An Empirical Study Of Social Media As "A Supporting Pillar" For The Fashion Industry

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Abstract
Fashion industry is at boom today because of its increased visibility and approachability to the customers. Social media (SM) is a platform which provides such visibility and enriches the experiences. As more fashion professionals turn to online media sources, connected features that connect designers to their clients and consumers are revolutionising the industry. These stages must make the industry more accessible to the general public and fashion customers by engaging and educating them about latest trends in industry. In the present study an empirical investigation was done to explore the Social media (SM) factors affecting the fashion industry. An exploratory cum descriptive study was conducted in Delhi/NCR region. A sample of 420 respondents was collected from the cities and the coronach alpha i.e. reliability $\alpha = 0.79$ was calculated. Principal component analysis was used to undertake an exploratory factor analysis, which looked at four factors: SM marketing, blogs/websites, branded mobile apps, and email marketing. It was found that all these factors have an ultimate effect on purchasing decision of consumers. Thus a SM factor adds value to the fast fashion paced industries and increases the brand value.

Keywords: social media, purchase decisions, fashion industry, brands, e-commerce, SM platforms.

1. Introduction

The advent of Social media (SM) offers numerous opportunities to interact online to exchange information, experiences and integrating it into their everyday lives. In his several publications, Moran (2012) explained that SM is a group of online communication platforms and platforms that people use to communicate information, profiles, assumptions, observations, apprehension, and media. It makes it possible for people from all over the world to interact and communicate with one another. As more SM platforms develop, it is possible to connect people from different parts of the world. SM has given new dimension to marketing where digital marketing evolved into a powerful marketing tool. Digital marketing allows the making and program of information in the method of text, images, videotapes, and audios which results to raise brand recognition among consumers.

Fashion is one of the industries that have seen to be well appropriate and unsurprisingly fit used for SM platforms. Perhaps fashion industry utilise SM platforms to engage with their clients to predict recent trends and fashion habits. SM platforms like Facebook, Instagram, What Sapp groups (Business accounts) have connected the fashion industry entities with the clients and customers. This indeed resulted to complete transformation of the fashion industry. Perhaps, digital marketing is one of the tools that have propelled fashion industry to the forefront in this global market.

The Factionists now have fresh sources of inspiration thanks to the popularity of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Through Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites, we can get a variety of perspectives on a variety of topics (Kim & Ko, 2012; Galloway, 2012; VanAuken 2015), from fashion blogs to live streaming of runway events to social buying. It has become into the most important runway in the fashion world. Through the incorporation of SM tactics there is an increased consumer's visibility and hence, increased the profit of designers and companies with large fan bases as an outcome.

By the mounting development of recognized relationships amid creators and customers, it is important to integrate comments into the creation process of this work. This kind of interactivity between designers and their customers has permitted a new method for inventors to stay ahead of the tendency. This kind of interactive approach has completely revolutionised the fashion industry. Perhaps, this in return increases the consumer's interest, visibility, and encouraged the consumers to purchase the products. Therefore, SM plays a very critical role in influencing the consumer's purchasing decision. (Taylor, 2005). Young adults use SM heavily; 28% of them posted brand-related content to discussion forums and 19% of them uploaded it to the homepages of their favourite SM sites, according to Qualman (2009). These customers have a major impact on product evaluation, social relationships and influencing the purchase

decisions of others by huge word of mouth on various SM platforms. Blackwell et al. 2001 also emphasized that consumer's acquisition choice is influenced by consistent product visibility and social recognition.

2. Review Of Literature

SM has developed an imperative marketing tool aimed at the fashion industry as it allows them to connect with consumers and increase their respective brand visibility. These further reinvigorate brand enthusiasm and customer devotion. SM consumes a great influence on the fashion industry as it increases the interactivity amid the brands and customers. Customers attach their emotions (Lee, 2009) with the brand which has a great influence on their purchase decision. This connect brings customers in a much better position to analyse and anticipate the trends, which ultimately brings great customer satisfaction.

According to Lee 2009, various SM stages like Facebook, Twitter etc. monitor customer's opinion and deliver real-time customer support. These platforms spark a dialogue between various fashion entities and their target audiences which has the direct impact on customer purchase decision. According to Naik and Prabhakar (2010), designers captivate on more than 400 million Facebook users and 28 million Twitter users which save their marketing expenses and increases the possibility of getting linked with new audience altogether. Hence SM plays a very important role for designers as well as consumers. In addition to this, Agathou (2011) also mentioned that SM plays crucial role in increasing brand loyalty and word of mouth which proves to be a great influencer in purchasing goods and services.

Similarly, Stephenson (2009) said that SM platforms are the human voice of the brand, and their voice brings more creation to my brand and recognise me beyond my creations. This helps me to retain customer and earn their loyalty. Hence as per Stephenson, SM is being used by fashion industry and retailers to build interactions with customers in real time. Emerging stylists, bloggers, and designers have a worldwide platform where they exhaust the SM technology to the fullest to create and nurture the brand (DiMauro, 2011). From both the manufacturer's and the consumer's points of view, brands are one of the most important elements in the fashion industry. Branding has evolved to read customer minds and provide opportunities for self-expression and identity as a result of market and media evolution. Brand is the product's personality, especially in the fashion industry. In a same vein, a product becomes a brand. For case while buying a Van Heusen bag client is not just buying the bag; they are buying the brand and quality that Van Heusen delivers to its customers (Sharma and Sahni, 2017). Branding theories have their ignition phase in the mid of the 20th century (Farquhar, 1995) There are several studies in the past which have formalized the evolution of branding from the 1950s to the present times. Holt (2004) and Parker (2006) have well formulated in summing up the various brand theories. The gap in the literature is then prevalent as there is not enough studies available describing the relationship between the theories. (Hampf, A. & Lindberg-Repo, K. (2011)) in her study has beautifully explained the causal relationship between the flow of various branding theories from past to the present 21st century (Figure 2-1). The subsequent info graphic gives a tabular representation of the 15 important branding concepts discovered by the eminent researchers during their studies from 1950 onwards until now. Various principles of branding kept on evolving with the upcoming demands and technologies and the ideas kept regenerating based on this evolution.
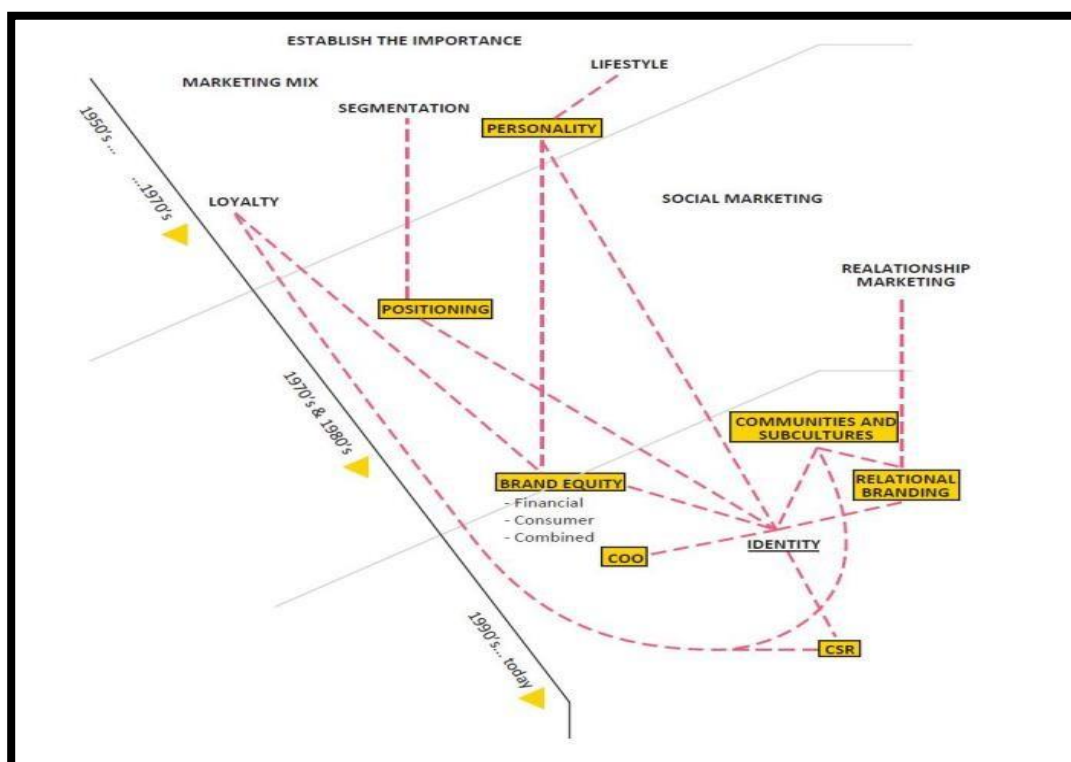

Figure 1: Evolution of Branding Theory (*Source Hampf, A. & Lindberg-Repo, K. (2011))

Brand management has therefore emerged as a crucial element in the fashion industry (Choi, 2014). It is the application of marketing strategies to a particular product in order to provide recognition of distinctiveness and indicators of quality (Bridson & Evans, 2004). Brands may help consumers feel stronger about them and have more opportunities for self-expression, self-realization, and identification. Since, fashion industry is one of the most revolutionized industries where trends change every season, marketers and brand managers should constantly reinvent and renovate strategies to communicate the clear message. Therefore, a fashion brand needs to be an effective contact point management, and be unique so as to be successful (Kapferer, 2004; Venkatesh et. al., 2010). Similarly Heine (2010) and Morace, (2010) mentioned in their research study that brands are continuously focusing on customer-oriented approach and capacity to change and adapt to novel practices of fashion industry. So SM has been described as relationship building platforms and branding tools (Ahlqvist et al., 2008). It is possible to establish a brand personality via the practice of SM and to make the brand more accessible to consumers. SM includes weblogs, social blogs, micro blogs, wikis, podcasts, ratings, and social bookmarking, the law firm of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) there's a lot of overlap between the various media functions of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest with the focus placed on the social ties between the community members, according to Agichtein et al (2008). Social marketing has been characterized by as an exchange of ideas, views, and information through a medium, rather than the traditional method or practice of advertising, selling, and distributing a product or service.

Research Methods
Objective of the study
To identify the influence of digital marketing on consumer purchase decisions toward fast fashion products.

Research Design
Research design refers to the blueprint of techniques and processes used to gather, analyse, and present data (Churchill, Brown, and Suter, 2009). Similarly, Malhotra (2010) mentions that research project is a framework the investigator usages to test hypothesis and achieve research objectives. In the present study exploratory cum descriptive research design is implemented. Various digital marketing factors were explored which were contributing towards multiple fashion brands.

Sampling Method and Technique
Sample was collected from Delhi/Ncr i.e. Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad (Kaur,G. (2014)) because high awareness towards various fashion brands and high purchasing power of the consumers in the given region. Moreover, 450 questionnaires given and returned 30 incorrect responses. Hence, 420 people were included making it a valid sample for the research.

Convenience Specimen was applied for the assortment of defendants (consumers) in Delhi/Ncr region. Additional sub-dividing to Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad. Furthermore, **Quota Sampling** was applied where 25% quota was fixed for the four regions i.e. Delhi, Noida, Gurugram and Faridabad.

Statistics was calm with the assistance of Google form, where an on-line survey instrument was created for this investigation (Lavrakas, 2008). Survey was further separated into 2 parts A and B. Part A covers of the all demographic info of the respondents and part B- consist of the 25-items on the effect of numerical marketing on customer purchase choices. After the research of Schivinski (2014) and Kim (2012), five matters are rummage-sale to quantity SM advertising (2012). However, the gage developed after Malär and Hoyer (2011) is used to assess blogs/websites. Hsu and Tsou (2011) precisely adding, to gauge the success of branded mobile applications, researchers Lassar and Mittal (1995) and Zang (1997) used a five-point scale. In addition, the email marketing measurement scale is based on Ducoffe (1995), Jamalzadeh, Behravan, and Masoudi's (2012) email marketing measurement framework (2012). Finally, five items from Shareef, Kumar and Kumar (2008) that measure consumer buying choices are retrieved. Likert gage ranging after strappingly agree =1 to strongly upset =5 was secondhand for calculating the present exploration homework. The reliability of the total sample collected 420, was planned by spread completed the "Cronbach Alpha". Alpha rate of the 25 variables was 0.79 which met the least criterion "($\alpha > 0.60$)" (Nunnally, 1978). To determine how well items on a test fit together conceptually an internal consistency is measured to check the correlations between them (Nunnally 1994; Devon 2007).

Factor Names	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
SM marketing	3	0.86
websites	3	0.86
Branded mobile apps	5	0.92
Email marketing	4	0.75

3. Data Analysis And Interpretations
Descriptive Statistics
The mean phase of defendants stood in the range of 18-25 yrs. Table mentioned below shows that 66.4 percent of the plaintiffs were female, although the remaining 33.6% were male, respectively. 45.7 percent of the respondents were

between the ages of 18 and 25, which is a significant number. A total of 27.9% of those polled were in the age range of 26 to 30. Ages 30-35 comprised 12.9% of those surveyed, while 35-40 comprised 6.4%. Participants under the age of 18 made up only 2.9% of the total, while those over the age of 45 accounted for 4.3%. Among the 420 participants, 37.9 percent had a bachelor's degree, followed by 35.0 percent with a master's degree. People with a high school diploma and those with a doctorate of education each had a 12.9 percent share of the entire. Only 1.4 percent of the contributors were high school graduates. Most participants were students, accounting for 60.0 percent of the population. While 28.6% were hired, 8.6% were self-employed, and 2.9% were unemployed, 8.6% of the population was self-employed.

Exploratory factor analysis was castoff to uncover latent theories (i.e. features) reflecting four different digital selling frequencies and obtaining choices based on the responses to the inspection questionnaires. A pilot survey was conducted which validated all the assumptions that we can run EFA for our present study. There was no evidence of multicollinearity when examined i.e. the existence of a linear link between two or more explanatory factors based on the results (Elith et al., 2006). Similarly, a sample capability test identified as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was performed and a value of 0.95 was calculated from the given data (Brace et al., 2012).

Table: The outcome of KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Portion of Selection Adequacy.		0.95
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6930.08
	Df	190
	Sig.	0.000

On the provided data, a principal component analysis using the varimax rotation approach was performed, and only those items were kept that had factor loadings greater than 0.40 (Hair et al. 2009; Hooper 2012; Kaur, G. 2014). We only keep the elements that have Eigen values greater than 1. A single variable equals a factor with variance "less than 1.0".

SM marketing, blogs and websites, branded mobile applications, email marketing, and consumer purchasing decisions are the five variables of interest in this study. As a result, only five components were retrieved. SMM4, SMM5, BW1, BW2, and EM1 were all eliminated as the result of these exclusion criteria (Munro, 2005). Table 4.4 shows the final output pattern matrix.

Table 2: Factor Loadings of SM Platforms towards Fashion Industry.

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor3	Factor 4	Communalities
1. SM marketing for fast fashion yields is frequently seen.					.759
2. The SM ads for fast fashion yields are very attractive.					.569
3. The SM ads for fast fashion brands can be easily recalled.					.599
4. I regularly browse fashion websites.			.963		.689
5. I feel virtuous about glancing fashion websites.			.666		.657
6. Given the casual, I intend to buy fast fashion clothes that are posted in the style websites.			.616		.686
7. Fast fashion brand are satisfy to usage.		.838			.592
8. After by a fast fashion brand app. I reason the brand is extra effective		.723			.716
9. I intend to purchase yields through fast fashion branded apps.		.805			.566
10. Fast fashion email publicity is trustworthy.				.586	.844
11. Fast fashion email publicity is not maddening.				.723	.772
12. Fast fashion email publicity does not bring privacy anxieties for me.				.628	.621
13. I frequently purchase yields of fast fashion brands.	.821				.681
14. I intend to secure again after fast fashion brands in the future.	.948				.764
15. Overall, "I am satisfied nearly my acquisition of crops after fast fashion brands".	.799				.634
Eigen values	**3.6**	**2.2**	**1.4**	**1.2**	
% of Variance	**25.7**	**12.5**	**8.4**	**7.3**	

The EFA results indicate following factors extracted:

Factor 1: With an Eigen value of 3.6, the first factor examined three variables and explained 25.7% of the variation. The values of the communalities were discovered to be 0.681, 0.764, and 0.634. The primary elements were "I frequently buy things from fast fashion brands" and "I plan to buy from quick fashion firms again in the future." Additionally, "I am satisfied overall with the goods I bought from fast fashion brands." The three factors are referred to as "SM marketing" collectively.

Factor 2: Three variables were found by the second component, and they each had an eigenvalue of 2.2 and an associated variance explanation of 12.5%. The communalities values were discovered to be, respectively, 0.592, 0.716, and 0.566. "Fast fashion brands are pleased to use," "After using a fast fashion company app," and similar statements made up the three items grouped together. I believe the brand to be more powerful, and I plan to purchase goods through fast fashion branded applications. After combining all these three variables together we classified it as "Blogs/websites".

Factor 3: With an Eigen value of 1.40, 8.4% of variations, and communalities at 0.689, 0.657, and 0.686, respectively, the third variable considered three variables. The combination of the three factors created the fourth component, "Branded mobile apps." The three statements were: "I regularly explore fashion blogs and websites," "I enjoy browsing fashion blogs and websites," and "Given the opportunity, I want to purchase fast fashion clothing that is advertised on the fashion blogs and websites."

Factor 4: Three variables with Eigen values of 1.2 and 7.3% of variance and communalities of 0.844, 0.772, and 0.621 correspondingly made up the fourth factor. The fourth research study factor, "Fast fashion email advertising is reputable," "Fast fashion email advertising is not bothersome," was formed by the combination of these three items. Furthermore, "Fast fashion email advertising does not raise privacy issues for me." Email marketing was therefore designated as the fourth component.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

With the convenience of SM to everybody and its extensive use in fashion industry it has become an important business model. Designers, stylist, bloggers use SM to bring customers close to their brand and make them feel as brand's extended family. With today's ever-expanding Internet advances SM acts as a channel for customers to experience the brands they adore and appreciate. Customers send their voices, opinions and comments through SM to various designers which results to evolving designers' collaborations. In our present research study also we explored factors which influence the consumer purchase decision. Hence proving the utmost importance of SM platforms in today's fast-paced fashion industry. Given the rapid expansion of Internet and digital media use among fashion consumers over the past few years, industry-specific research is necessary. The effects of social media marketing, blogs and websites, branded mobile apps, and email marketing on consumers' decisions to buy fashion items have all been investigated. The findings are also significant from a theoretical perspective since they demonstrate the relationships between different marketing channels and consumer purchase decisions, or at the very least, consumer intentions to make purchases. "The research also provides a number of practical recommendations for marketing and business professionals in the fashion sector." Brands with a better grasp of these trends will have an upper hand in the marketplace and see an increase in sales. Results indicate that SM certainly impacts fashion industry trends. Trend setting and increased fashion sense by SM in the market has given a new platform to fashion industry. Many new e-commerce websites like Nykaa, Purple.com are proven profitable business models due to the marked presence of SM platforms. Through SM these business models were able to build connections with consumers based on their prime demographics. These connections build are used by fashion industry to drive fashion purchases and increase the brand visibility among different segments of consumers. With wide validation and references for repetition, this study can be used by various fashion brands and companies to expand business and increase profit by effective use of social media.

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