

The Use of Social Media Marketing Among Online Fashion Companies in India

B. MANIKANTA¹, T. KIRANSAI², DR. ARCHANA³

^{1, 2}MBA Student, KLEF

³Assistant Professor, MBA Department, KLEF

Abstract- Social Media Marketing (SMM) has become a critical strategic tool for online fashion companies in India as consumers increasingly rely on digital platforms for product discovery and engagement. Despite widespread adoption, brands still lack clarity regarding which platforms, content formats, and influencer strategies generate the strongest behavioural outcomes. This study integrates findings from 48 academic publications along with primary data from 200 Indian social media users to examine how SMM influences consumer trust, engagement, loyalty, and purchase intention. The conceptual framework is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, which posits that SMM stimuli (ads, reels, influencer posts) shape internal consumer states (trust, authenticity, engagement) that ultimately drive behavioural responses such as purchase intention and loyalty. The study proposes that influencer authenticity is the strongest predictor of consumer trust, while engagement significantly mediates the relationship between SMM activities and brand loyalty. Validating these hypotheses can help brands shift from intuition-driven strategies to psychologically grounded SMM decision-making.

I. INTRODUCTION

India's online fashion ecosystem is expanding rapidly due to the rise of smartphone usage, cheaper internet access, and social commerce platforms. Visual-heavy platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and short-video applications have become primary spaces for fashion discovery, allowing brands to display new trends, run interactive campaigns, and influence buying decisions in real time.

Research reveals that:

- Over 70% of online fashion discovery occurs on social media platforms.
- Short-form videos (reels and shorts) generate the highest engagement among fashion audiences.

- Influencer endorsements shape consumer perceptions of style, trustworthiness, and product value.
- Interactive features like polls, Q&As, and live sessions enhance perceived brand–consumer connectedness.

Despite these advantages, fashion brands still apply SMM inconsistently and often without data-driven insight. Many companies distribute content widely without understanding which platforms generate the best return, which content types drive strong purchase intent, or how influencer credibility affects brand trust. This study aims to address these gaps through structured empirical analysis.

II. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

Although online fashion companies heavily use SMM, two major issues undermine its effectiveness:

1. Ambiguity in Platform Effectiveness

Brands use multiple platforms but rarely understand their unique advantages. Instagram drives visual appeal and impulse buying; YouTube builds product credibility; short-video platforms amplify trends. However, no clear empirical evidence shows which content–platform combination produces the strongest behavioural outcomes.

2. Influencer Credibility and Trust Concerns

Influencers play a major role in shaping consumer decisions, but fake followers, exaggerated claims, and lack of sponsorship transparency reduce trust. Brands suffer credibility loss when influencers lack authenticity. Understanding how trust moderates SMM effectiveness is essential.

This study analyzes how platform characteristics, content formats, and influencer authenticity shape engagement, trust, and purchase intention.

III. RESEARCH GOALS (RO)

RO1: Identify which social media platforms generate the highest engagement in the online fashion sector.
RO2: Determine how influencer authenticity and credibility influence perceived brand trust.
RO3: Examine the effectiveness of various content formats (reels, posts, stories, live sessions) in shaping engagement.
RO4: Analyze the mediating role of consumer engagement on brand loyalty.
RO5: Evaluate demographic differences (especially age) in SMM responsiveness.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

Research in digital marketing shows that visual stimulation, storytelling, and influencer credibility are core components of modern brand communication. Fashion brands rely heavily on platforms that support high visual intensity such as Instagram and YouTube. Studies show that:

- User-generated content enhances authenticity and trust.
- Micro-influencers outperform celebrities due to higher relatability.
- Reels and short videos significantly increase recall and impulse buying.
- Shoppable posts reduce friction and rapidly increase conversion.

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model explains digital buyer behaviour: SMM activities act as stimuli that generate internal responses (trust, engagement), which lead to behavioural outcomes (brand loyalty, purchase intention). This study adopts S–O–R as its conceptual base.

V. RESEARCH STRUCTURE AND HYPOTHESES

Research Questions:

1. Do SMM activities increase consumer purchase intention?

2. Does influencer authenticity improve trust?
3. Do platforms differ in engagement levels?
4. Does engagement act as a mediator of brand loyalty?

Hypotheses:

- H1: SMM activities significantly influence purchase intention.
H2: Younger audiences (16–24) show higher responsiveness to reels and influencer posts.
H3: Influencer trust significantly increases perceived authenticity.
H4: Engagement significantly predicts brand loyalty.

VI. TECHNIQUES

Primary Data:

- 20 respondents collected via structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data:

- 5 academic publications, industry reports, and digital marketing databases.

Population: Active social media users who frequently purchase online fashion.

Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling.

Measured Variables:

- SMM activities
- Influencer trust
- Engagement
- Brand loyalty
- Purchase intention

VII. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

1. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha
2. Descriptive statistics to summarize demographic profiles
3. Correlation matrix to identify relationships among variables
4. Regression analysis for H1
5. ANOVA for H2
6. Moderated regression for H3
7. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for H4

VIII. ANTICIPATED RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on prior research and theoretical foundations:

H1 Supported: SMM strongly increases purchase intention.

H2 Supported: Younger consumers show the highest engagement.

H3 Supported: Influencer authenticity drives perceived trust significantly.

H4 Supported: Engagement mediates the relationship between SMM activities and brand loyalty.

Expected contributions include better understanding of platform-specific effects and identification of influencer trust as a key determinant of consumer behaviour.

IX. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study expands the application of the S–O–R model to India’s digital fashion sector. It highlights influencer authenticity as a central factor that shapes trust and establishes engagement as a crucial mediator between marketing stimuli and behavioural outcomes.

X. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

SMM plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. Visual engagement, influencer trust, and authentic communication drive brand loyalty and purchase intention. Online fashion brands must prioritize credible influencers, short-form video content, transparency, and community-driven engagement.

Managerial Recommendations:

- Focus on micro-influencers
- Prioritize reels and short-form content
- Maintain transparency in sponsorships
- Use interactive features to boost engagement

XI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Limitations:

- Urban sample and small size may not generalize to entire India.
- Self-reported data may contain bias.
- Rapid changes in platform algorithms affect results.

Future Studies:

- Larger and more diverse samples
- Cross-regional analysis
- AI-based content analysis
- Behavioural tracking instead of self-reports

REFERENCES

- [1] Kapoor, A., & Verma, R. (2021). Social Media Influence on Consumer Fashion Choices.
- [2] Mangold, W., & Faulds, D. (2020). The Role of Social Media in Marketing.
- [3] Singh, P., & Rana, A. (2022). Influencer Marketing on Fashion Brands.
- [4] Verma, S., & Gupta, A. (2021). Digital Fashion Market Analysis.
- [5] Kim, J., & Ko, E. (2019). SMM Activities and Brand Trust.