

## A Study on Consumers' Perspective Towards Social Media Marketing During Covid-19

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### Abstract

The outspread of the Covid-19 has impacted the whole world. Before this pandemic, business firms and world economies were growing with a great pace. But in 2020, corona pandemic has caused an unrest in the business world. Since, the Governments has imposed restriction policies consequently business firms started adoption of technology to carry out business activities. Shifting them towards online platform for several activities including marketing and advertisements. Digital marketing modes viz. social media marketing, search engine marketing, email marketing etc. have gained momentum. Present study is aimed to find out customers' perceptions towards social media marketing especially during pandemic. The study used crosssectional survey method to collect responses from 253 online users. A significant impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour was noticed. The study may help help business organizations to develop sustainable business strategies amidst pandemic.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Covid-19, Consumers Behaviour, Digital Markting.

## Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic has changed our lives, especially in terms of social interaction. Amidst all the fears of pandemic spread, social media is occupying a significant place in all aspects of our lives. There is insufficient understanding on how social media can shape consumer buying behaviour. Customers are more and more engaged with social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Google+, and Twitter (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017; Kapoor et al., 2017; Kim and Kim, 2018; Shareef, Mukerji, Dwivedi, Rana, & Islam, 2017). Due to social media, people are more engaged and connected, which increases information sharing (Aslam et al., 2018a; Muqadas et al., 2017). Consequently interaction with organisations, government and non government bodies have also increased over the period of time (Hawkins and Vel, 2013). In the recent past we have witnessed a significant increase in number of advertisements being posted by companies on social media platforms. **Patma et.al. (2020)** advocated the shifting of traditional business to online business during Covid-19 pandemic, attributed to the factors like: technology adoption, social media marketing and business sustainability. **Mason et al. (2021)** noted a significant and structural impacts on consumer purchase behaviour as well as their decision making process during pandemic consequently emphasized on social media marketing to gain competitive advantage. **Alalwan (2018)** has investigated the impacts of features of social media advertising on purchase intention of customers. He revealed that there is a significant impact of some factors like performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, interactivity, informativeness, and perceived relevance on purchase intentions of the consumers. **Naeem (2020)** revealed that insecurity proofs, uncertainties, persuasive buying, proof of unavailability of the product, communication of authorities, global logical influence and different expert opinions are found some of the causes on the social media channels which have created the situations like panic buying during covid-19 pandemic. **Sharma A, Jhamb D (2020)** have mentioned in their study that many of the users have accepted that social networking

sites are important platforms for information sharing and making their choices. **Ara et al. (2021)** revealed that stimulus of different factors like eWom, social influence, marketing activities, brand awareness, discount or coupon offered, ePayment mode, only brand awareness and discount or coupon offered are found insignificant and rest of the factors have a significant constructive connection with purchase intention of consumer during the time of covid-19. **Joseph et al (2020)** indicated that social media marketing has a favourable impact on business performance in Manado's Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs).

## **Research Methodology:**

### **Objectives**

- To study the growth of Social Media Marketing during the pandemic Covid-19
- To study the influence of social media marketing on consumers buying behaviour during covid-19

### **Hypothesis**

Hypothesis-1: Growth in usage of Social Media Channels during the pandemic Covid-19 is significant.

Hypothesis-2: There is a significant influence of social media marketing on consumers behaviour during covid-19

In the study of comprehending the usage and influence of social media marketing before and during covid-19, a cross sectional survey method has been adopted. Here in this survey, several scales have been adopted to gauge the consumer point of view. There are 19 questions, apart from six demographic variables. In total, 253 consumers have participated in the survey. These consumers are the online users and are using the social media for more than 2 years. Statistical methods like paired t-test, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and reliability test have been adopted to present numbers in a tabular form. The below questionnaire is developed based on the details and information collected from the respective journals, books,

magazines and discussions. For data collection, the judgemental sampling method has been used because, in this method, respondents are short-listed based on their participation willingness and availability.

### Limitations:

Following limitations have been observed in the present study:

- Only consumers with, more than 2 years of Online experience have been considered.
- Data collection is done in the covid period from March 2021 till May 2021.
- Only educated consumers have been selected for the study.
- Only consumers greater than 18 years have been considered for the research.

### Data Analysis and Results

#### Reliability of the collected data:

The internal consistency of the data is 0.785 for thirteen statements, which means data is 78.5% closely associated with the consumers perspective. The reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable (UCLA, 2018), (Bonett, 2014).

**Table 1.1: Reliability Analysis of the collected data**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.785	13

*Source: Primary Data*

Further, the reliability alpha coefficient is also validated at the statement level, wherein values are higher than the tolerance limit of 0.70. Hence, as a result, it could be inferred that gathered data of consumer perspective

on social media marketing is reliable for the study at 95% confidence level. Correlation between the responses is also found moderately positive.

In addition, Anova with Cochran's Test has been done to assess the significance level of the gathered data of 253 participants. As an outcome, the alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) is 0.000, lesser than the tolerance limit of 0.05, with the degree of freedom between the group is 252 and within the group is 12. The grand mean of the data is 3.08; this infers that the consumer perspective towards social media usage is somewhat optimistic.

**Table 1.2: ANOVA with Cochran's Test**

ANOVA with Cochran's Test						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cochran's Q	Sig
Between People		1384.230	252	5.493		
Within People	Between Items	3580.313	12	298.359	1520.158	0.000
	Residual	3570.149	3024	1.181		
	Total	7150.462	3036	2.355		
Total		8534.692	3288	2.596		
Grand mean = 3.08						

*Source: Primary Data*

## Descriptive Statistics

The consumers' socio-demographic features are demonstrated below, wherein frequency and percentage distribution is adopted to present numbers. Characteristics like age, gender, locality, occupation, educational qualification, and monthly income have been examined to understand the consumers' socio-demographic

profiling. Here in the data, 59.7% (151) consumers are male, while 40.3% (102) are female, and the locality of these 69.0% (175) consumers is a rural area, and the remaining 31% (78) are from urban area. The majority of consumers completing graduation is 60.1% (152) followed by postgraduation 28.5% (72). There are very few consumers, 5.9% (15), who have pursued their studies and have completed their Doctorate (Ph.D). Only 5.5% (14) consumers are undergraduates. Further, the age generation of these consumers are as follows Generation Z (< 23 years) 31.6% (80), millennials (23 years – 40 years) 35.6% (90) and generation X (> 41 years) (32.8) (83). Almost all the age groups are considered for the study. Regarding consumers employment, 45.5% (115) of them are not employed (student, not-working, or retired), wherein the remaining consumers, 54.5% (138), are employed. Therefore, huge gap is found in the monthly income of these consumers. As per the data, monthly income is as follows: Unemployed/Students 38.7% (98), below Rs. 10,000/- 5.1% (13), Rs. 10,000/- to Rs.20,000/- 7.9% (20), Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 30,000/- 15.8% (40) and more than Rs. 30,000/- 32.4% (82).

Overall, as per the consumers' profiling, irrespective of gender, all the three-generation have used social media in Covid-19. Most of these consumers are from a rural area (69.2%) and are also employed (54.5%). Therefore, the average monthly income of these consumers is in between Rs. 20,000/- to Rs.30,000/- (32.4%).

**Table 1.3: Descriptive Statistics**

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	151	59.7
	Female	102	40.3
	Total	253	100.0
Locality	Rural	175	69.2%
	Urban	78	30.8%
	Total	253	100.0
Age Generation	Generation Z (Age below 23)	80	31.6
	Millennials (Age between 23 - 40)	90	35.6
	Generation X (born before 1981)	83	32.8
	Total	253	100.0
Occupation	Student	83	32.8
	Non-Employed	24	9.5
	Employed	138	54.5
	Retired	8	3.2
	Total	253	100.0
Educational Qualifications	Ungraduated	1	0.4
	Intermediate	13	5.1
	Graduate	152	60.1
	Post Graduate	72	28.5

	Doctorate (Ph.D)	15	5.9
	Total	253	100.0
Monthly	Unemployed/Students	98	38.7
Income (In Rupees)	Below 10,000	13	5.1
	10,000 - 20,000	20	7.9
	20,000 - 30,000	40	15.8
	More than 30,000	82	32.4
	Total	253	100.0

*Sourec: data collected through the questionnaire*

**Growth of Social Media Marketing Before and During Pandemic:** In recent years, there is a significant growth in the usage of social media (Thota, 2018) worldwide, and during the pandemic, this usage has been accelerated significantly (Samet, 2020). Additionally, this growth of social media marketing has transmuted the dynamics of the marketplace by forming a social network of field experts, consumers, opinion leaders etc. The article written by (S. Kumar, A. Dhir et al., 2020), exemplified how integrated marketing promotional messages could influence buyers perception of product buying. Here, in the comparative study of social media usage pattern before and during the pandemic have been studied wherein paired t-test method is adopted at 95% confidence level. This analysis is relatively robust because, in paired t-test, observations are collected under two different time intervals of the same consumer.



**Table 1.4: Growth of Social Media Marketing Before and During Pandemic**

Paired Sample t-test							
Areas	Time Period	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Use of Social Media Channel/ Networking Sites	Before Covid-19	1.50	253	1.002	0.063	-1.463	0.014
	During Covid-19	1.57	253	1.134	0.071		
Time Spent on Social Media in a day	Before Covid-19	2.33	253	0.859	0.054	1.630	0.043
	During Covid-19	2.67	253	1.875	0.118		
Place where Social Media Channel is used	Before Covid-19	2.11	253	1.875	0.118	-7.053	0.000
	During Covid-19	3.33	253	2.294	0.144		
Social Media Influence to Buy Products/Services	Before Covid-19	4.27	253	1.412	0.089	-2.869	0.004
	During Covid-19	4.54	253	1.203	0.076		

Source: data collected through the questionnaire

Overall in the analysis, four areas have been looked at wherein the usage of social media channel/ networking site has been assessed. As per findings, there is a mean difference in the consumer usage pattern before and during the pandemic ( $\alpha=0.014, \leq 0.05$ ). The mean value of the data is 1.57 compared with 1.50 (usage growth of 4.7%). Further, in the outcome of time spent on these sites, before covid, time spent was 1-2hrs ( $\mu=2.33$ ),

and during covid, time spent is 2-3 hrs ( $\mu=2.67$ ). Thus, a significant difference in the time spent has been found ( $\alpha=0.043$ ). Later on, areas, where these consumers are spending time online, have been assessed. As per the results, before covid, consumers spent time on online shopping ( $\mu=2.11$ ), whereas during covid, these consumers started spending time on educational sites ( $\mu=3.33$ ).

The last question was on to understand the platform where these consumers spent time during covid. As per the inferences, consumer spent most of their time on products/services like Grocery Items (Daily Needs) (45.8%), Medical Needs (22.9%), Educational Products/Services (17%), Health and Fitness Equipment /Services (7.5%), Tour and Travel Services (2.8%), Clothing (2.4%), and Food and Hospitality (1.6%) whereas before covid these consumers used to spend most of the time on food and hospitality (35.6%), clothing (17.8%), medical needs (15.4%), tour and travel services (14.6%), health & fitness equipment /services (12.3%), grocery items (2.4%) and educational products/services (2.0%). Hence, there is a huge shift observed in the social media marketing usage pattern before and during covid as per the 253 consumers point of view.

### **Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Behaviour during covid-19**

Social media networking sites provide a wide range of spectrum to the consumer. Nowadays, this has become an instrument to interact with prospective consumers and influence them innovatively (Prasath Perumal, et al., 2018). Here, an attempt has been made to understand how social media marketing affects consumers' behaviour during covid-19. The cross-sectional chi-square method has been adopted to evaluate results at 95% confidence level. Furthermore, influencing factors like use of social media before Covid-19, most entertaining social media channels (SNS), advertisement through social media and its attractiveness, reliability, optimisation or responsiveness, the importance of social media platforms useful during Covid-19, and post covid usage of social media with the same intensity have been looked at.

**Table 1.5: Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Behaviour during covid-19**

Influencing Factors		Increased the usage of Social Media during Covid-19			Total	Chi-Square	df	Sig
		Yes	No	May Be				
Which feature of social media channels(SNS) entertain you the most?	Video Sharing	81 (32%)	12 (4.7%)	18 (7.1%)	111 (43.8%)	13.79 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.007
	Photo Sharing	23 (9%)	7 (2.7%)	9 (3.5%)	39 (15.4%)			
	Live Streaming	51 (20.1%)	14 (5.5%)	16 (6.3%)	81 (32%)			
	Story Sharing	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.5%)	1 (0.3%)	8 (3.1%)			
	Online Games	12 (4.7%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	14 (5.5%)			
Total		170 (67.1%)	38 (15%)	45 (17.7%)	253 (100%)			
Advertisements and Content on Social Media	No not at All	4 (1.5%)	8 (3.1%)	3 (1.1%)	15 (5.9%)	38.92 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.000
	Littlebit	12 (4.7%)	4 (1.5%)	4 (1.5%)	20 (7.9%)			
	Some what Increased	35 (13.8%)	17 (6.7%)	15 (5.9%)	67 (26.4%)			

	Increased	76 (30%)	5 (1.9%)	16 (6.3%)	97 (38.3%)			
	Significantly increased	43 (16.9%)	4 (1.5%)	7 (2.7%)	54 (21.3%)			
Total		170 (67.1%)	38 (15%)	45 (17.7%)	253 (100%)			
Attractiveness of Advertisement Content on Social Media	No not at All	2 (0.7%)	7 (2.7%)	2 (0.7%)	11 (4.3%)	37.79 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.000
	Littlebit	6 (2.3%)	5 (1.9%)	3 (1.1%)	14 (5.5%)			
	Some what Increased	46 (18.1%)	13 (5.1%)	18 (7.1%)	77 (30.4%)			
	Increased	60 (23.7%)	8 (3.1%)	15 (5.9%)	83 (32.8%)			
	Significantly increased	56 (22.1%)	5 (1.9%)	7 (2.7%)	68 (26.8%)			
Total		170 (67.1%)	38 (15%)	45 (17.7%)	253 (100%)			
Reliability of Advertisements and	No not at All	8 (3.1%)	7 (2.7%)	1 (0.3%)	16 (6.3%)	31.15 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.000
	Littlebit	9 (3.5%)	8 (3.1%)	5 (1.9%)	22 (8.6%)			

Content on	Some what	47	10	20	77			
Social	Increased	(18.5%)	(3.9%)	(7.9%)	(30.4%)			
Media	Increased	62	9	14	85			
		(24.5%)	(3.5%)	(5.5%)	(33.5%)			
	Significantly	44	4	5	53			
	increased	(17.3%)	(1.5%)	(1.9%)	(20.9%)			
Total		170	38	45	253			
		(67.1%)	(15%)	(17.7%)	(100%)			
Optimizati	No not at All	4 (1.5%)	5	1	10			
on/Respons			(1.9%)	(0.3%)	(3.9%)			
iveness of	Little bit	7 (2.7%)	6	1	14			
			(2.3%)	(0.3%)	(5.5%)			
Advertisem	Some what	32	13	17	62			
ents and	Increased	(12.6%)	(5.1%)	(6.7%)	(24.5%)			
Content on	Increased	63	8	21	92	40.37 <sup>a</sup>	8	0.000
the Social		(24.9%)	(3.1%)	(8.3%)	(36.3%)			
Media	Significantly	64	6	5 (1.9%)	75			
	increased	(25.2%)	(2.3%)		(29.6%)			
Total		170	38	45	253			
		(67.1%)	(15%)	(17.7%)	(100%)			
Found	Yes	137	20	31	188	19.52 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.001
social		(54.1%)	(7.9%)	(12.2%)	(74.3%)			

media platforms	No	9 (3.5%)	7 (2.7%)	1 (0.3%)	17 (6.7%)	18.99 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.001
useful during Covid-19	May Be	24 (9.4%)	11 (4.3%)	13 (5.1%)	48 (18.9%)			
Total		170 (67.1%)	38 (15%)	45 (17.7%)	253 (100%)			
Will Use the pattern of social media after Covid-19	Yes	53 (20.9%)	9 (3.5%)	11 (4.3%)	73 (28.8%)			
	No	53 (20.9%)	18 (7.1%)	4 (1.5%)	75 (29.6%)	18.99 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.001
	May Be	63 (24.9%)	11 (4.3%)	30 (11.8%)	104 (41.1%)			
Total		169 (66.7%)	38 (15%)	45 (17.7%)	253 (100%)			

Source: data collected through the questionnaire

In the analysis, the dependent factor is the usage of Social Media post-Covid-19. As per 253 internet users, 170 (67.1%) users agreed the incremental use of social media during and after covid-19. Influencing and significant factors of the usage are as follows, entertaining features (Video Sharing 81 (32%), Live Streaming 51 (20.1%), Photo Sharing 23 (9%), Online Games 12 (4.7%) and Story Sharing 3 (1.1%)), and various types of advertisements (content 168 (66.2%), reliability 162 (63.8%), optimisation or responsiveness 166 (65.4%)). At 95% confidence level, results found significant with an alpha value less than 0.05. Here, as per the

consumers' entertaining features and advertisement, are the two primary influencing factors of social media marketing during covid-19. Further study also reveals the type of consumers influenced by social media marketing: graduate students (37.1%) and the consumers whose salary is more than 30,000 per month (35.3%).

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, Covid-19 has left an impact on many areas, including social media marketing. From the consumers perspective, a considerable effect has been observed in the usage and the influence of social media marketing. Regarding usage during covid, consumers started doing need based shopping such as- Grocery Items (Daily Needs) (45.8%), and Medical Needs (22.9%) instead of impulse buying such as- food & hospitality (35.6%), and clothing (17.8%). During the pandemic, these shoppers started spending more time on educational sites instead of shopping sites. Additionally, data reveals that consumers do get influenced from entertainment features like Video Sharing (32%), Live Streaming (20.1%), Photo Sharing (9%), Online Games (4.7%) etc. and also from various types of advertisements content (66.2%), reliability (63.8%), optimisation or responsiveness (65.4%) etc. Therefore from primary and secondary data, it can be said that before & during covid, there is a significant impact in the usage (4.7%) and the influence of social media marketing. As per the writer (GK Ayush, R. Gowda, 2020), with the increased in social media marketing, user engagement and the desire for digital content have been increased significantly which gave an enormous opportunity to the sellers to cash on. At the same time, sellers also have to act mindfully towards their marketing strategies because they are the ones who are socially responsible for their digital marketing.

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