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OMNICHANNEL RETAILING: IMPACT OF FACEBOOK ON RETAIL BUSINESS DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

Indian Retailing industry came with evolutionary patterns from kirana store retailing to online retailing (i.e.,) Rural to Urban. This scenario was unorganized in the beginning stage and its gradually growing as Omnichannel retailing through Social Media (Facebook). The purpose of this study is to deliver a Smarter Shopping Experience on Social Media especially on Facebook. The Structured Questionnaire has been used to collect from 1045 respondents on the basis of Random Sampling method. The respondents include Engineering Students & Staffs of Madurai. The data has been analysed with the help of Statistical Software (SPSS) and Simple percentage, Descriptive statistics and ANOVA are used for analysing the data. This study offers detailed description and analyses of the Facebook affecting retailer's business dynamics.

KEYWORDS

omnichannel, retailing, social media, online shopping, seamless experience.

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INTRODUCTION

To compete in the world where consumer expectation to be treated as individual, the retailer must strive to have customers feel as if you know them personally understand of their life style needs, wants and aspirations, and that the retailer have their current interest, needs and wants in mind. This level of intimacy can ultimately create long – tasting and rewarding relationships between the retailer's business and customer.

Facebook has gained importance on digital landscape. Organizations now prefer to use a combination of social media and the traditional media that has been in the market for more than a decade. There have been opinions that various channels in media have faced many challenges that made traditional media like television and radio to earn profits. Also, previous research has shown collaboration between traditional and modern channels of media. Thus, it is a challenge of tough competition in the economic environment that has led to the tightening of budgets in the advertising industry due to the shift of focus from the traditional to the digital media.

Today, Facebook has become the most popular networking website for marketing the products to their target audience by retailers. It serves as a platform, which allows marketers to innovate on their message through posters, and videos, which generates customer engagement through conversations and storytelling by the marketer to the end customer.

Facebook today is being used by a majority of organizations in India to voice their message, engage and collaborate with the millions of users that are on this network 24/7. Yet there is still a lot of untapped potential that this medium can offer to the end users.

A smarter shopping experience must also be beyond the notion of separate channel, customer should be able to shop in the Social Media (Facebook) and able to interact with retailers on web, via mobile device or through call centre in absolutely seamless way with the flexibility to connect, Shopping Experience, research, buy, pay, receive and return. This paper aims to deliver a smarter shopping experience on Facebook, a complete view of customers across a single touch points and a single commerce and marketing platform for interaction and engagement.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The retail landscape has become competitive in nature. Today, retailers have a huge opportunity to tap the development of technology and reach to a larger customer base. It is a challenge for the retailers to keep pace to the development of technology in terms of product communication and delivery to the end consumer.

In India, Facebook is still in a very nascent stage. Due to the explosion of media and mobile retailers need to be far more innovative to engage and retain their target audience. The purpose of the study is to give an insight on the various marketing strategies used by the online retailer to generate Seamless Shopping Experience. Also, on the customer front it is being analysed on how the Message, Poster, Image, and Videos are being created to facilitate a customer relationship through a decision making journey on Facebook.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study concerned with both primary and secondary data. Data were collected from the Engineering college students and staff in Madurai. The data collection was made from 1045 respondents under the simple random sampling method; the structured questionnaire has been used as a tool. The simple percentage, Descriptive statistics and ANOVA are used for analyzing the data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marketers here should play a role of aggregators of customer communities (Weber 2009). They are expected to organize and find the most appropriate social network and best possible way of presenting the product to the consumer and respectively receiving customers' feedback through it. It's proved that people trust their friends more than traditional advertising (Nielson Company). They purchase the product, talk about it online and do marketing activities even without realizing it. That process is known as word of mouth (WOM) advertising but here it is done in online manner.

Social Media Marketing should be gradually implemented into the existing marketing plan of a certain company and not used as a replacement of it (Flagler, 2011). It must be integrated within the other marketing tools that certain company use as the common usage will lead to better results (Lake, 2011). Nowadays there is substantial evidence that online word of mouth affects peoples' attitude toward the product or the brand and respectively that affects the purchase behaviour of the consumer (Chen, 2011). Many scholars recently pay attention and research the influence of social media to product sales, consumer decision making, and sales forecasts or even to existing marketing strategy of the company (Chen, 2011). Widely discussed is also the issue of how social media influences brand awareness but not much attention is paid to the problem of the social media effectiveness towards people's brand attitude and all the arising from that issue - sub problems.

For companies and large corporations content communities are of a great thread because of the chance to be used as platforms for sharing copyright materials (Kaplan, 2009). Social Networking Sites follow the content communities in the review of social media types. It's important to clarify their meaning and usage as they take central place in the current thesis. Through these kinds of sites people connect while exchanging personal information, photos, videos and even instant messages. People can also invite friends to have access to this information. Facebook and Twitter are considered to be the most popular social networking sites. Companies nowadays switch to Facebook in their efforts to bond with the customer (Kaplan, 2009).

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL

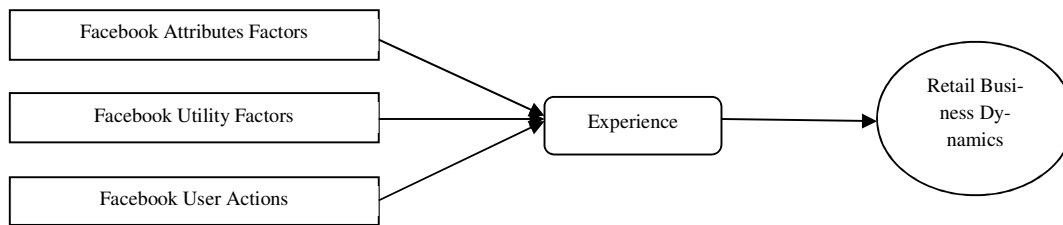


TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF FACEBOOK USERS

Demographic factors	No. of Respondents (Total= 1045)	Percentage
GENDER		
Male	564	53.97
Female	481	46.03
AGE		
20-25 yrs	192	18.4
26-30 yrs	745	71.3
31-35 yrs	56	5.4
Above 35 yrs	52	4.9
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION		
Up to HSC	75	7.2
Graduates	459	43.9
Post Graduates	245	23.4
Professional Courses	255	24.4
Higher Studies (Ph.D/M.Phil)	11	1.1
OCCUPATION		
Self Employed/Entrepreneurs	221	21.1
Public sector Employee	79	7.6
Private Sector Employee	262	25.1
Student	469	44.9
Home Maker	14	1.3
FAMILY INCOME		
Up to Rs. 15000	422	40.4
Rs. 15001- Rs. 30000	350	33.5
Rs. 30001- Rs. 45000	174	16.7
Rs. 45001- Rs. 60000	43	4.1
Rs. 60001- Rs. 75000	19	1.8
Above Rs. 75000	37	3.5
FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE PER DAY		
Less than One Hour	69	6.6
1 – 5 hours	347	33.2
6-12 Hours	546	52.2
More than 12 Hours	59	5.6
24 hours Connected	24	2.3
MAIN REASONS FOR EXPERIENCE ON FACEBOOK RETAILERS		
Just like the Brand/ product	265	25.4
Get users reviews & Experience & Share	149	14.3
Easy access to Product/Company information, Available 24/7, and info about new products/ services	274	26.2
Networking & Relationship Building with Brands, Feels more humanised	101	9.6
Entertainment, fun, contests, offers, coupons, deals, etc.	68	6.5
Using the products currently, easy to avail after sales services & product info.	154	14.8
Attractive advertisements and promotions	19	1.8
Useful for scouting Employment opportunities	15	1.4

Table 1 shows that out of the total number of sample respondents. 53.97% were male and 46.03% were female. Age wise distribution shows that 71.3% users belongs to 26 to 30 age group, followed by 20-25 years, 31-35 years and above 35 years , respectively at 18.4%, 5.4% and 4.9%. users of Facebook by education observed that 43.9% users are Graduates; followed by respondents whose education is professional courses (24.4%), Post Graduates (23.4%), upto HSC (7.2%) and rest 1.1% user belong to Higher Studies like M.Phil/Ph.D. Occupation of the Users 44.9% users are Students, 25.1% users are private employee, 21.1% users are self employed and 7.6% users are public sector. Few Facebook users are homemakers (1.3%). Concerned with users family income shows that majority of the users family income is upto 15000 (40.4%) and 33.5% of users income level 15001 – 30000 and 16.7% users belong to income level of 30001-45000. Table shows that the frequency of social media usage per day. Majority that 52.2% of the respondents using Facebook 6-12 hours per day and 33.2% of users on Facebook 1-5 hours per day. Reasons for experience on Facebook is Easy access to Product/Company information, Available 24/7, and info about new products/ services (26.2%)

AN ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK ATTRIBUTES

Facebook Platform has various features, which attracts users to use them for their own benefits. The Facebook attributes are something that looks for on social media (Facebook) platforms. In this research, seven attributes have been taken into consideration, Likewise-Content, Interaction, Sharing of Experience, participation, 24/7 Accessibility and Usefulness.

H1: Average performances assigned by respondents to the defined Facebook attributes across Demographic Factors of respondents are alike.

TABLE 2: OVERALL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR FACEBOOK ATTRIBUTES ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
N	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045
Mean	4.96	4.87	4.73	3.94	3.59	3.06	2.85
SD	2.169	1.744	1.615	1.413	1.667	1.790	2.264

Overall analysis of variance, “Content” is the most preferred Facebook attributes, having mean value of 4.96, followed by Interaction (4.87) and Experience Sharing (4.73). While Usefulness was least preferred attribute among respondents having lowest mean of 2.85.

Means and ANOVA for Gender and Facebook attributes							
Gender	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
F ratio PV*	0.193	0.300	10.469	5.945	3.613	3.088	3.520
	0.660	0.584	0.001	0.015	0.058	0.079	0.061
Means and ANOVA for Age and Facebook attributes							
Age	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
F ratio PV*	1.939	3.593	0.881	2.622	1.146	6.906	2.280
	0.122	0.013	0.450	0.049	0.330	0.000	0.078
Means and ANOVA for Education and Facebook attributes							
Education	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
F ratio PV*	2.502	1.654	0.599	1.762	0.889	0.792	4.648
	0.041	0.159	0.664	0.134	0.470	0.531	0.001
Means and ANOVA for Occupation and Facebook attributes							
Occupation	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
F ratio PV*	6.424	4.121	6.407	1.778	4.035	10.268	4.949
	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.131	0.003	0.000	0.001
Means and ANOVA for Income and Facebook attributes							
Income	Content	Interaction	Sharing of Experience	Participate	24/7 accessibility	Authority	Usefulness
F ratio PV*	5.100	2.014	3.007	1.721	5.764	4.479	3.021
	0.000	0.074	0.011	0.127	0.000	0.000	0.010

* F ratiion Probability value (derived from ANOVA table)

The result show that the preference of Facebook attributes across demographic variables. “Sharing of experience” and “Participation “attributes, remaining all attributes are equally preferred by Gender category. Sharing of experience and participation attributes are found to be statistically significant with respect to the rank preference assigned by gender category. Interaction, Participation and Authority are found to be statistically significant with reference to the rank preferences assigned by the respondents based on Age Group category. Content and Usefulness Seems to be statistically significant with reference to the rank preferences given by respondents based on education category, remaining all other attributes are equally preferred by education category. Occupation category varies significantly in all Facebook attributes except Participation. Interaction and participation as there seems to be a statistically significant variation among all attributes preferred by income category.

AN ANALYSIS OF FACEBOOK UTILITY FACTORS

Various factors motivate users of Facebook to use it. Following factors are identified as ‘Facebook Utility Factors’. Seven Utility factors are taken into consideration, Creating relationships and friendship, Entertainment and relaxation, Space for sharing ideas/views/opinions, community and mutual support, Information and advice, Recognition, Intelligence and Opportunity.

H2: Average preferences assigned by respondents to defined Facebook Utility Factors across Demographic Factors of respondents are alike.

TABLE 3: OVERALL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR FACEBOOK UTILITY FACTORS ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
N	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045
Mean	5.60	4.99	4.48	4.05	3.49	2.90	2.50
SD	1.999	1.710	1.590	1.436	1.629	1.607	1.944

* R&F – Relationships and Friendships, E&R- Entertainment & Relaxation, SIVO- Space for sharing Ideas/View/Opinions, C&M- Community and Mutual support, I&A- Information and Advice, Recog.- Recognition, I&O – Intelligence and Opportunity.

“Creating Relationship and Friendship” is the most preferred Facebook Utility factor having a mean value of 5.60, followed by Entertainment & Relaxation. Least preferred Utility factor is Intelligence and Opportunity having lowest mean of 2.50.

Means and ANOVA for Gender and Facebook Utility Factors							
Gender	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
F ratio PV	3.532	3.787	3.483	0.472	9.086	2.365	0.762
	0.060	0.052	0.062	0.492	0.003	0.124	0.383
Means and ANOVA for Age and Facebook Utility Factors							
Age	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
F ratio PV	8.879	10.899	1.173	1.222	9.987	4.431	3.017
	0.000	0.000	0.319	0.300	0.000	0.004	0.029
Means and ANOVA for Education and Facebook Utility Factors							
Education	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
F ratio PV	2.100	6.043	3.641	1.405	3.957	0.812	3.299
	0.079	0.000	0.006	0.230	0.003	0.517	0.011
Means and ANOVA for Occupation and Facebook Utility Factors							
Occupation	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
F ratio PV	4.781	5.656	6.014	4.948	2.925	5.369	0.427
	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.020	0.000	0.789
Means and ANOVA for Income and Facebook Utility Factors							
Income	R & F	E & R	SIVO	C & M	I & A	Recog.	I & O
F ratio PV	3.896	6.596	3.771	3.076	1.608	3.833	4.025
	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.009	0.155	0.002	0.001

* F ration Probability value (derived from ANOVA table)

“Entertainment & Relaxation” and “Provides access to information & advice which cannot be availed anywhere else” are proffered by gender category. “Provides a private free space for sharing ideas, views, opinions” and “Provides a sense of community & mutual support” preferred in the age category. The preference of Facebook utility factors across Education varies significantly in three factors such as “Creating relationship and friendship”, “Provides a sense of Community & Mutual support” and “Recognition”. Occupation category varies significantly in all social media utility factors, except “Opportunity to get involved with Social or Cultural causes”. Facebook utility factors preference across income varies significantly in all utility factors except ‘provides access to information & advice which cannot be availed anywhere else’.

ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER ACTIONS ON PRODUCT & SERVICES

The users of Facebook website gets involved with one or the other brands and companies on Facebook liking a Facebook pages. The involvement gives them numerous benefits like Shopping deals, Discounts, Information on new products, News, etc.

H3: Average preference of actions taken after liking or sharing product and services on social media across demographic factors is alike.

TABLE 4: OVERALL ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR FACEBOOK USERS ACTIONS ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS.

	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
N	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045	1045
Mean	4.74	2.96	4.07	3.51	2.40	3.32
SD	1.544	1.720	1.433	1.417	1.428	1.633

The descriptive statistics shows that, the most preferred action by user is to “Talk” about product and services on Facebook platform. This result displays that there are higher chances of spreading the online word of mouth regarding the product or service.

Means and ANOVA for Gender and Facebook Users acton						
Gender	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
F ratio PV	0.165	1.804	0.787	0.014	0.008	0.188
	0.684	0.180	0.375	0.905	0.927	0.664
Means and ANOVA for Age and Facebook Users acton						
Age	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
F ratio PV	2.286	3.439	0.535	5.555	2.552	6.244
	0.077	0.016	0.659	0.001	0.054	0.000
Means and ANOVA for Education and Facebook Users acton						
Education	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
F ratio PV	5.010	2.122	1.484	2.062	1.089	3.276
	0.001	0.076	0.205	0.084	0.360	0.011
Means and ANOVA for Occupation and Facebook Users acton						
Occupation	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
F ratio PV	2.764	0.421	1.051	1.346	1.810	3.116
	0.026	0.794	0.380	0.251	0.125	0.015
Means and ANOVA for Income and Facebook Users acton						
Income	Talk	Purchase	Recommend	Like/Share	Complain	Suggest
F ratio PV	3.078	2.996	3.586	2.174	1.702	3.169
	0.009	0.011	0.003	0.055	0.131	0.008

* F ration Probability value (derived from ANOVA table)

All the users action taken by consumers after liking the products and services on Facebook across Gender category is not statistically significant. Users action on Product and services on Facebook across the Age group, varies significantly in all actions, except, “Talk” and “Recommend”. Facebook users action across the Education category varies significantly in two actions such as “Talk” and “Suggest”. The concerned with Occupation category “Talk” and “Suggest” varies statistically significant. Income category respondents equally prefer the action ‘Complain’. All other actions are found to be statistically significant with respect to the Income category.

CONCLUSION

The usage of Facebook in India is still at a very nascent stage. The retail industry in India is fragmented and its highly competitive market with a lot of untapped potential. Today, most of the retailer brands on Facebook (Snapdeal, Yourprint, My Dream Store, Club Factory-Fair Price, Paytm mall: online shopping, SHEIN India, Kraftly, Cyankart.com, Addicshop) but the retailers in India are yet to go beyond the stage of awareness.

A conceptual model was being framed and tested in order to understand the retailing Dynamics and the various strategies it follows on Facebook in specific on online retailers. The research findings conclude that respondent belonging to various demographic categories like Gender, Age group, City, Education, Occupation, Income, and Facebook Users consumes social medium (Facebook) in different ways. Hence, there is a ready target market of each kind. If used strategically, taking into considerations their behaviour and attitudes, Facebook can prove beneficial to their businesses.

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