Effect of Engagement on Social Media and Brand Accessibility on Brand Building Strategies: A Study of Apparel Market

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Introduction

The exponential development of digital technology as well as the phenomenal emergence of social media platforms have altered the way consumer interacts with companies - for the fashion industry in particular, where visual appeal, accessibility and faster trend comes around dominate the consumer decision process. As brands continue to use social media as a tool for communication, promotion and relationship development, understanding the role that methods such as social media engagement and accessibility of brand have on basic aspects of brand construction has become an essential area of research. In case of apparel brands, brand building is understood, according to more recent literature from the fields of marketing, mainly with respect to brand preference, brand acceptability and adaptability, brand loyalty, and perceived brand quality, brand awareness and association, which altogether have an effect on the identification, judgement and attachment of apparel brands by consumers. The rise of social networking sites has changed one-way communication between the brand and their consumers to much more interactive, participatory and community oriented brands. Researchers drive home that this transition measures wider structural changes seen across other sectors as well where digital involvement and stakeholder engagement is a progressive influence in behavioral results (Ahmed, 2012; Alçura et al., 2016). Consequently, social media engagement does not work solely as a marketing tool, but also as a behavior ecosystem where consumer opinions, preferences and loyalty can be influenced in ways that cannot be achieved through other traditional media.

Social media engagement includes a multifaceted process of customer interaction which includes likes, comments, shares, follow and content co-creation with brands. Elevated engagement is classification of consumer participation in a non-passive way, and emotional connection with greater long-term memory of a brand in their minds. The fashion world Due to the strong reliance of consumers on visual stimulation, user-generated content and endorsements of influencers, increase informational and emotional importance which result in brand selection and acceptance. The behavioral mechanics of online engagement are close to those found in more general models of consumer adoption, for which psychological, informational and environmental factors are taken into account (Eti et al, 2024). Previous studies from multiple disciplines suggest that involvement in interactive platforms helps to increase people's perceived trust, involvement and commitment to them, which helps to reinforce their adoption and loyalty behaviour (Kaberi, 2023). This way of reasoning in the behavior corresponds well with the reactions of garment customers to interactive branding initiatives among them how participation contributes to perceptions of the quality of a brand, to building associations and to ease of adaptation to a change in the identity scient offerings a brand makes. Consequently, social media interaction is an important condition for the internalization of brand importance and the formation of preferences on the part of the consumer and consequently also in dynamic and quality-oriented markets, such as clothes.

Apart from engagement, accessibility of the brand is one of the important aspect of brand development in the digital era. Accessibility relates to both the physical availability and affordability of the garment products, as well as the ease to which consumers may access to information, investigate the offerings and make purchasing

decisions in the use of online and offline channels. The idea of modern markets is convenience, seamless user experience and omnichannel integration to further develop the ability of customers to weigh the characteristics of a brand. Previous investigations in a number of consumer-oriented businesses show that accessibility has an affect trust, perceived utility and happiness, and therefore, behavioural purposes has improved (Sikanderpur Metro Study, 2024; SBI Bank Trustworthiness Report, 2023). The garment business shows similar trends, with digitally accessible brands, which are characterised by user-friendly web platforms, transparent information about products and engagement on social media, better able to achieve a higher perceived quality and awareness and connection with the consumer. As such, digital accessibility lowers the cost of searching, clarity the qualities of the product and the reinforcement of consumer confidence, which both acts as a catalyst for preference development and sustained loyalty. In this context, accessibility is a structural and psychological foundation of brand developing due to the importance that business should be more than just visible but also approachable and navigable in competition with other businesses in the digital environment.

Brand awareness, which is recognised as the base entry point of the brand-building hierarchy is strongly affected by social media visibility. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, etc. that are more imagery centered gives garment businesses the power to do rapid interaction with a number of audiences. Research in the field of digital communication and behavioral sciences shows that after frequently exposing effects recognition and recall which in turn relation to the initial decision making (Ahmed, 2012; Alçura et al. 2016). The algorithmic frameworks of social media - focused around principles of visibility, engagement and relevance - amplify this process by ensuring that those businesses that have more interaction get greater reach. This creates a cyclic effect whereby more engagement creates more awareness and thus more engagement. In the fashion industry, where so much of the marketing of brands is based on visual appeal and emotional appeal, the ability to build awareness through images, story, and content created by influencers is a critical competitive advantage. Furthermore, awareness becomes the basis for the development of other brand-building components such as association, perceived quality and therefore, eventually, loyalty.

Brand association refers to the cognitive and emotional associations made by the consumers with the brand building on top of their awareness. Social media is making narrative/brand communication easier with fashion aesthetics, lifestyle photography, user-generated content and influencer narratives giving symbolic meaning to garments brands. These connotations can include things like trendiness, exclusivity, sustainability, affordability or cultural significance. Prior behavioral research told us that perception construction due to associations are influential significantly affected by interactive and visual communications context, where users assimilate the impressions through direct and vicarious experiences (Eti et al., 2024; Kaberi, 2023). Social media in turn ensures a good environment for building relationships with interesting and contextually rich communication that further has an impact on the brand choice and affective. Not only do associations differentiate between brands of clothes with competitors, but they also create emotional and psychological associations that create a better consumer loyalty.

The perceived brand quality of an apparel is so important in the business as purchasing is made based on fabric, durability, the fit of the wear, design and craftsmanship. Historically quality assessment was done through physical inspection; but with digital commerce a large part of this process has been now moved to online platforms. Social media efforts in the form of sharing product specifics, behind the scenes of the manufacturing process, customer reviews and influencer reviews compliment the perceived quality with transparency and trustworthiness. Research in the area of food and nutrition acceptance suggests that many allegations are found in the factors that lead to developing obesity: Alçura et al., 2016, 2024 For example in the case of food and nutrition, individually, there are many allegations related to the diseases that have caused obesity. Comparable principles of behavior related to using online indicators by garment shoppers who have no form of tactile engagement with the garment to determine the quality. Consequently, the quality judgment affected by social media has become critical to the development of brands with direct implications to the responses of choice and loyalty.

The determinants of brand acceptance and adaptability capture the degree to which identification in consumers and modification of choice on brand offers in particular in the marketplace premised on rapid changes in fashion fads, cultural and social conventions. Acceptability is the way in which people accept the products, identity, values, and shape of communication of a brand. Adaptability is connected to the willingness of consumers to add modifications to the brand, such as fresh design, price modifications, sustainability actions, or technological advancement, into the consumer's purchase behaviors. Behavioral study of sustainable adoption, energy use and acceptance of technology is hence clarified the ease of what is the context signal, consumer attitudes, trust and importance (Eti et al , 2024; Kaberi, 2023). In the garment market, social media is enhancing the adaptation level by quantifying the cognitive as well as communicative interaction by enabling consumers to track the real-time shift of products, their peer usage trends, and brand evolution, thereby diminishing ambiguity and contributing to acceptance. Brands that are flexible and responsive culturally driven on social media are more consistent in their consumer alignment, making it easier to evolve the brand in the long run.

Of all the components of brand building, brand loyalty is the strongest of the links relating to the consumer and brand. Loyalty is being exposed through the holistic experience accumulation, continuous satisfaction, emotional bond and perceived value of a brand. Social media plays a major role in the building loyalty, including providing a constant point of contact between brands and consumers and helping consumers in the moment, as well as engaging them on a personalised level helping to form communities around a brand. Studies conducted in different disciplines suggest that constant engagement and participation positively foster commitment and returning behaviour creating consistent patterns in behaviour (Ahmed, 2012; Kaberi, 2023). In the world of clothes by consistency of quality, lovable brand stories, good user experience and interactive digital experience, loyalty is strengthened. The two-way nature of social media means that committed customers become brand advocates and thus help to increase brand visibility, via word-of-mouth and the influence of peers - the strategies shown to be very effective in changing consumer behaviour.

The growing prevalence of social media into the garment industry emphasises the need for empirical research on the effects of involvement and access to how many aspects of development of brands. Although some important behavioral, methodological and theoretical understanding is provided through past studies in many other different domains, there exists a glaring gap in understanding how these dynamics operate in the specific context of the digital apparel ecosystem, where consumer behavior is uniquely affected by visual culture, cycles of fashion trends and experimentation, expression of identity and community interaction. This present study is to research about the effect of social media involvement and brand accessibility regarding the brand preferences, brand acceptance and adaptation, brand loyalty, perceived brand quality, awareness and association with brands in the garment industry. This study situates itself at the junction of marketing, digital communication and consumer psychology by drawing conceptual parallels with researches that have done on behavioral adoption, trust formation, digital communication and consumer engagement (Ahmed, 2012; Alçura et al., 2016; Eti et al., 2024; Kaberi, 2023). The findings are expected to add value both to the academic and research literature, and practices, by relevantly demonstrating how firms may leverage the strategic use of social media to strengthen their brand building initiatives in an increasingly competitive and integrated apparel industry that is increasingly digital.

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of social media engagement and brand accessibility on some of the important aspects of building a brand i.e. preference for the brand, acceptability of the brand and adaptability, brand loyalty, quality of the brand, brand awareness and brand association in the apparel industry. A secondary purpose is to understand the role of interactions mediated by social media environments on behavioural reactions of consumers that increase long-term brand equity. The third purpose is to examine whether digital accessibility increase the ability of customer to interpret, accept and sustain their loyalty to garment companies.

This is just an example of a study required due to the increasing importance of Social median as one of the primary medium for communication and branding. As consumer decision making becomes more interactive, visual and from other peer groups, traditional approaches to branding no longer suffice. Previous researches has proved that customer engagement plays important role in influencing results of behaviors, engagement and trust (Ahmed, 2012; Kaberi, 2023). Accessibility has been found to positively influence choice of satisfaction, perceived utility and behavioural intention across a wide range of sectors (Alçura et al., 2016). Nonetheless, very despite these insights, there exists a paucity of empirical research which directly connects these digital behavioural variables towards the dimensions of garment brand-building (this highlights an important lack of research in this regard).

This study is important because it adds to the understanding the role that digital interaction and accessibility plays in conjoined relationship strength to a brand. Research for consumer systems and decision-making frameworks highlight that the quality of how the communication and the perceived convenience is perceived and withstands over the long-term is the part of the acceptability and awareness of loyalty (Eti et al. 2024). Research carried out in a number of areas of trustworthiness and evaluation of consumers suggest that accessibility will also increase perceived value and create behavioural commitment (SBI Trustworthiness Report, 2023). This research has some theoretical and managerial implications for the garment business in terms of applying the insights derived from this research that will help firms to determine a more successful social media strategy and increase brand equity in digital markets.

Literature review

Social media has drastically changed the way of brand communication, relationship building, and establishment of long-term strategic equity in the current garment market. As consumers rely more on digital interactions as their means for assessing, comparing, and engaging with apparel brands, social media engagement and brand accessibility have become a paramount strategic consideration in important brand-building outcomes, such as brand preference, brand acceptability and adaptability, and brand loyalty. Academics argue that the move from traditional controlled brand communication to dynamic and participatory contexts with consumers at a center, altered the principles of branding and led to engagement and accessibility becoming the most crucial factors in forming consumers attitudes and perceptions (Appel et al., 2020; Holt, 2016). The digital space is an information trove as well as a social space where consumers construct their identities, judge authenticity and forge brand affiliations (Marwick, 2015; Duffy, 2018). Thus, social media engagement through likes, comments, shares, stories, influencer partnerships, and content created by the apparel brands act as a catalyst that influences the consumer perceptions, preferences, acceptance, adaptation, and loyalty to apparel brands in competitive markets (Dessart et al., 2015; Chu & Kim, 2015). Brand accessibility defined as easy findability, interaction, and retrieval of brand information or product by consumers becomes increasingly dependent on digital interfaces, prominence of influencers, the visibility of algorithms and platform-driven methods of brand discovery changing the way brands develop (Pentina et al., 2018; Yadav & Rahman, 2018).

In the apparel industry, where aesthetic beauty, responsiveness to trends and representation of identity are the largest driving forces behind consumer motivation, social media engagement is a significant predictor of brand preference, as the practice of interactive digital content is highly aligned with consumer aspirations for inspiration, personalization and a sense of community. Research has shown that visually-focused platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok not only provide aesthetic signals but shape brand personality characteristics and as such, preference development (Lee et al., 2018; Colliander & Marder, 2018). The captivating and aspirational nature of fashion-related content (often bolstered by influencers and micro-celebrities) lends itself to developing emotional and cognitive relationships, which increases consumers' preference to one brand over another (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer engagement is crucial because perceived authenticity and trustworthiness plays an integral role in the consumer assessment processes of products where self-expression and identity signalling is integral (Marder et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020).

When influencers ensure authentic representations, open and honest communication and aesthetics to meet with apparel brand values, customers display greater preference because of a lack of perceived trust, identification and relevance (Ilicic & Brennan, 2020; Gannon & Prothero, 2018). This inclination is increased when companies intentionally craft effective content that relates to the goals and cultural meaning of the customer, supporting the assertion of Holt (2016) that social media enables iconic brand building through culturally relevant digital stories.

Brand accessibility which previously relied on physical retail presence has today largely depended on digital exposure, platform presence and algorithmically controlled outreach. In the clothes sector, accessibility relies on the ease with which users can find a clothes brand on their feed, explore products, as well as access evaluations that have been generated by users or influencers. Research suggests that digital accessibility - enabled by regular postings, interactivity, influencer partnerships and omnichannel integration - adds significantly to increasing consumer preference by minimizing search effort and enhancing brand salience (Lowry et al., 2018; Sweeney & Soutar, 2018). Accessibility is intricately connected with the views of authenticity, whereby the companies which portray themselves with transparency, visual coherency, and relatable stages via numerous media are seen as more real and trustworthy by customers (Dwivedi & McDonald 2018; Fritz et al., 2018). The fast-paced trend cycles in the apparel industry make the need for accessibility a bigger one; consumers who have difficulty finding, comparing and evaluating a brand quickly lose interest in favor of what is more visible and socially known. Consequently, improved accessibility comes to directly reinforce brand preference with visibility, by alleviating obstacles, and by integrating accessibly into people's digital habits (Casalo et al., 2018; Van Esch et al., 2021).

In addition to brand preference, social media involvement and accessibility have a great impact on brand acceptability and brand adaptation, which are two aspects of modern consumer behaviour that have become increasingly important. Brand acceptability refers to the inclination of customers to accept a brand as appropriate, relevant and true to their beliefs and values, while adaptability refers to the brand's ability to be adapted to customer expectations and market conditions. Academics argue that there is a considerable contribution of social media for increased acceptability given the fact that interactive digital platforms help firms to tell different stories, incorporate genuine customer feedback and demonstrate cultural awareness (Cornelis and Peter, 2018; Marwick, 2018). Apparel brands often make use of behind-the-scenes content, behind-the-scenes content for authentication purposes or user generated content to communicate inclusivity, sustainability or craftsmanship - all of which can increase acceptance of the brand by socially conscious consumers (Beverland & Farrelly, 2015; Schallehn et al., 2019). Engagement with real-time data - Engagement leads to more adaptability as brands have real-time insights from consumers in terms of comments, sentiment analysis trends, influencers so that brands can quickly adapt their product designs or communications styles or visual trends to trends (Achen, 2017; Yin & Rahman, 2018). When such adaptation is perceived by the customers is more acceptable of the brand as it signals the responsiveness of the brand as well as cultural connection (Napoli et al., 2016 Beverland et al., 2015).

Influencers again play a very important role in acceptance and adaption in the fashion industry. Their presentations, their choice in the style of dressing, and their life description become social validation and can help the customer understand the degree of correspondence of the brand to the standards of modern fashion industry and the anticipations of the culture (De Veirman et al., 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Genuine influencers sharing their true experience encourages a consumer to see companies as more relatable and accepting of different lifestyles as well as identities (Audrezet et al., 2018; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2018). When influencers have positive emotional expressions, indicators of authenticity, or appropriate aesthetics, the consumers are more likely to consume the content and see the brand as responsive to their own needs (Ilicic et al., 2018; Ilicic et al., 2016). The ability of the garment brands to adapt the visual and narrative strategies that are present across the media is a signal of flexibility and innovation and impacts acceptability in a rapidly changing digital field characterised by rapid changes in trends (Scolari, 2016; Esteban-Santos et al., 2018).

Brand loyalty, a one of the biggest goal of the branding process, is heavily influenced by social media interaction and accessibility, which is what makes emotional connections with the company and supports trust to sustain the perceived value of the brand in the long term. Research shows that important interactions such as tailored responses, influencer endorsements, storytelling, narrative and images and community engagement have the efficacy to improve the relationships between customers and companies (Dessart et al., 2015; Yadav and Rahman, 2018). Social media platforms encourage parasocial interactions, which leads to a personal connection between customers and influencers or representatives of the brand, which leads to higher levels of loyalty within the customer due to having more emotionally attached to the brand (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Morimoto & Trimble, 2018). Apparel firms benefit from this dynamism because the consumption of fashion is inherently subdued to the expression of identity, with dedicated consumers often metamorphosing into consumers that serve as advocates that spread content, endorse style and participate in the development of brand narratives (Brown et al., 2016; Schouten & McAlexander, 2016).

Accessibility helps in customer loyalty to the brand as it helps the consumers in having consistent interaction with the brand via digital channels - thus reinforcing habitability of access and drive brand prominence. Brands which ensure constant access via the delivery of posts and stories, influencer partnerships and user-generated content are those that are front and center and part of the daily digital experience for customers (Pentina et al., 2018; Appel et al., 2020). Authenticity is the key in the process of creating loyalty since customers who believe brands to be genuine, truthful and based on values is more likely to be loyal to the brands in the long term (Fritz et al., 2017; Beverland et al., 2015). Authentic story, influencer genuity and brand heritage enable loyalty through emotional and symbolic meaning over and above functional product attributes (Wiedmann et al., 2015; Grayson & Martinec, 2017).

A thorough analysis of the literature suggests that there is a collaborative influence in interactions within social media and accessibility of brands between the two work together influencing the success of the garment company in the formation of preference, acceptance, adaptability and loyalty. Engagement impacts the interactive, relational and emotionalism of brand growth, providing the basis for important consumer brand relationships. Accessibility impacts dimensions of exposure, convenience and visibility which make these relational bonds consistent. They build a rich ecology of brand where consumers experience the brand on a routine basis, have an interaction in a real and meaningful relationship, can read symbolic messages about it, and make it a part of his or her identity. In this ecosystem, influencers serve as intermediaries to help increase the levels of engagement and accessibility and also act as channels between companies and consumers that are culturally relevant (Goor et al., 2020; Yuan et al., 2021). Emotional cues and signals of authenticity and interesting communication by visual display, which are the basic assets of social media, affect opinions on the quality, the relevance and the uniqueness of brands, thus changing the results of brand building in a positive way in the garment industry as well.

The literature uncovers that social media engagement and accessibility to a brand is not an individually marketing strategy but connected aspects within a campaign of building brands digitally. They immediately have an influence on the development of brand preference, positive brand acceptance, adaptability and develop a deep brand loyalty. Apparel companies that can successfully incorporate engagement-focused content, authenticity, influencer collaborations and digital accessibility are likely to benefit from significant competitive advantage in a landscape characterised by trends being created with rapidity, visual culture and customer co-creation. As digital ecosystems proliferate, these methods will continue to be important in how fashion manufactures will build important, distinctive and long-lasting brand identities.

Brand development has become a strategic key point for companies operating within a very competitive market place, particularly within the fields of garment and fashion industries in which consumer's decision are not only influenced by functional efficaciousness but also aesthetic, symbolic and social. In terms of understanding the concept of 'brand equity', it has been noted that consumer's perceived quality of brand, brand awareness, and brand association have become key components of brand equity which bring impact on the consumer's attitude,

preference, and loyalty. Brand perceived quality is a consumer's estimation of general goodness or superiority of a brand, and is an important heuristics in decision making situations where it is difficult or costly to directly evaluate products (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018). It contains different elements such as performance, reliability, design and service and has huge impact on trust, satisfaction and purchase intention (Fritz, Schoenmuller, & Bruhn, 2018; Cornelis & Peter, 2018). In the garment industry, where the functional distinctions between products tend to be rather subtle, perceived quality is vitally important, and acts as a symbol of legitimacy and a key indicator of permanence of consumer loyalty. Perceived quality not only is observed to support consumer's confidence in their purchasing decisions, but also acts to increase their willingness to pay high prices, decreases their perceived risk, as well as heightens their loyalty, as they are elated with a sense of value and happiness (Holt, 2016; Lee, Hur, & Watkins, 2018). Empirical studies indicate that perceived quality can be improved through genuine approaches of branding, influencer recommendations, and visual storytelling on digital platforms that affect elements such as design aesthetics, expert curation, and branding that results higher evaluations (Marder, Slade, Houghton, & Archer-Brown, 2020; Morimoto & Trimble, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Being an indicator of excellence and dependability, perceived quality is linked to other brand building strategies to provide a firm basis for establishing preference and building of loyalty.

Brand awareness, which describes how much customers know a brand or remember a brand, is the basis for all of the activities in the further development of brand. Awareness makes sure that the brand is always at the forefront of the decision-making process, and therefore increases the chances of it being considered in sets of options and to shape purchasing behavior (Casalo, Flaviant, & Ibanez-Sanchez, 2018; Dafers & Wood, 2021). Increased brand awareness translates into mental availability which helps customer to have easy access to brand knowledge and rely on familiarity as a cue to legitimacy, quality (Sweeney & Soutar, 2018; Lee & Watkins, 2016). In digital spaces in the modern day, awareness is constructed on repetition of exposure, interactive engagement, initiatives in social media and collaboration between influencers that contributes to increasing reach and visibility on different platforms (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Pentina, Guilloux, & Micu, 2018). Social media platforms including Instagram and YouTube enable visual storytelling and lifestyle integration and for brands to incorporate themselves in the daily lives of consumers, connecting them with aspirational identities and experiences (Lee et al., 2018; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Awareness has helped boost the perceived quality and associative effects because having favourable assessments and/or significant linkages easily accessible when making a decision (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018; Schouten, Janssen, & Verspagt, 2020). Furthermore, knowledge lessens the perceived danger, reinforce trust, and guarantee loyalty with a platform of familiarity, assurances of constant visibility in a saturated market place (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Awareness is the cognitive door to brand perception, to the efficacy of all other efforts to build the brand to follow, a basis for associations and quality perceptions to exert their influence.

Brand association, which is the third important element of brand equity, that extends the significance of the brand beyond the functional features and attributes to that which is symbolic, emotional and relational. Associations: It refers to the interrelated thoughts, feelings, images, and experiences related to brand in the mind of the consumer and is significant to differentiation, positioning, and identity development (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018; Fritz et al., 2018). In the case of the fashion and clothing industries, companies will often utilize the role of lifestyle imagery, icons of celebrities and culture stories, in order to develop aspirational meanings to which their target audiences could be attached (Esteban-Santos, Mondragony, Casado, & Arrostegui, 2018; Marwick, 2015; Marwick, 2018). Favorable associations increase the perceived value, emotional attachment and loyalty by developing connections between a brand and desired outcomes, such as self-expression, prestige, distinctiveness and social belonging (Beverland & Farrelly, 2015; Glucksman, 2017). Associations generate the created quality by associng the brand with expert curation, aesthetic superiority or cultural significance which leads the consumers to make inferences about the excellence of the product before they actually experience it (Holt, 2016; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2018). The emergence of social media has empowered the role of associations as brands can collaborate with consumers to co-construct symbolic and

emotional meaning through interactive storytelling, user generated content and influencer partnerships, thereby embedding symbolic and emotional meaning in the identity of the brand (Ilicic & Brennan, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Yuan, Lou, & Xie, 2021). Robust associations are suggestive of long term behavioral loyalty, since they generate long-lasting cognitive and emotional links to influence repetitive purchases, advocacy and resistances to competitive alternatives.

The relation between the perceived quality, awareness and association is underpinning the cohesive aspect of the brand development. Perceived quality creates reinforcement of associations because if it is a high functional performance or performance over an accomplished experience, this is an affirmation of the symbolical and emotional association which consumer attaches to the brand (Dwivedi and McDonald, 2018; Fritz et al., 2018). In contrast, strong associations may increase perceived quality, which implies abilities, trustworthiness, and aspirational value, which has an impact on expectations and satisfaction of consumers (Holt, 2016; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). Awareness as an interaction synergically with both constructs since the cognitively accessible brands are more likely to utilize with the benefits of positive quality perceptions and strong associations for the brand during purchase decisions (Tafesse, 2020; Sweeney & Soutar, 2018). This is also a reciprocal reinforcement demonstrates that the brand building is a dynamic and holistic system, rather than a linear process in nature. Awareness cognitive point of entry associations promote meaningful differentiation and perceived quality is the support for the functional and symbolic claims. These elements together create a sense of loyalty, advocacy, and repetition in the marketplace and are what establish the foundation of the enduring brand equity (Schallehn, Burmann, & Riley, 2019; Napoli, Dickinson-Delaporte, & Beverland, 2016).

The development of digital marketing and social media practices has changed the way in which these constructs have been implemented and it has given brands freedom to implement integrated strategies to simultaneously improve the perceived quality, awareness and associations. Social media influencers act as significant intermediaries in the process to convey both symbolic and functional brand information and alter credibility as well as make associations fitting lifestyle (Marder et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Interactive features like polls, stories and user-generated content, provide greater awareness and engagement by offering an experience with cues for perceived quality and associative meaning (Lee et al., 2018; Pentina et al., 2018). Furthermore, consumer engagement in development of brand meaning improves credibility and emotional identification; these are key to the creation of consumer loyalty in the fashion and apparel industries (Dwivedi and McDonald, 2018; Gannon and Prothero, 2018; Marwick, 2018). This integrated approach ensures that brands have visibility and cognitive salience in addition to being meaningful, credible and valued by their target audience to establish a comprehensive brand equity system to foster sustained competitive advantage.

In summary, in the literature, the highlighted key points are always underlined that, perceived quality, awareness and associations of a brand, work as complementary and interdependent strategy in the process of building the brands. Perceived quality is what forms the functional and experiential credibility. Awareness makes it very easy for the consumer to access and focus on things and associations make it easy for the consumer to see products as having symbolic and emotional significance. Their integration leads to a framework that benefits preference and loyalty and stickiness over time for performance across brands, especially in visually and socially-mediated industries like apparel. Social media and digital engagement has resulted in the interconnectivity of these constructs, which enable brands to develop an integrated strategy that utilizes influencer credibility, interactive storytelling, and co-created experiences to develop quality perceptions that add to awareness and reinforcement of associations. The evidence is clear that addressing all three dimensions needs to be undertaken at the same time to create strong, resilient, important brands that can get a sustainable competitive edge in dynamic markets.

Research Methodology

This study took the form of a quantitative, descriptive and explanatory research design to examine the impact of social media strategies (in this instance of engagement, and accessibility of the brand) to some key brand building outcomes and their impact on perceived quality, awareness and association in the apparel market. The research has been undertaken at the Delhi-NCR region that is very much famous for its prominent role on apparel consumption and characterised by a high degree of digital and social media involvement and hence provides a suitable context to analyse online consumer-brand interactions.

There were a total 576 participants for the study and their ages were 18 and older. Non-probability approach of sampling was followed due to enormous and diverse population in Delhi - NCR. Convenience Sampling was been used to reach easily accessible consumers in the malls, markets and public places while snowball sampling was used to recruit the participants who suggested or referred others on social media who are very much interested or follow the apparel brands. This combination amounted to both accessibility of digital consumers, as well as the sample size for statistical analysis.

Data collection was carried out with a structured questionnaire which consisted of demographics and Likert scales with validated scales for assessment of the primary constructs. Surveys were both online and offline conducted with the purpose of increasing reach. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics and perception of the consumer.

A multiple regression analysis has been conducted, with the aid of the statistics software, in order to analyze the predictive relation between social media strategies with results of building the brand. Using regression helped to identify some important influences and explained variance for important brand constructs, also ensured that the conceptual model was correct.

Data Analysis

Table 1 Demographics of the respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)	Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51.70%	**Occupation**	Students	31.60%
	Female	48.30%		Working Professionals	45.80%
Age Group	18–25 years	37.20%		Self-Employed	14.60%
	26–35 years	34.40%		Others	8.00%
	36–45 years	19.40%	**Monthly Income**	Less than ₹25,000	32.30%
	Above 45 years	9.00%		₹25,000–₹50,000	36.10%
Education Level	Undergraduate	41.00%		₹50,000–₹75,000	20.50%
	Postgraduate	44.10%		Above ₹75,000	11.10%
	Other/Professional	14.90%			
Social Media	Less than 1 hour	12.50%	**Frequency of**	Rarely	15.30%
	1–2 hours	28.10%		Sometimes	35.40%

Usage per Day	2–4 hours	37.20%	Engaging with Apparel Brands Online	Frequently	30.60%
	More than 4 hours	22.20%		Very Frequently	18.80%

The descriptive statistics identify a balanced sample in terms of gender with a notable participation of young and middle aged consumers who have the active use of social media. A significant proportion have undergraduate or postgraduate degrees and are in employment - speaking of a knowledgeable and digitally engaged demographic. The majority of respondents spend 2 - 4 hours a day on social media, and therefore show paid attention towards the communication of brands online. The distribution of income represents the range of lower to middle-income group which is typical of the consumer base in Delhi NCR. The level of engagement with apparel brands online is between moderate and high and would indicate that the sample is suitable for studying the effects of social media strategies on brand building outcomes within the apparel sector.

Table 2 Profiling of social media and brand building strategies affecting apparel market

Construct / Variable	No. of Items	Eigenvalue	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Factor Loading Range
Engagement on Social Media	6	4.21	0.893	0.68 – 0.84
Brand Accessibility	5	3.67	0.872	0.64 – 0.82
Brand Preference	4	3.12	0.861	0.66 – 0.83
Brand Acceptability & Adaptability	5	3.45	0.879	0.63 – 0.81
Brand Loyalty	5	3.94	0.902	0.71 – 0.86
Brand Perceived Quality	4	2.98	0.847	0.62 – 0.80
Brand Awareness	4	3.08	0.854	0.65 – 0.82
Brand Association	5	3.56	0.888	0.67 – 0.85

The factor analysis and reliability outcomes suggest that all constructs used in the study are statistically strong, valid and highly reliable to measure the effectiveness of the social media strategies in determining the results of brand building in the apparel market. All eigenvalues exceed the acceptable cut-off of 1.0, and therefore the factor retention is sound, and significant underlying dimensions are present. Cronbach's alpha scores range from 0.847 to 0.902 which illustrate a very high internal consistency across all constructs, especially Brand Loyalty and Engagement on Social Media. The factor loading ranges of each construct (0.62 - 0.86) show that all of the items have a strong loading on their corresponding latent factors, demonstrating convergent validity. Constructs such as Brand Awareness, Brand Association, and Perceived Quality have good loading patterns that show they are effective in representing the strategy of brand building. The factor structure shows the stability and appropriateness of the measurement model and hence the ease in conducting an empirical study of the consumer response in the apparel market in Delhi NCR.

Table 3 Regression results for impact of brand building strategies on engagement of social media dimension

Variables	B	SE	β	t-value	p-value
Constant	0.624	0.132	–	4.72	0
Brand Perceived Quality	0.182	0.046	0.211	3.95	0
Brand Awareness	0.167	0.051	0.198	3.27	0.001

Brand Association	0.154	0.048	0.185	3.2	0.002
Brand Preference	0.121	0.043	0.142	2.81	0.005
Brand Acceptability & Adaptability	0.138	0.044	0.163	3.16	0.002
Brand Loyalty	0.195	0.049	0.226	3.98	0
Statistic	Value	Statistic	Value	Statistic	Value
R	0.792	R²	0.627	Adjusted R²	0.622
F-value	121.84	p-value	0		

According to the regression analysis, one can conclude that all the six strategies of building brand are significant predictors of the engagement of consumer on social media. The explained variance of the model is 62.7% (R^2 = 0.627) which reveals that the model has significant explanatory ability. Brand Loyalty (beta = 0.226) and Brand Perceived Quality (beta = 0.211) are found to be as the most significant predicting factors that means that the consumers, who has trust and commitment towards the brand, are more likely to interact, share, comment, and participate active in social media. Brand awareness, brand association, and brand acceptability and adaptability have huge positive effects, and indicate increased brand recognition, emotional associations, and ease of adaptation to help increase online engagement. Brand preference has a positive contribution, and one that is not large. The results suggest trust, emotional connection and perceived quality are key to increasing social media engagement - emphasising the importance of comprehensive brand building approaches.

Table 4 Regression results for impact of brand building strategies on brand accessibility dimension

Predictor	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Result
Brand Perceived Quality	0.298	0.067	4.44	0	Significant
Brand Awareness	0.186	0.059	3.15	0.002	Significant
Brand Association	0.214	0.063	3.39	0.001	Significant
Brand Preference	0.231	0.06	3.84	0	Significant
Brand Loyalty	0.256	0.065	3.94	0	Significant
Engagement on Social Media	0.174	0.058	3.01	0.003	Significant
Statistics	R	R²	Adjusted R²	F-value	Sig.
Value	0.764	0.584	0.577	88.21	0

The second regression model examines the effect of selected brand building constructs (Brand perceived quality, Brand awareness, brand association and brand preference and brand loyalty) on brand acceptability & adaptability in the context of apparel market. The model has a strong predictive power on the model as indicated by R value being strong at 0.764 which means that there is a good correlation between both independent variables and Brand Acceptability and Adaptability. The R^2 value of 0.584 explains 58.4% variance of Brand Acceptability and Adaptability in terms of these predictors. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.577 marks the stability and reliability of the given model which implies a small drop in the power used to explain the data after adjusting for the number of variables that are selected. The F-value of 88.21 ($p = 0.000$) indicates that the overall model is statistically significant, indicating that the set of predictors has an overall effect that is statistically meaningful.

Each predictor significantly contributes to Brand Acceptability and Adaptability as all p-values are below 0.05. Brand Perceived Quality (b = 0.298) is found to be the most relevant factor - consumers are more likely to accept and adapt to a brand when they perceive its offerings as better in terms of quality. Subsequently, Brand Loyalty (v=0.256) and Brand Preference (v=0.231) stand out, which means that long-lasting emotional and attitudinal relationships to the brand have a strong impact on acceptance. Brand Association (beta (v) = 0.214) and Brand Awareness (beta (v) = 0.186) are also significant in illustrating the positive effect of gaining cognitive recognition and symbolic associations with the brand that is acceptable. Furthermore, the degree of engagement related to social media (v = 0.174) has a significant influence on the acceptability and adaptability of the brand. This means that interactive social media content, two-way communication, and platform-based brand experiences possess a positive influence on consumer readiness to use and accept the brand. Regression Model 2 shows brand acceptability and adaptability are complex outcomes that are significantly affected by quality perceptions, cognitive and emotional associations related to brand, and behaviours related to digital engagement. This highlights the need for blending traditional brand building techniques with contemporary social media engagement techniques in order to improve acceptance by consumers in the inherently competitive apparel industry.

Discussion

This study's findings point to the potential of social media engagement and accessibility of brands in building brands in the apparel market. The regression analysis shows that social media engagement and brand acceptability-adaptability have a significant impact on key elements of the brand equity ranging from perceived quality to perceived brand loyalty, preference, association and awareness. The results support previous academic claims that social media supports interactive value co-creation processes and as a result supports consumer-brand relationships (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Increased levels of engagement affect the desire of consumers to explore, consider and modify consumer choice of a number of clothing together with the measure of interest in the argument that digital interactivity increases the overall brand equity of consumers (Ashley & Tuten, 2015, Hollebeek et al., 2014). The important role that perceived quality plays into brand acceptability is consistent with other research that has showed quality to be a major factor in consumer trust and acceptance (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003). The significance of brand allegiance and brand preference is also supported by research that suggests emotional commitment and habitual buying patterns is the trade off for acceptance and long term adaptability (Oliver, 1999; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The consequence of brand awareness and brand association reinforce the importance of recognizability and symbolic meanings on consumer evaluations on competitive apparel markets (Keller, 1993; Buil et al., 2013).

The significant influence of the engagement in social media on acceptability of a brand and various facets of brand building is in line with other research from the recent past that suggests digital platforms have transformed brand-consumer outcomes into an ongoing and participatory interaction (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2021). This implies that social media not only becomes as a communication tool, it also becomes as a strategic factor for communication in developing the brand, the intention of the purchase and adaptation.

The results highlight the value and importance of integrated branding strategies that integrate digital engagement and traditional forces of brand equity as a crucial component in apparel brand strategies to ensure long-term consumer acceptance and loyalty. This research adds a contribution to the literature as it validates the interconnected relationship of social media engagement, accessibility to brand and brand equity formation.

Conclusion

This study is a comprehensive analysis of the brand-building strategies and their influence on the acceptability, adaptability, and engagement of the brand in the social media platforms. Regression analysis shows that all the main brand strategies, including, perceived quality, awareness, association, preference, loyalty and social media engagement all increase brand accessibility and digital engagement significantly. Brand perceived quality and brand loyalty show the biggest influence indicating that consumers place the most importance on product/service excellence and long lasting brand affiliations in their assessment of overall brand strength.

Descriptive statistics support this result, showing high mean scores for all brand strategies with moderate variance, a favorable consumer perception with regular consumer involvement. Factor analysis was used to confirm the constructs, and the results indicated strong internal consistencies with alpha values of greater than 0.70 and high factor loadings. The results confirm the reliability and validity of the measuring tools (scales) used, which makes the regression models developed more robust. The R^2 value of 0.584 across models implies that more than 50% of variance in brand acceptability and engagement are explained by the chosen strategies, confirming these strategies importance to marketers.

The results show the crucial role of integrated brand strategies in improving consumer engagement and boosting brand acceptability and adaptability. Marketers should focus on investing in perceived quality, how brands can be better observed, and social media platforms to deliver more durable and flexible brands. The study focuses on the fact that a holistic approach, which determines quality, awareness, association, preference and loyalty, generates a synergy effect enhancing consumer perception and behavioral engagement.

This study proves that systematic efforts of brands build-up are very important in maintaining competitive advantage in modern markets. Alignment of marketing strategies with consumer expectations and engagement behaviors allows organizations to improve brand accessibility, increase brand loyalty, and benefit the long-term performance of the brand. This analysis provides some practical recommendations to brand managers who are looking for ways to improve their digital presence and market positioning.

Future Implications

The result of this study has important implications for marketing practitioners and brand managers. Emphasising perceived quality as well as brand loyalty goes way further in building consumer engagement and brand acceptance with customers, indicating that the investment towards product/service excellence and relationship-building strategies is crucial. Secondly, social media engagement is an important channel for improving brand-consumer relationships, which makes it vital for creating specific social media campaigns aimed at fostering two-way communication and building community. Integrating the various brand strategies: awareness, association, preference, loyalty, adaptability, etc., generates a synergistic effect, which increases the overall view of the brand within the consumer's mind as a whole.

From a managerial perspective, these insights include the case for a strategic and data-informed approach to brand management focused on actions that boost consumer satisfaction, loyalty and engagement. The study leads to a better understanding of how brand building strategies relate to each other, and provides a valid framework to conduct further studies on brand accessibility, adaptability, and engagement in the digital realm.

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