



Role Of Social Media In Building Customer Trust, Satisfaction, And Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – As more and more customers rely on online channels for communication and information gathering before making decisions, social media's significance is expanding every day. Because of this, the purpose of this research is to investigate how social media marketing activities affect customer satisfaction, loyalty, and trust.

Design/methodology/approach – The study argues for the advantages of social media marketing initiatives in fostering consumer loyalty, trust, and satisfaction with the product or service that the community is centered around. After the validation of measurement scales, the hypotheses were analyzed through structural modeling on PLS-SEM4.

Findings – The data obtained through an online survey shows that participation in the activities carried out on social media platforms may foster customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Strategic investments in building Trust, and ensuring high levels of satisfaction can lead to increased customer loyalty and advocacy. These findings collectively guide businesses in crafting effective social media marketing approaches for lasting **customer**-brand relationships in the organized apparel retailing sector.

Research limitations/implications – The present study also has certain constraints and only select social media platforms. The findings are specific to the organized apparel retailing sector. Additionally, the social media landscape is dynamic, and platforms' popularity can change over time due to new features, trends, and shifts in user preferences.

Practical implications – The study identifies key factors such as informativeness, interactivity, trendiness, customization, and electronic word-of-mouth as significant contributors to trust, satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Businesses should prioritize these aspects in their social media marketing activities. Strategic investments in trust, commitment, and satisfaction, along with effective social media marketing, can lead to increased loyalty and advocacy, contributing to long-term success in the organized apparel retailing sector.

Keywords – Social Media, Social Media Marketing Activities, Trust, Satisfaction, and Customer loyalty.

1. Introduction

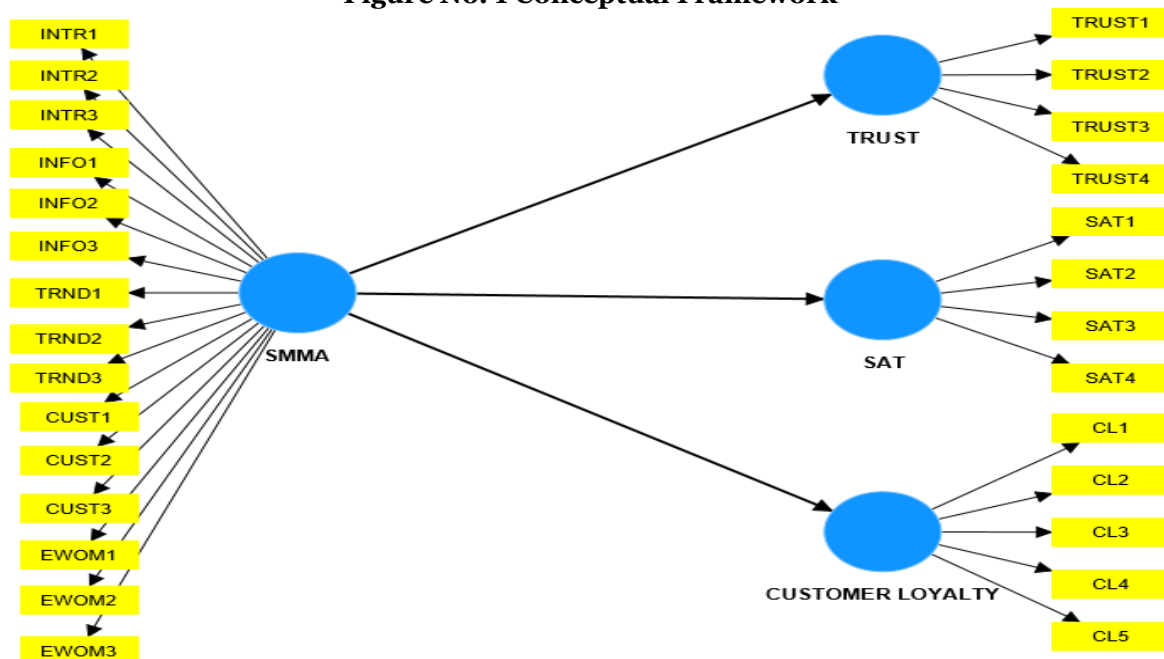
Scholarly investigation has sought to delve into contemporary societal shifts and grasp the emerging patterns in social media and brand representation[1] and [2]. Different social media platforms facilitate enhanced connections and interactions among individuals. Additionally, the digital landscape has transformed the business landscape, shifting from value-centric relationships to ones rooted in social interaction[3].

Frequently, businesses need to adjust their marketing approaches by leveraging appropriate marketing tools instead of relying solely on traditional methods. In today's fast-paced environment, customers are often occupied, necessitating businesses to maintain a constant presence and accessibility across all social media platforms[4]. Social media is defined as "Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content"[5]. In contemporary times, the concept of social media extends beyond mere communication, connection, and interaction through written messages. It now serves as a means to gain knowledge, acquire learning, engage in interactions, share content, and actively participate in the market[6]. Furthermore, when consumers select a particular brand, their decision-making process is impacted by various factors that influence social media marketing activities (SMMA) which includes interactivity, trendiness, entertainment, customization, and word-of-mouth [7]. This research contributes to existing literature by introducing a comprehensive framework that demonstrates how social media marketing affects customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty within the apparel industry in the northern region of India. The aim is to thoroughly investigate the influence of social media marketing on customer responses. To address research gaps, the study will specifically: (1) assess the connections between brand satisfaction and brand trust; and (2) determine the relative significance of different components of social media marketing efforts (SMMEs) in shaping customer loyalty. Additionally, it will (3) analyze the key elements involved in SMMA; and (4) evaluate the impact of SMMEs on fostering loyalty, particularly through platforms like Facebook and Instagram, within the apparel industry.

According to earlier studies, luxury firms can benefit from using social media channels for marketing communication [7][8][9]. The utilization of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram by luxury enterprises is not just pioneering but also signifies a significant advancement within the industry[10].

This study aims to uncover the significant positive effects on brand trust, satisfaction, brand loyalty (i.e., preference), and customers' willingness to pay premium prices. The insights gleaned from this research will help marketers evaluate the effectiveness and potential of their marketing strategies. A conceptual framework illustrating the impact of social media marketing activities on brand satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (refer to Fig. 1) is studied. Following this, it discusses the empirical methodologies used and interprets the results. Conclusion with a discussion of the implications of the findings for future research endeavors and managerial applications.

Figure No. 1 Conceptual Framework



2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The advent of social media has brought about a significant transformation in the creation, distribution, and use of brand content. This has resulted in the authority of users' online relationships and content to define brand images, formerly held by marketers.[11]. Five dimensions were identified by social media marketing to characterize the efforts of luxury brands: trendiness, entertainment, interactivity, customization, and word-of-mouth (WOM). This study assesses the social media marketing strategies of various luxury brands based on these five perspectives identified[7]. Entertainment stems from the enjoyment and amusement derived from the social media encounter [12]. Multiple research works highlight entertainment as a significant driver for social media usage [13][14]and [15]. For instance, entertainment has been identified as a potent motivator for

engaging with user-generated content (UGC)[16]. Additionally, entertainment contributes to social media platform engagement in quite positive way. [15]. The dynamics of social media interaction are fundamentally reshaping communication between brands and consumers [17] [5]. social interaction serves as a significant motivator for generating user-generated content. Social media platforms provide consumers with opportunities for seeking assistance, engaging in discussions, and exchanging ideas[18]. Social interaction encompasses users' contributions to brand-specific social media platforms aimed at connecting with like-minded individuals and discussing particular products/brands. fostering interaction on social media platforms requires brands to tailor their content to align with the characteristics of their audience, actively participate in discussions, and offer practical assistance[14]. By building such relationships, brands can bolster credibility and strengthen affinity with their audience [19]. This study defines interaction as the exchange of information and opinions among users. Consumers increasingly rely on diverse social media platforms to gather information, viewing them as more credible sources compared to traditional promotional efforts sponsored by corporations [20][21]. Four subcategories can be distinguished from trending content on social media: inspiration, pre-purchase information, knowledge acquisition, and surveillance. The degree to which a service is customized to an individual's preferences is known as the extent of customisation. [22]. Brands may highlight individuality and personalise experiences by personalising their platforms, which increases customer brand connection and loyalty. [23].

Studies show that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is more credible, empathetic, and relevant to consumers than things from online marketers. [24]. Social media platforms serve as ideal channels for eWOM, enabling consumers to freely generate and share brand-related content with their social circles [7][21]. A study that examined word-of-mouth (WOM) activities pertaining to companies on Twitter found that posts by customers start the information-dissemination processes, which include comments, attitudes, and views linked to brands. [25].

In conclusion, research underscores the potency of eWOM in influencing consumer perceptions, with social media platforms serving as facilitators for such exchanges. Studies examining WOM activities on platforms like Twitter shed light on the dynamics of information dissemination and its impact on brand perception.

Trust is an outward manifestation of emotions that influence one's expectations, beliefs, and actions [26]. One of the main goals of using a service or product is to be satisfied, which is a wide concept that reflects good quality [27]. Customers and buyers must have trust in each other, but if that trust were strong, customers would be loyal to the service or product brand.[28]. A few researchers are interested in investigating customer satisfaction, which is associated with an individual's emotional state of contentment, dissatisfaction, or pleasure as a result of contrasting expectations and perceived value of the good or service. Customer happiness and discontent must be taken very seriously because they are all necessary for a business to be successful[29]. Fear or uncertainty about buying a product is what drives people to be loyal customers since they are inclined to make more purchases and share their positive experiences through word-of-mouth promotion[30]. Customer preference and attachment to the brand are factors that influence loyalty[31].

H₁: *SMMA has a significant impact on Trust.*

H₂: *SMMA has a significant impact on Satisfaction.*

H₃: *SMMA has a significant impact on Customer Loyalty.*

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

Data collection was conducted by an online survey method. Respondents were recruited via convenience sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to different social media platforms. Only 250 questionnaires were filled out completely.

3.2 Measurements

The Likert scale, which goes from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was used to measure each concept. The four latent constructs that were distributed via questionnaire were captured by 28 items that were modified from the literature. In particular, fifteen SMMA measurement items that have yielded acceptable reliability values were modified and implemented [7]. Eight items from the study by Grunig and Huang [32] were used to gauge satisfaction and trust. Four scales were used by K. L. Ailawadi, S. A. Neslin, and K. Gedenk to measure customer loyalty [33].

Academic marketers participated in a pretest phase of the questionnaire, offering feedback on a range of factors including item readability, phrasing, and comprehension [34]. To make sure the items' meanings and wording were understandable, the questionnaire was tested on fifty randomly chosen people. After then, the data gathering questionnaire was finalised.

4. Results

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Customers

Demographic Profile of the Respondents		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	20 - 25	95	37.4	38.0	38.0
	26 - 31	114	44.9	45.6	83.6
	32 - 37	31	12.2	12.4	96.0
	38 or above	10	3.9	4.0	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	
Gender	Male	190	74.8	76.0	76.0
	Female	60	23.6	24.0	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	
Education	Intermediate	3	1.2	1.2	1.2
	Graduation	30	11.8	12.0	13.2
	Post-graduation	173	68.1	69.2	82.4
	Other	44	17.3	17.6	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	
Occupation	Student	116	45.7	46.4	46.4
	Private sector employee	86	33.9	34.4	80.8
	Govt. sector employee	15	5.9	6.0	86.8
	Business/self-employed	15	5.9	6.0	92.8
	Homemaker	3	1.2	1.2	94.0
	Other	15	5.9	6.0	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	
Income	Less than 4 lakhs	123	48.4	49.2	49.2
	400001 - 800000	73	28.7	29.2	78.4
	800001 - 1200000	28	11.0	11.2	89.6
	12 lakhs or above	26	10.2	10.4	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	
Time Devoted on Social Media	Less than an hour	31	12.2	12.4	12.4
	1-2 hrs	86	33.9	34.4	46.8
	2-3 hrs	69	27.2	27.6	74.4
	3-4 hrs	26	10.2	10.4	84.8
	More than 4 hrs	38	15.0	15.2	100.0
	Total	250	98.4	100.0	

The data above shows a comprehensive demographic profile of 250 respondents based on various characteristics. In terms of age distribution, a significant portion falls within the 26-31 age range, comprising 44.9% of the respondents, followed by the 20-25 age group at 37.4%. The demographic breakdown by gender indicates that 74.8% identify as male, while 23.6% identify as female. In the educational context, the majority of respondents have pursued post-graduate qualifications, accounting for 68.1%, with 11.8% being graduates. The occupation of the respondents reveals that 45.7% are students, 33.9% work in the private sector, and 5.9% each are government sector employees, business/self-employed, homemakers, or fall into other categories. The income distribution highlights that 48.4% of respondents earn less than 4 lakhs, while 28.7% fall in the income range of 400,001 - 800,000. Those devoting time to social media predominantly spend 1-2 hours, constituting 33.9%, followed by 27.2% who spend 2-3 hours. Interestingly, a considerable number, 15.0%, devote more than 4 hours to social media.

4.1 Testing of measurement model

Table 2: Reliability and validity

CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY				
	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
SMMA	0.95	0.95	0.955	0.588
SATISFACTION	0.923	0.923	0.945	0.812
TRUST	0.911	0.92	0.937	0.789
CUSTOMER LOYALTY	0.901	0.923	0.926	0.714

Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 indicates a high level of internal consistency or reliability for the SMMA construct. Composite reliability measures, both rho_a (0.95) and rho_c (0.955), also suggest excellent reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.588 indicates that the underlying construct captures 58.8% of the variance in the observed variables. While this is above the recommended threshold of 0.5. High Cronbach's alpha (0.923) indicates good internal consistency for the Satisfaction construct. Both rho_a (0.923) and rho_c (0.945) values suggest strong reliability. The AVE of 0.812 is quite high, indicating that the majority (81.2%) of the variance in the observed variables is accounted for by the underlying construct. Cronbach's alpha of 0.911 demonstrates good internal consistency for the TRUST construct. Both rho_a (0.92) and rho_c (0.937) indicate high reliability. The AVE of 0.789 suggests that the underlying construct captures 78.9% of the variance in the observed variables. Cronbach's alpha of 0.901 signifies good internal consistency for the CUSTOMER LOYALTY construct. Both rho_a (0.923) and rho_c (0.926) suggest high reliability. The AVE of 0.714 indicates that the underlying construct explains 71.4% of the variance in the observed variables.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY- FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION				
	CUSTOMER LOYALTY	SATISFACTION	SMMA	TRUST
CUSTOMER LOYALTY	0.845			
SATISFACTION	0.737	0.901		
SMMA	0.515	0.646	0.767	
TRUST	0.694	0.716	0.607	0.889

The table displays correlation coefficients among constructs, commonly utilized for evaluating discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. This criterion compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations with other constructs. If the square root of the AVE is greater, it indicates support for discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

In summary, based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the provided correlations suggest that discriminant validity is supported among the constructs Customer Loyalty, Satisfaction, SMMA, And Trust, as the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs.

4.2 Findings and testing of the structural model

Figure 2: Structural equation model of SMMA And Its Impact On Trust, Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty

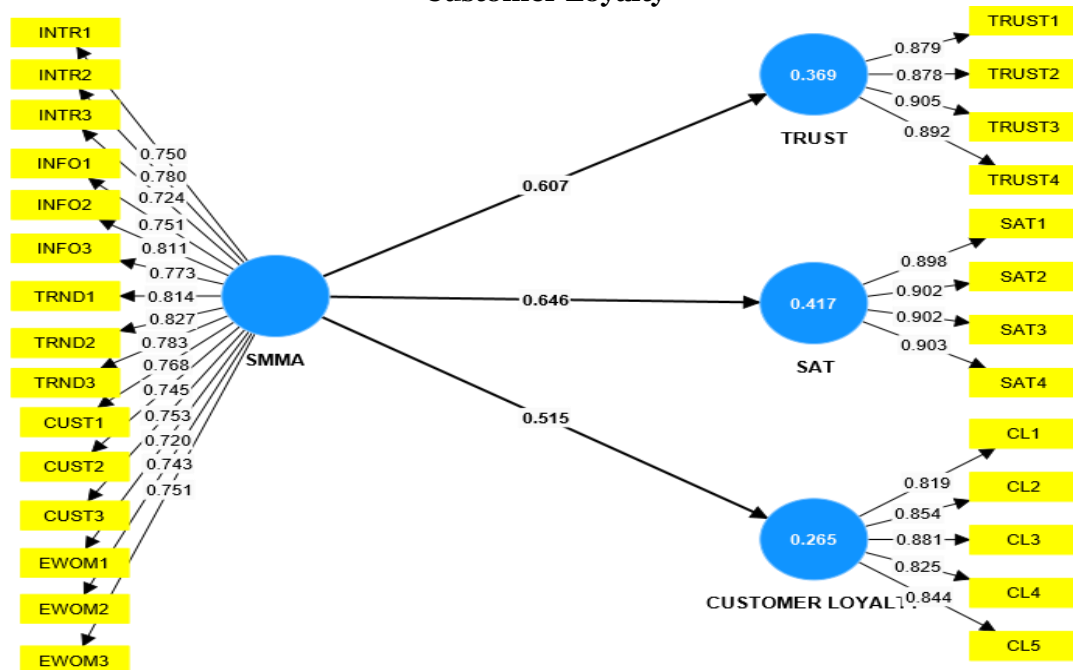


Table 4 :Regression Model

Constructs	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Customer Loyalty	0.265	0.262
Satisfaction	0.417	0.414
Trust	0.369	0.366

R-squared serves as a measure of statistical validity, indicating the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables in a regression model. Adjusted R-squared, considering the number of predictors in the model, offers a more accurate representation of the model's fit. For instance, the R-squared value of 26.5% for customer loyalty suggests that 26.5% of the variance in customer loyalty can be explained by the independent variables in the regression model. Similarly, in the satisfaction model, the independent variables account for 41.7% of the variance in customer satisfaction, as indicated by the R-squared value of 41.7%. In the case of trust, the R-squared value of 36.9% suggests that the independent factors explain 36.9% of the variance in customer trust.

Table 5: Path Coefficients

PATH COEFFICIENTS					
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
SMMA -> CUSTOMER LOYALTY	0.55	0.552	0.054	10.086	0
SMMA -> SATISFACTION	0.689	0.691	0.048	14.243	0
SMMA -> TRUST	0.65	0.652	0.047	13.895	0

The path coefficient of 0.55 indicates a moderate to strong positive relationship between SMMA and Customer Loyalty. The T statistics value of 10.086 suggests that the relationship is statistically significant at a very high level, considering the large magnitude. Strong evidence against the null hypothesis is indicated by the P value of 0, which is less than the standard significance level of 0.05 and supports the significance of the association. The path coefficient of 0.689 signifies a strong positive relationship between SMMA and Satisfaction. The high T statistics value of 14.243 indicates that the relationship is highly statistically significant. The P value of 0 further confirms the statistical significance, suggesting a negligible probability of observing such a strong relationship by chance. The correlation between SMMA and Trust is very positive, as indicated by the path coefficient of 0.65. The association appears to be highly statistically significant, as indicated by the T statistics value of 13.895. The P value of 0 reinforces the statistical significance, indicating a negligible probability of observing such a strong relationship by chance. In summary, the results demonstrate strong and statistically significant positive relationships between Social Media Marketing Activities and each of the outcome variables: Customer Loyalty, Satisfaction, and Trust. These findings suggest that increasing engagement in SMMA is associated with higher levels of customer loyalty, satisfaction, and trust.

5. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The findings of this study highlight the need for apparel industry marketers to tailor their social media marketing (SMM) activities to enhance customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. Crafting industry-specific strategies that resonate with the preferences and expectations of apparel consumers can lead to more effective outcomes. Marketers should explore and diversify their SMM channels beyond Facebook, considering the evolving landscape of social media platforms. Incorporating platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, or emerging platforms may offer new avenues to connect with the target audience. Recognizing the impact of cultural nuances on consumer behavior, apparel industry practitioners should adapt their SMM approaches when targeting diverse international markets. Future research could delve deeper into cultural dimensions and their influence on the effectiveness of SMM activities. Marketers should focus on integrating trust-building elements in their SMM strategies, such as transparent communication, customer testimonials, and credible endorsements. Emphasizing authenticity and reliability in online brand representation can contribute to building and maintaining customer trust. Given the dynamic nature of social media, marketers should continuously monitor trends, feedback, and customer sentiments to adapt their strategies accordingly. Remaining agile in response to changes in consumer behavior and preferences can enhance the long-term effectiveness of SMM efforts.

In conclusion, this empirical study in the apparel industry sheds light on the significant impact of social media marketing activities on customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. The findings underscore the importance of tailored strategies, considering the industry-specific context and the need for continuous adaptation to dynamic social media landscapes. As the apparel industry strives to navigate the challenges posed by evolving consumer preferences and global market dynamics, a strategic focus on SMM emerges as a crucial driver for sustainable customer relationships. By understanding and addressing the implications outlined in this study, marketers can position themselves to not only meet but exceed customer expectations, fostering enduring trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in the competitive apparel market. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors, providing a foundation for future studies and strategic developments in the field.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The existing research has encountered several limitations. Firstly, the study primarily involved students as participants, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings. The questionnaire instructed participants to reflect on the brands they Favor on Facebook and Instagram, introducing a potential limitation in using liked pages as a measure of social media marketing (SMM) activities. Additionally, the outcomes of the study may not be applicable across various industries, emphasizing the necessity for future investigations to explore the proposed model in different contexts. Secondly, the research concentrated on a northern region of India, urging the need for subsequent studies to extend their focus to other nations. Lastly, the study did not explore socio-demographic variables as potential moderators, suggesting that future research should consider examining their impact.

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