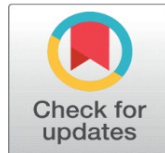


# A STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE, ENGAGEMENT, AND BRAND INTIMACY: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL FASHION MARKETING

Swati Bhalla <sup>1</sup>  , Pradeep Joshi <sup>2</sup>  

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Amity University, ASFT, Sector 125, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup> Group Addl. Pro Vice Chancellor, Director General and Dean (Faculty of Applied Arts/Fine Arts/Performing Arts/Visual Arts), Amity University, ASFT, Sector 125, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India



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## Corresponding Author

Swati Bhalla, [swatibhalla@gmail.com](mailto:swatibhalla@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how social media usage and engagement behaviours influence the development of brand intimacy within the digital fashion industry. Adopting a quantitative research design, the study employs a structured survey method to collect data from active social media users across India. The data were analysed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to identify underlying dimensions of consumer engagement and emotional connection.

The findings reveal two key components—Social Media Usage/Engagement and Brand Intimacy—highlighting the dual behavioural and emotional dimensions of consumer-brand interaction. The results indicate that engagement acts as a critical mediating mechanism between social media usage and brand intimacy. Behavioural interactions such as liking, sharing, and participating in brand activities, combined with personalized and interactive content, significantly enhance consumer trust, emotional attachment, and loyalty toward fashion brands.

The study concludes that digital marketing effectiveness extends beyond visibility and reach, emphasizing the importance of meaningful, interactive, and personalized communication in fostering long-term consumer-brand relationships. It highlights that engagement is both behavioural and emotional in nature, evolving into brand intimacy through sustained and value-driven digital interactions. The research contributes to the theoretical understanding of consumer engagement by reinforcing its multidimensional structure and offers practical insights for fashion marketers to design human-centric, data-informed, and emotionally resonant digital strategies.

**Keywords:** Interactive Marketing, Brand Relationship, Social Media Marketing, Digital Consumer Behavior

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer engagement represents a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions that reflect the depth of interaction between consumers and brands. [Brodie et al. \(2011\)](#) define consumer engagement as the degree of psychological and behavioral investment a consumer exhibits toward a brand through active participation across various touchpoints. It involves the processes through which consumers interact, contribute, and co-create value with a brand, ultimately influencing brand loyalty, advocacy, and purchase intentions. In contrast, [Batra et al. \(2012\)](#) describe brand intimacy as the emotional closeness between consumers and brands, grounded in trust,

affection, and long-term commitment. Brand intimacy reflects how deeply a brand becomes integrated into a consumer's life, shaping not only consumption choices but also identity and attachment patterns.

This paper examines digital marketing from a multi-platform perspective, seeking to understand how consumers interact with brands across diverse digital environments. It specifically investigates the interrelationships among social media usage, brand engagement, and brand intimacy, conceptualizing them as interconnected constructs that collectively shape the digital consumer experience. While existing literature [Brodie et al. \(2011\)](#), [Hollebeek et al. \(2016\)](#), [Kotler et al. \(2020\)](#) has established the importance of engagement as a mediator between marketing efforts and brand relationship outcomes, this study extends the discussion by analyzing how these dynamics operate across multiple social media platforms. The paper explores the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of brand engagement, alongside the affective and relational attributes of brand intimacy, to develop a nuanced understanding of how digital touchpoints—ranging from social media interactions and personalized content to participatory campaigns—contribute to sustained consumer-brand relationships. By examining these components in an integrated framework, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how digital marketing practices foster emotional connectivity, trust, and long-term loyalty within the evolving landscape of fashion branding.

Social media has transformed the landscape of consumer engagement by transitioning consumers from passive recipients of information to active participants in brand ecosystems. Platforms such as Instagram, X (formally known as Twitter), and Pinterest have redefined communication between fashion brands and consumers, fostering interactive, real-time, and personalized exchanges. Unlike traditional marketing, where brands maintain control over messaging, social media democratizes influence, allowing consumers to shape brand narratives, express opinions, and co-create trends. This participatory dynamic repositions consumers as collaborators in the brand experience, reinforcing the shift toward relationship-based marketing.

The interactive nature of social media supports two-way communication that strengthens brand relationships through immediacy and authenticity. User-generated content, interactive campaigns, and personalized storytelling replace one-way promotional strategies, cultivating a sense of community and belonging [Barger et al. \(2016\)](#). Consumers not only consume brand messages but also contribute to them—sharing experiences, generating discussions, and shaping perceptions. This transition from passive consumption to active co-creation enhances engagement and embeds brands within consumers' digital identities.

One of the central drivers of engagement on social media is value co-creation, facilitated through content sharing, feedback, and peer-to-peer interactions. The rise of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has amplified the significance of peer influence in shaping brand perceptions. Consumers now rely heavily on online discussions, reviews, and recommendations, shifting the balance of power from brands to consumers. In this context, social capital—the trust and reciprocity cultivated within digital communities—plays a critical role. As [Gvili and Levy \(2018\)](#) note, content perceived as authentic and trustworthy within one's network is more likely to influence attitudes and behaviors. Thus, social capital not only drives eWOM transmission but also strengthens consumer-brand relationships by embedding brands within social networks of trust.

Social media enables varying levels of engagement, from low-effort behaviors (liking or sharing content) to high-involvement actions (creating original brand-related content or participating in advocacy campaigns). According to [Tafesse \(2016\)](#), consumer engagement encompasses cognitive (thinking and evaluating), emotional (feeling and connecting), and behavioral (acting and participating) dimensions. Interactive tools such as live streams, polls, contests, and gamified experiences further deepen engagement by encouraging active participation and immersion. These mechanisms enhance brand recall, satisfaction, and emotional resonance, reinforcing the long-term relational value of engagement.

Given the dynamic and fast-paced nature of social media environments, maintaining engagement requires authenticity, relevance, and consistency. Personalization has become a cornerstone of effective engagement strategies. Advances in artificial intelligence and data analytics enable brands to segment audiences, predict behavior, and deliver tailored experiences. Personalized offers, customized recommendations, and targeted communications enhance perceived value and emotional connection. However, as [Barger et al. \(2016\)](#) caution, brands must balance personalization with ethical considerations and data transparency to preserve consumer trust.

As digital ecosystems evolve, the future of consumer engagement will be shaped by emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual influencers, and metaverse-based experiences. These innovations will blur the

boundaries between digital and physical engagement, offering immersive and multisensory brand interactions. Yet, the core principles of authenticity, value creation, and emotional connection will remain central to engagement success. Brands that adapt to these shifts by fostering genuine, participatory, and human-centered interactions will be better equipped to sustain consumer engagement and cultivate enduring brand intimacy in an increasingly complex digital marketplace [Boechat et al. \(2025\)](#).

## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to examine how fashion brands employ social media marketing strategies to enhance consumer engagement, evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing content in fostering interactive participation, and analyze how social media-driven engagement contributes to developing brand intimacy, emphasizing emotional attachment, trust, and sustained consumer loyalty within digital environments. The study's objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine how fashion brands utilize social media marketing strategies across digital platforms to enhance consumer engagement and participation.
- 2) To evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing content—such as personalization, interactivity, and visual storytelling—in influencing consumer engagement with fashion brands.
- 3) To analyze the relationship between social media-driven consumer engagement and the development of brand intimacy, emphasizing trust, emotional attachment, and long-term loyalty.

## 3. RESEARCH GAP

Based on the reviewed literature and empirical evidence, several research gaps emerge that justify the present study's focus. Although a growing body of scholarship has examined digital marketing and consumer engagement, limited industry-specific insights exist regarding how these dynamics unfold within the fashion sector—a domain characterized by high visual appeal, trend sensitivity, and emotional consumer attachment. Most prior studies have analyzed digital engagement in generic retail or service contexts, neglecting the unique behavioral, aesthetic, and experiential dimensions that define fashion consumption and brand interaction in social media environments.

A second gap lies in the lack of empirical exploration of the relationship between digital marketing strategies, consumer engagement, and brand intimacy across multiple social media platforms. Much of the existing research investigates engagement through isolated lenses—focusing on either content strategy or platform performance—without integrating how social media usage patterns collectively shape emotional and behavioral engagement outcomes. Furthermore, studies often emphasize engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, while overlooking the psychological and affective aspects that contribute to enduring brand intimacy and trust.

Additionally, there remains an unclear understanding of how strategic posting parameters—including content frequency, timing, and format—affect sustained engagement in the fashion industry. Although research has examined content quality and interactivity, there is still no consensus on optimal posting schedules, platform-specific preferences, or algorithmic responsiveness that maximize audience involvement and brand attachment.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a comprehensive quantitative framework to analyze how fashion brands utilize digital marketing strategies—across multiple social platforms—to enhance consumer engagement and brand intimacy, thereby contributing both theoretical and practical insights to contemporary marketing scholarship.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology serves as the foundational framework that guides the research design and analytical direction of a study. It establishes the philosophical orientation through which data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted to address the stated research objectives. As [Fischer et al. \(2023\)](#) note, a well-defined research approach ensures logical coherence between theoretical underpinnings, empirical inquiry, and research aims, thereby enhancing the study's internal validity. [Bloomfield and Fisher \(2019\)](#) conceptualize this approach as a lens shaping methodological decisions, influencing data collection methods, analytical techniques, and interpretative depth.

In this study, a quantitative, descriptive approach grounded in deductive reasoning is adopted to empirically examine the relationships among social media usage, consumer engagement, and brand intimacy within the fashion

industry. This approach is particularly suited to identifying measurable associations and testing theoretical propositions through statistical validation. Quantitative methods allow for the systematic measurement of behavioral and perceptual variables, ensuring objectivity, replicability, and generalizability across different digital contexts. Furthermore, the use of structured instruments and inferential analysis strengthens the reliability of findings by minimizing researcher bias. As the study's primary objective is to determine correlations rather than explore subjective meanings, the quantitative framework provides a coherent, rigorous, and empirically grounded methodological structure for investigating how digital marketing influences consumer engagement and emotional connection with fashion brands.

To comprehensively capture the multiple dimensions of the research objectives, a structured questionnaire was systematically designed and developed (discussed in detail in the next section). The instrument was organized into distinct sections to address the behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional components of digital consumer engagement. The initial section focused on demographic variables, including age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, family income, and frequency of social media use, thereby establishing a contextual foundation for analyzing consumer behavior patterns. Subsequent sections explored respondents' interaction with various digital platforms—namely Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn—to measure engagement through quantifiable actions such as liking, sharing, commenting, content creation, and participation in brand-led initiatives. Another section evaluated brand intimacy, operationalized through constructs such as identity alignment, shared values, emotional attachment, and perceived trust toward fashion brands.

The questionnaire employed five-point Likert scales to assess attitudinal and perceptual constructs and ranking scales to prioritize engagement factors and evaluate platform preferences. Following Bryman (2016), a pilot study was conducted with 50 active social media users to assess clarity, content validity, and ease of comprehension. Feedback from this pre-test facilitated refinement of question phrasing and layout, ensuring the instrument's reliability and usability. The final version of the questionnaire incorporated closed-ended, structured items conducive to quantitative analysis, allowing for robust measurement of relationships between posting frequency, content strategy, engagement intensity, and brand intimacy.

The survey items were adapted from established and validated scales in prior studies Vivek et al. (2012) to ensure construct validity and theoretical alignment. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7, confirming internal consistency across the constructs. Each construct—social media usage, engagement, and brand intimacy—was operationalized using standardized measurement indicators from digital marketing and consumer behavior literature. Quantitative data derived from Likert-scale responses and observed engagement metrics enabled the use of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (Principal Component Analysis).

In accordance with Walliman (2021), the questionnaire was distributed online to capture responses from a geographically diverse and demographically representative sample of social media users. This approach maximized accessibility, ensured data diversity, and strengthened the generalizability and reliability of findings within the digital marketing and fashion branding context.

This study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique to select participants best suited to examine the relationship between digital marketing, consumer engagement, and brand intimacy in the fashion industry. The sample specifically targeted active social media users who regularly interacted with fashion brands on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

Determining an appropriate sample size is essential to ensure that findings are statistically valid and representative of the target population. The sample size reflects the number of participants selected for data collection and directly influences the accuracy, reliability, and generalizability of results. In this study, the sample was designed to capture meaningful insights into social media engagement behaviors and brand intimacy among users. The calculation followed Cochran's formula for an infinite population, which accounts for a 95% confidence level ( $z = 1.96$ ), a population proportion of 0.50 (assumed in the absence of prior data), and a 5% margin of error ( $\epsilon = 0.05$ ). The formula, expressed as  $n = (z^2 \times \hat{p} \times (1 - \hat{p})) / \epsilon^2$ , provided a statistically robust framework for determining an adequate sample size. Based on this computation, a minimum of approximately 385 respondents was identified as sufficient to achieve the desired confidence and precision levels for the study's objectives.

In this study, missing data were not a concern, as the data collection process was designed to ensure completeness and accuracy. The survey was administered via Google Forms, where each questionnaire item was configured as mandatory, preventing participants from submitting incomplete responses. This approach guaranteed that only fully

completed questionnaires were recorded, resulting in a dataset with 100% response rates across all variables. Consequently, the dataset required no imputation, omission, or additional data cleaning procedures related to missing values, thereby enhancing the overall reliability and integrity of the data used for analysis.

The collected data were systematically analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) and Microsoft Excel (Office 365). SPSS served as the primary tool for conducting descriptive, inferential, and multivariate analyses, while Excel was employed for preliminary data organization, coding, and visualization. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize demographic profiles and engagement patterns, offering a clear overview of respondents' social media behavior and brand interaction tendencies. To uncover latent constructs and structural relationships among variables, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed, identifying the key underlying dimensions that influence social media engagement and brand intimacy.

## 5. QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire for social media users was systematically developed to capture the behavioral, interactive, and emotional dimensions of engagement with fashion brands in digital environments. The instrument was structured around three core constructs—Social Media Usage, Social Media Engagement, and Brand Intimacy—each reflecting a distinct but interrelated aspect of consumer interaction and relationship-building with fashion brands on online platforms.

Construct 1: Social Media Usage measured users' frequency, patterns, and intensity of activity related to fashion content. This included behaviors such as following fashion brands or influencers, participating in online contests, viewing or sharing visual content (e.g., short-form videos, reels), and engaging with digital campaigns. The construct aimed to assess the level of user exposure and participation within fashion-focused social media ecosystems. Prior research indicates that frequency and type of platform use strongly influence brand-related engagement and loyalty behaviors [Naeem and Ozuem \(2021\)](#), [Xiao and Chen \(2025\)](#). Hence, this construct provided foundational insights into how digital visibility and habitual media consumption shape the consumer's likelihood of engaging with brand content.

Construct 2: Social Media Engagement explored the interactive and participatory behaviors of users across digital platforms. This construct included actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, and responding to brand-generated or user-generated content. It represents the behavioral expression of engagement and highlights how consumers actively contribute to a brand's digital presence and reach. Existing studies affirm that engagement intensity varies across platforms and depends heavily on the nature of brand content and posting strategy [Wang and Lee \(2020\)](#). By measuring these behaviors, the construct provided a quantifiable understanding of active user participation and its role in reinforcing brand visibility and digital community interaction.

Construct 3: Brand Intimacy examined the emotional and relational aspects of consumer-brand engagement. This included elements such as trust, loyalty, perceived authenticity, and emotional closeness toward fashion brands. The construct evaluated how personalized communication, responsiveness, and authentic representation strengthen consumers' emotional attachment and long-term relationship with brands. Prior studies in the context of fashion social media marketing have demonstrated that sustained engagement fosters deeper emotional bonds, leading to enhanced brand loyalty and advocacy [Naeem and Ozuem \(2021\)](#), [Wang and Lee \(2020\)](#).

As discussed in [Table 1](#), the questionnaires for social media users were systematically structured to ensure clarity, logical flow, and alignment with the study's research objectives.

**Table 1**

Table 1 Questionnaire Design and Construct Development			
Survey Group	Section / Construct	Number of questions	Examples of Measurement Items
Social Media Users Survey	Demographics	6	Age, Gender, Education, Occupation, Annual family income, Frequency of social media use.
	Construct 1: Social Media Usage	5	Following fashion brands and influencers; viewing short-form content; participating in contests; exposure to AR features.
	Construct 2: Social Media Engagement	4	Responding to user-generated content; appreciation for visuals and storytelling; interactive and personalized brand content.

Construct 3: Brand Intimacy	5	Perceived trust, loyalty, acknowledgment by brands, emotional attachment, customer testimonials.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	

A total of 1400 active social media users were approached via social media platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook communities etc. using purposive sampling, as these platforms provided direct access to the population. The survey resulted in 418 completed questionnaires.

During the data cleaning phase, the procedures recommended by Moore et al. (2021) were systematically applied to maintain the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the dataset. Each questionnaire response was carefully reviewed for completeness, internal consistency, and respondent attentiveness. Instances of straight-lining—where participants selected identical responses across items—were identified as indicators of low engagement. Consequently, four such cases were excluded, resulting in a final valid dataset comprising 414 responses. This meticulous screening process ensured that only authentic and reliable data were retained, thereby strengthening the robustness and credibility of the dataset for subsequent statistical analyses.

Each item in the questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1), enabling respondents to indicate the degree of their agreement with each statement. The research adhered strictly to ethical standards, ensuring transparency, integrity, and voluntary participation. All respondents provided informed consent prior to completing the structured questionnaire, confirming their understanding and willingness to participate.

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis in this study followed a structured quantitative analytical framework, employing appropriate statistical tools and software to ensure methodological rigor, reliability, and replicability. The selection of analytical techniques was guided by the study's objectives, the nature of the data collected, and the requirement for valid and generalizable findings. This framework was designed to systematically evaluate how digital marketing strategies influence consumer engagement and brand intimacy within the fashion industry while adhering to established statistical and scientific standards.

To identify underlying dimensions and interrelationships among the study constructs, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed as the primary data reduction technique. PCA was used to uncover latent factors influencing digital marketing strategies, social media engagement, and brand intimacy. Given the exploratory nature of this research, PCA was preferred over Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), as it allowed the identification of empirical groupings and patterns rather than testing a predefined model. This approach was particularly suitable since the constructs had been adapted to the Indian fashion brand context, where limited prior validation existed. By extracting meaningful components from large datasets, PCA established a robust foundation for interpreting the structural relationships between digital marketing variables and engagement outcomes.

The analysis utilized IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) and Microsoft Excel (Office 365) as the main analytical tools. SPSS was used for complex statistical testing—including reliability analysis and factor analysis—owing to its capacity for managing large datasets and performing both descriptive and inferential computations. Several analytical procedures were systematically applied to address the study's objectives: Descriptive analysis provided an overview of the dataset, summarizing demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, and engagement behaviors. Measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and percentage distribution were used to capture central tendencies and variability. These statistics helped identify response trends and ensured that subsequent inferential analyses were grounded in accurate data representations.

The internal consistency of constructs was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with values  $\geq 0.70$  considered acceptable for social science research (George and Mallery (2018), Nunnally (1978)). Separate reliability tests were conducted for the marketing professional and social media user groups to ensure comparability. Alpha values between 0.70 and 0.90 indicated strong internal consistency, confirming that the questionnaire items measured the constructs of digital marketing, engagement, and brand intimacy reliably.

PCA was conducted to identify latent dimensions and reduce interrelated variables into interpretable factors while retaining maximum variance. Prior to extraction, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were

applied to verify sampling adequacy and data suitability. KMO values above 0.70 confirmed that correlations among variables were sufficient for factor extraction, while a significant Bartlett's Test ( $p < 0.01$ ) validated the presence of meaningful relationships. Varimax rotation was then applied to achieve orthogonality and interpretability, with components retaining eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and factor loadings above 0.50 considered significant. These parameters ensured statistical robustness and conceptual clarity.

In summary, the systematic application of statistical techniques—supported by SPSS and Excel—ensured a methodologically rigorous, transparent, and replicable data analysis process. The integration of descriptive, reliability and factor analyses allowed the research to uncover meaningful patterns and validate theoretical linkages among the study variables. Through this structured analytical design, the study achieved internal consistency, empirical robustness, and theoretical alignment, contributing credible insights into how digital marketing strategies enhance engagement and foster brand intimacy in contemporary fashion branding.

## 7. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The scope of this research is pan-India, focusing on active social media users who engage with digital marketing content shared by fashion brands across multiple platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest. The study captures behavioral, interactive, and emotional dimensions of engagement within India's diverse digital ecosystem, emphasizing how consumers perceive, respond to, and develop emotional connections with fashion brands. By examining patterns of social media usage, content interaction, and brand intimacy, the research provides an empirically grounded understanding of how digital marketing strategies influence consumer engagement and loyalty. The findings are relevant to digital marketing professionals, brand strategists, and fashion marketers, offering insights into consumer-driven engagement dynamics that can inform more personalized, authentic, and data-based marketing approaches. Thus, the study contributes to both academic theory and industry practice by linking user behavior analytics with strategic applications in digital fashion marketing.

## 8. DATA INTERPRETATION

### 8.1. DEMOGRAPHICS: AGE

The age distribution of the 414 social media users who participated in the survey reveal a pronounced concentration among younger cohorts, with 48.6% of respondents aged 18–24 years and 20.3% falling within the 25–34-year category. Collectively, these groups represent 68.9% of the total sample, signifying that the majority of individuals engaging with fashion-brand content on social media are young adults. The remaining respondents comprise 15.5% aged 35–44 years, 12.6% aged 45–54 years, and 3.1% aged 55 years and above.

The predominance of respondents within the 18–34 age group underscores that fashion-related engagement on social media platforms is youth-oriented, reflecting the digital affinity and visual content preferences typical of this demographic. Younger consumers are particularly responsive to trend-led and visually engaging media formats, such as influencer-driven campaigns, short-form videos, and interactive content, which aligns closely with the study's objective of assessing how digital marketing strategies stimulate consumer engagement. Nevertheless, the inclusion of 31.1% of respondents aged 35 and above provides valuable heterogeneity to the dataset. Middle-aged and older users may exhibit distinct engagement motivations—prioritizing aspects such as product quality, reliability, and brand authenticity—compared to younger users' emphasis on novelty and social appeal. This demographic variation reinforces the need for age-segmented analysis in subsequent sections, facilitating comparisons of content preferences, trust levels, and brand intimacy across age groups. Overall, the age composition suggests that while the digital fashion engagement ecosystem remains predominantly youth-driven, the meaningful representation of older cohorts warrants comparative analysis to capture diverse behavioral and emotional engagement patterns across generational segments.

### 8.2. DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER

The survey results from 414 social media users indicate a balanced gender distribution among participants. Of the total respondents, 48.6% were female, while 51.4% were male, demonstrating near parity in representation. This equilibrium suggests that both genders are actively engaged on social media platforms in the context of fashion-related digital marketing and consumer interaction. The balanced composition enhances the representativeness and validity of

the findings, as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing strategies influence engagement behaviors across gender groups.

### 8.3. DEMOGRAPHICS: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

The educational qualifications of the 414 social media users reveals that 6.5% of respondents had completed high school, 53.4% held an undergraduate degree, 36% possessed a postgraduate qualification, and 4.1% had attained a doctoral degree. Collectively, more than 90% of participants had at least an undergraduate education, indicating that the sample represents a highly educated cohort. This educational profile suggests that respondents are likely to demonstrate advanced digital literacy, greater capacity for critical evaluation of online content, and more discerning engagement behaviors with fashion brand communications compared to less-educated users. The high concentration of educated participants enhances the analytical depth of this study, as it enables the exploration of complex constructs such as trust formation, perceived authenticity, and information-based engagement.

### 8.4. DEMOGRAPHICS: OCCUPATION

The survey of 414 social media users indicates that students (41.3%) and employed individuals (37.9%) form the majority, highlighting the dominance of young, digitally active users engaging with fashion brands online. Self-employed respondents (15.9%) suggest an entrepreneurial segment using social media for both personal and professional fashion interests, while minimal representation of unemployed (4.1%) and retired (0.7%) users underscores that digital marketing in fashion primarily targets and influences the working-age and student demographics, who are more responsive to online promotional efforts and exhibit higher digital engagement.

### 8.5. HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media constitutes an integral part of respondents' daily routines. A substantial majority (85.5%) access these platforms multiple times a day, while 9.4% use them once daily, indicating near-universal engagement. Only 1.7% and 3.4% use social media a few times a week or rarely, respectively. This high frequency highlights the strategic significance of digital marketing for fashion brands in sustaining engagement, enhancing visibility, and fostering personalized consumer interaction.

### 8.6. RELIABILITY TESTS

#### 8.6.1. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE (RELIABILITY)

As presented in [Table 2](#), the construct Social Media Usage recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.788, demonstrating strong internal consistency across the five measurement items. This indicates that the scale effectively captures respondents' frequency and behavioral patterns of social media activity related to fashion brands. The reliability value, approaching 0.8, confirms consistency in user responses, validating the instrument's dependability for further analysis. These findings reinforce that frequent and active social media engagement provides a reliable basis for examining how user interactions contribute to broader digital marketing strategies and consumer-brand engagement within the fashion domain.

**Table 2**

Table 2 Reliability Statistics, Social Media Usage		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.788	0.792	5

#### 8.6.2. SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT (RELIABILITY)

As indicated in [Table 3](#), the Social Media Engagement scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.763 (0.767 standardised), reflecting satisfactory internal consistency. This demonstrates that the items effectively capture various engagement dimensions, including liking, commenting, sharing, and content creation. The reliability result confirms that

the instrument consistently measures users' engagement behaviors toward fashion brands, supporting its suitability for subsequent analyses examining the relationship between engagement, trust, and brand intimacy within digital marketing contexts.

**Table 3**

Table 3 Reliability Statistics, Social Media Engagement		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.763	0.767	4

### 8.6.3. BRAND INTIMACY (RELIABILITY)

As shown in [Table 4](#), the Brand Intimacy scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.861, reflecting excellent internal consistency across the five items. This high reliability confirms that the scale effectively captures key dimensions of emotional connection, including attachment, trust, and self-association with brands. The result indicates that respondents' consistent perceptions of closeness and loyalty accurately represent genuine emotional engagement, validating the construct's robustness for further analysis of how digital interactions strengthen long-term consumer-brand relationships.

**Table 4**

Table 4 Reliability Statistics, Brand Intimacy		
Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.861	0.860	5

### 8.6.4. KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS SURVEY

[Table 5](#) presents the outcomes of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, conducted to evaluate the data's suitability for factor analysis. The KMO value of 0.927, well above the recommended threshold of 0.6, indicates excellent sampling adequacy and supports the appropriateness of the dataset for identifying latent factors associated with social media usage and engagement [Kaiser \(1974\)](#). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is statistically significant (Approx. Chi-Square = 1857.749,  $df = 91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming strong correlations among variables. Collectively, these results validate that the dataset is robust for multivariate analysis, ensuring that the factor structure derived can reliably capture the key dimensions influencing consumer engagement, emotional connection, and brand intimacy within digital fashion marketing contexts [Bartlett \(1950\)](#), [Tabachnick and Fidell \(2019\)](#).

**Table 5**

Table 5 KMO and Bartlett's Test, Social Media Users Survey		
KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1857.749
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

## 8.7. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

### 8.7.1. PCA: COMMUNALITIES

[Table 6](#) presents the communalities derived from the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of survey data examining social media users' engagement with fashion brands. Communalities represent the proportion of variance in each variable explained by the extracted factors. High extraction values for items such as "The way a brand interacts with me on social media influences my brand loyalty" (0.679), "My trust in a brand increases when I engage with them on social media platforms" (0.659), and "Personalized recommendations from a fashion brand increase my trust in the brand"

(0.632) indicate strong associations with underlying dimensions of consumer engagement and trust. Conversely, lower communalities, such as for “I prefer short-form video content (like Reels) over long-form content” (0.340), suggest a weaker contribution to the factor structure.

Although a few items showed communalities below 0.50, they were retained because they represent theoretically important aspects of the construct. According to Hair et al. (2019) and Field (2024), variables may be retained if they contribute meaningfully to the factor structure and improve interpretability post-rotation. The rotated component matrix confirmed satisfactory loadings for these items, validating their inclusion in the analysis.

Overall, the findings emphasize that interactive, personalized, and authenticity-driven digital marketing approaches—such as personalized recommendations, responsive communication, and user-generated content—significantly enhance consumer engagement, trust, and loyalty toward fashion brands. In contrast, content format preferences exert a relatively limited impact. These results highlight that fostering personal connection, transparency, and authenticity on social media platforms can serve as effective strategies for strengthening brand–consumer relationships and sustaining engagement in digital fashion marketing contexts Dangaiso (2024), Nasidi et al. (2022).

**Table 6**

Table 6 PCA: Communalities		
Communalities	Communalities	
	Initial	Extraction
I follow fashion brands on social media.	1.000	0.489
Social media content influences my interest in a fashion brand.	1.000	0.595
I follow fashion influencers	1.000	0.513
I prefer short-form video content (like Reels) over long-form content (like on YouTube).	1.000	0.340
Social media giveaways and contests influence my engagement with the fashion brand.	1.000	0.408
High-quality visuals and storytelling	1.000	0.544
The use of AR features (e.g., virtual try-ons) increases my engagement.	1.000	0.452
User-generated content (e.g., reposting user reviews) increases trust.	1.000	0.601
Personalized content recommendations increase my engagement.	1.000	0.625
My trust in a brand increases when I engage with them on social media platforms	1.000	0.659
The way a brand interacts with me on social media influences my brand loyalty.	1.000	0.679
Personalized recommendations from a fashion brand increase my trust in the brand	1.000	0.632
I feel valued when a brand acknowledges my comments.	1.000	0.558
I trust brands more when they showcase real customer testimonials.	1.000	0.464
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

### 8.7.2. PCA: TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Table 7 and Figure 1 illustrate the results of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) conducted to determine the latent dimensions shaping social media users’ engagement with fashion brands. In exploratory social science studies, a cumulative variance of around 50% is considered satisfactory, given the multidimensional nature of behavioral constructs Field (2024), Hair et al. (2019). The PCA extracted two components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, collectively explaining 54.004% of the total variance, thereby confirming the dataset’s adequacy for further interpretation.

Component 1, explaining 46.674% of the variance, represents Social Media Engagement and Interaction. High-loading variables on this component relate to behavioral activities such as frequent social media use, liking and sharing branded posts, commenting, and following fashion influencers. This dimension reflects the behavioral aspect of engagement—how users actively participate, interact, and express brand affinity through visible, measurable online behaviors.

Component 2 accounts for 7.329% of the variance and corresponds to Trust and Brand Intimacy. Variables associated with this component reflect emotional factors such as perceived authenticity, emotional attachment, loyalty, and trust in digital brand communication. This component captures the emotional dimension of engagement,

emphasizing how users' affective connections influence their sense of closeness and sustained engagement with fashion brands.

Together, the two extracted components establish a two-dimensional structure of social media engagement, encompassing both behavioral participation and emotional bonding. While the first reflects the extent of users' online activity, the second highlights their deeper psychological connection and brand trust. The cumulative variance of 54.004% demonstrates a strong explanatory power, validating that these components collectively capture the essence of user engagement with fashion brands in digital environments.

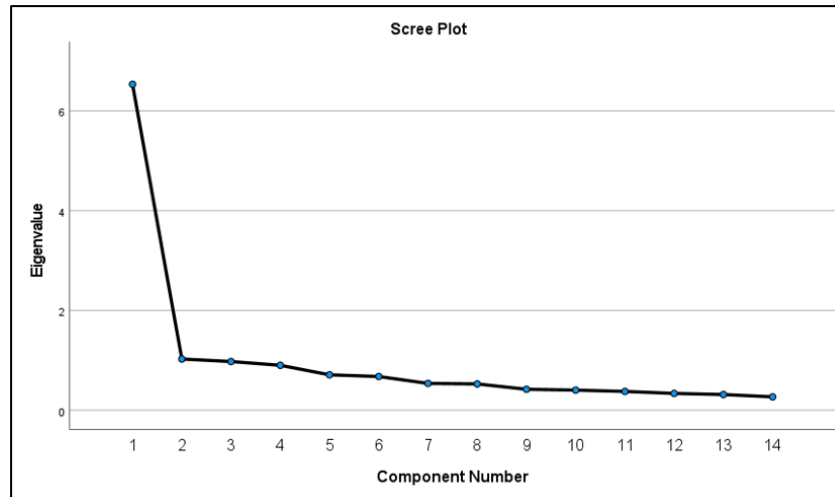
Although a few variables recorded communalities below 0.50, they were retained based on theoretical significance and contribution to overall interpretability. As supported by [Field \(2024\)](#) and [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#), such variables may enhance conceptual completeness despite lower statistical extraction values. The rotated component matrix confirmed satisfactory factor loadings, substantiating the reliability and coherence of the final factor structure for subsequent analytical interpretation within the framework of digital marketing and consumer engagement research.

**Table 7**

Table 7 Total Variance Explained									
Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.534	46.674	46.674	6.534	46.674	46.674	4.097	29.263	29.263
2	1.026	7.329	54.004	1.026	7.329	54.004	3.464	24.74	54.004
3	0.976	6.968	60.972						
4	0.9	6.43	67.402						
5	0.71	5.073	72.474						
6	0.676	4.828	77.303						
7	0.537	3.837	81.14						
8	0.527	3.761	84.901						
9	0.419	2.993	87.894						
10	0.402	2.872	90.766						
11	0.376	2.685	93.451						
12	0.336	2.4	95.851						
13	0.314	2.24	98.091						
14	0.267	1.909	100						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Scree Plot: Total Variance Explained

### 8.7.3. ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Table 8 presents the results of the Rotated Component Matrix, which clarifies the structure of the two extracted components identified through Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The rotation, performed using the Varimax method with Kaiser Normalization, enhances interpretability by maximizing variable loadings on specific components, thereby distinguishing the behavioral and emotional dimensions of social media engagement with greater precision.

The Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings Table 8 indicates two distinct factors influencing consumer behavior: Social Media Usage (29.3% variance) and Brand Intimacy (24.7% variance). The first factor, Social Media Usage and content driven engagement, represents active interaction with content, including user-generated content, personalized recommendations, high-quality visuals, storytelling, and AR features. High loadings (0.508–0.758) indicate that these elements significantly enhance engagement, implying that fashion brands can foster deeper connections by creating interactive, personalized, and visually appealing content.

The second factor, Brand Intimacy, reflects trust, loyalty, and emotional connection, with high loadings (0.511–0.779) on items such as brand acknowledgment of comments, personalized recommendations, and showcasing customer testimonials. This suggests that engagement on social media translates into stronger consumer-brand relationships when brands actively foster trust and emotional attachment, reinforcing the importance of social media as a tool not only for promotion but also for cultivating long-term loyalty.

**Table 8**

Table 8 Rotated Component Matrix		
Rotated Component Matrix		
	Component 1	Component 2
I follow fashion brands on social media.	0.464	0.524
Social media content influences my interest in a fashion brand.	0.538	0.553
I follow fashion influencers	0.553	
I prefer short-form video content (like Reels) over long-form content (like on YouTube).	0.538	
Social media giveaways and contests influence my engagement with the fashion brand.	0.524	
User-generated content (e.g., reposting user reviews) increases trust.	0.753	
Personalized content recommendations increase my engagement.	0.758	
High-quality visuals and storytelling	0.707	
The use of AR features (e.g., virtual try-ons) increases my engagement.	0.508	
The way a brand interacts with me on social media influences my brand loyalty.		0.779
My trust in a brand increases when I engage with them on social media platforms		0.763

Personalized recommendations from a fashion brand increase my trust in the brand	0.758
I feel valued when a brand acknowledges my comments.	0.678
I trust brands more when they showcase real customer testimonials.	0.511

Two items—“I follow fashion brands on social media.” and “Social media content influences my interest in a fashion brand.”—exhibited cross-loadings across components. These cross-loadings were theoretically expected, as such items conceptually bridge social media usage and brand loyalty. Both items were retained as their loadings were strong and theoretically aligned with the assigned components.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive empirical examination of how social media usage, engagement behaviors, and emotional connection collectively shape consumer–brand relationships within the digital fashion ecosystem. Drawing on data from active social media users across India, the findings establish that digital marketing strategies—particularly those centered on interactivity, personalization, and content quality—play a decisive role in transforming passive audience exposure into meaningful engagement and, ultimately, brand intimacy. The study confirms that engagement is not a singular construct but a multidimensional process encompassing both behavioral participation and emotional attachment, thereby reinforcing its centrality in contemporary relationship marketing frameworks.

The results demonstrate that social media platforms have evolved beyond their traditional function as promotional tools into dynamic relational environments where consumers actively co-create brand meaning. High-frequency usage patterns, with the majority of respondents engaging multiple times daily, indicate that digital platforms are deeply embedded in consumers’ everyday routines. This habitual interaction creates continuous opportunities for brands to engage with users, but more importantly, it underscores the expectation of ongoing, relevant, and value-driven communication. Consumers no longer perceive themselves as passive recipients of brand messages; instead, they act as active participants who interpret, respond to, and reshape brand narratives within digital communities.

The Principal Component Analysis further strengthens these insights by identifying two dominant dimensions underlying consumer engagement: Social Media Usage/Engagement and Brand Intimacy. Together, these components explain a substantial proportion of variance, confirming the robustness of the conceptual framework. The first dimension reflects observable behaviors such as following brands, interacting with content, and participating in digital campaigns. The second dimension captures affective outcomes, including trust, emotional attachment, and perceived brand authenticity. Importantly, the findings suggest a sequential and reinforcing relationship between these dimensions—frequent and meaningful engagement behaviors contribute to the development of emotional closeness and long-term loyalty. This progression highlights engagement as a transitional mechanism that converts digital interaction into relational depth.

The study advances existing literature by reaffirming the multidimensional nature of consumer engagement and extending its application within the fashion industry context. It integrates principles from relationship marketing and social exchange theory, demonstrating that sustained interactions characterized by value exchange, responsiveness, and personalization lead to stronger consumer–brand relationships. Unlike traditional models that emphasize transactional outcomes, the findings highlight engagement as a cumulative and evolving process, where repeated interactions foster familiarity, trust, and identification with the brand. This reinforces the conceptualization of engagement as a continuum that progresses from cognitive attention to behavioral participation and ultimately to emotional commitment.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the understanding of digital consumer behavior by emphasizing the symbolic and experiential dimensions of fashion consumption on social media. Engagement is not merely functional but also expressive, allowing consumers to construct and communicate identity, lifestyle, and social belonging. The interactive and visual nature of digital platforms enhances this process, enabling users to engage with brands in ways that are both personally meaningful and socially visible. As a result, fashion brands operate not only as commercial entities but also as cultural symbols embedded within consumers’ digital lives.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings offer several strategic implications for fashion brands seeking to strengthen their digital presence and consumer relationships. First, while consistent posting remains important for maintaining visibility, it is the quality and relevance of content that drive meaningful engagement. Brands must prioritize content that is visually compelling, emotionally resonant, and aligned with audience preferences. Second,

personalization emerges as a critical driver of engagement and trust. Tailored recommendations, customized communication, and responsiveness to user feedback enhance perceived value and foster a sense of individual recognition.

Third, interactivity plays a pivotal role in deepening engagement. Features such as user-generated content, live interactions, polls, and immersive technologies encourage active participation and create a more engaging brand experience. These tools transform social media from a passive viewing platform into an interactive space for dialogue and co-creation. Fourth, authenticity and transparency are identified as foundational elements of brand intimacy. Consumers increasingly value sincerity, ethical conduct, and genuine communication, and they are more likely to develop trust and loyalty toward brands that demonstrate these attributes consistently.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of integrating data-driven insights with creative storytelling. While analytics can inform strategic decisions regarding content timing, format, and audience segmentation, the emotional dimension of engagement requires a human-centered approach. Brands must balance technological capabilities with authenticity and creativity to build meaningful connections with their audiences.

In conclusion, this research establishes that social media engagement functions as a critical mediator between digital marketing efforts and the development of brand intimacy in the fashion industry. The findings underscore that the effectiveness of digital marketing lies not merely in increasing visibility or reach but in fostering genuine, sustained relationships with consumers. Engagement emerges as a process of co-created value, where brands and consumers collaboratively shape experiences, meanings, and identities. By demonstrating the interconnected roles of behavioral interaction and emotional connection, the study contributes to both academic discourse and industry practice. Ultimately, it affirms that in the contemporary digital landscape, the strength of a brand is defined not by its presence alone but by the depth of the relationships it cultivates with its audience.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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