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Role of social media marketing in a clothing brand

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Abstract:

This research investigates social media marketing's influence on consumer behaviour in the clothing industry for young consumers 18-25 in Mumbai. The rise of social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube as major marketing pathways prompts the study to see if social media marketing, through influencer marketing, user-generated content, or product visuals, influences consumer behaviour regarding purchasing decisions. For the study, we collected data from 102 respondents using a survey with a set format structure. This research found that using visually attractive, authentic content is significant to buying behaviour, and that trust and satisfaction is also an important factor. This research also identified the concerns that clothing brands had with social media marketing, like inauthentic influencers and misleading advertisements. These findings will benefit clothing brands looking to develop their social media strategies and create the basis for sustainable consumer relationships.

Keywords- Social media marketing, clothing brands, influencer marketing, consumer behaviour, trust, youth, Instagram, YouTube

Introduction

Social media plays one of the most important roles of modern marketing, and for fashion specifically, the visual and trend-based nature of social media makes them ideal - there are platforms focused on visual content (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest), that allow clothing brands to showcase the product visually and engage in real-time with consumers, as well as partner with social media influencers. The cohort of young adults aged 18–25 is one of the most engaged groups on social media and, on average, this age group not only seek social media for inspiration for fashion, but also often rely on social media for their purchasing decisions. While there are clear benefits of visibility and marketing capacity, with social media comes issues that could heavily impact the companies' ability to create a trustworthy experience with consistency of content and credibility of information. This study explores the influence of social media marketing strategies in the clothing sector by assessing behavioural responses of young consumers based in Mumbai.

Literature review

Social media has gained an extensive body of literature regarding its application as a marketing mechanism for consumers. Ashley and Tuten (2015) emphasized that creative branded content on social media has a transformative effect on customers' engagement (measurement indicated as an experience), particularly through social media channels. Duffett (2017) indicated that social media marketing communication can influence the attitudes of young consumers more than traditional media advertising. In addition to this, influencer collaborations and user-generated content (UGC) can drive engagement through perceived authenticity (De Veirman et al., 2017). The sensitivity of consumer trust is also affected by the presence of false or misleading advertisements and the influencers' perceived inauthenticity (Appel et al., 2020). The implications of social media on consumer behaviour have been supported in previous research (Duffett & Carr, 2019). Gaps remain to be examined in understanding platform-specific preference discovery or the emotional impact of young, urban consumers while purchasing fashion. This study focuses on the youth market in Mumbai to begin to fill that gap.

Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives

- Analyse consumer demographics and clothing spending patterns.
- Examine social media usage and platform preferences.
- Evaluate the influence of content types on purchase decisions.
- Measure trust and satisfaction with brand content.
- Identify perceived benefits and concerns related to social media marketing.

Hypotheses

- H1: Social media usage is positively correlated with clothing purchase frequency.
- H2: Influencer collaborations and UGC significantly impact purchase decisions.
- H3: Trust in influencers increases purchase likelihood.
- H4: Perceived benefits improve brand attitudes.
- H5: Misleading content reduces trust.
- H6: A strong social media presence enhances engagement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive and correlational quantitative study using a structured Google Forms survey.

Sampling

- Sample Size: 102 respondents
- Demographics: Primarily aged 18–25, students, and young professionals in Mumbai
- Sampling Technique: Non-probability, convenience sampling

Data Collection & Tools

- Data Collection: Structured online questionnaire
- Tools: Excel, frequency distribution, percentage analysis
- Key Measures: Trust and satisfaction rated on 1–5 scale

Data Analysis & Results

Demographics

- Age: 36% between 18–25 years
- Gender: 36% Male, 34% Female, 22% Other
- Education: 35% Bachelor's degree
- Occupation: 33% Students

Social Media Usage & Platforms

- Frequency: 36% use social media several times a day
- Top Platforms: YouTube (44%), Pinterest (41%), Instagram (40%)

5.3 Influence on Purchase Behaviour

- 73% reported being influenced to purchase clothing via social media
- Top content types influencing purchases:
 - Product visuals (52 responses)
 - User-generated content (45)
 - Influencer collaborations (26)

5.4 Trust & Satisfaction

- Trust in influencers:
 - 3 out of 5: 43 responses
 - 4 out of 5: 22 responses
- Satisfaction with brand content post-follow:
 - Mostly between 2–3 out of 5 (61 responses)

5.5 Perceived Benefits & Concerns

- Top Benefits:
 - Style inspiration (42)
 - Exclusive promotions (38)
- Top Concerns:
 - Influencer inauthenticity (42)

- Privacy concerns (41)
- Misleading ads (29)

Discussion

This research validates that social media marketing has a large and substantial impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in the apparel sector, especially with youth consumers. Even though Instagram and YouTube are effective channels to create brand awareness and discover new brands, campaigns are only successful if they are authentic while being backed by believable influencers, and it is important to keep the social media conversations going and develop long-term relationships with consumers. Consumers prefer relatable, visually appealing and peer-based content. User-generated content and influencer marketing are extremely powerful but must be seen as credible. There remain concerns about credibility and too much choice often keeps consumers from having long-term loyalty with brands.

Conclusion

Social media is an important driving force for brand engagement and sales of clothing. The results of this study demonstrate that: Young individuals are socially active in fashion content. A purchase is influenced more by visually authentic and relatable engagements than through advertisements. Trust and satisfaction with a brand are not strong, and can be diminished with misleading content. Brands that do not promote the guidance of social media, aspirational content, or focus too hard on a platform-specific strategy do better.

Recommendations

- Invest in UGC and micro-influencers to boost authenticity.
- Create platform-specific visual content, especially for Instagram and YouTube.
- Address trust concerns through transparent and honest communication.
- Enhance post-follow content to maintain long-term engagement.

Limitations and future scope

Sample consists of only young adults in Mumbai findings are not generalizable to other areas of the world nor other age groups. Responses are self-reported and have a potential for bias. Future research could take into consideration: Studies on specific platforms (e.g. TikTok, Threads) Longitudinal studies that understand how behaviours change Behavioural analytics (beyond self-reports)

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