

Social Media Consumption habits during Covid-19 lockdown

Abdul Rahim Munshi¹, Darshana Dave², Sneha Anna Sabu³

¹Assistant Professor School of Business ITM sls Baroda University Vadodara

²Professor GH Patel Institute of Business Management VV Nagar, Anand

³MBA Student School of Business ITM sls Baroda University

ABSTRACT

The roots of social media extend far deeper than we might visualize. Even though it appears like a new trend, sites like facebook are the natural result of many centuries of social media development. These days there are a vast variety of social networking sites, and a lot of them can be linked to allow cross-posting. This creates an environment where operators can reach the maximum number of individuals deprived of sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication. We can only speculate about what the future of social networking may look in the next era or even 100 years from now, but it seems clear that it will exist in certain form for as long as humans are alive. The main influence of social media is the behavior of users, which has clearly distinguished the boundaries between experts and amateur, information providers and consumers. The COVID-19 lockdown that has been implemented in most of the countries around the world has affected the social media consumption habits of people. The nature and magnitude of change varies from country to country but collectively it has seen a vast alteration. This research paper aims at studying the social media consumption habits of respondents; the study also aims to compare social media consumption before and during COVID-19 lockdown. Descriptive research design was used with a sample size of 226 respondents selected on the basis of non-probability convenience sampling. Wilcoxon test was used to compare social media consumption before and during the COVID-19 lockdown. The results indicated that consumption of all social media platforms had increased during the lockdown.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Consumption habits, Social Media Platforms during COVID-19, Digital Consumption, Social Networking sites (SNS).

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I. INTRODUCTION

Social media and social networking seem to play an inseparable part of people's lives around the world. Social media initiated as a way to interact with friends and family but was later accepted by businesses which desired to take benefit of a popular new communication technique to reach out to customers. With the ease of internet access, the number of active social media users in India stood at 330 million in 2019 and it is expected to reach 448 million by 2023. 290 million active social media users in India access social networks through their mobile devices. The supremacy of social media is the ability to connect and share information with anyone on Earth or with many people simultaneously. Millennials and Gen Z are the main contributors for social media usage in India. 52.3 % of social media results come from millennials. 28.4 % of social media conversations are from Gen Z and 15.1 % from those aged 35-44. 97 % of Indians who are connected to the internet watch videos online. Facebook and YouTube are the most popular social media networks in India, Amazon and Flipkart are the most popular online shopping platforms and TikTok is the most downloaded app of 2019. The entry of WhatsApp into India's digital market boosted app usage, with a doubling in rural areas in recent years. Data shows that the reach of the messaging service extends wider than just urban areas. Other popular apps include TikTok and Instagram. Social video app TikTok has been a huge hit in India, it has reached 1.5 billion downloads worldwide on the App Store as well as Google Play and India leads the chart with 466.8 million or about 31% of all unique installs (Kantar IMRB, ICUBE, 2018). Facebook remains the most commonly used social media platform among marketers. As per a study by social media examiner, 97% of B2C marketers stated that they use the world's largest social network professionally. Among B2B marketers, Facebook's reach is a little smaller, but at an adoption rate of 89%, it is still the most important social platform. Interestingly, the use of social networks aside from Facebook differs strongly depending on whether the respondents' focus is on B2C or B2B marketing. While Linked In and Twitter are important to both groups, visual networks such as Pinterest or Instagram see higher usage among B2C marketers. Additionally Social media has gained incredible popularity over the past few years as an open-source of information and knowledge sharing platform. Educational institutions are using social media space to interact with young people. We are seeing educators hold the potential of social media technologies to enhance the overall teaching-learning

process. Using online social networks in the educational process has been supported by several educational technology researchers, who have emphasized the benefits of technologies. Rising of social networking sites and a general interest in students have attracted attention to the use of internet tools to develop distance education. During COVID 19 both students and teachers have been burdened with the task of adapting to an online learning environment seemingly overnight. There is dearth of research done on the impact of Covid-19 lockdown on social media usage. This paper aims to fill this gap.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

COVID-19 has led to a massive upsurge in social media activity as reported in newspapers and research articles; however there has been little research done in context of India. With increased traffic on social media platforms, it will be a huge opportunity for marketers to build visibility and generate revenue. This research paper attempts to compare social media consumption before and during COVID-19 lockdown.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

As per Casero (2020) in critical situations of high complexity and risk to human life, such as the Coronavirus outbreak, citizens consider the search for information and the following of news as key activities. In case of Covid-19, 92% of adults in the United States frequently accessed the news about the pandemic, registering an increase of 32 percentage points over the period before the health emergency. A similar research was done by Cellini (2020) on “Changes in sleep pattern, sense of time, and digital media use during covid 19”; it was found that people in lockdown experienced negative psychosocial changes which had an impact on their well-being (e.g., sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety). It was observed that during total lockdown individuals’ sleep habits were challenged by several factors, i.e., reduced exposure to sunlight, reduced physical activity, and psychological distress. Lack of social zeitgebers, such as regular work schedules and social activities, as well as changes in living conditions (e.g., moving to parents’ house), were strongly affecting sleep habits under restrictions. Furthermore, people use of digital media increased specially during bedtime. As per a study done by Gao et al., (2020) there was high prevalence of mental health problems, which positively associated with frequently SME during the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China. As per an article “Coronavirus: 87% increase (2020), it was found that 75 per cent people were spending more time on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp compared to the week before. In the first week of lockdown, Indians spent more than four hours every day on social media. This is a 87 per cent increase from a week before lockdown. Before the lockdown, social media usage was on average 150 minutes per day. However, in the first week of lockdown, the figures jumped to 280 minutes per day, showed a survey. The survey added that 75 per cent people were spending more time on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp compared to the week before. In social media, people were largely consuming news and communicating with their friends and families as coronavirus grappled the country”. As per Bhattacharya (2020), consumption of Instagram and Tiktok were up the most by 59% and 53%, respectively during lockdown. The share of daily active users, those who open and engage with a platform in a day, increased the most for Twitter. Mature products like Facebook and Instagram didn’t show much of a change since their usage is already quite high. However, for Bytedance-owned Tik Tok, which has gained immense popularity in recent months, the lockdown has definitely boosted use. Another article “ Surge in social media activity (2020), mentioned that as per a study by DivyaSinghal and Padhmanbhan Vijayaraghavan from Goa Institute of Management in which they took responses from 231 people found that more than 50 per cent of the respondents have reported that their time spent on social media and watching movies/shows online has gone up. Similarly, over 80 per cent of the respondents agree that their technology usage to connect with their friends and relatives has also gone up. They also found that over 50 per cent of respondents feel that reading forwarded messages on COVID-19 is depressing, and an overwhelming majority discourage unverified forwarded messages.” As per Bannerjee D. (2020), the amount of media consumption and the consequent change in public reaction have been much higher during Covid-19. Many distress calls that we cater to nowadays are related to compulsive use of the internet and social media leading to health anxiety, somatic complaints, anxiety, depressive disorders, agitation and insomnia. On a different note, children and adolescents exposed to more online time tend to develop technology and gaming addiction. Further, social media-related blame can also lead to stigma, marginalization, communalism and violence, especially at such times of crisis. Another article titled “How social media is the saving grace (2020) mentioned that social media activity experienced a whopping 50X surge in India in wake of the global pandemic, COVID-19. In the first week of lockdown, Indians spent more than four hours every day on social media leading to an 87 % increase in its usage in comparison to a week before lockdown. The positive side of this sudden increase in digital consumption of social media is that a lot of awareness campaigns were triggered on social media which helped people across the country to know about the essentials of the lockdown as well as the precautionary measures to be taken during this time. As brands, utilize this time to keep their presence strong in the digital space. This is the time when brands can create long-lasting relations with their target audience, build trust and

loyalty. As per Kemp (2020), there have been big jumps in digital activity, especially in countries that have seen the strictest lockdowns especially in social media use, with video calling taking centre stage, Accelerating adoption of ecommerce, particularly for grocery shopping, An increase in the amount of time spent playing video games and watching e- sports creating some unexpected opportunities for digital advertisers. As per Balramon (2020), with limited activity out of home, Indians are reportedly reading, contributing and influencing on social media. The total volume of Covid-19 related conversations reached 22.3 million on March 24 in the country. In e-commerce, average orders surged for staples with edible oil growing by 106%, salty snacks by 84%, soft drink by 68% and biscuit by 31% on a weekly basis in last one month till last week. Sales of hand sanitizer reported 1425% growth, face mask grew over four times, hand wash by 86%, floor and toilet cleaner by 77%. Royon (2020) found that India, although a recent entrant within the global hierarchy of producing and consuming digital media spectacles, is fast catching up (Indians consume over 11 GB data every month). Nielsen, the market research firm, reports that social media conversations in India around COVID-19 have seen a massive surge of 50x between January and March 2020. According to Chaturvedi (2020), social media users find novel ways to stay engaged; usage and engagement rates of TikTok and Instagram's live videos have gone up significantly during the lockdown with more content and views being generated by users.

Research Questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in social media consumption between males and females during Covid-19 lockdown?
2. Is there a significant difference in the consumption of social media platforms pre lockdown and during lockdown?

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Questionnaire Design

A self-administered questionnaire consisting of two sections namely descriptive information of the respondents and social media consumption habits was prepared and circulated among respondents for data collection. Several multiple choice and likert scale questions were included in the questionnaire with a purpose to measure the social media consumption habits of the respondents.

4.2 Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was sent to 226 respondents from Gujarat and Kerala were selected on the basis of non-probability convenience sampling. Respondents belonged to a population of students and employees of private and government organizations.

<p>Gender: Male Respondents: 87 Female Respondents: 139</p>	<p>Occupation: Students: 116 Employees (Private Job): 72 Employees (Govt. Job): 19 Self-Employed: 19</p>
<p>Age Group: Below 20 Years: 29 21-30 Years: 130 31-40 Years: 16 41-50 Years: 24 Above 50 Years: 27</p>	<p>Income Group: Not Earning (Students): 109 Below 3,00,000: 50 3,00,001-5,00,000: 34 5,00,001-7,00,000: 18 7,00,001-9,00,000: 9 Above 9,00,000: 6</p>

Table No.1: Sample Characteristics

4.3 Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant association in the time spend on social media during lockdown and gender.
- H2: There is significant difference in consumption of Facebook before & during lock down.
- H3: There is significant difference in consumption of Instagram before & during lock down.
- H4: There is significant difference in consumption of WhatsApp before& during lock down.
- H5: There is significant difference in consumption of TikTok before& during lock down.
- H6: There is significant difference in consumption of Snapchatbefore& during lock down.
- H7: There is significant difference in consumption of Youtube before& during lock down.

V. RESULTS

a. Chi-Square test was conducted to test (H1), the time spend on social media during lockdown and gender. Result of the chi-square test are mentioned in Table No.2.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.316 ^a	5	.140
Likelihood Ratio	8.253	5	.143
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.489	1	.115
N of Valid Cases	226		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.39.

Table No.2: Result of Chi-Square Test

A chi-square test of Independence showed that there is no significant association between time spend on social media during lockdown and gender, $\chi^2(5, N=226) = 8.316, p = .140$.

b. Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test was conducted to check whether there is any difference in social media consumption of various platforms pre lockdown and during lockdown. Mean Ranks are shown in Table No.3. Z and Asymp Sig. Values are mentioned in Table No.4.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles		
						25th	50th (Median)	75th
How many hours did you spend in Facebook BEFORE the lock down ?	152	1.04	1.952	0	15	.00	.50	1.00
How many hours did you spend in Facebook DURING the lock down ?	226	1.69	2.751	0	30	.00	1.00	2.00
How many hours did you spend in Instagram BEFORE the lock down ?	226	1.93	4.272	0	35	.00	1.00	2.00
How many hours did you spend in Instagram DURING the lock down ?	213	2.37	3.761	0	30	.00	1.00	3.00
How many hours did you spend in Whats App BEFORE the lock down ?	226	3.01	4.283	0	30	1.00	2.00	3.00
How many hours did you spend in Whats App DURING the lock down ?	226	3.84	4.002	0	30	1.50	3.00	5.00
How many hours did you spend in Tik tok BEFORE the lock down ?	226	.39	1.235	0	12	.00	.00	.00
How many hours did you spend in Tik tok DURING the lock down ?	226	.78	3.098	0	30	.00	.00	.00
How many hours did you spend in Snap chat BEFORE the lock down ?	226	.68	2.741	0	30	.00	.00	.50
How many hours did you spend in Snap chat DURING the lock down ?	226	.75	2.649	0	30	.00	.00	1.00
How many hours did you spend in You tube BEFORE the lock down ?	226	2.21	4.481	0	30	.50	1.00	2.00
How many hours did you spend in You tube DURING the lock down ?	226	2.87	4.110	0	30	1.00	2.00	4.00
How many hours did you spend in linked in BEFORE the lock down ?	226	.69	2.710	0	30	.00	.00	1.00
How many hours did you spend in linked in DURING the lock down ?	221	.77	2.733	0	30	.00	.00	1.00

Table No.3: Descriptive Statistics

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
How many hours did you spend in Facebook DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Facebook BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	4 ^a	43.75	175.00
	Positive Ranks	71 ^b	37.68	2675.00
	Ties	77 ^c		
	Total	152		
How many hours did you spend in Instagram DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Instagram BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	14 ^d	60.61	848.50
	Positive Ranks	102 ^e	58.21	5937.50
	Ties	97 ^f		
	Total	213		
How many hours did you spend in Whats App DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Whats App BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	9 ^g	78.61	707.50
	Positive Ranks	137 ^h	73.16	10023.50
	Ties	80 ⁱ		
	Total	226		
How many hours did you spend in Tik tok DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Tik tok BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	6 ^j	22.75	136.50
	Positive Ranks	29 ^k	17.02	493.50
	Ties	191 ^l		
	Total	226		
How many hours did you spend in Snap chat DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Snap chat BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	3 ^m	20.33	61.00
	Positive Ranks	28 ⁿ	15.54	435.00
	Ties	195 ^o		
	Total	226		
How many hours did you spend in You tube DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in You tube BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	9 ^p	85.39	768.50
	Positive Ranks	125 ^q	66.21	8276.50
	Ties	92 ^r		
	Total	226		
How many hours did you spend in linked in DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in linked in BEFORE the lock down ?	Negative Ranks	10 ^s	19.55	195.50
	Positive Ranks	27 ^t	18.80	507.50
	Ties	184 ^u		
	Total	221		

Table No.4: Mean Ranks and Sum of Ranks

Test Statistics ^a							
	How many hours did you spend in Facebook DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Facebook BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in Instagram DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Instagram BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in Whats App DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Whats App BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in Tik tok DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Tik tok BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in Snap chat DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in Snap chat BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in You tube DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in You tube BEFORE the lock down ?	How many hours did you spend in linked in DURING the lock down ? - How many hours did you spend in linked in BEFORE the lock down ?
Z	-6.739 ^b	-7.115 ^b	-9.242 ^b	-2.976 ^b	-3.857 ^b	-8.474 ^b	-2.417 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.000	.016

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
 b. Based on negative ranks.

Table No.5: Test Statistics

Hours spend on Social media platforms before and during lockdown were compared. It was found that number of hours people spent on facebook was more during lockdown (Mdn=1) than before lockdown (Mdn= .50). A Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this difference was statistically significant, T= 2675, z= -6.739, p<.05. Similarly it was found that It was found that number of hours people spent on instagram was more same during lockdown (Mdn=1) and before lockdown (Mdn= 1). A Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, T= 5937.50, z= -7.115, p<.05.

For Whatsapp it was found that number of hours spent during lockdown (Mdn= 5) was more than before lockdown (Mdn=3). A Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, T= 10023.50, z= -9.242, p<.05.

For Tik Tok the number of hours people spent before lockdown (Mdn=.00) and during lockdown (Mdn=.00) remained the same. Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, T= 493.50, z= -2.976, p<.05.

Number of hours people used snapchat was more during lockdown (Mdn=1.00) than before lockdown (Mdn=.50). Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, T= 435, z= -3.857, p<.05.

Number of hours people used youtube was more during lockdown (Mdn=4.00) than before lockdown (Mdn=2.00). Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, $T = 8276.50$, $z = -8.474$, $p < .05$.

For Linked In the number of hours people spent before lockdown (Mdn=1.00) and during lockdown (Mdn=1.00) remained the same. Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated that this result was statistically significant, $T = 507.50$, $z = -2.417$, $p < .05$.

VI. FINDINGS

The research findings substantiate the evidences from literature review; indicating that social media consumption has increased during COVID-19 lockdown. However as per the findings of this paper not all social media platforms have seen an upsurge in consumption, the ones that are not a part of this rise are Linked In, Tik Tok and Instagram which is contrary to the findings of Bhattacharya (2020) who found that these social media platforms saw a rise in their consumption during lockdown. As per this study, the social media platforms that have seen a rise in consumption include Facebook, Whatsapp, Snapchat and Youtube. H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 were accepted as all were statistically significant. Another finding of this paper is that there is no significant association between social media consumption and gender indicating that people from all age groups (H1 was rejected) had increased social media consumption irrespective of their age. Their motives behind social media consumption and platforms might differ. This is in line with previous studies.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

All hypotheses were accepted except H1 indicating that social media consumption on platforms like facebook, whatsapp, snapchat and youtube has increased during the Covid-19 lockdown. It has also been observed that most of industries have relied on digital media to interact with their customers and employees. Government relied heavily on Social Media to circulate important instructions and information with citizens which itself is a testimony to the credibility of social media. This recent flux in terms of social media consumption has led to an opportunity for many brands to encash. It has created an opportunity to increase visibility and engagement with the customers. The times are going to be very interesting for social media as consumers have adopted this media for not just communication but for other needs also. Social media over the years had gained momentum in developing countries but the recent pandemic has given an impetus to this momentum. Looks like social media in times to come will replace the other media's.

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