

AWARENESS ABOUT DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT

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Abstract

Social media networks significantly influence purchasing decisions. This study investigates the digital marketing awareness and online shopping behavior of college students in Ramanathapuram District, India. The study showed a substantial preference for online shopping among students, with clothing and apparel appearing as the most preferred category. Convenience, increased product choice, competitive pricing, and the ability to compare products are the key motivators for online buying. The survey found that students have various levels of awareness of specific digital marketing tactics. While social media exposure exposes consumers to diverse online marketing strategies, gender inequalities occur. Females tend to have a better knowledge of issues such as the influence of reviews and identifying misleading marketing. The platform used by students appears to influence their awareness of specific marketing methods. Students who use Facebook and Twitter have a greater comprehension of various marketing methods than those who predominantly use other social media platforms.

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

1. Introduction

In today's digital world, digital marketing has become an essential tool for businesses promoting their products or services. With the ability to reach a large audience via multiple digital platforms, digital marketing provides a cost-effective and efficient way for firms to communicate with their target market. Understanding college students' accepting and skill in digital marketing strategies in Ramanathapuram District is critical for determining their readiness for the modern

labor market and entrepreneurial chances. Social media networks significantly influence purchasing decisions. College students are exposed to commercial messages via sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These channels have a significant favorable impact on student purchasing decisions. Online advertisements are presented on websites, search engines, and other digital platforms, also contribute to students' buying decisions. The visibility of online advertisements influences their preferences. Mobile devices are ubiquitous, and mobile marketing (such as SMS campaigns and app notifications) has a positive impact on college students' purchasing behavior. Interestingly, the impact of email marketing is more complex. While it remains a relevant channel, its effectiveness varies among students. Demographic factors, such as gender and academic level, shape the response to email marketing messages.

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

Despite the increasing importance of digital marketing in the contemporary business landscape, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the awareness and understanding of digital marketing practices among college students in Ramanathapuram District. This knowledge gap hinders the development of effective educational programs and initiatives tailored to equip students with relevant digital marketing skills.

4. 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.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design. This study used convenience sampling to represent the overall population in the study region. The researchers employed both primary and secondary data to support the study's objectives and hypotheses. The researchers created a systematic questionnaire to collect primary data, including demographics and service perceptions. The researchers collected secondary data from journal articles, cellular service providers' websites, and published documents. Data was processed using SPSS 22.0 and MS-Excel to create tables and figures. Hypotheses were tested using Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis test.

5. Product or service purchased of the sample customer

Digital marketing is a technique used by businesses to promote their products or services through digital channels such as search engines, social media, email, and other websites. It is a cost-effective way to reach a larger audience and target prospects that are most likely to buy the product or service. Digital products are products that are sold online and do not have a physical form or substance. Examples of digital products include e-books, software programs, website templates, and online courses. Digital marketing can be used to promote digital products as well as physical products. By leveraging digital marketing, businesses can reach a wider audience and increase their sales and revenue.

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

Online shopping provides flexibility, allowing consumers to shop anytime and anywhere, compare prices across various retailers, and enjoy the convenience of doorstep delivery. The shift to online shopping is driven by factors such as avoiding crowds and long queues at physical stores. These trends suggest that online shopping has become a preferred and enduring choice for consumers, emphasizing the convenience and advantages offered by 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 table illustrates the percentage of respondents who prefer to shop on an online platform. Time savings and flexibility are the most common reasons for shopping online, with 24.2% of respondents doing so. Convenience is the second most important reason for choosing to shop online, with 20.8% of respondents doing so. Competitive prices and discounts are the third most important reason people opt to purchase online, with 19.7% of respondents doing so. The ability to compare items and read reviews is the fourth most common reason for shopping online, with 18.7% of respondents using it. A wider choice of products and brands is the least compelling reason

The factors that influence for choice of online shopping platform

Choosing where to purchase online requires a careful balance of criteria, including reputable brands, infinite product aisles, compelling offers, honest reviews, convenient delivery, and worry-free returns. Each feature contributes to clients choosing the platform that feels the most secure, gratifying, and, ultimately, the best fit for their needs. It's a symphony of influences, and understanding the melody is essential for any firm looking to attract online shoppers.

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? Exploring Relevance vs. Intrusion	9.718	.045	236.72	214.20	189.54	194.82	224.84
The Power of Authenticity in Ads	32.517	.000	237.31	252.92	186.67	173.40	183.74
Brands Engaging Beyond Websites	13.312	.010	236.74	194.78	228.59	186.54	188.41
Reviews Rule	14.864	.005	165.46	219.84	229.15	211.67	208.02
Contest Connoisseurs Participating Wisely in Online Giveaways	3.884	.422	197.72	213.24	217.21	195.19	229.29
Demystifying Search Engine Results	14.088	.007	187.22	196.96	214.40	208.48	267.40
Automating Marketing: Understanding Email Campaigns & Tools	4.164	.384	217.88	215.22	204.95	190.46	228.01
Retargeting Realities: Personalized Ads Based on Browsing Habits	7.726	.102	191.40	218.96	210.34	226.68	176.30
Content Marketing Channels	8.813	.066	179.91	216.91	205.96	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. Major finding

- Factors influencing online shopping platform selection: Product variety and selection (31%) is the most crucial factor for Students when choosing an online shopping platform. Brand reputation and trustworthiness (20.1%) and competitive pricing and discounts (26.4%) are also significant factors.
- Gender and social media preference influence digital marketing awareness: The study observed a difference in digital marketing awareness between genders and social media preferences.
- For aspects like "Daily Dose of Digital," "The Power of Authenticity in Ads," and "Content Marketing Channels," females showed a higher level of awareness compared to males.
- Social media preference groups also differed in their awareness. Students who preferred Facebook and Twitter showed lower awareness for aspects like "Decoding Sponsored Ads" and "QR Code Champions" compared to those who preferred other platforms.

6. Suggestion

Businesses must examine factors impacting online shopping platform choices. Gender and social media preferences influence digital marketing awareness, Daily Dose of Digital, and QR Code Champions variables while developing digital marketing strategies. To attract clients, they should focus on having a diverse product line, preserving brand reputation, and delivering competitive prices. Additionally, personalizing marketing strategies based on gender and social media inclinations may be effective in reaching a larger audience.

7. Practical implication

To attract and maintain customers on online shopping platforms, firms should focus product diversity, brand repute, competitive price, and targeted marketing methods. They should supply a diverse range of items, build trust through excellent customer service and transparent processes, offer competitive pricing and promotions, and personalize marketing messages depending on gender and social media preferences.

Educational institutions should embrace digital marketing education to provide students with essential skills while also addressing any gender inequalities in digital marketing knowledge. Students, in turn, should stay up to date on digital marketing

8. Conclusion

Understanding the awareness and proficiency of college students in Ramanathapuram District regarding digital marketing practices is essential for addressing the evolving needs of the job market and fostering entrepreneurship. By identifying areas for improvement and designing targeted educational interventions, stakeholders can empower students with the requisite digital marketing skills to thrive in the digital economy.

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