

"EVALUATING COLLEGE STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES IN RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT"

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Abstract

Buying decisions are greatly influenced by social media networks. This study looks into college students' online shopping habits and awareness of digital marketing in India's Ramanathapuram District. According to the survey, students significantly prefer to shop online, with clothes and accessories ranking as their most popular category. The main reasons people buy things online are convenience, a wider selection of products, affordable prices, and the chance to compare products. According to the poll, students' knowledge of particular digital marketing strategies varies. Gender disparities persist even when social media exposure exposes users to a variety of online marketing tactics. Women typically know more about topics like spotting deceptive marketing and the impact of reviews. Students' platform of choice seems to have an impact on how aware they are of particular marketing strategies. Pupils who use Facebook and Twitter more often than those who use other social media sites understand different marketing strategies better.

Keyword: social media- Digital marketing- awareness- Factors influencing

1. Introduction

In the current digital landscape, digital marketing has emerged as a crucial instrument for companies looking to advertise their goods or services. Digital marketing offers businesses an economical and effective means of communicating with their target market because it may reach a wide audience through various digital platforms. Determining college students' preparedness for the contemporary labour market and entrepreneurial opportunities requires an understanding of their acceptance of and proficiency with digital marketing techniques in Ramanathapuram District. Buying decisions are greatly influenced by social media networks. Commercial messaging can reach college students through social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. These sources significantly influence students' purchasing decisions in a positive way. The way that online ads are displayed on webpages, search engines, and other digital platforms influences what students choose to purchase. Online ads that are visible to them affect their choices. Due to the widespread use of mobile devices, college students' purchase decisions are positively impacted by mobile marketing (such as SMS campaigns and app notifications). It's interesting that email marketing has a more nuanced effect. Although it's still a useful tool, students' experiences with it differ. The way people react to email marketing messages is influenced by demographic factors, including academic level and gender.

2. Review of related literature

Digital marketing, encompassing online channels like websites, apps, and social media, has become crucial for businesses to reach and connect with customers. This shift is driven by factors like economic liberalization, increased competition, and the growing internet user base. Research by Bhuvaneshwari et al. (2022) explores consumer behavior towards digital marketing, highlighting the changing landscape from physical stores to online shopping. Bhandare (2021) emphasizes the use of various digital marketing tools like social media marketing and search engine optimization by companies to acquire new customers and maintain existing ones. Studies by Alamsyah et al. (2021) further emphasize the importance of understanding consumer preferences and brand awareness in implementing digital marketing strategies.

3. Statement of the problem

There is a dearth of thorough research on college students' awareness and comprehension of digital marketing methods in the Ramanathapuram District, despite the field's growing significance in today's business environment. The creation of successful educational programmes and initiatives aimed at providing students with pertinent digital marketing skills is hampered by this knowledge gap.

Objectives

- To assess the level of awareness about digital marketing among college students in Ramanathapuram District.
- To explore the perceived importance of digital marketing skills for future career prospects among college students.

4. Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed in the study. Convenience sampling was employed in this study in order to represent the entire population of the study area. The study's goals and theories were supported by the use of both primary and secondary data by the researchers. The investigators devised a methodical survey instrument to gather firsthand information, encompassing demographics and opinions regarding services. The websites of cellular service providers, published documents, and journal articles were the sources of secondary data that the researchers gathered. Tables and figures were produced through the use of SPSS 22.0 and MS-Excel for data processing. The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used to test the hypotheses.

Product or service purchased of the sample customer

Businesses utilise digital marketing as a strategy to advertise their goods and services via online platforms like social media, email, search engines, and other websites. It is an economical method of reaching a wider audience and focusing on potential customers who are most likely to purchase the good or service. Items that are sold online without a physical form or substance are known as digital items. Online courses, software, e-books, and website templates are a few examples of digital items. Both physical and digital products can be promoted through digital marketing. Businesses may reach a larger audience and boost sales and profitability by utilizing digital marketing.

Table No. 1
Product or service purchased of the sample customer

Sl. No	Product or service purchased	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Electronics	51	12.32
2	Clothing and apparel	276	66.67
3	Books and music	13	3.14
4	Home goods	67	16.18
5	Travel	5	1.21

6	Others	2	0.48
	Total	414	100

Source: Primary data

The table shows the results of a survey conducted on 414 respondents. Among the surveyed individuals, clothing and apparel emerge as the most prevalent choice, with 66.67% of respondents making digital marketing-driven purchases in this category. Electronics follow at 12.32%, reflecting a significant but comparatively lower proportion. Books and music, home goods, and travel constitute 3.14%, 16.18%, and 1.21% of the responses, respectively. Interestingly, the "Others" category represents 0.48% of respondents, indicating a minor yet diverse range of digital marketing-influenced purchases.

The main reasons for choose to shop online

Customers may compare prices across several merchants, shop whenever and wherever they choose, and take advantage of doorstep delivery when they shop online. The desire to escape crowds and lengthy lines at physical stores is one of the main reasons behind the transition to online shopping. These developments imply that consumers have made online buying a favoured and enduring option, highlighting the benefits and conveniences of digital retail experiences.

Table No. 2

The main reasons for choose to shop online of the sample customer

Sl. No	Main reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Convenience and ease of use	87	20.8
2.	Wider variety of products and brands	69	16.6
3.	Competitive prices and discounts	82	19.7
4.	Ability to compare products and read reviews	78	18.7
5.	Time-saving and flexibility	101	24.2
	Total	417	100

Source: Primary data

The percentage of respondents who prefer to shop online is displayed in the table. Online shopping is most commonly done for time savings and flexibility (24.2% of respondents). Twenty.8% of respondents cited convenience as the second most important factor in their decision to shop online. 19.7% of respondents cited competitive prices and discounts as the third most important factor in their decision to shop online. With 18.7% of respondents, the ability to

compare products and read reviews ranks as the fourth most popular justification for online purchasing. Expanding the selection of brands and products is the least convincing argument.

The factors that influence for choice of online shopping platform

A careful balance of factors, such as trustworthy brands, endless product aisles, alluring deals, frank reviews, convenient delivery, and hassle-free returns, must be considered when selecting an online retailer. Every feature helps customers select the platform that feels the safest, most satisfying, and, in the end, most suitable for their requirements. Understanding the melody in this symphony of influences is crucial for any business hoping to draw in online customers.

Table No. 3
The factors that influence for choice of online shopping platform

Sl. No	Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Brand reputation and trustworthiness	84	20.1
2.	Product variety and selection	128	31
3.	Competitive pricing and discounts	110	26.4
4.	Customer reviews and ratings	56	13.4
5.	Delivery options and shipping costs	15	3.6
6.	Return and exchange policies	24	5.5
	Total	417	100

Source: Primary data

According to the poll results, 31% of respondents believe that product variety and selection are the most essential factors in online purchasing. Brand reputation and trustworthiness rank in second at 20.1%, with competitive price and discounts taking a considerable proportion of 26.4%. Customer feedback and ratings account for 13.4%, delivery options and shipping charges for 3.6%, and return and exchange policies for 5.5%. It's worth noting that these statistics represent the proportion of respondents who believe each aspect is crucial in their online shopping selections.

Level of awareness about digital marketing practices among gender groups of customers

To test the level of awareness about digital marketing practices and gender groups of customers, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

Ho: There is no significance difference between the levels of awareness about digital marketing practices among gender groups of customers.

The non-parametric statistics of Mann-Whitney Test was used to analyze the level of awareness about digital marketing among gender group of customers and test the proposed null hypothesis. The details of the result of Mann-Whitney Test is given in Table 4

Table No. 4

Level of awareness about digital marketing practices and gender groups of customers

Awareness	U-value	Z-value	p-value	Mean rank	
				Male	Female
Navigating the Digital Marketing Landscape	19630	-1.754	0.079	219.13	198.92
Daily Dose of Digital	19187	-2.122	0.034	196.75	221.2
Recognizing & Assessing Online Promotion	19584.5	-1.792	0.073	219.34	198.71
Decoding Sponsored Ads, Paid Placements, Platforms & Targeting	21390	-0.289	0.772	207.34	210.66
QR Code Champions: Embracing Technology for Information Access	20068	-1.387	0.166	200.98	216.98
Marketing Savvy: Decoding Buzzwords like SEO & Influencer Marketing	19610	-1.766	0.077	198.78	219.17
Targeted Ads: Friend or Foe? Exploring Relevance vs. Intrusion	21175.5	-0.467	0.641	211.69	206.32
The Power of Authenticity in Ads	19167	-2.136	0.033	196.65	221.29
Brands Engaging Beyond Websites	20340.5	-1.161	0.246	202.29	215.68
Reviews Rule	18897	-2.365	0.018	195.35	222.58
Contest Connoisseurs Participating Wisely in Online Giveaways	18718	-2.516	0.012	223.51	194.56
Demystifying Search Engine Results	20753	-0.821	0.412	204.27	213.7
Automating Marketing: Understanding Email Campaigns & Tools	19955.5	-1.485	0.138	200.44	217.52
Retargeting Realities: Personalized Ads Based on Browsing Habits	20024.5	-1.422	0.155	200.77	217.19
Content Marketing Channels	18332	-2.831	0.005	225.37	192.71
Mobile App Perks: Discount Codes & Loyalty Programs in Our Pockets	20705.5	-0.859	0.39	213.95	204.07

This table shows that men and women have different levels of awareness of digital marketing practices. "Daily Dose of Digital," "The Power of Authenticity in Ads," "Reviews Rule," "Contest Connoisseurs," and "Content Marketing Channels" all have p-values less than 0.05. As a result, it would reject the null hypothesis for these elements, indicating a significant variation in awareness across gender groups.

A number of other topics such as "Navigating the Digital Marketing Landscape," "Recognizing & Assessing Online Promotion," "Marketing Savvy," "Targeted Ads," "Brands Engaging

Beyond Websites," "Demystifying Search Engine Results," "Automating Marketing," "Retargeting Realities," & "Mobile App Perks," the p-values are in the range of 0.05 to 0. As a result, it would fail to reject the null hypothesis for these elements, implying that there is no substantial variation in awareness across genders.

Level of awareness about digital marketing practices among preference of social media groups of customers

To test the level of awareness about digital marketing practices and preference of social media groups of customers, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

Ho: There is no significance difference between the levels of awareness about digital marketing practices among preference of social media groups of customers.

The non-parametric statistics of Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to analyze the level of awareness about digital marketing among preference of social media group of customers and test the proposed null hypothesis. The details of the result of Kruskal-Wallis Test are given in Table 5.

Table No. 5

Kruskal-Wallis Test: level of awareness about digital marketing practices among preference of social media groups of customers

Awareness	Chi-Square χ^2	p value	Education (Mean Rank)				
			Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	LinkedIn	Other
Navigating the Digital Marketing Landscape	17.304	.002	225.75	205.67	237.42	173.28	189.09
Daily Dose of Digital	7.674	.104	213.75	229.18	191.17	195.38	227.07
Recognizing & Assessing Online Promotion	6.216	.184	202.92	195.87	206.45	214.18	248.00
Decoding Sponsored Ads, Paid Placements, Platforms & Targeting	22.883	.000	186.36	177.77	249.16	213.59	213.91
QR Code Champions: Embracing Technology for Information Access	33.647	.000	191.76	167.72	206.27	260.10	237.87
Marketing Savvy: Decoding Buzzwords like SEO & Influencer Marketing	8.732	.068	234.65	193.78	219.67	189.71	211.20
Targeted Ads: Friend or Foe?	9.718	.045	236.72	214.2	189.5	194.82	224.84

Exploring Relevance vs. Intrusion				0	4		
The Power of Authenticity in Ads	32.517	.000	237.31	252.9 2	186.6 7	173.40	183.74
Brands Engaging Beyond Websites	13.312	.010	236.74	194.7 8	228.5 9	186.54	188.41
Reviews Rule	14.864	.005	165.46	219.8 4	229.1 5	211.67	208.02
Contest Connoisseurs Participating Wisely in Online Giveaways	3.884	.422	197.72	213.2 4	217.2 1	195.19	229.29
Demystifying Search Engine Results	14.088	.007	187.22	196.9 6	214.4 0	208.48	267.40
Automating Marketing: Understanding Email Campaigns & Tools	4.164	.384	217.88	215.2 2	204.9 5	190.46	228.01
Retargeting Realities: Personalized Ads Based on Browsing Habits	7.726	.102	191.40	218.9 6	210.3 4	226.68	176.30
Content Marketing Channels	8.813	.066	179.91	216.9 1	205.9 6	214.29	242.09

This analysis, based on the Kruskal-Wallis test, reveals potential variations in digital marketing awareness regarding different social media platforms used by customers.

For most aspects of digital marketing, the p-values are less than 0.05. Therefore, you would reject the null hypothesis for these aspects, suggesting a significant difference in awareness about digital marketing practices among different preference groups of social media.

The aspects "Daily Dose of Digital," "Marketing Savvy," "Targeted Ads: Friend or Foe? Exploring Relevance vs. Intrusion," "Contest Connoisseurs Participating Wisely in Online Giveaways," "Automating Marketing: Understanding Email Campaigns & Tools," and "Retargeting Realities: Personalized Ads Based on Browsing Habits" have p-values greater than 0.05. Therefore, you would fail to reject the null hypothesis for these aspects, suggesting no significant difference in awareness about digital marketing practices among these specific preference groups.

5. Important discovery

- Elements affecting the choice of online shopping platform: When it comes to selecting an online shopping platform, students rank product diversity and selection (31%) as the most important aspect. Other important criteria include competitive pricing and promotions (26.4%) and brand reputation and trustworthiness (20.1%).
- Social media preference and gender affect awareness of digital marketing: The study found that there are differences in awareness of digital marketing between social media and gender.

When it came to topics like "The Power of Authenticity in Ads," "Daily Dose of Digital," and "Content Marketing Channels," women outperformed men in terms of awareness.

- There were variations in social media preference groups' awareness as well. Students who favoured Twitter and Facebook were less aware of features like "QR Code Champions" and "Decoding Sponsored Ads" than students who favoured other sites.

6. Recommendation

Companies need to look at what influences the platforms that consumers choose for online buying. When creating digital marketing strategies, gender and social media preferences have an impact on the Daily Dose of Digital, QR Code Champions, and digital marketing awareness variables. They should prioritise maintaining their brand's reputation, offering competitive prices, and maintaining a varied product line in order to draw in customers. Furthermore, targeting marketing campaigns according to social media preferences and gender could help you reach a wider audience.

7. Useful implications

To draw and keep consumers on e-commerce sites, businesses should prioritise product variety, reputational branding, competitive pricing, and focused advertising strategies. They should provide a wide variety of products, establish credibility through clear procedures and first-rate customer care, provide competitive pricing and promotions, and tailor marketing messaging based on social media preferences and gender.

To give students the necessary skills and to solve any gender disparities in the understanding of digital marketing, educational institutions should embrace digital marketing education. In response, students ought to keep current in digital marketing.

8. Final Thoughts

To meet the changing demands of the labor market and promote entrepreneurship, it is critical to comprehend the knowledge and expertise of college students in the Ramanathapuram District concerning digital marketing techniques. Through focused educational interventions and identification of areas for development, stakeholders can equip students with the necessary digital marketing skills to prosper in the digital economy.

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