

## A Study on the Usage of Social Media as Advertising Tool by Self Help Groups in Coimbatore District

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### Abstract

Over the years, social media advertising have dominated the advertising landscape. Social media have become a pathway where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a broader range of consumers. Social networking site provides the ideal platform for direct communication between marketer and customers. Self Help Group is a group of micro entrepreneurs having homogenous social and economic back ground. The marketing activities of self-help groups are much less than the new codes defined by globalization. They only engage in direct and local marketing. Social media helps SHG women entrepreneurs in gaining empowerment through global social media networking in the process of marketing their products. SHG women are producing variety of products and using global social media networking like, face book, WhatsApp, while marketing their products which is a good sign for their empowerment as it opens the channels for wider marketing. The purpose of this study is to analyze how Self Help Groups in coimbatore district use social media as an advertisement tool to promote their products. This is a qualitative research study. And focus group method is followed in this study where 6-10 people provide feedback regarding their products and services. The expected result in the usage of social media as advertising tool by Self Help Groups in Coimbatore district is limited and they need awareness and more training on that.

**Key words:** Social media, Self Help Groups, Advertising, Women Empowerment.

### I. Introduction:

*“Empowerment of women leads to development of a Good family, Good Society and ultimately a Good nation”.*

- Dr.A P J Abdul Kalam

Self Help Groups (SHGs) progress is adopted by Indian government to uplift the rural poor women. The empowerment of women through Self Help Groups (SHGs) would lead to improve not only to the individual woman and women groups but also the families and community as a whole through collective action for development. Self-help indicates self-determination, self-reliance, self-production and self-empowerment by mobilizing internal resources of the persons, the group or the community.

The concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) is proved to be good fortune for the rural women in some states of India. It has not only increased their income but also their social prestige. A group of 12 to 20 poor women in the age group of 18 to 60 years who are residing in the same area are organized as a 'Self Help Group' (SHG). SHGs women are joined together with common interest and perform entrepreneurial achievements in their own rural areas by means of producing and marketing the products with their available resources.

The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of women (TNCDW) was established in 1983 with the prime objective of bringing about socio-economic development and empowerment of women. The Corporation implements Tamilnadu State Rural Livelihood Mission and National Urban Livelihood Mission, a major anti-poverty programme meant for self employment of rural poor. The objectives of TNSRLM is to build strong and vibrant institutional platforms of the poor in the rural areas which enable them to increase their household incomes through livelihood enhancements and access to financial and other services. Identification and mobilization of the left out poor into the SHG network, Improving the quality of the SHG products and providing marketing opportunities, Providing financial assistance to SHGs for on-lending to their members for taking up economic activities are some of the salient features of TNSRLM.

Coimbatore is one of the largest cities in Tamilnadu consists of large portion of urban slums. Government and Non-Governmental Organizations have been taking action to associate slum women in SHG activities and strengthening them to become entrepreneurs. And they also encouraging them to market their products on some special occasions like festivals, cultural and entrepreneurial meets by allotting stalls. Such stalls may be arranged community function halls, bazaars in colleges and schools. Hence, Coimbatore will have the distinction of enrolling all women living below the poverty line into SHG movement.

The SHGs are formed, trained and supported frequently by the government with lots of schemes and programs. They take up their business in a micro or small scale and experience many challenges. Marketing, customer analytics and branding are their most important challenging areas.

Social media platform could transform the way of marketing followed by SHGs. Around the world Internet, social media, mobile apps, and other digital communications technologies have become part of day to day life for billions of people. The emergence and usage of social media as advertising tools is increasingly broadening. Over the decades it is apparent that the landscape of advertising has taken a new dimension whereby products, goods and services are sold, promoted, advertised, and patronized on virtual platforms known as social media.

Social media, a new dimension of marketing has made it possible for users to express their views about the product as well as their advertising. User-centric social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and YouTube are flourishing (Bond Camilla et al. 2010). At the technological age, most of the entrepreneurs are doing business depends more on social media advertising for persuading consumer and branding their products.

The emergence of Social Media has helped organizations in engaging in a direct, efficient, cost effective and timely end-consumer contact as compared to the traditional communication tools. Social Media Advertising is more beneficial not only to large firms, but also to small and medium sized companies, and even non profit and governmental agencies. Most of the consumers are turning away from the traditional sources of advertising like radio, television, magazines, newspapers and are using Social Media more frequently to search information about products and make purchase decision. The main benefit of selecting Social networking sites

for advertisement is that the advertiser can use the user's demographic information and target their advertisement appropriately.

Social media advertising is the process of gaining awareness, driving traffic and engaging the customers and prospects using social media channels. Despite the current boom of Social networking sites for marketing, this study was designed to know whether the social media is used as an advertising toll by the Self Help Group women in Coimbatore district and how they use social media as an advertising tool to promote and market their products.

## II. Scope of The Study:

Social media is a powerful medium of communication, entertainment and shopping for people. Social media is a perfect place to advertise products and services as many people access it every day from different parts of the world. This study aims to find out how the social media is used as an advertising tool by the SHGs in Coimbatore District. The study also reveals the problems faced by SHGs in Coimbatore District to access social media and provides suggestion to solve the problems. The study also aims to find out whether the SHGs in Coimbatore need training or any other aids from Government or NGOs regarding social media marketing.

## III. Objectives:

- 1) To analyze the role of Self-Help Groups in empowering women.
- 2) To study how social media is helpful to women to grow up as entrepreneurs.
- 3) To assess the usage of social media by Self-Help Group women in coimbatore in marketing process.
- 4) To find out the challenges being faced by SHG women in promoting their product through social media
- 5) To examine at what extent the government is helping the SHG women in promoting their products through social media

## IV. Review of Literature:

**A. G. Sudha, F. J. Peter Kumar & A. G. Aruna (2020)** in the article "Involvement of Women as a member of Self-Help Group on the Economic Development of Coimbatore" emphasized that the involvement of women as a member of SHG has a strong influence on the economic development of Coimbatore. A greater number of self-help groups should be formed in the rural areas and women should be motivated by giving them proper functional training as well as to give them enough information on the different schemes offered by the government to improve the status of women.

**Sridevi K B, K.G.Nalina, V.Seema(2019)** in their article "Information Technology Initiatives to Enable E-Marketing for Self-Help Groups" highlighted that In today's digital pace, E-marketing is recognized as a more vital platform for business and it is common for the self-help groups as well. The traditional boundaries are faded away and global reach is facilitated through social media, by means of active interactions among people through virtual communities and networks. It enables self-help groups to expose themselves to large and potential global consumers and that too in a cost effective manner.

**P.Usha&S.Durga Prasad (2018)** in the article “Self-Help Groups And Access To Technology -A Review” emphasized that it was found that only a few SHG women entrepreneurs are getting benefit from the technology as most of them are illiterates or less educated so that they could not use ICT. And also due to lack of experience about marketing they are unable to sell their products in modern markets and sell them at low prices.

**D. Lakshmanan& S. RabiyaathulBasariya (2017)** in the article “The role of Social media on Enhancing Advertising Effectiveness” noted that through the use of social media would easily reach the user-friendly interactive system, understanding customers’ special and unique needs in a way that clients themselves are can adapt and understand well.

**Yadav, (2015)** has made an attempt to set up the significance of social networks as an advertising medium and evaluated the existing advertising methods that are in trend via certain case studies and concluded that social websites are not just a tool to interact with the different people but also medium to reach the prospective customers.

**Farzana et al, (2014)** found that social networks will play a key role in the future of marketing ; eventually they can replace customer annoyance with engagement and internally they help to change the traditional focus on control with an open and collaborative approach that is more conducive to success in the modern business environment.

**Aka and Topcu, (2011)**Social media has become the center of attention in many industries by facilitating various areas of marketing such as: promotions, marketing intelligence, sentiments research, public relations, marketing communications as well as product and customer management.

**Elizabeth Wright et al, (2010)**Many people have their own personal website where they fill out information about themselves, post pictures, create their own blogs, and upload their own videos which are important for advertisers to understand the self-esteem and self-actualization.

**Mangold and Faulds, (2009)**Social media has been acclaimed for having dramatic influences on every stage of the consumer decision-making process as well as influencing general opinions and attitude formation.

**Keller & Kotler, (2009)**In the digital age, more and more people in western cultures are finding new ways to connect with like-minded individuals and more interested in satisfying their needs for pleasure and self-actualization.

**Palmer and Koenih-lewis (2009)** Over half of Facebook users have clicked on a company’s Facebook page while about 16% had sent a message to a company. This literally explain the significance and relevance of social media in advertising.

**Hennig-Thurau et al, (2004), Shankar and Malthouse, (2007)**The change prompted by the emergence of social media also applies to the consumer decisionmaking process and marketing communications.

**J Suresh Reddy, (2003)** Online advertising creates a cost effective and on-going relationship with the consumers, by letting them to know about the product and services whenever and wherever they want to with the wish to purchase or repurchase.

**M. Potter, (1994)** Marketing on the internet known as the world wide web results in ten times as many units sold with one-tenth the advertising budget”

**Polly and Mittal, (1993)** Consumers deem advertising as a valuable source of information because product information shown in advertisements help them in making the informed and right purchase decisions.

## **V. Research Methodology:**

The target population for the study is the members of self-help group belongs to 12 different blocks of coimbatore. The present study is a qualitative research study and is mainly based on interview and observation methods. Focus group method is followed in this study where the members from different blocks provide feedback regarding their products and services. The research has analyzed the existing review of literature pertaining to the problems of the SHGs and their marketing deficiencies.

### **5.1. Data Collection:**

Data has been collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. Primary data are collected through observation and interview method by discussing with the members of Self-Help Groups in coimbatore. Secondary data is collected from journals and internet.

### **5.2. Sampling Technique :**

For the purpose of the present study the researcher has collected database through purposive random sampling and collected data through interview method.

## **VI. Research Findings:**

- Most of the SHG women entrepreneurs are qualified with higher secondary level and few of them are graduated.
- The SHG members are focusing on the products like organic soap, jute bags, handloom sarees, cold pressed oil, millet flours, soft toys and also sell five metal jewels and terracotta jewels. They also produce silk sarees, traditional Toda embroidered shawls and herbal products. Important fact was they are supplying the products through mobile phones orders also.
- The usage of mobiles by the SHG entrepreneurs is most common and some of them are having access to internet and availing the global networking facility in marketing their products. Usage of mobile phones help them to have interaction with the customers and they are able to supply them timely according to their requirements.

- The SHG women who are educated and able to operate smart phones use social media for marketing their products by using internet. And also understanding the type of products that the consumers are expected.
- They are giving publicity to their products through whatsapp, email and few of them use facebook and youtube so as attracting the customers.
- Some SHG women had given interviews to leading newspapers, popular online news channels and local news channels. Here the interesting point is that they are posting these spot lights on social media to promote their products.
- It was found that only a few SHG women entrepreneurs are getting benefit from the social media as most of them are less educated or not aware so that they could not use social media platform frequently.
- Due to lack of experience and awareness about marketing they are unable to sell their products in modern markets and sell them at low prices. The repayment of old debts also forces them to sell their products in local markets at whatever price they offer.
- Most of the SHG women desire to showcase their products in online platform and expect training and aids from the Government.
- Tamilnadu Government had taken initiative to tie up with e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart to wider the marketing area of SHG products. Initial training programme for the members of SHG groups in coimbatore had been conducted where makers were introduced to the idea of online trade.
- This initiative ensured global market exposure to the rural born self-help groups as the social media marketing is tremendously growing and more preferred by the marketers. Eliminating hurdles in conventional sales and marketing, this move is expected to widen the market for the SHGs. The wider market would increase the product demand and so higher income.
- If the government or non-governmental organizations create awareness about the importance of social media marketing and its usage by giving training for them in digital marketing, it will strengthen the activities of SHG women entrepreneurs in coimbatore.

## VII. Conclusion:

Women self help group is a successful concept in Coimbatore and it contributed to the economic betterment and development of women as aimed by our government. SHG women in coimbatore are gaining empowerment in all dimensions i.e socially, economically, politically and technologically.

Most of the SHGs have been limited to local markets and concentrate on making just enough to meet their daily expenses. Adaption of digital technologies is essential to enhance production value added products should improve the profitability of the self-help groups.

This study reveals that only few SHG women are using basic level of social media advertising like email, whatsapp facebook and youtube. Most of the SHG women in coimbatore are not aware and familiar with the social media marketing. They expect the training and promotional aids from government and NGOs for social media advertising. Hence, in order to facilitate them for a smooth transformation towards social media marketing, intensive training programs are to be organized on online marketing and its approaches.

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