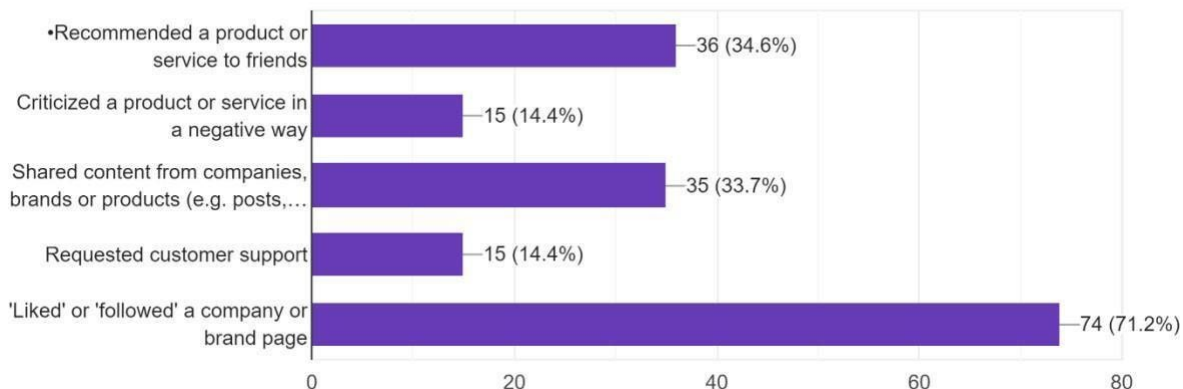
Social media	Frequency
Facebook	15%
Instagram	67%
YouTube	17%
WhatsApp	1%
Nothing	0%

Table No: 5- Platforms of Social Media Used

Based on the above, we can understand that out of the respondents numbering 111, 15% mentioned Facebook, 67% Instagram, 17% YouTube, and 1% WhatsApp, rest 0%.

In the past 30 days, have you done the following activities on social media?

104 responses



Graph No:5- Survey of 30 days

Based on the above, we can understand that out of the respondents numbering 111, 34.6% mentioned product recommendation from people, 14.4% mentioned in a negative way, 33.7% mentioned shared content from companies, and 14.4% mentioned customers support and finally 71.2% mentioned followed a company or brand.

Hypothesis Testing

Independent Variable				Dependent variable
Parameters For Analysis	Social Media Platforms	Brand Ambassadors	Brand advocate (I.e., Brand Recommendations Through Social Media)	Consumer Satisfaction
Sum	484	463	454	492
Count	114	114	114	114
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5
Range	4	4	4	4
Mean	4.245614035	4.061403509	3.98245614	4.315789474
Median	4	4	4	4
Mode	5	5	4	5
Standard Deviation	0.822505836	0.975894441	0.917495219	0.787131027
Sample Variance	0.682502717	0.960798013	0.849247011	0.625058221

Table No. 6 Hypothesis Testing

The mean value of different Social Media Platforms is 4.24 and that of Brand Ambassadors is 4.06 and that of Brand advocate is (I.e., Brand Recommendations Through Social Media) Through Social Media is 3.98 and the mean of Dependent variable Consumer Satisfaction is 4.31. The standard deviation in Social Media Platforms is

0.82, Brand Ambassadors is 0.97, Brand advocate is 0.91 and Dependent variable Consumer Satisfaction is 0.78. Similarly sample variance for various social media are: for Social Media Platforms is 0.68, Brand Ambassadors is 0.96, brand advocate is 0.84 and Dependent variable Consumer satisfaction is 0.62.

Correlations

		platforms	Ambassadors	Recommondaction	Satisfaction
platforms	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.616	.604	.459
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	115	115	115	115
Ambassadors	Pearson Correlation	.616	1.000	.489	.515
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	115	115	115	115
Recommondaction	Pearson Correlation	.604	.489	1.000	.432
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	115	115	115	115
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.459	.515	.432	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	115	115	115	115

Table No. 7 Hypothesis Testing, Correlation Analysis

The correlation between Platforms (Social media platforms) and Ambassadors (Brand ambassadors) remains 0.616, which implies that there is a positive relationship between the set of variables and concludes that strong correlation. The correlation between Platforms (Social media platforms) and brand recommendation (i.e. Brand advocate through social media) is 0.604 this is a strong positive relationship between these variables. The correlation of Platforms (Social media platforms) and satisfaction (consumer satisfaction) is 0.459 this is a moderate relationship but less positive than other variables the correlation between Ambassadors (Brand ambassadors) and brand recommendation (i.e., Brand advocate through social media) is positive 0.489. Between Ambassadors (Brand ambassadors) and satisfaction (consumer satisfaction) is 0.515 which implies there is a positive relationship but less positive than the other variables brand recommendation (i.e., Brand advocate through social media) and (satisfaction) consumer satisfaction is Positively correlated and the value is 0.432. Correlation between Platforms (Social media platforms) and Platforms (Social media platforms) is equal 1 same for Ambassadors (Brand ambassadors) brand recommendation (i.e., Brand advocate through social media), and (satisfaction) consumer satisfaction correlation among themselves.

Satisfaction by platforms

ANOVA					
Satisfaction towards Different Social Media Platforms					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.26	4	12.491	7.52	.0004
Within Groups	55.84	110	189.264		
Total	71.10	114			

Table No. 8 - Hypothesis Testing, ANOVA

Interpretation: Based on the above, it is seen that customers' satisfaction changes with the use of various social media platforms as per gender.

Based on the customers' perception due to the use of social media platforms according to Qualification, the p-value (sig value) of the F-test is 0.0004. It is less than standard p-value 0.05 (5% level of significance). So, we accepted the F-test. Hence, we rejected the null hypothesis and accepted an alternate hypothesis.

Conclusion: As far as customers' satisfaction is concerned, there is significant difference due to the use of different social media platforms based on gender.

Satisfaction by Brand ambassadors

ANOVA					
Satisfaction toward Brand ambassadors					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.96	4	6.49	15.82	.0056
Within Groups	45.13	110	0.41		
Total	71.10	114			

Table No. 9 - Hypothesis Testing, ANOVA

Interpretation: Based on the above, it is seen that due to the use of Brand Ambassadors there are changes in the views of customers.

The calculated p-value (sig value) of the F-test is 0.0056. It is less than the standard p – value 0.05(5%level of significance). So we accepted Ftest. Hence, we rejected the null hypothesis and accepted an alternate hypothesis.

Conclusion: Due to the use of Brand Ambassadors there are significant changes in the views of customers, as per gender.

Satisfaction by Brand Advocate

ANOVA					
Satisfaction towards Brand advocate					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	16.91.	4	4.49	8.58	.036
Within Groups	54.13	110	0.49		
Total	71.10	114			

Table No. 9 - Hypothesis Testing, ANOVA

Interpretation: Based on the above, it is seen that due to the use of Brand Ambassadors there are changes in the views of customers as per gender.

Hence, the calculated p-value (sigvalue) of the F-test is 0.036. It is less than the standard p-value 0.05 (5% level of significance). Hence, we accepted the F test and rejected null hypothesis; and accepted alternate hypothesis.

Conclusion: Due to the use of Brand Ambassadors there are significant changes in the views of customers, as per gender.

Conclusion

There isn't any doubt that the social media community is influencing the customers' satisfaction, which shifted the clients from buying at the marketplace or shopping center toe-buying to a few extents. These e-buying choices are decided by way of means of the employer elements, demographic elements of the clients and technological environment. Social media have opened a brand new possibility for entrepreneurs to recognize the actual want of the clients and supply the goods or offerings to assemble up the expectancy at the most excellent level. On the other hand, clients declare that they may be exploited via means of presenting a replica of the well-known brand, charging an exceptionally better fee than the marketplace going fee and they may now no longer be refunded in case of dishonesty via means of entrepreneurs. Sometimes it isn't always feasible to discover the markers who behave in commercial enterprise seasonally or occasionally. Since the clients opt for buying via social media networks, the policy makers must install a few guidelines and rules for making sure the betterment of the clients and affordable income for the businessmen.

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