SHOPTING ON SOCIAL NETWORKING MEDIA – GENDER BASED CONSUMERS’ OPINION

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is tough every year and companies find several ways to reach customers and one such way is through social media. As technology rules the world, innovation opens its roots in various fields and communication is not an exemption nowadays. Social Networking Media provides platform to bring customers at one place virtually and promotes different products that suits customers’ need and requirement. However, discrimination between male and female customers exists and their attitude differs for certain dimensions of shopping. This study is designed to find out the customers’ opinion about various dimensions of social networking sites and also to identify the variations among the customers towards shopping on social networking sites with respect to their gender. Data was collected from university students who use social networking sites for shopping. Result shows that learning to shopping, enjoyableness, pleasant, easy in using credit card for shopping, fit between products and SNS are found to be significant variation between male and female respondents.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Shopping on SNS, Social Media, Advertising

Introduction

Internet is a social place which created new forum for consumers. Virtual communities, blog, and online social networking websites provide a platform to influence consumers’ purchase decisions. The growth of online social network websites has provided many different additional online activities for consumers such as blogging, chatting, gaming, and messaging. There are several social network websites available such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Plus, MySpace, Hi5 and bebo. Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. Individuals who are members of Facebook can construct dynamic profiles about themselves and share information with other individuals within the group (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Rogers (2003) found in his research that social interaction with others created new behaviors and also affected consumer’s daily purchase decisions. Diverse ranges of people have influenced consumers such as family members, friends, co-workers, and group or individual that consumers would love to compare themselves with them (Schiffman, et al., 2008). These ranges of people could be involved in consumer’s online social networks, and influence from these individuals can be online as well. Online social network websites are good platform for consumers to gather information and advices. Consumers make many product decisions every day and they would like to receive advice from others (Evans, et al., 2009).

Several research studies have been conducted in SNS and especially on Facebook and other media, to know the user opinion and their attitude. In general, how people perceive the social networking media and sites is a great question to ponder. Generally people purchase some products through online either by paying the amount in advance or after delivery. Sometimes, people do research for products online and purchase it offline. However, it is interesting and important to do research on social networking media to find out the consumers’ opinion. Further, there is a huge difference between male and female consumers in shopping for products online. Male normally purchase more compared to female. Therefore, it is important to find out the difference of opinion, if any, among the respondents towards various dimensions of social networking media as far as shopping is concerned.

Review of Literature

Davis (1989) developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Perceived Usefulness (PU) is a significant factor affecting the acceptance of an information system (Davis et al., 1989). There are five parts in this model: They are Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), Perceived
Usefulness (PU), Attitude towards Using (ATU), Behavioral Intention to Use (BI), and Actual Usage (AU). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) consider that consumers do transaction through technology mainly for two reasons (1) Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and (2) Perceived Usefulness (PU). This model has been widely used by the researchers to explain the user acceptance of technology in different types (Bahmanziari et al., 2003; Pavlou, 2003). Consumers prefer online shopping then traditional store shopping for various reasons. In particular there is no time constraint of online shopping, consumers can order for any products or services whenever they want. For this reason consumers get sufficient time to think and then give the order (Delafrooz et al., 2009). In fact in online shopping context there vendors can display thousands of products on website and for these reasons consumers can buy product from lots of choice and with less price than traditional store shopping (Harn, et al., 2006; Delafrooz and Paim, 2011).

**Shopping and Social Networking Sites**

Social media play increasingly important roles as a marketing platform. Some social networks have geared up to provide shopping services. Facebook added a shopping application that enables users to search for products they want to buy, then share their opinions of those products with other Facebook members. Facebook addition of shopping services to social networking sites is in the nascent stage in the United States, but social networking sites in some other countries employ shopping services aggressively. For example, Cyworld.co.kr, a popular Korean social network that attracts more than one-third of the country's population and 90% of people in their 20s, carries both real and virtual items. It generates approximately $300,000 daily from individual users by selling virtual items such as music, avatars, and customized profile layouts. Although U.S. social networking sites provide users with similar items, such as music and profile layouts, they usually are provided for free. Cyworld also generates revenues from selling real items, such as clothes and fashion accessories.

Research suggests that consumers rely on two different sets of values in making their shopping decisions: hedonic and utilitarian (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Babin and Darden 1995). Batra and Ahtola (1990) defined these values as follows: "(1) consummatory affective (hedonic) gratification from sensory attributes, and (2) instrumental, utilitarian reasons." Hedonic shopping value thus reflects the value received from the multisensory, fantasy-related, and emotive feeling a consumer receives from a particular product, whereas utilitarian shopping value focuses on the acquisition of products and/or information in an efficient manner, which reflects a more task-oriented, cognitive, unemotional outcome (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994). Utilitarian value therefore is more associated with cognitive aspects of attitudes, such as economic benefit (Zeithaml 1988), convenience, and time savings (Teo, 2001).

Online shoppers tend to seek utilitarian values rather than hedonic values (Reibstein 2002), because online shopping services lack multisensory attributes. The primary utilitarian values that online shoppers seek include the convenience of locating and comparing merchants, evaluating price/quality ratios, and conserving temporal and psychological resources (Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon 2001; Grewal, et al., 2003). And also, the duration of e-purchase for a longer period have high degree of opinion about shopping on SNS (Magesh, et al., 2013). Adding virtual items to social networking sites could expand the value of online shopping. Shopping for virtual items is more relevant to hedonic than to utilitarian values, because consumers would not purchase virtual items out of necessity. Thus, whether a social networking site sells real or virtual items may determine consumers' attitudes toward shopping on that site. Considering the different nature of real and virtual items in a shopping context, this study explores the differences and similarities between factors that affect shopping for real and virtual items on social networking sites.

**Objective of Study**

- To find out the consumers attitude towards Social Networking sites
- To identify the significant variation among the respondents with respect to their gender towards various dimension of social networking sites

**Methodology**

This section of the report is an attempt to explain as clearly as possible the steps and procedure of the work. The research design used in this study is descriptive research design. The population for this study is any customer who uses social networking sites. The sample for this study is post graduate students from a reputed university in Chennai as the students are familiar with social networking sites and purchase products through SNS especially Facebook. For the purpose of this study, convenient sampling method is used to identify the sample from university in Chennai region. The data were collected from the students.
through a well structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of several multiple choice questions and also questions related to shopping on social networking sites. The questions that measure the shopping behaviour of respondents are measured using five point Likert scale. For a population of more than a lakh, Van der Lans (2005) suggested a minimum of 400 samples enough to be surveyed. In order to increase the accuracy and also to reduce the non-response from the respondents, an additional 25 percent has been added which come around 500.

**Pilot Study**

In order to identify the difficulty in filling the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 50 samples from colleges nearby to the researcher’s residence area. While filling the questionnaire, the respondents felt difficult on some terms. The researcher noted down the queries raised by the respondents and carried out the correction after completing the pilot study.

**Procedure**

The data were collected from the respondents through a structured questionnaire with different types of questions. Five point Likert scale has been used to measure the attitude of consumers about the use of social networking media. Apart from attitude measuring statements, few statements relating to the socio-economic background of the respondents have been asked. After going though the pilot study to carryout corrections, the main questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the people who know about social networking sites in a reputed University in Chennai region. The distribution has been done based on convenient sampling method and the researcher explained the need of the study to the respondents and sought their cooperation. 500 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and collected the entire questionnaire from them. After collecting the questionnaire, the researcher found that 7 questionnaire are improperly filled, and hence rejected them. Finally, the number of questionnaires ended with 497. The data were analysed through SPSS package. The analysis and interpretation of results are given in the following chapter.

The data reliability has been performed using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient. Since the alpha coefficient value obtained is 0.8249 which is a satisfactory value. Hence, the data collected for this study is reliable.

**Analysis and Discussion**

The data collected through survey method are analyzed using SPSS package. It is observed from the study that 63% of the respondents are male and 47% of the respondents are female.

**Table: Variation among the respondents with respect to their gender towards various dimensions of social networking media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Male Mean</th>
<th>Male SD</th>
<th>Female Mean</th>
<th>Female SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shopping services on the social networking websites will be easy to use</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to shop in the SNS will be easy for me</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>5.130</td>
<td>0.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping service on the social network will be useful for me</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.904</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping service on the social network will me more efficient</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.407</td>
<td>0.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping services on the social network will me my life easier</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping on social networking website is more enjoyable</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>5.238</td>
<td>0.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual process of shopping on the social networking website will be pleasant</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>4.792</td>
<td>0.040*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping on social networking website will always have fun</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping on social networking website is interesting</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using credit cards to make purchase on the social networking sites would be safe</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>4.491</td>
<td>0.048*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making payments on the social networking website would be secure</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>1.318</td>
<td>0.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a good fit between the social networking website and each of the marketable items</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>4.547</td>
<td>0.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the social networking website to shop for each item would be a good idea</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table shows the mean and standard deviations of various dimensions of the shopping aspects of social networking sites with respect to gender of the respondents. It is found that easiness in learning to shopping (F = 5.130; p = 0.035), enjoyableness (F = 5.238; p = 0.027), shopping process is pleasant (F = 4.792; p = 0.040), usage of credit card to purchase is safe (F = 4.491; p = 0.048), and fit between the products marketed and SNS (F = 4.547; p = 0.042) have significant effect, which means that the respondents differ significantly towards the various dimensions of social networking sites with respect to their gender. It is found that male respondents (mean = 3.33; SD = 0.060) feel that the learning to shop in the SNS is easy for them compared to female respondents (mean = 2.74; SD = 0.52). Regarding enjoyableness, female respondents (mean =3.03; SD = 0.81) feel that they are more enjoyable than male respondents (mean = 2.73; SD = 1.03). In addition to that male respondents feel a pleasant shopping on social networking sites (mean = 3.27; SD = 0.52) compared to female respondents (mean = 2.94; SD = 0.42). Male respondents (mean = 3.40; SD = 0.44) opine that using credit cards to make purchase on social networking sites would be safe whereas female respondents (mean = 3.02; SD = 0.45) opinion is comparatively less than male respondents. Male respondents (mean = 3.34; SD = 0.78) opinion towards fit between the social networking website and each of the marketable item is comparatively higher than female respondents (mean = 2.88; SD = 0.97).

Findings and suggestions

It is found that male respondents feel that the learning to shop in the SNS is easy for them compared to female respondents. Regarding enjoyableness, female respondents feel that they are more enjoyable than male respondents. In addition to that male respondents feel a pleasant shopping on social networking sites compared to female respondents. Male respondents opine that using credit cards to make purchase on social networking sites would be safe whereas female respondents’ opinion is comparatively less than male respondents. Male respondents’ opinion towards fit between the social networking website and each of the marketable items is comparatively higher than female respondents.

The role of social media in marketing is to use it as a communication tool that makes marketers accessible to customers interested in the marketers’ products and to make them visible to those that don’t know about their product. The fact is that social media is so diversified that it can be used in whatever way best suits the interest and the needs of business. With social networking tools, it should be easier than ever to stay in touch, organized, and well-connected. Although the situation is rapidly changing, scholars still have a limited understanding of these sites. Hence, it should be included as one of the topics in their curriculum. It is a medium managed by the consumer to a great extent. Any content generated can easily be transferred, appraised and analyzed resulting in increased customer value. It therefore requires very careful planning and most importantly transparency in the affairs of business. There is little possibility of manipulation of information by the marketers because the locus of the control of the customer. To avoid the problem arises out of the social media advertisements there must be a separate forum for controlling and ministering all social media.

Conclusion

New trends are emerging in the field of marketing every year with the development of technology. People are increasingly using the Internet to communicate with others, elicit information, find recommendations, interact with associates etc. Social marketing i.e. marketing over the social networks via the Internet may prove to be a cost-effective new tool for any business; small or big, seeking to build a loyal customer base by understanding the needs of the customers. These networks are freely available to everyone and they generate huge amount of data everyday, which is of the interest to the marketers. By carefully understanding the behavior of the people, it allows companies to target specific customer segments and enhance their servicing capabilities. These sites are fast becoming important value adding, cost-reducing marketing tools, particularly in enabling small and medium size start-ups to more effectively compete in the global online market. It will be interesting to see how the online marketing world is affected as Facebook and Twitter continue to add many business-friendly applications, virtual marketplaces, and direct-purchase features of products and services.
References