



Modern female buying behaviour assessments in Urban India

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Abstract

The modern era is marked by a plethora of advancements taking place in and around the customers' environment. Especially with the advent of internet, traditional marketing methods seem to be fading to a large extent, if not entirely. Considering one such impactful components as social networking sites like facebook, twitter, wtsApp etc., this paper aims at assessing the relationship between the demographical variables and buying behaviour score based on social networking sites for the females in a densely populated locality in Delhi. Also, an attempt has been made to classify the sample into segments based on their homogeneity. This research follows a literature based exploratory research design with further investigations in the form of a consumer survey. A self-structured questionnaire after a pre test (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.791$) was used on a sample size of 158 female residents in Sarita Vihar, New Delhi based on convenience sampling. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts; one with demographic details and the other with psychographic statements over a 5-point Likert's scale. Pearson's coefficient of correlation has been used to examine the direction and significance of correlation between the demographic variables and the buying score. Further, the psychographic score has been equally distributed into 3 parts using percentiles as low, middle and high. This has further been cross-tabulated against the various demographic variables and significance is examined using chi-square test. Resource limitation is an unavoidable element. Still, this study has been conducted with a representative sample, thus, the results can be generalized over female population in Delhi residing in socially and economically sound localities. The results can provide strategic insights to the marketers using social networking sights as a promotional tool. This research is original in the sense that social networking sites are still in their adoption stage in our country. Its widespread impact is yet to be assessed based on various demographic variables in India. Previous researches have been majorly, outside India and nationally, it mostly focuses on Generation Y. Also, studying the female behaviour in particular gives it a unique element advocating gender marketing and also, the rising economic contribution by females in our nation.

Keywords: social networking sites, demographics, buying behaviour, psychographics, SPSS 20

Introduction

Social networking sites as a tool of promotion is in its nascent stage in India yet the pace at which it is capturing attention is commendable. They are the most accessible means of spreading awareness about brands, generating leads, gaining customer feedback and cheaper conversion rate of customers (Weinberg, 2009) ^[19]. Social networking sites provide greater exposure which motivates companies to adopt it as a marketing tool (Rugova, B. & Prenaj, B., 2016; Stelzner, 2012) ^[14, 16] and shifting from traditional marketing (Gillin, P., 2009) ^[7]. With the wide usage of these sites, huge data is accumulated about the users regarding their demographic details and product preferences (Celine, 2012 ^[3]; Mc Kinsey, 2011) with the help of intelligence software which helps the marketers in better understanding of consumer behaviour. From the customers' view point, a huge customer base is able to share a common platform to gain wide information about a variety of products and services (Chui & Manyika, 2012) ^[5]. It

provides a sense of value to the customers as they get the opportunity to give their feedback (Mayfield, 2008) ^[12].

Social networking sites are in an acceptance stage in India. According to the forecasts by the Statistics Portal as represented in Figure1, it is estimated that there would be around 258.27 million social network users in India in 2019, up from 168 million in 2016. Also, youtube and Facebook emerged as the most popular social networks in India followed by whats App.

According to Financeonline.com, women are more inclined towards social networking (Vermeren, I., 2015) ^[17]. It is further supported by a Nielson study which stated that females spent more time on social networking through mobile or web Apps as compared to their male counterparts (State of the media-The social media report 2012) ^[15, 16]. Even the reports by Pew Research Centre (2014) ^[13] documented that more percentage of females used social networking sites in comparison to the men in the various categories of internet users.

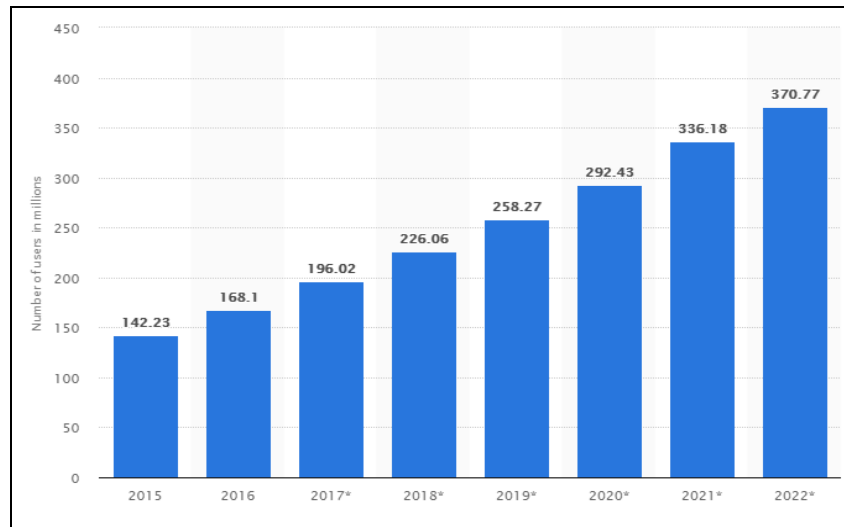


Fig 1: Number of social network users in India from years 2015-2022 (in millions) (URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278407/number-of-social-network-users-in-india/>)

Hence, with the high potential of social network users in India and women showing a greater participation in this usage, the current study is justified. To give it a focused approach, it has been conducted for the females in a progressive geographical location in urban India.

Literature Review

This section aims at identifying the gaps from the review of literature to justify the current study and explore the various parameters associated with the social networking sites as a marketing activator.

In the past decade, Pew Research Center documented the usage of social networking sites by Americans for seeking out information on products. In a national survey conducted in March-April for over 1520 adults revealed that Facebook was the most popular social networking site in U.S. and more percentage of online users were women in comparison to the males in the study (Greenwood, S., *et al.*, 2016) [9]. The study conducted on over 6500 consumers in U.S. revealed that more than 50% of them liked brands on their Facebook page and in fact, their purchase decision was impacted by the information on social networking sites (Dugan, 2012). Another study conducted in Ireland for young girls in a school found that they were using social media networking for building personal identity and relationship management (Dunne, A., Lawlor, M. & Rowley, J., 2010). Also, social networking sites prove to be major stimulants for spreading word of mouth (Brown, *et al.*, 2007). The research gap identified in these studies are that they are not in Indian context and don't consider females buying behaviour in particular impacted by social networking sites.

The global average time that a person spends on social networking sites is 6.9 hours/month (Delaney & Salminen, 2012) [6]. Social networking sites work as an activator for information sharing (Chen, *et al.*, 2011) [4]. An empirical study on a sample of 100 respondents documented that social media marketing impacts consumer behaviour and business organizations should promote their products through social networking (Atlaf, N., 2014) [1]. This media provides

customers with the facility to immediately post their feedback about the products (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Fuller, *et al.*, 2009) [11, 8]. Social networks affect the trust of customers connected through social media globally for purchase decision (Lu, *et al.*, 2010) [10]. The study doesn't reflect a representative sample and no consideration is given to gender marketing in particular. Impact of SNS in general is being discussed with no reference to Indian females buying behaviour in urban India.

Research Methodology

Objective 1: To examine the correlation between age and buying behaviour of female consumers.

Objective 2: To examine the correlation between marital status and buying behaviour of female consumers.

Objective 3: To examine the correlation between education and buying behaviour of female consumers.

Objective 4: To examine the correlation between income and buying behaviour of female consumers.

Objective 5: To classify the female buyers into different market segments.

Ho1a: There is negative correlation between age and buying behaviour of females.

Ho1b: The correlation between age and the buying behaviour is not significant.

Ho2a: There is negative correlation between marital status and buying behaviour of females.

Ho2b: The correlation between marital status and the buying behaviour is not significant.

Ho3a: There is negative correlation between education and buying behaviour of females.

Ho3b: The correlation between education and the buying behaviour is not significant.

Ho4a: There is negative correlation between income and buying behaviour of females.

Ho4b: The correlation between income and the buying behaviour is not significant.

Ho5a: There is no significant relationship between age and

the buying behaviour of female respondents.

H₀5b: There is no significant relationship between marital status and the buying behaviour of female respondents.

H₀5c: There is no significant relationship between education and the buying behaviour of female respondents.

H₀5d: There is no significant relationship between income and the buying behaviour of female respondents.

This research follows a literature based exploratory research design with further investigations in the form of a consumer survey. For this purpose, 300 females from the locality of Sarita Vihar, New Delhi were chosen as the respondents based on convenience sampling. A self-structured questionnaire with statements regarding social networking sites on a Likert's 5-point scale has been used to generate the responses. A pre-test

on 20 females generated Cronbach's alpha= 0.791 making it a reliable questionnaire. Face and content validity was checked and approved by experts in this field. The females were personally approached to get the questionnaires filled. SPSS 20 has been used as the analysis software tool. Scoring of the responses on the scale was done by the summation of all the responses for each respondent. Pearson's coefficient of correlation has been used to examine the direction and significance of correlation for hypothesis testing. For classification purpose, the scores were uniformly distributed using percentiles as low, middle and high score and were cross-tabulated against the demographic variables (rows) in terms of their frequencies and χ^2 test was applied for hypothesis testing.

Data analysis and interpretation

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Frequency analysis of age, marital status, education and income of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
"18-25yrs"	45	28.5
"25-35yrs"	52	32.9
"35-45 yrs"	42	26.6
"above 45 yrs"	19	12.0
Marital status		
"married"	115	72.8
"unmarried"	43	27.2
Education		
"senior secondary"	4	2.5
"graduate"	95	60.1
"post graduate"	46	29.1
"others"	13	8.2
Family income (per month)		
below Rs 20000	14	8.9
Rs (20000-50000)	87	55.1
Rs(50000-100000)	45	28.5
above Rs 100000	12	7.6

Inferential Analysis

Table 2 illustrates the correlation analysis between the different demographic variables and purchase score. It has been documented that there is a negative correlation between age and buying behaviour ($r < 0$) and the correlation is significant with $p < 0.05$. Thus, H_{01a} is accepted whereas H_{01b}

is rejected. Further, marital status, education and income have a positive correlation with buying behaviour ($r > 0$) and there is significant relationship between these demographic variables and the buying behaviour of female respondents ($p < 0.05$). Hence, H_{02a} , H_{02b} , H_{03a} , H_{03b} , H_{04a} and H_{04b} are rejected.

Table 2: Pearson's correlation analysis of age, marital status, education, income and psychographic score

		Age	Marital status	Education	Income(p.m.)	Score
Age	Pearson Correlation (r)	1	-.524**	-.424**	.307**	-.183*
	p (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.021
	N	158	158	158	158	158
Marital status	Pearson Correlation (r)	-.524**	1	.576**	.039	.251**
	p (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.629	.001
	N	158	158	158	158	158
Education	Pearson Correlation (r)	-.424**	.576**	1	.067	.465**
	p (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.405	.000
	N	158	158	158	158	158

Income (p.m.)	Pearson Correlation (r)	.307**	.039	.067	1	.610**
	p (2-tailed)	.000	.629	.405		.000
	N	158	158	158	158	158
Score	Pearson Correlation (r)	-.183*	.251**	.465**	.610**	1
	p (2-tailed)	.021	.001	.000	.000	
	N	158	158	158	158	158

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 represents the cross-tabulation of the total psychographic score which has been equally distributed using percentiles with low score being below 31, middle is between 31 to 44 and high is above 44. The total score has been calculated by summation of all the responses of the statements on Likert’s scale. Further, frequency of the different demographic variables has been cross-tabulated against the different score categories and χ^2 test has been used which

documented significant relationship between the demographic variables and the buying behaviour. Hence, H_{05a} , H_{05b} , H_{05c} and H_{05d} have been rejected. The clusters have been identified by choosing those samples in each demographic variable which has maximum frequency in each score category. The interpretation of the 3 clusters formed is depicted in Table 4.

Table 3: Contingency table representing “buying/psychographic scores” and demographic variables

		Low(<31)	Middle(31-44)	High (>44)	Chi-square (χ^2)
Age (in years)	18-25yrs	14	19	12	227.48 (0.001)
	25-35yrs	16	13	23	
	35-45 yrs	12	14	16	
	above 45 yrs	15	03	01	
Marital status	Married	51	35	29	56.29 (0.030)
	Unmarried	06	14	23	
Education	Senior secondary	04	00	00	197.78 (0.001)
	Graduate	47	30	18	
	Post graduate	05	15	26	
	Others	01	04	08	
Income (per month in Rs)	Below Rs 10000	06	08	00	194.35 (0.001)
	Rs 10000-50000	45	29	13	
	Rs 50000-100000	06	12	27	
	Above Rs 100000	00	00	12	

Table 4: Interpretation of clusters on the basis of buying score

Cluster I	Indifferent Purchasers
Psychographics	They aren’t frequently accessing the social networking sites and aren’t influenced by the advertisements give. They have low level of engagement on these sites and don’t buy under the influence of promotion on social network sites. For them, it is not a reliable media for product information or assessing brand image.
Demographics	25-35years, married, graduate, income between Rs20000-50000.
Cluster II	Logical buyers
Demographics	18-25 years, married, graduate, income between Rs 20000-50000.
Psychographics	An intermediate score with ample presence on the social media and consider it a good medium of product promotion. They rely on information provided and shared on such sites but don’t always buy products based on it. It is a good means of enhancing the brand image.
Cluster III	Impulsive spendthrifts
Psychographics	They depicted the highest score as they are not only frequently accessing these sites but also, purchase based on the information shared or the website links given. They trust these sites as a reliable promotional tool. They themselves show sufficient engagement on these sites and get influenced in their buying decision.
Demographics	25-35 years, unmarried, post-graduate, income above Rs 50000.

Findings and Conclusion

It has been found that there exist a significant correlation between age, marital status, education, income of the female customers and the buying behaviour driven by social media marketing. Thus, marketers need to take this demographical analysis into consideration and likewise adopt the strategy of product promotion. The entire sample admitted having access to internet and the majority was aware of social networking sites. Hence, it is a profitable option for marketers to promote

through the online social media. Segmentation of the entire sample documented cluster III to be the most profitable segment from a marketer’s perspective as it depicted the highest score for buying. It includes females in the age-group 25-35 years who are unmarried with good educational qualifications (post-graduates and employed) and monthly income above Rs 50000. Thus, it is concluded that social networking sites act a successful promotional tool in influencing the female buying behaviour. With the right

strategies of social media choice and appropriate application marketers can develop a more focused targeting and positioning plan.

Recommendations/Implications

The marketers targeting the females in urban India should exploit the opportunity of promotion through social media especially Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn etc. as internet accessibility is vast and such options are easily available even on mobile phones. Also, young females are contributing massively to the rising economy and have enormous purchasing power due to the rise in education leading to higher employment (ASSOCHAM report, 2013). Gender marketing advocates that buying behaviour is different for both genders (Aswegen, V. A., 2015) ^[2], thus, adopting specific strategies to influence the female buyers can attribute to higher revenue generation for the companies. Hence, social networking site is a commendable tool for promotion available to marketers if efficiently used.

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