

Socialised Shopper: An empirical study of shoppers' browsing psychology, social media and share to purchase behavior

Dr. Samarth Singh, Dr Maitri

Abstract

As Indian economy is moving towards digitalization there would be more digital shopper- retailer interactions like social media interactions etc. Recognizing the importance of social media during shoppers purchase journey and their browsing psychology in a retail outlet , this paper reports results from an empirical study that investigates shoppers browsing psychology and social media behaviour undertaken in organized retail in Delhi. It studies shoppers social media behaviour on retailer's social pages along with the share to purchase behaviour so as to understand the usefulness of such interactions. Further it studies shoppers browsing psychology in terms of usage of shopping list, on pack information and browsing of aisles. Five hundred shoppers' data was attained using a survey questionnaire. Study reveals that majority of the shoppers visit retailer's social pages to avail exclusive discount followed by socializing with friends to know more about products they want to buy , to participate in competitions, to earn rewards points, to provide product feedback , to avail after sales services and to launch complaints . Further, highlighting the share to purchase behaviour it reveals that thirty eight percent (five percent of total shoppers) of those who went to the retailer's site through sharing on social media have purchased the product from physical store .Regarding browsing psychology only 19 percent shoppers frequently use shopping list, 22 percent shoppers look for on pack information and go to intended aisle directly and majority of shoppers go for assistance to sales staff Research outcomes encourage retailers to implement technology driven targeted marketing.

Key Words: Shopper, Retail, Retail marketing, shopper Behaviour, Social media

1.0 Introduction

Technological evolution in the form of smartphones and social media is affecting shoppers psychology and steering shopping behaviour differently. It has not only provided new ways to the retailers to affect shoppers' behavior (Shankar and Balasubramanian, 2009) but has become an essential touch point in today's consumer decision process. Social media helps building customer relationships by helping organisations to better interact with current and potential customers and building intimacy (Mersey *et al.*, 2010). The communications of users and organization at social media help in creating a positive image of organization in the mind of others who access this information and thus affect their purchases (Pookulangaran and Koesler, 2011) .

Today's Shoppers are using smartphones for accessing social media which has altered the communication process of

Associate Professor, Management Education & Research Institute, GGSIP University, Delhi
Associate Professor, Management Education & Research Institute, GGSIP University, Delhi

both retailers and shoppers. For shoppers, it has not only become a trustworthy source of information about products (Kozinets *etal.*, 2010; Accenture, 2013) but also a means of availing retailing benefits like deals (PwC, 2014), services (PwC, 2013) etc. Further, it has given shoppers an ability to affect other consumers as shoppers share information ,post product reviews (PwC, 2013) and complaints (Mangold and Faulds ,2009; Kozinets *etal.*, 2010) on such site at retailers' pages and other places.

Thus ,Shoppers are being influenced by social media and the retailers want them to be influenced positively, they need to build a strong social media presence which requires engaging with target demographic, building relationships and understanding the share to purchase behaviour . Further understanding of shoppers' browsing psychology provides an opportunity to retailers to influence buying behaviour.The current research thus focuses on examining shoppers' browsing psychology and social media behaviour with the smartphone along with share to purchase behaviour so as to help retailers in developing relevant digital shopper marketing strategies.

2.0 Literature Review

Smartphones are steering buying behaviour as never before. Shoppers are not only using smartphones for accessing information, searching products, assessing promotions , price comparisons etc. but also to access social media which has become an medium for shoppers to influence other shoppers and to assist in their purchases. Some researches that have studied this behaviour of shoppers is discussed below:

Kozinets (2002) revealed the usage of social media by users for sharing their views and ideas about products and also to connect with other fellow customers seeking information about various products.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) highlighted the importance of social media in influencing customer behaviour across entire purchase cycle from gathering information to post buying behaviour. They post their dissatisfaction about products on such media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) highlighted the popularity of social media and its role in revolutionizing marketing activities. It further emphasized on its greater efficiency in comparison of traditional methods and thus emphasized greater participation by organisations in Twitter, facebook etc.

Kozinets *etal.*(2010) in their research on social media highlighted the usage of social media by shoppers to vent their concerns ,satisfaction and dissatisfaction like a public forum. It further mentioned usage of social media to access information about various products so as to decide their purchases

Mersey *etal* (2010) highlighted the importance of social media.It mentioned that Social media helps building customer relationships by helping organisations to better interact and with current and potential customers and building intimacy

shopping path and targeted to them inside retail store via mobile shopping app.

Pookulangaran and Koesler (2011) revealed the importance of communications of social media and highlighted that communications of users and organization help in creating a positive image of organization in the mind of others who access this information and thus affect their purchases.

Accenture (2013) in a survey of six thousand millennials to study shopping behaviour revealed that millennials use social media to share shopping related information to their family and friends and access retailer deals ..

PwC (2013) in their survey divided the respondents into three categories: Social addicts, brand lovers and deal hunters. The results revealed that 53 percent of brand lovers interacting using social media go to physical shop on daily basis or weekly. Social addict consumers use social media to know friends preferences, to avail customer services ,to give ideas and feedbacks. Further, 23 percent consumers first research online about electronics and then make a purchase at store. Similar trends are highlighted for other categories except for books ,games, movies .

PwC (2014a) in their report Achieving Total Retail Consumer expectations driving the next retail business model surveyed 15000 consumers and revealed that 23 percent of consumers visited retailers' social media site to participate in contests . However 21 percent consumers visited such site due to personalized promotions .It further highlighted that majority of consumers used smartphone before visiting store for price comparison (66 percent) followed by researching about product (65 percent),to check store location (57 percent) and checking funds (44 percent).

3.0 Objectives

The present study aims to study shoppers' browsing psychology along with social media and share to purchase behavior

4.0 Research Methodology:

The study is a descriptive study on five hundred shoppers visiting various types of organized retail formats in Delhi chosen using convenient sampling. Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire. Initially a pilot study is conducted to test the reliability, validity and sensitivity of the questionnaire and finally the data is collected by survey method. Data is analysed using statistical methods.

5.0 Results and Analysis

5.1Profile of Shoppers

The research involved 500 shoppers of organised retail in Delhi. Out of which 44 percent were male and 56 percent were female (Figure 5.1.1)

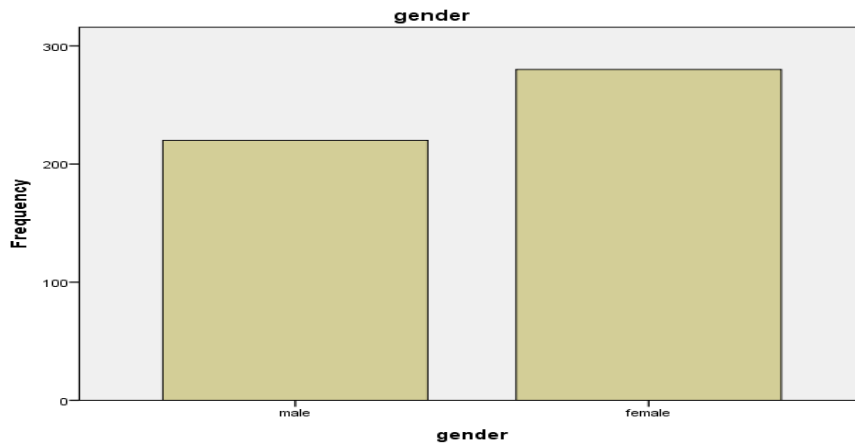


Figure 5.1.1

Among the surveyed shoppers majority of shoppers i.e. 75.2 percent were married and 24.8 percent were unmarried (Figure 5.1.2)

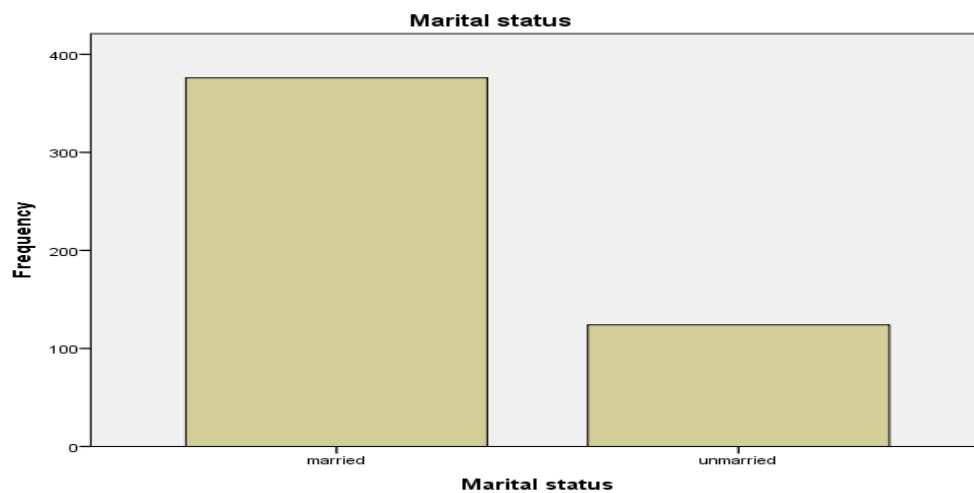


Figure 5.1.2

Age composition of shoppers indicate that 34 percent shoppers belong to age group of 15-35 years whereas 40 and 26 percent shoppers belong to the age groups of 35-55 and more than 55 years respectively (Figure 5.1.3)



Figure 5.1.3

Income levels of shoppers indicate that majority of Shoppers fall in the yearly income group of 2 – 5 lakh with 30.8 percent, followed by 27.6 percent shoppers in income group of 5-10 lakhs. However 21.4 percent and 20.2 percent shoppers fall in the income group of more than 10 lakhs and less than 2 lakh respectively (Figure 5.1.4).

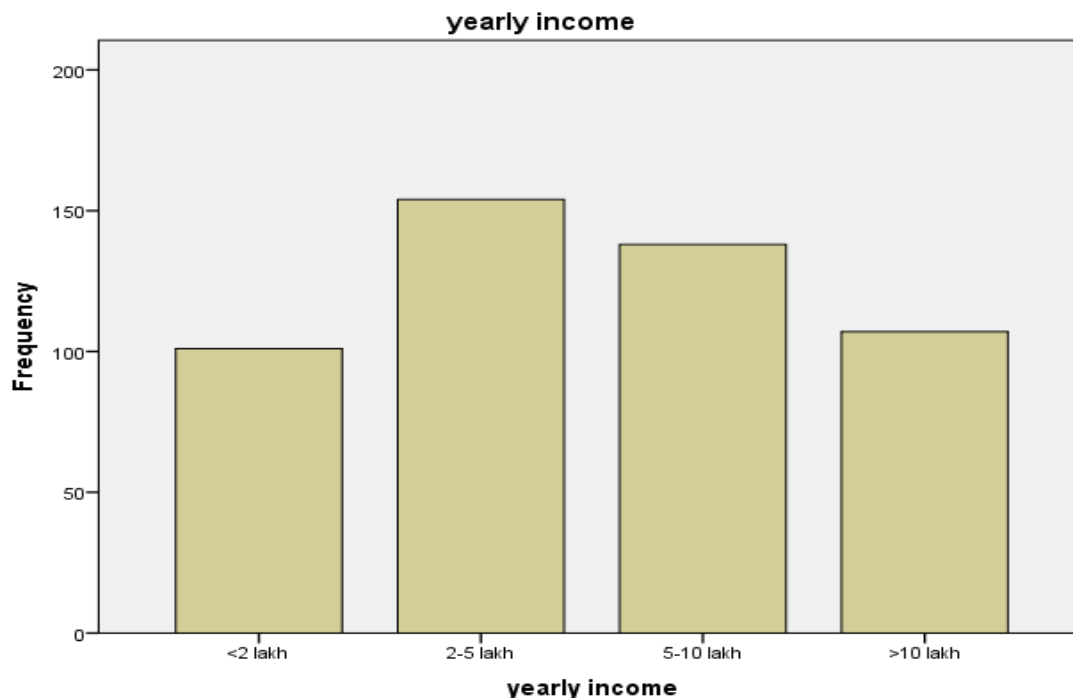


Figure 5.1.4

Figure 5.1.5 shows shoppers educational profile with 33.6 percent shoppers being graduates followed by 26 percent post graduates, 22.8 percent undergraduates and 17.6 percent below matric.

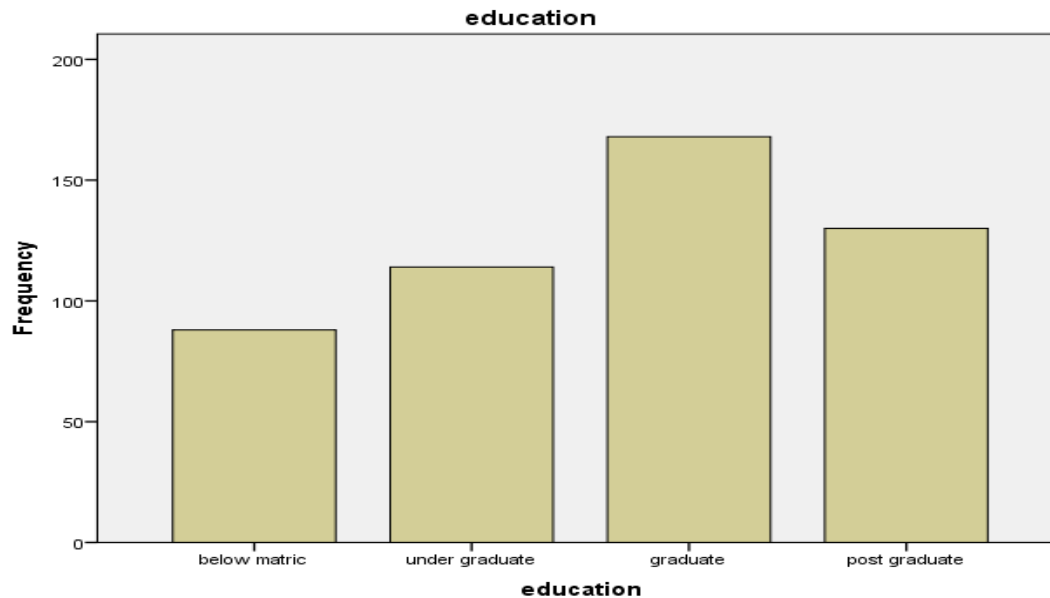


Figure 5.1.5

Most of the shoppers i.e., 23.8 percent are Home makers followed by 23.4 percent business class shoppers and 21.8 percent service class shoppers. A good number of shoppers i.e. 12.4 percent, 10 percent and 8.6 percent are students, retired and unemployed respectively (Fig. 5.1.6)



Figure 5.1.6

5.2 Browsing Psychology

The current research also involved studying shoppers' browsing psychology related to:

- i) Usage of shopping list
- ii) On pack information search
- iii) Browsing of Aisles

iv) Assistance

5.2.1 Usage of Shopping list:

Shoppers have been using shopping aids like shopping list, smartphones etc. during shopping visits. Shopping lists help shoppers to recall brands and products to purchase .In the current study the results reveal that almost 19 percent shoppers frequently use a shopping list while shopping .However 39 percent shoppers either use the list rarely or never. Thus , such shoppers may be planned in their purchases and may prefer brands in accordance to the list .

5.2.2 On Pack Information:

Shoppers browse products differently. Results reveal that around 22 percent shoppers frequently look for on pack information. On the contrary around 26 percent shoppers rarely or never look for on pack information

Thus, shoppers' appetite for information must be fulfilled by retailers through innovative displays and providing enough product information at various shoppers' touch points like websites ,kiosks etc. Moreover such a behaviour provides opportunity to sales representative to influence the buying behaviour as on pack information may be provided in a simplified way.

5.2.3 Browsing of Aisles

Shoppers browse retail store differently .Results reveal that almost 22 percent shoppers directly go to intended aisle frequently. Whereas 42 percent shoppers rarely or never go to intended aisle

Thus there is ample opportunity for retailers to affect the purchasing decisions of such shoppers by developing retailing attributes as preferred by such shoppers.

5.2.4 Assistance

During the shopping cycle, while inside the store shoppers seek assistance in finding merchandise, product features , pricing , deals and other retailing attributes . They may seek this assistance from sales representative but with technology becoming advance shoppers have started seeking assistance from the digital kiosks of the retailers along with their own smartphones. This section tries to understand assistance seeking behaviour of shoppers.

Results as depicted in Table 5.2.4.1 reveal that majority of shoppers go for assistance to sales staff followed by shoppers who take assistance from their own device ,smartphone . In terms of assistance kiosks/digital display are the least preferred options.

Table 5.2.4.1 Assistance

Assistance	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I go for assistance to my own device	500	3.0180	1.09913
I go for assistance to sales staff	500	3.2840	1.18750
I go for assistance to kiosks/digital display	500	2.4180	1.11434

A further analysis revealed that in term of assistance from sales staff most of the shoppers make their own choice and believe that sales staff should be there when needed. Though few shoppers also believed that sales staff should assist all time (Table 5.2.4.2)

Table 5.2.4.2 Assistance

Assistance	Mean	Std. Deviation
I make my own choice and sales staff should be there when i need	3.3700	1.27921
Sales staff should assist all time	2.5980	.85432

Thus the results clearly highlight the importance of Sales staff and Mobile devices in assisting shoppers and thereby influencing the behaviour. Though kiosks/digital display have emerged as least preferred options their importance cannot be underestimated with shopper getting smarter and tech savvy each day. Further, Retailers will have to ensure non intrusiveness of sales staff. Though this will be challenging as simultaneously sales staff have to cross sell and upsell .Thus sales staff will have to be skillful enough to identify selling opportunity while not being intrusive.

5.3 Shoppers social media behaviour using smartphone

5.3.1 Shoppers Social Behaviour on retailer's social pages

Shoppers use Smartphones to access social media sites which have also become an important source not only for shoppers to access information, service, retail promotions and connect to other shoppers and but also to retailers for better customer connect and sales.

Regarding shoppers behaviour on Retailer's social pages majority of shoppers visit retailer's social pages to avail exclusive discount. This is followed by a good number of shoppers prefer visiting retailer's social pages to know more about products before buying , to participate in competitions, to earn rewards points, to provide product feedback , to avail after sales services and to launch complaints about the products in decreasing order (Table 5.3.1.1)

Table 5.3.1.1 Shoppers Social Behaviour on retailer's social pages			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I do not interact with retailers on their social pages	500	1.7840	1.58946
I socialise with other consumers that like the fan page to know more about the products i want to buy	500	2.4600	1.03273
I use sites for customer service after buying the product	500	2.1200	.89622
I use sites to launch complaint about products	500	2.0620	.79714
Exclusive discounts	500	2.8800	1.24124
To provide product feedback	500	2.2440	.98101
To earn rewards points	500	2.3780	.93855
To participate in competition through social media	500	2.3780	1.14444

5.4 Share to purchase Behaviour

Regarding shoppers behaviour on social site like facebook , thirty seven percent shoppers have “liked” products . Fifteen percent shoppers have shared comments about their product purchases with friends . Thirty six percent shoppers have read product comments shared by their friends and thirty six percent (thirteen percent of total shoppers) of the shoppers who read these comments have clicked on the product image, linking them to the retailer’s site . Thirty eight percent (five percent of total shoppers) of those who went to the retailer’s site have purchased the product from physical store .(Figure 5.4.1)

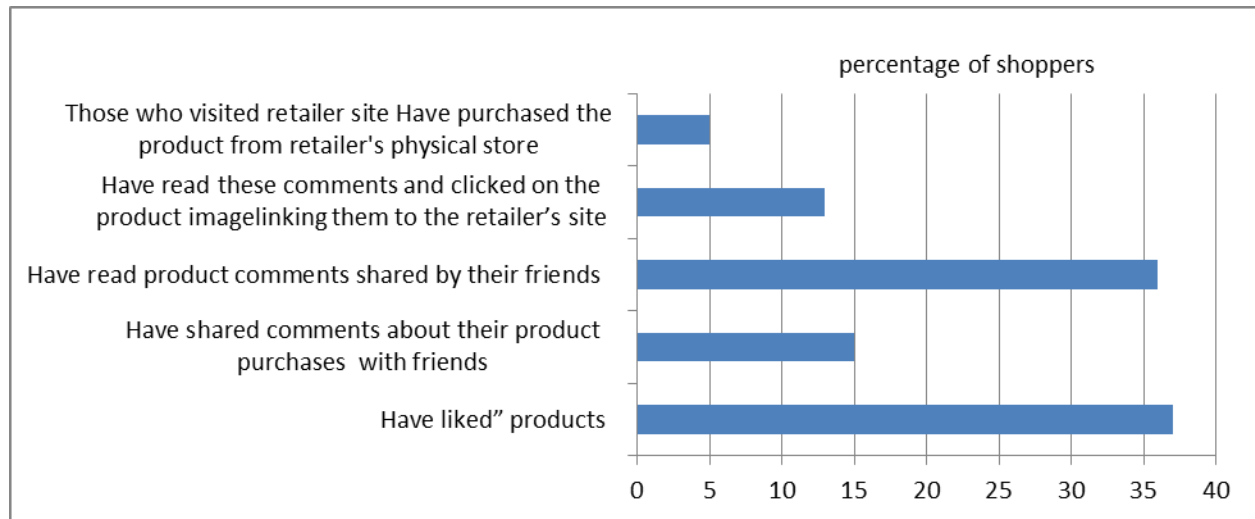
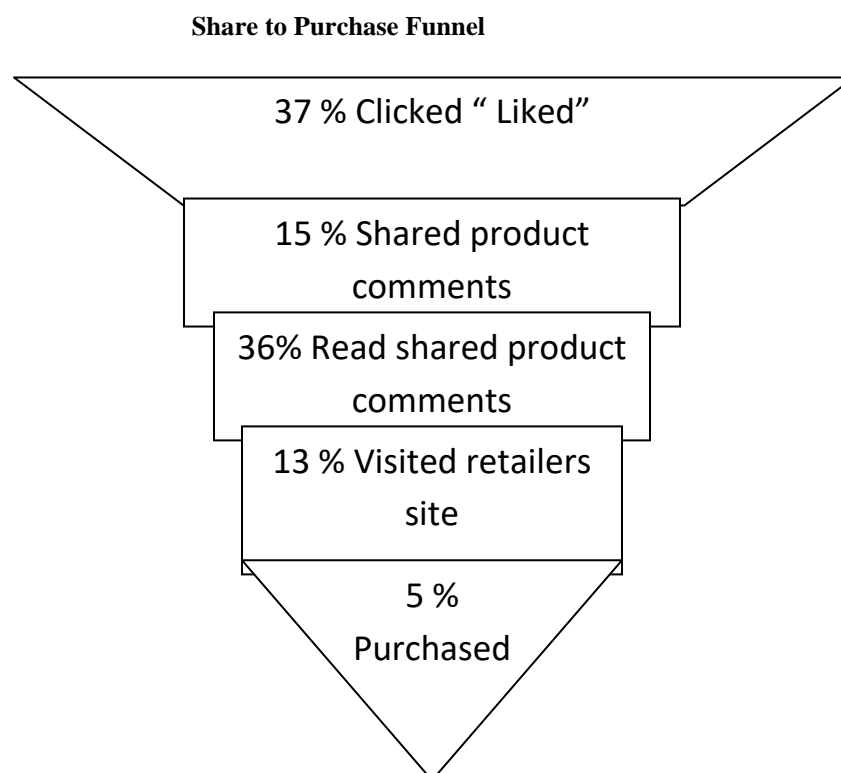


Figure 5.4.1



6.0 Conclusion

The changing technological scenario has shifted the balance of power towards the shopper. As a result retailers stand to benefit by better understanding shoppers' social media behaviour. Shoppers visit retailer's social site to avail exclusive discounts, to know more about products, participate in competitions and provide feedback etc. thus retailers need to develop their strategies accordingly in order to engage and generate more revenues. Retailers must integrate reviews into the shopping experience. They must leverage social media like facebook for exporting products and sales as well as providing support for shoppers. The social presence on facebook must have enough product information along with engaging contests and rewards point and discounts. They must interact with shopper on facebook to answer their queries and engage with them as they provide feedback and socialize with potential customers. Further a better understanding of shoppers' browsing psychology will help retailers to their shopper marketing strategies accordingly. The research limits to Delhi and thus the results may not be generalized thus opens an area for a more exhaustive research covering wider segments.

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