



Analysing Consumer Challenges In SMM Of Oral Care Products: Evidence From Odisha

Dr Sasanka Sekhar Swain¹, Dr Neha Yadav², Dr Krishan Kumar³(Corresponding Author), Dr Suruchi⁴

¹Department of Women & Child development and Mission Shakti, Govt. of Odisha, India

^{2,3,4}Assistant Professor, School of Commerce and Management, Starex University, Gurugram, India

Abstract

Social Media Marketing acts as a digital channel that facilitates direct communication between businesses and customers, enabling discussions about the company's products and services. In this study investigates the consumer challenges in social media marketing (SMM) for oral care goods in Odisha, India. The data collected from 365 respondents in six districts, the study identifies major flaws such as excessive and irrelevant ads, misleading claims, lack of transparency, fake reviews, influencer inauthenticity, and privacy concerns. Collectively, these characteristics limit customer trust and engagement in digital oral care marketing. The study emphasises the importance of transparent, evidence-based, and ethical promoting techniques. To recover customer confidence and foster long-term trust online, brands should work with genuine influencers, protect data privacy, and prioritise real communication.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Oral care Product, Consumer behaviour, Challenges etc.

1. Introduction

The development of social media has transformed the landscape of marketing communication across industries, giving firms an interactive platform to communicate directly with their customers. With billions of active users on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, social media has emerged as an essential tool for product promotion, brand community building, and consumer decision-making. In India, where digital revolution is rapid, social media marketing (SMM) has become a critical component of organisations' entire promotional efforts. The Oral care business, which was previously reliant on television and print advertising, is rapidly turning to social media channels to reach and engage health-conscious customers in both urban and rural areas.

SMM acts as a digital channel that facilitates direct communication between businesses and customers, enabling discussions about the company's products and services. Social media supports two-way communication, benefiting both consumers and businesses. Before making a purchase, customers often explore a brand's social media profiles to gather information. In India, the use of social media is closely linked to changes in the country's digital environment. Besides being cost-effective, social media allows marketers to explore other service providers at a lower cost compared to previous methods. Businesses use social media to engage with customers worldwide, offering a variety of services to meet consumer needs.

Customers interact with brands through stories, product updates, and educational content. Social media allows users to compare products and services with competitors, providing a practical way to assess quality. SMM encompasses online communities, social networks, blogs, and other digital media to reach both current and potential customers. Social media marketing has significantly impacted consumer behavior across various industries, including the oral care sector. The rise in global social media usage has allowed brands to engage directly with consumers, raise awareness about oral hygiene, and promote their products. In Odisha, where internet access and smartphone adoption have increased rapidly, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become vital for marketing oral care products. Understanding consumer behavior is essential for marketers in the oral care industry, as it involves the habits and preferences that shape purchasing decisions. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer behavior refers to the actions and decision-making processes individuals undertake when choosing, purchasing, and using products. In the oral care context, factors such as brand trust, product effectiveness, price, and recommendations play a crucial role in influencing consumer choices. Social media marketing enables brands to target specific demographics in Odisha by using localized content and collaborating with influencers to engage consumers. As noted by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), influencer marketing has become an effective method for building brand credibility and encouraging purchase decisions. Furthermore, user-generated content, including reviews and testimonials, plays a key role in shaping consumer trust and brand perception.

India, being the world's second-most populous country with approximately 1.40 billion people, is one of the fastest-growing economies globally. The Indian population has embraced social media extensively. According to the Global Statshot Report of 2022, Indian internet users spend an average of 2 hours and 38 minutes daily on social media. Due to the widespread availability of the internet, the number of social media users in India has increased to approximately 467 million. With 658 million internet users, nearly 47% of India's population is connected online (National Family Health Survey, 2022).

The primary motive of the study to analyse the the challenges faced by the consumers regarding social media marketing related to Oral Care Products in Odisha.

2. Literature Review

This section confers several researches concerning social media marketing conducted by other researchers worldwide, such as **Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)** noted that information-seeking, entertainment, and convenience are key motivations for internet usage. A consumer's engagement level on social media is determined by their psychographic attributes and personal interests. **Wilner et al. (2010)** highlighted the role of online communities in shaping consumer purchasing behavior. Social media discussion boards enable users to obtain product knowledge, assisting them in making informed purchasing decisions. **Kwon and Wen (2010)** identified social identity, empathy, and telepresence as key factors affecting perceived usefulness and Consumer engagement. They highlighted that consumers with strong social identities are more likely to respond to engagement initiatives. **Gummerus et al. (2012)** suggested that perceived benefits, including entertainment, social interaction, and financial rewards, exert the strongest influence on CE behaviors. **Yadav et al. (2013)** argued that social networks significantly impact exchange-related activities in computer-mediated environments. **Hajli (2014)** suggested that social media platforms and online communities have simplified information access due to their user-friendly interfaces. Consumers using web-based applications for online shopping encounter minimal barriers in the purchasing process.

Duffett (2015) found that an active presence on Facebook positively influences behavioral attitudes, including purchase intentions, among South Africa's Generation Y. Factors such as platform usage characteristics, login frequency, profile update frequency, and demographic factors further affect purchase perceptions and purchase intentions. **Jung et al. (2016)** identified that perceived advertising values like entertainment and rewards play a significant role in shaping positive attitudes toward corporate Facebook homepages. **Icha (2016)** evaluated the advantages and drawbacks of social media as a marketing tool.

Sustainable social media presence depends on engagement, content quality, skill set, and consistency. Essential skills include research, graphic design, optimization, and analytics. Social media marketing enhances customer communication, word-of-mouth promotion, and trend influence. However, businesses face challenges in impact assessment and staff training. A balanced approach encompassing financial, customer, business process, and learning perspectives can optimize social media marketing benefits. **Duffett (2017)** revealed that social media marketing communications positively affect teenagers' cognitive (awareness, knowledge), emotional (liking, preference), and behavioral (intention-to-buy, purchase) responses. However, this influence has been diminishing over time, which aligns with the purchase funnel model. **Herrera Serna et al. (2017)** assessed the sustained impact of a digital oral health campaign aimed at encouraging oral hygiene habits in children. Two years after implementation, the study found high retention of key oral health messages and improved plaque indices, demonstrating the efficacy of long-term digital health interventions in fostering positive behavioral change. **Shareef et al. (2019)** investigated the effectiveness of different sources of social media advertisements in raising consumer awareness. Their research revealed that peer recommendations and word-of-mouth marketing on social platforms had a stronger impact on consumer awareness compared to traditional brand advertisements. **Tafesse and Wien (2018)** explored how brands utilize social media to enhance awareness and consumer engagement. Their study concluded that a combination of promotional, educational, and entertaining content is the most effective approach. Furthermore, they emphasized that maintaining consistency in brand messaging plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perception. **Dani (2020)** examined consumer behavior in selecting oral care products, focusing on the influence of branding and promotional techniques. The study confirmed that marketing strategies play a pivotal role in shaping purchasing decisions, underscoring the need for companies to adopt targeted promotional campaigns within the oral hygiene sector. **Chaudhary (2021)** examined consumer behavior across multiple social media platforms, analyzing collected data to predict purchasing trends. The study found that consumer preferences vary significantly, indicating that one consumer's inclination toward a product may not align with another's. The author developed a mathematical model to validate the data and used machine learning techniques to forecast consumer behavior on social media. **Kholiya, Massey, and Hussain (2022)** conducted a study on Indian consumers' purchasing behavior during COVID-19. The research found that financial and psychological concerns significantly shaped perceptions of apparel purchases, leading to a decline in clothing sales during the pandemic. The study concluded that COVID-19 had a notable impact on consumer buying behavior. **Ruiz et al. (2022)** further examined the spread of misleading oral health content online and its potential effects on consumers. Their review emphasized the importance of oral health professionals guiding patients in distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources, thereby promoting evidence-based decision-making regarding oral care. **Bentley (2023)** conducted a review on the integration of oral health messaging into social marketing campaigns. The research explored existing health promotion strategies in San Francisco, suggesting that incorporating oral health components could enhance campaign effectiveness and strengthen public health messaging. **Acosta et al. (2025)** explored the role of social media in dental practices in the Philippines, emphasizing its growing adoption among younger professionals. Their findings highlighted a generational shift, wherein younger dentists are increasingly leveraging social media for patient engagement and health promotion.

Some important insights can be derived from the above prior literature, including the fact that primary research is being conducted on social media marketing. Most of studies have focused solely on consumer engagement, preferences, and awareness of social media marketing for oral hygiene products. There was no study found to examine the issues faced by consumers regarding social media marketing regarding oral care products in Odisha. Based on the above observation, this study attempts to investigate the challenges faced by the consumers regarding social media marketing related to Oral Care Products in Odisha.

3. Research Methodology

To analyze the challenges faced by the consumers regarding social media marketing related to oral care products. The present study consists of individuals from state of Odisha who use social media platforms. For this purpose the data has been collected from six district of Odisa i.e Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Khurdha, Puri, Jalpur & Kendrapada through questionnaire from 365 consumers and responses has been recorded on the eight statements i.e. too many ads cluttering the platform, Irrelevant ads that do not match my needs/preferences, difficulty in trusting the advertised products, misleading claims about oral care products, lack of transparency regarding ingredients or benefits, Inability to differentiate between genuine and fake reviews, Over-reliance on influencers with questionable expertise and Concern over privacy and targeted ads through questionnaire. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement at five-point scale taking 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. The data has been analysed through descriptive statistics using SPSS.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

To analyze the challenges faced by the consumers regarding social media marketing related to oral care products. The data has been evaluated through descriptive statistics using frequency and percentage in the following tables:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	87	43	94	94	47	365
Percent	23.8	11.8	25.8	25.8	12.9	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The above table illustrates consumer opinions on whether social media platforms are overloaded with ads. Responses are categorized into five levels as Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. It can be observed that 23.8% (87 consumers) indicating they don't see ad clutter as an issue. 11.8% (43 consumers) sharing a similar but less firm stance. 25.8% (94 consumers) showing no strong opinion on the matter. 25.8% (94 consumers) suggesting they feel social media has excessive ads. 12.9% (47 consumers) firmly believing ad clutter is a problem.

Majority of the consumers perceive ad clutter as a concern while 25.8% remain undecided, highlighting varied consumer perspectives on the issue.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	63	74	87	81	60	365
Percent	17.3	20.3	23.8	22.2	16.4	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 2, presents consumer perspectives on receiving irrelevant ads on social media. A total of 38.6% consumers feel the ads do not align with their needs, while 37.6% do not find this to be an issue. Meanwhile, 23.8% remain neutral, suggesting a balanced mix of opinions. The data highlights that while many find ad targeting ineffective, others either disagree or have no strong opinion on the matter.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	101	51	86	55	72	365
Percent	27.7	14.0	23.6	15.1	19.7	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 3, presents consumer views on trusting advertised products. 34.8% struggle to trust these ads, whereas 41.7% do not see it as an issue. 23.6% consumers showing uncertainty.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	67	62	99	68	69	365
Percent	18.4	17.0	27.1	18.6	18.9	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 4, highlights a major concern for consumers, misleading claims in oral care product marketing. Out of 365 respondents, 37.5% feel brands exaggerate benefits, making it hard to trust their promises. On the other hand, 35.4% don't see this as a major issue. Meanwhile, 27.1% remain neutral, unsure of what to believe. This data underscores the challenge of consumer skepticism, which directly impacts trust in brands and purchasing decisions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	65	66	92	76	66	365
Percent	17.8	18.1	25.2	20.8	18.1	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 5, highlights a significant consumer challenge i.e. lack of transparency in oral care product ingredients and benefits. Out of 365 respondents, 38.9% feel that brands do not disclose enough information, making it difficult to trust their claims. On the other hand, 35.9% do not find this to be a problem. Meanwhile, 25.2% remain neutral, showing uncertainty. This lack of clarity fosters skepticism, impacting consumer trust and buying decisions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	62	56	90	78	79	365
Percent	17.0	15.3	24.7	21.4	21.6	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 6, highlights a key consumer challenge difficulty in identifying genuine reviews from fake ones. Out of 365 respondents, 43% find it hard to trust online reviews, making their purchasing decisions more difficult. In contrast, 32.3% do not see this as a problem, while 24.7% remain neutral, reflecting uncertainty. The prevalence of misleading reviews can create confusion, weaken trust in brands, and complicate consumer choices.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	70	48	97	98	52	365
Percent	19.2	13.2	26.6	26.8	14.2	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The table 7, highlights a common consumer concern trusting influencers who may not have real expertise in oral care. Among 365 respondents, 41% feel that many influencers lack proper knowledge, making their product recommendations less reliable. On the other hand, 32.4% don't see this as a major issue. This over-reliance on influencers can mislead consumers, making it harder to make confident purchasing decisions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Frequency	68	70	88	75	64	365
Percent	18.6	19.2	24.1	20.5	17.5	100.0

Source: Own calculations

The above table 8, highlights a key consumer concern regarding privacy and targeted advertising on social media. Among 365 respondents, 38% feel uncomfortable with how their personal data is used for ad targeting, raising privacy worries. In contrast, 37.8% are not concerned, while 24.1% remain neutral, reflecting uncertainty. Many consumers feel brands track their online activity without transparency, making them hesitant to engage with ads. This lack of trust in data security and personalized marketing can negatively impact brand perception, prompting consumers to be more cautious about their online interactions and purchase decisions.

5. Results and Implications

The study "Challenges for Oral Care Consumers in Social Media Marketing (SMM) in Odisha" discovered that, while social media has revolutionised brand-customer interaction, it also introduces a number of challenges that affect consumer trust and participation. A large number of respondents voiced worry about ad clutter, claiming that platforms are overloaded with commercial messages, reducing user experience. Furthermore, many customers reported that the ads they see are often inappropriate to their requirements or tastes, indicating flaws in algorithmic targeting. A big issue that has arisen is a lack of trust in social media marketing, which is caused by false claims and insufficient information about ingredients and product benefits. Consumers also expressed difficulties identifying authentic evaluations from false ones, resulting in uncertainty and hesitancy. Consumers also reported difficulty discriminating between authentic and false reviews, resulting in confusion and hesitancy in purchasing decisions. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents questioned influencer trustworthiness, claiming that many influencers pushing oral care products lack actual competence. Finally, customers expressed worries about privacy and data protection, since they were concerned with how their online activity and personal information were used for targeted marketing.

The implications of these findings are numerous. For marketers, the findings highlight the critical need to improve content credibility and transparency in social media advertising. Brands should work with accredited influencers and provide scientifically supported information to boost consumer confidence. Personalised yet respectful advertising methods can increase campaign effectiveness while reducing perceptions of intrusion. For consumers, the study emphasises the significance of digital literacy, or the ability to critically analyse online marketing and identify false content. Finally, policymaker must impose

tougher laws to prevent fraudulent claims in oral health advertising and protect customer privacy, so ensuring ethical and responsible marketing activities.

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that, while social media marketing is an effective promotional tool for oral care businesses, it is now hampered by customer skepticism, misinformation, and privacy concerns. Consumers in Odisha have demonstrated skepticism towards digital advertisements, owing to ad saturation, irrelevance, and concerns about influencer authenticity. The findings show that brands that prioritise promotional quantity over message quality risk losing consumer trust. To foster long-term involvement, oral care companies must implement transparency-driven and consumer-centric marketing strategies that emphasise education, authenticity, and ethical communication. By developing a sense of reliability and accountability, brands may not only improve consumer views but also establish long-term loyalty in the competitive digital marketplace

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