



A Study on Purchase Frequency Levels in Social Networking Sites With Special Reference to Gender

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Abstract. Advancements in technology has given rise to a novel online shopping phenomenon known as “social commerce”. Users share their insights, expertise and experiences as content creators. It provides business opportunity to leverage social media for understanding customers and engaging them. Companies gain substantial benefits and implement tailored strategies to effectively sway customer behavior. Past research suggests that there is gender-based distinctions in social networking sites. The research paper investigates how often people buy fashion items on social networking sites and explores any gender disparities in their shopping habits. Using a survey, the study utilizes a chi-square test to uncover the link between gender and the frequency of purchasing fashion items within six-month period. It reveals a noteworthy connection between gender and the regularity of buying fashion items on these platforms. Additionally, the study also highlights differences between genders in how frequently they make these purchases. The research offers insights to marketers aiming to devise strategies that account for how gender impacts purchasing frequency. There’s potential for more investigation within this stud to uncover gender differences across different social networking platforms and create tailored approaches for each site.

Keywords: Gender differences, Social commerce, Social networking sites.

1 Introduction

The rise of social networking sites, improved internet access and technological advancements has led to the emergence of a new form of online shopping called “social commerce”. Social media users now have the ability to share their opinions, knowledge, and experiences as content creators. This gives businesses the chance to take use of social media's ability to comprehend, communicate with, and facilitate business transactions with clients. Companies benefit significant advantages from social media, such as increased brand recognition [11], electronic word-of-mouth(eWOM) [9], boosted sales [22, 3] and the development of customer service in social contexts [4, 7]. Businesses create social media strategies that are appropriate in order to influence customers [2]. Users can have a free space online with social media, creating a

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public identity [33]. These websites support users to interact with their networks and acts as a medium for information exchange. Social networking sites acts as an ideal platform for likeminded people to interact and share. It offers various communication tools such as instant messaging, blogs, voice messages, videos etc. Facebook reigns as the most visited and famous fun-centered site in India. There are many types of social networking sites like professional, media sharing, virtual world sites, and more [30]. According to [24] there is gender difference with networking sites in social media.

2 Literature Survey

People often refer to online platforms as social networks. [12] explains that social networking sites allow users to set up and control their accounts, chat and share things with friends, and see how they're connected to others. Fue et al. (2009) says that these sites are now key players in online shopping, enabling users to chat, form friendships. Looking at it further, Lai & Turban (2008) note that social networks increase bonds and build trust. People mostly use social media because they find it fun. How many friends they have and usefulness are two other reasons for joining social sites. Differences among genders also have an impact on how social sites are used, Lin and Lu(2011). Bae & Lee (2010) studied and found big differences in how people see online customer reviews.

Social commerce is about using social media to help online business transactions. It's done through applications on social media sites or social networking features on online shopping websites (Liang & Turban, 2011). Social commerce is the idea of making money from online sales through social media says Marsden (2011). And according to Yadav et al. (2013), it's any activity linked to trade, which is influenced in both virtual and real-world settings. This is made possible by online social environments. These activities can be related to different phases of shopping decisions, such as realizing a need, buying, and after buying. Yahoo started "Pick Lists" in 2005, letting users rate items and comment. This was the beginning of social commerce on the platform (Rubel, 2005; Rothberg, 2005). Amazon's "purchase circles" and Epinions's in-house social forums were the trailblazers. These systems were similar to today's recommendation systems and online groups (Curty & Zhang, 2011).

As stated by Hajli (2015), Web-based technology makes it possible for user-generated content to be built on social media platforms referred as social commerce constructs like communities, forums, ratings & reviews, and referrals & recommendations. They have similar features and varying technological capacities. Using social commerce tools like recommendations and ratings and reviews offers quick way for customers to share their opinions and experiences regarding the goods or services (Amblee & Bui, 2011). Ratings and reviews allow users to provide independent perspectives and experiences with products. While recommendations and referrals are typically customized, these ratings and reviews are publicly accessible. Making and receiving recommendations on things to buy, do, or see via social media is known as recommendation-making.

People can share their evaluations and comments based on unbiased perspectives and personal encounters through the utilization of ratings and reviews of a product. While recommendations and referrals are typically customized, these ratings and reviews are publicly accessible. Making and receiving recommendations on things to buy, do, or see via social media is known as recommendation-making. Retailers offer referral programs as rewards for customer promotion. In regulated environment, tools utilized for engaging in social interactions are communities and forums (Shadkam & O'Hara, 2013). Social commerce elements like rating, reviews, referrals, recommendations, forums, communities alongside trust plays a pivotal role in influencing purchase intentions were used to develop the social commerce adoption model.

A study carried out among college students regarding usage of Facebook has identified significant differences towards the purpose of social networking sites among male and female users (Mazman & Usluel (2011)). Gender influences social networking sites, according to research on purchasing patterns on these platforms. Additionally, it implied that a purchase would probably occur if more time was spent on social networking sites. Compared to male users, women spend more time on social networking sites (Narasimhamurthy, 2014). The intention to use social networking site is high with female compared with men (Harsano & Suryano (2014)). Male and female have different intention towards usage of social networking sites (Goswami & Dutta (2016)). Gender differences to be considered in understanding continuance usage of social networking sites (Featherman & Sarkar (2017)). Females look out for social networking sites to seek information and for the sake of convenience (Singh & Waller (2019)). Among female social networking site users, Trust and enjoyment had positive intention for social commerce (Tun (2021)).

3 Research Objective

To investigate how gender influences the regularity of buying fashion items on social networking sites.

H1: The frequency with which fashion products are purchased on social networking sites and gender are significantly related.

4 Research Methodology

Participants in the study were users of social networking sites who had recently (within the last six months) made purchases of fashion items in social networking sites. A pilot study was conducted to improve the questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used to collect final data through a structured questionnaire that was distributed both offline and online. The chi-square test is utilized to ascertain if a significant difference exists between a person's gender and how frequently they purchase fashion products on social networking sites.

5 Research Findings

The chi-square test is applied to determine if gender and the frequency of fashion product purchases made in the last six months on social networking sites are significantly related. The following table shows the percentage of fashion product purchases made (in less than six months) on social networking sites, on basis of gender and including chi-square and p-values.

Table 1. Chi-square test for respondents influence of gender on regularity of buying fashion items within six months in social networking platforms

Regularity of buying fashion products in social networking sites within six months	Gender		Total	Chi-square Value	pvalue
	Male	Female			
Only once	93 (66.4%) [29.5%]	47 (33.6%) [17.7%]	140 (100.0%) [24.1%]	115.004	0.001**
Twice	107 (57.2%) [34.0%]	80 (42.8%) [30.1%]	187 (100.0%) [32.2%]		
Three	59 (84.3%) [18.7%]	11 (15.7%) [4.1%]	70 (100.0%) [12.0%]		
Four	45 (48.9%) [14.3%]	47 (51.1%) [17.7%]	92 (100.0%) [15.8%]		
Five	0 (0.0%) [0.0%]	46 (100.0%) [17.3%]	46 (100.0%) [7.9%]		
Six	1 (4.2%) [0.3%]	23 (95.8%) [8.6%]	24 (100.0%) [4.1%]		
Six and Above	10 (45.5%) [3.2%]	12 (54.5%) [4.5%]	22 (100.0%) [3.8%]		
Total	315 (54.2%) [100.0%]	266 (45.8%) [100.0%]	581 (100.0%) [100.0%]		

Source: Primary data

** 1% significance

From the above table 1, 54.2% of the respondents are male constitute to the overall frequency of purchases which is comparatively high than 45.8% of female respondents constituting to the overall frequency of purchases of fashion products in social networking sites within six months.

By comparing the regularity of purchases level of shopping fashion products in social networking sites within 6 months among male respondents in above table it is inferred, 34.0% of male respondents buy twice in comparison among regularity of other purchases levels. 29.5% of the respondents has regularity of buying just once, 18.7% of the respondents has regularity of buying thrice, 14.3% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level four, 3.2% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level six and above, 0.3% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level six for fashion products in social networking sites within last six months. For frequency of purchases level five, there are no male respondents in the category.

By comparing regularity of shopping fashion products in social networking sites within six months among the female respondents in the above table it is inferred, 30.1% of female respondents purchase twice higher among other frequency of purchases levels. Both frequency of purchases levels only once and three exhibit 17.7% same level of respondents in each category respectively followed by 17.3% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level five, 8.6% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level six, 4.5% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level six and above, 4.1% of the respondents has frequency of purchases level three for fashion products in social networking sites within six months.

The regularity for buying fashion items through social networking sites in the last six months is of following order - 66.4% of male respondents purchased once which is comparatively higher than 33.6% of female respondents, 57.2% of male respondent purchased twice which is comparatively higher than 42.8% of female respondents, 84.3% of the male respondents has a frequency of purchases level three which is comparatively very much higher than 15.7% of female respondents, 48.9% of male respondents has a frequency of purchases four which is comparatively less than 51.1% of female respondents, 4.2% of male respondents has a frequency of purchases level six which is comparatively very low compared with 95.8% of female respondents, 3.2% of male respondents has a frequency of purchases of six and above which is comparatively little lower than 4.5% of female respondents.

Furthermore, based on the above table, it is inferred that there is a significant relationship between gender and regularity of buying fashion items made on social networking sites in the recent past within six months, with chi-square (χ^2) = 115.004 at 1% significant level.

Based on the above results, it is concluded that the frequency of purchases of fashion products in social networking sites in the recent past varies with male and female customers. Among the regularity of purchase, it is inferred that within last six months, a

higher number of male customers have shopped online compared to female customers. However, the frequency of purchases level four, five, six, six and above is high among female customers and the frequency of purchases level one, two, and three is high among male customers. Additionally, when compared to other regularity of purchase made online in the last six months, both male and female customers show higher frequency of purchases twice.

6 Implications and Limitations

The study has revealed a notable connection between gender and the regularity of purchase of fashion items in the last six months on social networking sites. It provides understanding to marketers for developing approaches considering their gender differences relating with frequency of purchases. However, the research was confined to major social networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Google Plus, targeting active online shoppers. The responses were constrained to users of these social networking sites who made purchases within the past six months specifically in Chennai. There's potential for further exploration within this study to identify gender differences across various social networking sites and develop site specific approach. The study offers additional opportunities to conduct research on each unique social networking site in order to gain a comprehensive understanding.

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