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Selfie, Emoji And Smartphone, Live In The Moment! The New Mantra Of Young Generation

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What is common among 'Padmavat', 'Fukrey Returns', 'Jagga Jasoos' and 'Baahubali 2'? Do you categorize these as hit or flop movies? Is it about star power or promotions on every possible platform? What made 'Baahubali 2' a huge success in North India, when barely anyone knew the name of the lead actors? Well, it's all about 'word-of-mouth' (WOM) that determined the success or failure of these movies.

With the emergence of the Internet (websites), social media (Facebook, Twitter) and the ubiquitous instant messaging app (WhatsApp, Hike) on smartphones, the traditional WOM is mostly replaced by the new electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The younger generation is always online via their smartphones and engages in eWOM. Mostly the messaging apps are the platforms where decisions are made about which movie to watch, whether it is good or which restaurant to visit for a quick bite.

When it comes to sharing experience about movies on social media via posting pictures or videos, most of the users prefer smartphones. Smartphone provides immediate gratification and people use it to post information instantly. We can see such a trend on our Facebook walls, where people immediately post

where they are – Checked in Mall X, or ‘watching’. The young population wants to ‘live in the moment’. So, all the experiences whether good or bad are immediately broadcast to their online friends.

To analyse the role of a device (smartphone or laptop) in their eWOM behaviour (preference for text or visual eWOM), we conducted a study on 120 management students. The results show that as many as 60 percent of students prefer smartphones for immediate posting of text about their experience (like movies), compared to 40 percent who prefer their laptop. When it comes to sharing experience about movies on social media via posting pictures or videos, most of the users prefer to use smartphones.

However, interestingly, before a movie is released, people prefer laptops to smartphones for search and sharing information online. As one of the respondents puts it – “I use a laptop because it is easy to search and share the content about the movie trailer, e-posters and songs on YouTube”.

But is the sharing of information the same for all products – say a Salman Khan movie vs. the latest Canon camera? In fact, the reason young users share information also depends on the product/experience in question. To nullify the effect of product type, the researchers used two products, digital camera as ‘search goods’ and movies as ‘experience goods’. The features and characteristics of search goods (like a digital camera and furniture) can be evaluated before making a purchase, while for experience goods (like music and food), it has to be consumed/ experienced for evaluation.

The results of the study point out that people prefer a laptop to share information for searching goods because they find it more convenient to search for the information and compare features or prices on a bigger screen. Also, people invest time and effort in acquiring relevant information. However, as expected, for experience goods, people prefer smartphones to share information. This is why we are bombarded with selfies taken at fun places like restaurants, movie halls, resorts and tourist spots. In the case of a digital camera, it is easy to take pictures of the product and share with others to convey their experience with the product. But for movies, words merely are not sufficient, the smiling faces, popcorn in hand, or pictures taken inside the hall convey the real experience. In both cases, the success of the product is driven by the experience of end consumers, and how the ‘word’ travels to connected consumers on the Internet, social media or face-to-face communications.

Consider another example: imagine going to a nice restaurant or vacation, and posting the pictures of yourself enjoying the excellent cuisine, beaches and having fun. One can capture the ‘live’ moments and post it to Facebook or forward it using WhatsApp. How many of us take pains to transfer photos taken from phones or digital camera to our computers and then post it to social media, that’s the main question.

So, convenience and possibility of real-time update enhance the travelling of word-of-mouth recommendations. Facebook has recognized this need from the users and that’s why it has introduced the ‘Facebook Live’ feature. The study shows that visual media (pictures and videos) are winning over the old-fashioned text. Many young consumers prefer selfies, Emojis and animated icons to express

themselves online. That's why we can see why Instagram or Pinterest are gaining popularity, especially among the younger population.

BOX: Historically, consumers have relied upon recommendations from their friends, relatives and colleagues before making a purchase decision. As per Nielsen (2013) report, 84 [percent of global consumers consider recommendations from friends and family as the most trustworthy sources of information about products. Also, 68 percent of consumers trust the online opinions posted by other users.

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