



Social Media Marketing and Apparel Purchase Behaviour Among Generation Z: Empirical Evidence from Delhi, India

Dr Kamaldeep Kaur¹, Dr Mansi Bansal², Sanchit Khandelwal³

¹Associate Professor, S.G.T.B. Khalsa College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

²Associate Professor, S.G.T.B Khalsa College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

³Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, S.G.T.B College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Corresponding Author: mansi@sgtbkhalsa.du.ac.in

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Abstract— With the growth of the social media platforms, the marketing strategy of the apparel industry is also changing rapidly, especially for the “Generation Z” who are depending more and more on the social media platforms to search for information, evaluate products and make their purchasing decisions. This research is guided by the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) approach that explores the effect of SME (Social Media Exposure), Information Quality and Consumer Perception on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Apparel Industry. Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire from 158 consumers of the Generation Z age group, from the city of Delhi, working, studying, or residing, who had bought the clothes after seeing the social media content. Data analysis techniques employed were descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression. The results indicate that all three dimensions positively affect the consumer's buying behaviour and have a significant impact. Information Quality gave the highest value of β (.376, $p < .001$), followed by Consumer Perception (.326, $p < .001$) and Social Media Marketing Exposure (.270, $p < .001$). The model accounted for 72.9% of the variance in the buying behaviour ($R^2 = .729$). The study enhances the use of the SOR framework in the Indian apparel industry and offers practical implications to marketers for better consumer engagement and conversion to purchase using social media marketing strategies.

Keywords— Social Media Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Generation Z, Apparel Industry, Information Quality, Consumer Perception.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of social media platforms, the e-marketing landscape has changed dramatically for the apparel industry, especially for Generation Z consumers, who seek information on social networks and use digital tools to evaluate products and make their buying choices. The present study is based on the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) approach and focuses on how Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality, and Consumer Perception affect consumer buying behaviour in the Apparel Industry. This study extends the SOR model to the Indian apparel industry and offers valuable insights for marketers

seeking to enhance consumer engagement and sales conversions through social media marketing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been a considerable amount of research on social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the last decade. Several mechanisms have been examined that describe how social media impacts consumer attitudes, perceptions, intentions and behaviours. The mechanisms are influencer marketing, electronic word of mouth, user-generated content, brand engagement, social commerce and information quality.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Initial research focused on social media as a communication and information-sharing tool. According to Ioane and Stoica (2014), social media has changed the way consumers make decisions, as they are now able to get information about the products, compare them with other products, and communicate directly with brands. Likewise, Bilal and Ahmed (2014) identified that social media is an important information source in the apparel industry, and it affects consumer attitudes towards fashion products.

Additionally, Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2019) proposed that the interactive communication and personalised content provided by social media marketing can improve the awareness, engagement, and purchasing attitudes of consumers. Similarly, Scuotto et al. (2017) have found that social networking sites have a significant effect on consumers' behaviour, as they enable information sharing and relationship establishment.

INFLUENCER MARKETING AND PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

One of the powerful aspects of social media marketing that is becoming more popular is influencer marketing. Fashion influencers can be opinion leaders whose advice helps to influence consumers' attitudes and shopping decisions. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young consumers feel the social media influencers are more relatable and credible than traditional celebrities. Likewise, Martin (2016) found that user-generated content helps consumers in gaining trust and maintains their relationship with the brand.

Chetioui, Benlafqih and Lebdaoui (2020) showed that the factors of credibility, expertise and attractiveness of the influencers have an impact on the purchase intention of the consumers in the fashion world. Agnighotri, Kulshreshtha and Tripathi (2023) and Ashraf, Hameed and Saeed (2023) further noted that the authenticity of the influencer positively impacts consumer buying behaviour as it builds trust and perceived credibility.

GENERATION Z AND FASHION CONSUMPTION

The consumers of Generation Z have distinct characteristics that set them apart from other generations. Magano et al. (2022) discovered that Generation Z shoppers care a great deal about authenticity, transparency and social responsibility when assessing brands. Refer to Aw and Chuah (2021), parasocial relationships with social media influencers have a positive impact on brand attitudes and consumer behaviour of the younger generation.

Tripathi (2023) came up with the factors influencing purchase intention in fashion consumption among Indian

Generation Z consumers: social media exposure, peer influence, and brand image. Likewise, Lazarus and Aher (2024) revealed that the trust, perceived usefulness, and social influence factors greatly influence the purchase intention of Gen Z consumers. The results are significant and demonstrate the role that social media marketing plays in influencing younger consumers' fashion consumption behaviours.

RESEARCH GAP

While there is existing research that correlates social media marketing and consumer behaviour, there are several gaps that need to be addressed. First, a lot of the current literature is based on purchase intention and not purchase behaviour. Second, empirical data available on the Indian apparel industry is still limited in the context of the rising importance of digital commerce in India. Third, there are numerous studies that focus on individual aspects of social media marketing without exploring the impact that these aspects can have together in one study. Last but not least, a few studies are specific to apparel and cover Generation Z consumers.

These gaps are filled by the present study, which aims to explore the combined effect of Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality and Consumer Perception on actual consumer buying behaviour among Generation Z consumers in Delhi.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

This present study is based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The SOR Model is an explanation that suggests that external environmental stimuli affect an individual's internal psychological state, which then affects their behaviour. It has successfully been used in the fields of consumer behaviour and digital marketing research to describe the influence of marketing stimuli on the consumer decision-making process.

Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality, and Consumer Perception are the external stimuli in this study. Such stimuli affect consumer cognitions and emotions about brands and products in clothing. Consumers' psychological responses, in turn, impact their purchasing behaviour.

Showing exposure on social media improves awareness and familiarity with products and brands. The quality of information has an impact on consumers' perceptions of product usefulness, credibility and reliability. Consumer perception is the result of consumers' attitudes, trust and evaluations about brands' social media interactions. These

dimensions are interdependent and collectively impact the purchasing of apparel.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Social Media Marketing Exposure
- Information Quality
- Consumer Perception

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

- Consumer Buying Behaviour

HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature review and theoretical foundation, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Social Media Marketing Exposure has a significant positive influence on Consumer Buying Behaviour.

H2: Information Quality has a significant positive influence on Consumer Buying Behaviour.

H3: Consumer Perception has a significant positive influence on Consumer Buying Behaviour.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Questions

Drawing upon the identified gaps in the literature, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Does social media marketing significantly influence consumer buying behaviour in the apparel industry among Generation Z consumers?

RQ2: To what extent does Social Media Marketing Exposure influence consumer buying behaviour?

RQ3: How does Information Quality available through social media platforms affect apparel purchase decisions?

RQ4: What role does Consumer Perception play in shaping consumer buying behaviour toward apparel products promoted through social media?

RQ5: Which social media marketing dimension exerts the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour?

RQ6: To what extent do Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality, and Consumer Perception collectively explain variations in consumer buying behaviour?

4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the impact of Social Media Marketing Exposure on consumer buying behaviour in the apparel industry.

2. To evaluate the influence of Information Quality on consumer buying behaviour.
3. To assess the effect of Consumer Perception on consumer buying behaviour.
4. To determine the relative contribution of Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality, and Consumer Perception toward consumer buying behaviour.
5. To examine the combined explanatory power of social media marketing dimensions in predicting consumer buying behaviour among Generation Z consumers.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a descriptive research design, which aims to describe the influence of social media marketing on consumer buying behaviour in the apparel industry. The target audience consisted of Generation Z consumers who live in Delhi and actively use social media platforms and have purchased apparel products after seeing products in their social media feeds.

The data collected were primary data, which were obtained by filling out a structured questionnaire with a Google Form online through convenience sampling. The target respondents of the study were digitally active social media users. During the period of the survey, a total of 190 responses were obtained. 158 responses were valid and relevant and were used for analysis.

A five-point Likert scale was used for each construct of Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality, Consumer Perception and Consumer Buying Behaviour. IBM SPSS Statistics software was used to analyse the data. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was done. The data were summarised by descriptive statistics for the characteristics of the respondents and for the study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used for the relationships among the variables, and hypotheses were tested. The relative contribution of each predictor was analysed using multiple regression analysis.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Marketing Exposure	0.646
Information Quality	0.816
Consumer Perception	0.795
Consumer Buying Behaviour	0.857

Reliability coefficients were higher than the acceptable range of 0.60, which would suggest good internal consistency and reliability of measurement.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive analysis was conducted to evaluate respondents' perceptions regarding social media marketing and buying behaviour.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Media Marketing Exposure	3.737	1.042
Information Quality	3.509	1.090
Consumer Perception	3.384	1.047
Consumer Buying Behaviour	3.421	1.031

Each of the variables recorded shows an average score that is greater than the neutral score of 3.00, suggesting generally positive perceptions with regard to social media marketing and its impact on apparel purchasing decisions. The highest mean score was for Social Media Marketing Exposure, indicating that the respondents most often see content related to apparel on social media networks.

5.2 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Pearson correlation analysis was calculated to examine relationships among the study variables.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
SMM Exposure	1			
Information Quality	.692**	1		
Consumer Perception	.665**	.751**	1	
Buying Behaviour	.680**	.781**	.772**	1

Note: p < 0.001

The findings suggest that there are strong positive relationships between all the independent variables and consumers' buying behaviour. The most positive correlation was found between Information Quality and $r = .781$, followed by Consumer Perception ($r = .772$), and Social Media Marketing Exposure ($r = .680$). The results indicate that consumers are very concerned about useful and credible information in the decision-making process to purchase apparel.

5.3 MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the collective influence of Social Media Marketing Exposure,

Information Quality, and Consumer Perception on Consumer Buying Behaviour.

Table 4. Regression Results

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Social Media Marketing Exposure	.270	5.026	< .001
Information Quality	.376	5.613	< .001
Consumer Perception	.326	4.844	< .001

Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R ²	.729
Adjusted R ²	.724
F-value	138.102
Significance	p < .001

The regression model accounted for 72.9 per cent of the variance in consumer buying behaviour, which is a strong explanatory power. Information Quality was the top predictor, followed by Consumer Perception and Social Media Marketing Exposure. The results show that meaningful and credible information has a more powerful effect on consumers than exposure.

5.4 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	SMM Exposure positively influences Buying Behaviour	Supported
H2	Information Quality positively influences Buying Behaviour	Supported
H3	Consumer Perception positively influences Buying Behaviour	Supported

All hypotheses were supported, confirming the positive influence of social media marketing dimensions on consumer buying behaviour.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that there is a strong influence of social media marketing on the buying behaviour of apparel among Gen Z consumers. In line with the SOR model, social media marketing serves as an external stimulus impacting consumer perceptions and behaviours.

Information Quality was the highest predictor of purchasing behaviour. This discovery implies that when consumers are considering buying something, they want reliable, helpful and relevant information. Good information helps to minimise uncertainty, build trust and aid in making informed decisions. The findings are consistent with the previous results reported by Yadav and Rahman (2020) and Santiago et al. (2020).

The second strongest predictor was Consumer Perception. The greater the buy intent based on positive trust, brand image, and credibility perceptions, the more positive the purchase intent. It corroborates the findings of Chetioui et al. (2020), Mayrhofer and Matthes (2020), and Lazarus and Aher (2024), who have highlighted the importance of the mechanisms of trust building in social media marketing.

The exposure to Social Media Marketing also had a strong positive relationship with buying behaviour. Its influence was less than that of Information Quality and Consumer Perception. This implies that being exposed to a product is not enough to make a sale, unless they are imparting some kind of meaning or building up any positive reviews of their product.

VII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer important implications for apparel marketers.

First of all, brands must focus on content instead of promoting too much. Product information, styling suggestions, reviews and comparisons should be offered by marketers because Information Quality was the best predictor.

Secondly, brands need to concentrate on a trust-building approach. When consumers trust the message, they are more likely to buy, and when they see the authenticity of good communication, marketers can help build their trust. Consumers have an increased chance to purchase when they feel they can trust the communication, and when they see the authenticity of good communication, marketers can help build their trust.

Third, because of the interactive and engaging nature of the content, marketers should take advantage of content types like short videos, reels, live sessions, and user-generated content to lift engagement and brand attachment.

Last but not least, companies must be vigilant in tracking customer comments and adjusting social media strategies in response to evolving tastes and social media trends.

VIII. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The results of this study can be applied to the literature in various ways. It extends the use of the Stimulus–Organism–Response model to the Indian apparel industry. Furthermore, it is centred on actual consumers' purchasing behaviour instead of purchase intention. Third, it compares the relative importance of the three variables, Information Quality, Consumer Perception and Social Media Marketing Exposure, in an integrated empirical model.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are some limitations of the study. Findings are restricted to generalizability because of the use of convenience sampling. The sample was restricted to consumers from Generation Z in Delhi and might not be reflective of consumers in other geographical regions. The study also used a self-reported method and a cross-sectional research design.

The study could be expanded to other cities and population segments in future studies. Another method that could be used is to investigate the mediational and moderational relationships using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach. Further, comparisons of the various social media platforms and generations could also be studied to get some interesting insights about consumers' online behaviour.

X. CONCLUSION

The study explored the impact of Social Media Marketing Exposure, Information Quality and Consumer Perception on consumer buying behaviour in the apparel industry. The results support that all three dimensions are found to have a significant and positive effect on the consumer's buying behaviour for Generation Z.

Information Quality proved to be the most influential factor, followed by Consumer Perception and Exposure to Social Media Marketing. The findings emphasise the increasing role content quality, trust and consumer engagement play in the purchase decisions of apparel. The study has added value to the academic research and managerial practice, it has given empirical evidence in the Indian context and given some suggestions for social media marketing strategy.

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