AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND CHOICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: Social media is best opportunity or medium amongst all opportunities available to a brand to connect with the prospective consumers. Social media is a medium for socialization. It has strong impact on purchasing process. Social media is popular to promote the brands. Firstly, consumers search detail information of a brand/ product in traditional buying process of a consumer and after getting detailed information they consider many brands and then from those brands they evaluate a few brands and in the end, the final decisions are taken according to his/her needs. Nowadays, social media is considered as the right way to get right information at the right time by the consumer. Social media give consumers high control as it provides buyers much more information. It also enables consumers to watch reviews and make comparison of different products, while sitting at home. Social Media has become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior which leads to brand commitment. The present paper is an attempt to find out the impact and benefits of using social media in brand choice. The paper also highlights some important social media networks and its usage pattern. Data has been collected by sending questionnaire online among the social media users. Bar charts, frequency, cross tabulation have been used to analyse the data. Multiple linear regression has been conducted to check the effect and relationship of purchase intention, brand awareness, word of mouth, brand engagement and brand choice. The positive linear relationship has been found among all five variables. Purchase intention affects brand choice more significantly than EWOM and brand awareness. Thus, social media has great impact on brand choice.

Keywords: Social Media, Brand awareness, EWOM, Brand engagement, purchase intention, brand choice

Introduction

The social media has given a new medium for communication. It has changed the way of communication between consumers and brands. The traditional buying process of a consumer includes a lengthy process mainly a) to search detail information of a brand/ product, after getting detailed information, b) they consider many brands and c) to evaluate a few brands out of those brands and d) in the end, the final decisions are taken according to his/her needs. They also consulted with their family, friends and peers. Nowadays, due to advancement of technology, social media is considered as the right way to get right information at the right time by the consumer. Social media give consumers high control as it enables the buyers to gather much more information, watch reviews, and make comparison of different products, while sitting at home.

From the last decade, social media has been proved to be the "best opportunities available" for a brand for connecting with prospective consumers. Social media is the medium to socialize. It has a strong impact on the purchasing process of a consumer.

Earlier, brands only used to give messages through print and electronic campaigns and got responses late. Now, consumers express their views about brands easily through social networking sites. This new type of media has enabled consumers to make positive and negative influence on brands. Social media users recognize and recall brands, even, interact with the brands owners. So, brand managers are taking proper care in managing brands and engaging consumers through impactful contents, videos, pictures and promotional tools. These techniques have proved to be quite cost-effective and have attracted many customers. In today's world internet is considered as the best way to spread messages. Therefore, many companies have gained a lot from digital marketing and fans through social networking. Social Networking Websites including Facebook and Twitter which are now being used by various multinational companies in order to convey their message to the customers.

In this way, social media has become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior which leads to brand commitment.

According to Barnes, N. G., & Mattson (2008) social media takes less time to reach out to customers and has endless possibilities. It helps to grab attention of a customer by writing a blog or leaving a comment on someone else's blog. One can reach out to potential clients in a cost effective manner by advertising on social websites, especially if one is a small business owner who doesn't have the budget for television and advertising campaigns.

The companies have converted the marketing approaches towards the social media. Now, every business large, medium and small is focusing on it and trying to divert attention of users to their pages existed on the various social networking sites. The consumers are also getting awareness about new brands. They recognize their favorite brands and like to discuss with the other users and brand managers about their expectations from the brand. Social media has put the consumers at the centre of business world, which needs marketers to use new set of marketing tools to integrate the consumers to their brands in very innovative manners.

Social Media
Unlike traditional marketing channels and communication tools, social media is a two way channel for communication between the users/public and organization. The nature of social media platform gives the opportunity to people to be an active participant, rather being a passive audience.

Social media basically includes the various online technological tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information and resources. Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts and other multimedia communications.

These are various forms of electronic communication such as websites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online/virtual communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".
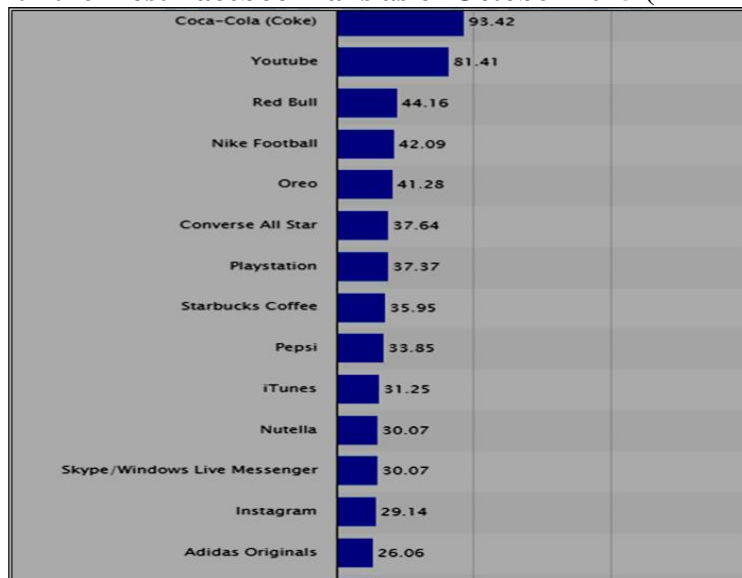
Social networking sites
Boyed & Ellison (2007) defined social networking site as a web based service which allows people to make profiles, express or share views with other members on the same connection, and allow them to make visible their list of connection to others.

There are many social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Instagram, Pintrest, Myspace and Youtube etc. Out of the many social networking sites online, Facebook has become a dominant player because of its incredible growth and because of how quickly its audience has become diversified (Cavanaugh, 2009). These sites enable users to create profiles, share ideas, pictures/videos, connect with each other, to join groups and engage in social general behavior.

From a marketing perspective, businesses hope to use Facebook to brand their organizations and products and create sales. This is commonly done through Facebook using the concept known as 'friendvertising' leveraging the power of social influence to build momentum in promoting a company and its unique brand (Ryan & Jones, 2009).

Product brands with the most Facebook fans as of October 2015 (in millions)

Brand	Fans (in millions)
Coca-Cola (Coke)	93.42
Youtube	81.41
Red Bull	44.16
Nike Football	42.09
Oreo	41.28
Converse All Star	37.64
Playstation	37.37
Starbucks Coffee	35.95
Pepsi	33.85
iTunes	31.25
Nutella	30.07
Skype/Windows Live Messenger	30.07
Instagram	29.14
Adidas Originals	26.06

(source : http://www.statista.com/statistics/265657/leading-product-brands-with-the-most-fans-on-facebook/)

In this way, brands are using social networking sites platform not only to advertise their brands, but to make users engage with their brands. Consumers are also taking assistance to make evaluation and select the brands. They like the brand pages, so that they can get notifications

about new products, discounts, freebies, offers and also take participation in discussions regarding brands. They also look for the reviews by other users about products/brands, they want to buy. Social Media platform represent a mind blowing new innovative inclination that should be of interest to companies which operate in online space (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Review of Literature

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user -generated content". Social media can take many different forms, including social networks, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Weber, 2009). Weber also includes search engines in the definition of social web, and describes them as reputation aggregators with the task of aggregating sites with the best product or service to offer and usually put things in order of reputation (Weber 2009).

Safko and Brake (2009) have supported the concept proposed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2009), as they have referred social media to "activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media". Nonetheless, social media expedite the flow of communication by encouraging contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested and it is a two-way conversation when comparing to the traditional media because social media outlets are open up to feedback and participation.

Social media marketing

Craig Lefebvre (2011) found that the main focus of social marketing was on products or services, price and distribution commitment. Social marketing used communication persuasiveness to make behavioural change with the use of incentives and other behavioural economic elements.

Keller (2009) states, "Interactive marketing communications allows consumers to learn from and teach others about a brand, as well as express their commitment to a brand and observe the brand loyalty of others". Social media plays a vital role and has already left an ever lasting impact in terms of brand equity.

Liana Evan (2010) found that now customers don't like the traditional ways of advertising. They usually skip the flash ads and banner ads. It doesn't mean they don't see or engage with the products and companies. They are conversing with brands by expressing their thoughts, opinions and experiences on blogs, forums. Thus, to engage the customers, companies have to look deeply the comments, ratings, and reviews of the users-generated contents on the social media sites. Otherwise, conversation will become one sided.

Social Media and Brand Engagement

Bond et al (2010) suggested that use of social media advertising with multichannel communications tools have influential impact on brand loyalty and engagement. Consumers

perceived the difference between the brands on social media. Some brands focus on publicity only and other brands intent to engage consumers on social media. If brands want to achieve successful position on social media then they have to interact with consumers rather just showing their attractive presence on social media.

Weber (2009) came upto the question of branding in the social web. According to him, the companies communicate with their customers and assert that the stronger the dialogue is, the stronger the brand is, and vice versa. The author questioned the very core concept of traditional marketing and branding. The marketers used to broadcast messages to audiences and target groups, but in the era of social web, branding and marketing is about to participate in social networks to which people want to belong, where dialogue with customers and between customers can flourish.

Evan (2010) analysed that customer Engagement is very different in open and participative environment on social media platforms. Engagement is redefined by the online consumers from read only mode to participative mode. Consumers are now participants rather than just viewers. Customers are now willing to talk to brands, show their personal interest in your business. By sharing their experiences on social media, customers can take better purchase decisions. Engagement involves four processes 1. Consumption (means downloading, reading, watching, or listening to digital content), 2. Curation (sorting and filtering, rating, reviewing, commenting on, tagging, or otherwise describing content.), 3. Creation (uploading contents, photos, and 4. Collaboration (Blogging, taking direct inputs from the consumers and design the product accordingly)

Social Media and Brand Awareness
Aaker (1991) discussed about brand equity as a combination of fundamental grouped dimensions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand associations. Aaker (1996) also suggested a brand equity model comprised of ten factors among which brand awareness is fundamental. Brand awareness is very essential in buying decisions making that consumer recall the brand among the several product categories. Keller (2008) characterized brand awareness with two elements like brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition is treated as the consumers capacity to identify the brand whilst the brand itself is given as a cue. Brand recall is the consumer ability to remind the concerned items. Here, instead of the brand itself, purchase and/or usage situation is given as cue. Brand recognition is important in store based purchase decision while recall is important in other cases. Nowadays, consumers get awareness about different new brands over various social networking sites through many promotional activities conducted by brands, comments & likes by friends on brand pages. Thus, social media become a source of brand awareness among the consumers.

Social Media and WOM
WOM helps to marketing practitioners for understanding the consumer engagement with brands through social media. Consumers consider the social media as trusted information source (Robyn, 2011). In order to engage with consumers, marketers have got to learn the new rules of

conversation with consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). A particularly interesting aspect of social media is its potential to engage users in sharing their opinions and interests, generating a vast amount of word-of-mouth, also known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Jansen et al. 2009)

Social Media and Trust

Lee (2014) describes that the sociability has positive influence on customer's trust and trust further influences perceived value. Thus, by creating groups and communities and engaging members in discussions help in attracting loyal customers. This will help customers more when they have needs. Social media dependency has positive influence on trust and perceived value of customers on social media. This will motivate them to have purchase intensions. So, if companies want to attract and obtain customers, then companies need to make their customers active on the social media platforms by providing the new features and functions. Companies should understand the need of users and make them free to trust. Their brand should be prominent and distinguish on social media.

Objectives

1. To know about social media usage pattern
2. To find out factors social media affect brand choice.
3. To assess the impact of social media on brand choice by evaluating four factors, purchase intention, brand engagement, electronic-word-of-mouth (EWOM) and brand awareness.

Methodology

The exploratory research has been conducted to understand the social media trends in the areas of marketing and the effect of social media in brand engagement among consumer. The exploratory research methods involves collection of relevant literature like published articles, seminar proceedings, websites , write-ups in blogs, books and some unpublished research based working papers. There was all possible effort for assimilation and synthesizing of the information to make a coherent whole.

In the next phase, a study on the social media users has been carried out to gain the insight on consumers' response toward the social media. The data is collected from 218 internet users who are having account on at least one social networking sites or blogs. Out of these 125 are male and 93 are female respondents. The judgmental sampling technique has been conducted because data can be collected from the respondents who use social networking sites.

The study considered Purchase Intention, brand awareness, Electronic word of mouth, brand engagement and social media brand choice to make relationship between these variables. A structured questionnaire on variables identified earlier from literature on social media use and its influence on brand choice. Questionnaire used by Shojaee & Azmanhas (2013) and Shampa Jahan (2014) has been adapted and many changes have been performed according to this study.

The software SPSS has been used to analyse the data. Bar charts, diagrams, tables and multiple linear regression analysis have been performed to analyze the data statistically.

Research Model

In order to meet the research specific objectives, several particular indicators are used to measure the effect from social media brand awareness to brand choice. The study revolves around five main variables that are Purchase Intention, Brand Awareness, E-Word of Mouth, Brand Engagement and Brand Choice. The research model has been proposed. The multiple linear regression has been applied one by one between these four variables.
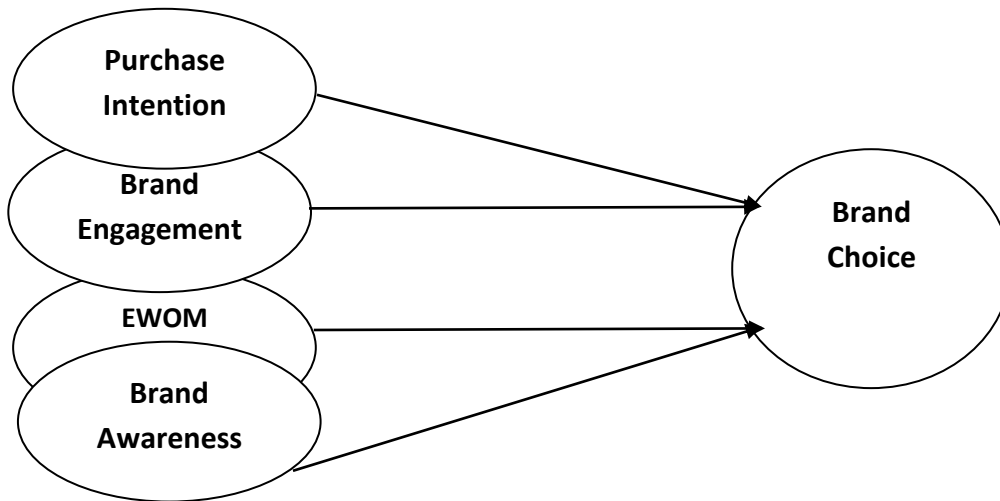
Figure 1 : Conceptual Model

Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic characteristics

Here, some demographical analysis has been given.

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Gender	Frequency	Percent
18-24	52	23.9	Male	125	57.3
25-34	104	47.7	Female	93	42.7
35-44	36	16.5	**Total**	**218**	**100.0**
45-54	16	7.3	**Occupation**	Frequency	Percent
55 and above	10	4.6	Student	62	28.4

Total	218	100.0	Business	7	3.2
Education			Profession	53	24.3
Under Graduate	25	11.5	Service	79	36.2
Post Graduate	99	45.4	Retired	4	1.8
M.phil/Ph.d	89	40.8	**Total**	**218**	**100.0**
Others	5	2.3			
Total	**218**	**100.0**			

Table 1 : Demographic detail

Reliability Check

The values of the Cronbach's Alpha for the independent variables, Purchase intention, brand engagement, EWOM and brand awareness are obtained as 0.907, 0.931, 0.926 and 0.957 respectively, and for the dependent variable, i.e. brand choice, as 0.942. The value 0.7 or more of Cronbach's alpha is considered as acceptable social science studies. Thus, the result highly confirms the internal consistency of the constructs.
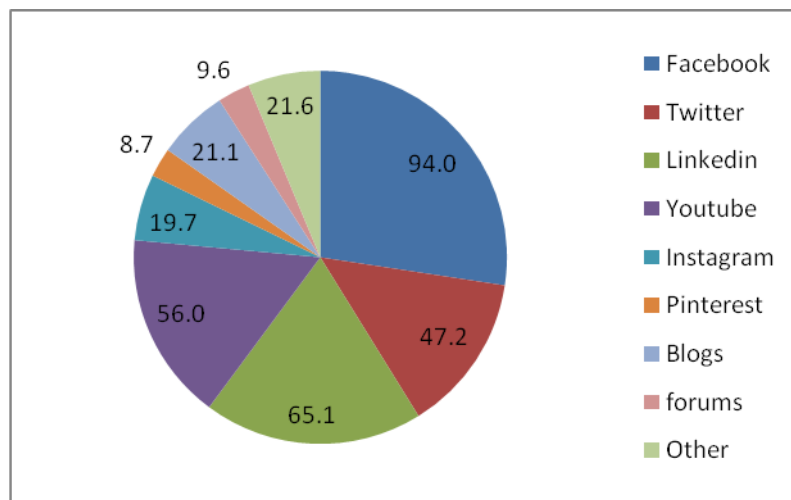
Variables	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Purchase Intention	.907
Brand Engagement	.931
EWOM	.926
Brand Awareness	.957
Brand Choice	.942

Table 2: Reliability Test
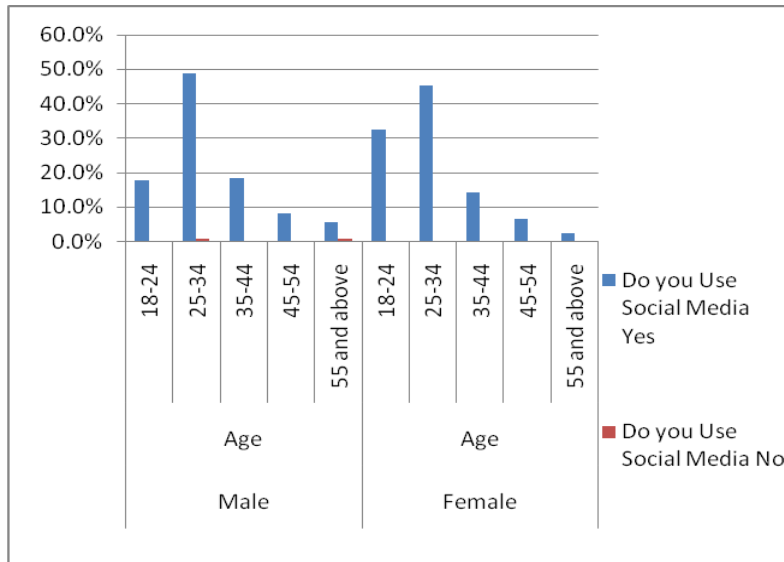
**Graph 1 : Do you use Social Media**

Graph 2 : Social Media Profile/Accounts

From the above graph, it is evident that maximum number of respondents (male or female) who use social media belongs to age group of 25-34,

Respondents have accounts on different social networking sites. Most popular social networking site is Facebook, as 94% respondents have account on it. We can see Linkedin is also getting popularity among the users.
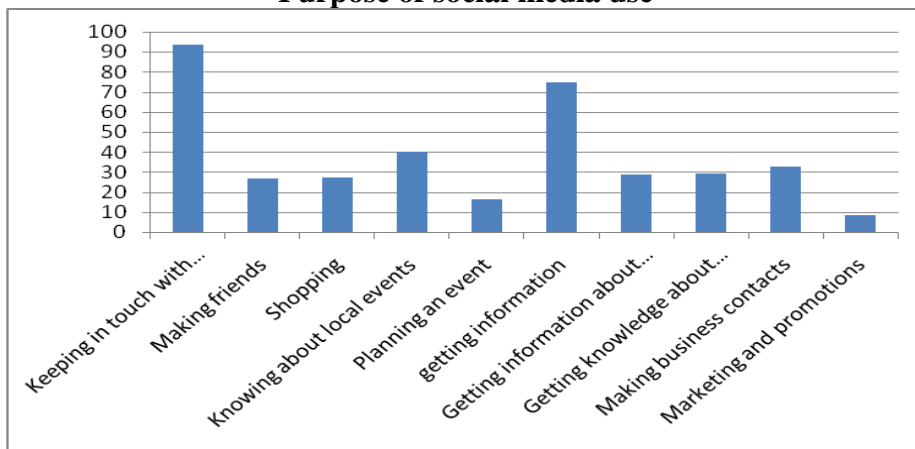
Average Time spend on use of social media
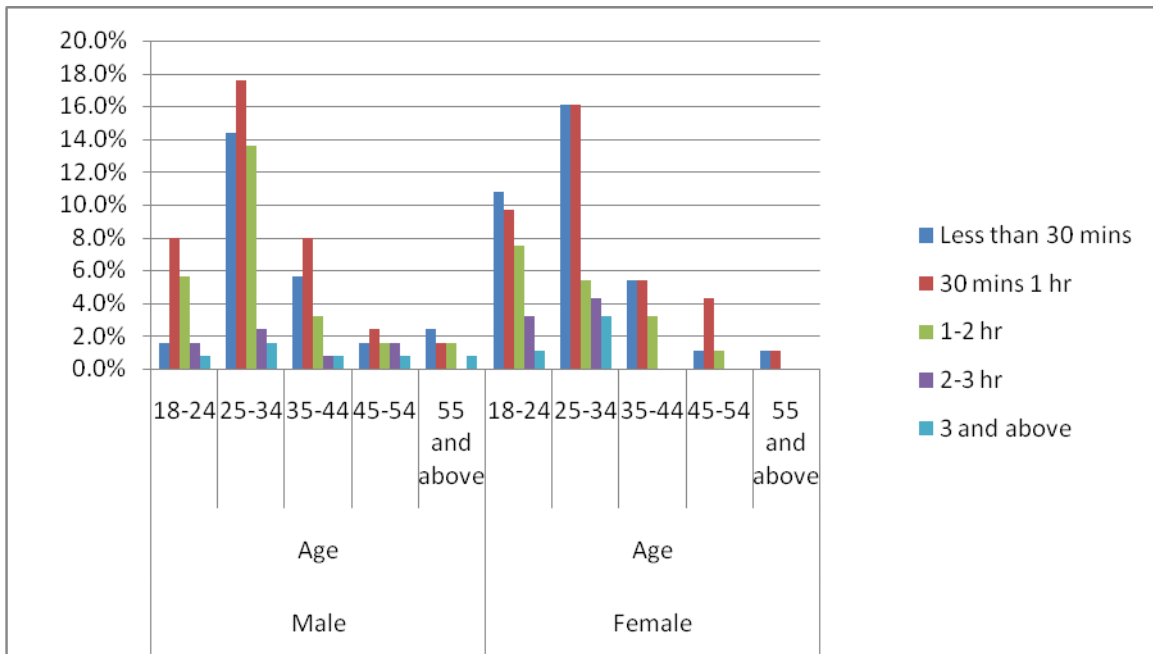
Graph 3 : Time Spent

Figure 4, describes that 17.6% and 16.1% (male and female) respondents belongs to same age group 25-34 who use social media for 30 mins to 1 hr. On the other hand, respondents who use social media more than 3 hr also belong to age group of 25-34. And if we compare among all respondents, female age group of 25-34 use social media more than 3 hr.


Graph 4 : Purpose of Social media use

Above graph 4 is showing that maximum number of respondents 93.6% use social media to keep in touch with friends and relatives. After that 74.8% respondents use it to get various types of

information. Only 27.1% respondents use social media for shopping. Yet approx 30% respondents use it to get information about discounts, offers and to know about new products.

Preferred source for information about products/services you want to buy
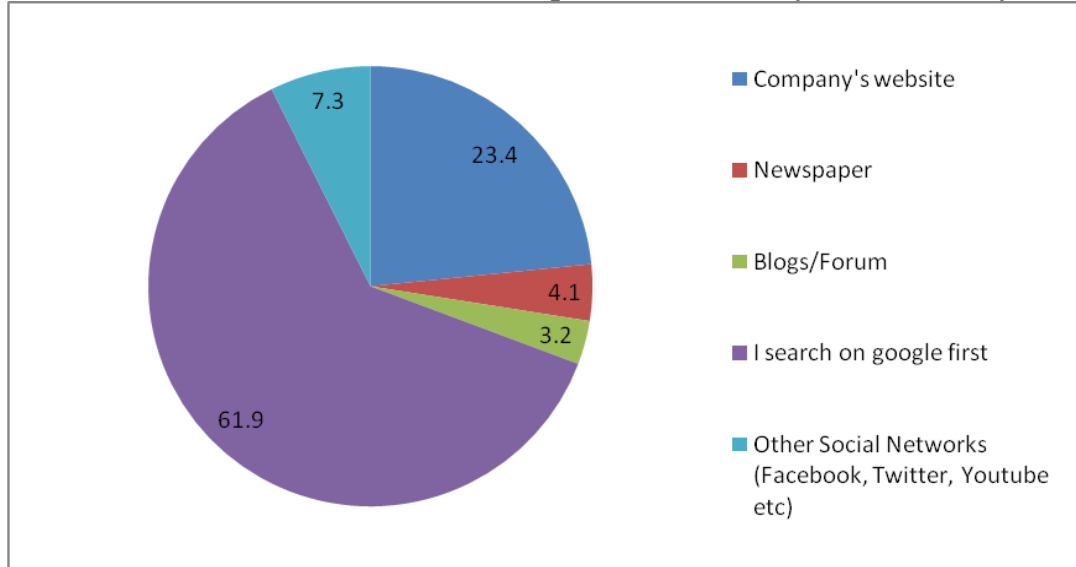
Graph 5 : Preferred source of information

Majority of respondents seek information about products and services on google. They also prefer company's websites and then social networking sites to get information about products.

Results

To investigate the objectives of this research study, the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables, Multiple Linear Regressions have been used. The dependent variable is Brand Choice (Y) and four independent variables are Purchase Intention (X1), Brand Engagement (X2), Electronic-Word-Of-Mouth (X3) and Brand Awareness (X4). These variables are used in the multiple linear regression models:

$Y=\beta0+\beta1X1+\beta2X2+\beta3X3+\beta4X4+e$ (*e* is the error term)   (1)

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.926[a]	.857	.854	4.25346	2.040

a. Predictors: (Constant), Purchase_Intention, Brand_Engagement, EWOM, Brand_Awareness

b. Dependent Variable: Brand_Choice

Table 1 : Model Summary

Table 1 presents the output model summary, to present the strength of the relationship between the independent variables of multiple regressions and the dependent variable which is measured by the relation R. Regarding the results of analysis, R=0.926 which shows a high positive correlation. The R Square value (= 0.857) shows the independent variables explain 85.7% of the variance in adoption. It means about 57.3% of the variation in brand choice can be described by the variation in purchase intention, brand engagement, EWOM and Brand awareness. The Durbin Watson statistics is used for indicating variables that do not have autocorrelation problems. According to Shim (2000), the values that fall within the range of 1.5 to 2.5 are favorable. The Durbin-Watson index is at 2.040, so the assumption of independence of error is not violated and no autocorrelation problem is happened.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	23120.125	4	5780.031	319.482	.000[b]
1	Residual	3871.665	214	18.092		
	Total	26991.790	218			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand_Choice

b. Predictors: (Constant), Purchase_Intention, Brand_Engagement, EWOM, Brand_Awareness

Table 2 : ANOVA

In Table 2, the ANOVA gives information about levels of variance within a regression model which is used for tests of coefficients' significance. One-way ANOVA analysis, shows that acceptance of brand choice toward social media is statistically significant, because F-value is statistically significant, $F (4, 214) = 319.428$. The p-value is less than 0.05 (P=0) which means that at least one of the four predictor variables can be used to model brand choice.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.869	1.304		1.433	.153		
	Brand Engagement	.028	.043	.032	.651	.515	.272	3.676

EWOM	.216	.060	.191	3.573	.000	.235	4.247
Brand Awareness	.231	.036	.343	6.362	.000	.230	4.346
Purchase Intention	.665	.072	.430	9.191	.000	.306	3.267

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Choice

Table 3 : Coefficient

The coefficient test is used to find the most effective independent variable(s). According to the result (Table 3), the estimated multi regression model is formulated as

$$\ddot{Y}=1.869+0.665X1+0.028X2+0.216X3+0.231X4 \tag{2}$$

According to the equation, the highest coefficient is possessed by Purchase intention which is equal to 0.665 with highest *t*-statistic (9.191) and *p*-value of 0.000. Brand engagement has the lowest coefficient with weight 0.028 and p-value is no less than .5, thus, brand engagement does not affect brand choice significantly. It shows that one standard deviation increase in purchase intention is followed by 0.665 standard deviation increase in brand choice, provided that the brand engagement, EWOM and brand awareness are left unchanged. It can be explained for both other independent variables in the same way. Based on the VIF values of the independent variables, there is no multicollinearity problem in the data, because none of the VIF greater than 5. However, a value of 10 has been recommended as maximum level of VIF (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995; Kennedy, 1992; Marquardt, 1970; Neter, Wasserman & Kutner, 1989) and 5 as maximum VIF value (Rogerson, 2001). Therefore, this model can be used for an estimation objective.

Conclusion:

Social media provides a platform to brands to communicate with consumers and conduct their marketing activities on it. The consumers also contribute actively towards those marketing efforts by making connections with brands. Customers are very conscious who use social media. Brands cannot persuade them easily by showing any stories on their wall. These customers are literate and sophisticated. From the above results, it is clear that consumers use social media as a medium to collect information about brands. Many of the respondents consider social media as a reliable source of information. It provides users a place where they can know about their favourite companies or brands. Consumers consider many brand aspects while choosing a brand like they like to know about brands from their friends, peer groups and other users of the social media. They ask for recommendations from their folks about the products/services. In other words, they consult on the social media about brands they like or want to buy. Friends also deliver their feedback/reviews and recommendation in return through brand endorsement by post

sharing, commenting, liking, even by checking in at a place. Sometimes social media has emotional impact in evaluation of products. Friends help to find brand and discuss whether to buy or not and price is suitable or not. Word of mouth has exponential growth on social media. Marketers and consumers both are using it to have communication with each other and get benefits from the power of social media. It also enables users to recall and recognize brands easily. Users like to engage in discussions with brands but it doesn't help in selection of a brand. Word of mouth and purchase intention play very significant role in brand choice. Thus, brands and marketers should make effective efforts to make users involve in discussions and persuade them to transfer the information immediately. It requires good contents marketing. User generated contents on social media is the hardest thing to control. In this way, social media has great impact on our choices. As it influences our decision making and we should be more conscious while using social media for brand choice.

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