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CUSTOMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE REVIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG YOUTH IN BANGALORE

Dr. Padmalini Singh

Department of Management Studies,
M. S. Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore, India.

Dr P V Raveendra

Department of Management Studies,
M. S. Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore, India

Dr. Santosh Kumar S

Department of Management Studies,
M. S. Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore, India

Namitha H. N

Student, Department of Management Studies,
M. S. Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore, India

Likith R

Student, Department of Management Studies,
M. S. Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore, India

ABSTRACT

Social media marketing constitutes an exceptional media for promoting a product or service or a new brand in the market. One of the explicit way to do so is to offer a platform to internet users to generate online content in a form of reviews, comments called 'earned media' than just relying on old school thought of a planned advertising copy. These days, Social Media Marketing (SMM) strategies of any company is to create Brand fan page, reviews and ratings and likes for a new brand and influencing customers to buy by spreading positive e-WOM (Electronic-Word Of Mouth). The social media marketing involves creating online reviews and likes to influence consumer purchase intention. Consumers often refer to these reviews and like to make a purchase decision. Therefore, this study was carried out to explore consumers' attitude towards online reviews on social media with the help of a research design that is descriptive in nature having close ended questions distributed for gathering the information from 90 respondents specifically using social media in Bangalore. Statistical tool Chi-square test

and frequency distribution has been used to analyze the results. From the study it was found that there was significant relationship between the awareness of online review and ratings on purchase intention, online reviews on purchase decision and the age group and time spent on social media every day.

Keywords: social media, customer's attitude, online reviews, social media marketing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of social media marketing has led marketers to emphasise on the use of social media platforms to promote their brands. This not only provides benefit to marketers to lower down their promotion cost but also offers a convenient way for customers' to gain information about products and services. Therefore, major advertising budget is allocated for social media marketing focussed on building the trust among customers to believe in the online information source in order to encourage online purchase (SimonaVinerean et.al. 2013).).

The world is becoming more active on virtual social medium. According to Hubspot 2012, the average time spent on social media is increasing to approximately to 4.6 hours per week.

Online reviews have become one of the important information source that includes ratings, opinions, images, icon, symbols representing consumer's view about any product and services. Retailers ensures that their websites flashes consumers' reviews for ease of other customers' to make their purchase decision favourably for their offerings (PrabhaKiran and Vasantha S. 2015)

Social media platforms can be categorized into different groups according to their functions. Social networks such as MySpace, Facebook, Google+ allows to publish more personal contents unlike LinkedIn that connects people professionally. Blogs and Microbolgs is another category that offers a platform to exchange personal thoughts but at a risk of being trapped into a cascading negative thoughts if it arises. There are websites like YouTube, Pinterst, Slideshare, Vimeo etc that offers media (phot/video/audio/PPT) sharing facilities exclusively targeting young audience. A vigorous control is required for the websites such as Wikipedia, World66, WikiTravel etc that are used for crowdsourcing. Social networking sites that are used as discussion forum for interactive conversations are Yahoo Groups, PHP, Phorum etc. To cover social events happening in every part of country social sites such as Meetup and Eventful solves the purpose by highlighting upcoming events(Arca, 2012). All these social networking sites used for various functions such as sharing, discussion, buying & selling, networking, publishing, playing etc captures marketer's interest for easy and effective communication and affect business at different point of time.

The benefits of social media have been described by Stelzner (2012) in his extensive study where he emphasized on the use of social media for brand exposure through directing the target audience to company's website. The feedback and interaction with customers not only serves the purpose of improving one's own service/products being offered but also helps to research about its competitor's. Apart from this, social media is also used for lead generation, developing loyalty, improving ranking, reduced marketing cost drastically and most importantly it improves sales.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the rapid growth of online communities on social media, information access and sharing has become a matter of seconds (Chen et al. 2011). Members of Brand Community are influenced to change their perceptions about the brands (Muniz & Schau, 2005). Information sharing on social media apart from affecting trust (Wu et al. 2010) and loyalty for a brand also shows cascading effect to word-of-mouth (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007) strengthens superior brand status (de Vries, Gensler & Leeflang 2012), rise in sales (Agnihotri et al. 2012). Social media platform connects internet users by creating social profile on social network such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). As, companies are developing social media marketing strategies influencing customers' perception and purchase intention, consumer behavior study on social media platform is a critical research plan (Liang & Turban 2011). Social media in the form of online search experience, online reviews, online marketing activities and online advertisements have a major role in influencing consumer behavior (Simona Vinerean et al. 2013). Decision making for purchasing a product online is significantly affected by product reviews as well as product rating that vary in theory (Georg Lackermair et al. 2013). In the background of these reviews, an attempt has been taken to analyze the attitude towards online reviews on youth in Bangalore.

S. Mishra & Tyagi (2015) found that in 2008 there were more than 65 million Facebook user's but in spite of large number, company's failed to use social media to sell their offerings effectively. It was studied further that perceived risk, perceived usefulness and personal fits are most important factors for marketing the offerings on social media effectively. The finding of the study was that the attitude towards marketing through social media is positively affected by perceived usefulness and personal fits but negatively affected by perceived risk.

As social media have become an integral part of communication among customers, marketers are creating new opportunities to engage and market their offerings to target audience. Though many studies have been done to understand the attitude of customer's towards social media, but it fails to guide companies to create value. Camilla (2015) suggested that though using social networking for communication is economical for companies but its more complicated than traditional media as it lacks direct control. The most important benefit for which it is being used is for awareness, publicity and influencing brand image.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Twitter, Facebook and Google+ have provided a global platform to the mass experiencing a rapid growth in e-services category; Gross and Acquist (2005) and Boyd and Ellison (2007). These websites facilitate internet users to generate their semi-personal or personal profiles visible to the public, enabling them to connect (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). For the awareness of the brand, discussions are encouraged among online consumers by marketers (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Brand communities are created on social media that influence consumers' perception as well as purchase behavior by enhancing their knowledge about a specific brand (Muniz & Schau, 2005). It has been studied that a person's attitude and relationship with a specific brand is highly influenced by the interactions they have with brand community on social media (Füller, 2008). This influence is greatly through consumer's opinion, product ratings, product reviews etc. Though social media marketing is an extensively researched topic, but it has only been studied from single lens of benefits that companies gain by using this tool. Studies have never been undertaken to precisely understand the customer's outlook about the online product/service reviews that is one form of social media marketing.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to analyze customer's attitude towards online reviews on social media among youth in Bangalore.

4. OBJECTIVES

The research aims to study the following objectives:

1. To study the influence of online reviews on social media.
2. To study the customers' perception towards social media marketing strategies.

4.1. Research Methodology

The present study is quantitative in nature based on primary data. In order to empirically study customers' attitude towards online reviews on social media, a self-designed questionnaire was used for survey method. Using convenience sampling technique, responses were collected by 90 respondents in Bangalore. To gain more insights about the influence of online reviews on purchase intention, researcher has attempted to use Chi-Square analysis.

4.2. Limitations of the Study

The results of the study completely stand on the field study in Bangalore region so the analysis may be different for other socio-cultural diversity. Time and money constraints have not allowed to include in-depth analysis through interview and focus group discussion to analyze the study more acutely.

5. HYPOTHESIS

HO1: The age group of respondents and the time spent on social media websites are independent.

HO2: The awareness of online reviews and product preference are independent.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1 Demographic details of social media users

Particulars	CLASSIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender	Female	43	48
	Male	47	52
Age Group	15-22	6	6
	23-30	51	57
	31-36	33	37
Occupation	Unemployed/Students	60	66
	Entrepreneurs	10	12
	Employed/Professional	20	22

Table 2 Awareness of social media sites

Particulars	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	90	100
No	0	0

Table 3 Time spent on social media everyday

Particulars	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Less than 30 MINUTES	18	20
30 MINUTES	47	52
1 HOUR	25	28

Table 4 Awareness of ratings and online reviews on social media

Particulars	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	55	62
No	35	38

Table 5 Product preference through online reviews

Particulars	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	68	75
No	22	25

Table 6 Effectiveness of reviews and likes on purchase intention

Particulars	SA	A	N	D	SD
I check out how many Likes and Comments / Reviews the new product has if the product is interesting.	8	77	3	2	0
The Reviews or the number of Likes for the product has stimulated an interest to either buy or not buy the new product.	15	68	4	2	1

Table 7 Perception towards online reviews on social media

Particulars	SA	A	N	D	SD
I believe the source of the Reviews and Likes are given by genuine people who have experienced the new product.	8	38	5	33	7
I still believe in content that is displayed on social media is genuine.	11	41	7	23	8
I trust the recommendations for any product/service even from a person whom I don't know on Facebook.	10	39	6	26	9

7. TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

7.1. Chi-Square analysis

HO1: The age group of respondents, and the time spent on social media websites are independent.

To find out the relationship between the age group of respondents and the time spent on social media websites, chi-square analysis was done and the results is shown below

Table 8 Respondents time spent on social media by age

	15-22	23-30	31-38	Row Totals
<30 mins	5 2.67	5 5.67	5 6.67	15
30 mins	6 6.76	15 14.36	17 16.89	38
>1 hr	5 6.58	14 13.98	18 16.44	37
Column Totals	16	34	40	90

Chi square test			
Calculated Value	Degree of Freedom	Level of Significance	Tabulated Value
3.18	4	0.05	9.48

Calculated value being greater than tabulated value, reflects that there is a significant relationship between the age group of respondents and time spent on the social media.

HO2: The awareness of online reviews and product preference are independent.

To study the awareness of online reviews and its influence on purchase intention, chi-square test was done. The results are given in the table below:

Table 9 Respondents awareness of online reviews on purchase intention

Factor		Purchase intention		Rows Total
		Yes	No	
Online reviews	Yes	46 (41.56) [0.48]	9 (13.44) [1.47]	55
	No	22 (26.44) [0.75]	13 (8.56) [2.31]	35
Column Total		68	22	90 (Grand Total)

Chi square test			
Calculated Value	Degree of Freedom	Level of Significance	Tabulated Value
5.0003	1	0.05	3.84

Calculated value being greater than tabulated value, reflects that there is significant relationship between awareness of online review and purchase intention.

8. FINDINGS

- The demographic study revealed that out of 90 respondents that includes 62% are female and 38% are male are aware of social media sites.
- Majority of the respondents 57% fall in the age group of 31-36 years following 37% who is in between 23-30 years.
- 66% responses are from students and 22% from employed professional who are social media users.
- 90% respondents were aware of social media.
- It was found that 52% youth spent at least 30 minutes on social media platform.
- 85% respondents agreed that they check out likes, reviews and ratings on social media and 83% youth feels that likes, comments & reviews generate their interest in purchase.
- 55% respondents were aware of online reviews and ratings on social media and 68% of them felt that product preference is influenced by online reviews.
- Majority of youth believes in genuinity of the reviews and ratings on social media i.e., 52% whereas 46% feels reviews and ratings are given by people who have experienced the product and service.
- 49% youth trust on recommendations even by a stranger.
- A significant relationship was found among the age group of social media users and time spent on the social networking.
- There is significant relationship between awareness of online review and purchase intention.

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To achieve the objective of studying the customers' attitude towards online reviews on social media, it was found that there was significant relationship between the awareness of online review and ratings on purchase intention which supports the findings of Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym (2012). The study also agrees with the findings of the study of (Micheal and Alrasheed 2011) on understanding the significant relationship between online reviews on purchase decision. It was also found that there was a significant relationship between the age group and time spent on social media everyday. For the study, it is clear that reviews, likes,

ratings and product/ service recommendations on social media has a critical part to play in decision making. Customers have a positive perception about online reviews on social media and it is believed as a credible source of information.

Realizing the importance and influence of online reviews and comments on social media, online retailers should create a criteria consideration for selecting reviews for displaying on their website. Certain guidelines should also be followed by consumers to voice their opinion about the product/service and write reviews as their recommendations have a strong impact on purchase decision. Use of standard keywords should be taken into considerations for writing a review.

As majority of youth in Bangalore are aware of various social platforms, ratings and reviews, social media marketing should lay more emphasis on online reviews received by genuine customers as it is regarded as most credible source by customers.

As technology is advancing, the form of social media is bound to change and so is the form of online reviews and ratings. In the future, the ratings and reviews may take a form of a symbol or icon to streamline the process. Further research can be done on understanding the changing dynamics of ratings, reviews, recommendations, likes and comments on social media that have a huge impact on purchase intention today.

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