



Cross Media Analysis of Consumer Buying Behavior: A Study of Information

Search Stage Among the Mizo Youth

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ABSTRACT

In today's multifaceted media environment, consumers encountered a multitude of information sources that shape their purchasing decisions. This study examines the comparative efficacy of traditional versus social media platforms in facilitating product and seller discovery. Focusing on the information search stage of the consumer decision making process, the sample was drawn from 384 individuals, aged between 13 to 40 years from Aizawl, Mizoram. By employing descriptive statistics analysis and paired sample t-tests, the study found that social media – particularly seller-managed accounts – are perceived as more effective than traditional media in enabling product exploration and seller identification. This paper contributes to the dynamic consumer behaviour with respect to the information search phase by highlighting the shifting prominence of media platforms in the digital era.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Process, Information Search, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of digital landscape has transformed the process of consumer decision-making-which is largely influenced by the proliferation of media channels. The consumer buying process is no longer confined to conventional media channels; instead, it's a dynamic process influenced by multiple forms of media. From television, radio and newspapers to social media, blogs and e-commerce platforms, the modern consumer bombarded with information that shapes perceptions, preferences, and purchase decisions.

With the emergence of social commerce, deciphering consumer behaviour have become increasingly challenging, as social media driven consumers plays a substantial role in shaping purchase decision (Hettiarachchi H.A.H. et. al., 2018). To understand this complex consumer behaviour, Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1970) offered a comprehensive and structured framework, popularly known as “EKB model”. The model outlines five critical stages of the buying process, namely - problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. Of these, the information acquisition stage serves as a pivotal link between consumer awareness and the final purchase stage—acting as the gateway through which buyers identify and evaluate available choices existing in the market. At this stage, the media plays a crucial role, influencing not only the quantity and quality of information accessed but also its perceived credibility, level of engagement, and persuasive power.

This study aims to investigate the impact of various information channels in the consumer buying process. By conducting a media-based comparison, the study evaluates users' interpretations and perceptions of various information sources including traditional media such as print publications, radios and televisions broadcasts, search engines and social media platforms. The in-depth analysis of the role of different media in facilitating information acquisition provides a deeper insight into the dynamics of consumer behaviour among the youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Yogesh & Yehsa (2014) concluded that social media is intensively use for searching information due to factors such as perceived convenience, effectiveness as well as perceived credibility. The result also highlighted that reviews and opinions post by users of social media has significant impact on purchase decision process.

A survey conducted by Jorgensen and Kean (2018) reveals that young adult consumers seek information through different sources including family, peers, online customer reviews and visual online social networking websites (VSNS), in particular Pinterest and Instagram, before forming an attitude and purchase intention for a product. The study also highlighted that mothers serve as the most influential socialization agent for young adults.

Voramontri & Klieb (2019) conducted an empirical study to analyse the role of social media for complex purchases in the purchase decision stages adapted from EBM Model. The study was conducted among the tech savvy consumers in South-East Asia. The study indicated that social media expedite information search and resulted in higher satisfaction in the information search and alternative evaluation stages. The finding showed that traditional brick-and-mortar shops has not yet lose their significance and the satisfaction derived by the users from both online and offline stores remains the same.

Varghese and Agarwal (2021) examined the complex consumer buying process and found that users prefer social media than traditional media as it benefits them by providing easier access to information, availability of trustworthy advertisements and customers reviews and less time consumption. The study also highlight that customers tend to spend four times more than their normal purchases due to the influence of social media. The findings also suggests that contents such as discounts and promotions spark the interest of consumer and possessed the ability to change customers' attitude and perceptions.

A study conducted by Antony (2022) on the influence of online shopping sites on buying behaviour of youth reveals that consumers opt for online shopping due to variety of products and price and their purchase decisions are highly influenced by brand values and recommendation by friends and family.

OBJECTIVE

- i. To evaluate the degree of usefulness of different media in the information search stage
- ii. To compare the effectiveness of traditional media and social media platforms in facilitating consumers' information search process

Hypotheses:

H1: There is no significant difference between traditional and social media platforms in their effectiveness in facilitating the search for seller-related information

H2: There is no significant difference between traditional and social media platforms in their effectiveness in facilitating the search for product-related information

METHODOLOGY

Using a structured questionnaire, the study was conducted among 384 respondents, aged between 13 to 40 years, residing in Aizawl city, Mizoram. Participants were selected using random sampling technique to ensure a representative and unbiased sample of the population.

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and interpret the demographic and behavioural patterns of the respondents, while paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine significant differences and relationships within the dataset.

In addition to primary data, secondary information was gathered from a variety of credible sources, including academic journals, scholarly books, and reputable websites. These secondary materials provided a theoretical foundation and contextual background that enriched the study and supported the interpretation of findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSION

Demographic Profile:

A majority of the respondents are female, comprising 53.9% of the total sample, while male respondents represent the remaining 46.1%. The predominant age group is 13 to 18 years, accounting for 38.59% of the respondents, followed by those aged 19 to 24 years at 32.81%. Respondents in the age category of 25 to 30 years comprises of 17.19%, while respondents aged between 31 to 35 years and 36 to 40 years both accounted for 5.73% of the total sample. In terms of educational attainment, 41.4% have completed Higher Secondary School, 19.8% hold postgraduate degrees, 15.9% are graduates, 13.5% have completed High School, and 9.38% possess education below Class 10 level. Regarding occupational status, a significant proportion (70.05%) are students, employed individuals – including salaried employees, professionals and self-employed – accounted for 26.56%, while only 3.39% are reported being currently unemployed. The average monthly income levels among respondents exhibits considerable variation with largest segment (16.7%) falling within ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 income bracket.

Table1: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

		No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	177	46.1
	Female	207	53.9
Age Categories of Respondents	13-18	148	38.54
	19-24	126	32.81
	25-30	66	17.19
	31-35	22	5.73
	36-40	22	5.73
Educational Qualification	Below 10	36	9.38
	Matric	52	13.5

	Higher Secondary School	159	41.4
	Graduate	61	15.9
	Post-Graduate	76	19.8
Occupation	Student	269	70.05
	Employee	59	15.36
	Professional	28	7.29
	Self-employed	15	3.91
	Unemployed	13	3.39
Family Income per month	Below ₹10,000	18	4.69
	₹10,000 - ₹20,000	64	16.7
	₹20,000 - ₹30,000	39	10.2
	₹30,000 - ₹40,000	37	9.64
	₹40,000 - ₹50,000	53	13.8
	₹50,000 - ₹60,000	41	10.7
	₹60,000 - ₹70,000	17	4.43
	₹70,000 - ₹80,000	18	4.69
	₹80,000 - ₹90,000	21	5.47
	₹90,000 - ₹1,00,000	30	7.81
	Above ₹1,00,000	46	12

Source: Primary Data

Degree of Helpfulness of various channels while searching for seller-related information

The study assessed the usefulness of different media channels in aiding consumers' search for seller-related information by comparing their mean scores. The result shows that seller's own pages on social media were rated the most helpful sources of information, emphasizing the

importance of direct digital engagement. Online browsing and interpersonal recommendations through friends and family also proves to be a helpful source of information. Meanwhile, Exhibitions and Fairs seem to be falling behind in impact, suggesting a declining influence of conventional promotional methods and a shift towards digital platforms.

Table 2: Ranking of information sources in their degree of helpfulness in seller discovery

Information Sources		N	Mean	Rank
Social Media	Social Media Account/Page of the seller	384	3.53	1
	Social Media Advertising	384	3.40	4
	Post/Account shared by friends and family on social media	384	3.26	6
	Social Media Influencers/Youtubers	384	3.24	7
	Social Media campaigns	384	2.97	10
Traditional Media	Seller's Website	384	3.32	5
	Traditional Advertisement	384	3.07	8
	Recommendation by friends and family	384	3.43	3
	Window Shopping	384	3.04	9
	Exhibitions/Fairs	384	2.89	11
	By browsing over the internet	384	3.50	2

Degree of helpfulness of various channels while searching for product-related information

The degree of helpfulness of various media in searching for product-related information was ranked by comparing their mean scores. The findings revealed that seller-managed pages on social media were ranked as the most helpful sources of product-related information. Online browsing and social media advertising also contributed significantly to information acquisition. In contrast, traditional outlets such as Exhibitions and Fairs showed comparatively lower impact, suggesting the declining relevance as its role for searching product-related information. The overall results

highlight the growing preference among the youth for digital platforms while seeking information for products and services.

Table 3: Ranking of information sources in their degree of helpfulness in product discovery

Information Sources		N	Mean	Rank
Social Media	Social Media Account/Page of the seller	384	3.65	1
	Social Media Advertising	384	3.47	3
	Post/Account shared by friends and family on social media	384	3.22	5
	Social Media Influencers/Youtubers	384	3.14	6
	Social Media campaigns	384	2.90	10
Traditional Media	Seller's Website	384	3.39	4
	Traditional Advertisement	384	3.02	7
	Recommendation by friends and family	384	3.39	4
	Window Shopping	384	2.97	8
	Exhibitions/Fairs	384	2.91	9
	By browsing over the internet	384	3.57	2

Traditional Media vs Social Media - Which is more effective in facilitating seller-related information search?

This section presents a comparative analysis between the two broad information channels – tradition media and social media – in terms of their effectiveness in facilitating search for seller-related information.

H1: There is no significant difference between traditional and social media platforms in their effectiveness in facilitating the search for seller-related information

Table 4: Social Media and Traditional Media Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social Media	65.6042	384	13.91093	.70989
Traditional Media	64.1667	384	12.16843	.62097

Table 5: Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.43750	12.60917	.64346	.17235	2.70265	2.234	383	.026

Table 5 shows that p-value is 0.026 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. We concluded that there is significant difference between social media and traditional media in their efficiency in facilitating users in sellers' information search. The standardized mean scores of social media (65.6042) is higher than the standardized mean scores of traditional media (64.1667) indicating that social media is a better channel for finding seller-related information.

Traditional Media vs Social Media - Which is more effective in facilitating product-related information search?

By comparing the standardized means of traditional and social media platforms, this section aims to measure the effectiveness of the two main media in supporting users during the process of product and services search.

H2: There is no significant difference between traditional and social media platforms in their effectiveness in facilitating the search for product-related information

Table 6: Social Media and Traditional Media Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social Media	65.5104	384	14.44427	.73711
Traditional Media	64.1406	384	13.08125	.66755

Table 7: Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.36979	12.21041	.62311	.14465	2.59494	2.198	383	.029

The p-value of 0.29 which is less than alpha value of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected signifying that there is statistically significant difference between the two information channels - social media and traditional media. Table 6 reveals that the standardized mean of social media (65.5104) is higher compared to traditional media (64.1406) suggesting that social media is a better platform for searching information related to products and services.

CONCLUSION

The findings highlight a paradigm shift in consumer behaviour toward digital channels for search of information. Seller-managed social media pages emerge as the most effective tool, underpinning the importance of a direct and engaging online presence. While social media advertising proves to be an effective source of information, conventional methods such as internet browsing and word-of-mouth recommendations remain valuable in the digital age. On the contrary, the role of traditional platforms like Exhibitions and Fairs appear to be less influential in facilitating consumer information search.

As social media platforms recorded a higher standardized mean score than traditional media, the findings reveal that social media is a better platform in assisting consumers in the information search stage. This indicate that consumers perceive social media as a more helpful channel for locating seller information, highlighting its increasing relevance in the digital marketplace.

The result suggests that businesses aiming to enhance discoverability and foster consumer engagement must prioritize dynamic digital strategies, with a blend of conventional promotional approaches.

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