

# The Use of Social Media and Its Effect on Young Consumers

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## INTRODUCTION

At a stage where today's society turned into a consumption society, it is worthwhile to examine how youngsters behave. Young consumers purchases intensively for different reasons. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of social media to young consumers' consumption expenditure.

Social media has an intense number of users in Turkiye as is the case in the world. In recent researches, it has been observed that young people were closely associated with social media. Together with the use of internet in all aspects of daily life, young people have a chance to connect social networks where ever they want, especially after the development of mobile communication technologies and smartphones. Social media is almost at the centre of young people's life.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the dimensions used by young consumers to evaluate effective online influencers; determine the impact of demographic segmentation – that is, gender, behavioral segmentation and whether young consumers often follow the advice of online influencers to make a purchase – on the evaluative dimensions. The results will inform advertisers regarding the types of online influencers that they should feature to endorse their products to create desirable promotion effects. Reports show that social media influence consumer behaviour both in the virtual environment (including: Internet shopping — e-commerce and shopping by means of mobile applications — m-commerce) as well as outside the virtual environment (traditional shopping in retail facilities). Information obtained from social media portals influence the behaviours of consumers: 44% of the users of social media portals thanks to

information in social media bought a product they didn't plan to buy before, 40% of users on the basis of information in social media changed their preferences and decision concerning the purchase of a product of a particular brand (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016). What has been observed is the constantly growing role of social media as a source of recommendations and information about products. 61% of social media users share their opinions and information about purchases in social media (Chamber of Digital Economy, 2016). Moreover, 76% of the users of social media portals declare that positive opinions of their friends have an impact on the purchasing decisions that they make and 56% of the users of social media use them as a place for seeking advice and obtaining information about a product.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Information: Social media provides consumers with information that helps them make purchase decisions.

Expression: Social media allows consumers to express themselves and share their opinions with brands and businesses.

Inspiration: Social media content can inspire young consumers to make purchases and find alternatives to satisfy their needs.

Peer recommendations: Young consumers are more likely to trust peer recommendations than traditional advertisements.

Two-way communication: Social media allows for real-time communication between consumers and brands, which can enhance the consumer experience.

Targeted ads: Brands use targeted ads to reach young consumers.

Influencer partnerships: Brands use influencers to promote their products and services.

- To assess how important social media sites are in India among the youth.
- To understand the possible advantages and disadvantages for the youth using social media.
- Identifying the popular social media sites in India.
- Determining the frequency of young Indians buying products online.
- To assess the influence of social media advertising campaigns.
- Determining the main kind of posts online.
- To assess youth consumer attitudes study toward online advertisements.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Young consumers are an important and significant part of every society. They are very characteristic participants of the market. We can notice many differences between the adult and young participants of the market. The latter have different needs, feel them differently and perceive the world surrounding them in a different way. They receive the messages that reach them in a different way. They also have different systems of values and rules of conduct. Young consumers encounter numerous barriers, which make it impossible for them to fully participate in the market. These are, among others: legal conditions, age, social influences, means for carrying out consumption, level of market education, understanding of market mechanisms, or access to information. Currently the role and significance of young consumers as participants of the market is noticeable. They have at their disposal bigger and bigger financial resources, which they manage according to their needs and desires. Additionally, their influence on the purchasing decisions made in the family is getting stronger and stronger.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is based on exploratory research whose primary objective is to provide insights into the patterns of using social media and social networking sites while making purchasing decisions. The paper uses a combination of primary and secondary data to understand how consumers benefit from social media platforms. The study is set in India's commercial and financial capital, Mumbai. Data collection is achieved by using an online consumer survey of 145 social media users from the ages of 16 to 30 years. The

information was collected directly from respondents via the internet, from October 5th to December 16th, 2017. The responses to this questionnaire were then analysed to investigate what people really use social media for and what benefits they receive from it as consumers, if at all. The convenience sampling technique was used which implies a nonprobability sampling.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The most popular and the most often used social media network is Facebook. Almost 99% of the respondents use this service regularly (at least a few times a week and more often) and over 90% use it a few times a day. This is possible above all thanks to mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) with installed Facebook application.

Among young people YouTube is the second social media network in terms of popularity and frequency of use. Similarly, as in case of Facebook 90% of respondents use it regularly, which means using it at least a few times a week, or more often. Every second respondent uses it at least a few times a day. Also, here the percentage of people without an account is marginal — 0,8%. According to declarations, men use the service more often than women. 87% of respondents watch videos on YouTube every day. Every third surveyed woman declared she uses YouTube every day. The frequency of using YouTube drops along with older age. Younger people use the social medium most often, a few times a day. The older the respondent, the less often he, or she uses YouTube. In case of Snapchat 60% of young consumers declared that they use the service regularly. Out of them most use the service a few times a day. Every third respondent doesn't use this medium. It is worth pointing out here that among all the portals mentioned in the research this is the only one that can be used only by means of mobile devices equipped with a camera. This application doesn't have a computer version. Women use Snapchat more often and more regularly than men. Snapchat is most popular among the students of upper secondary schools, that is, respondents from two youngest age groups, that is, 16–17 and 18–20. The older the respondents, the lower their activity on the portal. In the oldest age group (24–26) a half of respondents don't use the service at all (50.9%).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Importance Social networks are important to 52% of the respondents and particularly important to 17%. They hold no particular importance for 23% whereas

they are totally unimportant to 8%. It appears that women consider social networks to be of far greater importance than men with 74% considering them important compared to 26% of the males and 84% considering them very important.

• **WHAT IS THE FREQUENCY OF SHOPPING ONLINE?**

Young Consumers who shop online can maximise the pros of social media as a lot of social media content is aimed at online shoppers. Only 20.3% of the respondents said they never shop online. However, majority of the respondents' (81.2%) answers fall on the lower scale of frequency of shopping online which shows that although social media may have an impact on consumers, for consumers in India the change is taking place slowly as most people still prefer shopping in person

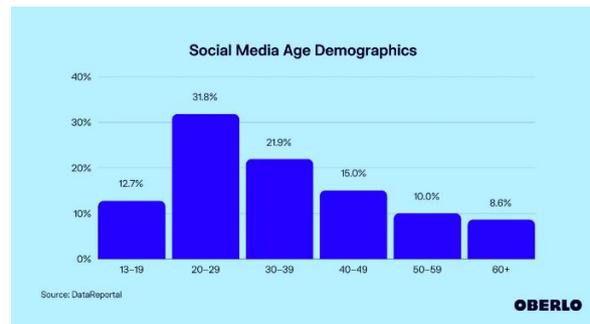
• **INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUNG CONSUMER TO PURCHASE?**

65.7% of respondents admitted that a social media post 'has some influence at times' on purchasing decisions. Although this may not strongly indicate the importance of social media for consumers, when we take into account that most people are unwilling to disclose or unaware of how influential an advertising campaign can be, we can safely infer that what brands post on social media influences customers. This can prove to be beneficial to consumers by providing information about products and trends as well as personalising the advertising process. However, it may also be possible that consumer pressurised into buying things they do not require. This could be one of the negatives of social media for consumers.

• **THE KIND OF SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES FOLLOWED BY YOUNG CONSUMERS?**

70.6% used social media to follow news pages which only supports the earlier statement about social media benefitting readers/consumers of news by allowing them to follow the pages of news agencies and receiving the latest news directly in their feed. 60.3% also followed fashion and lifestyle brands that show how consumers can use social media for online shopping by following their favourite brands online. 50% of the respondents follow social causes online which allows them to donate to and volunteer for causes more easily, not to mention raise awareness about them. 39.7% follow technology pages. Such pages not only help consumers make better purchase

decisions but also show them how to make best use of the technological devices they already own. 32.4% follow social media icons such as bloggers and vloggers (video bloggers). Although such icons are more popular among the youth, they benefit people of all ages. Not only do they allow consumers to follow topics they are interested in but they often recommend products to their following and, like technology pages, show how consumers can make the most of what they already own.



**LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The results are susceptible to the limitations of online surveys. The responses on which this study is based were given only by people in online media which participated voluntarily, and the concentration of responses is slightly more from women than from men. The reach of the study is restricted to the demographic profile of the social media users. This study is based in Mumbai which cannot be taken as representative for the whole of India. It might be interesting to study to what extent social media marketing is used by the rural population. Also research is needed that while consumers like to receive information about products from social media, how long they remain loyal to the brand and what kind of relationship exists between the two. It may be of use to study further attributes of the buyers and how these factors affect the buying decisions.

**CONCLUSION**

The influence of social media in Mumbai and other parts of India among the youth cannot be ignored. Not only is there a rise in social media users, but also in the types of social media and number of social media platforms. Now, all applications have a 'social' element; even ordinary application whose primary purpose is different can act as a social media platform by connecting users to one another. In these circumstances, social media is bound to play a part in the lives of consumers. Social media undoubtedly is

both important and valuable to businesses. As demonstrated by this study, social media can have several advantages for young consumers. Although social media has myriad benefits for consumers, they all boil down to one thing: information. Consumers need information to make quick and reliable purchase decisions and social media has made this information available at their fingertips. Young consumers are also responsible for their social media experience and can enhance it through methods such as,

- Using specialised, dedicated social media platforms where it is more likely that they find information that helps and interests them.
- Giving limited personal information to stay safe on the Internet.
- Checking that the website they use is secure.
- Searching for pages on social networks by topic to find a larger variety that interests them, trying to connect to users with similar interests.

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