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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON BRAND EXPERIENCE AND CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION OF LUXURY FASHION BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the marketing activities on social media on brand experience and consumers' purchase intention of luxury brands. The relationships of these constructs are explored by examining the top 10 luxury fashion brands in selected cities in Punjab (India). The primary data were collected from customers who purchased these brands and followed brands on different social media channels. A well-structured questionnaire method was used for data collection with five constructs of social media marketing activities, four dimensions of brand experience, and three dimensions of consumers' purchase intention. The results indicated in this study that there is a significant relationship between social media marketing activities and consumers' purchase intention of luxury fashion brands with the use of mediators' brand experience. The results also showed that these brands can build positive relationships with their customers through social media channels. The study's findings also demonstrate how leveraging social media platforms may help companies and consumers have a better relationship. Through the use of the structural equation model, this study has filled in the gaps found in the previous research on social media marketing activities of the luxury brand.

***KEYWORDS**: Social Media, Brand Experience, Social Media Marketing Activities, Luxury Brands.*

Introduction

Social media refers to online groups sharing information and ideas using conversational media. Many developments have occurred during the previous decade in the media and it has undergone several transformations **(Brakus et al., 2009)**. Social media offers brands and customers a venue for engagement and information exchange **(**Shah & Ali, 2023, **Richter et al., 2007)**. These tools and platforms include social blogging and podcasts, Weblogs, microblogging, wikis, images, videos, and social bookmarking. Social media has a significant role in shaping customer perceptions of products and brand success. Technology advancements have led to noticeable changes in social media platforms **(Phan et al., 2011)**. According to the Internet World Statistics (2013), 34% the world's population uses these sites via the internet. Companies are attempting to discover new methods to quickly contact consumers Customers, make interactions, and engage them with the companies **(Kozinets et al., 2010)**. According to Internet World Stats (2014), internet users are Growing by the day, it now accounts for 40.7% of the global population. Social media allows marketers to connect with potential customers and build solid connections **(Kelly et al., 2010)**.

Social Media Marketing Activities

Social media marketing is producing content for different social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others to advertise goods and services. It should also encourage customers to create and share their content, reviews, or comments about products and services on social media known as "earned media"(Aji et al., 2020). **Bruhn et al., (2012)** have looked at how social media

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channels, as opposed to conventional media, affect brand communication's relative influence on brand equity. A sample of 393 responses from three different industries was noted. Online surveying was the main focus. The data in the research were analyzed using the structural equation modeling approach. The findings indicated that brand equity is significantly impacted by conventional and social media communication. Brand awareness is strongly influenced by traditional media, whereas the brand image is strongly influenced by social media communication. **Zailskaite & Kuvykaite, (2013)** have focused on the influence of communication via social media on brand equity. The qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the investigation. The results showed that social media communication helps to build brand awareness and a positive brand image for the product. Brand-related material on social media networks promotes favorable relationships and influences client buying intentions (Shah & Ali, (2023). **Agichtein et al., (2008)** found that engaging in social media activities leads to enjoyment and play, resulting in entertainment.

Brand Experience

Brand experience refers to the subjective responses of consumers to brand-related stimuli such as design, identity, packaging, communication, and surroundings **(Brakus et al., 2009)**. Brand experience is complex and includes four dimensions: sensory, emotive, intellectual, and behavioural. A sensory experience engages the customer's five senses (taste, smell, touch, sound, and sight) while they interact with the product **(Bernd, 1999)**. An effective experience speaks to a customer's sentiments, feelings, and innermost thoughts. Positive or intense feelings for a product are examples of it **(Bernd, 1999)**. Intellectual experiences aim to provide cognitive and problem-solving experiences that inspire consumers' creativity by stimulating their thought processes **(Bernd, 1999).** The experience inspires analytical and creative thinking, which is part of the intellectual dimension. A behavioural experience happens when a brand prompts certain kinds of activity, like physical acts. It may also involve a customer adopting new behaviours, lifestyles, and habits **(Bernd, 1999).**

Customers' Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention is a customer's desire to purchase a product or service. Perceived value, brand image, social influences, marketing strategies, and individual factors all indicate their willingness and readiness to buy. The impact of social media on the connection between customer relationships and purchase intention for luxury fashion brands appears to be quite significant, as indicated **(Kim & Ko, 2010)**. The relationship plays a crucial role for customers when considering the purchase of high-end products. (Liu et al., 2019) they were observed that brand equity has an impact on brand preference and purchase intentions in the service industry. The study's major goal was to examine brand equity's effect on service brand purchasing intentions. There were 74 answers registered. The study's data was collected via a questionnaire, and the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was utilized to analyze it. The study's findings verified the role of brand equity in customer choice and purchase intentions.

Perceived value is the consumer's judgment of a product's worth in proportion to its price. Brand image refers to the level of trust and recognition associated with a brand, and it can have a substantial impact on customer behavior. Social impacts include ideas from friends, relatives, and internet feedback, which can influence decision-making. Advertising, promotions, and other marketing efforts have the potential to impact how consumers perceive and behave, which is included in marketing strategy. Individual influences include personal preferences, desires, and financial situations also have a significant impact. Comprehending these elements can assist companies in customizing their marketing strategies to efficiently impact consumer buying intentions.

Hypothesis Development

- **Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Experience (H1)**

Brand experience is mostly created through social media marketing efforts for companies. Customers are brand followers on these social media sites for the most recent updates. These websites increase awareness among customers and build a brand image. Consumers search on these social media platforms and sites to get up to date information on a single brand. As a result, these websites have a significant effect on customers' purchase intentions. A favorable brand experience can be influenced by the total product, shopping, and consumption experience of consumers, leading to brand satisfaction and loyalty **(Brakus et al., 2009)**. It includes not only actual interactions with staff and using items or services but also browsing for brand information on social media. Brand experiences have a

crucial role in luxury consumption, leading to positive and meaningful connections. Research suggests that positive brand experiences can lead to increased consumer loyalty. Previous studies have focused on social media's marketing effort for numerous brands by using their internet resources. The purpose of this study is to examine how these social media platforms' marketing activities impact on consumers' purchasing intentions of luxury fashion brands. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H_1: *Marketing activities on social media have a positive and significant impact on brand experience.*

- **Social Media Marketing Activities and Customers' Purchase Intention (H2)**

The marketing activities of a brand on social media were considered as an independent variable, with consumer response as the dependent variable. This study collects quantitative data from consumers across selected countries. This study demonstrates that using social media to market a brand positively impacts consumer behavior **(Godey et al., 2016). Kim & Ko, (2010)** found a correlation between social media marketing activities and customer purchase intentions, which may also influence consumer response. This study found that social media marketing had a favorable and significant impact on consumer purchase intentions. Data was acquired via a questionnaire. This poll included 150 luxury brand buyers from the Seoul area. The study included 211 randomly selected internet users. **(Wu, 2013)** identified three independent variables that influence purchase intention, including social influence. The poll received 1,380 valid replies from 1,750 respondents in Taiwan, indicating a favorable relationship between the variables. **Bruhn et al., 2012)** conducted an online poll with 393 participants and found a substantial positive correlation between social media communication and purchase intentions. A survey of 400 respondents found a positive and substantial association between social media marketing activity and consumer response, with brand equity acting as a mediating component **(Kim & Ko, 2012)**. Social comparison had a beneficial impact on customers' attitudes towards purchasing luxury brands **(Luo et al., 2013)**. Additionally, the mediating variable has a positive impact on purchase intentions. This study found a favorable and significant relationship between social media and customer purchase intentions. **Wang & Yang, (2010)** defined the relationship by an online poll of 935 individuals. The study found that peer communication on social media has a favorable influence on online customers. Research indicates that using social media technology improves customer relationship management capabilities. Data was randomly obtained from 1,200 firms in the United States. Participants comprised the firms' top management team members. According to using technology improves customer service and influences consumer behavior. Social media marketing strongly influences consumer behavior when purchasing products or services. Brand marketers should be mindful of social media marketing activities, as they can influence potential buyers to purchase their products (Ibrahim et al., 2020, Shah & Ali, 2023). Researchers should clarify the relationship between these two concepts in detail to provide valuable information for marketers in Punjab (India), as it has received little attention. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H_2: *Marketing activities on social media have a positive and significant impact on consumers' purchase intention*

- **Brand Experience and Customers' Purchase Intention (H3)**

Several studies have expressed interest in the relationship between brand experience and purchase intention. For instance, many studies have been done in the marketing literature on the relationship between brand experience and purchase intention **(Hung et al., 2011).** According to A study, favorable encounters with real brands were significant predictors of both future favorable purchase intentions for those brands and negative purchase intentions for counterfeit goods **(Boonghee et al., 2000).** In other words, customers are more likely to buy more real goods and are less likely to be tempted to acquire counterfeit goods when they have a positive experience at the legitimate stores of fashion companies **(Lee et al., 2011)**. Still, the investigation discovered that the opposite was not true. In other words, satisfying experiences with buying fake goods weren't discovered to suggest ongoing use of these goods. **Chen & Lin, (2019)** discovered a favourable correlation between purchase intentions and brand equity. For customers with low switching costs, however, this association is not substantial, which emphasizes the significance of sensory inputs and brand experiences. According to **Brakus et al., (2009)**, consumers who are holistic and interested in a wide range of experiences—that is, sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral—have a stronger relationship between their attitudes towards brands and their intentions to make purchases, whereas consumers who are utilitarian and not very interested in experiences have a weaker relationship. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: *Brand experience has a positive and significant impact on customers' purchase intention.*

- **Brand Experience Mediating Relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Customers' Purchase Intention (H4)**

The consumer experience encompasses more than just physical interactions with brands and using products or services. It also involves seeking and acquiring brand information from social media. Additionally, brand experience is influenced by both direct and indirect interactions with the brand **(Şahin et al., 2011)**. Effective and engaging social media marketing activities can enhance consumers' memory of the brand, boost consumer knowledge, and subsequently foster positive feelings. Furthermore, a study conducted by **Beig & Khan, 2018)** discovered that consumers have positive brand experiences with brands that consistently share content and engage with their followers on Facebook. Hedonic motivations drive consumers, leading to a natural desire for emotional, sensory, and social-based stimulations. Brand pages on various social media channels offer comprehensive experiences that can more effectively satisfy these needs and generate positive customer reactions. Numerous writers studied the intentions of consumers' behaviour when making online purchases. Many researchers have investigated the behavioural intentions of consumers for online purchases and discovered that these intentions varied according to the degree of customer experience. Consequently, if clients have a more satisfying shopping experience, they are more likely to intend to buy the goods and services on social media channels. **Bernd, 1999)** emphasizes the importance of branding in shaping consumer experiences. The use of social media for marketing is expected to result in favorable brand experiences. Furthermore, some have proposed that customers' initial perceptions of a brand can have a lasting impact on their overall perception of it. In their 2012 study, Sheng and Teo examine how customer experiences impact mobile brand equity, concluding that perceived usefulness, entertainment, and aesthetics attributes of products contribute to brand equity through customer experiences. Brand marketing and word-of-mouth communications exert the greatest influence on brand meaning when consumers lack direct experience with a company's products or services.

H4: *Brand Experience Mediating Relationship between Social Media Marketing Activities and Customers' Purchase Intention.*

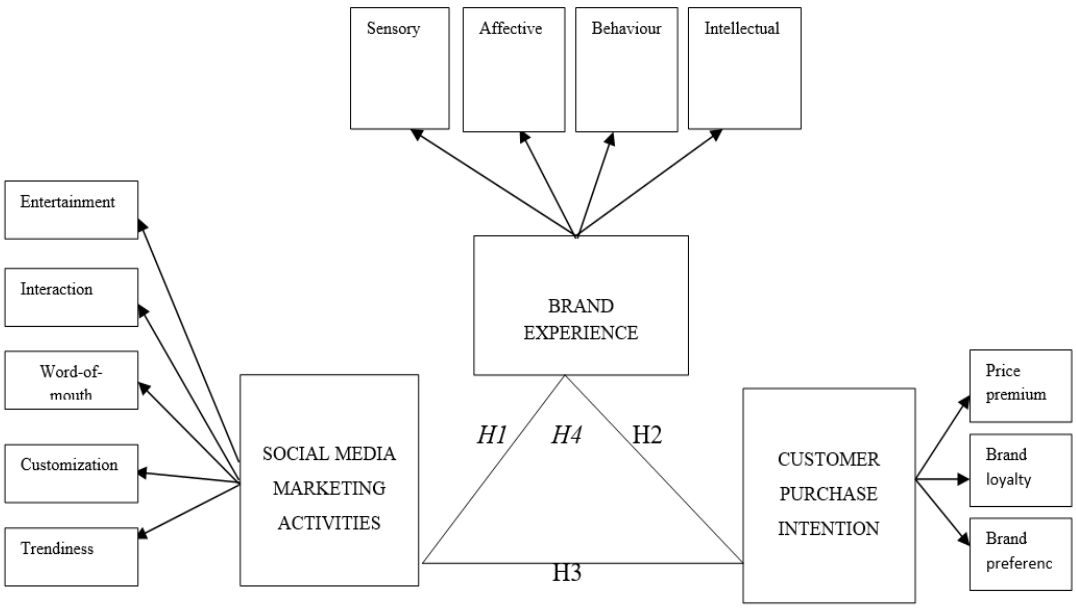

Figure 1

Methodology: Data Collection and Sample

The survey questionnaire method was employed in this research to collect data for model testing purposes. A purposive sampling method undertaken for the data collection process required that

the respondents to follow a brand's social media page on any social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram at the very minimum. The data were obtained from respondents from Punjab (India) and followed brands on various social media channels. G*power (v3.1.9.2) software **(Faul et al., 2009)** is applied to calculate the minimum sample size with assuming (significant level of 0.05, 3 predictors and the power of 0.95) for the study is 300 respondents.

Measurements

A seven-point Likert scale adapted from previous research papers was employed to assess customer attitudes across all variables. **Kim & Ko, (2012)** identified five elements of social media marketing activities (SMMA): entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth (Table 1). This study considered all five dimensions of SMMA. **Brakus et al., (2009)** identified four dimensions of brand experience: Sensory, Behaviour, intellectual, and affective, consumer response is based on three dimensions: brand preference, willingness to pay a premium, and brand loyalty. The scales for brand preference, willingness to pay, and brand loyalty were adapted from **(Hyun & Kim, 2011).**

Data Analysis

PLS-SEM using Smart PLS was undertaken to carry out data analysis due to the research model was complex and involved multiple higher-order constructs. The descriptive summary in Table 1 shows that out of total respondents, 61.33 per cent were Male and 38.66 per cent were Female. Most of the respondents belonged to age group of 28 to 32 (27.66 per cent), followed by 26.33 per cent above 32 years and remaining 23.66 and 22.33 per cent in 18 to 22 and 23 to 27 age group. 102 out of the total 300 respondents were professional while 73 respondents were Master degree holders. Self-employed and employed respondents were approximately 65 per cent and the rest of 35 percent in their occupational. Most of the respondents belonged to the income group of 5 lakh to 15 lahks (57.66 per cent), followed by 43.33 per cent above 15 lahks. 238 out of the total 300 respondents used smartphones while the rest of the respondents used other devices.

Demographic Table 1

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Male	184	61.33
Female	116	38.66
Prefer not to	Nil	0
Age (years old)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
18 to 22	71	23.66
23 to 27	67	22.33
28 to 32	83	27.66
Above 32	79	26.33
Education Qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Undergraduate	57	5.26
Graduate	68	22.66
Masters	73	24.33
Professionals	102	34.00
Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Self-employed	96	32.00
Employed	98	32.66
Professional	47	15.66
Homemaker	31	10.33
Other	28	9.33
Family Income (Per year in Indian rupees)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Less than 5 lakhs	44	14.66
5.1 lakhs to10 lakhs	97	32.33
10.1 lakhs to 15 lakhs	83	27.66
Above 15 lakhs	76	25.33
Use of social media	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
More than thrice in a week	284	94.67
Once a week	12	4.00

Less than once a week	03	1.00
Never in a week	01	0.33
Devices (you use to access social media)	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Smartphones	238	79.33
Tablets / iPod	23	7.66
Personal Computer	18	6.00
Laptop	21	7.00

Analysis of the Measurement Model

The lower-order reflective dimensions (ENT, TRE, WOM, INT, CUST, BEH, AFF, INTT, SENS, BLOY, PRIP, and BPREF) were assessed for the relevance of items loading, convergent validity, and internal consistency. The outer loadings for all the items of latent variables were more than the recommended value of 0.708 which implies more than 50 percent variance of an item has been explained by the latent variable **(Hair et al., 2011 & 2019)**. The internal consistency and reliability were checked using Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The Composite reliability statistics for all the latent variables exceeded the acceptable value 0.70. The value of Cronbach's alpha for every construct was also more than 0.70 **(Hair et al., 2011 & 2019)**. Hence, the model possessed internal consistency reliability as shown in Table 2

Table 2

Construct	Indicators	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Social media marketing activities	Entrainment	0.857	0.850	0.916	.782
	Trendiness	0.868	0.885	0.923	.734
	W-O-M	0.826	0.950	0.918	.767
	Interaction	0.858	0.854	0.932	.737
	Customization	0.767	0.863	0.912	.743
Brand Experience	Behaviour	0.789	0.845	0.917	.773
	Affective	0.874	0.909	0.932	.734
	Intellectual	0.856	0.857	0.919	.787
	Sensory	0.787	0.868	0.936	.747
Purchase Intention	Brand Loyalty	0.875	0.901	0.924	.752
	Premium price	0.778	0.923	0.927	.772
	Brand Preferences	0.774	0.841	0.926	.776

Hypothesis Testing

Social media marketing activities significantly influence consumers' purchase intention. The empirical result supported H1 i.e. SMMA has a significant impact on CPI (β = 0.183, t-value =5.387, P-value = 0.000). H2 was empirically supported as SMMA was found to be positively associated with BEXP ((β = 0.206, t-value =4.786, P-value = 0.000). A strong positive relationship was found between BEXP and CPI (β = 0.152, t-value =5.006, P-value = 0.000). Hence H3 was supported. Hypothesis results are shown in Table 3

Table 3

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
H1	SMMA→CPI	0.183	5.387	0.000	Yes
H2	SMMA→BEXP	0.206	4.786	0.000	Yes
H3	BEXP→CPI	0.152	5.006	0.000	Yes

Mediation Analysis

The mediating variable BEXP was introduced in SMMA→CPI. To examine the hypothesized mediating effects the recommendations were followed (Ali Memon et al., 2017), (Sarstedt et al., 2020). The mediating effect of BEXP on the relation between SMMA and CPI was statistically significant (β = 0.048, t-value =3.423, P-value <0.05). the direct impact of SMMA on CPI was also found significant (β = 0.164, t-value =5.374, P-value <0.05). the summary of results is given in Table 4.

Table 4

Hypothesis	Effect	Path	B	t-statistics	P value	Significant
H4	Direct	SMMA→CPI	0.164	5.374	0.000	Yes
	Indirect	SMMA→ BEXP→CPI	0.048	3.423	0.001	Yes

Conclusion

This study investigates the influence of SMMA on Brand experience and Consumers' purchase intention of fashion luxury brands. The study is a contribution to the existing literature on the impact of SMME on brand experience as well as Consumers' purchase intention. SMME consists of five elements, viz., entertainment, trendiness, customization, interaction, and word-of-mouth. There are four dimensions of BEXP, which are Sensory, Behaviour, intellectual, and affective. CPI also consists of three dimensions which are premium price, customer preferences, and brand loyalty. The results of the study are statistically significant. SMMA helps to engage the customers with the brands by enhancing brand experience and Consumers' purchase intention of fashion luxury brands in Punjab.

The results of the study reveal that brands can improve their relationship with customers by using social media sites. The relationship of brands with customers helps to convince the customer to prefer their brand and become loyal, when the customers become loyal to the brand, they will be willing to pay a premium price.

Limitations and Future Scope

The first limitation of this study is the socio-demographic factor which includes age, gender, income, and education. It should be included as a moderating variable in future studies to thoroughly understand the studied phenomenon. Second, Brand experience is used as a mediator in this study, it should be used as a moderator variable in future research. Third, the findings of this study are restricted to Punjab 's (India) cultural context. Future research could be conducted on other cultures for an in-depth understanding of the concepts. Besides, respondents were allowed to select either a luxury or non-luxury brand as the reference. They might have a higher expectation of social media marketing activities from luxury brands compared to their non-luxury counterparts. This might potentially affect the results. Thus, future scholars may want to focus only on one type of brand (i.e. luxury or non-luxury) when measuring perceived social media marketing activities to reduce the issue of heterogeneity.

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