



INFLUENCING CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

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Abstract

"Social media stands as a pivotal communication medium, bridging connections between individuals and organizations globally. This research delves into factors like social media content, demographics, purchase motivations, attention drivers, duration on social media, and its relation to consumer perspectives within the apparel sector. Such insights elucidate the impact of social media content on shaping consumer perceptions in the fashion realm. Primary Data Sources, in the guise of a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, provided the research data. The analysis incorporated feedback from 250 participants, with the questionnaire tailored to address the study's specific goals. Quantitative techniques deciphered the survey results, employing tests like Kruskal Wallis, Chi Square, and Wilcoxon to gauge consumer perspectives about apparel-related social media content, ascertain disparities in perceptions based on demographics and motivations, and evaluate the sway of social media content. The research deduced that content perceptions do differ based on factors like age, gender, occupation, and attention triggers. However, the time devoted to social media and purchasing motivations don't significantly influence these perceptions."

Keywords: (Consumer Perception, Social Media, Apparel Industry,)

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1. Introduction:

The Influence of Social Media on Communication and Commerce Today, social media has emerged as a dominant platform for global communication. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn have become the go-to for individuals to share experiences and connect with global organizations. These platforms are rife with diverse user contributions, from product reviews and health tips to usage guidelines. The vast connectivity enabled by social media influences many in their purchasing decisions, making it a prime space for businesses to establish a robust online presence. The evolution of marketing has thus seen the ascendancy of social media as a critical factor, affecting consumers at every stage of their purchase journey. Awareness of one's brand and offerings, and continual engagement through influencers, is key to building solid consumer relationships in this era.

Insights on the Apparel Industry

Clothing is as vital to humans as food, shelter, and drink. Presently, the apparel industry is a rapidly growing sector and stands as India's second-largest foreign exchange earner, contributing to 26% of the country's exports. The Indian government's ambitious target is to achieve \$50 billion in revenue from this sector by 2015. As of 2008-09, India's garment export valued at 10.17 billion dollars, grabbing 2.99% of the global share. The country boasts the title of the world's second-largest garment producer, exporting mainly to regions like America, the European Union, parts of Asia, and the Middle East. Notably, for every INR 100,000 invested in the industry, seven new employment opportunities arise. The apparel sector is responsible for 8% of India's total exports. In earlier days, clothing production was considered an art. However, technological advancements have transformed the industry, reshaping its dynamics, particularly at the retail level. Comprehensive knowledge of the industry's nuances is imperative for success in this highly competitive market.

1.3 Introduction to role of social media in the apparel industry

The digital age has heralded a new era for industries worldwide, redefining the way businesses operate and engage with their customers. Among the multiple facets of the digital transformation, social media has emerged as an indispensable tool for marketing, communication, and customer relations. Particularly in industries where visual presentation and customer engagement play a pivotal role, such as the apparel industry, social media has shifted paradigms, introducing new platforms for display, promotion, and interaction. This paper delves into the intricate

role social media plays in the apparel industry, investigating its implications for marketing strategies, consumer behavior, and brand perceptions.

The global popularity and accessibility of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest have transformed the way consumers discover, engage with, and ultimately purchase products (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The apparel industry, with its inherent focus on visual appeal, trends, and personal expression, is uniquely positioned to benefit from these platforms, offering brands opportunities for direct consumer engagement and real-time feedback (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Historically, the fashion industry was largely influenced by designers, celebrities, and fashion week events. The cycle of trend setting and adoption was predictable and sequential. However, with the rise of social media influencers, bloggers, and user-generated content, there's been a democratization of fashion discourse, enabling consumers to participate directly in trendsetting (Phan, Thomas, & Heine, 2011). This development has required apparel brands to adapt rapidly, adopting more transparent, interactive, and agile strategies to remain relevant and competitive (Lu, Karpova, & Fiore, 2011).

Over the past five years, the apparel industry has witnessed an unprecedented interplay between fashion and technology, primarily driven by the proliferation of social media platforms. From 2018 to 2023, major shifts have been observed in consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and overall brand narratives. This evolving landscape underscores the dynamic nature of the apparel industry in the social media age.

With platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and newer entrants into the social media sphere, the fashion narrative is no longer solely in the hands of designers, magazines, and celebrities. Instead, everyday consumers, influencers, and even artificial intelligence have begun to play pivotal roles in trendsetting and fashion discourse (Author A, 2019). The lines between creator and consumer have blurred, introducing a more inclusive and democratic space where 'street style' meets 'haute couture' (Author B, 2020).

The rise of "virtual try-ons", augmented reality (AR) filters, and sustainable fashion movements, largely propagated through social media campaigns, have further shaped the industry. Brands are now held accountable by a global audience, emphasizing ethical production, inclusivity, and sustainability more than ever

(Author C, 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic-induced shift to online shopping has only amplified the role of social media in bridging the gap between virtual selection and physical purchase, giving rise to a hybrid retail experience (Author D, 2022).

In light of these shifts, this paper seeks to understand the profound and multi-dimensional impact of social media on the apparel industry from 2018 to 2023, exploring its challenges, innovations, and the emerging paradigms of digital fashion.

This article aims to outline the manifold ways social media has interwoven itself into the fabric of the apparel industry. It addresses the influence of social media on brand building, its role in shaping consumer expectations and preferences, the advent and influence of influencer marketing, and the challenges and opportunities it presents for apparel brands in the 21st century.

2. Review of Literature:

With this research paper, it can be concluded that social media is now a vital tool for consumers. Without a question, social media has been used by a variety of businesses to locate and engage with their target market. The numbers also don't lie: Facebook has 2.45 billion active users, Instagram has one billion, Twitter has 330 million, YouTube has two billion, and Snapchat has 360 million. On average, people spend about 2.5 hours every day on social media. Each month, more than 28% of people across four main social media platforms engage with live streaming. More than 73 percent of marketers believe social media is effective and yields a positive ROI. As a result, social media platforms are in a great position to run successful digital marketing initiatives (Singh R, 2020).

In terms of acceptance and usage levels, social media has had a tremendous success. They affect how individuals connect and communicate with one another, how they express and share ideas, and even how they interact with products, companies, and organisations. Furthermore, social media platforms have evolved into important knowledge-sharing platforms for consumers. The impact of social media on travel and tourism has already been described as enormous, owing to the experience nature of tourist products, particularly vacation trips: purchases are seen as risky, and hence decision-making processes are data-heavy. A sufficient number of research has been attempted to uncover the role and impact of social media on aspects of consumer behaviour before, during, and after the travel process. Almost all, however, take a micro approach, focusing on a specific type of social medium (for example, consumer review and

rating websites), a specific application (for example, TripAdvisor), a specific stage of the decision-making process (for example, information search), or a specific stage of the travel process (e.g. before travel) (Fotis J, 2015).

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of social media on Bangladesh's digital transformation. Trends and influencers have been discovered to have a significant impact on customers. When customers interact with business platforms on social media, they have more faith in the firm and feel closer to it, and vice versa. Through Social Media in Digital Bangladesh, the company may obtain more direct feedback from customers. The impact of digital marketing in persuading more people to make successful online transactions. Through postings, photographs, activities, and comments on social media, the company's facts are displayed. Social media allows customers to sense the company's philosophy and culture, increasing customer loyalty. Of course, some unfavourable social media remarks can be detected; they will have a greater impact on customers than positive ones. Nonetheless, businesses can use it as a motivator to develop. Because of the fast-paced changes in market dynamics, there is less brand visibility and brand awareness in the market, prompting the industry to look for new ways to differentiate themselves and provide a more confident experience to their customers. This work will aid other researchers in comprehending how numerous factors, as specified in theory, have altered consumer purchasing behaviour in Digital Bangladesh and are gradually becoming a critical component influencing consumer purchasing behaviour (Prome S, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of social media advertising on customer purchasing behaviour, with a focus on the fast fashion industry. The information gathered was evaluated via descriptive and inferential statistics. As a result, the results of the regression analysis demonstrate that the study's independent variables, entertainment, familiarity, social imaging, and marketing spending, have a significant positive impact on the dependent variable, consumer buying behaviour, and so all four hypotheses were accepted. The study's implications give Fashion Retailers and Marketers with a wealth of information. In the same way, the study serves as a source of literature for future researchers (Voramontri D and Klieb L, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of social media in consumers' decision-making processes for complex transactions, which are expensive and rare and are marked by considerable brand variations, strong consumer

engagement and risk. The information search, alternative appraisal, and purchase decision steps from the conventional EBM model are used in this model. A quantitative study looks into the extent to which social media alters people's experiences. Customer satisfaction is influenced by social media use during the stages of information search and alternative evaluation, with satisfaction increasing as the consumer progresses through the process toward a final purchase choice and post-purchase review (Bandara D, 2020).

Social media marketing is crucial, and it is one of the most effective tools and techniques in any sort of advertising. Every businessman's major goal is to grow the number of selling articles using various marketing tools and approaches, as is well known. Without a doubt, it can help a variety of companies increase their profits. The primary goal of this research is to determine how social media marketing will influence final consumer behaviour among people who frequently use social media websites, as well as to determine the predicted relationships between various social media marketing activities, customer activities, and consumer behaviour. The implementation of Social Media websites is continually evolving to meet the social demands of website users, while also increasing the chances for corporations to sell their products and services in a tailored manner. In the past, social media has played a crucial role in influencing client perceptions during the purchasing process. Organisations can no longer ignore the growing relevance of social networking sites in terms of consumer behaviour and how they influence it (Surenderkumar C, 2016)

Developing products/services that match unique consumer wants has become a challenge, given that consumers are now involved in not just the purchase process, but also the design and distribution. The use of social media has changed people's lifestyles and cultures, making it challenging for businesses to comprehend their clients. Individuals and businesses can now communicate in two directions because to the dynamic nature of social networks. The primary goal of this research is to determine the impact of social networks (digital marketing) on customer behaviour while also examining customer loyalty, tolerance, and sophisticated buying experimentation. In order to service customers and meet their demands, organisations should focus on customer interaction and online presence, according to this study. The research was carried out using questionnaires to collect primary data. Statistical analysis, correlation, and regression were used in the study using SPSS Statistics (Xhema J, 2019).

The study's major goal is to highlight how social media marketing has affected people's lives. Not

only has traditional media altered, but social media marketing has exploded in popularity in the modern era. People are sharing their opinions on various social media marketing platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Skype, and others, with the goal and objectives of this study clearly demonstrating how social media is preferred by customers for purchasing decision channels, and the researcher has chosen Thane as the location for his research (Chandwani V, 2018).

3. Research Methodology:

Objective of the study

- To analyse the influence of various types of social media content (e.g. advertisements, user-generated content) on consumer attitudes towards apparel brands.
- To identify the factors that contribute to the formation of consumer perceptions through social media content in the apparel industry.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of different marketing strategies employed by apparel brands to shape consumer perception through social media content.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis I: There is no variation in the perception of content on social media related to the apparel industry based on demographic elements like age and occupation.

Hypothesis II : The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on among gender.

Hypothesis III : The perception of content related to the apparel industry on social media remains consistent regardless of the amount of time spent on social media.

Hypothesis IV : The perception of apparel industry content on social media remains consistent irrespective of attention-driving elements.

Hypothesis V : The perception of apparel industry content on social media remains unchanged regardless of the factors motivating purchase.

Data Analysis

This chapter delves into an analysis of the survey responses collected for the research. A total of 250 responses were received. The focus of this study is to understand the extent to which social media shapes clothing purchase decisions and how content on these platforms influences consumer perceptions. To derive insights from this investigation, the chapter encompasses an interpretation of the survey responses, complemented by the Kruskal Wallis Test, Chi Square Test, and One Sample T Test. The primary objective of this chapter is to interpret the findings

of the study titled "Impact Of Social Media On Customer Perception In The Clothing Industry." For the quantitative data sourced from the survey,

techniques such as Kruskal Wallis, Chi Square, and T test are employed for comprehensive analysis Table no: 4.1

Reliability Test

Variable Name	Reliability Statistics	
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Perception on Social Media Content	.835	6

The above table shows Cronbach's Alpha value as 0.835, This means there is a high level of internal consistency for the scale with this specific sample. Hence, the questionnaire distributed is reliable and is consistent throughout.

3.4 Sample size and sampling techniques

The population of this study are those individuals that use social media to purchase apparel. Due to the vastness of the population, the population size is unknown. A total of 250 respondents were used for the analysis of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is carefully structured to fulfil the various research objectives of the study. A quantitative analysis is used to interpret the results of this questionnaire. This helps deal with unbiased research and gather information from a large population. Through the help of this method, data can be collected from a large population in a brief period.

3.5 Sources of Data Collection Questionnaire

The process of gathering data commenced with a comprehensive study on the impact of social media on consumer views in the apparel sector. Through meticulous examination, it became evident that consumer perceptions of social media's influence vary based on diverse factors, including age, gender, duration of use, profession, driving motivations, and more.

Kruskal Wallis Test

Kruskal Wallis test has been carried out to understand the variance among different demographic factors such as age and occupation as per the hypothesis stated below:

H0: The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on demographic factors.

Sub Hypothesis:

H1: The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on

Table 4.24: Kruskal Wallis Test to understand the mean variance on the basis of age

	Perception
Kruskal-Wallis H	15.257
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.002

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: Age_group

Interpretation:

The Kruskal Wallis Test was conducted to examine if there are median differences in perceptions about the content of social media in the apparel industry across different age groups. In this evaluation, age was considered the independent variable, while the perception of content on social media during apparel shopping was the dependent variable. The

presented table shows an H value of 15.25 and a p-value of .002. This indicates a significant difference in perceptions about social media content in the apparel industry among various age groups. Given that $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and embrace the alternative hypothesis (H1).

Sub Hypothesis:

H2: The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on based on occupation.

Table 4.25: Kruskal Wallis Test to understand the median variance on the basis of occupation
TEST STATISTICS

	Perception
Kruskal-Wallis H	11.235
df	2

Asymp. Sig.	0.004
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a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: Occupational_status
 The Kruskal Wallis Test was employed to determine if median differences exist in perceptions regarding the impact of social media on the apparel industry based on occupation. In this study, occupation serves as the independent variable, while the perception of content on social media during apparel shopping is the dependent variable. The table provided reveals an H value of 11.23 and

a p-value of .004. This suggests a significant median difference between occupation and the perceived influence of social media in the apparel sector. Given that $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and adopt the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

H3: The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does vary based on time spent on social media.

Table 4.26: Kruskal Wallis Test to understand the median variance on the basis of time spent on social media.

TEST STATISTICS

	Perception
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.761
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.251

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: Time_spent
Interpretation:
 The Kruskal Wallis Test was utilized to examine if there are median differences in perceptions about the role of social media in the apparel industry relative to the amount of time spent on social media. In this study, the duration of time spent on social media is the independent variable, and the perception of content on social media when shopping for apparel is the dependent variable. The data presented in the table shows an H value of 2.76 and a p-value of .25. This suggests there's no

significant median difference between time spent on social media and perceptions regarding its influence on the apparel sector. Given that $p > 0.05$, we uphold the null hypothesis (H_0) and dismiss the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

Furthermore, the Kruskal Wallis test was undertaken to delve into the variation based on attention-driving factors on social media, according to the hypothesis presented below:

H4: The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on based on attention driving factors.

Table 4.27: Kruskal Wallis Test to understand the median variance based on attention driving factors

TEST STATISTICS

	Perception
Kruskal-Wallis H	16.366
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: Attention
Interpretation: The Kruskal Wallis Test was used to determine if there are median differences in perceptions regarding the influence of social media

on the apparel industry, based on attention-driving factors. For this analysis, the attention-driving factors were considered as the independent variable, and the perception of content on social media when buying apparel was the dependent variable. The provided table displays a value of H being 16.36 and a p-value of less than .001. This

suggests a significant median difference between attention-driving factors and the perceived influence of social media in the apparel sector. Given that $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and embrace the alternative hypothesis (H_1). Additionally, the Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to analyze the variation concerning

motivating factors for purchasing on social media, based on the following hypothesis:

H_5 : The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on motivating factors of purchase.

Table 4.28: Kruskal Wallis Test to understand the median variance based on motivating factors of purchase
TEST STATISTICS

	Perception
Kruskal-Wallis H	3.587
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.31

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: Motivating_Factors

Interpretation:

The Kruskal Wallis Test was used to examine if there are median differences in perceptions about the impact of social media on the apparel industry based on motivating factors for purchasing. In this analysis, the motivating factors for purchase serve as the independent variable, while the perception of content on social media during apparel shopping acts as the dependent variable. The provided table shows a value of H at 3.58 and $p = .31$. This suggests there isn't a significant median difference between the motivating factors for purchase and

perceptions on the role of social media in the apparel sector. Thus, given that $p > 0.05$, we retain the null hypothesis (H_0) and reject the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

Chi Square Test

Chi Square Test has been carried out to understand the variance among gender as per the hypothesis stated below:

H_0 : The perception of content on social media in the apparel industry does not vary based on among gender.

Table 4.29: Chi Square Test to understand the variance among gender
CHI-SQAURE TEST

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	85.767	40	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	34.742	40	0.706
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.233	1	0.007
N of Valid Cases	249		

- a. 45 cells (71.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Interpretation:

A Chi Square Test was conducted to determine if there are differences in perceptions about the impact of social media on the apparel industry based on gender. The presented table shows a p-value less than .001. This suggests a significant

difference in the perceptions between genders regarding the role of social media in the apparel sector. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1) since $p < 0.05$.

Findings, Suggestions and Conclusions

This research was carried out to explore the influence of social media content on consumer perceptions within the apparel sector. We utilized the Kruskal-Wallis, Chi Square, and Wilcoxon A tests to gauge consumer attitudes towards apparel-related social media content, discern potential mean differences in perceptions based on demographics and motivation, and assess the overall impact of social media content on consumers.

For the Kruskal-Wallis test, we analyzed data from the survey concerning demographic factors, attention-driven elements, and consumer views on social media content in the apparel context. The findings revealed a significant association between these variables, indicating a pronounced correlation. However, when analyzing data related to time spent on social media, purchase motivation factors, and consumer views, the test did not find a noteworthy relationship between these aspects.

The Chi-square test, applied to data focusing on gender and perceptions of social media content in the apparel realm, demonstrated a strong connection between these variables.

Finally, the Wilcoxon test, centered on the data concerning consumer perceptions of social media content in the apparel sector, highlighted a substantial influence of social media on respondents' views of the apparel industry.

Suggestions

In the apparel sector, businesses should prioritize understanding their consumers. By deeply understanding their clientele, they can elevate brand awareness and value, ultimately fostering greater customer loyalty and long-term engagement.

For apparel businesses, the emphasis should be on enhancing customer satisfaction via diverse social media channels.

Utilizing social media allows companies to foster a closer connection with customers, consistently engage with them, and significantly influence their perception of the fashion world.

Brands, by being more engaged on these platforms, can gather richer consumer insights, reviews, and feedback, making customers feel integral to the brand's journey.

By showcasing positive testimonials from previous customers on social media, brands can shape prospective buyers' views, influencing their perceptions in the fashion industry.

4. Conclusion

This research aimed to understand the impact of social media content on shaping consumer views in the apparel sector. We employed the Kruskal-Wallis, Chi Square, and Wilcoxon A test to gauge

consumers' attitudes towards apparel-related social media content, to identify if there were mean differences in perceptions based on demographics, to discern if there were mean differences based on motivational elements, and to determine the extent to which social media content influences consumers. The findings indicated that perceptions of social media content varied based on factors like age, gender, occupation, and attention triggers. However, the time devoted to social media and purchasing motivations didn't significantly alter these perceptions.

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