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Impact Of Social Media Influencers On Purchase Habit Of Rural Youth : A Study In Bikaner District Of Rajasthan

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Abstract—With the advent of internet and especially web 3.0 and web 4.0, the internet has become a go to media to get the advice about purchases all over the world and India is not the exception. India is one of the countries where social media has started to play a big role in decision making on purchases. The present paper discusses the role of social media influencers in the decision making among rural youth in the Bikaner district.

The study underlined the impact of social media influencers, and a questionnaire was designed to determine how much importance these influencers carry while youth take a purchase decision. The study highlighted that not only social media influencers are recognized by the rural youth but also, they influence the purchase decisions of the rural youth population.

Keywords—social media, influencers, rural youth, pre purchase behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior refers to the behavior that a consumer displays while searching, analyzing, purchasing, and disposing a product or service. For a typical consumer, there are 6 stages of purchase process which are as follows

1 Need recognition

The first stage is the need recognition stage. Consumer buys a product or service to satisfy his/her need.

2 Search for product information

For any business, the second stage provides a huge opportunity as in this stage, the consumer actively searches about the product information. In this day of internet, the consumer searches all the literature that is available on the social media such as YouTube, twitter, Facebook etc.

Brands should consider enhancing brand awareness through SEO and online paid marketing as it also helps build trust and credibility.

3 Product evaluation

In today's time, a consumer like to take an informed decision and he/she evaluates all the available alternatives in this stage a company may want to convince prospects that it may have exactly what they need.

4 Purchase decision

After the evaluation stage, the consumer takes the decisions to purchase the product or service.

5 Purchase

There are many factors that could prevent a customer from making a purchase at the last stage. Many times, the unavailability of variant can alter the decision of the consumer even in this stage.

6 Post-purchase evaluation

This is by far the most important stage of purchase decision as often consumer has post purchase dissonance or dissatisfaction and he/she seeks additional information that might remove the worry about the purchase decision.

The impact of social media

There are **4.65 billion** social media users around the world in April 2022, equating to 58.7 percent of the total global population. Social media user numbers have continued to grow over the past 12 months too, with **326 million** new users joining social media since this time last year.

The latest figures indicate that well over 9 in 10 internet users now use social media each month

Clearly, social media has become a big part of people's lives in recent times. Social media platforms are not just a means of staying in touch with friends, family, and colleagues; they have also become powerful digital marketing tools for creating brand awareness and customer engagement.

Social media is now a big part of everyone's lives and a crucial way for brands to reach new customers. In the last two decades, more and more people have joined social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Many of them began creating content for these platforms and that's how social media influencers were born. Thanks to the rising popularity of social media platforms, many celebrities have also created a strong presence on these platforms.

- It creates product and brand awareness

When people face a problem, they turn to people they know on social media for advice and recommendations. Social media platforms are actively used for social sharing, and social sharing is impacting the brand image significantly.

Now these days most consumers get to know about brands through content distributed on social media. If a consumer has a positive experience with a brand, they are more likely to recommend it to their friends and family. Such recommendations increase product and brand awareness and widen customer reach.

- Social Media has shortened the consumer decision making time

Before smartphones and social media, people got to know about new products through TV and newspaper ads. They may have seen the product multiple times on TV for several days or weeks before they went shopping and bought the product. In today's digital age, that is no longer the case. Many customer journeys only last a few minutes.

New age buyers are more likely to buy something on the same day when they use social media to help shop. Users are more likely to see a product on social media, click on the link, and buy it. They do not need to wait days or weeks to go shopping for a specific product. The consumers who use social media during their shopping process are four times more likely to spend more due to a digital shopping experience.

Social media has shortened the consumer journey, but it has also complicated it. Product research is more accessible to online buyers than ever before.

- Social proof significantly influences buying decisions

Social proof has emerged as people tend to imitate the behavior of others

consumers' friends' social media posts directly influence their purchasing decisions.

Happy and satisfied customers go about praising products on social media platforms with reviews, comments, likes, and shares. Even marketers appreciate the power of social proof. They are bringing in more transparency by sharing reviews and comments of their happy customers to increase conversions and enhance brand trust.

Social media has become an integral part of sellers and buyers alike. Brands just cannot undermine the power of social proof.

II Literature Review

Andrew T Stephen discussed the role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior

Simona Vinerean, Iuliana Cetina, Luigi Dumitrescu & Mihai Tichindelean clarified the effects of social media marketing on online consumer behavior in their article by identifying different types of users, a segmentation of these users and a linear model to examine how different predictors related to social networking sites have a positive impact on the respondents' perception of online advertisements.

Mohammad Reza Habib, Michel Laroche and Marie-Odile Richard Tested an extended model of consumer behavior in the context of social media-based brand communities and found that social media greatly influences the consumer decision making.

Stefan Zak and Maria Hasprova showed that the promotion of some products through influencers may be more advantageous than others. Influencers will have the greatest impact when buying clothes, shoes, cosmetics and, surprisingly, services. Meanwhile, people rely heavily on other factors to buy food, jewelry, and electronics, but it is not excluded that influencer marketing could affect them as well.

Sudha M. and Sheena K explored the influencer marketing techniques used by fashion industries and the impact of influencers on the consumers buying decision process in fashion industry.

Xin Jean Lim, Aifa Rozaini bt Mohd Radzol, Jun-Hwa Cheah (Jacky) and Mun Wai Wong investigated the effectiveness of social media influencers, focusing on source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and meaning transfer and found that social media influencers were exerting a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention

A study published by Lovedeep Singh Sidhu Ramandeep Saini indicated that all the stages of consumer decision making process of millennials and plurals were impacted due to social media influencers. Furthermore, the highest impact was found on need recognition stage, followed by post purchase behavior

Arpita Agnihotri & Saurabh Bhattacharya suggested that mainstream celebrities were more effective endorsers than social media influencers in both a celebrity-product congruent and incongruent condition

A research study published by Andrew N. Mason, Matt Brown, Kevin Mason & John Narcum demonstrated increased usage of social media as a tool for consumer decision-making.

III RESEARCH GAP

After analyzing the existing literature available on this topic, the researchers realized that although there is research done on this topic most of the research has largely ignored the impact of social media on rural population. In India where rural population comprises around 65 percent of total population, their omission is an irony. Most of the research was done using online questionnaire as they were addressed to the urban population which understands the nuances of language whereas very few research were conducted on offline mode using local dialect to communicate effectively with them

IV OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: -

1. To find out the awareness level of social media influencers among rural youth
2. To find out the impact of social Media influencers in the purchase decisions of rural youth

V RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: -

The present study was carried out in 27 villages of 9 tahsils of the Bikaner district which is situated in Rajasthan. The study was based on primary and secondary data which was collected through different sources. For collecting the primary data, the questionnaire survey method has been adopted. The questions

were asked in the local dialect and the sample size of 410 was used for the present study.

VI Data Interpretation:

Table:1. In this table the distribution of respondents Age Group wise which are following: -

Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
13-18	112	27.31
19-25	172	41.95
25-30	126	30.73
Total	410	

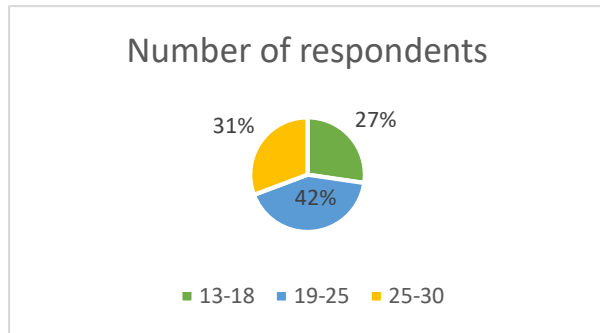
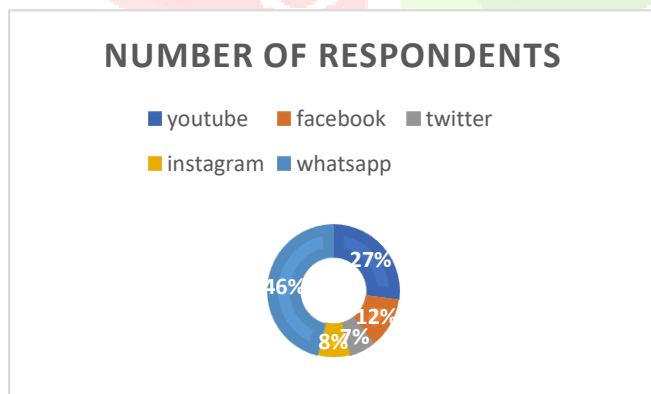


Table 2: which social media platform you use most

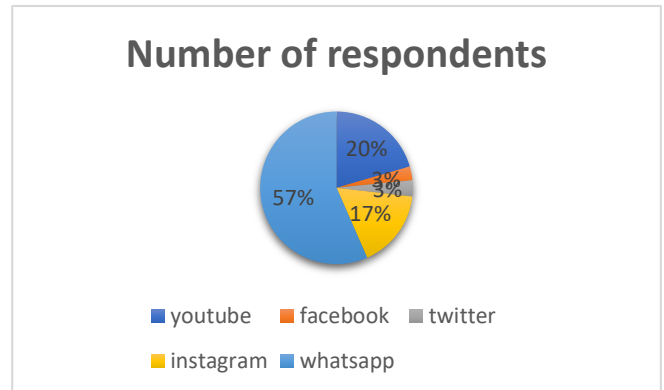
Platform	Number of respondents	Percentage
YouTube	111	27.07
Facebook	51	12.43
Twitter	27	6.58
Instagram	32	7.80
WhatsApp	189	46.09
Total	410	



Majority of the rural youth are using WhatsApp and YouTube platforms to get the news and recommendations for their purchases.

Table-3 which social media platform you trust the most when it comes to product reviews

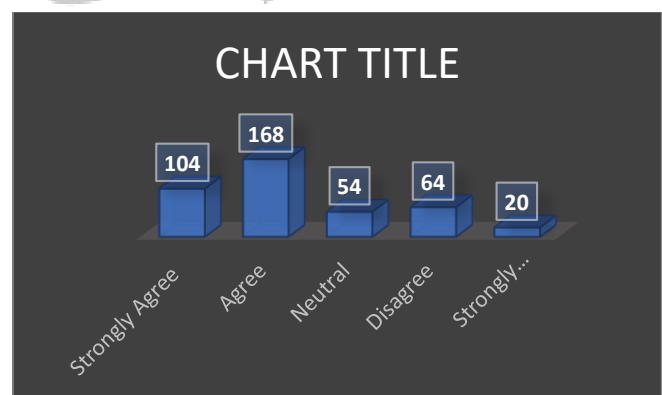
Platform	Number of respondents	Percentage
YouTube	84	20.48
Facebook	12	2.92
twitter	14	3.14
Instagram	68	16.58
WhatsApp	232	56.58
Total	410	



Through a collective analysis it can be observed that WhatsApp is the most trusted platform followed by YouTube whereas surprisingly Facebook is the least popular. This makes WhatsApp and YouTube very attractive mediums for companies to market their products and services. In especially under 20 age group Instagram is also gaining traction.

Table-4 Do you get influence by the social platform reviewers/ users in your purchase decisions

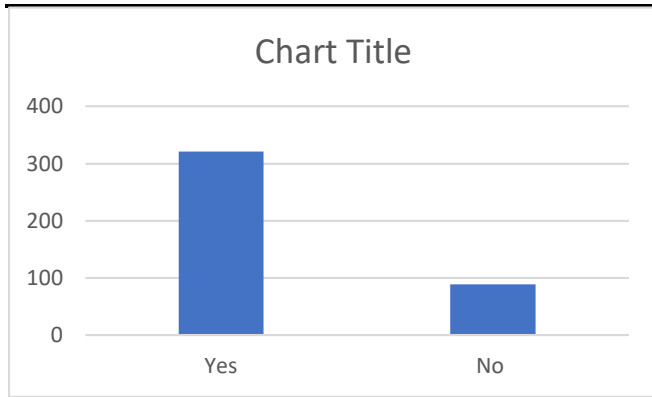
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
104	168	54	64	20	410



It is clear from the above table that rural youth decisions are impacted by the social media influencers.

Table- 5 Do you also interact with these influencers through comments/ emails regarding your aspirations?

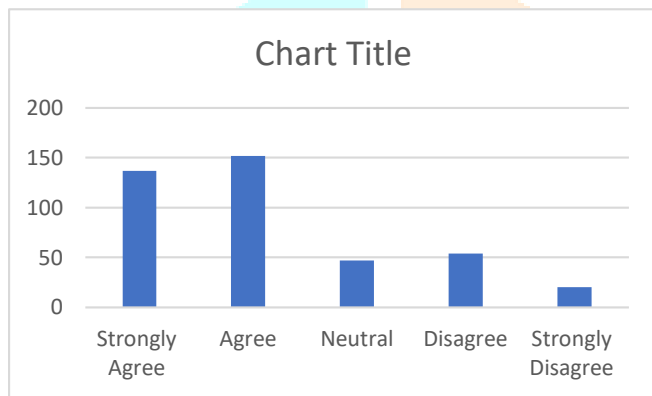
Yes	No	Total
321	89	410



It was also a revelation for researchers that rural youth populations is having a meaningful discussions with the content generators and influencers.

Table-6 Are you likely to change your decisions if a product which is liked by you has negative reviews by your favorite influencer

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
137	152	47	54	20	410



As can be seen from the above table, social media influencers play pivotal role in changing the purchase related decisions among rural population.

VII Discussions and conclusion

Its is important to underline here that in the post covid marketing landscape, things have changed rapidly in Indian consumer’s mindset. The low cost 4G internet services and affordable mobile phone prices have empowered the rural population in India and these rural youth is very active in online media. The rural population is not only aware about the social media but also, get their reviews and these social media influencers are increasing becoming sort of celebrity among rural population. It’s a high time that companies must take cognizance of these new celebrities and engage them with their marketing strategies.

The research also highlighted the role of these social media influencers in decision making among rural youth population and on a side note, some of the rural youths have also started their own channels to become influencers.

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