Consumer Behavior and Entrepreneurship : A Netnographic Study

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Abstract

Nowadays, the whole world rather, the whole universe is a global village and the credit goes to globalization. Due to globalization, the internet came and consumers started buying online products. This research paper gives a framework on consumer behaviour with collaboration of entrepreneurs. This article presents an insight into the minds of consumers and entrepreneurs. This composition also identified the areas for further investigation which can be used as a stencil for entrepreneurs to understand the online behaviour of customers. The paper also endeavoured to merge from an applied perspective, two different yet connected concepts: the Netnographic approach, and end users' tradition.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, entrepreneur, Netnography, online buying.

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Consumer behaviour and entrepreneurship go side by side. You cannot take one out of the other. Both are merged into each other so intensively that any person who starts a business needs to study consumer behaviour and the study of consumer behaviour ultimately throws light on the developmental aspects of entrepreneurs.

The term Netnography was coined by Dr. Robert.V. Kozinets. According to Kozinets, it is web based (online) ethnography used in a particular manner. It is an analytical tool that works upon the conventional, in-person participant observation system of anthropology to study the synergy and knowledge that is established through digital communication (Kozinets, 1998). In the beginning Netnography was used as a method for consumer research but this method was extended to other disciplines like anthropology, education, psychology, sociology, hospitality, tourism etc. Netnography is the combination of network and ethnography.

Ethnography is the structured study of human beings and their cultures. Ethnography is conducted deeply to explore the cultural facts where the researcher observes culture as a course of the study. Anthropology is the study of various characteristics of mankind within the past and present communities. It deals with the standards and effectiveness of societies.

Netnography is identical to ethnography in five ways:
(1) Naturalistic: It attempts to study wired communication by taking part in it and noticing it.
(2) Immersive: It includes the researcher as the key domain in data collection and design.
(3) Descriptive: It seeks substantial environmental rendition of the remaining living knowledge of wired communal life.
(4) Multi-method: It can use a variation of other techniques like, interacting with people, semiotic visual analysis or data science.
(5) Adaptable: It includes the study of numerous kind of wired sites and engineered conversations and communication.

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Netnography focuses on meaning observant cultural understanding. It involves the ethnographic collection and explanation of in public, available, interactive electronic communication as the chief authority of research data (Netnography, n.d.). In Netnography, web based communication is viewed as a cultural display that yields deep human apprehension. Like in person ethnography, Netnography is naturalistic, immersive, descriptive, multi-method, daptable, and focused on context. Unlike the predecessor, Netnography is less obtrusive and more naturalistic than surveys and focus groups. Netnography is well placed in the front-end stages of innovation and in the uncovering phases of marketing and brand management.

Figure 1. The synergy of consumer behavior and entrepreneur

Consumer Behavior
Condition
Conduct
Perception

Online Interaction

Entrepreneur
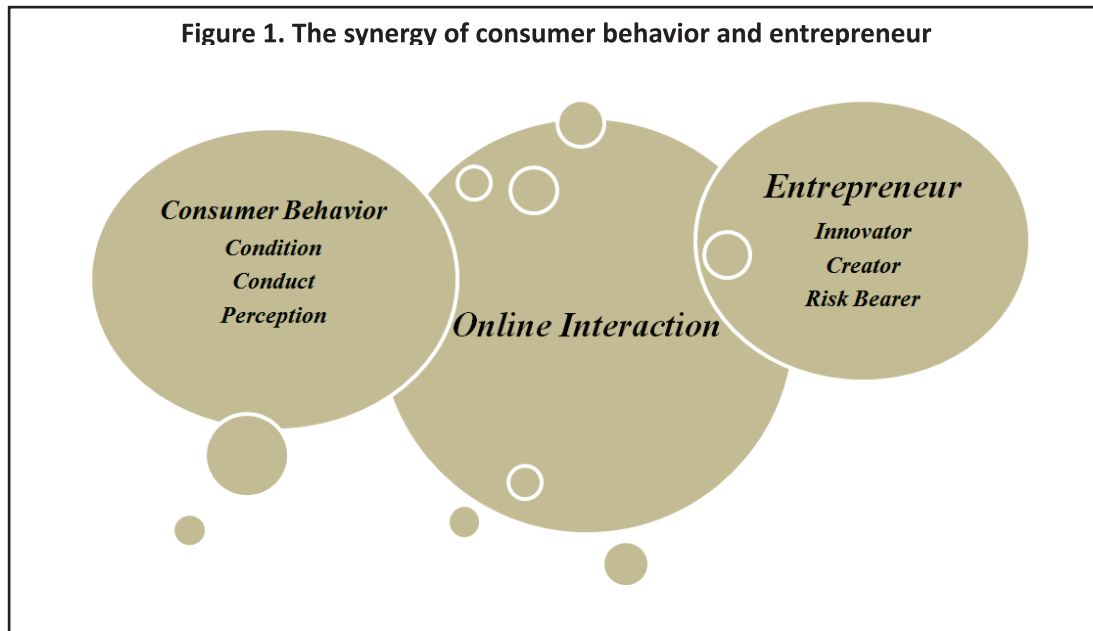Innovator
Creator
Risk Bearer

Figure 1 presents a mutual synergy between consumer behavior and entrepreneurs created by online interaction. Customer behavior depends upon condition, perception, and conduct. The entrepreneur is the one who is an innovator, creator, and risk taker. Both these interact with each other in the online environment.

In this technological era, everyone is getting attracted towards online interactions. Here, the end user can find anything which is available in traditional marketing. The best way to study such users is through groups, communities, forums etc. Social networking is the place where one can find all the three. Facebook provides a platform for the sellers to connect to the buyers instantly and to grow their business. All over the world people use this stage to start business, to connect, to grow, and to go worldwide.

Review of Literature

❖ Albert Muniz and Hope Jensen (2007) found that the meaning of ads for the consumers is created by themselves. They also suggested that advertisements can be used to build a strong brand community.

❖ Belz and Baumbach (2010) examined Netnography as a lead user of identification. This research found that 9 out of 40 web based community members have lead user features. It even advocates that 22.5% of several vital community users are considered as lead users. The study also examines the best variable to distinguish among the lead user and non-lead user in wired community that appears to be ahead of trend. It also considers that netnographic search and the screening procedure, the consistency of the lead user, and non-lead user is higher based on the previous attribute.

❖ Bowler (2010) observed that there are few guidelines for the work done through Netnography. He suggested that online community should be selected on the basis of its (a) relevance, it must be related to research area and questions;

(b) active users, should have active users; (c) communication, should have proper recent interaction among the participants; (d) meaningful, should have serious communicators and energetic feel; and (e) diverse, and should have a number of different participants.

❖ Brodie, Ilic, Juric, and Hollebeek (2010) explored the nature of consumer engagement in the virtual world. Their research highlighted consumer engagement as an interactive, experiential process based on individual consumer engagement with the particular brand community.

❖ Chao (2015) especially focused on the three important elements of online community, i.e. attachment between the members of online communities, blend of morals, worthiness of their members, and duty seen as more of the ethical responsibility towards each other. In his research, he also explained that social class can be linked with the help of culture and community. He took three online communities and selected giagonlone.com as it had the maximum online traffic. This research shows that the online communities strengthen the member's relationships and allows mutual interaction. It also reveals that Netnography is helpful in unleashing several elements which are naturally occurring.

❖ David and Susan (2001) examined how culture shapes ingrained consumer behavior. They also examined how customers in various markets will respond to their behavior as culture consists of rituals, values, symbols etc., and behavior consists of cognition and affect.

❖ Khim and Cheng (2013) explored the brand community on Facebook and said that consumer interaction in this community makes a unique set of database at an individual consumer level. They also studied the time difference in decision of joining the fan page and joining dates. They came to the conclusion that the user generated content has stronger impact rather than the marketer generated content on consumer behavior.

❖ Jennifer A. Sandlin (2006) argued that netnographic section of the research was an essential part of understanding the basis of informal customer education text (budget living). She stated that instead of undoubtingly accepting the educational messages of the magazine, readers found meaning from the magazine, and created alternatives for adoption of what it seems to be *practice of budget living.*

❖ Leesa, McDermott, and Wallace (2017) explained that Netnography can be small and backbone of a single community or it may demand years of research of multiple communities. They also explained that netnographers always focus themselves on getting an entrée in the community, undergoing participant-observation, and also cautiously differentiate it from non participant observation, while also checking the data with the community members.

❖ Robert V. Kozinets (2002) explored contemporary coffee consumption. He discovered that web based communities are committed to consumption related topics which are an important source of data for marketing research. These hideouts can be made as individual market sections that are of interest in their own capacity, and may be significant in size.

❖ Xun and Reynolds (2010) advocated that Netnography has distinctive positivity for marketers. They found several positive outcomes from the use of Netnography. The research revealed the opportunity for marketers and advertisers to effectively upgrade their marketing practices. The study also suggests that consumers often confuse and appear less interested among the highly steaming and similar offerings available.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

(1) To study the benefits consumer gets from the online brand community.
(2) To study the psychology of entrepreneurs for online brand community.
(3) To study the management of entrepreneur with its online consumers.

By embracing Netnography as a tool of research, this article focuses on identifying the perks consumers get from online lingerie entrepreneur communities on Facebook. Netnography as suggested by Kozinets (2006) helps us to understand the virtual world.

The internet has been a huge tool for all the people in the world to get anything, to know anyone, to get any information regarding any subject. So, the virtual communities are digging their claws in the online market. In India it is also very much prevalent and entrepreneurs are getting good response through this medium. Communities are giving away benefits to customers to attract them and get an insight into consumer behaviour. The main objective of this paper was to study the same. The other purpose of this study was to understand how entrepreneurs are employing communities to manage the relationship with customers.

Research Methodology

(1) Sample

Facebook has worldwide presence and according to statistics portal, 213 million users in India use this social networking site. The site has brand communities, fan pages, fan clubs, groups etc. Fan clubs and fan pages on Facebook are created by the concerned organizations. On the other hand, groups and communities created by fans or end users for whom it is the best virtual place where people interact, share, give opinions etc. were chosen as far as the sample is concerned, because nowadays online presence for any entrepreneur makes the difference for its end users. Facebook fan pages were considered for the study.

Appropriate criteria were considered for selecting the appropriate community. For this Netnographic study, the sample community selected was on the basis of level of involvement with a product or service that has an impact on consumer behavior. Brand community pages of online fashion lingerie stores (Amante, Zivame, Jockey etc.) were selected. These were selected because of the level of involvement among the users and similar consumer behavior may be considered.

Kozinets (2002) put forward few questions so that appropriate communities can be selected, for example,
❖ Is the community relevant and focused?
❖ Is the movement within the community high?
❖ Is the data illustrative and elaborative in nature?
These were the few questions on the basis of which the communities were chosen. The communities chosen were Zivame, Amante, Jockey, Pretty Secrets, and Clovia. Table 1 shows the popularity of the brand community on the basis of number of likes and number of people following the brand.

Table 1. Popularity on the basis of number of likes and number of people following a brand

Sr.No	Name of the Brand	Numbers of Likes	Number of followers
1	Zivame	614486	608874
2	Amante	188421	186451
3	Jockey	363940	341803
4	Pretty secrets	108646	108112
5	Clovia	307397	306183

Source: Brand Community page

(2) Data Collection

Kozinets (2002) suggested "Participant-Observation" approach for studying Netnography. So, for data collection the

same approach was used. In this approach one joins the community as a participant and participates if required and observes the activity going on in the community as an observer. This results in observing hundreds of discussion threads in the communities.

Based on the above approach data were collected, the behavior of members was observed, and the threads were analyzed. Each of the pages were analyzed for the number of members, frequency of member participation, prevalence of number of posts, content, and other description about the pages. These helped in understanding the page better in terms of structure and content. The pages were observed for a period of three months and after proper scanning, the relevant data related to the study were downloaded.

Results

The data collected were divided into benefit categories like financial, communal, and pragmatic benefits. The benefit categories were kept in mind according to Indian consumers.

(1) Financial Benefits

These are the benefits which attract customers the most. The brands provide financial benefits in terms of cash prizes, free coupons, free overseas trips, movie tickets, buy one get one etc. Amante is a leading brand in lingerie in India and provides monetary benefits to its customers. Following is the thread in which a contest was announced and a voucher of ₹1000 was given as a benefit. It got huge response from female customers as they posted their pics to win the voucher.

Thread 1: #Contestalert We're celebrating the spirit of solo travel with the #travelwithamanté contest! Here is this week's giveaway contest: share a photo of your best holiday look & win a ₹1000 gift voucher! #Contest#ContestTime #ContestInIndia

User1: ShilpiMishra #travelwithamante
#ContestTime
#ContestInIndia I truly believe in TRAVEL IN STYLE...denim always help me achieving easy yet stylish look.amanté

User2:MouDey amanté #travelwithamante
I travelled solo to Los Angeles.Here I am seen in my best travel look at Malibu, LosAngeles, California. A true Amante fan
Another benefit which Amante gave was a trip to Thailand through a contest. Almost 25,000 people liked this post and the thread is as follows:

Thread 2: Here is your chance to win an all-inclusive experiential travel trip to Thailand. Right from a temple tour around Bangkok to snorkeling and island hopping, Byond Travel is looking to pamper you and help you rejuvenate your senses through this unforgettable experience - all whilst you stay at luxury resorts.
This is also your lucky chance to sign up to their community and get ₹2500 off on your next Byond trip: http://byd.tl/BYNDAMANTE_25
Hurry. Offer and contest end on 31st of May 2017!
User 1: Biswas Pretty
User 2: Purbali Acharjee give contest details
User 3: MitalPrajapati very nice n very much interested
User 4: Nandini Shankar Wow!!! Thank you soooooooooooomuch 😄 you guys are the best, much needed!! 🖤🖤

The customers were very excited for the contests due to the financial benefits they were getting in return. The brand's focus on the long term relationship with the customers so that they give them lucrative offers and in return, the

customers connect themselves with the particular brand. It is also observed that the financial benefits do not bind the customers for long term. Most of the customers come back to the community page or visit the community page to get to know about the contests or free merchandises or free coupons etc.

(2) Communal Benefits

Social media, social communities, and social benefits all go hand in hand. With the technology changing so fast, the society is also changing at a rapid rate, which allows entrepreneurs to connect to them socially and benefit from them. Zivame is one such lingerie brand which posts about the topics which are not much talked about because of the mentality of the society from time to time on its brand page . However, Zivame has come up with those topics and is getting great response from its customers. Few of the examples are as follows:

Thread 1: To Bra, or not to Bra?Is Is it Bad To Wear A Bra To Bed?

User1: Ankita Mona great initiative and blog

User2: Trisha Sharma Wow !
never thought that I l get dis thing sorted out: wear not to wear.

User 3: Sania Mishra Love Zivame

Thread 2: Read on to see the world of off-shoulder clothing with bras that complement your look. ***How ToWear Off-shoulder Dresses With A Bra?***

User1: Padma Raghunath Thanks for giving us problem @ solutions

User2: Harsh Gupta Nice superb technique

User3: Prabal Kumar Das Every Girls having SMARTPHONE must have ZIVAME.COM for own comfort.

User4: SarangaSinghal True for me

So, it can be seen from the threads that consumers are praising as well as connecting with what the brand is doing and sharing their experiences and thoughts with the brand. Few are even recommending to have an app of the same for comfort. So, this is how the brand is connecting for making good and long term relations. Many consumers tag their mates on the posts and pictures shared by them or by the page. This not only attracts the old users, but it also attracts new users to the page, which in return gives popularity to the brand page.

Maslow gave us hierarchy of needs and social need is one of the most important. People want to connect with each other and want to be socially active. This is a great medium to do so.

(3) Pragmatic Benefits

These are also called experiential benefits. These are the benefits which are related to the emotional quotient of the user. Basically, the interaction plays a vital role in this benefit. Some of the brand communities talk to their customers on a regular basis, which provides an emotional touch with customers. Sometimes, to make the experience of the consumer more positive, communities provide links in their posts, for example, lingerie brands Zivame, PrettySecrets give links in their posts from where customers can buy their products.

Thread 1: Pop Colour Alert! Girls, Is This What You Have Been Waiting For? Shop Here - https://goo.gl/g5BVwE

Thread 2: On a rainy day, naps are good. But it would be better in satin! http://buff.ly/2s3Nipt

Sometimes, users also give suggestions to enhance products and the brand takes it seriously. It gives a sense of belongingness to consumers, for example, Jockey always welcomes the suggestions made by customers.

User1: Swati Agale-WedePatil Sir please work on men 3/4 and women printed capries otherwise all products are ....Superb

User2: Jockey India Hi Swati, We are pleased to note your immense satisfaction with our product and will ensure your suggestion reaches the right people in the team. Team Jockey.

This provides an easy way to customers to get to know the product without getting into the retailers website. To make the experience even better, the brand provides quick resolutions to the problems of customers. In return, customers show their appreciation towards the brand. This shows that the consumer values the community very much. Great experience brings the users back to the same community and they also influence their friends to go to the particular brand.

Findings and Implications

The main purpose of the study was to get an insight and understand the brand community and their implications for online users. A netnographic study was conducted and it resulted in three benefits namely, financial, communal, and pragmatic benefits. Although users are not able to recognize these benefits, still they enjoy the experience with the brand community.

Entrepreneurs like Zivame, Prettysecrets, and Clovia are much more customer oriented and focused on customers' needs. Like the brands Amante and Jockey, they are trying to capture the online market through various tools. Entrepreneurs believe in quick and instant solutions and responses due to which users are more inclined towards them. On the other hand, they are providing numerous designs and substantially good quality products with instant deliveries, which attracts customers the most.

It was also observed that the users were more interested in resolving their issue related to payment, delivery etc. and were more inclined towards contests instead of sharing their experiences. Out of the three benefits financial benefits attract customers the most. Brand community is able to get users for the short term but their existence for long term is doubtful. As most of the consumers get back to brand page to check new contests or to check the results of the previous one.

It is very important to know that no brand page made any effort to differentiate loyal customers from other customers. Rather, it is very easy in case of online lingerie industry as brands can easily keep a check on loyal ones and non-loyal ones. They can also have separate contests, coupons etc. for their loyal customers. This will bring the sense of belongingness to users and can also influence non users to join the brand.

Limitations

Every research work faces some limitations. This research also has some limitations. One of the major limitations is that it is focused only on the online responses of respondents. The researcher observed the responses of individuals on the basis of which the conclusion was drawn. The research work may vary in other market segments because in the end, the consumer is the king of the market. If the trend changes, the requirement of the customer also varies with the change.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the most influential benefit to consumers is financial benefit. Marketers should be keen to use these benefits for their brand community. Brand pages should be more interactive in terms of the content they post so that they can get maximum user traffic on their page.

Scope for Further Research

To manoeuvre the limitations of the current study, we also provide scope for the future research. As it is a Nentnogrphic study, there is a possibility that some bias crept in which can be taken of care by a significant study on the same topic by adding more or different products or categories. The growth of an entrepreneur depends on the response of the market, and more importantly on the response of the consumer. There are some fundamental forces which help the growth of a company like the rate of innovation, company's economic growth, enhancement in knowledge etc. The current study helps to establish the balance between marketing and entrepreneurial orientations. Using the Netnographic aspect, this study will draw a positive connection between the two and will help in emerging as distinctive entrepreneurial marketing. This research will make a new composition for front end innovation providing mapping of socio-cultural wired space, communicative and cultural awareness, and fixed understanding of consumer choice as well. Worldwide, this phenomenon is used to enhance marketing and consumer buying behavior strategies. The scope of this study is wider as it is related to online consumer buying behavior which is the base for Netnography.

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