



Role of Social Media in Promoting Organic Products in Karnali Province, Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines the Karnali Province of Nepal's use of social media to promote organic products. This research examines the unique influence on the growth and awareness of organic products of the global revolution in communication and marketing tactics sparked by the rapid expansion and widespread adoption of social media platforms. The study digs into the tactics adopted in advertising organic products within the unique context of Karnali Province. Data for the study was collected through a survey questionnaire distributed to 300 respondents. The sampling method utilized a convenience sampling to gather diverse information about social media engagement, the choice of social media platforms, marketing strategies employed on these platforms, awareness levels of organic products, consumer behavior, and the effectiveness of organic product promotion. The survey targeted a representative sample of the population in Karnali province. Using the Smart PLS-4 programme, the study analyzed the data it had obtained, concentrating on testing hypotheses and looking at the correlations between the variables. The outcomes contribute to a wider understanding of using social media to promote organic products in addition to providing knowledge particular to a given location. This study adds to our knowledge of how social media, particularly in remote and rural areas like Nepal's Karnali Province, may be a potent and successful instrument for promoting organic products. The results offer useful recommendations for digital marketing tactics customized for certain regional contexts and sustainable agriculture to marketers and policymakers.

Keywords: Social media platforms, promotional strategies, natural goods, digital marketing, sustainable agriculture, consumer perception



Introduction

Social media is a term that describes the interactions between individuals in which they produce, distribute, and/or exchange knowledge and ideas in online communities while applying the social exchange theory (Emerson, 2003) as a marketing strategy for organic farmers. A new method of client interaction has arisen, enabling the filling of niches. The ability to sell a large volume of organic products because to the internet inspired (Anderson, 2007). One benefit of social media is its capacity to cater to niche markets or customers who are dispersed throughout the world. “Social media have become an integral part of marketing strategies and cost structures of many companies around the world,” as Jespersen et al. (2017).

Social media are very different from previous forms of media. They resemble dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interacting creatures that are independent of any governing bodies, according to Peters et al., 2013. User-generated content, sometimes referred to as social media communication, is “now a common source of information; it has changed the tools and strategies companies use to communicate, highlighting that information control now lies with the customer” (Pechrová et al., 2015).

The niche’s characteristics applied to organic goods. However, according to Jensen and Baggesen (2014), “the demand for ‘organic’ or ‘biodynamic’ goods has generally increased. organic products have become increasingly popular due to their potential health benefits, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare considerations. Karnali Province in Nepal offers a wide array of organic products ranging from crops to herbal remedies and handicrafts. The region’s commitment to organic farming practices and sustainable production methods ensures that these products maintain their natural qualities while promoting environmental conservation and supporting local communities.

The misuse of pesticides and fertilizers in the production of food has had a negative impact on public health and safety. Social media in promoting organic products is a powerful tool for promoting organic products. Organic products are good and manufactured from natural materials without the use of any chemicals. The ideal tool for public communication is social media. Everyone participates in social media in today’s digital age because it spreads information quickly and grabs people’s attention (Bernal-Jurado et al., 2017).

In recent years, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for communication and information dissemination. These platforms have transformed the way people interact, share ideas, and conduct business. The influence of social media extends to various domains, including the promotion of organic products. This

paper explores the role of social media in promoting organic products in Karnali Province, Nepal. With its unique geographical location and diverse agricultural practices, Karnali Province presents an interesting case study for understanding the impact of social media on organic product promotion. This introduction provides an overview of the significance of organic products, the growing trend of social media, and the specific context of Karnali Province, setting the stage for a comprehensive examination of the role of social media in promoting organic products.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the social media engagement in promotion of organic products.
2. To examine the social media platforms in promotion of organic products.
3. To identify the social media marketing strategies in promotion of organic products.
4. To analyze the role of organic product awareness in promotion of organic products.
5. To examine the effect of consumer behavior in promotion of organic products.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is significant relationship between social media engagement and promotion of organic products.

H₂: There is significant relationship between social media platforms and promotion of organic products.

H₃: There is significant relationship between social media marketing strategies and promotion of organic products.

H₄: There is significant relationship between organic product awareness and promotion of organic products.

H₅: There is significant relationship between consumer behavior and promotion of organic products.

Literature Review

Meliawati et al. (2023) has focused on how Social media altered businesses and brands with their audience. Companies use social media marketing to gain a competitive edge in order to compete. Bittersweet by Najla, a small and medium-sized business, Using TikTok for social media marketing in conjunction with highlighting the quality of the product will increase the probability that consumers will make a purchase. Social media marketing first influences purchase intent,

followed by product quality and, thirdly, a relationship between social media marketing and purchase intent. Tik-Tok, a company that offers information search and services catered to client needs, is an indication with the most important value in social media marketing factors. One indicator, the product's look, has the strongest coefficient association value for the product quality variable. Because of this, Bittersweet by Najla keeps using TikTok as a social media platform for its marketing strategies and raising the standard of its goods.

Tazeen and Mullick (2023) explored the impact of social media platforms, specially face book and instagram, on consumers' inclination to purchase organic products. It investigates consumption patterns and how social media sites contribute to raising public awareness and support for organic products. The findings indicate that social networking sites play a crucial role in shaping users' consumption behavior and influencing their purchasing decisions concerning organic products. Likewise, Kostygina et al., (2022) have analyzed Twitter messages about heated tobacco products (HTPs) to determine their frequency and content. Over the period of August 2016 to July 2021, the number of monthly tweets about HTPs doubled. Organic tweets increased from 29.00 percent to 73.50 percent of all tweets during this period. Evaluating social media's role in promoting HTPs is important for tobacco use reduction and substance abuse prevention efforts.

Nekmahmud et al. (2022) investigated customers' intents to purchase organic products and how social media usage and marketing (SMM) have a direct impact on consumers' sustainable consumption patterns. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2021) have researched the role of digital platforms in reducing customer uncertainty and encouraging the use of novel organic products in rural China. The most important discovery is that a low-cost social media support infrastructure may successfully drive adoption even for a new product like a pesticide.

Gupta and Syed (2022) has studied the relationship between various social media marketing activities impacting Indian consumers' attitudes towards People's readiness to pay a premium price for environmentally friendly products is the goal of this paper. The results of the study suggest that word-of-mouth; interaction, entertainment, and customization are the four main social media marketing activities that shape consumer attitudes towards green products. The resulting optimistic mindset significantly and favorably influences consumers' willingness to pay a premium for environmentally friendly goods.

Balasubrahmanyam and Muthumeenakshi (2021) has analyzed the advertising strategy in the handloom industry to increase sales of handcrafted goods. The tactics of promotion gradually evolved in the contemporary circumstances. It is a

positive indicator for the handloom industry. Sales volume in the handloom sector, in particular, is consistent, and it was at that time that social media entered the market. Due to the integration of all brands under one umbrella, social media currently plays a very significant role and offers a wide range of opportunities to buyers and sellers of handlooms. Manufacturing companies use a cutting-edge strategy to market their branded goods on social media. With the use of social media, domestic and international businesses have adopted an advertising strategy. This essay discusses social media services, social media marketing, and the role social media plays in promoting handcrafted goods and enhancing customer happiness.

Novytska et al. (2021) has focused use of digital technology by a wide range of businesses creates entirely new options for the gathering and analysis of data on markets and consumers, the execution of marketing communications with clients, and the development of brand recognition. Through the use of digital information and communication technology and electronic channels, digital marketing allows for contact with clients and business partners. It has been determined that digital marketing's development in the area of advertising organic products is in its early stages. It has been established that social networks serve as the primary digital marketing platforms for businesses that create organic goods because they don't incur additional fees to hire a marketing expert.

Yekimov et al. (2021) explored the need for ecologically friendly food products with environmentally friendly production methods exists among consumers. Using social networks to promote the products and services of agricultural businesses helps them become more competitive. A farming business that produces ecologically sustainable food items and draws a larger pool of potential customers. The creation of high-quality virtual content using the expertise of competent specialists is required for the efficient advertising of products and services through the usage of social networks. Potential customers will learn more about the company's products and services, as well as how they differ from those of other manufacturers, through the high-quality content that makes up the social network's virtual area.

Pop et al. (2020) examined the role of social media and its impact on ecologically friendly behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was used in the current study to explain how social media affects customers' buying intention and motivation (altruism and egoism). The findings highlight the significance of social media on consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and egotistical and altruistic motivations, as well as the influence of these factors as antecedents of purchase intention for green cosmetics. There are significant theoretical ramifications of these findings. The research findings are important for marketers to use to improve social media communication methods to boost consumer motivation and buy intent for

green cosmetics.

Sun and Wang (2020) focused the links between social media marketing, perceived consumer effectiveness, product knowledge, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, price consciousness, and consumers' attitudes and intentions to buy organic products, this study explores the correlations between these variables. This study adds to the knowledge of the characteristics that affect consumers' purchasing decisions for organic products in developing nations, particularly in the setting of social media marketing, by evaluating these variables. However, Lu and Miller (2019) examined the combined effects of social media and customer relationship management (CRM), specifically in terms of duration, on retail sales. The study specifically investigates the effect of altruistic or egoistic marketing postings in relation to CRM membership over time compared to other forms of sales on organic retail sales on a Facebook brand page. The findings indicate that customers are more likely to respond to messages about health benefits over time than to messages about price and environmental benefits.

Schwemmer and Ziewiecki (2018) have studied about the YouTube has transformed into a powerful marketing tool for social media influencers, who collaborate with marketers to promote products through electronic word-of-mouth. However, the extent of this phenomenon has been poorly understood. Through analysis of 139,475 German You Tube videos from 2009 to 2017, the research reveals a growing presence of commercial promotion, particularly in beauty and fashion.

Haff (2017) has studied the social media marketing tactics utilized by the organic food business were examined in this study using content analysis. The findings show which social media platforms and social media marketing techniques are being employed. Chanthinok et al. (2015) identified the social media channels used as those employed by frequency and the capability of the application to meet the targeted marketing goal. The marketing tactics that were evaluated were first classified as transformative or informative, and then further divided into subcategories based on how the consumer would view them.

Conceptual Framework

Social Media Engagement

The level of interaction and interaction between users and content on various social media platforms is referred to as social media engagement. It includes the number of likes, comments, shares, and other participation signals that show how actively a user is interacting with a given article, page, or account. High social

media interaction is frequently a crucial indicator for companies and people looking to increase their online presence. It increases the reach of material and develops a sense of community and connection. Effective engagement techniques can increase consumer loyalty, brand recognition, and the overall effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives (Dessart, 2017).

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms are online locations where people and organizations may interact, share material, and talk to a large audience. They have completely changed how people interact by making networking, real-time communication, and information sharing possible. Popular websites and apps like Face book, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn serve a variety of interests, from casual friendship to business networking. However, they also struggle with issues like addiction, misunderstandings, and privacy. Social media continues to be a potent instrument for both personal and professional goals, influencing modern communication and online culture despite these worries (Weller, 2016).

Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social media marketing strategies involve leveraging popular social platforms to promote products, services, or brands. Key tactics include creating engaging content, targeting specific demographics, and utilizing paid advertising. Building a strong online presence, fostering community engagement, and analyzing data to refine campaigns are essential elements. Additionally, staying updated with platform algorithms and trends is crucial for success in this ever-evolving field. Effective social media marketing can enhance brand visibility, customer engagement, and ultimately drive business growth (Bajpai et al., 2012).

Organic Product Awareness

The growing knowledge of and appreciation for the advantages of organic foods and products is referred to as “organic product awareness.” It entails raising consumer awareness of the production practices that put sustainability first, stay away from synthetic chemicals, and support environmental and animal welfare. This awareness has raised consumer demand for organic goods, promoting better lifestyle choices and fostering a more ethical and ecological approach to farming and consumption (Briz & Ward 2009).

Consumer Behavior

The study and analysis of how individuals or groups of people choose and act when utilizing goods and services is known as consumer behavior. It includes a wide range of elements, such as psychological, social, cultural, and economic dimensions,

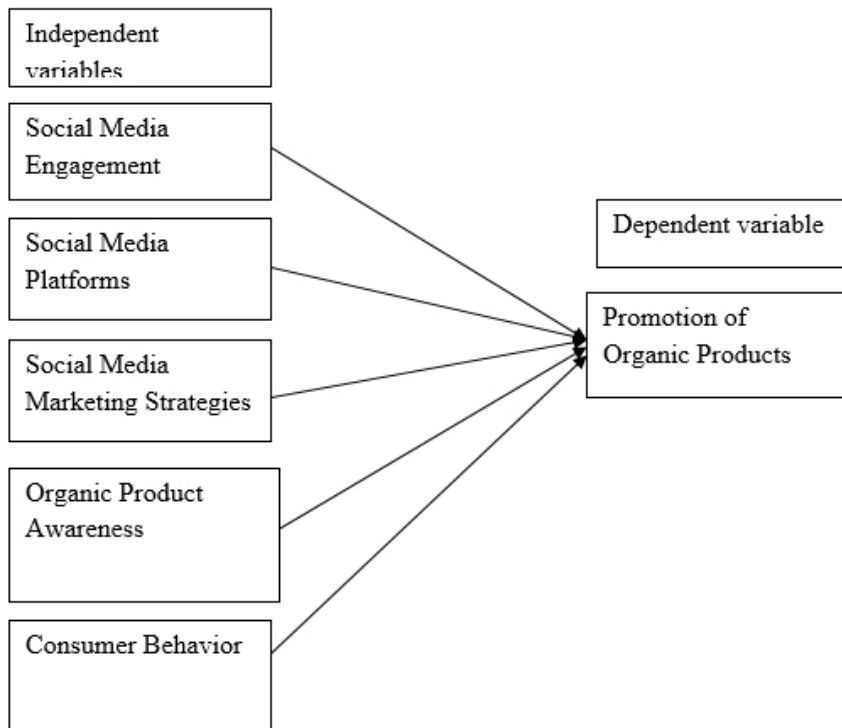
that have an impact on these decisions. For firms and marketers to establish efficient marketing strategies, produce goods that satisfy consumer requirements, and produce positive customer experiences, they must have a thorough understanding of consumer behavior. In order to forecast and affect customer purchase behaviors, it requires examining factors such as motivation, perception, attitude formation, and the effects of advertising, pricing, and social influences (Cummins et al., 2014).

Promotion of Organic Products

It is crucial to promote organic products for both environmental sustainability and individual wellbeing. Natural, chemical-free approaches are prioritized in organic agricultural practices, minimizing damage to ecosystems and customer exposure to dangerous pesticides. By purchasing organic goods, consumers promote sustainable agriculture, the preservation of biodiversity, and the consumption of healthier foods. Companies and organizations are essential in spreading knowledge about the advantages of organic products, promoting their use, and developing a market that values both environmentally friendly practices and consumer wellbeing (Pechrová et al., 2015).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Methods and Procedures

The study employed a quantitative research design to examine the role of social media in promoting organic products in Karnali Province, Nepal. Samples of 300 participants were selected through a convenience sampling techniques because of its practicality and accessibility, as it allows for the selection of participants based on ease of availability rather than a random or systematic method and time and resources are also limited. The sample included individuals who had purchased organic products and were active social media users. Structured Likert scale questionnaires were developed to collect quantitative data. The data were collected in the months of July and August, 2023. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and Statistical software (e.g., SPSS, Excel, and Smart PLS-4) was utilized to perform the data analysis.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Profiles

		No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25	60	20.00
	26-35	90	30.00
	36-45	120	40.00
	Above 45	30	10.00
Marital Status	Married	180	60.00
	Single	120	40.00
Gender	Male	200	66.67
	Female	100	33.33
Qualification	Primary or below	30	10.00
	Secondary	90	30.00
	Graduation	120	40.00
	Post Graduation	44	14.67
	Above	16	5.33
Occupation	Government service holder	120	40.00
	Private service holder	150	50.00
	Unemployed	30	10.00

Income level	Less than 10,000	30	10.00
	10,000-20,000	80	26.67
	20,001-40,000	130	43.33
	Above 40,000	60	20.00

Source: Field Survey 2023

The table 1 provided the information on the age, marital status, gender, qualification, occupation, and income level of the participants. The majority of respondents were in the 36-45 age range, accounting for 40.00 percent of the total. The next largest group was below 25 years old, comprising 20.00 percent of the respondents. Similarly, 60.00 percent of the respondents were married, while the remaining 40.00 percent were single. The survey had a higher proportion of male participants, accounting for 66.67 percent of the total. Females made up 33.33 percent of the respondents. The largest group of respondents, at 40.00 percent had a graduation qualification. The next significant group, at 30.00 percent had a secondary qualification. Private Service holders were the majority, comprising 50.00 percent of the respondents. Government service holders accounted for 40.00 percent, while the unemployed made up 10.00 percent. The highest number of respondents fell within the income range of 20,001-40,000, accounting for 43.33 percent. The next largest group had an income above 40,000, representing 20.00 percent of the respondents.

Reliability Test

The Cronbach alpha reliability co-efficient was used to evaluate the research instrument's dependability. A reliable co-efficient of 0.6 and above are acceptable and high while a reliable coefficient of below 0.6 shows questionable and poor reliability (Dikko, 2016).

Table 2

Code	N	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
CB	5	0.632	Acceptable
OA	5	0.629	Acceptable
PO	5	0.774	Good
SE	5	0.816	Excellent
SP	5	0.769	Good
SS	5	0.609	Acceptable

As shown in the table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha of the variables is higher than 0.6 thus we can say that there is high level of internal consistency among the variables.

Rotated Component Matrix

The matrix reveals the factor loadings of all constructs obtained to be higher than 0.5. It has met the criteria of research. Besides, the communalities values of each item have also been recorded to be higher than 0.5, which is highly reliable. Additionally, the values of each construct are higher than 0.7, which is highly valuable (Hair et al., 2012). Similarly, here according to the table 3, 23 items among 30 items are met the criteria because factor loading more than 0.5, others remaining components 7 are not taken in to account for this study because factor loading less than 0.5.

Table 3

Rotated Component Matrix

Items	Factor loadings
CB3	0.567
CB4	0.730
CB5	0.907
OA4	0.776
OA5	0.898
PO1	0.686
PO2	0.762
PO3	0.756
PO4	0.759
PO5	0.652
SE1	0.708
SE2	0.801
SE3	0.863
SE4	0.785
SE5	0.634
SP1	0.733
SP2	0.656
SP3	0.768
SP4	0.834
SP5	0.606
SS2	0.781
SS4	0.547
SS5	0.761

Smart PLS-4

Smart PLS (Partial Least Squares) is a software package commonly used for structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. Hypothesis testing is a fundamental aspect of SEM, and Smart PLS provides capabilities to test hypotheses using the partial least squares algorithm (Wang et al., 2023). In Smart PLS, hypothesis testing typically involves assessing the significance of path coefficients, which represent the relationships between variables in the model. Here, the study is conducted Role of social media in promoting organic products. For, this purpose Smart PLS-4 is used which is mentioned as follows.

Figure 1

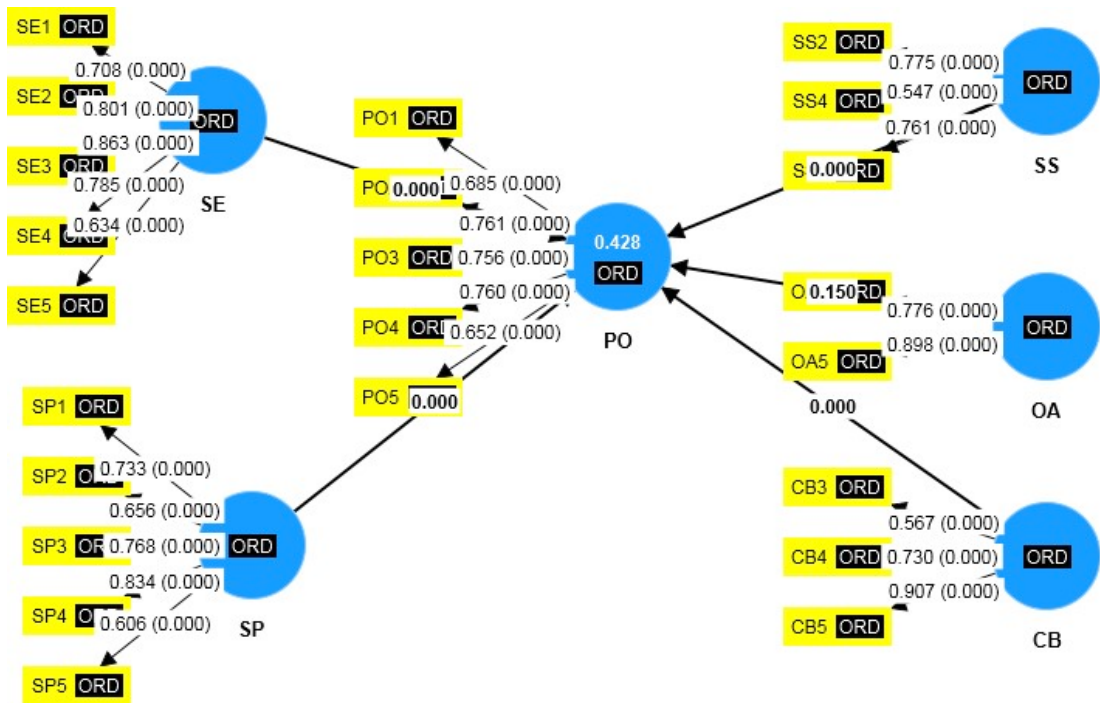


Table 4

Path Analysis

Path	P value
CB -> PO	*** (0.000)
OA -> PO	0.15
SE -> PO	***
SP -> PO	***
SS -> PO	***

Source: Smart PLS-4

Note: (***) denotes p-value significant at 0.01 level of significance, (CB = Consumer behavior, OA = Organic products awareness, SE = Social media engagement, SP = Social media platforms, SS Social media marketing strategies=, and PO = Promotion of organic products)

According to the above figure and table, the path analysis table 4 presented p-value of Consumer behavior, Social media engagement, Social media platforms, Social media marketing strategies less than 0.01, which indicates that there is significant role of above mentioned variables on promotion of organic products at 1% level of significance. But the p-value of Organic products awareness is 0.15 which is more than 0.01, therefore this result find that there is no significant relationship between Organic product awareness and promotion of organic products.

Conclusion

Consumer behavior has a significant and strong positive influence on the promotion of organic products. This indicates that the preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behavior of consumer play a crucial role in the success of organic products promotion in Karnali Province. However, Organic products awareness has a weak and non-significant influence on the promotion of organic products. This suggests that while consumers may be aware of organic products, their awareness alone may not directly contribute to their promotion. Similarly, social media engagement has strong positive role on the promotion of organic products. This highlights the importance of active engagement with consumers through social media platforms to effectively promote. Likewise, the choice of social media platforms

and effective utilization of their features can greatly enhance the promotion of organic products in the region. In addition, Social media marketing strategies have a significant and strong positive influence on the promotion of organic products. Implementing well-designed marketing strategies specifically tailored for social media can effectively boost the promotion of organic products in Karnali Province.

Organizations promoting organic products in Karnali Province should invest in understanding consumer preferences, attitudes, and behaviors towards organic products. To promote organic products successfully, businesses should actively engage with consumers on social media platforms. This can be achieved through various means such as responding to queries, sharing informative content, conducting polls, and encouraging user-generated content. Businesses should identify the social media platforms that are popular among the target audience in Karnali Province. Understanding the demographics and user behavior of each platform help organizations make informed decisions about where to focus their efforts and allocate resources for promoting organic products effectively. Organizations should develop comprehensive social media marketing strategies specifically designed for promoting organic products. These strategies should leverage the unique features and capabilities of each platform to engage the audience, increase brand visibility, and communicate the benefits of organic products. Partnering with influencers who have a strong presence on social media can greatly enhance the promotion of organic products. Influencers can create authentic and engaging content that resonates with their followers, thereby increasing awareness and interest in organic products. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of social media promotion efforts are crucial. Organizations should analyze the impact of their campaigns, track key metrics such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates, and make necessary adjustments to optimize their organic product promotion strategies.

By implementing these recommendations, businesses and organizations in Karnali Province can harness the power of social media to effectively promote organic products and contribute to a sustainable and environmentally conscious consumer culture.

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