Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Perception

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The world today is driven by technology. Communication has migrated from personal to gadget based. The dynamism taking place every hour is driving us to strive harder and harder to improve our quality and perspectives of life. With the onset of digital technology paving way in our lives, social media is playing a mind boggling role. The reliability quotient on any aspect is with respect to the social media posts, be it facebook, instagram, whats app etc. The impact of marketing a product or service through the social media has caught up like fire. The trend of marketing has evolved from the traditional method of door to door canvassing of products to digitalization of marketing strategy getting it closer to the consumers. Surge in Consumerism has led to the market being agile and are catering to the respective target groups. Digital Marketing is unlike an instant solution to any service or product to be accepted, it requires social media marketing or search engine optimization to become visible.

What is Social Media?

Sharing of information through the virtual platform is what we mean by social media. Amidst the various technology available for communication , the process has become simpler and faster through social media. A pertinent question lingering in the minds of the people is the reliability of the information. Nevertheless it has crept into every walk of life.

Social Media Marketing ?

SMM can be defined as using the social media and the networks to promote the market for a product or service. This mode helps to maintain the existing customers and reach out to the newer ones and promote their culture and mission. They give promotional offers to existing customers on introduction of new customers. This enables them be capture the market faster and in a swift manner. Digital marketing is one such technique which adopts social media to persuade and influence the market.

Digital Marketing, in a common man's vocabulary can be explained as any form of marketing that uses electronic devices to reach out to the consumers in promoting or sale of the product. With more and more avenues available, online marketing is being reached out not only through text and multimedia messages along with emails, social media, and web-based advertising, as marketing channels that are also in vogue.

Being the most effective form, digital marketing has been discovered to be a trending tool in the marketing business. The results of which are obviously visible. Online leads have been created and targets met by businesses by overcoming the marketing limitations. This field is a miracle in the advanced technology that has escalated the business prospects across the world to the optimum.
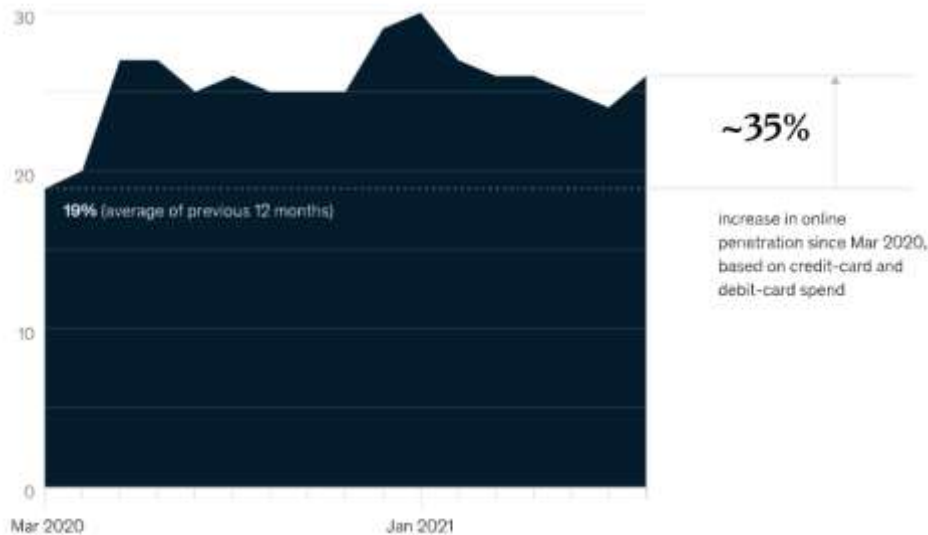
Online Marketing

Online Marketing, being a subset of digital marketing, utilizes online digital devices to market their products. The primary benefit of online channels for marketing is the possibility to measure the influence of any given channel as well as how visitors interact with the online facility

Provided, also observed to have magnified with the pandemic. A small example of increased invasion of online marketing is cited below:

Online penetration increased with the onset of COVID-19 and has remained about 35 percent above pre-COVID-19 levels.

Retail-oriented online credit-card and debit-card spend, % of total[1]

19% (average of previous 12 months)

~35%

increase in online penetration since Mar 2020, based on credit-card and debit-card spend

Mar 2020   Jan 2021

[1]Includes the following retailer categories: Amazon, apparel, club stores, cosmetics, discount stores, drugstores, grocery stores, home stores, mass stores, pet shops, restaurants, software and electronics.
[2]Average monthly online penetration from Mar 2019 to Feb 2020.
Source: Affinity Solutions credit-card and debit-card spend data for Feb 2019–Jun 2021; Facteus debit-card spend data for Feb 2019–Jun 2021; Stackline Amazon spend data for Feb 2019–Jun 2021

Online Marketing is complemented by the Social Media apps which has transformed the global market scenario. Social Media is a very distinct and trending marketing strategy to establish brands in the market. This has helped the online market to increase the economics of the industry. The dynamics of the digital marketing is deep rooted in the minds of the consumers and we see the reflections of the same in its outcome.

It is very evident that digital marketing ensures the dissemination of truthful, clear and accurate content from influencers and endorsers. In tune with this, the employees and their family members endorse the content and exhibit their loyalty as well. Brands must be conscious of the fact that while using a personality to market, the brand and the speaker must ensure that there is no conflict of interest. The brands must be vigilant about their ambassadors' compliance, as the ultimate responsibility lies with the brand.

The five pillars of social media are :

- **Strategy:** This helps in determining goals, the planning of social media channels and content that can be used and shared.
- **Planning and Publishing:** Business establishments must chalk out the structure of the content, whether it will hold videos or illustrations etc. to finalise the medium.
- **Listening and Engagement:** Viewing and analyzing the comments of the users or , customers regarding the posts, brands, and any other business assets. This will necessarily require the social media engagement tool.
- **Analytics and Reporting:** In order to comprehend the reach of the posts, one has to be active on social media.
- **Advertising:** Procuring media space for posting ads on social media for the growth and development of a brand.

Review of Literature

Social media marketing, according to Weaver (2012), can be explained as the social media platforms used by the marketers to reach out their promotions or information to the desired market. Brand awareness among the existing as well as potential customers is escalated with the help of such sites, to the extent that the whole business is promoted by using social media marketing.

Mandiberg (2012) acknowledged that social media marketing is based on web based media sites and these contribute to the various marketing tools, informing the people about the personality of the brand or product. Social media marketing thrives on the creative content that will attract huge customers and create an impact on their decision making and purchasing protocols.

Karan Shah, in Business World said since more than a year, covid-19 pandemic had hit the market and the situations have yet not come to normal. Businesses operate without a glitch as we're adapting to the new normal which testifies that everything is shifting online. While discussing about online, the immediate pop up that comes to mind is digital marketing. The digital landscape has changed since covid has positively impacted the digital marketing industry.

With the rapid growth of social media accessible on the mobiles, says Schivinski&Dabrowski, it has become an important medium for retail enterprises to carry out their sales and marketing activities through this much evident channel.

Retail enterprises are choosing mobile apps unlike individual enterprises who are restricted to their subjective feelings. A comprehensive analysis of the expected use of social media, its results, business benefits, and possible costs are essential to implement product related information and brand promotions (Schivinski&Dabrowski, 2016).

According to Birbahadur Kathayat in his article, "The Impact of Coronavirus on Digital Marketing and Effective Solutions," expresses that Consumer behavior drastically changed the scenario of the market. All of us are witnessing an altogether different consumer today. Markets being closed, necessities being sold at 30% to 50% increased rates or are out of stock. Customers are forced to stay home – quite a few of have forfeited their employment resulting in them having a limited source of earning.

The framework of social networks has brought in changes in the ideas and trials in marketing, changing in particular the conventional mode of correspondence, which has become a significant marketing model (Chu and Kim, 2011)

Research Problem

- Growth of Social Media Marketing to direct sales.
- Increasing belief in social media posts.
- Consumers are influenced by the social media marketing strategy.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted

- to understand the influence of social media on the target audience.
- to understand the reliability of social media marketing on the product information.
- to understand the perception of the consumers about the product based on social media posts.

Research Methodology

The theoretical framework :

• Uses and Gratification Theory discusses the effects of the media on people. Digital marketing is carried out on an online platform, hence the media used plays a significant role in influencing the buyers.

• Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework for understanding how the environment is shaped and shapes the people. The peer pressure most of the times dictates our actions and establishing the facts becomes easier.

• Socio Cultural Theory explains that the mental abilities of the people are dependent on the way the people interact with others and the culture they live in. Social environment and reference group motivates the members to pursue what their socio-cultural group professes.

This study is specific to customers using the digital platform and who indulge in online shopping. A framed questionnaire was circulated among 150 respondents to understand the use of digital marketing platform for purchasing the commodities or services.

This research shows that facebook, linkedin, google+, twitter, youtube etc. are the independent variables and customer perception is the dependent variable, in its conceptual framework.
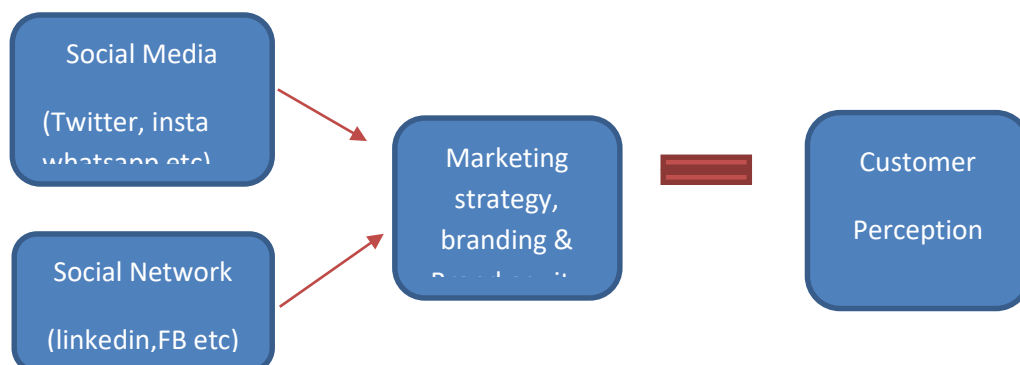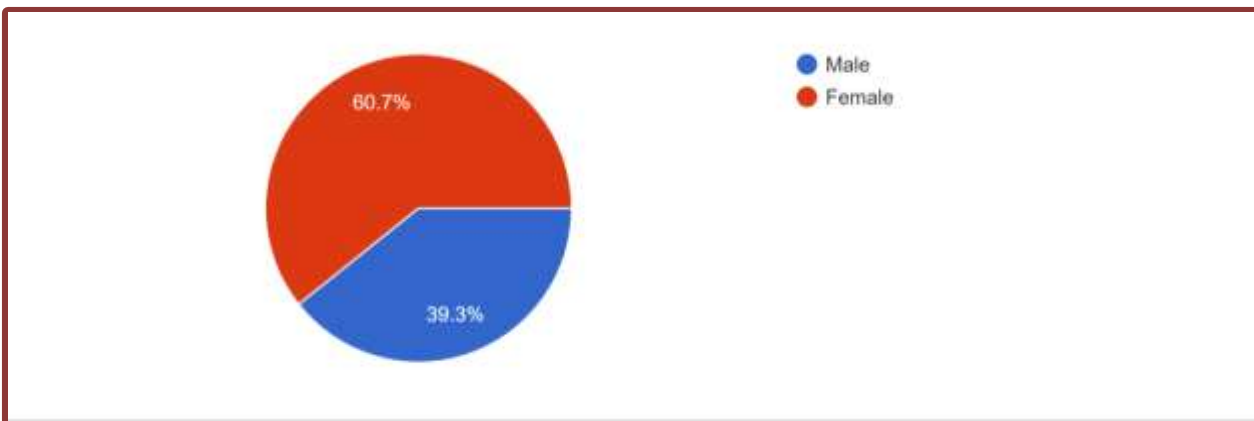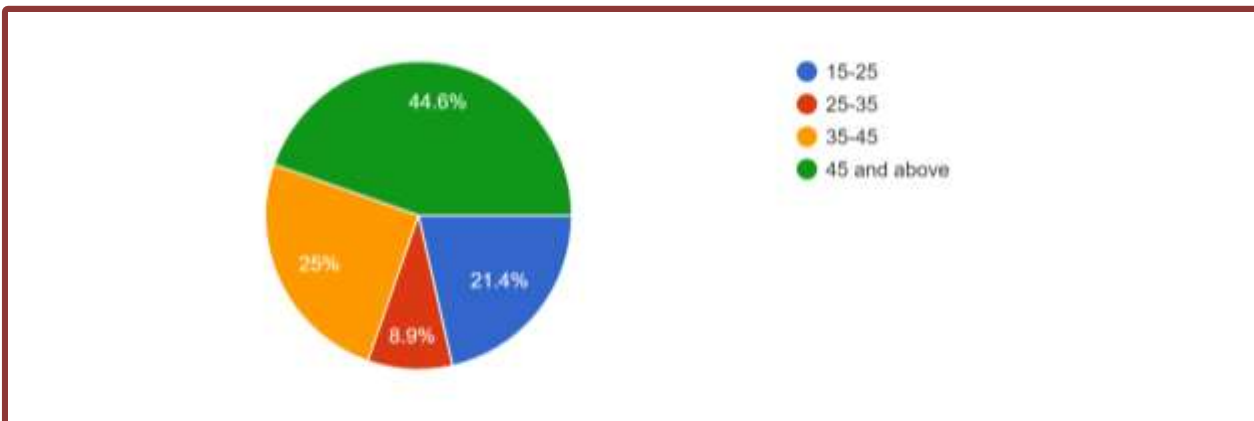
Analysis of Data

Occupation
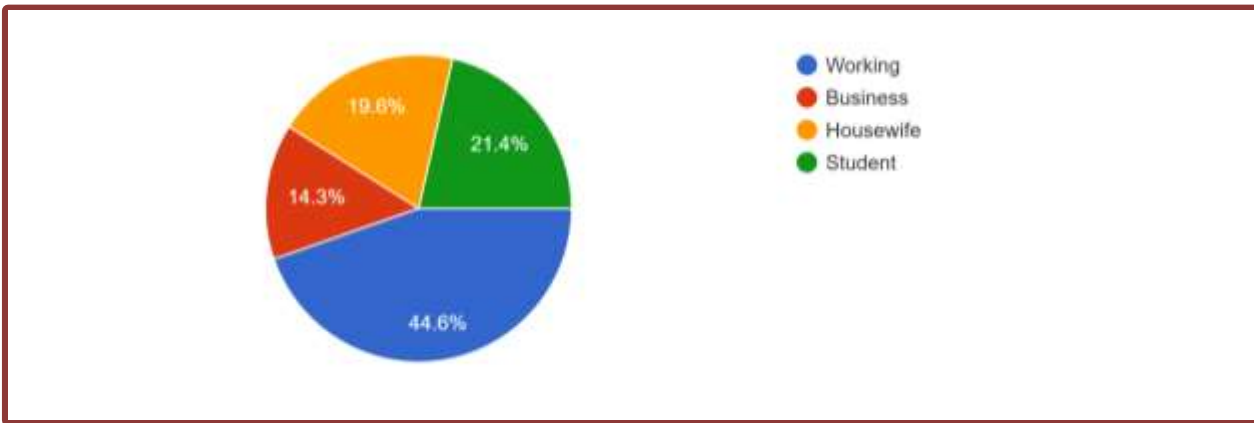
44% of the people who indulge in social media marketing apps are working people.
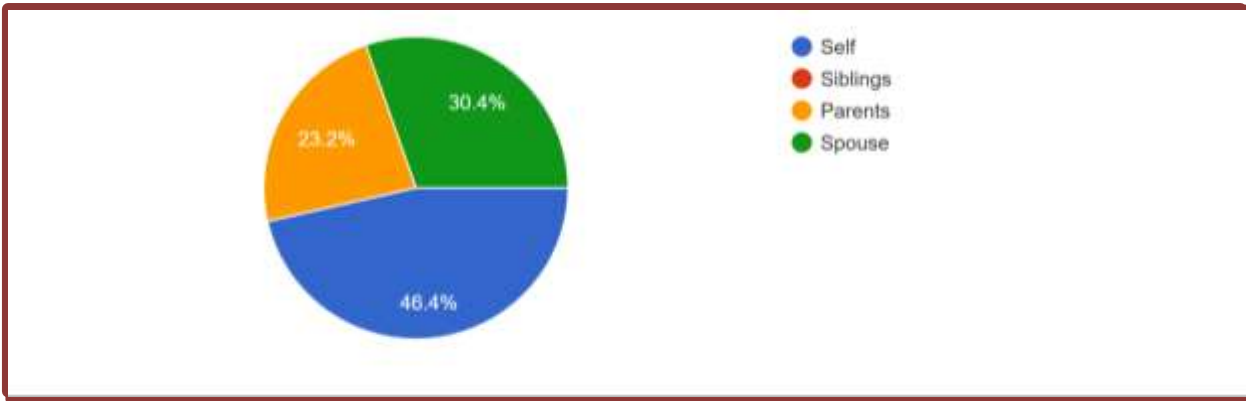
Gender

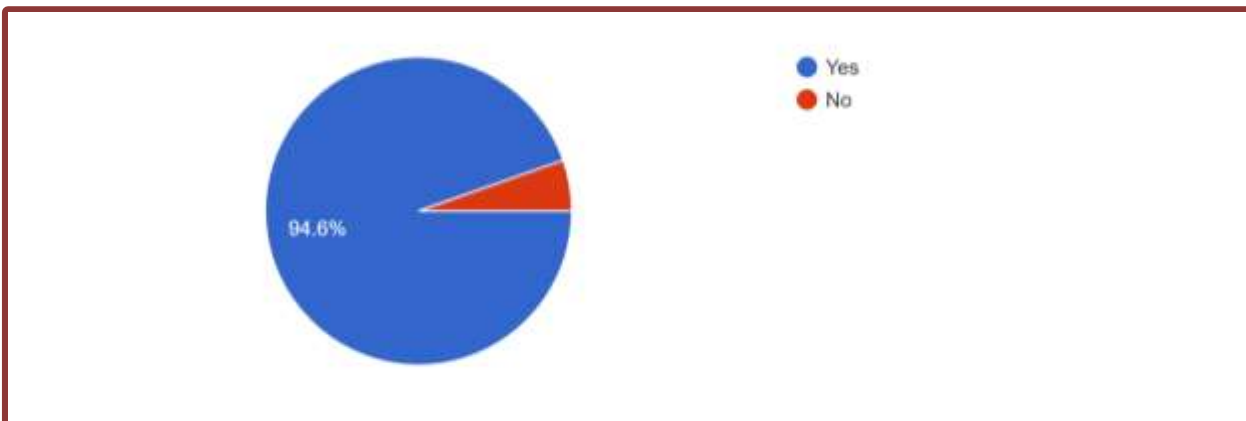Among the respondents 60.7% were women.
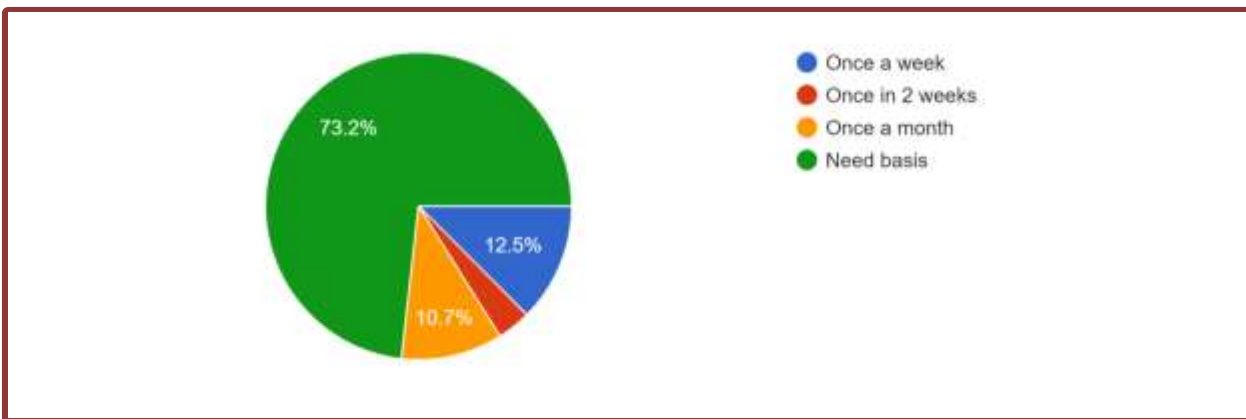
Age

44.6% were above the age group of 45 years.

Influence of social media marketing by


Legend: Self (blue), Siblings (red), Parents (orange), Spouse (green)
Spouse 30.4%, Parents 23.2%, Self 46.4%

Awareness about social media marketing

Legend: Yes (blue), No (red)
Yes 94.6%

Dependency on social media to learn about products or services

Legend: Once a week (blue), Once in 2 weeks (red), Once a month (orange), Need basis (green)
Need basis 73.2%, Once a week 12.5%, Once a month 10.7%
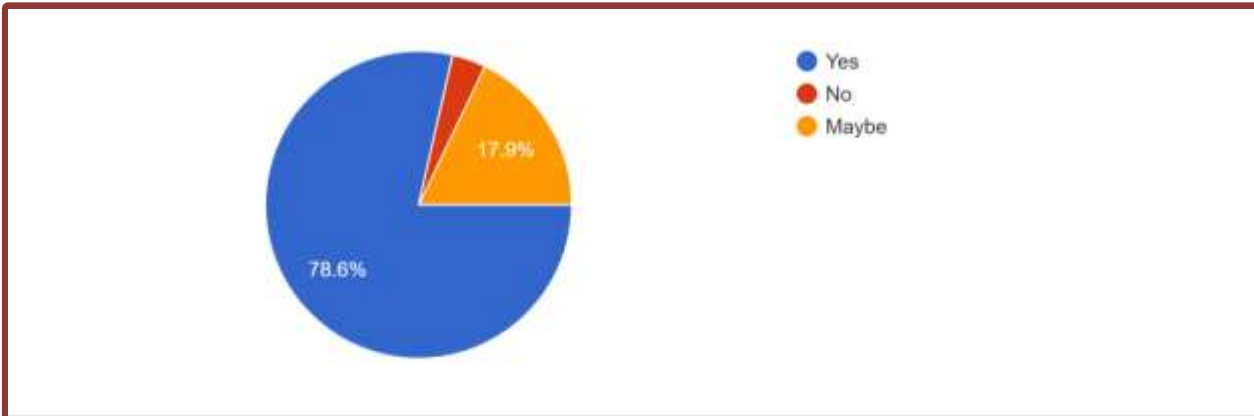
Increase in Businesses using various social media platforms to be informed about a product/service
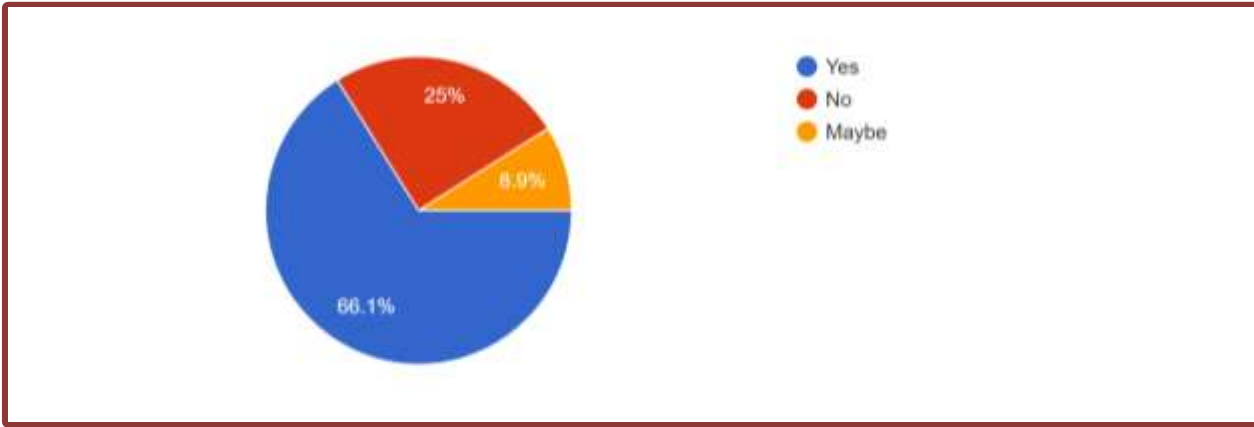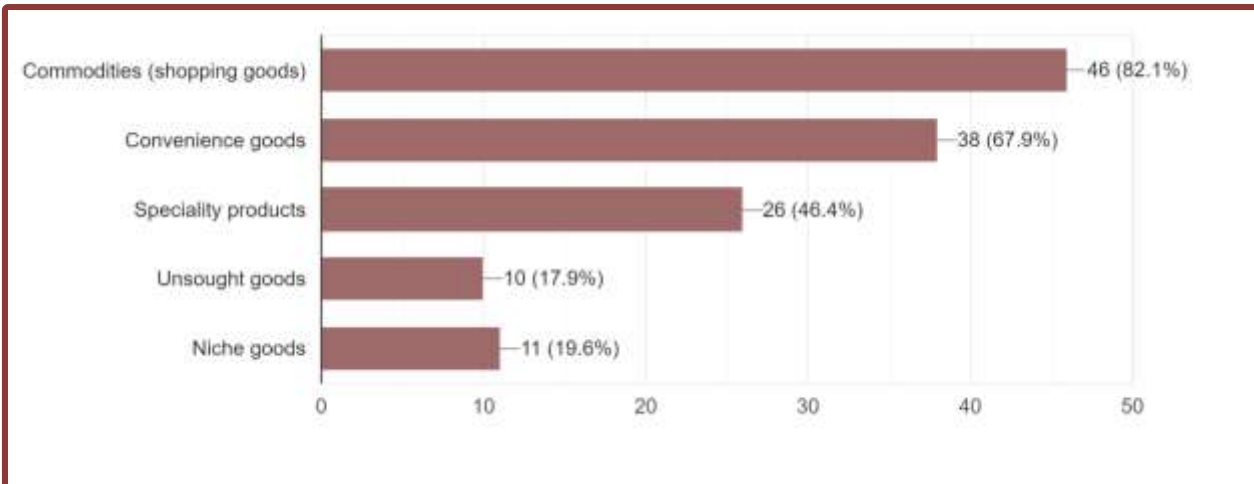

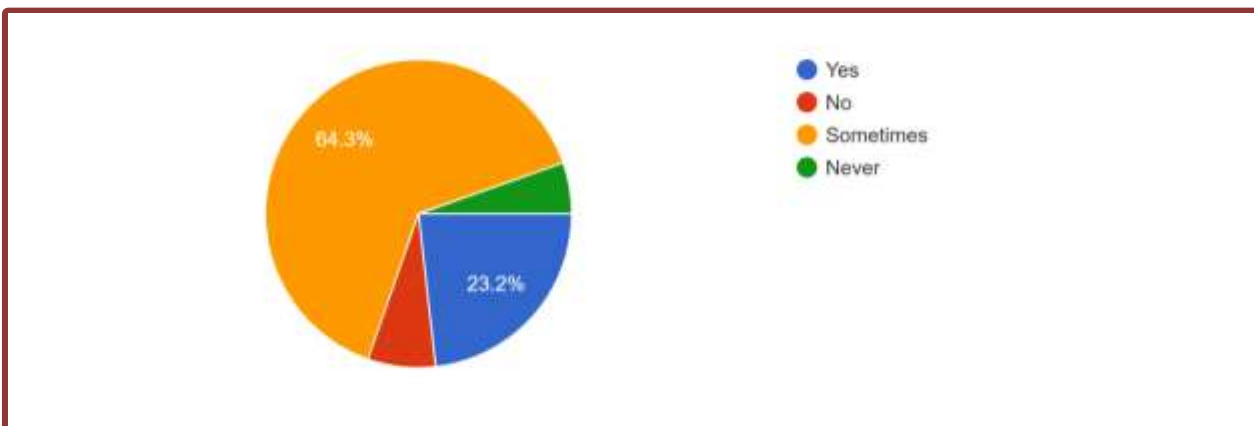**Blocking of ads through Social Media**
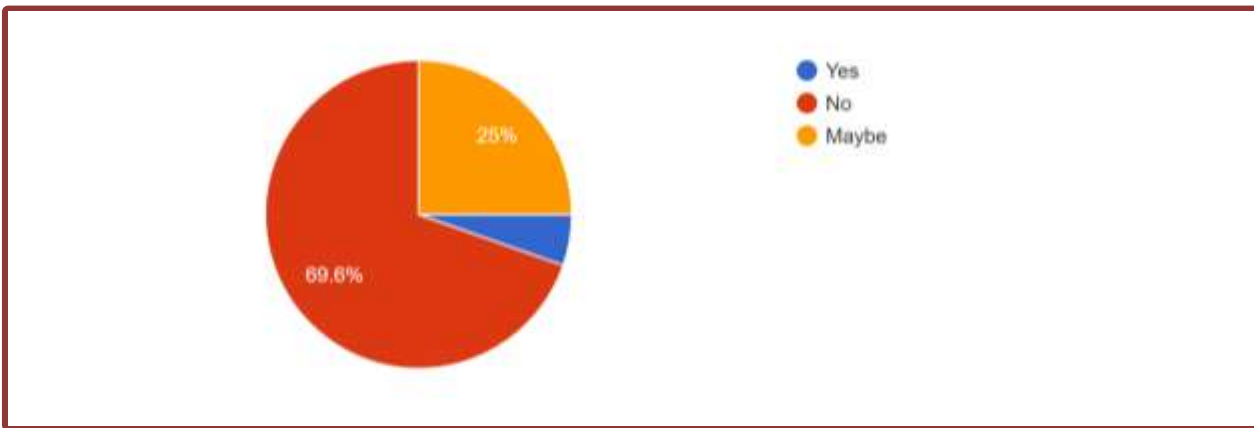
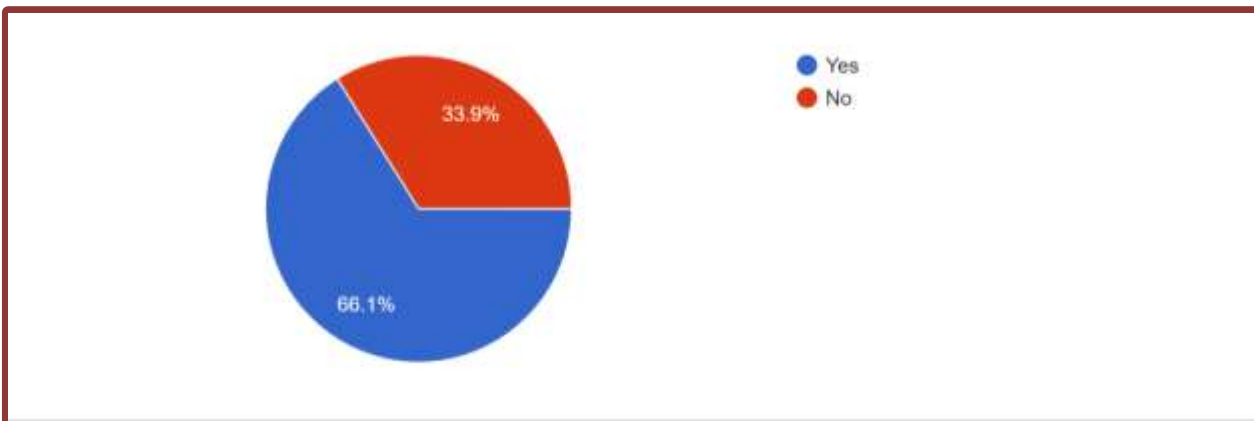**Social Media Marketing Increases the peer pressure on perception and influencing peers**
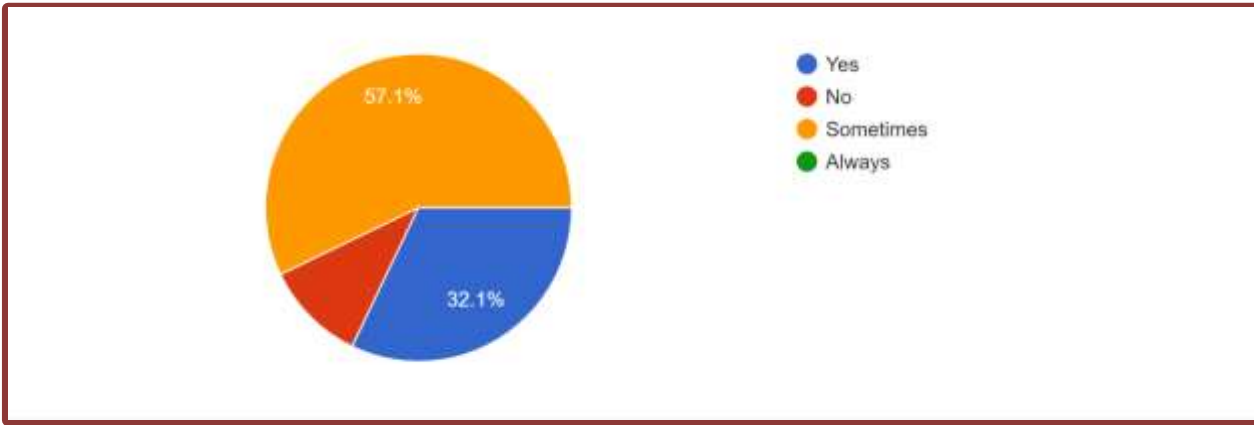
Choice of Products

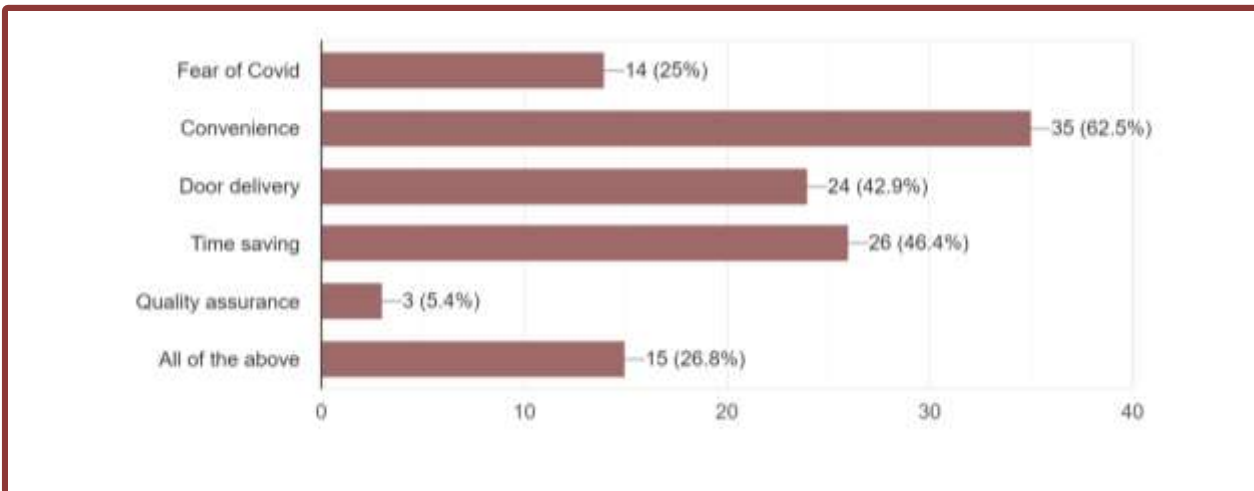**Effectiveness of Social media marketing explaining the utility of product**

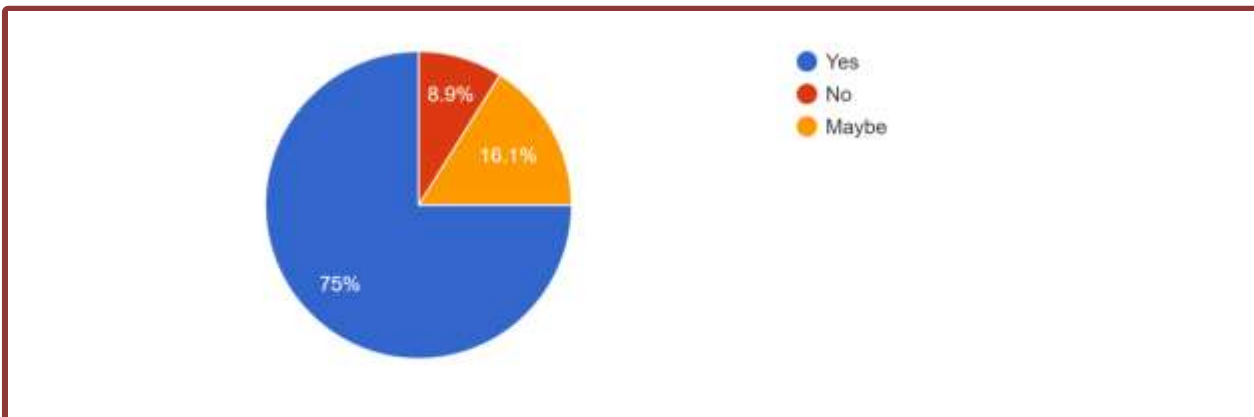**Change in perspectives as a result of pressure of social media marketing**
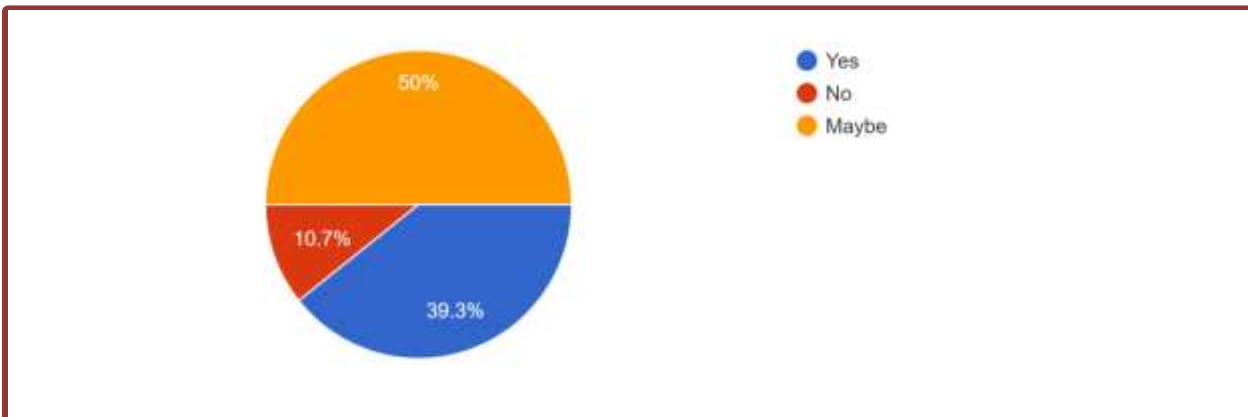
Preference on Online shopping due to deals/offers

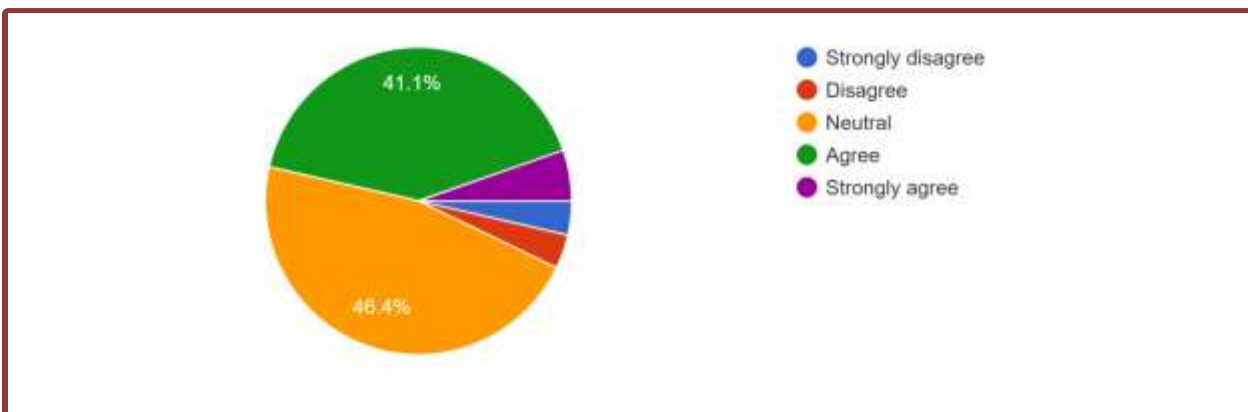**Reasons for Online Shopping**

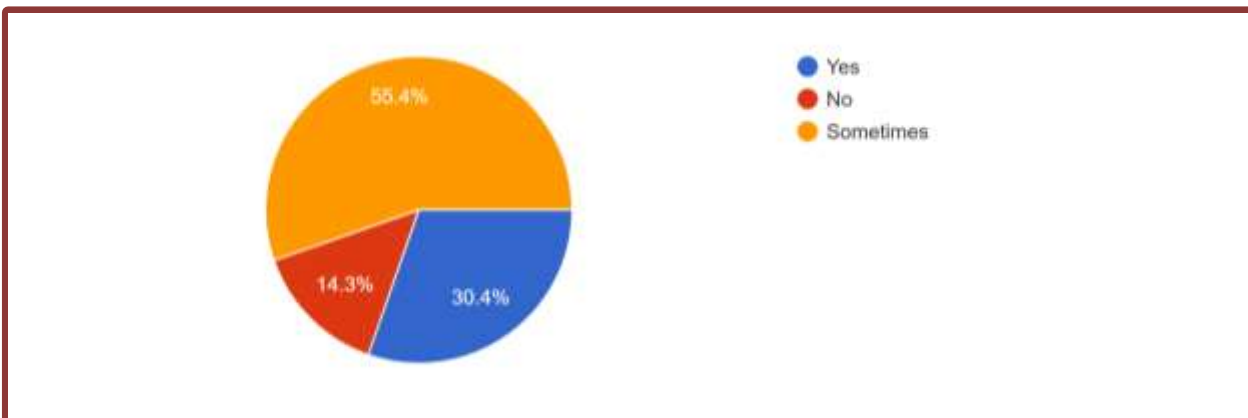**Social media marketing gives scope to choose from a variety**

Impact of COVID on Social Media Marketing

Increase in purchase capacity due to social media

Security issues in Online Transactions effect consumers

Major Findings

Social Media Marketing has emerged as one of the biggest business opportunity for the marketers to use today. It has become impossible for the Marketers' not to advertise or promote their brands or products without the aid of the available social media sites. It is suggestive of being a one way communication with the customers, but the feedback in terms of the returns supports the fact that these social media sites are channels of two way communication. Across the globe, high connectivity and reach of social media marketing has become one of the most convenient and best medium of advertisements for all businesses. For the organizations and corporate ventures social media has become the next big thing, as felt by the common man.

This study focused on the impact of social media marketing on consumer perception and the influence of the same in their decision making for procurement through the digital platform.

- ✓ 44% of the respondents indulging in digital marketing apps were working people and out of this 60.7% were women
- ✓ 94.6% of the respondents are aware of Social Media Marketing.
- ✓ 73.2 % of the respondents did need based shopping
- ✓ 66.1% believe that there is an increase in business due to the social media
- ✓ 69.6% do not block digital marketing advertisements.
- ✓ 78.6% of the respondents feel that social media marketing has increased the peer pressure on perceptions of products/services
- ✓ The pressure of changing perspectives based on social media posts accounts to 66.1%.
- ✓ 75% of the respondents feel that social media offers much more variety online.
- ✓ Despite the fact that the respondents do not get their doubts clarified, 82.1% use online shopping.
- ✓ The majority of the age group of the respondents is above 45, they feel that online market is convenient but post COVID they will not be completely dependent on digital marketing driven online market

Conclusion

Social media marketing implies that the technique adopted by market to lure the potential customers by providing them exclusive content through their social media posts. In the competitive business environment of economic globalization and commodity homogenization today, most of the products have entered almost all stores, with a very wide geographical coverage. Even if you are unable to procure what you want in the store, e-commerce companies like amazon, flipkart etc. help you procure, at your convenient space and time.

Through this study, the personality traits of online consumers' willingness to purchase, and clarifications on the extraneous factors that influence and internal perception factors are the main reasons that are responsible for affecting the consumers' willingness to purchase through the apps, has been analysed. Considering the fact that social media is the research platform, taking its users as the research object, consumer experience value as the intermediate variables, the study examines the usefulness of social media. At the end of it, it highlights the factors on which decision-making and development of e-commerce is dependent. Dependency, consumer involvement, the impact of social media on consumer's willingness to shop.

Digital Marketing has become the order of the day. The big bulls are capturing the market online and the scope for the regular street shops is diminishing resulting in effecting their life style and the scope for employment is also on the decrease.

With the development of technology and internet based culture, we see a transition in the entire socio-economic and political scenario. The online resources are persuasive and influencers with the added glory of the ambassadors featuring in them. Though the digital market is making life easier, it is also complicating in terms of the variety the audience is exposed to and also the increased burden on the purchasing capacity due to socio-cultural pressures.

Consumer perception is the bridge between the interests of the customers and what they actually buy. Social Media marketing is both directional and intrusive in its approach to the consumers and prospective customers. The buying patterns of customers is predominantly dependent on the consumer perception. Thus, there is a significant weightage given to the consumer perception by the businesses. Having focused on how social media marketing can have an impact on consumer perception, the study has resulted in positive responses reflecting that social media marketing has a tremendous impact on the consumer perception.

The affirmative and obvious result showed that social media marketing is the top priority for organizations and marketers as well as for the consumers. Majority of the customers today look at social media sites for promotional activities. It is also being as a grievance portal by many customers. Many customers read and acquire information about products or services through social media sites . Majority of people follow social media sites to get updates on the business.

To conclude , I strongly recommend that though online market is soaring its way, smaller business communities must be safeguarded for a better quality of life of them. The opportunities for small time vendors to bring their product online is limited, thus the government could bring in a ceiling on the classification of products that could be made available on social media platforms, else rope in the small time vendors also in the digital platform by creating awareness and make a app which will cater to satisfying their requirements.

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