

## تأثير التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على ولاء العلامة التجارية في منتجات فئة نمط الحياة: الدور الوسيط لتجربة العملاء

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### المستخلص

يقوم المسوّق باستمرار باستكشاف وسائل جديدة ومبتكرة لجذب العملاء نحو المنتجات، وبناء تفضيلاتهم وإقناعهم بشراء منتجات نمط الحياة. برز التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كواحد من الأدوات القوية المهمة لتعزيز قيمة العلامة التجارية لمنتجات نمط الحياة.

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في تأثير التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تحسين ولاء العلامة التجارية وتقييم التأثير الوسيط لتجربة العملاء على التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وعلاقة ولاء العلامة التجارية لمنتجات نمط الحياة في السياق الهندي. في استطلاع شمل 259 مشاركاً تم اختيارهم عشوائياً، كشفت الدراسة أن التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يؤثر على ولاء العلامة التجارية ومنتجات أسلوب حياة تجربة العملاء.

تشير الدراسة أيضاً إلى أن تجربة العملاء تتوسط العلاقة بين التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وولاء العلامة التجارية لمنتجات نمط الحياة. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن منظمات تسويق منتجات نمط الحياة يجب أن تركز بشكل أكبر على الاستخدام الفعال لمنصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لتحديد مواقع العلامة التجارية، وتسهيل مشاركة المعلومات، ومشاركة العملاء، وتطوير علاقة هادفة مع العملاء، والتي بدورها تميل إلى نمو الأعمال والاستدامة. ستساعد الأنشطة التسويقية الفعّالة عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وتجارب العملاء التي لا تُنسى؛ الشركة على مواجهة المنافسة بنجاح، وتعزيز علاقات العملاء مع العلامة التجارية بشكل خاص والشركة بشكل عام. كما يتم عرض بعض القيود ونطاق البحث المستقبلي في الدراسة.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، تجارب العملاء، منتجات أسلوب الحياة، الولاء للعلامة التجارية، إلخ.

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lifestyle brands, other consumers, the products of the organization and the overall organization.

The results of second hypothesis testing approves that social media marketing have positive influence on customer experience of consumers towards lifestyle products. In addition, the assumption of mediating effect of customer experience on the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty is believed to be valid. Compared to organizational offerings, customer experience is seen as a distinctive offering by the lifestyles products marketing organizations. It may evolve either directly through product actual usage, information search and following the brand pages or community or indirectly when consumers expose to intangible aspects of marketing communications (Brakus, et al., 2009). Customer experiences may be developed through mental, emotional, spiritual, social and physical engagement with brands. Favorable or memorable customer experiences have the tendency to become the part of individuals' long-term memory, and consequently, these associations can play a crucial role in building brand attitude, brand preference, and brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). Modern customers, especially young netizens, regard social media marketing as a more trustworthy source of information about their brands than traditional instruments of marketing communications. In view of this, social media marketing activities like effective brand promotion, information search, brand comparison, online brand communities and customized brand communications strategies shape the unique customer experiences. Companies must consider controlling digital content and other online publications and be willing to share their experiences and exchange opinions. Companies should use social media and other online applications to provide consumers with up-to-date, relevant and fresh information, as this information inspires and motivates customers to make decisions, choose brands and be loyal to brands (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Thus, it can be concluded that social media marketing practices provide strategic advantage to contemporary business organizations in the marketplace to compete with their competitors to differentiate their offerings. Marketers also understand the fact that social media marketing has wide reach across boundaries, cost-effective, high popularity and high credibility. They must use constant brand communication and engagement strategies, share useful information about brands and market trends, develop a feeling of community and social bonds in social media platforms for encouraging brand positioning, which, in turn enhance brand loyalty and customer experience.

Researchers, therefore, recommend marketing practitioners or brand managers to concentrate on the swift growth of social media marketing and associated customer experiences, and consider how these developments could be managed to improve the brand loyalty of modern customers. Keeping these in mind, the implication of the research work will help practitioners (brand managers and social media marketers) and industry-players to exploit the effectiveness of social media platforms to increase market-share and mindshare. Lifestyle brand marketers must deliver effective services to customers, offer social status, develop elite brand positioning and concentrate on changing preferences of fashion-conscious netizens to create a unique customer experience. In addition, they must understand the effective brand information search, brand comparison, online brand communities, updates on industry trends, and personalized brand communication content specific to each social media platform.

### Conclusions

This study was designed to examine the impact of social media marketing on improving the brand loyalty and the mediating effect of customer experience and brand loyalty relationship for lifestyle products in the Indian context. Lifestyle products were chosen for the study because of growing demand for lifestyle products, rising disposable income, high spending of Indian

consumers on lifestyle and luxury products. Further insights from the research findings reveal that social media marketing influence the brand loyalty and customer experience towards lifestyle products. These findings indicated that lifestyle product marketing organizations should concentrate more on effective utilization of the social media platforms for brand positioning, facilitating information sharing, customer engagement, and develop meaningful customer relationship, which in turn has a tendency for business growth and sustainability. The effective social media marketing activities and memorable customer experiences will help company to face the competition successfully and cement the customers' relationships with the brand and the company in general.

### Limitations and Future Scope of Study

This research has certain limitations. First, this study is limited to Indian consumers only. Further studies are required to know the significant factors in other culture and contexts. Second, the small sample size of 259 respondents is another limitation of this study. Third, data collected in this study was performed at a single point in time to make it cross sectional. The longitudinal method of data collection might serve as a better approach of collecting data in the future. Thus, these shortcomings indicate the limited generalizability of the results. Future studies can be carried out with student groups belonging to different universities and educational background, age and income groups, and people who are engaged in the business life. By receiving different perceptions of consumers regarding social media marketing applications, the effects of these perceptions on brand loyalty and purchase intention can be measured or the effect of five perceptions in this study on different variables can be investigated. Furthermore, the perceptions and attitudes of businesses about social media marketing applications can be investigated and compared with the findings of consumer perceptions in this study. As previously mentioned, market dynamics are also obliged to change along with the easy and quick change of the attitudes of consumers adapting to the digital age we live in. Therefore, a similar study can be carried out with this new consumer group if social media changes or brings some innovations in the next periods, or in the period during which the next generation, generation Z, will start to work.

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**Table 5: Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.814	.293		-2.781	.006
Social Media Marketing	1.129	.083	.648	13.656	.000
R = 0.648 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.420 F = 186.482 P = 0.000 Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.628					

Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

Table 6 indicates that the impact of social media marketing on customer experience was found significant (F = 186.50, P= 0.000; t=43.186, p=.000) and contributed 87.9% (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.879) to customer experience. The results

showed that the beta values for social media marketing is 0.992 and it has significant effect on customer experience. This shows the acceptance of second research hypothesis indicating that social media marketing (SMM) has positive influence on customer experience (CE).

**Table 6: Impact of Social Media Marketing on Customer Experience**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.039	.081		.480	.632
Social Media Marketing	.992	.023	.937	43.186	.000
R = 0.937 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.879 F = 186.5020 P = 0.000 Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.1746					

Dependent Variable: Customer Experience

Table 7 indicates the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty. It was found significant (F = 196.563, P= 0.000; t= 14.020, p=.000) and contributed 43.39% (R<sup>2</sup> =

0.433) to brand loyalty. The results showed that the beta values for customer experience is 0.077 and it has significant effect on brand loyalty.

**Table 7: Impact of Customer Experience on Brand Loyalty**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.665	.275		-2.422	.016
Customer Experience	1.082	.077	.658	14.020	.000
R = 0.658 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.433 F = 196.563 P = 0.000 Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.62112					

Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

**Mediation Effect of Customer Experience of Social Media Marketing & Brand Loyalty**

Table 10(A) and 10(B) revealed the results of Sobel test, Aroian test, and Goodman test that were conducted to evaluate the effect of mediating variable (customer experience) of a given independent variable (social media marketing) on a given dependent variable (brand loyalty). In general, mediation may occur if: (1) the independent variable significantly affects the mediator; (2) the independent variable significantly affects the dependent

variable in the absence of the mediator; (3) the mediator has a major unique effect on the dependent variable; and (4) the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable shrinks when the mediator is applied to the model. Such principles can be used to informally determine whether mediation is taking place or not. Sobel test indicated that p-value is less than 0.05 assuming a two-tailed z-test is greater than 1.96 and hence research hypothesis is accepted and concluded that customer experience mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

**Table 10(A): Influence of Mediating Variable using Sobel Test (A)**

.	Input		Test Statistics	Standard Error	P-Value
a	.992	Sobel test	13.36073113	0.08033572	.000
b	1.082	Aroian test	13.35748578	0.08035524	.000
Sa	0.023	Goodman test	13.36397884	0.0803162	.000
Sb	.077				

**Table 10(B): Influence of Mediating Variable using Sobel Test (B)**

	Input			
t <sub>a</sub>	43.186	Sobel test	13.34350289	0.000
t <sub>b</sub>	14.030	Aroian test	13.34026829	0.000
		Goodman test	13.34673984	0.000

**Discussion & Implications**

This present study examined the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty and mediating effect of customer experience on social media marketing and brand loyalty in the context of lifestyle products. The results showed that social media marketing has positive influence on brand loyalty of consumers towards lifestyle products. Attesting the proposition of Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), the present work supports that effective social media marketing practices are key determinants of brand loyalty. Social media marketing practices such as brand pages on social media sites, customer engagement initiatives, brand information and effective social media advertising make

customers more engaged with brand. Consequently, customers tend to be loyal and committed to the brand. Similar to findings of Merisavo & Raulas (2004), Schau et al. (2009), Zhou et al. (2012), Laroche, Habibi & Richard (2013), and Ismail (2017), this study supports that social media marketing significantly influence the brand loyalty towards lifestyle products. Therefore, the study concluded that perceived social media marketing activities are effective tools for developing relationship with customers, and building brand loyalty within the social media-based brand community. The study concluded that effective social media marketing activities can enhance brand trust and loyalty by augmenting the relations of customers with the

Variables	Mean	SD
I discuss advertisement of lifestyle product with my friends on social media.	3.633	0.953
The graphics and phrases of product advertisement on social media is memorable.	3.757	0.999
Social media is better in dealing with public issues.	3.483	0.921
<b>Quality Conformance (<math>\alpha = 0.766</math>)</b>	<b>3.220</b>	<b>0.907</b>
Social media is a powerful tool to exploit prospect of lifestyle products and its promotion.	3.359	1.026
The lifestyle product offer appears inexpensive on the social media websites.	3.274	1.171
To learn more and make a purchase, I still click on the lifestyle products advertisement on the social media websites.	3.139	1.280
I am very curious and try to explore and know more about the various features of lifestyle product by watching social media sites.	3.108	1.237
<b>Curiosity Stimulation (<math>\alpha = 0.763</math>)</b>	<b>3.815</b>	<b>0.828</b>
The advertising of lifestyle product on social media are too enticing.	3.749	1.227
Social media sites can easily be used for product discovery.	3.432	1.287
I consider the social media sites very convenient to use.	4.263	0.977
<b>Product Exploration (<math>\alpha = 0.761</math>)</b>	<b>3.766</b>	<b>0.747</b>
My communication and performance skill in exploring product has improved by using social media.	3.961	0.866
The exploration of lifestyle product on social media is interesting.	3.838	0.879
Social media marketing has given new hope for exploration of product information.	3.695	0.874
<b>Product Promotion (<math>\alpha = 0.928</math>)</b>	<b>3.701</b>	<b>1.036</b>
Promoting lifestyle product on social media is causing desire to know more.	3.633	1.035
Social media is better for promoting product from organization than individual customer	3.768	1.110

Table 3 indicates the mean and standard deviation values for various measurement items of brand loyalty. Attribute 'I will definitely remain with present brand' with mean value of 3.301 and standard deviation of 1.283 was ranked highest. It was followed by attribute 'I consider

myself loyal to this brand' with mean value of 3.22. Interestingly, 'I will definitely recommend others to associate with this product' variable secured lowest preference with mean value of 2.919 and standard deviation 1.287.

**Table 3: Factors of Brand Loyalty (BL)**

Variables	Mean	SD
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>	<b>3.147</b>	<b>0.824</b>
I will definitely recommend others to associate with this product.	2.919	1.287
I consider myself loyal to this brand.	3.220	1.159
This product will be my first choice in the future.	3.259	1.204
My present product really attracted me over other brands.	3.124	1.103
Social interactivity and its approach are trying to engage customers' lives.	3.058	1.145
I will definitely remain with present brand.	3.301	1.283

Data presented in Table 4 of various factors of customer experience reveals that 'intellectual experiences' factor secured the highest mean (mean = 3.716), whereas factor 'Sensory experience' has the lowest mean (mean = 3.284). 'The lifestyle brand keeps me up-to-date about their products and latest developments' and 'The lifestyle brand sincerely seeks my input for its new products' were ranked

first and second in the respondents' evaluation with mean value of 3.977 and 3.765 respectively. 'The lifestyle brand is very attractive and arises my strong sensation' and 'I have a strong positive feeling about that lifestyle product' attributes secured lowest with a mean value of 3.097 and 3.224 respectively.

**Table 4: Factors of Customer Experience (CE)**

Variables	Mean	SD
<b>Sensory experience</b>	<b>3.284</b>	<b>0.654</b>
The lifestyle brand is very attractive and arises my strong sensation.	3.097	0.789
I have a strong positive feeling about that lifestyle product.	3.224	0.7549
The lifestyle brand is quite worthwhile.	3.533	0.612
<b>Social Experience</b>	<b>3.436</b>	<b>0.606</b>
The lifestyle brand promotes my relationships with my friends and others.	3.417	0.587
By shopping this lifestyle, I can get recognition.	3.436	0.698
The lifestyle brand gives me a sense of belonging and positions my social status.	3.456	0.737
<b>Behavioral Experience</b>	<b>3.654</b>	<b>0.545</b>
The lifestyle brand's online resources are designed to be as efficient/informative as possible for me.	3.463	0.722
The lifestyle brand sincerely seeks my input for its new products.	3.765	0.586
The lifestyle brand delivers a good customer service.	3.734	0.573
<b>Intellectual Experience</b>	<b>3.716</b>	<b>0.584</b>
The lifestyle brand keeps me up to date about their products and latest developments.	3.977	0.616
Being a customer of the lifestyle brand gives me experiential learning.	3.649	0.632
The lifestyle brand knows exactly what I want.	3.521	0.764

**Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis was carried out to measure the coefficients of the linear equation between social media marketing, customer experience, and brand loyalty. Combined factor mean (social media self-efficacy, media credibility, interactivity, media trust, quality conformance, curiosity stimulation, product exploration and product promotion) were used in analyzing the construct 'Social media marketing'. Similarly, combined mean of sensory experience, affective experience, behavioral experience and intellectual experience were calculated for assessing 'Customer experience' factor. Combined mean of six

measurement variables of brand loyalty were calculated using SPSS software and then further regression analysis was carried out. Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis. The impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty was found significant ( $F = 186.482, P = 0.000; t = 13.656, p = 0.000$ ) and contributed 42.0% ( $R^2 = 0.420$ ) to brand loyalty. The results revealed that the beta values for social media marketing is 1.1293 and it has significant effect on brand loyalty. Hence, the research hypothesis is accepted indicating the social media marketing (SMM) has significant effect on consumers' brand loyalty (BL).

six items adopted from Ailawadi et al. (2001), Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), Benuur & Jin (2017). The last part of the questionnaire examined surveyed consumer's demographic profile.

To assure the validity of survey instrument, the initial questionnaire was given to a panel of experts and faculty members to judge its content's validity, clarify its items' meaning and to assure its linkages with the study objectives. To validate the reliability, the questionnaire was pilot tested using 30 respondents, representing 12% of the total sample size, who were considered the representatives of the study population. The value of Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.922, which suggested the acceptable level of reliability of the questionnaire. Questionnaire was mailed to 1000 respondents. Researchers received 303 responses and after editing, 259 respondents were found fit and were used in this study, excluding 41 responses that were unreliable or insincerely answered. Thereafter, the data received was systematically arranged, tabulated and analyzed using SPSS 22. Data analysis involves descriptive statistics and by using SPSS 22 and regression analysis, the assessment was performed

on the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty, and mediating role of customer experience in the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty.

## Results

The information presented in the table 1 indicates the demographic characteristics of respondents. It was found that 22.4% of respondents were from the age group of up to 20 years and 31-40 years. Most of the respondents (42.54%) were in the age group of 21-30 years. 22.2% respondents were from age group ranging from 41-50 years. Remaining 1.5% respondents were in the age group of 51-60 years. The analysis indicates that males dominate the sample with 64.5% in the survey. Regarding education level, 48.65% respondents surveyed were graduate, 23.55% were postgraduate and 27.8% were professionally qualified. Occupation-wise, the sample included students (37.5%), salaried employees (29.7%), housewives (9.3%), and professionals (17%). Remaining 6.5% respondents were involved in other kinds of occupations such as business owners and unemployed.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 259)**

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Up to 20 years	58	22.4
	21-30 years	110	42.5
	31-40 years	58	22.4
	41-50 years	29	11.2
	51-60 years	4	1.5
Gender	Male	167	64.5
	Female	92	35.5
Educational Level	Graduate	126	48.65
	Postgraduate	61	23.55
	Professional	72	27.80
Occupations	Students	97	37.5
	Salaried Employees	77	29.7
	Housewives	24	9.3
	Professionals	44	17.0
	Others	17	6.5

## Descriptive Statistics

Data summarized in Table 2 of various factors of social media marketing reveal that 'Social Media Self Efficacy' factor secured the highest mean (mean = 3.821). It is followed by 'Curiosity Stimulation' (mean = 3.815), 'Product Exploration' (mean = 3.766) and 'Product Promotion' (mean = 3.701). 'Media Creativity' factor has the lowest mean (mean = 2.869). 'Interactivity' (mean = 3.188) and 'Quality Conformance' (mean = 3.222) also rated poor by respondents. Attribute 'I am comfortable in using social media for taking information of lifestyle products' has been ranked as the first with a mean of 4.517 and a standard deviation of .769. 'I consider the social

media sites very convenient to use', 'Lifestyle product contents presented in the social media are credible and trustworthy' and 'I am confident in my ability to find product information on social media sites' attributes were ranked second, third and fourth with a mean value of 4.263, 4.246 and 4.191 respectively. Attribute related to 'Social media is successful in the selling of a lifestyle product' was ranked lowest with mean of 2.676. It was followed by attributes like 'Social media advertisement is more insightful as compared to traditional advertising' and 'Social media is useful in building communities of mark fans' with mean value of 2.687 and 2.687 respectively.

**Table 2: Factors of Social Media Marketing (SMM)**

Variables	Mean	SD
<b>Social Media Self Efficacy (<math>\alpha = 0.922</math>)</b>	<b>3.821</b>	<b>0.602</b>
I am comfortable in using social media for taking information of lifestyle products.	4.517	0.769
I am confident in my ability to find product information on social media sites.	4.191	1.009
Lifestyle product contents presented in the social media are credible and trustworthy.	4.246	1.063
I extensively use social media sites for product information and evaluation.	4.100	1.102
I often lookup product related questions and answer on social media sites.	3.147	1.185
I subscribe social media networking sites for updates and alerts regarding a brand or lifestyle product.	3.954	1.150
I invest in those lifestyle brands, which are endorsed on social network by celebrities.	3.660	1.264
Social media is useful in building communities of mark fans.	2.676	1.413
<b>Media Creativity (<math>\alpha = 0.773</math>)</b>	<b>2.869</b>	<b>0.912</b>
Social media is great for consumer engagement.	3.768	1.110
Social media fits well for advertising lifestyle product.	2.954	0.951
Social media is successful in the selling of a lifestyle product.	2.687	1.078
I feel at ease using social media sites to share my knowledge.	3.008	1.367
<b>Interactivity (<math>\alpha = 0.857</math>)</b>	<b>3.188</b>	<b>0.994</b>
The picture of lifestyle product presented on social media is deep memorable & can't be avoided.	2.954	0.951
Social media advertisement is more insightful as compared to traditional advertising.	2.687	1.078
I refer to experts' views on social media when considering products of a lifestyle.	2.819	1.057
Advertising on the social media is more interactive and informative than traditional advertising.	3.015	1.553
<b>Media Trust (<math>\alpha = 0.849</math>)</b>	<b>3.665</b>	<b>0.827</b>
I get pleasant feeling of lifestyle product on social media sites.	3.147	1.185

brand, the existing academic literature emphasize on the need for more researches, especially in the context of the social media marketing, to better understand how do customer experiences develop the brand value for lifestyle products. Islam & Rehman (2016) explored the role of social media marketing activities such as customer engagement in enhancing customer trust, experience and word-of-mouth. The results reveal that all these social media marketing activities lead to customer trust, favorable experience and word-of-mouth activities. Marketers believe that customers do not just visit the social media platforms and buy the product within few minutes. Rather, the overall experience of the customer is most importantly shaped by the information available on the social media about the organization and brand. Social media marketing, particularly the usage of advance technologies, is the powerful communication medium to enhance customer experience, develop the relationships, earn trust and build brand awareness. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H2: Social media marketing have positive influence on customer experience.**

**Social Media Marketing, Brand Loyalty and Customer Experience**

Several researchers have confirmed that social media marketing activities such as: interactivity, entertainment, customization practices, social networking, customer engagement, brand pages and online brand community allow companies to enhance positive perception, favourable brand image, encourage electronic word-of-mouth, trust, customer experience and brand loyalty (Yadav & Rahman, 2018, Islam & Rehman, 2016; Tafesse & Wien, 2018). These social media marketing activities stimulate customer experience and influence consumer perception of brand equity and brand loyalty (Chen & Lin, 2019). Rapala (2014) pointed out that brand loyalty is in close contact with the consumer's value system, the consumer's lifestyle, the personal history and social aspects of consumers. The study also confirmed that customers find their lifestyle brand loyalty driven by correspondence of own values and brand values, compatibility of the brand with current lifestyle,

stories and memories connected to the brand, features of the products, and sense of togetherness. Brand loyalty is a crucial construct for success in business. Understanding the customer experience with the brand plays an important role to achieve high brand loyalty from the customers. Social media marketing strategies and customer experience have a symbiotic relationship in which there is the possibility for each to have a positive or negative effect on the other. It has been observed particularly in the context of young millennial consumers that they generally terminate a brand partnership even due to a minor disappointment. This dissatisfaction may lead to poor customer experience that could arise from poor social media marketing strategies and poor brand communication strategies.

Customer experience has a direct and positive impact on customer's willingness to purchase a product, and customer willingness forms the basis for customer satisfaction, loyalty and customer retention. Zarantonello & Schmitt (2010) and Shamim & Butt (2013) confirmed that customers are willing to prefer one brand over others for its experiential benefits. They further argued that a positive or negative evaluation of these experiences could affect their perceptions about the credibility of a brand and thus influence purchase intention. Social media marketing alone can't lead to customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. In addition to that, consumers with positive brand experience in relation to the brand play an important role in achieving customer's loyalty towards the company (Brakus et al., 2009). The overall favorable experiences of customers either through direct experience or exposure of effective social media marketing campaigns significantly influence the brand loyalty. Thus, it is proposed that:

**H3: Customer experience mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty towards lifestyle brands.**

To conclude, the existing literature review studies the variables and hypothesize the relationship between social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer experience. A conceptual framework was designed to show the proposed relationships among the variables (Figure 1).

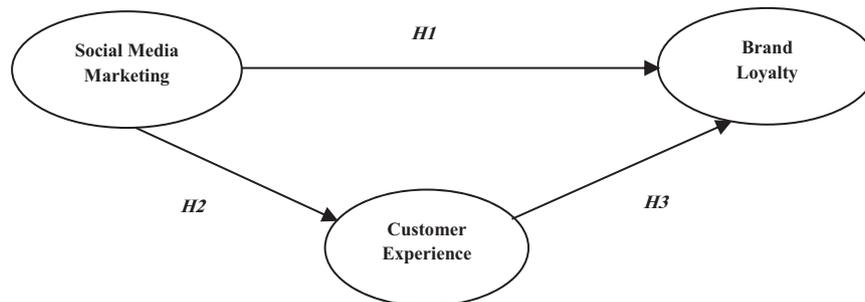


Figure 1: The conceptual framework

**Research Methodology**

Data for the present study was collected from Indian consumers using an online survey developed on Google Forms over a period of three months from October to December 2019. Consumers were invited to participate in the study through email and by posting invitations to well-known sites asking potential respondents to visit the website to complete the questionnaire. Variables for the social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer experience were identified through the review of relevant literature. The survey questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first part consisted of questions related to purchase attributes of consumers for lifestyle products. Lifestyle product categories - apparels, fashion accessories, cosmetics, health care products and electronic appliances

were selected for this study. The second section contained the 48 attributes related to social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer experience. Respondents were instructed to express their opinion according to their degree of agreement with given 48 attributes in a five-point Likert-scale (where 5 designated strongly agree and 1 designated strongly disagree). Dimensions of social media marketing were identified as promotion efficacy, media credibility, interactivity, media trust, quality conformance, curiosity stimulation, product exploration and product promotions (Kim & Ko, 2012). Customer experience was measured on four dimensions namely, sensory experience, affective experience, behavioral experience, and intellectual experience. The variables of customer experience were taken from Kuppelwieser & Klaus (2020), Klaus (2014) and Fan & Li (2006). Brand loyalty was measured through

lifestyle products. In addition, this study also examines the mediating effect of customer experience on social media marketing and brand loyalty relationship for lifestyle products in the Indian context.

## Literature Review

### Social Media Marketing

The social media has emerged as one of the important mediums of online communication that facilitates multidimensional interaction among consumer, producer as well as channel partners and helps in resolving many issues related to product/services. Social media is a place for consumer learning about companies and their products (Shankar, Inman, Mantrala, Kelley & Rizley, 2011). Social media is a group of internet-based applications that is built on the ideological and the technological foundations of web 2.0 and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Yogesh et al., 2020, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Simply, it refers to the online technologies and practices which individuals, organizations and businesses use for sharing knowledge and opinions. Exponential growth of search engine technologies, mobile devices, internet resources and online social network has enabled marketers' ability to reach target customer through new touch point. Social media are applied or practical program, platforms and on-line media for the purpose of facilitating interaction, cooperation and sharing content. Social media are a group of internet-based tools that are created based on ideological construction and technical construction of the web and it deal with the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media provide a chance to reduce misunderstanding and prejudice toward brands and to raise the brand equity and purchase intention. It indicates the severity of the willingness and intention for the target behavior. Social media marketing involves all the activities for using social media to make existing and potential customers aware of the value of the products and services of the organization. Social media marketing has become an important tool for communication with consumers. The increased use of social media has changed the connection and contact between people. It has become very simple for brands to promote, publicize and involve the customers in the communication process via social media networks.

### Brand Loyalty

Marketing strategies have shifted their focus to relationships and value-creation that are directly linked to brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is a positive feeling towards a brand and consumers' commitment to purchase the same product or service repeatedly, regardless of the strategies of competitors or changes in the environmental conditions. The brand loyalty became an important area of study on Copeland's academic work in 1923 (cited in Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011, p. 288) with the assumption that brand loyalty only existed at the behavioral level. Later, scholars like Cunningham (1966), Day (1969) and Jacoby (1971) revealed another level of brand loyalty and they began to recognize the attitudinal aspect of behavior affecting brand loyalty.

### Customer Experience

Experience is described as a particular incident, feeling or similar other things that a person has undergone. Gentile et al., (2007) explained origin of customer experience; according to their opinion, customer experience is originated from a set of interactions between customer, product, product manufacturing companies and other stakeholders inciting a reaction involving rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual involvement of customer at different levels. Meyer and Schwager (2007) expressed that customer experience is the internal feeling derived from subjective response that customers have towards any direct or indirect contact with a company. Verhoef et al. (2009) define customer experience related to

the involvement of customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the marketers.

### Social Media Marketing and Brand Loyalty

Marketers have used several strategies to preserve their brand loyalty to their consumers. One of the emerging tactics is social media marketing. Companies may use social media to engage with their clients, raise brand awareness, change consumer perceptions, gain input, enhance existing goods and services, and boost sales (Lal et al., 2020). Organizations can advance products and services, provide instant help and/or build an exciting brand-new online community in all forms of social media, such as social networking sites, web groups, the virtual worlds, forums, platforms for micro blogging, online gaming, social bookmarking, and news sites. Social media also helps customers to associate product and service products with their peers (Stileman, 2009; Mangold & Foulds, 2009). Such social media functions provide a cost-effective way for companies to increase brand awareness, foster brand recall and remember, and improve brand loyalty (Kujur, F., Singh, S., 2020, Abdul Bashiru Jibril, Michael Adu Kwarteng, Miloslava Chovancova & Michal Piliik Len Tiu Wright 2019, Gunelius, 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that social networking, engagement and community building allow companies to create brand loyalty. Tafesse & Wien (2018) argued that social media platform has a tendency of influencing consumers mainly due to the brand image and the degree of interaction. Also, this trend of advertising and marketing is rapidly corresponding to the large volume of content being produced by social media platforms; hence possessing the potential to motivate consumer purchase intention. Marketers must be more honest to their customers in social media interactions and try to show the true image of the brand since social media users now have more knowledge and influence. Social media is now definitely a platform for advertisers to sell their brands. Brands should be available on all potential social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs and virtual forums. This social media-based communication allows consumers to do as little as possible to ensure appropriate information is up-to-date (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). It also enables them to express their pleasure/disagreement more broadly. If a customer can react positively with social network branded content, a relationship with the company will gradually develop and a strong customer-brand relationship will eventually lead to a healthier brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998). There is positive relationship between the effective brand communication and the level of brand loyalty (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004; Ismail, 2017). So, based on the above arguments provided, it was hypothesized that:

***H1: Social media marketing has significant effect on consumers' brand loyalty.***

### Social Media Marketing and Customer Experience

In the contemporary business landscape, positive customer experience is considered as one of the important factors for the success of the organization. This subjective and internal feeling is generated in customers through every direct or indirect interaction with the organization. Experiences related to brand ideas, emotions, images, expectations, engagement, performance, and behaviors are held in consumers' minds and then converted into favorable brand performance (Keller & Lehmann, 2003). Several researchers including Yasin, Mahmoud & Porcu, Lucia & Liébana-Cabanillas, Francisco (2019), Berry (2000), Grace & O' Cass (2004), Biedenbach & Marell (2010), Sheng & Teo (2012) have shown that consumer experiences are strongly related to brand attitude, brand preference and brand equity. Since social media marketing is an important way of improving client mindset, strengthening brand values and shaping the customer's mind in favor of the

## Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty in Lifestyle Category Products: Mediating Role of Customer Experience

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### Abstract

The social media marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful tools to enhance brand equity of the lifestyle products. Marketers are continuously exploring the new and innovative means of attracting customers toward their products by studying their preferences, convincing them for the purchase of lifestyle products. The present study examines the impact of social media marketing for improving the brand loyalty and assesses the mediating effect of customer experience on social media marketing and brand loyalty relationship for lifestyle products in the Indian context. In a survey of 259 respondents chosen at random, study reveals that social media marketing influences the brand loyalty and customer experience towards lifestyle products. Study further indicates that customer experience mediates the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty of lifestyle products. These findings indicate that lifestyle product marketing organizations should concentrate more on effective utilization of the social media platforms for brand positioning, facilitating information sharing, customer engagement, and develop meaningful customer relationship, which in turn has a tendency for business growth and sustainability. The effective social media marketing activities and memorable customer experiences will help company to face the competition successfully and cement the customers' relationships with the brand and the company in general. Some of the limitations and scope of future research is also presented in the study.

**Keywords:** Social media marketing, customer experiences, lifestyle products, brand loyalty.

### Introduction:

Internet usage as a mean of interpersonal communication and its various applications has evolved significantly in recent years, with Internet users significantly increasing. Throughout recent years, the accelerated adoption of the Internet as a marketing tool has had a huge impact on how companies have opted to interact with their customers. The Internet has provided the local and global brands with a good platform to expand their market and acquire more customers than ever. A large number of customers spend significant time in searching information, discussing brand on social media and building their preference in favor of brand that ultimately impact their purchasing intentions. Because of these opportunities, companies and their brand managers have been exploiting such opportunities to promote their brand among customers. As a result, social media marketing has emerged as the most popular and effective tool of brand marketing as well as brand communication. Social media as a mean of interpersonal communication has grown exponentially and became very important tool for brand communication. Over the last few years, the way people interact, check and exchange information with each other has changed significantly (Subramanian, Kalpathy., 2017). Marketers are thus using social media to define the tacit and explicit desires of actual and potential customers. Social media increases the intelligence of customers and helps consumers develop new ideas and strategies to browse, analyze, pick and buy products and services (Albors, Ramos & Hervas, 2008). Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are increasingly relevant for marketing and possess opportunities for word-of-mouth marketing (Libai et al., 2010). Companies, businesses, and brands may use social media to integrate and engage with their customers, and solve the marketing-related issues and problems in future with the extended use of social media

(Appel, G.; Grewal, L.; Hadi, R.; Stephen, A.T., 2020, Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo, 2004). Marketers of lifestyle products now use social media to design their marketing communications for building customer preference and enhance brand loyalty. This type of communication is expected to build and improve the quality of customer relationships.

Lifestyle product branding is about identifying lifestyles and proactively marketing newly created goods in a lifestyle context. A lifestyle brand targets a specific lifestyle market segment (Helman & de Chernatony, 1999). As per existing literature, health care products, cosmetics products, branded apparels, artificial jewelry, shoes, beauty products and accessories for men and women are considered as lifestyle brands. Each brand has a distinct set of lifestyle values, which appeal to a specific consumer segment. Lifestyle brands promote social benefits, which are accepted by a considerable number of individuals because they indicate behaviors, values and interests (Saviolo & Marazza, 2013). The present study is undertaken in Indian context due to several favorable reasons such as the demographical advantage, second-largest emerging market for consumer goods, increasing demand for lifestyle products, rising disposable income of Indians, high spending on lifestyle and luxury products, promotion of digital India campaign of Indian Government and most importantly, tremendous increase in the number of internet users (627 million in 2019), social media applications and smartphones in the Indian subcontinent (Kala & Chaubey, 2018a, 2018b). All these reasons justify the relevance of the study in the Indian context. This research work has been undertaken with the intention to examine the impact of social media marketing on improving the attitude, opinion and interest of consumers and on enhancing the brand loyalty for