

## ***Problems and Prospects of Social Media on Online Shopping in Himachal Pradesh***

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**Abstract:** What consumer seeks, thinks, likes, prefer and buy is of great importance to the companies to know and study the buying behavior. Every individual has its own taste and preferences which are influenced by many factors. Consumers are now using YouTube, Blogs, Facebook reviews, and rating to seek recommendation, peer advice about products and services about the company. Social media is serving as a medium in the journey of the consumer purchase decision. The trend of online marketing is increasing day by day all over the world, as well as in India also. Business owners are developing a solid social networking strategies to market their brand on social networking sites. Social media marketing is the employment of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers that have value for an organization's stake holder. Main purpose of this research paper to find out the challenges and opportunities for social media marketing in rural India in general and Himachal Pradesh in particular.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Social Media Sites and Online Shopping

### **Introduction**

Social media is a relatively recent phenomenon. Over the last decade, the world wide web has seen a proliferation of user driven web technologies such as; blogs, social networks and media sharing platforms collectively called social media. These technologies have enabled the growth of user-generated content, a global community and the publishing of consumer opinion (**Smith, 2009**). Social media now dominates the way we use the web and has given rise to popular platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and twitter, where people connect, produce and share content. The social media revolution has led to new ways of seeking and obtaining information on the multitude of products and services in the market which has enabled consumers to connect and discuss brands with each other quickly and easily (**Powers et**

**al.2012).** Social media marketing is the use of social media to facilitate exchange between customers and organizations which provides inexpensive access to consumers about products or services and companies (**Solomon & Tuten, 2015, P.25**). The term 'social media' is derived from two words which constitute media and social. Media generally refers the communication of ideas or information and advertising through publications or channels. Social media denotes the interaction of individuals within a group or community. Social media is simply associated to communication or publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of individuals through the specific medium or tool (**Neti, 2011, p.2**). With the help of social media, consumers can get opinions, information about products or services and companies. Goal of social media marketing is to essence, plant a seed and have the generated interest led to conversation between people about your product and services.

## **Review of Literature**

**Mersey et al. (2010)** Social media websites provide an opportunity for companies to engage and interact with potential and current customers, to encourage an increased sense of intimacy of the customer relationship, and build all important meaningful relationships with consumers.

**Bajpai et al. (2012)** in their study "Social media marketing: strategies and its impact" highlighted the various types of social media marketing strategies for small businesses which will take this viral marketing form far beyond the current social media to make the community powerful enough to create an initiative shopping and marketing effective. They also compared social media marketing with the implications of traditional means of marketing.

**Elisabeta and Ivona (2014)** examined the social media and its impact on consumers behavior. The study found that the income influences the consumers attitude before buying a particular product. The study also revealed that the social networks have a role in influencing the behavior of consumers in the virtual environment, particularly when the degree of exposure of messages and the relation created between the variety of information given and the consumer who is about to make a purchase.

**Motwani, D., Shirmali, D., & Agarwal, K. (2014)** in their paper on "Customers Attitude towards social media marketing" have examined the influence of social media on consumer buying behavior and the perception of consumers towards social media marketing practices of marketers. A survey of internet users was conducted in Udaipur and the findings revealed that social media not only make customers aware about brands, but customers also prefer the brands

advertised through social media while making their final purchase. But still there is no significant relationship between awareness and preference of brands that are promoted on social media sites. Customers have positive perception towards social media marketing practices; they considered social media advertising more interesting, innovative, informative and interactive as compare to traditional advertising.

**Singh (2016)** analyzed the consumer behavior toward social media and the awareness of social media marketing. 150 data sample were collected from consumers in Punjab and correlation was used as a statistical tool to analyze the data. The study revealed that there is positive correlation between social media marketing and consumers behavior. It also found that consumers are aware of various social media strategies.

**Kumar (2018)** Researcher stated in his study that consumers are relied on social recommendations and using blogs/ Facebook reviews and rating for their purchase decision. Secondary data has been used for the purpose of the study. This study explained the benefits from social media marketing for consumers and business houses and also explained how social media bring opportunities and challenges to business marketers. Study recommended that a fully networked business environment will be benefitted to consumers because they get more direct and personal access.

**Ansari et al. (2019)** studied the impact of brand awareness and social media content marketing on the consumer purchase decision. The information for this exploration was gathered through an online poll. The absolute number of respondents for this study were 150 (60% female; 40% male). In any case, results show that brand awareness has a feeble positive critical association with shopper buying decision though, social media content marketing has a moderate positive noteworthy association with the customer buying decision.

## **Objectives**

1. To study the mode of payment and online purchasing frauds.
2. To find out the challenges faced by social media users.

## **Hypothesis**

### **Main Hypothesis**

- **H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):**

There is no significant association between demographic variables and the mode of payment and online purchasing fraud.

### **Sub-Hypotheses**

- **H<sub>01</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between gender and the mode of payment preferred for online shopping.

- **H<sub>02</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between age groups and their preference for mode of payment in online shopping.

- **H<sub>03</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between education level and delivery-related problems faced in online shopping.

- **H<sub>04</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between education level and types of frauds encountered during online shopping.

- **H<sub>05</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between marital status and delivery-related problems in online shopping.

- **H<sub>06</sub>:**

There is no significant relationship between marital status and types of frauds encountered in online shopping.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with social media marketing in the rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. With the increasing penetration of internet services and smartphones in rural India, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for marketers to connect with consumers. However, the extent of its effectiveness in rural settings remains largely underexplored, particularly in hilly and infrastructurally constrained regions

like Himachal Pradesh. This study attempts to fill that gap by analyzing rural consumers' awareness, usage patterns, perceptions, and behavioral tendencies regarding social media platforms and marketing content. Study is mainly based on primary data collected from 300 respondents selected from three districts of Himachal Pradesh through a questionnaire. The field survey for the study has been conducted during the year 2023–24. The SPSS 27 version software was used to analyze the data; Chi-square test has been used at various stages of data analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

The study explored respondents' trust levels in online platforms and how it influences their shopping behavior. It was found that trust plays a pivotal role in determining not only the frequency of online purchases but also the willingness to adopt newer payment methods such as UPI and mobile wallets. Respondents who reported higher trust in platform security and product authenticity were more likely to experiment with different payment modes and shop more frequently. Conversely, those who had experienced fraud or delivery issues in the past tended to revert to traditional payment options like cash on delivery, even if they were otherwise tech-savvy. Moreover, the study revealed that social media reviews and peer recommendations significantly affect trust and purchasing decisions, especially among younger and more educated respondents. This indicates the growing importance of digital word-of-mouth and influencer content in shaping consumer preferences in rural areas, highlighting a crucial opportunity for marketers to build brand credibility through localized and transparent online engagement strategies.

The mode of payment preferences for online shopping exhibit varied trends across different demographic factors such as; gender, age, education level, and marital status. It is evident from the Table No. 1 that vast majority of the respondents do not opt for cash as mode of payment, but like debit and credit card as payment mode. Only 6.5 percent of males and 2.6 percent females adopt other mode of payment. As compared to males, females prefer cash on delivery. No significant relationship between age of respondents and their preference to mode of payment for online shopping has been found. Majority of the respondents do not opt cash on delivery, as chi square value (28.224) at 5 percent significance level is more than table value. So null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. Majority of the undergraduate respondents are using cash on delivery as mode of payment for online shopping, whereas, respondents with higher educational qualification are using debit and credit card as

mode of payment. Majority of the respondents irrespective of their marital status opt cash on delivery as a mode of payment. More married respondents are using debit card as a mode of payment as compared to unmarried respondents.

More than two-third of respondents irrespective of their gender, are facing delivery related problems (Table No. 2). At 5 percent significance level, chi square value (.048) is more than table value, hence gender wise there is no significant difference. Hence, it can be inferred that gender has no impact on delivery relating problems in rural area. No significant relationship has been observed between the age of the respondents and delivery relating problems, as majority of the respondents are facing delivery relating problems. A significant relationship between different education groups and delivery relating problems has been observed. Respondents with higher education are facing comparatively less delivery related problems. Vast majority of the respondents irrespective of their marital status are facing delivery related problems. At 5 percent significance level, chi square value (.182) is more than table value. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected. Further, no significant relationship between marital status of respondents and delivery relating problems has been observed.

Significant relationship between gender of the respondents and kind of frauds faced by them has been found (Table No. 3), however, gender has no impact on kind of frauds faced by the respondents in online purchasing. No significant relationship between the age of the respondents with the kind of fraud faced by them has been observed. At 5 percent significance level, chi square value (22.970) is more than table value, hence null hypothesis is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. A significant relationship between the opinion of different education groups with the kind of fraud faced by them has been found. Further, no significant relationship has been found between marital status and type of fraud faced by them in online shopping, although, unmarried respondents are facing more problem of account hacking, whereas, married respondents are facing comparatively more problem relating to sale services.

**Table No. 1 Mode of Payment for Online Shopping**

Demographic Variables \ Mode of Payment		Cash on Delivery	Debit Card	Credit Card	Others	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Gender	Male	89 47.6%	60 32.4%	25 13.5%	12 6.5%	185 100	20.761 P<0.05
	Female	76 66.1%	26 22.6%	10 8.7%	03 2.6%	115 100	
Age	Below 25 yrs.	55 68%	16 20%	07 8.8%	02 2.5%	80 100%	28.224 P>0.05
	25-35 yrs.	36 49.3%	26 35.6%	08 11%	03 4.1%	73 100%	
	35-45 yrs.	48 54.5%	23 26.1%	10 11.4%	07 8%	88 100%	
	Above 45 yrs.	25 42.4%	21 35.6%	10 16.9%	03 5.1%	59 100%	
Education	Matric	31 79.5%	05 12.8%	02 5.1%	01 2.6%	39 100%	64.521 P<0.05
	10+2	46 66.7%	17 24.6%	04 5.8%	02 2.9%	69 100%	
	Graduate	33 48.5%	16 23.5%	12 17.6%	07 10.3%	68 100%	
	Post Graduate	44 55%	20 25%	14 17.5%	02 2.5%	80 100%	
	Above Post Graduate	18 40.9%	19 43.2%	04 9.1%	03 6.8%	44 100%	
Marital Status	Married	98 50%	62 31.6%	24 12.2%	12 6.1%	196 100%	11.142 P>0.05
	Unmarried	66 63.5%	24 23.1%	11 10.6%	03 2.9%	104 100%	

Source: Primary Data

**Table No. 2 Delivery Relating Problems**

<div> <div>Delivery Related Problems</div> <div>Demographic Variables</div> </div>		Yes	No	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Gender	Male	162 87.6%	23 12.4%	185 100%	.048 P > 0.05
	Female	100 87%	15 13%	115 100%	
Age	Below 25 years	69 86.3%	11 13.8%	80 100%	10.006 P < 0.05
	25-35 years	67 91.8%	06 8.2%	73 100%	
	35-45 years	79 89.8%	09 10.2%	88 100%	
	Above 45 years	49 79.7%	12 20.3%	59 100%	
Education	Matric	34 87.2%	05 12.8%	39 100%	12.065 P<0.05
	10+2	59 85.5%	10 14.5%	69 100%	
	Graduate	56 82.4%	12 17.6%	68 100%	
	Post Graduate	70 87.5%	10 12.5%	80 100%	
	Above Post Graduate	43 97.7%	1 2.3%	44 100%	
Marital Status	Married	172 87.8%	24 12.2%	196 100%	.182 P > 0.05
	Unmarried	90 86.5%	14 13.5%	104 100%	

Source: Primary Data



**Table No. 3 Online Purchasing Fraud**

Demographic Variables \ Online Fraud		Account hacking	Not getting same product	No warranty	No after sale service	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Gender	Male	32 17.3%	75 40.5%	38 20.5%	40 21.6%	185 100%	3.423 P>0.05
	Female	23 20%	49 42.6%	25 21.7%	18 15.7%	115 100%	
Age	Below 25 years	14 17.5%	41 51.3%	15 18.8%	10 12.5%	80 100%	22.970 P>0.05
	25-35 years	15 20.5%	29 39.7%	16 21.9%	13 17.8%	73 100%	
	35-45 years	17 19.3%	31 35.2%	23 26.1%	17 19.3%	88 100%	
	Above 45 years	09 15.3%	23 39%	09 15.3%	18 30.5%	59 100%	
Education	Matric	05 12.8%	14 35.9%	09 23.1%	11 28.2%	39 100%	30.508 P<0.05
	10+2	13 18.8%	36 52.2%	11 15.9%	09 13%	69 100%	
	Graduate	11 16.2%	27 39.7%	17 25%	13 19.1%	68 100%	
	Post Graduate	17 21.3%	28 35%	22 27.5%	13 16.3%	80 100%	
	Above Post Graduate	09 20.55%	19 43.2%	04 9%	12 27.3%	44 100%	
Marital Status	Married	35 17.9%	75 33.3%	42 21.4%	44 22.4%	196 100%	8.491 P>0.05
	Unmarried	20 19.2%	49 47.1%	21 20.2%	14 13.5%	104 100%	

Source: Primary Data

**Table No. 4 Social Media Challenges**

	Respondents	Percent
Lack of Education	80	26.67
Less Internet Facility	138	46
Non availability of Android Phone	46	15.33
High Price of Product	52	17.33
Poor Quality of Product	69	23
Difficult to find a relevant product	111	37
Irrelevant/Outdated information about Product	60	20
Not fully aware about social media	39	13

*Source: Primary Data*

Non availability of internet facilities is the main challenge being faced by the people in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. Other difficulties include problems in finding relevant product on social media sites, lack of education, poor quality of product, irrelevant and no knowledge of using social media sites. Non-availability of Internet facility is the main challenge being faced by the respondents (46%) (Table No. 4) Other difficulties include problems in finding relevant product on social media sites, (37%) lack of education (26.67%), poor quality of product (23%), irrelevant information about the product (20%) and unaware about social media sites (13%).

## **Conclusion**

Most of the respondents are facing delivery relating problems in rural area, however, no impact of gender on delivery relating problems has been found. Most of the respondents are facing frauds while purchasing products online, however, no impact of gender on kind of frauds faced by them in online purchasing has been found. Most of the respondents feel that SMS help them in increasing their business turnover. Majority of the respondents do not opt cash on delivery as mode of payment and like debit and credit card payment mode, though, comparatively more female respondents prefer cash on delivery method for payment. Majority of the respondents are facing delivery relating problems, however, no relationship between age of the respondents and delivery related problems in rural area has been observed. Majority of the respondents do not get the same product which they have ordered. No significant relationship between age of the respondents and their opinion about social media sites in increasing their business turnover

has been found. Further, no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their preference to online shopping payments has been found. However, a significant relationship between education level of respondents with delivery relating problems and fraud related problems has been found. No significant relationship between marital status of the respondents with delivery relating problems and online shopping related frauds was observed. Majority of the respondents irrespective of their demographic profile agree with the statement that social media sites can help business houses to increase their turnover and are also found satisfied with the warranty period and after sale services.

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