

# THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMATION SHARING THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORK SITES ON CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE DURING THE EPIDEMIC CRISIS OF COVID-19

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## *Abstract*

*The Research paper traverse the influence of information shared on social network sites and its significant effect on customers' decision making regarding their purchase and how it determines the personal recommendation of an individual in the adverse situation of the crisis of covid-19. The purpose of this study was to determine how the quality of the information shared through social network sites affected the consumers attitude during the epidemic crisis. This research paper is descriptive in nature, the primary and secondary data were used to give the conclusion. The data were collected through structured questionnaire while the pattern length was 200 respondents without any demographic factor considering while the secondary data were from the research papers, articles, official documents released from organizations etc. In this study the findings indicates that the information shared by an organization through social network sites were very effective in motivating the consumers to stick to the organization for their requirements of product and services, creating awareness among the consumers helped the organization to survive and do business effectively during the epidemic crisis of covid-19. So Organization should consider sharing information related to their product and services but also those information that might be needed to the consumers to help them making certain decision.*

**Keywords:** Social Network Sites, information sharing, Personal Recommendation, Purchase Intention, Epidemic crisis.

## INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of communication technology and digitalization the need for traditional business to move towards e-business is becoming the demand of today's society but as the covid-19 1<sup>st</sup> wave came in march 2020, everyone in the whole world was panicking due to the fear of getting infected and uncertainty around them but the need of daily lives did not end there even because of the fear of uncertainty people tend to shop more and stock at their home. At that time even the very traditional kirana stores in the tiny town areas of small district began to do doorstep delivery to the consumers.

But there were so many questions rising in the mind of customers regarding the safety measurement adopted by the organization and how they are tackling with covid-19. Then the Social Network Sites were the only medium of getting to know about what was happening around the world, social network sites played a very significant role in consoling as well as in the panic creation among the people around the world. The information shared on the social network sites were not always authentic and that's why they end up creating confusion in the mind of many, sometimes the information shared on SNS helped people in gaining strength and being aware about the government's guidelines and instruction about how to keep oneself safe and healthy. The only medium to connect with people was Social Network Sites and the other platforms with government's official sites.

From the Business point of view the organization which could not adopt to the change could not survive the covid-19 epidemic and the ones who could kept their business on run and survived the worse. The customers wanted more information about how the organization is coping up with pandemic and what they are doing for precautionary measures, if purchasing online would be a good and safe option or

not. The organization's involvement in the customer relationship management was the most crucial part for the organization in order to retain the customer and enhance their trust in the organization so the organizations needed to share the information not only about their product and service but also about news related to covid-19 and giving the customers advice about how to make the purchase safely. Eventually it build the confidence in the customers to make purchase freely with the government and organizations' guideline by keeping the safety in priority.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Peng Zou, Di Huo&Meng Li published a research paper titled "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on firms: a survey in Guangdong Province China" in 2020 under the journal of Global Health Research and Policy. In this research they found that: Firms in Guangdong Province have faced great challenges in the epidemic. Their production and operation activities have been limited, and they are facing significant risks. It is necessary to implement policies that would profoundly lower production costs for firms, help them survive this difficult period, and gradually return to normal business. The impact were very unpredictable and the firms were trying to find a way to survive taking measures so the policies that they were looking forward to were the most crucial part that could help the organization to survive.

Viktória Ali Taha, ToninoPencarelli, Veronika Škerháková, Richard Fedorko and Martina Košíková published a research paper in feb 2021 named "The Use of Social Media and its Impact on Shopping Behavior of Slovak and Italian Consumer during the Covid-19 Pandemic" under the publication of Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute where The results revealed the existence of statistically significant differences in the use of social media during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of various demographic factors as well as a relatively weak relationship between the social media used and the purchase in the e-shop promoted on the social media. Before Covid-19 the use of social media was a way of entertainment, most people who used social network sites were using them for the entertainment purpose only a few were using it for the means of doing business in order to grow and promote their business. So when the first wave of covid-19 came there were sudden restriction imposed on going outside the home and meeting people at that time most traditional stores understood the way of doing online business because it was the only way for them to survive and keep their business operational.

Abdulaziz Alhubaishy and Abdul majeed Aljuhani published a research paper in April 2021 titled "The Influence of information sharing through Social Network Sites on customers' Attitude during the epidemic crisis of covid-19". Under the journal of The Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research. In this research paper the author finds that A personal recommendation construct was confirmed as a partial mediator, where an indirect significant influence was found of broadcasting information on purchase intention through personal recommendation Therefore, this paper suggests that organizations should consider offering customers all the necessary types of information related to the COVID-19 crisis as this will help the organization as well as the consumers and eventually they will help each other, as for the organizations it will give them a big hand in facilitating their business whereas the consumers' interest is concerned it will help in making right choice at right time.

Parth Pandey & Bharti Shukla (2021) in their work on topic A Study on performance measurement of Online StoresDuring Corona Pandemic revelas how it become more difficult to work offline during COVID time and how consumer buying behaviour affected due to COVID.

Naveen Tiwari, Bharti Shukla and Sudhir Narayan Singh discussed about the importance of social media on consumer buying behaviour in their work on Influence of Social Media Marketing on Young Consume Buying Behavior.

Saria Abou Jeb and Abdulrahman Choura published a research paper titled "The impact of covid-19 on the change of customer buying behavior in 2021" in the journal of Jonkoping University (Jonkoping International Business School). This study revealed two significant findings:

- There is a large no of traditional business who are opting to go towards online business.
- There is new psychological pattern change in people related to Covid19 that is motivating and demotivating the customer's buying behavior

A Navitha Sulthan, Ruby Evangelin and Vasantha Shanmugam in September 2021 did a thorough research on the title "Influence of Social Media marketing in post covid-19" and published it under the Research Gate Publication. In this study they found that because of covid-19 eruption, the use of social media across the world is increasing and people are purchasing more to stock at home from e-commerce website in the fear of going traditional stores and getting infacted with covid-19.

Gravit Hingad, Shreyas Suresh, Mahesh Pathare and Amit Nerukar in 2022 published a research paper titled "Impact of Social Commerce on Consumer Buying Behavior in India" under the International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology. in India the social media is influencing the customers' buying behavior greatly because of the involvement of social media in information sharing from the product or service review to the post purchase feedback. Customers are being more aware of what they want and what they are purchasing so they are using social network sites for comparing products and checking feedback of old customers and their experience with that particular product so we can say that social media is becoming the biggest influencer.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- The study is designed with the following objectives based on a literature review:
- To investigate the influence of information shared by an organization related to covid-19 on consumer purchase intention on social network sites.
- To comprehend the role of sharing information related to an organization's adopted precautionary measures during covid-19.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper is descriptive in nature and primary and secondary data is used to complete this study while

**Primary Data:** Primary data were collected through the structure questionnaire prepared.

**Secondary Data:** Secondary data were used from the internet, research papers, articles and journals.

**Sample Size:** 200

Respondents' response to the questionnaire is displayed below.

**Fig 1.(Gender)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	97	49.5	49.5
	Male	94	48.0	97.4
	Prefer not to say	5	2.6	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	

**Interpretation:** Female respondents were the major participants.

**Fig 2 (Age)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16-25	77	39.3	39.3
	25-35	1	.5	39.8
	26-35	72	36.7	76.5
	36-45	20	10.2	86.7
	46+	19	9.7	96.4
	Under 15	7	3.6	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	

**Interpretation:** (16-25)Years of age group respondents were major participants.

**Fig 3 (Qualification)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	12th pass	1	.5	.5
	Diploma	6	3.1	3.6
	Doctorate	12	6.1	9.7
	Graduate	95	48.5	58.2
	Pharmacist	1	.5	58.7
	Post Graduate	27	13.8	72.4
	Under Graduate	53	27.0	99.5
	Uneducated	1	.5	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	

**Interpretation:** Among all the participants mostly were Graduate as the data shows.

**Fig 4 ( Occupation)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Businessman	37	18.9	18.9
	businesswoman	1	.5	19.4
	Employee	41	20.9	40.3

	Home Maker	14	7.1	47.4
	Professionals	22	11.2	58.7
	Student	79	40.3	99.0
	Teacher	2	1.0	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	

**Interpretation:** Students were more involved in this survey.

**Fig 5 (Work experience)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		1	.5	.5
	0	65	33.2	33.7
	1-2	42	21.4	55.1
	11+	17	8.7	63.8
	2-6	1	.5	64.3
	3-6	51	26.0	90.3
	7-10	19	9.7	100.0

**Interpretation:** As major participants were student so most of them had no work experience.

**Fig 6 (Substantially used SNSs)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	45	23.0	23.0
	Facebook, Instagram	1	.5	23.5
	Facebook, twitter	1	.5	24.0
	Facebook, twitter, Instagram	1	.5	24.5
	Instagram	80	40.8	65.3
	Linked in	1	.5	65.8
	LinkedIn	2	1.0	66.8
	Mail	1	.5	67.3
	Tiktok	1	.5	67.9
	Twitter	35	17.9	85.7
	Twitter, Facebook	1	.5	86.2
	Youtube	27	13.8	100.0

**Interpretation:** Instagram was found to be highly used by the participants followed by Twitter.

**Fig 7 (Likely of using SNS)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	148	75.5	75.5
	Monthly	6	3.1	78.6
	Never	13	6.6	85.2
	Weekly	29	14.8	100.0

**Interpretation:** Daily users of SNS are more likely to be active online

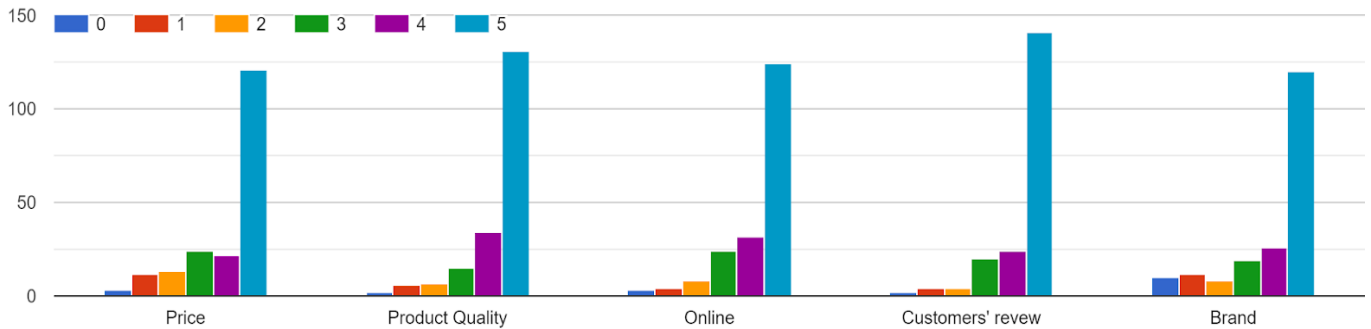
**Fig 8 (Shopping Frequency)**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Half Yearly	3	1.5	1.5
	Monthly	58	29.6	31.1
	Weekly	133	67.9	99.0
	Yearly	2	1.0	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	

**Interpretation:** Among all, weekly shoppers were comparatively higher.

Fig 9

Which of these factors is MOST important to you when you are deciding to purchase a product?



**Interpretation:** Before making purchase respondents gave priority to Customer Review among all the factors like Price, Product Quality, Online and Brand.

Fig 10

Seeking information related to covid 19 shared by organization before making purchase?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	16	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Yes	180	91.8	91.8	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	100.0	

**Interpretation:** During the covid-19 pandemic public wanted more information prior to their purchase of goods and services.

Fig 11

Checking Precautionary Measures Availability (PMA)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I feel tensed about how organizations are dealing with the pandemic.	16	8.2	8.2	8.2
	I prefer to know more about organization's guidelines during the epidemic.	54	27.6	27.6	35.7
	Information regarding how much organizations are recently affected by the epidemic crisis.	15	7.7	7.7	43.4
	Information like organizations' obedience to COVID-19 Precautionary planning guidelines.	111	56.6	56.6	100.0

**Interpretation:** 56.6% of people with higher than all the other participants wanted to know about the organizations' obedience to covid-19 precautionary measure guidelines.

Fig 12

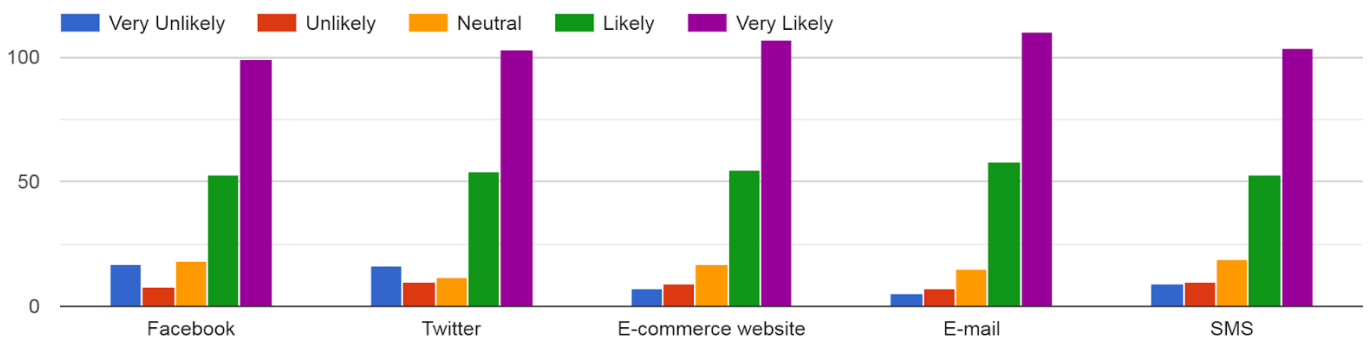
Situational Information Availability (SIA)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I require additional information regarding the problem from the organisation..	107	54.6	54.6	54.6

To keep up with the present scenario, I frequently read other consumers' web advice..	47	24.0	24.0	78.6
Obtaining information from the organisation regarding the present state of the crisis.	42	21.4	21.4	100.0

**Interpretation:** Situational Information like information regarding the problem from which the organizations were suffering were more found to be required by the customers.

**Fig 13**

Places from where You Personal Recommendation consider?



**Interpretation:** For personal recommendation social network sites along with e-commerce website and e-mail were considered frequently.

**Fig 14**

Personal Recommendation (PR)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To learn about organisations' preventive steps for covid-19, I frequently check other consumers' web advice.	41	20.9	20.9	20.9
	I frequently evaluate what other customers have to say about a company's security procedures on the internet.	18	9.2	9.2	30.1
	I frequently seek out online tips from other customers regarding company safety procedures.	1	.5	.5	30.6
	I frequently read other customers' internet reviews of a company's security measures.	100	51.0	51.0	81.6
	I would buy items or services from a company whose security measures are satisfactory to me.	36	18.4	18.4	100.0

**Interpretation:** For personal recommendation customers tend to believe the other people or customers' reviews on the SNS and E-COMMERCE website which were more trusted.

## RESULT DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

As the whole study was under the circumstance of the covid-19 epidemic crisis so result might be different in the normal scenario. In the demographic area of study the findings are more inclined towards the female in gender and as for as the age is concerned 16-25 years of people were more involved in the study. By occupation mostly were students so their job experience was almost null. The respondents agreed that they use social network sites daily wherein the most used social network sites was found to be Instagram followed by Twitter and the Facebook. As for as doing shopping is concerned they revealed that the weekly shoppers were more. During the covid-19 pandemic needs of people surprisingly increased than the normal days because people were in panic and were stocking things at home for future needs in the fear of uncertainties. So the questionnaire was prepared accordingly and the result showed that the people were more concerned about the news regarding covid-19 and other facts like how organizations are managing to do business in that during time. Information circulated by the organization was the most determinant factor that was helping the customer to decide whether to shop or not but the result shows that it influenced the customer in a positive way and the Purchase Intention of the customers was found to be positively related to the Personal recommendation made by the other customers' comment regarding the product as well as the information about the current situation of the organization.

## CONCLUSION

The study "The Influence of Information Sharing through Social Network Sites on Customers' Attitude During the Covid-19 Epidemic Crisis" reveals practical insights into how businesses should communicate multiple forms of information other than information about their products and services. Organizations should pay attention to the various types of information that customers require in order to increase customer loyalty and positively influence recommendations for the company's products and services. These organizations should also consider supporting customer awareness and loyalty by keeping them informed about the crisis's precautionary measures.

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