

Effect of Product Characteristics of Social Media Platforms on Students Purchase Decision

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Abstract

Social media has rapidly transformed into a vibrant marketplace, shaping how people, especially social media has rapidly transformed into a vibrant marketplace, shaping how people, especially social media has rapidly transformed into a vibrant marketplace, shaping how people, especially. Social media has turned into a vibrant marketing place shaping the college students in making purchasing decisions. In today's competitive market, product characteristics play a significant role in purchase decision among the customers. This study examines the influence of product characteristics of social media platforms on the students purchase decision. Students being a price-sensitive and trend conscious segment, often consider multiple factors before purchasing products. This study focuses on key influences such as product choice, brand choice and dealer choice. Using a quantitative approach, the research gathered insights from 100 students through a validated questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Tools such as correlation and multiple regression analysis are employed to analyse the data. Findings highlight the convenience and product visibility about brand choice, product choice and dealer choice play a significant role in shaping students' buying choices. The preferred shopping platforms showed only modest correlations, they were statistically significant. Notably, the study found a strong link between the product characteristics of products on social media and students purchase decision. This study provides useful insights for the marketers and retailers to design effective strategies targeting the students segment.

Keywords : Social Media Platforms, Purchase Decision, Product Choice, Brand Choice and Dealer Choice.

Introduction

Social media refers to text-messaging, blogging video-sites, wikis and social networks. These social media sites are characterized by inter-related communication technologies that allow people to engage in their local communities and the global community. Profiles, friends and comments are the pillars on which social media is built on. Social media sites are uncharted territory with potential for information aimed at mostly reaching the youth. Social media is defined "as a group of internet-based application that builds on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". Students tend to be informed buyers who evaluate the products carefully before making purchasing decision. Product characteristics play a crucial role in influencing consumers buying behaviour. Elements such as product choice, brand choice and dealer choice determine how consumers perceive value, quality and reliability. Product choice reflects the variety and features available to meet customers needs, brand choice influences the trust, image and perceived quality and dealer choice affects the convenience price, availability and post purchase services, all of which impacts the purchase decision.

According to Mangold & Faulds (2009) social media includes a wide array of online word of mouth conversations, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumers' product or service ratings websites as well as forums as well as internet discussion boards and forums. Social media has been irreversible in the manner in which it has revamped marketing communications by switching methods in which consumers choose, share and assess information (Morrison, 2015). With the emergence of social media, conventional media may have lost uninterrupted viewership and readership and their impact as advertising channels may have been weakened.

Companies are increasingly using social media platforms as part and parcel of the marketing and brand building activities, this is because there has been fast penetration of social media into the society though only few firms have able to get comfortable in this space. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter aid with the notion of connection, amongst the consumers themselves as well as between the firm and the customers. This interactive nature of social media platforms allows those selling their products and services to easily communicate with their clients. Social media is described as media for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques that can also be thought of as user-generated or consumer generated content. Social media platforms offer a means of conspicuous consumption, whereby people can incorporate goods into their personal profiles, with little obligation to match this virtual consumption with their material reality. Social media channels are inexpensive, user-friendly, scalable internet, and mobile-based technologies that allow for the sharing of user-generated material effectively. In the earliest century, small talk was social contact that existed between people who shared views on anything. Written correspondence delivered by hand was utilized in communities that were limited by the logistics of geography. Until 1972, when the telegraph was invented, short messages were delivered over the long distance. In the following centuries, with the evolution of technology with the new 9 technical invention, communication between people across great distances was not difficult. Technology began to change rapidly in the 20th century, with the creation of the first computer and the first blogging sites which became popular which was the foundation for modern

social media development People tend to use social media because of the informative content shared on these social media platforms. Social media users found it feasible to remain connected with friends and family. And for this reason, the number of people who use the internet keeps on increasing year after year. Studies about virtual communities have released different definitions of social networking year by year.

Significance of the Study

This study examines the impact of product characteristics of social media marketing on consumer purchase decision among the students, particularly how the product characterized in social media influences their purchasing decisions. Among various consumer segments students represent a significant and influential market, as their purchasing behaviour is shaped by changing styles, peer influence, brand awareness and exposure to digital media. The researchers believe this study will benefit the following stakeholders. The findings may help businesses tailor their marketing strategies to better connect with the students by understanding how social media marketing affects their buying choices. This research may guide the Department of Education in promoting responsible social media use and preparing students to make informed purchasing decisions in a digital marketplace. The findings can also help improve marketing courses, providing students with a stronger foundation for their future careers. This research can serve as a reference for educators in developing marketing and consumer behavior textbooks. It may also enhance classroom discussions on digital literacy and the ethical implications of social media marketing. The students can develop smarter buying habits and avoid unnecessary spending by learning how marketing influences their purchasing decisions. This study can also help them think critically about budgeting their allowances. This study provides a foundation for future research by identifying underexplored aspects of social media marketing and consumer behavior. The findings can guide further studies on marketing effectiveness and consumer relationships, fostering a deeper exploration of social media's role in shaping brand trust and loyalty and thus the consumer preferences.

Objectives of the study

- To analyse the relationship between product characteristics in social media platforms and consumers purchase decision.
- To know the influence of product characteristics in social media platforms on consumers purchase decision.

Hypotheses of the study

- ❖ Product characteristics in social media platforms have significant relationship with consumers purchase decision
- ❖ Product characteristics in social media platforms have significant influence on consumers purchase decision

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design, a method well-suited for examining relationships between variables without altering or controlling them (Creswell, 2014). This approach was chosen to understand better how specific features of social media shopping of the products, such as product choice, brand choice and dealer choice shape the purchasing decision of the students. Descriptive-correlational designs are beneficial when the aim is to quantify associations and uncover patterns within a clearly defined group (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2017). In this case, the design is enabled that the researchers could capture real-world behaviors and perceptions among students, offering insights into how digital shopping with product characteristics experiences influence their consumer choices. The study was anchored in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991), which provided a clear framework for identifying the independent variables (product features) and the dependent variable (student purchasing decisions). This theoretical lens helped structure the analysis, allowing the use of statistical tools to assess both the strength and direction of relationships between variables. By combining descriptive insights with correlational analysis and multiple regression analysis, the research design offered a balanced view of how social media shopping functions as both a behavioral and psychological experience for student consumers.

Sampling Technique

Sample design is the basis within which the sampling has to be conceded out. Sampling is the method of choosing a group from population to signify the population. Sample is the quantity of the population, which acts as a illustrative of the population through its character and nature. Probability Sampling is applied for this study.

Method of Data Collection

Primary and secondary data are collected. Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire and personal interview schedule. Secondary data were collected by referring company handbook, other article about the social media platforms, websites and magazines.

Sample size

A sample 100 students has been selected for the study by using simple random sampling. This sample size is taken from the middle cadre.

Results and Discussion

Table - 1. Relationship between product choice in social platforms and purchase decision

Product choice from social platforms	Purchase decision	
	r-Values	P-Values
Ability to choose products the students need to purchase	0.896	0.001*
Comments or likes aid in narrowing down the products or brands to purchase.	0.526	0.001
Ability to be aware and access alternative products.	0.378	0.001
Ability to voice opinion or review of products after purchasing.	0.687	0.001
Ability to compare products easily before purchasing.	0.432	0.001

Table 1 explains the relationship between students product choice from social media platforms and purchase decision. Product choice in social media platforms is treated as independent variable. Students purchase decision is treated as dependent variable.

H₁: Students product choice from social media is having significant relationship with their purchase decision.

In order to examine the above stated hypothesis, Pearson correlation test is applied. The calculated P-values are found to be significant (0.001) for all the statements of product choice of the students in social media platforms. so, the stated hypothesis is accepted. It is found that the product choice in social media platforms is having significant relationship with the purchase decision of the students. From the r-value, it is noted that the ability to choose products that the students need to purchase (0.896) have high correlation with the purchase decision of the students followed by ability to voice opinion or review of products after purchasing (0.687), comments or likes aid in narrowing down the products or brands to purchase (0.526), ability to compare products easily before purchasing (0.432) and ability to be aware and access alternative products (0.378).

It is found that, the product choice factors of facilitate the students to choose the products the students need to purchase in social media platforms is having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However ability to be aware and access alternative products is having weak relationship with the students purchase decision in social media platforms.

Table – 3. Relationship between brand choice in social platforms and purchase decision

Brand choice from social platforms	Purchase decision	
	r-Values	P-Values
Discover new brands	0.702	0.001*
Able to learn of unfamiliar brands.	0.723	0.001
Choosing brand through posts and comments recommended by friends and family.	0.526	0.001
Brand pages provide plenty of information about brands.	0.395	0.001

Table 4.33 explains the relationship between students brand choice from social media platforms and their purchase decision. Brand choice in social media platforms is treated as independent variable. Purchase decision is treated as dependent variable.

H₁: Students brand choice from social media is having significant relationship with their purchase decision.

In order to examine the above stated hypothesis, Pearson correlation test is applied. The calculated P-values are found to be significant (0.001) for all the factors of brand choice in social media platforms. So, the stated hypothesis is accepted. It is found that the brand choice of the students in social media platforms is having significant relationship with the purchase decision of the students. From the r-value, it is noted that social medias facilitate the students to learn of unfamiliar brands. (0.723) have high correlation with the purchase decision of the students followed by the students can discover new brands (0.702), comments or likes aid in narrowing down the brands or brands to purchase (0.626), Choosing brand through posts and comments recommended by friends and family (0.526) and Brand pages provide plenty of information about brands (0.395).

It is found that, the brand choice factors of social platforms facilitating the students to learn of unfamiliar brands and to discover new brands are having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However social media platforms provide plenty of information about brands in brand pages is having weak relationship with the purchase decision.

Table – 4. Relationship between dealer choice in social platforms and purchase decision

Dealer choice from social platforms	Purchase decision	
	r-Values	P-Values
Purchase from dealer that friends and family recommend in social platforms.	0.683	0.001*
Purchase from dealer that has less negative reviews in social platforms.	0.706	0.001
Purchase from a dealer who I active on social platforms.	0.354	0.001
Purchase from a dealer with whom I can engage with throughout the purchase process.	0.545	0.001

Table 4.34 explains the relationship between students dealer choice in social media platforms and purchase decision. Dealer choice in social media platforms is treated as independent variable. Students Purchase decision is treated as dependent variable.

H₁: Students dealer choice from social media is having significant relationship with their purchase decision.

In order to examine the above stated hypothesis, Pearson correlation test is applied. The calculated P-values are found to be significant (0.001) for all the factors of dealer choice of the students in social media platforms. And so, the stated hypothesis is accepted. It is found that the dealer choice of the students in social media platforms is having significant relationship with the purchase decision of the students. From the r-value, it is noted that social medias facilitation to purchase from dealer that has less negative reviews in social platforms (0.706) have high correlation with the dealer choice of the students followed by the Purchase from dealer that friends and family recommend in social platforms (0.683), Purchase from a dealer with whom I can engage with throughout the purchase process (0.545) and Purchase from a dealer who I active on social platforms (0.354).

It is found that, the dealer choice factors of social platforms facilitating the students to purchase from dealer that has less negative reviews is having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However purchasing from a dealer who is active on social media platforms is having weak relationship with the students purchase decision.

Table - 5. Relationship between product characteristics in social media platforms and purchase decision

Product characteristics in social media platforms	Purchase decision	
	r-Values	P-Values
Product choice	0.624	0.001*
Brand choice	0.712	0.001
Dealer choice	0.353	0.001

Table - 5 explains the relationship between product characteristics from social media platforms and purchase decision. Product characteristics in social media platforms is treated as independent variables. Students Purchase decision is treated as dependent variable.

H₁: Product characteristics in social media are having significant relationship with students purchase decision.

In order to examine the above stated hypothesis, Pearson correlation test is applied. The calculated P-values are found to be significant (0.001) for all the factors of product characteristics of the students in social media platforms. Hence, the stated hypothesis is accepted. It is found that the product characteristics in social media platforms are having significant relationship with the purchase decision of the students. From the r-value, it is noted that the product characteristics of brand choice (0.712) is having high correlation with the purchase decision followed by product choice (0.624), and dealer choice (0.353).

It is found that the product characteristics factor of brand choice is having strong relationship with the purchase decision in social media platforms among the students. However dealer choice of the products is having weak relationship with

the students purchase decision in social media platforms.

Table - 6. Effect of product characteristics on purchase decision

R-value	R ² Value	Adjusted R ² Value	F-value	P-value
0.889	0.790	0.789	96.456	0.001

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
constant	2.315	0.257		1.686	0.001
Product choice	0.679	0.141	0.464	-0.077	0.001
Brand choice	0.528	0.086	0.318	1.972	0.001
Dealer choice	0.347	0.153	0.127	0.085	0.001

H₁ : Product characteristics on social media platforms are significantly influencing the purchase decision of the students.

To verify the above stated hypothesis, Multiple linear regression has been applied. The result is displayed in the table – 6. Here product characteristic factors of product choice, brand choice and dealer choice are taken as independent variables and purchase decision is taken as dependent variables. As with multiple regression, if the p-value of the F-test is zero to three decimal places, the model is statistically significant (F = 96.456, p = 0.001). The adjusted R² is 0.789, meaning that 78.9 percentage of the variability of purchase decision is accounted by the independent variable in the model.

In this case, the adjusted R² indicates that about 78.9 percentage of the variability of purchase decision is accounted by the model, even after taking into account 3 predictor variables in the model. The coefficients for each of the variables indicate the amount of change, one could expect in given a one-unit change in the value of that variable, given that all other variables in the model are held constant.

To compare the strengths of coefficient of predictor variables refer to the column of beta coefficients, also known as standardized regression co-efficients. The beta coefficients are used to compare the relative strength of the various predictors within the model. Because the beta coefficients are all measured in standard deviations, instead of the units of the variables, they can be compared to one another.

From this regression result it is observed that the product characteristics factors of product choice, brand choice and dealer choice are positively influencing the students purchase decision.

For one standard deviation increase in students purchase decision in social platforms, the product characteristics factor of product choice in social media platform is influenced at 0.679 level when other factors remain constant. Similarly the product characteristics of brand choice is influenced at 0.528 level and dealer choice of products in social media platforms is influenced at 0.347 level for one unit increase in the students purchase decision in social media platforms with other respective factors remain constant.

It is observed that the product characteristics of product choice have been strongly influencing the students purchase decision in social media platforms. But, the dealer choice of the products in social media platform is influencing the students purchase decision at least level.

Findings and suggestions

❖ It is found that, the product choice factors of facilitate the customers to choose the products the students need to purchase in social media platforms is having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However ability to be aware and access alternative products is having weak relationship with the students purchase decision in social media platforms. Hence the awareness about the social media platforms could be created by training programs and advertisements

❖ It is found that, the brand choice factors of social platforms facilitating the customers to learn of unfamiliar brands and to discover new brands are having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However social media platforms provide



plenty of information about brands in brand pages is having weak relationship with the purchase decision. Hence Advertisements about products in social media platforms may provide information about brands.

❖ It is found that, the dealer choice factors of social platforms facilitating the customers to purchase from dealer that has less negative reviews is having strong relationship with the purchase decision. However purchasing from a dealer who is active on social media platforms is having weak relationship with the students purchase decision.

❖ It is found that the product characteristics factor of brand choice is having strong relationship with the purchase decision in social media platforms among the customers. However dealer choice of the products is having weak relationship with the customers purchase decision in social media platforms. So the management of various businesses or firms can apply the insights from this study for decision making purposes regarding the most suitable an efficient social media platform to use in marketing and reaching out to their targeted customers.

❖ It is observed that the product characteristics of product choice have been strongly influencing the students purchase decision in social media platforms. But, the dealer choice of the products in social media platform is influencing the students purchase decision at least level. The study recommends that businesses and firms need to appreciate the potential of the various social media platforms to complement each other in influencing the purchase decisions of students pertaining to the product, brand and dealer/store choice.

Conclusion

This study aims to analyse the relationship between product characteristics on social media platforms and students purchase decision. Here the product choice, brand choice and dealer choice are taken as independent variables and students purchase decision is taken as dependent variable. Among various consumer segments students represent a significant and influential market. Marketers' role here is to provide relevant, detailed and accurate information to the customers as well as to provide more and easier means to disseminate information in social media platform. Millennials, which constitute the most lucrative market right now, have higher propensity to share on social media than other generations, so providing more information sharing means to them have a positive impact on them as well as it may enhance the reach and visibility of the brand without any apparent marketing efforts. Students often face budget constraints and are highly sensitive to price, brand reputation and accessibility. And so Marketers can take a cue from here and should provide content not only enlightening but also engaging, entertaining, exciting, aesthetically appealing and out of box content at various social media touch points to grab and hold attention of all type students customers and turn brands in to good experiences.

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