INTRODUCTION

Internet has increasingly penetrated into our daily lives and so is the use of Social networking sites. The present version of internet helps the consumers to connect, share, exchange and communicate among themselves and with the companies as well. The evolution of internet has given an opportunity for companies to use social media as a communication, business and influencing medium.

Studies have shown that there is a drastic change in the Indian consumers buying behavior and attitude. With the changing economic status in India Rich is spending more but the middle class spending pattern has also changed. Living for the day is the new motto of consumers. Middle class people are ready to opt for loans to live a luxurious life. This can be seen from the credit card business which is booming day by day. People of India comprise different segments of consumers, based on class, status, and income.

Online shopping is a new platform in the field of e-business and is definitely going to be the future of shopping in India. Online shopping is very common in countries like US and UK but it is still in infancy stage in India. But there is a huge potential for online shopping in India as the market size is large. According to the Boston Consultancy Group report, digital influence study 2013-14, online shopping is expected to rise to 14 per cent by 2016 from 6 per cent in 2013. According to DNA analysis, a survey was conducted in 2013, over 3,500 traders and organized retailers in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmadabad and Kolkata were interviewed for the survey. Mumbai was ranked first in online shopping followed by Delhi and Kolkata as those living in metros are attracted by factors like home delivery which saves time as well as 24*7 shopping.

MEANING

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is the study of when, why, how and where people do or do not buy a product or service. Buying Behavior is the decision processes and acts of people involved in buying and using products. Consumer behavior can be defined as a behavior of individuals in regards to acquiring, using and disposing of products, services, ideas or experiences. It also includes
the acquisition and use of information, Consumer Buying Behavior refers to the buying behavior of the ultimate consumer. A firm needs to analyze buying behavior for:

- Buyer’s reactions to a firm’s marketing strategy has a great impact on the firm’s success.
- The marketing concept stresses that a firm should create a marketing mix that satisfies (gives utility to) customers, therefore need to analyze the what, where, when and how consumers buy.
- Marketers can better predict how consumers will respond to marketing strategies.

There are six stages to the Consumer Buying Decision Process (For complex decisions). Actual purchasing is only one stage of the process. Not all decision processes lead to a purchase. All consumer decisions do not always include all 6 stages, determined by the degree of complexity.

1. Problem Recognition
2. Information search
3. Evaluation of Alternatives
4. Purchase decision
5. Purchase
6. Post-Purchase Evaluation

Thus communication with consumers and receiving feedback from them is a crucial part of consumer behavior which is of great interest to the marketers.

**SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)**

Social Networking sites also known as SNS is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. Connections are established on a confirmation basis through social networking websites. A social networking site is also known as a Social website or social networking website. In simple terms social networking site is a website that gives a social platform to people to share information, photographs with a group. Different social networking sites are available for a different purpose like LinkedIn is used for professional purposes and Facebook creates a balance between private and professional networks. Thus a social networking site is any site that has a profile and connections which
have tools combines to share all types of contents online. Vangie Beal describes Social networking sites even as community-based Web sites, online discussions forums, chat rooms and other social spaces online. Social networking sites have become an important mode of communication between the companies and customers. SNS helps the companies to gain knowledge about potential customers and the consumers.

**Characteristics of social networking sites:**

1) **User Based:**
   All the social networks that are present today are user based i.e developed and directed by the users themselves. Without users the networks would be just an empty space.

2) **Interactive:**
   One of the important characteristics of social networks is that they are very much interactive. Websites like Facebook have become an entertainment option and a pass time that majority of the users are choosing over a television. Because these networks not only entertain the users but also connects them and allows to have fun with their friends.

3) **Community Driven:**
   Social networks follow the principle of Communities or social groups which bring together people with similar likes, interests, beliefs, hobbies etc. Social networks also provide an option to be a part of various groups in which the user is interested. This allows users to make new friends with similar interests and also reconnect with long lost friends.

4) **Relationships:**
   A social network thrives on relationships. The more established you are on a network shows that you are having more relationships within that network. And the network automatically seems to expand with contacts and sub contacts.

5) **Emotion over content:**
   Another unique characteristic of social networks is the emotional factor. It provides the users a sense of emotional security and supports during any kind of crisis in personal life. Social networks provide the users a sense of belonging and a thought that their friends are within easy reach.
**DEFINITION:**

Danah m. Boydand Nicole B. Ellisondefines “social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.”

**HISTORY**

The evolution of social networking sites started when people in India started using email ids. The birth of Orkut created a drastic shift from yahoo mail to Gmail. The combination of BSNL broadband connection and Orkut worked wonders in India. Thousands of social networking websites were started but the only one which could survive and capture the market was Facebook. After Facebook the next thing that hit India was Twitter.

**FACEBOOK**

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Facebook had over 1.18 billion monthly active users as of August 2015.

The site, which is available in 37 different languages, includes public features such as:

- **Marketplace** - allows members to post, read and respond to classified ads.
- **Groups** - allows members who have common interests to find each other and interact.
- **Events** - allows members to publicize an event, invite guests and track who plans to attend.
- **Pages** - allows members to create and promote a public page built around a specific topic.
- **Presence technology** - allows members to see which contacts are online and chat.

Within each member's personal profile, there are several key networking components. The most popular is arguably the Wall, which is essentially a virtual bulletin board. Messages left on a member's Wall can be text, video or photos. Another popular component is the virtual Photo Album. Photos can be uploaded from the desktop or directly from a smartphone/camera. There is
no limitation on quantity, but Facebook staff will remove inappropriate or copyrighted images. An interactive album feature allows the member's contacts (who are called generically called "friends") to comment on each other's photos and identify (tag) people in the photos. Another popular profile component is status updates, a microblogging feature that allows members to broadcast short Twitter-like announcements to their friends. All interactions are published in a news feed, which is distributed in real-time to the member's friends.

Facebook offers a range of privacy options to its members. A member can make all his communications visible to everyone, he can block specific connections or he can keep all his communications private. Members can choose whether or not to be searchable, decide which parts of their profile are public, decide what not to put in their news feed and determine exactly who can see their posts. For those members who wish to use Facebook to communicate privately, there is a message feature, which closely resembles email.

Facebook has affected the social life and activity of people in various ways. With its availability on many mobile devices, Facebook allows users to continuously stay in touch with friends, relatives and other acquaintances wherever they are in the world, as long as there is access to the Internet. It can also unite people with common interests and/or beliefs through groups and other pages, and has been known to reunite lost family members and friends because of the widespread reach of its network.

**TWITTER**

Twitter is a free social networking microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called *tweets*. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Tweets and replies to tweets can be sent by cell phone text message, desktop client or by posting at the Twitter.com website.

The default settings for Twitter are public. Unlike Facebook or LinkedIn, where members need to approve social connections, anyone can follow anyone on public Twitter. To weave tweets into a conversation thread or connect them to a general topic, members can add hashtags to a keyword in their post.
Tweets, which may include hyperlinks, are limited to 140 characters, due to the constraints of Twitter’s Short Message Service (SMS) delivery system. Because tweets can be delivered to followers in real time, they might seem like instant messages to the novice user. But unlike IMs that disappear when the user closes the application, tweets are also posted on the Twitter website. They are permanent, they are searchable and they are public. Anyone can search tweets on Twitter, whether they are a member or not.

In 2013 Twitter was one of the ten most-visited websites, and has been described as "the SMS of the Internet." As of May 2015, Twitter has more than 500 million users, out of which more than 302 million are active users.

RELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

During the past few years social networking sites have been the most preferred communication channel for many people. The popularity of Social media has rapidly increased since 2010.

These social networks can be used as an important tool for marketing by the companies to advertise and sell products and services. Millions of people are using SNS for communication and interaction. The time that consumers spend on internet and SNS has increased considerably and hence there has been a change in consumption trends.

Online marketing is replacing the traditional tools of marketing. Social media is changing the consumer buying behavior and adding a new factor to the process. Increasing use of social media allows consumers to exchange their ideas, ask for help, information and suggestions before buying a product or service. Existing studies have indicated that there is a connection between social interaction and framing of consumer opinion. Consumers rely on personal sources like recommendation by friends, to make purchases. Word of mouth is also a major personal source of information and social media provides a platform to connect with friends and get information and review of various products and services. Research have shown that 67% of Indian online shoppers refer to social media before making a purchase.

So it becomes necessary to study the impact of SNS on consumer buying behavior taking into consideration all the factors.
The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of online social networks i.e. Facebook and Twitter on consumers buying behavior. More precisely the research tries to find out how social networks influence the consumers buying behavior and how consumers are influenced by online social networks.