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The Impact of Social Media on Fashion Industry: Empirical Investigation from Karachiites

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of social media on fashion industry as social media is getting very much in and within the past decade a remarkable development has been witnessed. Businesses are using social media as a promotional tool. Fashion industry is one of the businesses where frequent changes occur and social media is the most convenient and cheapest mean to communicate. Based on convenience sampling, five organizations were selected and a sample of 130 respondents was obtained which had two variables i.e. Social media and Fashion industry which further defused into four sub variables each. Reliability of the questionnaire fell within the acceptable band. As a preliminary investigation, correlation between the variables is obtained which is 45.4% and significant at 1% confidence level. Further, the results obtained through regression shows that social media is a significant predictor of fashion industry.

Keywords: Social media, Fashion industry, Face book

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

The world has become a Global Village & with the advent of information technology the ways of communication and work has been revolutionized completely. The emergence of social media has transformed the world and its entire way of functioning, bringing the world and its people closer. Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviors among groups of people who gather online to share information, experiences and perspectives using colloquial media. Colloquial or conversational media are basically online based applications that have enabled to create and transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios. (Brake, 2009).

Over the last decade Social media has become an effective marketing tool, it has not only created a new dimension of marketing but has also provided many opportunities to the marketers to create brand awareness among consumers. It is now considered as the most transparent engaging and interactive form of public relations.

Social media is a compilation of online platforms and communication channels that are used by people to share information, profiles, assumptions, observations, perspicacity, apprehension and media itself, it facilitates communication and interactions between different groups of people from all across the world. (Moran, 2012).

One industry which is considered to be perfectly suited and naturally fit for social media is Fashion. When we talk about social media for the fashion industry it refers to the social networking websites and other online platforms that enable the fashion industry to connect with their customers using the latest social networking technology. The fashion Industry is using social media to study trends and anticipate fashion behaviors. It is embracing social media which has enabled it to emerge in the forefront as a phenomenon.

The development of social networking website such as Face book, Twitter has created a new muse among the Factionists. From the fashion blogs to the live streaming of catwalk shows, from the main fashion weeks to the social shopping we get diversity of opinions on different places through face book, twitter and other social networking websites. It has become a most important runway for the fashion industry.

The power and influence of Social Media on fashion industry is undeniable. In the twenty first Century The presence of fashion designers on the social networking websites are of extreme importance. The designer and brands who realize the true worth of social media are the ones who have massive fan following.

Not only this but now the fashion bloggers have the key role to play in the industry .They are considered to be thought leaders and have a voice in the industry. The brands are relying upon the fashion bloggers for the feedback on their products and they are serving as a link between target consumers and the

brands. Blogs give a chance to the designer to get feedback on their collections.

Blogging has created a new muse by providing an opportunity to the consumers to connect with the brands they love and adore. Initially the print media was predominating and powerful but now the power has shifted to the consumers and what according to them is reliable. If they think bloggers are reliable then it is also considered to be powerful. (Louw-2011)

The current prevailing trend is for fashion industry to embrace blogging because it is definitely determining, changing and revolutionizing the media industry and its operation. The fashion Industry is now becoming more and easily accessible to the general public all thanks to social media which has massively grown in the recent years.

1.2 Objective Of The Study

The Objective of the study is to determine the role and impact of social media within the fashion industry.

1.3 Problem Statement

The statement of the problem is how beneficial is social media in creating brand awareness among customers and the effects of social media on the fashion Industry.

1.4 Hypothesis

H₀: There is no impact of Social Media on Fashion industry

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

According to M2PressWIRE (2011) Social Media has become the hottest trend in the fashion Industry .The fame & uptake of the brands on the social networking sites is growing at a fast pace. In the past year majority of the brands have doubled their following on the social networking sites. According to the latest research by digital research, one of the prominent and leading provider of digital market research shows that the presence of fashion retailers on the social networking website has significantly grown in comparison to any other fashion retail sectors.

Qualman (2009) concluded that Young adults are power users of social media sites .They engage themselves with their favorite fashion brands through these online platforms and consider their opinions about brands important .According to “Young Adult Revealed” a global survey was carried out on 12603 people from 18 to 24 years old among 26 countries to find out how much young adults engage online with brands every day. The result shows 28% talked about brand on a discussion forum, 19% added brand related content to their homepage on favorite social sites.

Stephenson (2009) concludes that in Accordance to a public relations director for Betsey Johnson “Agatha Szczepaniak” the social media website especially Twitter is considered as an opportunity to get access to customers .They have actually become the human voice for the brand and can be use for free advertising. Fashion Couture houses, designers and retailers in an attempt to shape their brand personalities on real-time worldwide online platforms are tweeting, blogging & updating their profiles on regular basis. The designers are using social media to post videos, commercials, behind the scene and off screen footage and fashion shows which serves to be human voice for the brand.(Stephenson,2009). Fashion houses, brands and retailers are using social media platforms for facilitating real time and authentic relationships with consumers. Chief Executive Officer of Oscar de la Renta Alex Bolen says, “It gives a feel to the customers as if they are part of the brand’s complete family, and therefore the brand itself,(and) the interactive element further enhance that relationship. (Stephenson, 2009).Social media platforms provide an advantage that “gives brands an opportunity to be a part of discussions about their own companies”. These social networking platforms such as face book’s launch of a company page create a strong brand advantage (where) the company is in the middle of a joint communication with its consumer. Social media provides designers the power over releasing their new looks and designs in a representation insightful of its reliability and vision. (Stephenson, 2009).

According to Ziv.Y (2010) The Fashion Industry is deeply rooted in traditional business practices. The reliability and dependability of nearly all aspects of the fashion industry is mainly on people and not on the machines which includes everything from the couture designs to marketing and the buying process. But now with the use of social media the fashion brands can rely more on the digital technologies than the people which is undoubtedly much faster medium of creating brand awareness among customers and to anticipate fashion behaviors.

Social media has become one of the most popular fashionable tools which creates link between brand and the consumer. This link not only gives boost to the purchase intent but it also increases the oral communication. In addition to this social media can be very helpful in projecting the brands image in the minds of well informed and conscious consumers.(Apparel Magazine,2010).

Sanand (2011) concludes that The fashion Industry is welcoming social media because it is not only a

marketing strategy but it also observes and anticipates the fashion behaviours.

According to Lee (2009) The commencement of fashion bloggers, has a significant impact on the fashion industry. It has brought a change in everything from printing to publishing and how brands market themselves online. The renowned fashion brands and designer such as Dolce & Gabanna, Burberry, Alexander McQueen, along with foremost fashion magazines such as Vogue and Elle , acknowledged brilliant fashion bloggers such as Gala Darling, Tavi, Scott Schuman of the 'Sartorialist' and Garance Dore. With their established network of followers, the fashion industry have taken notice by requesting these bloggers to cooperate in fashion design collaborations and receive seats at the front row in the international fashion week . (Lee, 2009). The organization of communities-social media forums ,tweets and blogs, stimulate communication between brands and their consumers. Where social networking websites such as face book and twitter have become the most priceless and valuable tools for brands to observe consumer's response and present real time consumer service in the fashion industry. (Lee, 2009)

According to Noricks (2010) Fashion marketing relations and PR specialists and consultants help clothing companies and retail stores establish and keep a positive civic image." Fashion marketing promotions and PR strategies for designers and brands includes: working with the media, an acquaint media kit with packaged set of promotional materials such as photographs and background materials, scheduled media tours/desk sides, celebrity credit promotion, fashion events which includes the information regarding runway shows and fashion week and sales appointments. Fashion designers, retail outlets and promising stylists-all facets of the fashion industry were estranged before the emergence and use of social media. The establishment of "leading retailers and brands "is the result of digital PR trends" and the "alteration between brands and publishers. (Noricks, 2010). Just the way "brands are designing their own magazines,"the publishers are making use of their online platforms to express their opinions (i.e editorialize) retail. Social media platforms serves as an interactive medium for even fashion news coverage and are no longer considered as an addition to the print magazines. The members of social networking websites are becoming the "new professionals" of the industry. (Noricks, 2010).

Prabhakar (2010) concludes that by allowing the public behind the fashion influencer screen,(designers) are now connecting to an exclusively fresh spectators .The social media platforms allow designers "to benefit from the 400 million face book users and more than 22 million Twitters users," which is helpful in providing marketing capabilities which cannot be bought from advertising budget.

According to Phillips (2008) we human beings are multifaceted combination of private and social selves and the interconnections presented by social media give us a convincing platform."In organization with the Philips's point of view of social media, fashion brands and designers use an equation of online platforms to provide the costumers and consumers with a judgment on the different perspectives that formulate a brand strategy, they not only tweet and update about their collections and clothes but also about their personal parties, holidays and besides this they also share their personal phota via social networking websites.

Bourne (2010) concluded that social media platforms provide rising stylists, bloggers and designers a fashion outlet that has a global worldwide reach. "Social media is fashion's newest Muse," an article from "Forbes.com," discussed that social networking websites as a chance for specialized growth and appreciation for emerging designers, stylists and bloggers.(Bourne,2010).Social networking websites and retailers are using social media platforms as a foundation for exploring potential fashion designers. A former fashion editor ,Daria Shualy, "launched the website "Sense of Fashion" which was primarily founded on the basis of helping (independent) designers sell their (designs) and to provide better communication with customers and consumers.(Bourne, 2010)

According to DiMauro (2011) social media in the fashion industry is aiding the development of "social fashion," where expertise are applied to support art .Fashion bloggers and freelance stylists are considered as a integral part of brand's marketing and promotional strategies.

According to Olivier (2008) when shopping online, the customers are comfortable in buying the products from retail sites they can trust. Social media has brought fresh and innovative elements into the online shopping experience and is potentionally catalyst for additional profits, giving brands and retailers an opportunity to place their products in front on thousands of potential customers in a familiar and easily reachable surroundings .The social networking platforms have a wider reach to the potential consumers and target market, the customizable and **accommodating interface of the networking sites is introduced to them as a perfect platform to cater a larger no of audience and for expansion of business in an interactive environment. (Olivier, 2008).**

Michault (2009) concluded that a perfect example of the influence and impact of social media was during a round of fashion shows in 2009. Just by one tweet from Lady Gaga so many people clicked on the live streaming of Alexander McQueen's fashion show which caused the site's server to crash.

According to Morrissey (2010) to promote its Poppy line of affordable but luxury fashion clothing the brand Coach decided to run a social media campaign. When the line was launched back in 2009 Coach banked

on face book and tapped into its fan base. All the face book fans were given a gift on their visit to the Coach store. (Morrissey, 2010)

According to Agresta (2010) Social media marketing also includes understanding the online consumer behavior. The print, radio and television advertising is now replaced by the social media advertising which has become an important channel of marketing campaign. Today, people communicate via social networking websites, where peer reviews and opinions are of greater importance. Consumers are more expected to look for blog reviews and ratings and follow the like and dislikes of their friends via face book, tweeter and so on.

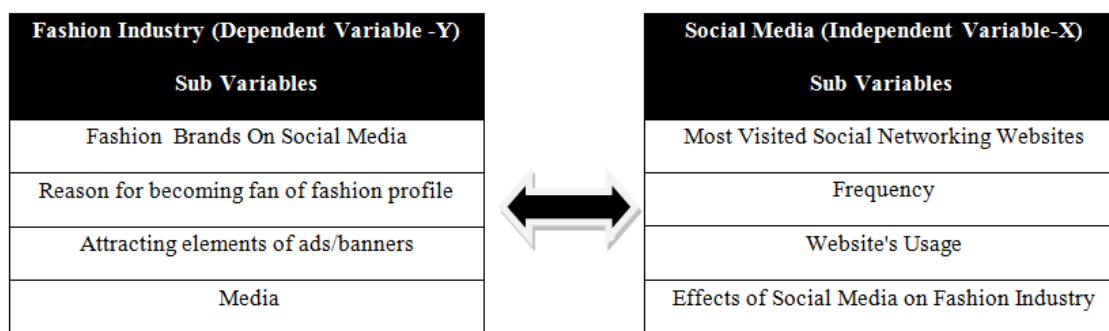
3. METHODOLOGY

My research topic is to determine the effect of social media on the fashion Industry therefore it will be considered as a causal research.

3.1 Data & Variables

This research topic calls for primary data to be collected. I have collected the data using questionnaires (see Appendix 1 for questionnaire).The likert scale questionnaire was used in order to find the results and relationship between independent variable i.e. social media and dependant variable i.e. fashion industry .It consisted of 10 questions.

Below is the conceptual framework that shows the variables:



3.2 Sample Technique

I have followed the convenience sampling by floating questionnaires to the people who were easily accessible. The questionnaires were distributed in the following educational institutions and office.

- Asian Institute of fashion designing (AIFD)
- Greenwich University
- Fatima Jinnah dental college
- Indus Valley school of arts and architecture(IVS)
- A & b Productions

3.3 Sample Size

The Sample Size of 130 questionnaires was used for the analysis. Total no of questionnaires floated and received back were equal i.e. 130 which means the response rate was 100 %.

3.4 Model

The purpose of my research is to identify the impact of social media on fashion industry's Therefore I have used Regression Model. Where social media was independent variable X and fashion industry was dependent variable Y.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

Where

Y= Fashion Industry

X=Social Media

α and β = coefficients

ε = error term

4. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Results

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.697	.655	10

Cronbach's alpha is used to check reliability of a questionnaire. Its lenient cutoff is 0.6 and strict cutoff is 0.7. As we are getting 0.697 which is closer to 0.7, it shows that questionnaire is reliable.

Correlations

		Social_Media	Fashion_Industry
Social_Media	Pearson Correlation	1	.454**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	130	130
Fashion_Industry	Pearson Correlation	.454**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	130	130

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation shows interdependence between two variables. Here, we are getting 45.4% correlation between social media and fashion industry which is significant at 1% as Sig value is less than 0.01. Hence, Social media and fashion industry are highly interdependent on each other.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.454 ^a	.206	.200	.57999

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social_Media

R square is also known as Coefficient of determination which shows goodness of fit of the model i.e. explained variations of a model. Here, it is 20.6% which means changes in social media dictates 20.6% changes in fashion industry. Furthermore, the difference between R-square and adjusted R-square is less than 5% which signifies that there is no sample error.

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.160	1	11.160	33.174	.000 ^a
	Residual	43.058	128	.336		
	Total	54.218	129			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social_Media

b. Dependent Variable: Fashion_Industry

Anova shows over all significance of a model. Also, significance of Anova shows significance of goodness of fit. Cutoff of F is 4 which show it is significant. Here F-statistic obtained is 33.17 which is greater than 4 which means it is significant. Moreover, as Sig value is less than 0.01 it is significant at 1%.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.466	.296		4.963	.000
Social_Media	.457	.079	.454	5.760	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Fashion_Industry

The table shows impact of Social Media on Fashion Industry .Here, the coefficient of social media is positive 0.457 which suggests that there is a direct relationship between fashion industry and social media. Furthermore, if social media score increases by one unit, fashion industry's score will increase by 0.457 units. This relationship is statistically significant as t value obtained is 5.76 and is greater than 2. This significance is also shown by sig value which is less than 0.01 so we conclude that model is significant at 1%.

4.2 Discussion

This research aimed to determine the impact of social media on the fashion Industry. In order to receive a better understanding of the impact of social media on the fashion industry and how useful it is for the fashion industry to incorporate online platforms in their marketing strategies primary data was collected by floating questionnaires through convenience sampling and the result was concluded on the basis of these questionnaires. The result findings show that social media and fashion industry are highly interdependent on each other. Moreover, social media and fashion industry have a significant relationship which means if there is an increase in social media by 1% it will lead to a increase in fashion Industry by 20.6 %.

Comparing the results with the previous research there is a difference in the findings. According to Han Nguyen (2010) People prefer traditional marketing more and have a neutral feeling about fashion profile on face book. Consumers hear about fashion brands mainly through radio, television and magazines. He concluded that Traditional marketing is still the main tool to create brand awareness among consumers as social media platforms can only reach a particular target market.

According to Laura Elizabeth (2011) with the use of social media people are connecting with brands on a personal level which in turn is affecting the fashion retail industry in many ways by providing a platform to interact with their consumers and promote their products. The relationship that social media creates between brands and the consumers is essential for brands in order to drive sales in future. Moreover, the use of social media over the recent years across all demographic groups is dramatically increased. The data collected from the subject survey suggests that the brands should continue to utilize creative online marketing strategies in order to engage consumers directly and more personally with the fashion brands.

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Considering the data analysis and result findings of the study, the hypothesis H0 has been rejected because according to the results there is a direct and significant relationship between social media and the fashion Industry.

For brands and designers joining the social media bandwagon, the benefits are numerous. Besides being a free tool for public relations, social media is also connecting potential buyers to marketers. The emerging designers, as well as the high end labels are using social media as one of their marketing strategies. With the big brands and designers in the industry using social media to create hype and buzz of fashion shows and events just before they are actually launched ,it would be safe to conclude that future of the fashion Industry looks promising. The fashion industry is going through a transformation as far as social advertising is considered. While some brands are still uncertain, the others have incorporated social media as a fundamental part of their marketing strategies. The passion with which both consumers and designers have embraced social media is overwhelming .Undoubtedly, social media, is the hottest trend in fashion in today's world and we have every reason to believe in the power and impact of social media.

5.2 Recommendations

After conducting the study, analysis of the researched literature and interpretation of the data collected concerning the topic "the effects of social media on the fashion industry", provides interesting result and conclusions. A few recommendations for practice must include an active online presence consistently to acquire reliable consumers as a brand, utilizing the fashion industry and its professionals for possible collaborations, and to effectively communicate with the consumers by staying in -tune with the latest internet trends and creating

innovated campaigns.

As we know the world and society's daily life changes at odds and fast pace, in order to cope up with the timely changes an individual must have an active presence. When it comes to social media it is even more essential and important to stay active with the evolving technological online outlets.

With the accessibility of social media to everyone, the fashion industry is gaining a new platform of emerging designers, stylists and fashionistas who are self styling their own voice and career.

For designers and brands that are using online platforms to welcome customers as a part of the brand's extended family, it is vital for them to stay connected with their customers.

Today with the emergence of social media and online platforms, people are using their voices and posting comments and opinions on fashion. This enables the individuals who are interested in fashion but have limited fashion knowledge, to break into the industry due to the recent shift of evolving designers collaborations with fashion bloggers.

In brief, Social media does not diminish the role of traditional media, but it provides another channel for consumers to experience the brands they love and adore.

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