

Customer Acceptance of Social Media Marketing by Lifestyle Brands in India: A TAM Framework

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Abstract

Social networking platforms have become a significant feature in the everyday lives of millennial customers. These platforms disrupt the routine of the young generation and consume their time and mind space. Marketers thus are interested in using these social networks as a part of their integrated marketing communication strategy to reach out to their existing and potential customers. So social media marketing is fast becoming an important facet of the integrated marketing communications of business houses to market product and service and engage customers to build brand trust and loyalty. Most organisations big or small are vying to be seen and heard on social networking platforms. In this study the researcher has tried to understand how the customers perceive social media marketing activities by brands and its influence on brand following and their intention to buy and thereby comprehend their acceptance of marketing of products and services by lifestyle brands on the social networking platforms with the help of the TAM framework.

Keywords: *social media networks, social media marketing, brand communication, technology acceptance model, purchase intention, brand following, lifestyle brands.*

1. Introduction

There has been enormous transformation in the media landscape in the last decade. The hold of social media over the world population especially the millennials cannot be denied. The applications that were developed to just to help connect people are now revolutionising the way businesses or organisations connect with consumers. However the growth of social media in India is still a nascent phenomenon when compared to the more economically developed countries of the west. Organisations of all sizes are jumping on the social media marketing bandwagon According to Patel et al. (2013) though Asian consumers show high level of involvement in social media advertisements, there is lack of sufficient empirical evidence to understand consumer's perception towards them. Many studies have been conducted in countries like the USA, the UK, China and Japan but not in India (Patel et al., 2013). The young, tech savvy Indian millennial cohort is most involved in this ever growing network of these disruptive online social applications. According to Wigmore (2015) persons born between 1976 and 2004 can be considered as millennials or the so called 'generation Y'. Persons of this generation are also exposed to a plethora of brand communication activities on social networks, but there isn't much research that has been done to study their perception, usage and acceptance of social media marketing carried out by various lifestyle brands in the country. This research tries to bridge this gap. This study may assist advertisers and marketers of lifestyle brands to effectively target and influence their consumers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Disruptive Technologies and Social Media

The concept of disruptive technologies was initially discussed when drastic changes were taking place in the early computer disk drive industry. Disruptive technologies are technologies which redefine the meaning of performance or unsettle the established course of enhancing performance (Christensen & Bower, 1996).

According to a write up by Tim Smith (2019) on Investopedia, 'disruptive technology significantly alters the way businesses or entire industries operate. It often forces companies to change the way they approach their business for fear of losing market share or becoming irrelevant.' In this context internet based solutions and networks like that of social media, can be considered as disruptive technologies in most markets today. Social media has redefined the way people 'stay connected' and the way brands are driving sales and doing relationship marketing. According to Christensen (1997) these technologies have certain features that only some customers value, but the outcome of the disruptive technology is usually smaller, simpler, more economical and most often, easy to use. The popularity of social media networks in maintaining profitable relationships with customers is underlined by the prevalence of these features.

2.2. Social Media Marketing and India

Gunelius (2011), defines social media marketing as "a form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build awareness, recognition, recall and action for a brand, business, and towards the product by using the tools of social web, such as blogging, micro-blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, and content sharing."

Social media content is intentionally produced by customers in order to educate and advise other customers about products, services, brands, and issues. This is facilitated by the frequently updated and favourable indexed social media content by search engines. So this media has significant and persuasive effect on brands. (Xiang & Gretzel, 2014).

Social media is one of the most inexpensive forms of marketing. 81 percent of the US population is on social media and they are using it to make purchase decisions and they are spending 20 to 40 percent more money on brands that are on social media. The top ten social media platforms for business are Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus and Yelp (Brandi, 2018).

Statistical data indicates that in 2021, the Indian internet traffic is estimated to be 291 times bigger than it was in 2005. Different studies have also indicated that digital marketing in India may grow at 25% to 40% annually. More so since research indicates time spent in a day on the internet by an Indian is 4.4 hours using laptops and 3.1 hours on smartphones and mobile devices it makes sense for companies to design digital marketing campaigns to capture this population of internet users (Tyagi, 2017). In 2016 the approximate number on social media users in India was 168 million and in 2019 it is estimated to increase to about 258.27 million users (Statista, 2018). Considering the rising number of internet and social media users and the average time spent by them on social media, their exposure to social media marketing activities by lifestyle brands on such platforms is very high.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) in their research have highlighted the fact that social media should spontaneously be included, developed and implemented as a part of organisations, integrated marketing communications (IMC) by marketing managers.

The above aspects clearly indicate that if marketers want to be successfully market lifestyle brands, they will have to make social media and social media brand communication as an integral part of their marketing communication activities.

2.3. Social Media Marketing of Lifestyle Brands

Lifestyle brands are brands that embody a certain lifestyle. According to Jung & Merlin, (2003) Lifestyle branding or lifestyle brands can be defined as a product or service that provides consumers with an emotional attachment to an identifiable lifestyle — the rugged outdoorsman, the posh executive or an urban hipster, for example. The consumer then projects this lifestyle to society by purchasing and using particular brands. Considering this, social media is the apt vehicle for the consumers to make a statement on his or her lifestyle by following brands they use or aspire to use.

The growth and advancement of media and technology has provided more options for businesses to market their products. One of these options is the evolution of social media influencer marketing where people represent companies through branded content and consumers look forward to apprise fellow consumers about their purchase decisions through their personal social media accounts on social media networks like Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Youtube (Glucksman, 2017). Marketers of lifestyle brands are already working towards

engaging and influencing consumers to build and grow lifestyle brands by using various brand marketing activities on these social vehicles or channels.

2.4. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model is a theoretical framework for assessing how people make decisions with respect to adoption of new technology. It was initially used to understand the adoption of information systems and other fields. The model indicates that the external variables perceived usefulness of and the perceived ease of using the new technology influences the attitude towards the new technology and that the external variable perceived usefulness and the attitude towards the new technology / system influence the user adoption of the technology (Davis.et.al.,1989).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed in the field of Information Systems, has been used in marketing to explain consumer adoption of technology. The technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis 1989) has been widely used by researchers to study how and why individuals in organizations adopt new information technologies, using cognitions such as perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) to predict a person's attitude, which in turn determines intention to use or actual use of the technology. TAM was adopted by marketing to predict consumer acceptance of technology (e.g., Kulviwat et al. 2007).

3. Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Formation:

H₁: Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing influences Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

H₂: Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing influences Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

H₃: Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Behaviour

H₄: Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Intention.

H₅: Attitude towards Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Intention.

H₆: Customers are receptive to social media marketing of lifestyle brands

4. Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to understand the behavioural intention of Indian millennials in consuming social media marketing by lifestyle brands and thereby the acceptance of this facet of marketing by businesses.

This is an explorative and descriptive research. Data was collected through primary as well as secondary sources. Primary data was collected by developing and administering a structured questionnaire and secondary data was collected from published research articles, journals and reports from online and offline sources.

The sample for this study consists of millennials in the age group of 18 to 35 years who are registered on atleast one social media account are residents of the cosmopolitan city of Bengaluru. 501 useable responses to the questionnaire were considered for the study. Judgemental sampling using intercept and snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling techniques was used to draw samples for the study.

Only data pertaining to to demographic characteristics of the millennial consumers, their social media consumption and their attitude, perceptions and pattern of consumption of social media marketing have been drawn from the original structured questionnaire for the purpose of this study / paper. The five-point attitudinal and perceptual scale on social media marketing ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5) consisting of 16 items that was developed by the researcher after referring to the works of Davis (1989), Chhateja & Jain (2014) and Al-Ghaith (2015) is being used for the purpose of this study.

Pallant (2001) considers Cronbach Alpha values in the range of 0.60 to 0.80 to be moderately reliable and acceptable but values in the range of 0.80 to 1.00 to be of very good reliability and acceptability. The Cronbach Alpha score for the scale being used for the study was found to be 0.920.

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation etc) and inferential analysis was carried out using correlation analysis, factor analysis and regression analysis. Microsoft Excel and SPSS (ver. 23) were used to analyse the data.

Bengaluru is a cosmopolitan city which is home to migratory residents from all parts of the Indian sub-continent, the generation Y of Bengaluru represent the Indian millennial milieu. The scope of this study is pertains to Indian millennials between the ages of 18 to 35 years who consume lifestyle brands, are registered on at least one social media platform and are from Bengaluru City, The philosophy of the technology acceptance model is being used only to capture the influence of social media marketing on brand following and purchase intention only.

The limitations of the study are that the sample size considered for the study in relation to the population of users could have been more, also that the respondents could have provided false or inaccurate data and research constraints owing to limitations related to time and resources.

5. Results & Discussion

The results indicate that the respondents are young, between 21 to 24 years of age, most of them are graduates or post-graduates students, almost two thirds of them are young women, mostly belonging to households with annual income of five to nine lakhs or more. This is a good representation of the young, educated, growing and financially comfortable urban Indian millennials of today. The mean number of social media account registrations is 5.28. A fifth of the respondents are registered on six social media networks and more than half of the millennials spent one to three hours of time on social media. Respondents of both genders spent similar amount of time on these networks. 479 of the 501 respondents used smartphones to access social networking platforms. The descriptive analysis indicates that respondents have a positive attitude towards brand communication on social media, they perceive social media marketing to be useful and simple to use.

Inferential analysis was carried out using correlation analysis, factor analysis and regression analysis in order to test the hypotheses framed for the study and understand the influence of various variables of social media marketing on the behavioural intention and acceptance of social media marketing.

Karl Pearson's' correlation analysis indicated that there was robust and significant relation a between the various variables related to social media marketing with each other at one percent level of significance.

Then, the various dimensions of perception of social media marketing by lifestyle brands, were extracted through factor analysis using Principle Component Analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser Normalisation process. A cut off of 0.5 was used to identify high factor loadings since all loadings should be above the minimum acceptable level of 0.5 according to Hair et al, (2006). The rotation converged in 16 iterations. The table in annexure 1 is based on the rotated component matrix for the variables related to social media marketing of lifestyle brands.

Table No. 5.1. Component Matrix for Statements on Social Media Marketing

Variables	Factor Loadings	Renamed Components
I find it easy to connect with brands on social media.	.613	PEOU_SMM
I think searching for product information on social media is easy.	.802	
I think sharing brand content or product information on social media to friends and family is simple.	.697	
I think brand posts are entertaining.	.525	
I get information about the latest products and trends in the market through brand posts.	.611	
I think advertisements on social media are a convenient source of brand information.	.678	PU_SMM

I think brand communication on social media allows users to participate in promotional activities (discounts, contests etc.).	.512	Attitude_SMM	
I believe marketing activities by brands on social media helps me make better product buying decisions.	.502		
I believe information provided through brand posts on social media are useful.	.525		
I feel brand marketing activities on social media are less intrusive than brand marketing activities on mass media (newspaper, television, radio etc).	.659		
I am satisfied with the content posted by brands on social media.	.664		
I am aware that brands are marketing to consumers on social media.	.833		
I think it is clever of brands to be market to customers on social media.	.823		
I would want my favourite brands to be on social media.	.644		
If my favourite brand is marketing on social media I would be proud to connect with it.	.716		SMM_BF_PI
I do intend to buy from brands that I interact with on social media.	.796		

It has been indicated in table no. 5.1 that five variables in component 1 of the rotated component matrix related to the simplicity of using social media marketing was termed as Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing (PEOU_SMM), Six variables concerned with the utility of social media marketing was termed as Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing (PU_SMM), three variables related to the outlook towards social media marketing were named as Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) and two variables related to consumer connections with brands and their purchase intention towards brands was named as Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI).

Regression analysis using the stepwise method was used to understand the influence of the following (1) Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing on Attitude towards Social Media Marketing and (2) Attitude towards Social Media Marketing on Brand Following and Purchase Intention.

(1) Influence of Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing on Attitude towards Social Media Marketing:

Table No. 5.2. Model Summary for Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.625 ^a	.390	.389	1.435771
2	.638 ^b	.407	.404	1.417316
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Ease of Using SMM				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Ease of Using SMM, Perceived Usefulness of SMM				
c. Dependent Variable: Attitude towards SMM				

Table No. 5.3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	657.965	1	657.965	319.177	.000 ^b
	Residual	1028.658	499	2.061		
	Total	1686.623	500			
2	Regression	686.249	2	343.124	170.812	.000 ^c
	Residual	1000.374	498	2.009		
	Total	1686.623	500			
a. Dependent Variable: Attitude towards SMM						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Ease of Using SMM						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Ease of Using SMM, Perceived Usefulness of SMM						

Table No. 5.4. Coefficients of Regression for Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Social Media Marketing

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.565	.217		7.212	.000	1.139	1.992
	Perceived Ease of Using SMM	.349	.020	.625	17.866	.000	.311	.387
2	(Constant)	1.151	.241		4.773	.000	.677	1.624
	Perceived Ease of Using SMM	.276	.027	.495	10.122	.000	.223	.330
	Perceived Usefulness of SMM	.088	.023	.183	3.752	.000	.042	.134

a. Dependent Variable: Attitude towards SMM

The **table no. 5.2** shows that the Adjusted R^2 is for Model 2 is 0.404 showing that the independent variables – Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing (PU_SMM) and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing (PEOU_SM) together causes a 40.4 percent variance in the dependent variable Attitude towards Social Media Marketing. The F-statistic for Model 2 in **table no. 5.3** was found to be 170.812 indicating that the explained variance in the model is 170.812 percent which is found to be significant at five percent.

In **table no. 5.4**, above, two regression coefficients in Model 2 i.e. Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing (PU_SM) and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing (PEOU_SMM) are significant for the model with standardized co-efficient values of 0.495 and 0.183. The table indicates that for a 0.547 unit change in PU_SM and for a 0.183 unit change in PEOU_SMM, there is change of one unit in in Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM). The coefficients are significant at five percent level of significance. Perceived Usefulness of Social Media has a strong relationship with Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) than Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing.

Based on the above results the equation for the dependent variable Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) is given as follows:

$$\text{Attitude_SMM} = 0.495 (\text{PU_SMM}) + 0.183 (\text{PEOU_SMM}) + \mu_1$$

Thus we accept the null hypotheses H_1 that 'Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing influences Attitude towards Social Media Marketing' and H_2 that 'Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing influences Attitude towards Social Media Marketing'

(2) Influence of Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing and Attitude towards Social Media Marketing on Brand Following and Purchase Intention.

Table No. 5.5 Model Summary for Dependent Variable: Attitude towards Brand Following and Purchase Intention

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	1.000 ^a	1.000	1.000	.00000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude towards SMM				
b. Dependent Variable: BF and Purchase Intention				

Table 5.6. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Dependent Variable: Brand Following and Purchase Intention

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1686.623	1	1686.623	.

	Residual	.000	499	.000		
	Total	1686.623	500			
a. Dependent Variable: BF and Purchase Intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude towards SMM						

Table No. 5.7. Coefficients of Regression for Dependent Variable: Brand Following and Purchase Intention

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.000	.000		.	.	.000	.000
	Attitude towards SMM	1.000	.000	1.000	.	.	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: BF and Purchase Intention								

Table 5.8. Excluded Variables for Dependent Variable: Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI)

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Perceived Ease of Using SMM	.000 ^b610
	Perceived Usefulness of SMM	.000 ^b715
a. Dependent Variable: BF and Purchase Intention						
b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Attitude towards SMM						

Table no. 5.5 indicates that the Adjusted R² is “1” for Model 1 is showing that the independent variable – Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) causes a 100 percent variance in the dependent variable Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI). The F-statistic of Model 1 in **table no.5.6** is not indicated and the regression coefficient for Model 1 in **table no. 5.7**, i.e. Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) is highly significant for the model with standardized co-efficient value of 1. The table indicates that for a 1 unit change in Attitude_SMM there is an equivalent change of one unit in Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI). For the final model with dependent variable Brand Following and Purchase Intention, influence statistics cannot be computed because the fit is perfect. The excluded variables are indicated in the table no 5.8 in the annexure.

Based on the above results the equation for the dependent variable Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI) is given as follows:

$$\text{SMM_BF_PI} = 1 (\text{Attitude_SMM}) + \mu_i$$

Table No. 5.8. extracted during the above regression analysis, indicates that the two variables Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing (PEOU_SMM) and Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing (PU_SMM) were excluded from being predictors for the regression analysis as they were highly correlated hence found to be highly collinear to the dependent variable - Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI).

According to (Frost, 2018), there is no need to reduce multicollinearity if the purpose of the analysis is to make predictions, as multicollinearity “does not influence the predictions, precision of the predictions, and the goodness-of-fit statistics”.

So it can be inferred from the analysis that all three dimensions, namely Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing, Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing and Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM) influence Brand Following and Purchase Intention.

So we accept the following three null hypotheses H_3 – ‘Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Behaviour’, H_4 – ‘Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Intention’ and H_5 – ‘Attitude towards Social Media Marketing influences Brand Following and Purchase Intention.’

The results of the above regression analysis were used to develop a conclusive model for the behavioural intention and acceptance of social media marketing by Indian millennials. The model is depicted in **Figure No. 5.1**.

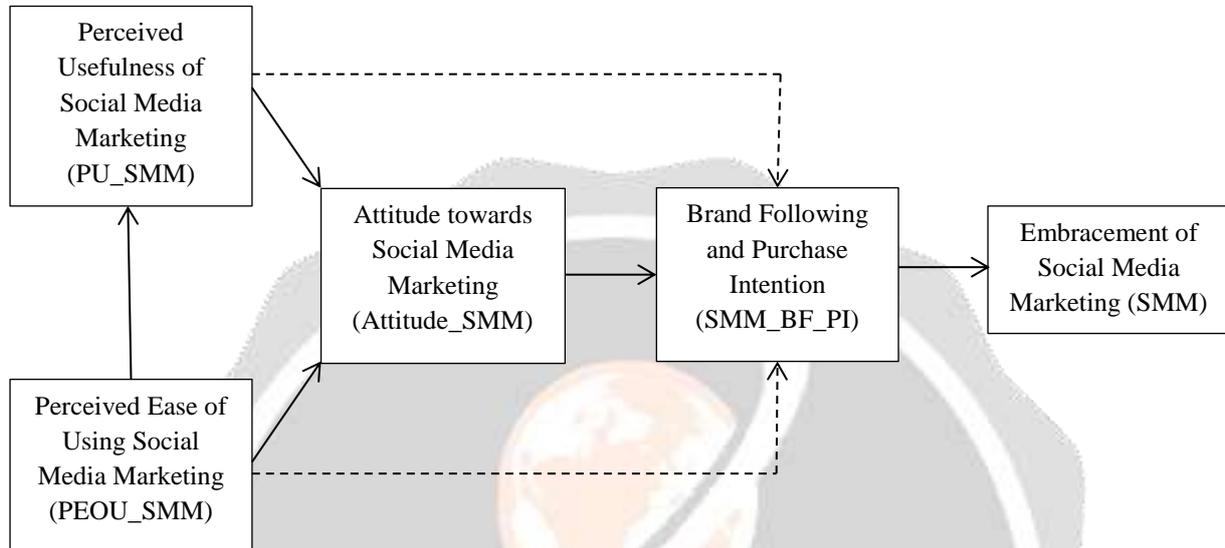


Figure No. 5.1. Adapted Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) for Social Media Marketing: Its Perceptual and Attitudinal Influences and Acceptance.

The above adapted technology acceptance model (TAM) is resultant of the above regression analysis. It depicts the influence of variables related to social media marketing on brand following and purchase intention. The adapted TAM is similar to the original technology acceptance model (TAM) by Davis et al. (1989). The difference lies in the fact that instead of just Attitude and the external variable - Perceived Usefulness of Technology (in this case - Social Media Marketing) influencing the behavioural intention (BI), here along with Attitude towards Social Media Marketing (Attitude_SMM), both the external variables - Perceived Usefulness of Social Media Marketing (PU_SMM) and Perceived Ease of Using Social Media Marketing (PEOU_SMM) have a strong influence over the behavioural intention (Brand Following and Purchase Behaviour) as both PU_SMM and PEOU_SMM are highly correlated to the behavioural intention (BI) i.e. Brand Following and Purchase Intention (SMM_BF_PI), as indicated by the high collinearity between the variables. As mentioned above multicollinearity does not influence the predictions of a model or goodness of fit statistics.

So the behavioural intention - BI (Brand Following and Purchase Intention) = Attitude_SMM + PEOU_SMM + PU_SMM

The above model indicates the overwhelming strength of both the external variables in influencing the behavioural intention (along with attitude) and the fact that the nascent technology or concept of social media marketing has been accepted or embraced by Indian millennials.

The influence of the perceived and attitudinal dimensions of social media marketing on the behavioural intention (Brand Following and Purchase Intention) of millennial customers shows that the concept of social media marketing which we can consider to be a disruptive technology or concept has been accepted by millennials, as illustrated in the adapted TAM model in **Figure No. 5.1** in the annexure. We can thus accept null hypothesis (H_6) that “Customers are receptive to social media marketing of lifestyle brands.”

As mentioned earlier in this paper, there haven’t been enough studies from the Asian or Indian perspectives that would assist researchers and marketers to gain better understanding of (1) the receptiveness of millennials

towards lifestyle brands' marketing activities on social media, (2) how these social media marketing activities by lifestyle brands' would impact brands' connections with their customers and (3) the customers product / brand purchase intentions. This research takes the lead in this direction.

6. Conclusion

Social media marketing helps lifestyle brands connect with their present and potential customers as well as increase sales of branded products. It is obvious from the above research that Indian customers', in this case, millennial consumers are open towards social media marketing and are willing to buy brands marketed on social network platforms. They are in acceptance of this kind of digital distraction in marketing communications. This research propels researchers and businesses to understand why social media brand communication should become a very important tool of integrated marketing communication strategy of all organisations catering to fulfilling lifestyle needs of consumers. This study opens up many more possibilities for future study to know the influence of social media marketing on the conspicuous consumption of merchandise, the process of buying behaviour, brand trust and brand loyalty and more. Thus the avenues of research on this phenomenon are many.

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