

Print ISSN : 0972-8813
e-ISSN : 2582-2780

[Vol. 19(1), January-April, 2021]

Pantnagar Journal of Research

(Formerly International Journal of Basic and
Applied Agricultural Research ISSN : 2349-8765)



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An analysis of the factors influencing the opinion of social media users on online education and online purchasing in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT: Social media is the new upcoming area in marketing and education that has blogs, micro blogs, groups, pages etc. Social Media is a just like any other form of media is a tool used for communication but at the larger scale for social interaction using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. The main objective of this study was to identify the factors influencing opinion of social media users. The study was conducted in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu. Data were collected using questionnaire to find out the factors affecting the opinion of the social media users. All the responders are social media users as they have the knowledge of the research issues and are able to provide informed responses. It was found that there is positive opinion towards online education and online marketing due to social media usage. Majority of the respondents (91.70 %) feels social media helps in educational development, similarly (73.30 %) prefer shopping in social media sites. Most of them (70.00 %) prefer to see/click on authorized dealers online advertisements in social media. Hence, the necessary information to be disseminated could be given in personalized way which plays an important role in forming a positive attitude of the users towards the advertisement.

Key words: Education, social media, social media marketing, user attitudes

Now a day's social media plays important role in one's life from shopping to electronic mails, education and business tool. Social media has a vital role in transforming people's life style. Social media includes social networking sites and blogs where people can easily connect with each other. The emergence of social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook as key tools for news, journalists and their organizations have performed a high-wire act (Aveseh Asough, 2012). These sites have become a day to day routine for the people. Social media is the invention of Internet-based applications that shape on the technological foundations of Web 2.0. Its content contributes to creation of text, pictures, videos, and networks (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011).

Social media refers to the internet-based digital tools for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers to the user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia that is shared and discussed over digital networks (Andres and Woodard, 2013). Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, consume and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Akram and Kumar, 2017). Merriam-Webster (2020) defines social media as forms of electronic communication through which users can create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content.

For the purpose of education social media has been used as an innovative way. Students should be taught to use this

tool in a better way, in the educational classes' media just being used for messaging or texting rather than they should learn to figure out how to use these media for good (Kalia, 2013).

Marketers are increasingly beginning to understand and use social media as a component of their marketing strategies. Promotions, marketing intelligence, public relations, marketing communications, and product and customer management are sub-disciplines of marketing that may use social media. Research that is more recent has examined the use of social media to communicate sustainability themed messages (Tugrul and Gocer, 2017). With consideration an analysis was conducted with the following objectives to study the profile characteristics of social media users; to identify the factors influencing opinion of social media users towards online education and to identify the factors influencing opinion of social media users towards online purchasing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ex-post facto research design was used in this study by considering the objective and type of information needed. The target sample for this research was social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) using respondents residing in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu. The data were collected by using a pre tested and structured interview schedule consisting of 30 questions related to social media usage, factors influencing opinion of social media users towards online education and online

marketing. The questionnaire was prepared as Google forms and were distributed to the respondents through social media such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Facebook. The district has fifteen blocks out of which three blocks viz., Mohanur, Namakkal, and Tiruchengode were selected randomly. One village from each block such as Aniyapuram from Mohanur block, Kondichettipatti from Namakkal block and Chitalandur from Tiruchengode block were selected randomly. At first key-informant from each village was identified. The link for Google form was sent to key-informants through social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook. After submitting their responses, they circulated the questionnaire among other social media users in their village using snowball sampling. The link was disabled after 2 days of circulation. In this way, 20 social media using respondents per village were selected using snowball sampling. Hence a total number of 60 social media using respondents were selected for the study. The analysis was carried out by applying suitable statistical tools such as frequency and percentage analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data regarding the profile characteristics of social media using respondents were analyzed using percentage analysis and the results are presented in the Table 1.

From Table 1, it is evident that about three-fifth (66.70 %) of the respondents belonged to young age category aged between 17 and 30 years old, this shows that social media users are more of lesser age, which is consistent with social media studies (Sohail and Al-Jabri, 2017) and over half of them were female (55.00%). Majority of them (86.70%) were educated up to college level. As for the occupation, 31.70% were employed and another 21.70 % were students with an average family income of Rs.50,000 to Rs.1,00,000 (63.30%).

The Information about social media usage behaviour of the respondents was analyzed using percentage analysis and the results are presented in the Table 2.

From Table 2, it could be inferred that majority of them (80.00 %) are aware of different social media platforms, all (100.00%) reported that they own account in any one of the social media sites, most of them (33.30 %) checks social media platforms atleast once a day and 83.30 per cent has mixed (both positive and negative) perception about the effect on information transfer using social media. Nearly half of the respondents (45.00 %) rarely extended the usage of social media at night when something interesting is present online, and (43.30 %) never extended the use of social media platforms at night. The main purpose of using social media platforms are for communication (91.70 %), entertainment (83.30 %) and for education purpose (55.00 %) and the main motivating

Table1: Profile characteristics of social media users (n= 60)

Characteristic	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (Number)	Percentage
Age	Young age	40	66.70
	Middle age	14	23.30
	Old age	6	10.00
Gender	Male	27	45.00
	Female	33	55.00
Education qualification	Primary school	1	1.70
	Middle school	3	5.00
	High school	4	6.70
	Graduate	52	86.70
Occupation	Employed	19	31.70
	Self-employed	10	16.70
	Student	13	21.70
	Home maker	9	15.00
	Unemployed	9	15.00
Average Annual family income	< Rs.50,000	7	11.70
	Rs.50,000 -	38	63.30
	Rs.1,00,000		
	> Rs.1,00,000	15	25.00

factors are entertainment (83.30 %), information seeking (73.30 %) and personal utility (68.30 %). Major problem felt by the social media users are fear of secretly maintenance of the messages (65.00 %), more time on social media sites leads to wastage of time (56.70 %) and less reliability on the information available in social media sites (53.30 %) respectively.

The data regarding knowledge about social media among the social media users were analyzed using percentage analysis and the results are presented in the Table 3.

From Table 3, it could be inferred that majority of them (95.00%) agreed that social media platforms is useful for the purpose of education as well as for the purpose of marketing; and most of them (93.30%) feels that it is important to have social media for the purpose of education as well as for the purpose of marketing.

The information about the opinion of social media using respondents towards education with social media was analyzed using percentage analysis and the results are presented in the Table 4.

From Table 4, it could be inferred that majority of the respondents (91.7%) feels social media helps in educational development. The role of social media in educational development as listed by the respondents are facilitate remote teaching and learning (73.30 %), help to exchange up-to-date information (73.30 %), facilitate for online evaluation (71.60 %), enhance learning experience (66.70 %) and creation of awareness on various online mode of education technology (63.30 %). Effects of

Social media usage on children and young age as mentioned by the respondents are 63.30 per cent felt reduced rate of academic performance in certain aspects, 62.70 per cent of them felt social media usage prone to go

for other unwanted media usage, 60.00 per cent of them felt wastage of time, 56.70 per cent of them felt reduction in real human contact by children and young age group and 55.00 per cent said it causes some health related

Table 2: Information about Social media usage behaviour of the respondents (n= 60)

Component	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (Number)*	Percentage
Awareness of different social media platform	Yes	48	80.00
	No	12	20.00
Do you have account on any one of the social media sites available	Yes	60	100.00
	No	0	0.00
Frequency of checking social media	All the time	13	21.70
	Every three hours once	13	21.70
	Atleast once a day	20	33.30
	Once in a week/ less	10	16.70
	Occasionally	4	6.70
	Never	0	0.00
Perception about the effect of social media on information transfer	Positive	7	11.70
	Mixed (both)	50	83.30
	Negative	3	5.00
Extended usage of social media at night	Never (Sleep is a priority)	26	43.30
	Rarely	27	45.00
Purpose of using social media	Always	7	11.70
	Communicate	55	91.70
	Collaborate	11	18.30
	Educate	33	55.00
	Engage	20	33.30
	Monitor	19	31.70
	Entertainment	50	83.30
	Others	0	0.00
Motivating factors for usage	Personal Utility	41	68.30
	Information seeking	44	73.30
	Convenience	18	30.00
	Entertainment	50	83.30
	Altruism	8	13.30
	Others	0	0.00
Problems faced due to social media usage	Fear of secrecy maintenance of messages	39	65.00
	Fear of losing personal information	30	50.00
	Indirectly health issues	22	36.70
	Less reliability on the information	32	53.30
	More time on social media indirectly leads to wastage of time	34	56.70
	Others	0	0.00

*Multiple responses

Table 3: Knowledge about social media (n= 60)

Component	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (Number)	Percentage
Social media platform useful for the purpose of education	Yes	57	95.00
	No	3	5.00
Social media platform useful for the purpose of marketing	Yes	57	95.00
	No	3	5.00
It is important to have social media for the purpose of education	Yes	56	93.30
	No	4	6.70
It is important to have social media for the purpose of marketing	Yes	56	93.30
	No	4	6.70

Table 4: Social media Users' opinion toward online education with social media (n= 60)

Component	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (Number)*	Percentage
Social media helps in educational development	Yes	55	91.70
	No	5	8.30
Role of social media in education	Create awareness on various online mode of education technologies	38	63.30
	Enhance learning experience	40	66.70
	Facilitate remote teaching and learning	44	73.30
	Facilitate for online evaluation	43	71.60
	Help to exchange up-to-date information	44	73.30
	Facilitate to pick out the Talented ones in unbiased manner	27	45.00
	Others	0	0.00
Effects of social media usage on children and young age group	Reduced rate of academic performance in certain aspects	38	63.30
	Distraction of attention and reduced ability of retaining information	19	31.70
	Prone to go for other unwanted media	37	61.70
	Health related issues	33	55.00
	Reduction in real human contact	34	56.70
	Wastage of time	36	60.00
	Loss of motivation	16	26.70
	Others	1	1.17

* Multiple responses

Table 5: Social media users' opinion toward online shopping with social media (n= 60)

Component	Category	Respondents	
		Frequency (Number)	Percentage
Preference of shopping with social media	Yes	44	73.30
	No	16	26.70
Preference of seeing/clicking authorized dealers online advertisements in social media	Yes	42	70.00
	No	18	30.00
Good idea to market with social media	Yes	54	90.00
	No	6	10.00
Social media marketing is the future marketing	Yes	46	76.70
	No	14	23.30
Companies must have social media for the purposes of marketing	Yes	50	83.30
	No	10	16.70
Public relations provided by the internet affect my purchasing decision	Yes	31	51.70
	No	29	48.30
Lot of fake advertisements from internet affect my purchasing decision	Yes	41	68.30
	No	19	31.70
Regularly look for review of products on internet before buying something	Yes	46	76.70
	No	14	23.30
Review of products on internet affect my purchasing decision	Yes	45	75.00
	No	15	25.00
Social media marketing is waste of time	Yes	11	18.30
	No	49	81.70
Social media marketing sometimes is worrisome	Yes	26	43.30
	No	34	56.70

issues.

The information about the opinion of social media users towards marketing were analyzed using percentage analysis and the results are presented in the Table 5.

From Table 5, it could be inferred that most of them (73.30 %) prefer shopping with social media, most of them

(70.00 %) prefer seeing /clicking authorized dealers' online advertisements in social media. Most of them (90.00 %) feel marketing with social media as a good idea, similarly (76.70 %) of them agreed that social media marketing as future marketing. Majority of them (83.30 %) were of the view that companies must have social media for marketing purpose. More than half of them (51.70 %) feel public relation provided by internet affects

their purchasing decision and majority of them agreed that there are lots of fake advertisement on internet (68.30 %). Nearly three-fourth of the social media users (76.70 %) regularly looks for review before buying a product and most of them (75.00 %) felt review of products on internet affects their purchasing decision. Majority of them disagreed the statements social media marketing is waste of time (81.70%) and social media marketing sometimes is worrisome (56.70%).

CONCLUSION

Social media support enthusiasm in a common space around sharing interests, collaborations, resource sharing, communications and interactions. It was revealed from the study that most of the respondents belong to the young age category, aged between 17 and 30 years old. There is a positive opinion towards education and marketing with usage of social media. The impact of social media is radically changing the way education has been traditionally delivered. Social media marketing has been included by almost all the marketer's world-wide; to promote products and services over social media and even have brand pages over the social networking sites. Fear of secrecy maintenance of messages and more time on social media which leads to wastage of time are the top most problem felt by the social media users. Students should develop the cognitive and intuitive ability to analyse how much time they spent with social media.

Limitations and directions for future research

The study may have suffered from certain limitations. There are differences in the sample size of the two groups which might have hampered the accuracy of tests applied (Byrne *et al.*, 2007). The generalizability of the results of the research may also have been limited because of the geographic extent of the study. However, the above mentioned limitations of the study are likely indicators for various other new areas of research. The results of the study can be further validated on a large sample. Future researchers can check the differences in the different groups used for the research.

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Received: March 14, 2021

Accepted: April 27, 2021