

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON THE SALES GROWTH OF FASHION RETAILERS DEALING IN APPARELS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - The research topic has been chosen with an aim to provide a marketing solution to the retailers dealing in apparels so that they can deal with the current scenario of the market. **Design/methodology/approach** - Primary data was collected from about 21 retailers of Jammu city of Jammu and Kashmir.

Findings- Retailers think that social media is an easy tool to use and also it is the best marketing tool to be used and by using social media platforms they can easily reach their customers.

Research limitations/implications- This research is limited to only those retailers who are dealing in fashion apparels only.

Practical implications – The research reveals that those retailers who are not using social media as a marketing tool should adopt it for its low cost, wider reach, user friendliness and for feedback of customers.

Social implications – This research will help small scale retailers situated in small towns of India to adopt latest methods of marketing for increasing their customer base, profit margins, global visibility etc.

Originality/value – This study is original and carried out in a major city of Jammu and Kashmir region of India named Jammu.

Keywords- Social Media, Apparels, Retailers.

INTRODUCTION

In today's scenario, social media has an important role to play in people's daily life. The concept of Web 2.0, also known as social media was introduced by O'Reilly in 2005. This development in the internet arrived with new interactive technologies and online applications which allowed users to create their personal online networks through which they can share information, one to one conversation. Consequently, many companies these days realise the advantages and benefits of social media and they are trying really hard to be active on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp.

India's retail sector is growing rapidly not only in Tier I cities but also in the Tier II and Tier III cities. The retail penetration is also expected to grow to 18% by 2021. Many new companies have entered in India's retail sector, like Wal-Mart Private Ltd. In order to improve the retail space of India, the Government of India has also taken many initiatives like 100% FDI

is allowed in the online retail of goods and services, through the automatic route and 51% FDI on multibrand retail (Foundation, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This research has been done to analyse the influence of social media as a marketing tool on sales of retailers dealing in clothing.

Literature Review

Irene Michel Abrons in their study found that owners of small retail clothing businesses must overcome identified barriers to social media marketing in order to be competitive. The study revealed that the participants had not faced much blockades in using social media marketing. (Abrons, 2018). Christine Adhiambo Odhiambo in their study analysed whether social media is more effective than traditional media with respect to brand management. (Odhiambo, 2012). Olabanji. A Oni, P. M. Shumba and Tafadzwa Matiza, University of Limpopoin their study tried to find out the influence of social media marketing on the revenue of the retailers based in Polokwane area of South Africa. (Oni, 2014). Maria-del-Carmen, Carlota Lorenzo and Efthymios Constantinides conducted a study to explore the aspects inducing the implementation process and the degree of engagement of social media as an online marketing tactic by Spanish retailers. (Maria-del-Carmen, 2008). Qingqing Chang, Yuqi Peng and Paul D. Berger, Bentley University, USA, conducted a study to find the relationship between various social media activities of the company and its sales. (Qingqing chang, 2018). Malik Shahzad Shabbir, Muhammad Saarim Ghazi and Atta Rasool Mehmood conducted a study to analyse the influence of social media applications on small entrepreneurs and how these small business proprietors get driven to use the social media applications.. (Shabir, 2016). Sarah Lynne Cox in his study attempted to understand how a small business owner recognizes the need for using social media to grow the business and to engage consumers. (Social media marketing in a small business, 2012). Mariama Mannehin his study tried to analyze the influence of social media on fast fashion multinational businesses and why these corporations use social media strategies to meet their long-term objectives. Four international fast fashion companies based in Sweden like Bik Bok, River Island, Monki and Vera Moda were interviewed. (Manneh, 2017). Tina P. Singh and Dr. Ratna Sinha, in their study attempted to make understand the benefits, impact and importance of social media on business performance and evolution.. (Singh, 2017). Udayangani Rathnayaka in his study tried to identify the effect of digital marketing with distinct reference to retail fashion industry.. (Rathnayaka, 2018). Hien Cao, Haaga Helia, 2018. The chief purpose of this paper is to examine the affordable retail brands in Europe and to evaluate the impact of the e-commerce on these brick-and-mortar stores from the point of view of both retailer and shopper. (Cao, 2018). Sita Mishra, in his study analysed the social media mind set of consumers in India and how useful it is for a marketer to market through social networking sites. (Mishra, 2015). Efthymios Constantinides, Carlota Lorenzo Romero and Miguel A. Gomez Boria, 2008 in their paper explained about the new face of internet which is known as social media or Web 2.0 and identifies its importance as a marketing tool for retailers. (Maria-del-Carmen, 2008). Abu Bashar and Irshad Ahmad, 2012. This paper studied the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and also analysed how social media helps consumers in making the buying decision. (Ahmad, Effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool, 2012). Bruno Schivinski and Dariusz Dabrowski in their paper explained the effect of social media on the consumer perception

of brands. (Dabrowski, 2016). Sam and Tahir (2009) emphasized that trust and empathy were most influential factors while purchasing online, during their study conducted in Malaysia on using websites for selling air tickets by low-cost airlines. Weisberg(etal), 2011 demonstrated the important role of social context in online purchasing. Trust and social presence were considered important mediators in online buying.Sangvikar , kolte & Pawardid a study on unorganised and organised retail sector in India with a focus on Pune city and found that shopping malls and big stores had a impact on the sales of local Kirana stores as they were offering more sales promotion schemes and suggested local retailers to use home delivery, credit facility etc. to reduce the competition.Varma (etal), 2019 studied the effect of privacy, trust, security and organisation's reputation on buying intention of consumers through e-commerce. The study was conducted in Maharashtra region of India and it was found that trust was major factor while buying online.Varma, M., Kumar, V., Sangvikar, B., Pawar, A. (2020) in their study have emphasised on the influence of online shopping advertisements on consumer purchase intentions and buying behavior. Banks, M. S., Onita, C. G., & Meservy, T. O. (2010).in their study have focussed on the fact that online social media websites have influenced many users through providing social interaction opportunities in multiple ways but the negative thing is that a person's personal information can be misused. Dwyer, C., Hiltz, S., & Passerini, K. (2007) in their study conducted an online survey fortwo popular website, Facebook and Myspace, where perceptions of trust and privacy were compared.

Hypothesis Development

H₀-There is a significant increase in sales of fashion retailers using social media tools

Obectives of the Research

1. To examine the business profile of the retailers using social media in Jammu city
2. To assess the retailer's perspective about marketing through social media
3. To identify the factors influencing social media tool choices of retailers
4. To analyse the influence of social media marketing on the sales growth of fashion retailers dealing in apparels.

Research Methodology

Primary data was collected from about 21 retailers of Jammu city of Jammu and Kashmir. Those retailers were chosen who are using social media apps for selling their products and services. Some of the retailers were selling exclusively on social media and some were selling offline also. The retailers of Parade, Channi Himmat etc., all major shopping hubs of Jammu city were covered. The retailers were personally interviewed by using a questionnaire. The research process involved defining the objectives of the research, selecting the markets in Jammu city for collecting the data, preparing a questionnaire, collecting the data from the retailers of different market areas of Jammu and analysis and interpretation of the data. Jammu is a Tier 3 city in Jammu and Kashmir of India. So retailers using social media apps can provide convenience to such customers whobelong to remote areas like Kashmir, Rajouri, Poonch, Doda , Kishtwar , Leh and Kargil. Also, all the fruits and dry fruits like walnuts, apples, apricots etc. are sent from Jammu wholesalersto other parts of the country and for exports. So questions were framed regarding the four objectives: to examine the business profile of the retailers using social media in Jammu city, toassess the retailer's perspective about marketing through social media, to

identify the factors influencing social media tool choices of retailers and to analyse the influence of social mediemarketing on the sales growth of fashion retailers dealing in apparels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As per the interpretation of the table I, that 43 % of the retailers are using social media in their1styear. This reveals that using social media for business purpose is relatively a new phenomenon for the retailers of Jammu city, Jammu and Kashmir, India. 3 retailers out of the sample are dealing with items of kids, 7 are dealing with women, 5 with men, 5 with men &women, and 1 is dealing with all three. As far as social media usage is concerned 33% of the retailers out of the given sample size are using both WhatsApp and Facebook, 19% are using WhatsApp only, 14% are using Facebook only, 10% are using Instagram and Facebook, 10% are using, 10 % are using Instagram only and only 5% are using Twitter. 52% of the retailers from the given sample use social media tools weekly, 29% use daily, and 19% use monthly. So, all retailers are using social media apps more frequently as compared to using it occasionally.

Retailers in the given sample perceive that the social media tools increase brand recognition giving it a value of 4.01(perceived mean score). So, retailers want to use or are using social media because it enhances their brand recognition as most of the millennials are using these. They have also given higher mean scores of 4.09 to increased visibility on social media, gives more conversion opportunities to business and social media increases customer satisfaction as it is a good communication platform. So, it is evident that retailers who are using social media perceive that greater visibility of their products on social media leads to higher conversion rates of sales of products. They also perceive that as social media is a better communication platform so the satisfaction of customers is enhanced as there is immediate feedback and two-way communication. The highest score of 4.23 has been given to Social media marketing is the most cost-effective tool of advertising as compared to other means which signifies that using social media as marketing tool is much cheaper as compared to other advertising and marketing tools like magazines, television etc. Next higher score of 4.13 has been given to social media is mostly used by millennial which are most brand loyal so it increases brand loyalty which indicates the popularity of social media among millennial and hence increased brand loyalty. Lower scores have been given to other factors like social media increases inbound traffic which is otherwise limited to usual customers, satisfied customers are more vocal on social media which enhances brand authority, Studying the profile of customers leads to market place insights and social media helps in maintaining reputation of brands. So, the retailers perceive that these factors have less influence on buyers as customers might not necessarily think that using social media is only for reputed products, or it can help in providing much insights of market as customers may not necessarily share their feelings. Satisfied customers may notnecessarily speak very good about the brand. Social media is also preferred as it has globalreach as compared to local tools like billboards, newspaper etc.

Retailers prefer social media with greater reach as they give a high score of 4.50 to it.According to them Facebook has greater reach as compared to other social media. They thinkthat social media like WhatsApp and Facebook are more user friendly as compared to others. The social media which are more popular among millennials are Instagram and Facebook asthey like sharing their pictures etc., so retailers also gave it a high score of 4.38. Retailers thinkthat Facebook is the most important tool in attracting new customers while WhatsApp is more relevant for retaining old customers. Facebook helps in studying profile of customers ascompared to others as there is complete information about them. Facebook has much higher

global reach, they perceive as compared to others. They prefer WhatsApp and Instagram for uploading photos and videos.

As per Table IV, all the retailers taken in given sample are of the view that their sales have increased after using social media. Hence this proves the hypothesis H1 that sales of fashion retailers have increased after using social media as marketing tool.

Most of the retailers are using Facebook, followed by WhatsApp and then Instagram as per this survey. Also, as a combination both Facebook and WhatsApp are majorly used as marketing tools. As was found in a study where four international fast fashion companies based in Sweden like Bik Bok, River Island, Monki and Vera Moda were interviewed. The research found that all the four companies were using social media as a marketing tool and Instagram was the most dominant of all (Manneh, 2017). During the survey, it was found that retailers in the Parade area are using mostly Facebook or WhatsApp or both whereas in the area of Channi Himmat, the retailers in WaveMall are using mostly Instagram. Majority of them are not facing any difficulty in using social media platforms but few of the retailers are facing difficulty as one of the studies revealed that the participants had not faced much blockades in using social media marketing. The study concluded that by using social media, small businesses will remain competitive and stable and neglecting social media will become a key business threat for small firms. (Abrons, 2018). Mostly the retailers are facing difficulty in using Facebook like regularly uploading the content, competitors, negative comments etc. Most of the retailers post only photos on social media platforms and some of the retailers post both photos and videos. None of the retailers post only video. Retailers think that social media is an easy tool to use and also it is the best marketing tool to be used and by using social media platforms they can easily reach their customers. As confirmed from the study of Abu Bashar and Irshad Ahmad, 2012. Which studied the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and also analysed how social media helps consumers in making the buying decision. They are also unanimously of the view that it has increased their sales which is in confirmation with the study of Olabanji. A Oni, P. M. Shumba and Tafadzwa Matiza, University of Limpopo, South Africa where it was concluded that social media had a positive influence on the turnover of the retailers in Polokwane. (Oni, 2014). As well as another study where it was concluded that the sales of retailers got increased by using the social media as more people got to know about the Food brand (Qingqing chang, 2018). Retailers prefer social media with greater reach. Social media marketing is the most cost-effective tool of advertising as compared to other means. The study reveals that using social media tools for business purpose is a new phenomenon for retailers of Jammu city, Jammu & Kashmir, India. Social media is mostly used by millennials which are most brand loyal so it increases brand loyalty. Retailers prefer social media tools which are popular among millennials. Retailers prefer social media tools which are user friendly.

Limitations

This research is limited to only those retailers who are dealing in fashion apparels. This lacks in collecting data from those retailers who are not using the social media. The research lacks in assessing all the social media platforms because only four social media platforms namely Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp have been used for the study.

Recommendations

This research includes small, medium as well as large scale retail businesses. For small scale retailers, it is recommended that they should make a proper strategy for using social media marketing to gain the profits. The small business owners should also regularly measure their outcomes. The medium and large-scale retailers should regularly monitor their social media accounts for both short term as well as long term benefits. The retailers should also find that specific time zone which is best for posting on the social media, based on the number of views, likes, comments etc. As this research is mainly based on apparels, so the retailers should use that social media which provides the best visual. As far as social media platforms are concerned, they should try to be more user friendly, should try to be popular among millennials, should increase their visual appeal and be cost effective.

Policy Implications

This research will help small scale retailers situated in small towns of India to adopt latest methods of marketing for increasing their customer base, profit margins, global visibility etc. They also perceive that as social media is a better communication platform so the satisfaction of customers is enhanced as there is immediate feedback and two-way communication. So, from this research it is evident that firms using social media as a marketing tool can have higher conversion rates, greater visibility, better communication, cost effective advertisement as compared to other tools and has a global reach as compared to local newspapers, billboards etc. Retailers and small business managers can adopt social media tools seeing the results of this research, as is evident that small businesses in India are going to gain lot and that also in cost effective and efficient manner by using social media marketing tools. As far as managerial implications for social media platforms are concerned, they should try to be more user friendly, should try to be popular among millennials, should increase their visual appeal and be cost effective. The contribution to literature of this paper is that use of social media will enhance competitiveness of small retailers and it's less or no use will keep them lagging in terms of profits and visibility, neglecting social media hence can become a threat for small businesses.

CONCLUSION

This research is done to find out whether the retailer's business increases in terms of sales after using social media marketing or not. Through the results and findings, it can be concluded that social media positively impacts sales turnover of the retailers of Jammu city, dealing in apparels. As per the results, social media is considered as the most viable tool to be used for marketing.

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Table 1 – Business profile of retailers

Business Particulars	No. of retailers	Percentage
Business Experience (in years)		
Less than 1 year	4	19%
1-5 Years	9	43%
5-10 years	5	24%

More than 10 years	3	14%
Target Audience		
Kids	3	14%
Women	7	33%
Men	5	24%
Men & Women	5	24%
Men, Women and Kids	1	5%
Social media usage (in years)		
Using Instagram only	2	10%
Using WhatsApp only	4	19%
Using Facebook only	3	14%
Using Twitter only	1	5%
Using Instagram and WhatsApp	2	10%
Using Instagram and Facebook	2	10%
Using Facebook and WhatsApp	7	33%
Frequency of using SocialMedia tools		
Daily	6	29%
Weekly	11	52%
Monthly	4	19%
yearly	0	0%
Occasionally	0	0%

Source: Author's own calculations

Table II- Retailer's perspective about marketing through social media

Statement	Perceived Mean Score
Social media tools increase your brand recognition	4.01
Social media increases inbound traffic which is otherwise limited to usual customers	3.22
Increased visibility on social media, gives more conversion opportunities to business	4.09

Social media increases customer satisfaction as it is a good communication platform	4.09
Social media is mostly used by millennials which are most brand loyal so it increases brand loyalty	4.13
Satisfied customers are more vocal on social media which enhances brand authority	3.21`
Social media marketing is the most cost effective tool of advertising as compared to other means	4.23
Studying the profile of customers leads to marketplace insights	3.89
Social media helps in maintaining reputation of brands	3.76
Social media has a global reach	4.01

Source: Author's own calculations

Table III- Factors influencing social media tool choices of retailers

Factor	Perceived Mean Score
Retailers prefer social media with greater reach	4.50
Retailers prefer social media tools which are less costly	3.23
Retailers prefer social media tools which are user friendly	4.29
Retailers prefer social media tools which are popular among millennials	4.38
Retailers prefer social media tools where they can upload photos and videos	4.45
Retailers prefer social media tools which help in attracting new customers	4.16
Retailers prefer social media tools which help in retaining existing customers	3.41`
Retailers prefer social media which help in studying the profile of customers	3.89
Retailers prefer social media which have a global reach	3.56

Source: Author's own calculations

Table IV- Percentage increase in sales of retailers after using social media

No. of retailers	Percentage increase in sales
5	20%
6	30%
4	10%
6	15%

Source: Author’s own calculations

Fig I: Apparel Market Size

