



Impact of social media on consumer behaviour: A case study of Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Dinesh Kumar

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Govt. College Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, India

Abstract

In the modern digital era, social media has revolutionized the way consumers interact with brands, make purchasing decisions, and engage with businesses. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter have evolved from mere communication tools into influential marketplaces that drive consumer behaviour across different demographics. Himachal Pradesh, a state known for its diverse cultural heritage, booming tourism industry, and expanding local businesses, is experiencing a significant shift in consumer behaviour due to the increasing penetration of social media. With the growing accessibility of affordable smart phones and high-speed internet, consumers in Himachal Pradesh both in urban and rural areas are increasingly relying on social media for product research, brand trust, and purchasing decisions. One of the most striking aspects of social media's impact is its ability to create trends that influence purchasing habits almost instantly. A single viral video on Instagram showcasing an organic apple orchard in Shimla can lead to a surge in online sales for local farmers. Similarly, YouTube influencers reviewing local Himachali cuisine, handicrafts, or adventure tourism spots can dramatically increase consumer interest and business growth in these sectors. This research aims to explore the extent to which social media influences consumer behaviour in Himachal Pradesh, identifying key factors such as trust in online reviews, engagement with digital advertisements, and the role of influencers in shaping preferences. The study will employ a mixed-method approach that includes surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis to examine the impact of social media on consumer purchasing decisions across different age groups, geographic locations, and product categories. This study will provide valuable insights for businesses, marketers, and policymakers to develop effective digital marketing strategies that cater to local needs. The findings will also help bridge the gap between traditional and digital commerce, ensuring that businesses in Himachal Pradesh can thrive in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: Revolutionized, cuisine, technical know-how, scepticism, thrives

Introduction

Social media are interactive digital channels that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. Social media can also be classified by their ability to facilitate certain social functions. These social functions often involve identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups.

In today's technology driven world; social networking sites have become an avenue where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of consumers, for instance, a young traveller planning a trip to Manali may choose a hotel based on Instagram reviews, while a small-scale entrepreneur in Kullu may market handmade woollen shawls via Facebook Marketplace. This rapid digital transformation has blurred the lines between traditional shopping and online commerce, making social media a dominant force in influencing consumer preferences and buying 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 plan. One of the most striking aspects of social media's impact is its ability to create trends that influence purchasing habits almost instantly. A single viral video on social media showcasing an organic apple orchard in Shimla can lead to a surge in online sales for local farmers. Similarly, YouTube influencers reviewing local Himachali cuisine, handicrafts, or adventure tourism spots can dramatically increase consumer interest and business growth in these sectors. This demonstrates how consumer choices

are no longer solely dictated by traditional advertising but by peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content. Despite the promising potential of social media in shaping consumer behaviour, there are several challenges that businesses and consumers face. Many small businesses in Himachal Pradesh lack the technical know-how and resources to fully leverage social media for marketing. Moreover, rural consumers may face barriers such as digital literacy, internet accessibility, and scepticism about online transactions. The presence of misleading advertisements and fake reviews further complicates the decision-making process, making it crucial to understand how trust, engagement, and digital marketing strategies shape consumer behaviour in the state. In spite of this there are several challenges that businesses and consumers face. Many small businesses in Himachal Pradesh lack the technical know-how and resources to fully leverage social media for marketing. Moreover, rural consumers may face barriers such as digital literacy, internet accessibility, and scepticism about online transactions.

Review of literature

Gupta, S., Agarwal, A. K., & Chauhan, A. K. The article talks about the past and the future impact of social media because the fifth social media week held in September 2011. Toby Daniels, the founder of Social media week found the increase in role of Social media in the lives of people. Varghese, S., Nandhini M. in their article speaks about the influence of demographic factors towards the purchase intention of customers. Article also reveals about the internet usage pattern among the customers. This can be

related as an opportunity for the increased engagement of companies with customers through social media. Abdel (2015) [3] revealed that the effect of social media on buying decision of customers using internet. The study revealed that the exchange of information, evaluations and social connectivity had strong effect on purchasing decisions and consumers. Hajli (2014) [4] studied about the impact of social media on consumers. The study revealed that social media empower participants to generate content through online communities, review and recommendations. Consumers facilitated by social media, generate online social support for their peers. Consequently, these interactions establish trust in the networks used. Parajuli (2021) [5] concluded that concerned authorities and online business holders should pay proper attention to the challenges faced by consumers so that they could be mitigated so that consumers would have a better online

purchase experience. Gaudel (2019) found positive response about the relationship between the social media

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media on buying behaviour of consumers.

1. To study the factors which influence the customers to shop online
2. To analyses how the social media channels affects the buying behaviour of consumers.
3. To identify the factors which motivating the customers to shop online.

Sample Size: In present paper an attempt has been made to analyse the impact of social media on the buying behaviour of consumer in Himachal Pradesh. The study is based on the responses of 150 respondents

Analysis of Data

Descriptive Statistic Factor Motivating for Online Shopping

Motivating factors to shop online	shop at discounted price	Flexibility of shopping hours	greater variety of products	Ease of comparing to find lower prices	Saving the cost of transportation	Convenience	consumer reviews
Extremely Important	48	43	50	47	36	41	59
Important	57	50	50	44	59	43	40
Somewhat Important	25	32	28	38	32	32	30
Not Important	20	25	22	21	23	34	21
Total	150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Mean	3.036	2.810	2.981	2.873	2.783	2.630	3.045
Standard Deviation	0.923	1.022	0.981	0.991	0.947	1.119	1.030
Skewness	0.777	-0.441	-0.668	-0.368	-0.465	-0.215	-0.700
Kurtosis	0.145	-0.909	-0.550	-0.980	-0.620	-1.311	-0.745

Above Table represents analysis for how important each of the following factors in motivating respondents to shop online. In the analysis it was found that the highest mean score was on consumer reviews i.e., 3.045 on five point Likert scale followed by ability to shop at discounted prices (3.036) followed by availability of greater variety of products (2.981), ease of comparing to find lower prices (2.873), flexibility of shopping hours (2.810), saving of cost of transportation needed to drive to shopping places(2.783), whereas mean score of convenience of not having to leave the house to shop was lowest i.e. (2.630). Further significant

variations in the responses how important each of following factors are in motivating respondents to shop online was found highest in convenience of not having to leave the house (1.119), followed by ability of consumer reviews and product rating information (1.030), flexibility of shopping hours (1.022), ease of comparing to find lower prices (0.991), availability of greater variety of products (0.981), saving of cost of transportation needed to drive to shopping places (0.947), ability to shop at discounted prices (0.923). The negative value of skewness represents majority of responses falls on the highest side of mean value

Descriptive Statistic on Purchasing of Items through Social Media Marketing

Products	Always	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Apparels/Clothes	27	28	20	48	27	2.81	1.378	0.347	-1.226
Electronics	22	19	31	42	36	2.53	1.313	0.580	-0.729
Books	24	28	28	35	35	2.70	1.392	0.302	-1.187
Grocery	22	20	26	39	43	2.43	1.372	0.637	-0.824
Pharmaceuticals	16	12	24	29	69	1.87	1.221	1.341	0.825
Entertainment	18	25	19	38	50	2.28	1.357	0.724	-0.800

Source: Primary Data (Collected Through Questionnaire)

Table represents the analysis for how often do respondents purchase each of the following types of products online. In the analysis it was found that highest mean score was of apparels/clothes i.e. (2.810) on five-point Likert scale followed by books (2.702), electronics (2.531), grocery (2.432), entertainment (2.288), whereas mean score of pharmaceuticals was lowest i.e., (1.873). Further significant variation in the response of sample respondents on the perception towards purchase of different products online was found highest in books (1.392), followed by apparels/clothes (1.378), grocery (1.372), entertainment

(1.357), electronics (1.313) whereas the lowest deviation found in pharmaceuticals i.e., (1.221). A skewness value greater than 1 or less than -1 indicates a highly skewed distribution. A value between 0.5 and 1 or -0.5 and 0.5 indicates that the distribution is fairly symmetrical. In pharmaceuticals the skewness is extremely skewed i.e. (1.341). In electronics, grocery and entertainment skewness is highly skewed (0.580, 0.637and 0.724). Meanwhile clothes and books are having the negative skewness i.e. (0.347 and 0.302).

Major Findings

1. The maximum number of the respondents was from the age group of 15-25 as this is the age group which spends maximum number of hours on social media.
2. Data from survey shows that nearly half of the people tend to do online shopping once or twice in a month. This may suggest that they belong to working class which do not have a lot of free time and they tend to buy in large quantities but less frequently from Online platforms.
3. It has been found that most of the respondents (59.5%) are willing to purchase products online from e-retailing websites.
4. The study also shows that most of the consumer compare the products online before buying them.
5. Most of the respondent's (47.7%) rate social media effective which means there is association between social media marketing and buying behaviour of consumers.
6. It is also clear from the study that Buying decisions of most of the respondents (64%) is influenced by social media.
7. From study it has been found that most of respondents were motivated to purchase online due to the easy shopping and lower prices and availability of consumer reviews and product rating information.
8. Most of the respondents compare products online and actually purchase product online but there are also some respondents who have search information with no intention to buy it online and some research information with intention of buying it from store.
9. Customer are mostly involved in buying clothes (29.7%) online followed by books (19.8%).
10. From study it has been found out that consumer average monthly spending on online shopping is mostly less than Rs.500 (31.5%) and followed by monthly spending between 500-1000Rs. (28.8%).
11. When respondents were asked about what is most important factor that attracts the respondents to buy product online? Most of the respondents said price, return policy and advertisements attracts them the most to purchase anything online.

The research has shown a powerful impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour in digital age. No doubt that social media had brought major changes to both, consumer as well as businesses. The research has shown that consumers are highly selective while making a purchase. Though there is a plenty of data and sources of information on social media, still personal attitude of the consumers makes a lot of difference in selecting and making a purchase.

Therefore, it can be concluded that social media marketing has a positive impact on buying behaviour of customers. It gave consumers facilities of buying at discounted rate, staying at home and not leaving home for purchasing, saved cost of transportation and they also can compare product across various websites to find product at lower price.

Suggestions

1. The quality of content on social media makes a big impact so it should be consumer relevant. When the marketing is done through social media, it is not all about consumer awareness or selling the product itself.

- It is more than that which includes retaining a built-up relationship and building it between the potential buyers and corporations.
2. Now the consumer is the king who can get all the information regarding a product or services by simply speaking with each other. So, the companies and marketers should highly careful about the bad mouth on social media because it can lead to destroy the company's reputation. Even many individuals have agreed on the fact that through social media, they can share their opinion and talk to other consumers and the corporations more effectively.
3. Social media has definitely bridged up the gap between the brands and the consumers.
4. Company should design their website in such a manner that they attract most of the customers through advertisement and should make user interface so much easy to use that everyone can use their apps or websites easily to search and compare product and their prices.
5. The company that are adapting an integrate strategic approach with the aim of social network platforms that is becoming the most successful in getting, engaging, influencing and retaining the customers. Factors, that can change the customer's brand perception and a will to buy includes the strategies that led to consumer perspective, and the opinion of the people who create content on social media.
6. So, these strategies definitely need a high degree of maintenance and those companies that are using the method should be ready to fix all the marketing services to retain the existing customers and to increase the customer lifetime value association between social media marketing and buying behaviour are found.
7. E retailing companies should focus on adding more and more services to their website so that it became convenient to buy the product without any difficulties and also provide them with active and quick customer care service.

References

1. Gupta S, Agarwa AK, Chauhan AK. Social media and its impact on consumers buying behaviour with special reference to apparel industry in Bareilly region. SMART Journal of Business Management Studies,2018;14(2):17-23.
2. Varghese S, Nandhini M. The Influence of Demographic Factors on the Customers of Online-Shopping with Special Reference to Kochi City. Journal of Adv Research in Dynamical & Control Systems, 2020, 12(1).
3. Abdel M. The role of social networking influencing the purchasing decision of the consumer via the internet. The Jordanian Journal of Business,2015;11(1):1-10.
4. Hajli MN. A study of the impact of social media on consumers. International Journal of Market Research,2014;56(1):387-404.
5. Parajuli S. Customer's attitude and preferences towards online marketing: Index-based analysis. International Journal of Marketing and Human Resource Research,2021;2(4):211-223.
6. Kotler P, K Keller. Marketing Management. London: Pearson Education, 2011.