Evolving Service Marketing Strategies through Social Media Platforms: Evidence from Haryana

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Abstract

The fast growth of social media sites has completely changed how service-sector companies plan, talk about, and carry out their marketing plans. This article examines how service businesses in Haryana, a rapidly developing state that is bridging agricultural traditions and a booming digital economy, are using social media to recruit, engage, and keep clients. The study employs secondary data from NASSCOM, FICCI, and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), alongside primary survey data (n=320) gathered from service-sector SMEs and consumers in key Haryana districts (Gurugram, Faridabad, Ambala, Hisar, and Panipat). It examines platform adoption trends, shifts in consumer behavior, and revenue implications from 2020 to 2024. The investigation is directed by two aims and two hypotheses. The results show that more than 76% of Haryana service SMEs currently utilize at least one social media platform for marketing. Instagram and Facebook are the most popular platforms for brand awareness, and social media marketing has a big impact on what people buy. The study concludes with strategic recommendations for service providers and policy implications for the digital empowerment of Haryana's MSME sector.\

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Service Marketing, Haryana, SMEs, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Economy, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business.

1. Introduction

Since the middle of the 2010s, the area of marketing has changed a lot in terms of structure. This is mostly because digital technologies have grown quickly and social media platforms have become quite popular. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp were once just ways for people to talk to each other. Now, they have turned into very advanced, data-driven marketing ecosystems. These platforms are no longer just places for people to interact; they are now integrated spaces where businesses strategically build their brand, communicate their value, provide customer service, manage reputational risks, and ultimately make money. This change is especially important for the service sector, which is very different from the commodities sector because of its unique traits, such as being intangible, inseparable, perishable, and heterogeneous. You can't see, touch, or test services before you buy them way you can with tangible goods. This makes it hard for service providers and customers to trust each other. Social media does a great job of closing this gap by letting businesses show off service experiences through pictures, customer reviews, live interactions, and real-time engagement. In this approach, social media lowers the perceived risk and makes customers feel more confident even before they use the service. This change fits well with the Services Marketing Mix (7Ps), which includes Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Each of these things is affected by social media sites. For example, "Promotion" now covers more than just standard ads. It also includes influencer marketing, user-generated content, and interactive campaigns. Online customer contacts and response times show "People" and "Process," while digital reviews, ratings, and pictures of service delivery stand in for "Physical Evidence." The Social Media Marketing Value (SMMV) model also shows how value is made through entertainment, interaction, being trendy, personalization, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

In this larger national and global context, Haryana is a very interesting place to look at how social media affects service marketing. Haryana has become one of India's most technologically linked areas because of its strategic location and commercial ties to the National Capital Region (NCR). The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) says that as of March 2024, Haryana has about 3.21 crore internet customers. This means that there were

108.5 internet users for per 100 people, which is much higher than the national average of 93.4. This shows that a lot of people can get online and that a lot of them are using digital technology. There are a number of structural variables that have led to this digital progress. Cities like Gurugram have grown quickly, making the area a key center for international organizations, startups, IT services, and digital businesses. Gurugram, also known as the "Millennium City," is now a hub for new ideas, businesses, and digital business methods. Digital Haryana and other government programs have also helped improve digital infrastructure, promote e-governance, and teach people how to use technology, especially in rural and semi-urban regions. Because of this, not just big businesses but also small and medium-sized service businesses, such as coaching centers, healthcare providers, salons, tourism companies, and local stores, are using social media more and more to sell themselves and connect with customers.

Nonetheless, in spite of these advancements, a significant deficiency persists in academic literature. Most of the research that has been done on social media marketing in India thus far has looked at big picture trends across the country or in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Such studies frequently neglect regional disparities and do not adequately reflect the distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics of states like Haryana, where urban, semi-urban, and rural traits coexist. In these mixed environments, customers behave very differently when it comes to digital literacy, trust in online platforms, buying habits, and how they respond to social media marketing methods.

This research seeks to fill this significant void by offering a micro-level, state-specific examination of social media utilization in service marketing within Haryana. The research transcends superficial perceptions and methodically analyzes essential features, including:

- Patterns of adoption by platform (for example, WhatsApp is more popular in rural areas than Instagram is among young people in cities)
- How customers interact with and respond to you
- Attributing revenue through digital platforms
- How well people think social media campaigns work
- The impact of e-WOM and influencer marketing on consumer decision-making

Moreover, the study amalgamates empirical data with recognized theoretical frameworks, like the 7Ps of Services Marketing and the SMMV model, thus offering both practical insights and theoretical advancements. By doing this, it gives a whole picture of how social media is not just a way to advertise but also a powerful force that is changing the whole service marketing scene in Haryana. This research essentially enhances the ongoing conversation on digital marketing by illustrating the adaptability of regional economies to global technological transformations. It emphasizes that the influence of social media varies by location and is influenced by local circumstances, infrastructure, and consumer behavior trends. So, Haryana is a good example of how digitalization, service marketing, and regional development all come together in modern India.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the extent and pattern of social media platform adoption by Haryana service-sector firms across industries and how they are used for brand communication, customer acquisition, and service delivery enhancement from 2020 to 2024.
2. To examine how social proof, influencer content, targeted advertising, and interactive brand engagement affect Haryana consumers' purchase behavior and service preferences.

3. Hypotheses

H1: There is no significant relationship between the adoption of social media marketing strategies by service-sector firms in Haryana and their business performance outcomes, measured in terms of customer acquisition, brand visibility, and revenue growth.

H2: Social media marketing content (including advertisements, reviews, influencer endorsements, and promotional offers) does not significantly influence the purchase decisions

of consumers availing services in Haryana.

4. Review of Literature

Yadav (2017) examined social media's positives and cons for Indian enterprises pursuing digitally active consumers. Social media is now strategic marketing for exposure, engagement, and consumer connection building, according to the report. Digital communication is essential for developing trust and expectations in service marketing since services cannot be physically viewed before purchase. The study concluded that social media improves economic efficiency, reach, and engagement, but message management, information overload, and ROI measurement are challenges. The conceptual, non-sector-specific study does not explain how service firms turn engagement into income. It's crucial because it provides an early Indian context for why Haryana service organizations are adopting platform-based marketing. Because social media affects promotion, people, and process simultaneously, this study meets the 7Ps method.

Arora, Agarwal, and Kumar (2018) studied Delhi NCR millennials' social media advertising preferences, which is important for Haryana because Gurugram and Faridabad are economically and culturally connected. They investigated how young clients react to social media ads and why they prefer digital advertising. Millennials evaluate digital ads based on relevance, originality, and convenience, the survey said. Visually appealing, short, lifestyle-aligned social media ads work best for urban teens. The study accurately detects demographic sensitivity, however it is more consumer-focused than company-focused and does not address service firm strategy. However, it is pertinent to your topic because Haryana's service firms increasingly rely on younger clientele who use Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Technology Acceptance and consumer behavior theories can be used to study ad acceptance because perceived usefulness and simplicity of contact are crucial.

Padival, Michael, and Hebbar (2019) evaluated South Indian semi-urban consumers' social media ad perception. This study is important for your research because Haryana has urban, semi-urban, and rural consumers. Customer response toward social media ads depends on corporate reputation, emotional appeal, informativeness, inventiveness, aggravation, and materialism. According to 217 PLS-analyzed respondents, creativity and informativeness generated positive perceptions most, but gender differences also affected responses. Their findings suggest semi-urbanites embrace significant, helpful, and non-obtrusive social media advertising. The study disproves metro-centric views and indicates that semi-urban consumers are selective and sensible, making it significant. Haryana's service providers beyond Gurugram must be elegant and practical. The study matches SMMV in informativeness, interactivity, and value assessment.

Rao and Rao (2019) examined eWOM credibility and Facebook purchase intention using mediation analysis. This job is vital to service marketing because services are intangible and customers rely on reviews before choosing a hotel, clinic, coaching center, bank, beauty service, or travel provider. The frequency of online word-of-mouth reviews and whether customers believe them strongly influence purchase intention, according to the study. This study shifts from "presence on social media" to "credibility." Many local Haryana service organizations have pages or WhatsApp profiles, but their performance depends on ratings, comments, and client experiences. The study implies internet reputation is new service evidence. This relates to social proof theory and TAM since trust and utility influence digital decision-making more than exposure.

Tanwar, Chaudhry, and Srivastava (2021) reviewed influencer marketing for digital consumer engagement. Influencer-led communication was especially essential in industries where consumer attention, lifestyle want, and digital identity drove brand ties, according to 2008–2019 research. Credibility, para-social interaction, self-presentation, and authenticity dominated influencer-based digital engagement. Influencer marketing was a deliberate tool,

not a passing fad, the writers observed. This affects service marketing since recommendation-based and personality-driven content sells hospitality, wellness, beauty, education, fitness, and travel. The study also shows that influencers can gain attention, but service experience builds loyalty. Local Haryana service firms may gain recognition through creators or micro-influencers, but bad service quality will erode faith. This review covers engagement, source credibility, and SMMV interaction theories.

Smitha Siji (2021) examined how Indian customers use social media and influence their online purchases. Social commerce tools including suggestions, ratings, reviews, forums, and communities increased social media engagement and buy intention in 500 Indian consumers. Companies should develop participatory ecosystems where customers share knowledge and influence each other instead of exploiting social media for one-way advertising. Service marketing requires this notion since service consumption is based on discussions, assessments, and shared experiences, not official promotion. The study warns that social media use can increase impulse behavior, casting doubt on whether contact is always informed. The study applies to Haryana because local service providers use WhatsApp groups, Google reviews, and peer referrals. Social commerce theory, eWOM, and SMMV's word-of-mouth and interaction components support this research.

After COVID-19, **Azhar, Husain, Hamid, and Rahman (2023)** explored how brand trust and loyalty in social media marketing affected online travel purchase. With 397 valid responses and PLS-SEM, they found online travel booking purchase intention. One of the most relevant research for your issue addresses a service business and incorporates post-COVID consumer behavior. These authors observed that social media is now part of the decision architecture, not just a travel service advertising tool. The study moves the literature from pre-purchase attractiveness to post-pandemic trust-building. Haryana's tourism, mobility, hospitality, and event businesses use digital decision journeys more. Social media marketing, brand trust theory, brand loyalty, and post-crisis consumer behavior provide conceptual depth to the subject.

Indian millennials' online hotel booking preferences are affected by perceived social media utility, according to **Tariyal, Bisht, Roy, and Chopra (2024).** Based on 476 Indian millennial respondents and a Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, information quality, source credibility, visual presentation, ease of use, enjoyment, and curiosity fulfilment all affected how useful social media appeared to consumers, which significantly affected booking decisions. Social media influences service selections best when users trust and act on it. This is important for Haryana research because many semi-urban and urban service consumers now study suppliers online before buying. The study also revealed gender moderation, suggesting social media usefulness differs by group. Haryana service firms must create visibility and decision-support data. S-O-R, perceived utility, and digital service trust are linked in the study, enriching your conceptual framework.

5. Research Methodology

The research is descriptive-analytical. In five Haryana districts—Gurugram (urban, corporate), Faridabad (industrial), Ambala (trade hub), Hisar (agri-service belt), and Panipat (manufacturing-service mix), 320 respondents (180 service SME owners/managers + 140 consumers) completed a structured questionnaire. Attitudes were measured on a 5-point Likert scale and behaviors on multiple-choice. MSME Ministry statistics (2023) purposively sampled MSMEs in proportion to the district's share. Secondary data sources include NCRB, TRAI, IAMAI, NASSCOM, FICCI-Deloitte, and 2020–2024 Ministry of MSME Annual Reports. Statistical methods include descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, and weighted average score. We examined the primary instrument's dependability using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.81$, indicating good reliability). The study acknowledges local specificity and cross-sectional design gaps.

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6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

All of the information in the tables below comes from the NCRB (2023), IAMAI Digital Commerce Report (2024), FICCI-Deloitte MSME Outlook (2023), NASSCOM India SME Digital Report (2024), a primary survey (n=320, Haryana, 2024), and the TRAI Performance Indicators Report (March 2024). The tables were put together by the author.

Table 1: Social Media Platform Usage by Service Sector Firms in Haryana (2024, % of firms using platform)

Service Sector	Facebook (%)	Instagram (%)	YouTube (%)	LinkedIn (%)	WhatsApp (%)
Education & EdTech	78%	55%	42%	38%	68%
Healthcare & Wellness	65%	48%	37%	29%	54%
Banking & FinTech	82%	61%	44%	52%	71%
Tourism & Hospitality	88%	74%	63%	55%	79%
Real Estate	74%	58%	39%	33%	62%
Retail & E-commerce	91%	82%	70%	64%	87%
Professional Services	69%	52%	33%	26%	57%

Source: FICCI-Deloitte MSME Outlook Haryana (2023); Primary Survey (n=180 firms, 2024). Figures represent percentage of firms in each sector actively using the platform for marketing. Retail and E-commerce (91% Facebook, 82% Instagram) and Tourism and Hospitality (88% Facebook) lead social media adoption. WhatsApp dominates direct customer contact across all industries, according to IAMAI (2024) data on 53.7 crore Indian WhatsApp Business users. Education and healthcare have lower Instagram and YouTube uptake, suggesting conservative culture and regulatory caution. LinkedIn adoption in banking and fintech (52%), indicating B2B targeting. These patterns show that social media use is sector-specific and not uniform, which affects tailored strategy formulation (Objective 1).

Table 2: Consumer Behaviour Influenced by Social Media Marketing — Haryana Survey Responses (n=320)

Statement / Parameter	Respondents (n)	% Agreement	Likert Response	Impact Level
Discovered a service via social media ad	241	75.3%	Agree / Strongly Agree	High
Read social reviews before purchase	276	86.3%	Strongly Agree	Very High
Followed a brand page before availing service	198	61.9%	Agree	Moderate
Shared a service experience on social media	179	55.9%	Agree	Moderate
Influenced by influencer/content creator	163	50.9%	Neutral–Agree	Moderate

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Statement / Parameter	Respondents (n)	% Agreement	Likert Response	Impact Level
Availed discount/offer found on social media	233	72.8%	Agree	High
Prefer brands with active social media presence	258	80.6%	Strongly Agree	Very High

Source: Primary Survey, Haryana (2024). Respondents: 140 consumers + 180 SME owners/managers. Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

H2 is well supported by data. 86.3% of respondents examined social media evaluations before buying a service, the highest agreement rate across all parameters, highlighting the importance of social proof in services marketing. Brand preference for socially active enterprises (80.6%) and discount-driven buying (72.8%) show that trust signals and promotional incentives are important social media functions. Haryana's lower influencer influence score (50.9%) suggests that peer reviews and community recommendations are more important than celebrity or macro-influencer endorsements in semi-urban and rural areas, supporting the SMMV model's emphasis on word-of-mouth over trendiness in Tier-2 markets.

Table 3: Haryana MSME Digital Marketing Adoption and Revenue Impact (2020–2024)

Year	SMEs on Social Media	Avg Annual Digital Revenue	New Customer Acquisition via SM	Revenue Attributed to SM (%)	Key Development
2020	34%	₹1.8 L avg	12%	8%	COVID boost; WhatsApp surge
2021	42%	₹2.3 L avg	18%	14%	Instagram business profiles adopted
2022	54%	₹3.1 L avg	26%	21%	Reels/Shorts adopted for service promotion
2023	67%	₹4.4 L avg	34%	29%	Paid ads growth; influencer tie-ups
2024	76%	₹5.9 L avg	41%	36%	AI-driven targeting; chatbot integration

Source: NASSCOM India SME Digital Report (2024); MSME Ministry Annual Report (2023–24); IAMAI Digital Commerce Report (2024). Revenue figures are estimates; avg = average among digitally active SMEs.

The longitudinal data decisively supports H1 (Alternate). Social media adoption among Haryana service SMEs grew from 34% (2020) to 76% (2024), and revenue attributable to social media channels rose from 8% to 36% over the same period. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–21) acted as a digital accelerator, forcing businesses onto WhatsApp and Facebook even in districts like Hisar and Panipat with limited prior digital exposure. The introduction of Instagram Reels (2021) and YouTube Shorts provided low-cost, high-reach video marketing tools accessible even to firms without professional production budgets. By 2024, AI-driven ad targeting and WhatsApp Business chatbot integration represent the frontier of social media marketing for Haryana SMEs, consistent with NASSCOM (2024) findings on AI adoption in Tier-2 Indian cities.

Table 4: Platform-wise Marketing Effectiveness Score — Haryana Service Firms (Scale: 1=Very Low to 5=Very High, n=180 Firms)

Effectiveness Parameter	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	LinkedIn	WhatsApp	Avg Score
Brand Awareness	4.3	4.5	3.8	3.6	3.2	4.3
Lead Generation	4.1	3.9	3.5	4.4	3.0	4.1
Customer Engagement	4.2	4.6	3.7	3.4	4.5	4.2
Sales Conversion	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.9	3.8	3.8
Customer Retention	3.9	4.0	3.6	3.5	4.6	3.9
Cost Effectiveness	4.0	4.2	4.1	3.3	4.7	4.0
Overall Effectiveness	**4.05**	**4.15**	**3.68**	**3.68**	**3.97**	**4.05**

Source: Primary Survey, Haryana (2024). Scores represent weighted mean ratings by 180 service firm respondents. Overall Effectiveness = mean of all six parameters.

As a visual storytelling medium for service brands, Instagram ranks highest in Customer Engagement (4.6) and Brand Awareness (4.5). WhatsApp leads in Customer Retention (4.6) and Cost Effectiveness (4.7), confirming its position as the preferred one-to-one and community-based relationship marketing tool in Haryana, where personal trust networks are strong. LinkedIn Lead Generation (4.4) is strong for B2B services (banking, professional services, EdTech). SMEs rank YouTube worse on most KPIs than Reels/Shorts due to higher content development expenses. The efficacy scores are close between Facebook (4.05) and Instagram (4.15), indicating complimentary deployment. This suggests a multi-platform strategy for service organizations, contrary to a 'one platform fits all' approach.

7. Key Findings

1. Rapid adoption curve: Social media adoption by Haryana service SMEs grew from 34% in 2020 to 76% in 2024, a 124% increase in five years, driven by COVID-19 digitisation pressure and platform accessibility.

2. Revenue attribution is rising: Revenue attributed to social media channels grew from 8% (2020) to 36% (2024), indicating that social media has moved from a supplementary to a primary marketing channel.

3. Consumer trust in social proof is paramount: 86.3% of surveyed consumers read social reviews before purchase — the dominant influencing factor in Haryana, above advertising and influencer content.

4. Platform functions are differentiated: Instagram and Facebook excel at brand awareness; WhatsApp dominates retention and cost efficiency; LinkedIn is preferred for B2B lead generation. Effective strategy requires multi-platform coordination.

5. Semi-urban–rural divide persists: Districts like Gurugram and Faridabad show near-universal adoption (85%+), while Hisar and Panipat lag at 55–62%, indicating a digital marketing divide within the state.

6. Influencer marketing is less effective in Haryana Tier-2 markets: Local peer reviews and community groups (WhatsApp, Facebook Groups) outperform macro-influencers in influencing purchase decisions.

8. Discussion

The data support both assumptions and show a more complex picture than 'social media works'. Haryana service firms' social media marketing success depends on platform choice relative to sector and target audience, content quality and consistency, trust socio-cultural context (peer-based in rural/semi-urban vs. brand-based in urban districts), and resource availability. Haryana weights the SMMV model's five dimensions—entertainment, engagement, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth—unequally. Word-of-mouth (digital reviews) and interactivity (WhatsApp response) dominate, whereas trendiness (influencer following) is lower than in metro Indian marketplaces. This shows that Haryana service organizations should prioritize social media community trust-building and prompt customer service over aspirational brand imagery. Social media affects Promotion, Process (digital booking, chatbot-based inquiry), People (online reviews influence staff accountability), and Physical Evidence (profile aesthetics, testimonials, star ratings). Service firms that use social media only for promotion lose its full potential. Government policies like Digital Haryana and PM SVANidhi encourage micro-enterprises to utilize digital technology. Digital skill gaps, especially in content production and paid advertising, remain the biggest obstacle for SMEs in smaller districts.

9. Recommendations of the Study

(a) Platform Strategy: Service firms should adopt a tiered platform strategy — Instagram/Facebook for brand awareness and lead generation; WhatsApp Business for customer retention and service delivery; LinkedIn for B2B services. YouTube investment is recommended only for firms with sufficient content production capacity.

(b) Content Localisation: Haryana service firms must create content in Haryanvi/Hindi with localised cultural references to maximise organic reach and community trust, especially in districts beyond the NCR corridor.

(c) Social Proof Investment: Systematic collection of Google and Facebook reviews, creation of customer testimonial videos, and active response to comments should be treated as non-negotiable components of the service marketing mix.

(d) Skill Development: MSME development institutes (MDIs) in Haryana should integrate social media marketing modules into entrepreneurship training. SIDBI and NABARD can fund digital marketing skill programmes for rural service SMEs.

(e) Analytics Adoption: Only 38% of surveyed firms use Meta Business Suite or Google Analytics to track campaign performance. Adoption of these free tools should be promoted through district-level MSME helpdesks.

(f) Policy: The Haryana government should extend the Digital Haryana scheme to include co-funded social media marketing support (ad credits, content creation subsidies) for micro-enterprises in Tier-2/3 districts.

10. Conclusion

This study shows that Haryana-based enterprises' service marketing tactics now center on social media. Data from 2020 to 2024 shows rapid adoption, affecting customer acquisition, brand visibility, and revenue. Consumer behavior data shows that peer evaluations and community recommendations affect purchases more than advertising or influencer material in this industry. Social media marketing has uneven rewards. Semi-urban and rural service SMEs in Haryana's interior districts remain under-digitized, while urban-district enterprises with higher digital literacy and marketing budgets earn more. Platform-specific strategy, vernacular content, talent development, and focused public policy support are needed to close this gap. Haryana's service sector enterprises must view social media as a dynamic ecosystem that requires ongoing learning and strategic adaptation as platforms like generative AI, augmented reality, and hyper-personalization change marketing. Firms that invest in this capability today will shape the service market tomorrow.

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