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Impact of Short Social Media Reels on Consumer Decision Making

Mansi

1.Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Digital revolution has transformed the way consumers access content and make purchase decisions. Gone are the days when consumers would rely on tradition marketing tools like advertising or sales promotion to make a purchase. Now, social media which is actively used especially by the youth has emerged not just as a networking device but also as a powerful marketing tool used by brands to make their product known amongst consumers. The most prominent development is the emergence of short social media format videos popularly known as reels or shorts. Short social media videos in the form of Instagram reels, YouTube shorts, Facebook reels and Snapchat spotlight highly influence consumer decision making and purchase intent (**Kaplan and Haenlei, 2010**). These short form videos which are typically for 15 to 60 seconds are specifically optimised for mobile consumption. In India, the penetration of mobile phones and affordable internet has accelerated the usage of short form videos.

1.2 Motivation of the study

The motivation of the study is based on 3 factors:

Explosion of short form videos- Reels have now become a cultural norm rather than just a marketing tool. Younger generations indulge in perpetual consumption and engagement of short social media reels. These reels have become dominant channels of communication. So, it has become important to study the impact of these reels on consumer behaviour.

Shift in consumer behaviour- Consumers reply heavily on reels for social media consumption for product discovery, reviews and comparisons. Reels often blur the lines between entertainment and advertising making it difficult to analyse that which key drivers impact consumer decision making process while making a purchase. Thus, there arose a need to conduct research to identify the impact of short reels on consumer decision making particularly among Delhi University students who are active consumers of digital content.

Market and Policy Relevance- Brands spend a huge amount on promotion through short form videos on various platforms like Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Thus, a deeper understanding is required on how short form digital videos impact consumer behaviour. This goes beyond simple engagement metrics like likes, share and comments to more deeper aspects.

2.Review of Literature

The current literature review involves a thorough analysis of previous research related to the impact of social media on consumer purchase intentions. With the expansion of social media, reels have emerged as significant channels affecting consumer behaviour and attitude (**Belch and Belch, 2018**). According to (**Mangolds and Faulds**, **2009)** social media has transformed tradition marketing completely and short reels specifically increase customer engagement due to providing information quickly. Factors such as emotional appeal, perceived authenticity and entertainment particularly make reels an effective tool for marketing (**Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016**). Young consumers are particularly most influenced by short form social media content because of their media consumption habits and due to seeking instant gratification **(Duffet, 2017**). Existing researches highlight that how repeated exposure to social media content enhances brand recall and increases brand loyalty (**Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie, 2014**).

Kelcie Slaton and Harold Lee (2025) conducted research titled "**From Scroll to Store: How Short-Form Video Drives Foot Traffic in Destination Retail."** The objective of the study was to find out that how short form video content on various platforms like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram influence Gen-Z and Millennials to visit destination retail stores. The research covered a significant research gap by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with various attributes of short videos namely perceived usefulness, curiosity and envy. The research adopted a quantitative research methodology wherein primary data was collected through an online questionnaire. The sample size particularly focused on Gen-Z and Millennials in North Texas, US who use social media for at least an hour. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test relationship between the two variables.

Y.J. Sheng (2025) in his research titled "**From Engagement to Conversion: Reviewing Social Media Marketing Strategies and Consumer Behavior**" aims to explore how social media marketing strategies affect consumer purchase decision in Malaysia. It aimed to explore that how short form videos, live streaming, user -generated content (UGC) and influencer marketing affects shopping behavior. The research methodology was based on systematic literature review evaluating how social media marketing affects consumer purchase intention. Similarly, an extensive literature review covering 50 research papers including both national and international papers was done to find existing gaps in the existing body of literature.

3. Research Methodology

4.1 Novelty of the study

In the current times, short-form videos have become a powerful tool in influencing consumer behaviour. However, no prior research has been done to measure the impact of short-form video content on consumer decision-making. All the past researches measure the general influence of social media marketing on consumers' attitude **(Mangold & Faulds, 2009)** and **(Duffett, 2017**). Research has also been done to measure the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour (**Djafarova &Trofimenko, 2019**) but no study has specifically examined how engaging micro-content can impact the consumer mindset. Past research has also been done to examine the influence of a single platform, like the impact of Instagram reels on consumer behaviour (**Sheldon & Bryant, 2016**) but no past study has examined the cumulative effect of short-form video content across all platforms, covering Instagram reels, YouTube shorts, and Snapchat spotlight. Moreover, most of the research on this theme has been done in foreign contexts, like the U.K., South Korea, China, etc. but not in the Indian context. For example, **Lee, J.E.& Warkins (2016)** conducted research to find YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer's perception, but no such study has been done in the Indian context recently. Even if research was done in the Indian context for a single platform, it was done prior to the pandemic, highlighting that no recent study has been conducted to measure the impact on consumers' purchase decisions.

4.2 Objectives of the study

1) To analyse the impact of short-form video content on different stages of the consumer decision-making process, ranging from information search, evaluation of alternatives, to making a final purchase.

2) To identify the key factors like entertainment, relatability, emotional appeal, credibility, etc. that influence the customers to make a purchase.

3) To identify which industry (Food, Beauty, Healthcare, Fashion, etc.) creates the strongest

effect by impacting consumers' perception through short-form video content.

4) To find out which platform, like Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, etc.is the most influential in driving purchases.

5) To analyse the role of emotional triggers like anxiety, trust, happiness, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), etc. in influencing consumer purchase,

4.3 Techniques Used in Research

The following technique will be used in research to analyse the data:

Frequency Distribution- Frequency Distribution was used to analyse how often a particular response occurs. It will be particularly used in case of multiple-choice questions and dichotomous questions.

Mean Analysis- Mean analysis was used to analyse Likert scale questions. It will be helpful in analysing average level of agreement related to consumer behaviour and perception.

Correlation Technique- Correlation technique was used to find the degree and direction of relationship between short form social media videos and consumer decision making. It will be used in determining that whether a positive or negative relationship exists between two variables.

Regression Analysis- This technique was used to find the cause-and-effect relationship between dependent variable (Consumer decision making) and independent variable (short social media reels). It will help in highlighting the extent to which these two variables are related.

Graphical and Tabular Analysis-Tables, graphs and pie charts were used to facilitate easy comparisons and for better visual clarity.

4. Discussion and Findings

The findings of the study suggest that AI driven short form reels had a significant impact on consumer behaviour amongst Delhi University students aged between 18 to 24 years. Mean analysis revealed that personalised content had a stronger impact on consumer decision making. Tailored content affected various stages of consumer decision making and particularly information search stage and purchase stage. Further statistical analysis revealed that personalised content had a crucial impact on appealing the consumers emotionally thereby increasing engagement ultimately leading to purchase. YouTube and Instagram were found to be the most influential platforms affecting consumer purchase decisions. Majority of the purchases were from fashion, beauty and food industries whereas health and high involvement products like automobiles and luxury goods were least impacted by short social media reels. Results of regression analysis indicated that both impulsive and rational decisions were made after watching reels. Rational decisions were made by consumers when short reels provided proper information about the product giving detailed comparisons and reviews whereas impulsive decisions about purchasing a product were made based on emotional appeal, storytelling, influencer endorsements and trending audios. Statistical analysis also revealed that emotional factors like happiness, anxiety and fear of missing out (FOMO) positively and highly impacted consumer decision making.

5. Implications and Conclusion

AI driven short form reels act as strategic tools which can be used by brands to increase their turnover. AI can help brands to identify browsing history of consumers which would give them an idea about what sort of product reels they need to focus more. For example, if a student frequently watches skincare and makeup tutorials, algorithm would suggest reels of brands like Lakme or Mamaearth. This would increase the probability of consumers making a purchased due to repeated exposure. Thus, brands should invest on short social media reels strategically. Different platforms affect consumer decision making differently. For instance, Instagram pushes more fashion and lifestyle related content whereas YouTube focuses more on tech driven content. These insights can be used by brands and marketers to make their investments accordingly. To conclude we can say that the study provides insights into how AI integrated reels shape consumer perception and affect decision making while making a purchase