

The Impact of Social Media in the Fashion Industry. Case Study on women's Fashion businesses in Romania

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Abstract

The global economic environment is causing major structural changes in the garment business, which has historically been known for its incremental alterations. Businesses now use digital transformation as a vital tool to manage the latest advancements and developments. The high cost of implementing new technology is one of the main issues small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textile and apparel sector are facing. Social media has become one of the most important marketing tools for fashion companies; nevertheless, it has also given SMEs a strong branding tool. The function of online platforms in Romania's fashion industry is the main topic of this study. Using a quantitative survey (N=115), the study aims to identify the impact of social media strategies on the purchasing behavior of Romanian female consumers, filling a gap in local market research. The study investigates the use of social media by Romanian women's fashion brands, its consequences, and how digital platforms have changed their business practices over time. The case studies demonstrate how fashion businesses have used social media platforms to actively involve customers in the story of a runway show in addition to engaging them. Customers can participate in the brand's narrative, share their personal stories, and represent themselves at fashion events. The study also demonstrates how social networking platforms have been utilized to develop a technologically advanced, immersive experience that engages consumers. By attracting more customers, enhancing brand recognition, and eventually increasing sales, this involvement not only improves the relationship with clients but also increases retail productivity. According to the research, social media has a significant role in the development and innovation of the Romanian women's fashion sector.

Keywords

Consumer Behavior; Digital Marketing; Fashion Industry; Romania; Social Media.

Introduction

A few decades ago, theorists predicted that the future of retail would see the convergence of online and offline shopping, and this has already come to fruition. Technological advancements have dramatically altered consumer behavior, influencing purchasing decisions both online and at physical retail locations (Dwivedi, 2019). Companies are beginning to recognize the market shift, acknowledging that customers are inherently omnichannel. This means consumers can engage with businesses through various channels, whether online or in person. Social media has become an increasingly important tool for consumers in making purchasing decisions, with many turning to platforms to gather information and inspiration. Additionally, social influencers have emerged as key figures within online communities, exerting significant influence over consumer choices. This shift highlights how social media has transformed the way fashion is marketed, displayed, and consumed, requiring companies to adapt to stay competitive.

The fashion industry, with its substantial contribution to the global economy, plays a crucial role in meeting basic clothing needs while also allowing individuals to showcase their status and style (Reike, 2017). Social media has become an indispensable tool for fashion businesses to market products and

build brand identities. Consumers increasingly turn to social platforms for inspiration, meaning these platforms hold substantial power over their purchasing decisions (Dwiwedi, 2022).

Despite the extensive literature on social media marketing and consumer behavior, limited research has focused specifically on the influence of social media on Generation Z women in the Romanian fashion industry. Most studies address broader demographic segments or global markets, leaving a gap in understanding the behavioral patterns of this specific consumer group. Given the growing role of social media platforms in shaping purchasing decisions, examining this demographic segment provides valuable insights for both academia and practitioners.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the influence of social media communication on the engagement, perceptions, and purchasing behavior of Romanian Generation Z women regarding fashion brands. To achieve this objective, the research employs a quantitative approach based on a questionnaire survey conducted among 115 respondents. The analysis focuses on several dimensions of social media influence, including promotional content, influencer marketing, brand trust, engagement, and personalized communication.

Literature review

Social media and digital marketing evolution

An entirely novel way of living that shapes how we connect, engage, acquire knowledge, and uncover innovative concepts is being shaped by the rapid changes in modern life, driven by political, economic, social, and cultural forces. Based on user interaction, platforms such as forums, wikis, blogs, and networking sites give users the chance to contribute and learn. According to Lenhart et al. (Lenhart, 2010), "social media" refers to a broad category of web-based applications that depend on user participation and enable the sharing and exchange of ideas within online communities. Social media's global expansion has eclipsed traditional media's significance in the last ten years, making it an indispensable part of everyday life.

Social networking platforms differ from traditional media sources like radio and television because of their unique features, notably their ability to interact (Brannon, 2019). Following the invention of the internet, technologies have fundamentally changed how people live globally, impacting many industries and setting new standards for consumer behavior. The emergence of "social commerce platforms," whereby purchases take place through social networks, is a result of social media's integration with e-commerce (Brannon, 2019). Social media has many advantages, but it also has drawbacks, such as the difficulty of handling enormous volumes of user-generated content and ensuring accurate analysis. In the end, social media serves as a tool for participation in online communities, encouraging cooperation and idea sharing.

Consumer behavior

Social media was first used as a way for relatives and close friends to stay in touch; however, as time went on, companies began using it to interact with prospective clients. With more than 3.8 billion members globally, social networks have developed into an effective tool for businesses, allowing them to connect and pass on knowledge across borders. Social networking remains in its infancy, despite this expansion, with new sites like TikTok appearing alongside more well-known platforms such as YouTube and Instagram (Dwiwedi, 2022).

Achieving success in business now requires more than traditional marketing techniques. Businesses now understand the importance of social networking in contemporary marketing. At first, limited time and the lack of methods to gauge performance made it difficult to employ social media for advertising. However, companies can now improve their social media activities due to advances in analytics (Dwiwedi, 2022).

Social media gives individuals the power to make informed decisions and helps enterprises connect with potential clients. Sales, stakeholder engagement, and even brand reputation can all be enhanced by an effective approach. Negative feedback, nevertheless, might be the consequence of inadequate management. Since companies need to engage people and promote interactions, originality is essential in social media promotion. Just 40.5% of Romanian companies promoted their brands on social media in 2023, making them the least successful in the EU in terms of digital marketing (Eurostat, 2023).

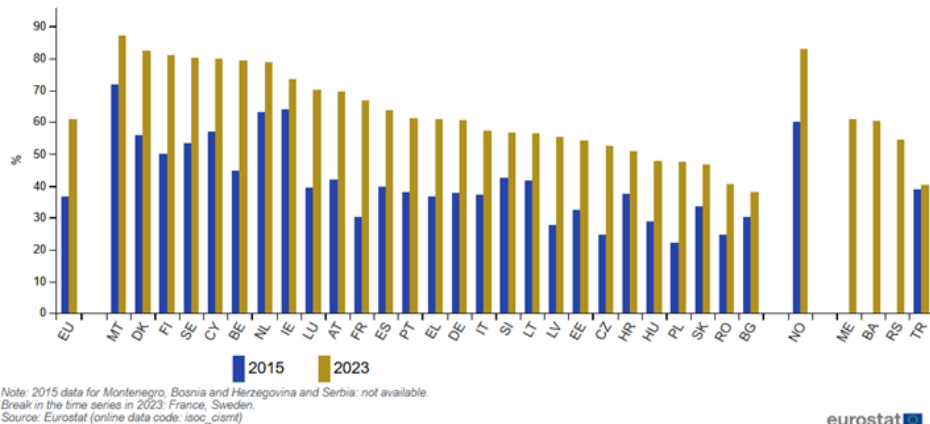


Figure 1. Enterprises using social media in the EU 2015 and 2023

Source: Eurostat, 2023

With a heavy emphasis on adapting to the technological revolution, the marketing environment is continually changing in response to internal and external obstacles. Businesses want to stay competitive in a rapidly shifting environment by incorporating innovative ethical standards and technological innovations (Bjornson, 2019). Online marketing is a vital tool for building connections between companies and their stakeholders. Firms can now interact with clients in new ways thanks to services like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, and they can improve their advertising through social networking analytics (Dwiwedi, 2022).

E-commerce expanded as a result, and "tradigital" marketing—a combination of traditional and digital strategies—arose (Al-Jaafar, 2023). Social media gives customers the ability to communicate with businesses in a deeper way than traditional marketing does. These days, social networking channels are essential platforms for interaction where companies and consumers collaborate and exchange ideas, thereby increasing involvement in the promotional process (Tracy, 2017). A business's capacity to navigate crowd culture—the internet communities that currently determine brand success—is crucial to the effectiveness of social media advertising (Rana, 2019).

Consumer perceptions, feelings, and experiences related to a company's brand are referred to as brand knowledge. It is a combination of brand image and brand awareness, shaped by a company's spokespeople, logos, ads, and communications. However, only consumers who have interacted with and felt a connection to the brand can genuinely understand it (Dwiwedi, 2020). Marketing campaigns increase brand recognition and understanding, encompassing brand image and corporate connection. While bad experiences, such as subpar service, can harm a company's reputation, strong brand knowledge builds brand equity and increases the brand's overall value.

By keeping their current clientele and drawing in new ones, businesses want to boost their earnings. A major factor in this is brand awareness, which is the degree to which customers are aware of a company and its offerings. Strong brands increase product recognition and can sway consumer choices (De Villiers, 2020). An efficient awareness campaign is the first step in the time-consuming process of

building brand recognition. Some clients react right away, but most take their time, consider their options, and then come back. It takes the longest to develop customer loyalty, which is based on a deep familiarity with the brand and is fuelled by strategic, consistent actions (Foroudi, 2018).

Since it affects both brand equity and brand awareness, brand image remains a crucial marketing tactic. Customers' perceptions are shaped by the connotations they associate with the company (Batrincea, 2014). Business loyalty and trust are influenced by brand image, a crucial factor in the purchasing process (Appel, 2019). Companies must focus on marketing initiatives that increase brand awareness, connections, and recognition to improve brand equity. Customers are less likely to choose a brand when seeking goods or services in a given field if they are unaware of its qualities.

According to Gunawan et al. (2023), brand equity is the impact that a company's name has on consumers' perceptions, influenced by favorable customer experiences that lead people to select a brand over rivals. Companies develop brand equity by using loyalty programs, keeping their word, and running ads that reflect the values of their target audience. Added value is an essential element of brand equity and can be measured as a behavioral, financial, or opinion-based metric. According to Keller (1993), it is the distinct influence that brand knowledge provides on customer responses. Brand equity explores a brand's market value, reputation, and customer views, whereas brand awareness only recognizes the brand's existence (Nunes, 2021).

Over the past ten years, social media has developed into a powerful marketing tool that offers marketers an abundance of choices for raising consumer brand recognition, as well as a novel perspective on marketing. At the moment, this is considered the most open, engaging, and dynamic approach to media affairs. People exchange data, identities, ideas, inquiries, insights, issues, and content through digital networks, which are collections of digital locations and communication networks (Dwivedi, 2020). This makes it possible for people from all over the world to engage and communicate with one another.

Social media marketing in the fashion industry

It has been asserted that the fashion industry is both distinctively customized and perfect for social networking. Social media platforms and several other digital platforms that enable the apparel sector to interact with its customers via the use of cutting-edge social networking technology are what we mean when we discuss social mainstream media for the apparel sector (Carrigan, 2013). The fashion industry uses social media to monitor trends and forecast future trends. That is social media integration, which has enabled it to become a movement.

Fashionistas now have fresh inspiration thanks to the growth of social media platforms. From fashion blogs to live broadcasting of runway events, from the major fashion weeks to online shopping, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and numerous other social media platforms provide us with a diverse array of viewpoints from a multitude of sources. For the fashion industry, this has developed into a major catwalk.

The acceptance and appeal of brands on social media platforms are expanding quickly. In the past year, the vast majority of businesses have more than quadrupled their social media following. The visibility of clothing vendors on social media platforms has also increased significantly compared to other segments of the clothing industry (Akhtar, 2022). Additionally, fashion brands tend to experiment with other digital environments, such as the metaverse (Patruti, Zbuche, & Pînzaru, 2022).

Social media had truly become a brand's communication channel and could be used for unrestricted publicity (Kaul, 2015). In an attempt to create brand identities on international online media, luxury companies, artists, and retailers often tweet, blog, and update their accounts. Films, advertisements, behind-the-scenes and off-the-clock videos, and even catwalk demonstrations that serve as the brand's authentic expression are all shared on social media by the designers.

The clothing sector has changed as a result of the emergence of online platforms, which have impacted how companies engage and interact with their customers. For more than 50 years, Romania has been recognized as a significant center for businesses in South-Eastern Europe involved in a variety of textile-related businesses. Several significant names in the international fashion sector manufacture their clothing in Romania because of the country's specific expertise, skilled workforce, and relatively low costs, which help sustain the sector's steady growth. Additionally, starting in 2023, Romania's clothing sector is expected to expand consistently and continuously, as reported by Statista (Statista, 2023). From 2.32 billion in 2022 to 3.10 billion in 2023, subsequently 3.63 billion in 2024, 4.24 billion in 2025, 4.64 billion in 2026, and then 5.07 billion in 2027, this growth will accelerate. Over the last ten years, income has changed significantly; 2027 is predicted to generate \$5.07 billion, a startling \$4.41 billion differential from the \$0.66 billion earned in 2017. With \$1.34 billion in 2020, \$1.94 billion in 2021, and a slight drop to \$1.63 billion in 2022, the apparel sector generated the most revenue. Conversely, the footwear category generated the least revenue, with 0.26 billion USD in 2020, 0.34 billion USD in 2021, and 0.29 billion USD in 2022.

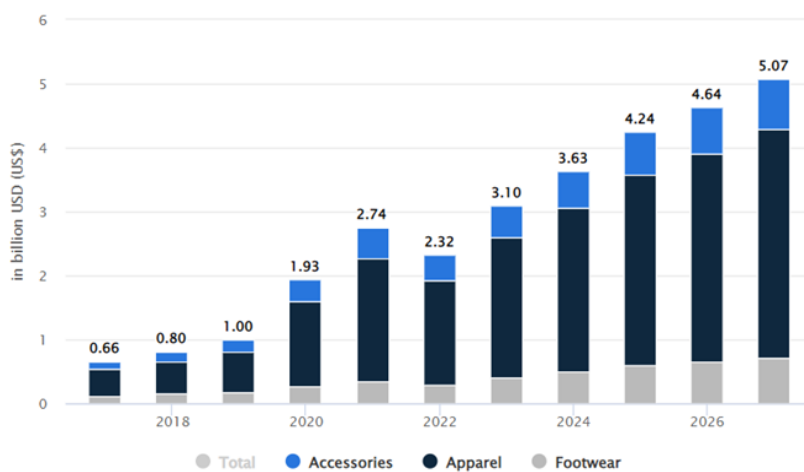


Figure 2. Revenue in billion USD regarding footwear, accessories, and apparel between 2017 and 2027
Source: Statista, 2023

With an annual contribution of more than €400 billion, the textile and clothing sector is a vital component of European prosperity in both the economy and society. The European Commission (2021) states that the industry includes a wide range of operations, from making clothes to turning natural and synthetic fibers into yarns and textiles. The industry is an essential component of European manufacturing, and it unquestionably contributes to employment and economic growth. The emergence of digital technology and social media platforms in recent years has given the industry new chances to develop and interact with customers globally.

Social media has become an essential tool for the fashion industry, enabling companies to monitor trends and test creative marketing strategies. Social media has two distinct benefits over conventional media channels like television and publications. First of all, because it is collaborative, anybody can submit material, including companies, local retailers, and consumers, which helps to shape brand identities and spread the word about fashion around the world. Whether satisfied or not, customers can readily express their thoughts and experiences online, generating natural word-of-mouth advertising. Businesses can learn a lot about customer opinion from this open discussion (McCormick et al., 2014).

Second, many social media platforms, such as Instagram, rely heavily on visuals. This is especially helpful for the fashion business, since product attraction is mostly communicated through images. Brands can reach and engage consumers more effectively by sharing multiple photos and videos of a single product on social media (Lemon, 2016). For instance, Instagram has revolutionized the fashion

industry. Instagram has become an essential tool for businesses since Facebook acquired it in 2012, enabling them to interact with customers directly and build brand equity (Dwiwedi, 2022). With 60% of users saying the app helps them find new products, Instagram is being used by over a million businesses to engage with their consumers (Anselmi, 2024). Many fashion firms leverage Instagram's unique features, including hashtags and user-generated content, to build connections and tell genuine brand stories.

Instagram's focus on visual content and timeliness has made it a perfect venue for fashion-related businesses to engage with emerging trends. The rapid rise of Instagram, particularly among fashion bloggers and micro-celebrities, has enabled fashion firms to communicate directly with a global audience. Brands may expand their audience and strengthen their reputation by working with influencers and supporting user-generated content. In methods previously unthinkable, the use of hashtags during events such as Fashion Week further combines offline and online engagement, fusing the two worlds (Ha, 2017).

In addition to Instagram, the fashion industry also relies heavily on Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and Pinterest. With more than 1.5 million business pages, Facebook remains one of the most popular social media platforms. According to Pinto and Yagnik (2017), 25% of social network users follow businesses on Facebook, giving businesses the chance to interact directly with potential clients. Another important channel for fashion promotion is TikTok, which has seen a sharp increase in popularity. The app's distinctive traits, such as its emphasis on short videos and viral trends, make it the perfect platform for fashion companies to work with influencers and showcase new collections. With more than a billion subscribers, TikTok's extensive user base offers marketers numerous opportunities to engage younger consumers (Forbes, 2021).

In a similar vein, fashion fans have turned to Pinterest, a visual-focused website. By sharing and saving photos, users build carefully selected boards that represent their goals and passions. By posting aesthetically pleasing content, fashion firms can reach this highly active audience and often boost brand awareness and customer engagement (Rajani, 2015). Pinterest is a crucial tool for increasing engagement because of its emphasis on aesthetics, which aligns perfectly with the fashion industry's demands.

Social media's increasing impact on the fashion industry is also due to platforms like YouTube and Snapchat. Younger customers are drawn to Snapchat's emphasis on private, fast sharing, while fashion enthusiasts are drawn to YouTube's long-form video content for its more in-depth narratives and behind-the-scenes glimpses. Fashion brands now engage with their audiences in a new way that combines marketing and entertainment, driven by the growing importance of visual storytelling on these platforms.

The fashion industry has undergone a revolution thanks to social media's ability to foster real-time participation, offer prompt feedback, and generate viral content. To maintain their edge over competitors in an increasingly digital market, brands must remain flexible and adapt to new trends as venues continue to evolve. Social media has become essential for fashion firms hoping to succeed in the current digital environment, driven by the growth of user-generated content, influencer partnerships, and the ability to combine offline events with online interaction.

The way people communicate and conduct business has changed significantly during the past 40 years. How businesses operate, and the rise of personal computers, the Internet, and e-commerce have profoundly impacted the market. The use of social media technology is increasing, and we can expect it to have a similar impact on businesses in the future as it does now. As new technologies become available, businesses that learn to take advantage of them gain a lot. People are social creatures who collect and share information that is important to them. Social media marketing is the process of recognizing how technologies have made it easier for people to interact socially inside their social networks and how businesses can profit from that knowledge.

Indeed, fashion is specially designed and obviously suitable for online networking. Whenever social media is mentioned in relation to the fashion industry, it refers to online platforms that enable the market to interact with its customers through the latest technological advancements. Digital platforms are used in the fashion industry to track trends and forecast fashion behaviors. The impact and repercussions on the garment business are undeniable, as designers' participation on social networking sites is crucial in the 21st century.

Fashion companies have benefited greatly from the openness of both selling and promoting on the internet realm, and they have progressively established themselves in the retail industry. The efficiency and success of clothing auctions and purchases have increased. The largest percentage of all products bought through social media sites is fashion items. More buyers are searching for the newest styles in clothing and fashion every day. Today's kids look to user-generated content on social media before making any purchases. Fashion retail companies are prioritizing social media as their advertising channel because it is now easy for customers to interact with fashion labels on these platforms.

Generation Z consumer behavior in digital environments

The younger generation makes thoughtless and frequent purchases (Sabina Lissita, 2016). Compared to previous generations, people are more likely to buy more quickly and are fully aware of their purchasing power (Flor Madrigal Moreno, 2017). Social media encourages more buying and spending because young people want to wear new, unique clothes every day to keep up with the latest trends shown on social networking sites. The younger generation of consumers adopts the latest styles, haircuts, and products to impress others. Furthermore, social media's ease, sense of independence, and control over in-store shopping (Wen-Hai Chih, 2012) may lead to unusual buying behaviors, such as compulsive and impulsive buying.

Social media utilization is very beneficial to both businesses and consumers. People are influenced by their circles of friends, acquaintances, celebrities, and the advertisements that appear on social media sites' home pages. Additionally, social media helps customers who are not familiar with brands become aware of them.

Social networking sites serve as trustworthy information sources that let customers choose what and where to buy. Because social media makes it possible to get feedback on products and brands, people use it for purchasing in much the same way as they use clothing websites or catalogs. As easy access to information through social media influences purchase decisions, more people are using social media to learn about new, accessible products, according to Jothi and Gaffoor (C Arul Jothi, 2017). Additionally, social media networks serve as trustworthy information sources that let customers choose what and where to buy. Because social media enables feedback on products and brands, people use it for shopping in a manner analogous to how they use clothing websites or catalogs. Jothi and Gaffoor (2017) state that, as easy access to information through social media influences purchase decisions, more people are using social media to learn about new items that are accessible.

Social media seems to be successful because it has provided the fashion industry a boost by providing both consumers and the industry with a common platform to submit content from anywhere at any time. Likes, comments, and photo updates from customers help brands grow. Fashion brands and consumers engage in a two-way dialogue as businesses on digital networking sites like Instagram and Twitter attract customers to the newest trends. Social media has united the fashion industry as more businesses move to online communities to connect with active consumers of all ages. All fashion companies use social media propaganda to boost their chances of being seen as a legitimate brand because of their digital likes and followers. It also enables a direct connection between generations of customers, which not only attracts new customers but also fosters customer loyalty.

Nearly 90% of clothing companies are investing in their digital evolution, demonstrating how quickly the fashion sector is adopting the digital age (Johan Hagberg, 2016). The relationship between customers and merchants is undergoing an important change as a result of the increasing digitization of business processes. The sector needs to adjust to evolving technological frameworks as customer

expectations and behavior change. Three essential elements must be in place for fashion companies to successfully shift to a digital business model: an integrated intelligence generator, a reliable logistics management platform, and a seamless client interface (Jocevski, 2019). In addition to increasing operational effectiveness and profitability, these elements provide a seamless digital experience for clients.

Building successful retailer-customer interactions in an increasingly digital economy requires merging current channels and creating new retail spaces (Johan Hagberg, 2016). Successful digital businesses understand the value of using social media platforms to build collaborative, interactive connections with their clients in addition to using them for marketing. Social media enables companies to react instantly to consumer feedback, creating a dialogue-like environment that facilitates problem-solving and strengthens client relationships. These platforms also provide businesses with useful information on consumer preferences, helping them spot business opportunities and create focused expansion plans.

The cost-effectiveness of social media marketing in comparison to more conventional forms of promotion is one of its biggest benefits. Online marketing initiatives are typically less expensive and deliver comparable, if not better, results than traditional marketing tactics, which can be very expensive. Businesses of all sizes can now more easily promote their content thanks to networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which offer the option at a comparatively low cost. Additionally, companies can precisely target specific demographics through technologies like pay-per-click advertising, ensuring that the right people see their content. This level of targeted accuracy increases engagement and sharing, helping the business reach a wider audience and attract new clients.

Another crucial area that social media improves is customer service. Businesses can quickly respond to consumer inquiries through social media channels like Facebook and Twitter, making it easier to handle complaints and find solutions. Since customers are more inclined to stick with businesses that provide prompt, friendly customer service, this instantaneous communication method increases customer satisfaction and loyalty. Because happy customers are more likely to post about their positive experiences online, social media also helps businesses build trust with new clients. A brand's reputation can be significantly impacted by word-of-mouth advertising, particularly in the fashion sector, where consumer sentiment is highly influential.

Because consumers have so many options in the fashion industry, customer loyalty is very crucial. Given the abundance of fashion brands selling comparable goods, businesses must cultivate enduring relationships with their customers to stay ahead of the competition. Social media allows brands to maintain relationships with their audience by providing a forum for ongoing interaction and input. By demonstrating responsiveness and dedication to customer satisfaction, businesses can attract new clients while retaining their existing clientele (McCormick et al., 2014).

Influencer marketing and social media engagement

Social media platforms not only enhance customer service but also offer insightful data that helps companies improve their marketing tactics. Businesses can better understand their audience's preferences and adjust their content by gathering customer data and feedback. Future marketing initiatives, market research, and product development can all benefit from this information. Businesses can develop more personalized messaging that connects with their target market and encourages further interaction by efficiently handling and responding to customer feedback.

Furthermore, social media's contribution to the fashion business extends beyond customer support and direct promotion. It is also essential for raising awareness and creating a brand. Brands can leverage user-generated content to sell their products by tapping the inventiveness of their influencers and consumers. Fashion brands often work with influencers or invite customers to post their own images along with brand experiences. The brand's visibility is enhanced, and genuine, natural buzz about its products is generated through this grassroots marketing strategy.

Businesses need to adapt to the evolving digital landscape as the fashion sector continues to evolve. Social media has evolved from a simple communication medium to a crucial component of marketing, consumer interaction, and brand building. Fashion brands can increase client satisfaction and loyalty, as well as their overall online visibility and financial success, by leveraging social media.

Social media promotions and purchasing behavior

Although social media has many benefits, adding it to a fashion company's website also poses several challenges. The time required to administer these platforms properly is one of the biggest challenges. Social media is often described as "time-intensive" because it requires sustained attention to establish and maintain deep ties with prospective clients. Rubathee Nadaraja (2013) asserts that the emphasis on social networking sites is not only on product promotion but also on building enduring relationships that lead to more sales. Devoted staff members are needed for every facet of social media administration, from publishing material to answering queries and comments. In the absence of a designated overseer for these platforms, a business's digital networks can struggle to attract new clients. Given that each of their rivals is likely using social media, fashion companies in particular need to assess whether they have sufficient time or funds to properly manage these channels. Effective time management is essential, and businesses need to recognize the time investment required. Fashion firms must set aside time each day to interact with their target market, respond to questions, and update their social media channels. They risk lagging behind their rivals, who might be constantly engaged on social media, interacting with their audience, and maintaining a strong digital brand presence, if they are reluctant to satisfy this need. Before integrating social media into their advertising strategies, companies must seriously evaluate if they currently have the capacity to dedicate to social media management.

Meeting consumer demand is an issue firms face when using social networks for marketing, in addition to scheduling constraints. Overstating the potential return on investment from online marketing initiatives is a common mistake among marketers. They frequently overstate social media's efficacy, creating irrational expectations, as Wizard (2017) notes. When the anticipated results are not realized, this overestimation may lead to disappointment. For social media platforms to be genuinely effective, all marketing channels must be used consistently and cohesively. Firms may encounter "small productivity" on social media, a term used to describe the platforms' failure to meet expectations when they are not properly integrated into their overall marketing plan. This problem is most noticeable in the fashion sector. Fashion firms need to market a variety of goods, so when social media channels are not managed effectively, their marketing efforts can appear scattered. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, for instance, may have distinct target demographics, tones, and strategies, but they must complement one another to improve a brand's online visibility. Each of these channels can appear disjointed when handled independently or without an obvious, cohesive strategy, which reduces the overall marketing impact. Fashion brands must thus invest enough time and money to guarantee uniformity across all channels. More unified, successful social media strategies that increase engagement and sales may come from this continuous work.

The threat created by unhappy clients is another significant issue regarding online marketing within the apparel industry. Customers frequently openly express their displeasure on social media sites in the age of technology. Consumer feedback, reviews, and comments can swiftly turn unfavorable and spread widely, harming a brand's reputation. According to Nadaraja and Yazdanifard (2013), user-generated content is highly trusted, suggesting that prospective buyers may give greater weight to other consumers' ratings and comments than to brand messaging. As a result, unfavorable comments or reviews have the power to damage a business's reputation and deter prospective buyers.

Fashion firms must keep a careful eye on social media for consumer complaints to reduce this risk. They must also take prompt action to resolve problems before they get out of hand. Retaining client loyalty and trust requires prompt, professional responses to unfavorable comments. Removing posts that are rude or improper can also help shield the brand from more damage to its reputation. Proper response techniques can help shape the tale and demonstrate to consumers that their concerns are taken seriously, even if they cannot prevent every instance of damaging feedback.

Firms are unable to overlook or improperly address client complaints in the fiercely competitive apparel market, where consumers have an endless array of choices at their fingertips. A clothing company risks losing clients to rivals who might be more receptive and considerate if it cannot manage unfavorable comments effectively. As a result, social media connection management is essential to a fashion company's overall success and requires an anticipatory approach to both client interaction and problem-solving. In summary, despite social media's enormous development potential, companies need to be ready for the lengthy commitment, integration challenges, and threats involved in handling unfavorable reviews and client expectations.

Methodology

Research design

Social networking has emerged as a key marketing platform, particularly for fashion labels aiming to appeal to younger consumers. Social networking platforms are the primary means by which Generation Z, an exceptionally involved and electronically native demographic, connects with companies (Fortuna, 2023). A data-driven approach that transcends presumptions and anecdotal observations is necessary to understand how these demographics view the outreach initiatives of female clothing firms in Romania.

The empirical approach's capacity to monitor developments over time is another essential characteristic. To remain relevant, businesses need to adapt their communication approach as social media patterns change (Dwivedi, 2020). This study can set precedents regarding how Generation Z now views engagement from clothing companies and serves as a basis for additional studies to evaluate changes in consumer tastes and perceptions. For clothing businesses trying to create commitment plans suited to the changing demands of the demographic they are targeting, this strategy is valuable. (Dwiwedi, 2022)

The study's precise goals are outlined in its research objectives, which ensure the inquiry remains organized and focused. Analyzing how Generation Z customers prefer to interact with female clothing companies on social media platforms and how they make their purchasing decisions in relation to them (Tlili et al., 2022) is one of the study's main goals. There are numerous ways to become involved, such as sharing, liking, commenting, following, and even purchasing. Companies can improve their content tactics to foster stronger connections and bolster their digital visibility by understanding these behaviors. (Paliszkievicz, 2020)

Evaluating perceived genuineness and reliability of brand communication has become another important goal (Dwivedi, 2020). Transparency is important to Generation Z, and they are inclined to interact with firms that seem sincere about their advertising (P., 2020). The research can offer an understanding of what renders social media communication appear more reliable in the eyes of young customers by analyzing the elements that contribute to the illusion of genuineness, such as the use of actual client reviews, influencer partnerships, and behind-the-scenes content.

Additionally, the study aims to assess how various forms of material affect engagement along with purchase intention. Fashion companies employ a range of social media strategies, such as influencer partnerships, product demonstrations, brand narratives, and promotional offers. Firms can improve their approach to that by identifying which kinds of content appeal most to Generation Z (Koles, 2023). Companies might choose to shift the emphasis to include additional client-focused material, for example, if the study reveals that user-generated content is preferable to conventional advertising for building brand loyalty.

Another important goal of this study is to investigate whether collaborating with influencers affects perceptions of brands and purchasing behavior. Influencers have a big impact on how consumers think, especially members of Generation Z. The reputation of the influencer, perceived genuineness of the partnership, and the degree to which the influencer's private label and the clothing company overlap

are some of the variables that affect how successful influencer marketing is (Suganya, 2024). The purpose of this study is to determine whether influencer collaborations increase customer involvement and trust, or merely fuel mistrust of brand motives.

The research also seeks to pinpoint the essential elements that enable fashion firms aiming to reach Generation Z to communicate effectively on online platforms and impact their purchase behavior. Assessing the most common communication style—such as formal versus informal messaging - and the ways in which interactive elements like surveys, Q&As, or live videos affect user involvement are part of it (Lipschultz, 2023). The investigation can provide businesses with practical suggestions to improve their online communication tactics and forge closer ties with their intended consumers by identifying which methods work best.

The research aims to evaluate the impact of online communication on brand loyalty, as well as involvement and trustworthiness. In a time when there are so many fashion companies available to the public, gaining their allegiance is becoming more challenging (Górska-Warsewicz, 2024). This study can assist businesses in developing more successful retention strategies by assessing how elements such as a consistent brand message, quick-response social media customer service, and personalized content help promote long-term client loyalty.

The research also aims to investigate how much Generation Z customers relate to clothing businesses on an individual basis via social media platforms. By releasing behind-the-scenes material, demonstrating company principles, or engaging with customers, many companies aim to build an emotional bond with their target market (Lipschultz, 2022). As companies aim to foster greater connection, knowing whether such efforts lead to improved consumer-brand relationships may prove insightful.

Finally, this study aims to evaluate how satisfied Generation Z customers are with Romanian female clothing firms' social media content and how this content affects their purchasing behavior. This survey may give organizations an outline for improving current digital marketing initiatives by assessing levels of satisfaction along with pinpointing areas that require development. Companies may take measures regarding consumer complaints about excessive promotional material or a lack of adaptability, among other aspects of brand communication. (Dwiwedi, 2022)

Research objectives and hypotheses

Collectively, the research goals, along with the empirical method, guarantee that the research yields significant and useful findings about how Generation Z views social media outreach by Romanian female fashion firms. This study goes beyond conjecture and provides verifiable evidence that businesses can enhance their online communication tactics to interact with their target demographic through data-driven analysis more effectively. In addition to contributing to scholarly conversations on customer behavior, including digital marketing, the research's conclusions will offer useful guidance for fashion firms seeking to strengthen their position in the ruthless digital marketplace.

Considering consumer impressions remains essential for businesses looking to stay relevant and build enduring relationships with their target market as social media continues to evolve. The use of an empirical method ensures this study accurately depicts how Generation Z engages with and responds to social media communications from fashion businesses. The investigation methodically investigates the critical elements that influence client involvement, reliability, and purchase behavior via concise research objectives. By using these data, Romanian female clothing manufacturers can create social media marketing strategies that seem more authentic, interesting, and successful while also catering to the particular tastes of Generation Z customers.

Survey instrument

The primary element of any academic study is the research method, which establishes the strategy for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. A quantitative research approach is used in this study through a questionnaire-based survey that examines how Generation Z views the online communication of female apparel firms and their purchase behavior. This method guarantees unbiased insights into interactions among variables, including online engagement, content category, brand communication, and demographic information, by enabling systematic data collection. The necessity for quantifiable, generalizable data that may identify patterns and correlations across a substantial number of Generation Z customers justifies the decision to employ quantitative research.

The research aims to evaluate how Generation Z uses social media to engage with, view, and purchase from female clothing companies. A quantitative technique is ideally suited to the study questions' subject matter because it allows for the assessment of factors such as genuineness, credibility, engagement, and intent to purchase. Through data analysis and structured surveys, this methodology enables an unbiased assessment of the variables that affect consumer impression. Quantitative research offers an organized framework for testing hypotheses and determining causal relationships, whereas qualitative research is more concerned with subjective experiences and judgments. Therefore, a research approach that collects numerical data from a sizable, heterogeneous sample of Romanian Generation Z consumers is needed.

Quantifiable data were gathered via a survey-based approach, making it easier to conduct a thorough examination of how various factors affect people's perceptions of brand communication. Furthermore, the quantitative method is best suited for identifying trends and making data-driven assumptions, as social media interactions generate enormous volumes of data.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from Romanian Generation Z consumers for this research. To measure impressions, degree of involvement, and preferences, the survey will include closed-ended questions, as well as multiple-choice and ranking responses. The survey will be divided into sections covering demographic information, such as age and gender; social media engagement, including frequency of platforms used and engagement with women's fashion brands; content type preferences, including preferred fashion content and the importance that a brand should include a variety of posts; brand interaction and personalization, including the importance for oneself to interact online with the fashion brand (through comments, direct messages, etc.) and personalization effects, as well as overall brand perception, which includes trust, genuineness and probability of purchasing.

Romanian Generation Z consumers who regularly use social media and interact with women's clothing companies comprise the sample for this study. The sampling procedure determines the reliability and accuracy of the findings. This research focuses on people in Romania who are members of Generation Z, are active on social networks, and occasionally interact with female fashion firms. In this investigation, the convenience sampling method is used, a traditional non-probability sampling technique. To ensure connectivity, respondents will be recruited through online communities, academic networks, and social media advertisements. The inability to reach an arbitrary number of Gen Z customers makes probability sampling unworkable, despite its ability to boost generalizability. To increase accuracy, an attempt will nevertheless be made to include a wide variety of participants by location and gender.

This study uses a quantitative approach to systematically and impartially gather data to evaluate how Generation Z views social media communications across women's fashion firms. The structured approach offers quantifiable understandings of demographic influences, brand interaction, content choices, and engagement. Despite the technique's high quantitative reliability and precision, the breadth and bias of response constraints need to be taken into account. The research's assumptions provide a solid basis for insightful results by addressing important connections among demographics, brand contact, content type, as well as social media involvement. To support these theories and advance knowledge of digital brand communication in the fashion sector, data gathered through a questionnaire from a traditional sample of Generation Z customers will be statistically analyzed.

How brands engage with consumers has been completely transformed by the dynamic expansion of digital communication, especially in sectors like fashion, which are influenced by aesthetics, identity, and trend sensitivity. Generation Z is one of the most tech-savvy and sensitive consumer groups. Because of their frequent use of social media, they are an important target market for fashion marketers. The purpose of this study is to determine how social media affects Generation Z women's perceptions and actions regarding fashion businesses. A series of hypotheses had been constructed to frame the analysis and direct the empirical investigation. Based on prior research, digital consumer trends, plus the distinct behavioral characteristics of Generation Z, these hypotheses provide theoretical presumptions.

- H1: After being exposed to social media content, women in Generation Z are less inclined to make rash fashion purchases.*
- H2: When exposed to social media, Generation Z women are far more likely to examine fashion items before making a purchase.*
- H3: Social media promotions have a beneficial impact on Generation Z women's fashion buying decisions.*
- H4: Social media discounts greatly boost Generation Z women's purchases of fashion items.*
- H5: Gen Z women are more drawn to fashion brands when they see visually attractive social media material.*
- H6: Gen Z consumers who engage directly with women's fashion brands (e.g., comments, DMs) have a more positive perception of the brand.*
- H7: Generation Z women's fashion choices are considerably influenced by social media influencers.*
- H8: Women in Generation Z who follow fashion brands on social media have a moderate degree of trust in them.*
- H9: Depending upon their social media presence, Gen Z women are somewhat likely to suggest fashion brands.*
- H10: Women in Generation Z regularly need to come across content from fashion brands on various social media channels.*
- H11: Generation Z women's opinions of brand aesthetic appeal, content attractiveness, and creativity are positively impacted by Romanian fashion brands' social media communication quality.*
- H12: Gen Z consumers who spend more time on social media have a more favorable perception of women's fashion brands' communication*
- H13: Women in Generation Z believe that global fashion labels are only moderately sensitive to regional cultural tastes.*
- H14: Personalized social media content, such as targeted advertisements and tailored content recommendations, positively influences Generation Z women's perception of women's fashion brands.*

Results and discussion

Overview of demographics and social media consumption trends

According to the demographic data, the participants' average age ranged from 18 to 22 years old (Mean = 2.81, SD = 0.906), which is in close agreement with the core Generation Z group. The job status (Mean = 1.80, SD = 0.910) mostly represents a mix of students and early-career professionals, and the gender distribution supports an almost all-female cohort (Mean = 1.02, SD = 0.152), as planned in the research design. The vast majority of respondents live in metropolitan areas, which often offer greater digital access and access to fashion content on social media channels, according to statistics on region of residence (Mean = 1.12, SD = 0.324).

The average amount of time spent on social media each day is 3.07 (SD = 0.856), which indicates a high degree of digital involvement in line with previous research on Generation Z. Additionally, the frequency of social media usage was high (Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.948), suggesting that individuals actively interact with content on these platforms in addition to using them often. Additionally, a mean score of 4.11 (SD = 1.091) indicated that a sizable percentage of respondents frequented numerous

social media platforms for fashion-related information. This research emphasizes the importance of fashion firms having a robust, multi-platform presence to reach this market successfully.

Perspectives on social media fashion content

Those surveyed offered nuanced insights into how they view fashion-related social media posts. Visual appeal, attractiveness, creativity, and engagement level were among the many content aspects scored. The findings show that although participants generally had a positive opinion of fashion content, there are significant variations in how certain aspects are assessed.

Relatively high ratings were given to the content's attractiveness (Mean = 3.36, SD = 0.913) and appeal (Mean = 3.38, SD = 1.373), indicating that Generation Z users value aesthetic and visual components. Nonetheless, more moderate ratings were given to inventiveness (Mean = 3.07, SD = 0.843) and engagement in particular (Mean = 2.93, SD = 1.280), suggesting a possible discrepancy between the form of the content and its capacity to maintain interest or encourage interaction.

These results support the notion that although Generation Z values well-executed graphics, they also anticipate a more complex, interactive experience. The moderate engagement score suggests that contemporary fashion content techniques may not be effective at promoting two-way communication, which is essential for building customer trust and brand loyalty in this generation.

Purchase patterns and after-exposure measures

Examining whether exposure to clothing content on social networks leads to direct purchasing was one of the study's main goals. Few individuals reported buying fashion goods immediately after seeing them on social media (Mean = 1.28, SD = 0.453). According to this research, women from Generation Z do not make rash purchases just because they are exposed to social media.

Rather, a sizable proportion of participants reported conducting additional research after encountering a product online (Mean = 3.62, SD = 1.102). This activity defies the perception of Generation Z as unduly impulsive or emotionally driven consumers by demonstrating a deliberate, information-driven approach to purchase. Before making a purchase, these young women seem to prioritize information and reliability, which has significant implications for how fashion firms should organize their online marketing campaigns. Companies may be better able to assist this group in making decisions if they offer links to reviews, clear product information, or client endorsements.

Impact of discounting techniques and promotional content

Consumer behavior was found to be significantly impacted by promotional content and discount offers. The average score for promotional content was 3.56 (SD = 0.778), while the average score for discounts was even higher at 3.72 (SD = 1.007). These findings are consistent with Generation Z's propensity to be quality-seeking, value-conscious shoppers who are also quite receptive to financial incentives.

Promotional tactics, particularly those that are exclusive or time-limited, seem to work well to increase participation and possibly boost sales. While offers entice many people, some may not place as much importance on discounts, perhaps valuing brand ethics, sustainability, and distinctiveness more than cost savings. This is indicated by the comparatively high standard deviation with discounts, which implies heterogeneity in responses.

The part influencers play in changing consumer perceptions

The results of this study show that influencer marketing is still very important for fashion communications on social media. A moderate rating of social media influence (Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.257) indicated a balanced effect. Influencers undoubtedly play a role in the ecosystem that influences consumer decisions, but they are neither the only nor the main force behind them. There is significant

variation in how individuals view influencers, as indicated by the relatively high standard deviation. Differences in how particular influencers are viewed in terms of their relevance, authenticity, and dependability may be the cause of this discrepancy. While some respondents might be strongly swayed by well-known fashion icons and micro-influencers with whom they personally identify, others might not be so sure, especially when the advertising goal is too obvious.

Confidence of customers and brand trust

Given significant participant heterogeneity, the mean trust in fashion companies score was moderate (3.19, SD = 1.305). This suggests that considerable skepticism persists, even though several Generation Z women have faith in fashion brands promoted on social media. This is consistent with broader trends indicating a growing appetite for peer-reviewed and user-generated information and a decline in trust in traditional advertising. This suggests that ethical production methods, social responsibility, and transparency should be given top priority by fashion firms looking to win over Generation Z's steadfast allegiance. This generation does not readily grant trust; rather, it must be earned by genuine communication and constant, value-driven engagement.

Advocacy intent and brand recommendations

The probability of recommending a clothing company to others was assessed using a variable called "Recommend." According to the measure's mean score of 3.36 (SD = 0.738), people are only moderately inclined to recommend brands they value on social media. The comparatively lower standard deviation, on the other hand, suggests greater consensus among respondents and suggests a generally cautious approach to brand advocacy. This supports the notion that, particularly in social or public contexts, Generation Z is picky about the brands they identify with. Delivering consistent value, first-rate service, plus an effective, ethical brand image that aligns with the values of the current generation are the main priorities for brands hoping to convert consumers into champions.

How global fashion brands are seen comparatively

Additionally, questions concerning the participants' opinions of foreign fashion labels were posed. With a neutral-to-moderate mean score of 3.11 (SD = 1.047), the responses indicated that people were open to international fashion brands but showed no significant bias against them. Even if global trends and aesthetics still influence Generation Z customers, this may indicate their growing interest in supporting sustainable or local firms. This dual preference for both domestic and foreign companies suggests that a hybrid marketing strategy is required. To effectively reach this market, global fashion brands must localize their content and incorporate culturally relevant elements, even as they capitalize on their reputations and global appeal.

Adjust social media approaches to informational posts

One of the analysis's most notable conclusions is that, after viewing social media content, Generation Z women are less likely to make spontaneous purchases ($M = 1.28$). Nonetheless, a high mean for product research following exposures ($M = 3.62$) suggests a methodical, well-informed approach to decision-making.

Clothing firms are advised to change their social media tactics from aggressively marketing to informing and educating. This may consist of:

- Comprehensive details about the product in captions as well as stories;
- Customer testimonials and reviews;
- Behind-the-scenes production stories (with a focus on sustainability or responsible sourcing);
- Tutorials and fashion advice.

Gen Z's inclination toward authenticity and value-driven decision-making aligns with informative material that presents the business as open and reliable.

Increase the use of promotional incentives

According to the analysis, user behavior is highly influenced by discounts ($M = 3.72$) and promotional content ($M = 3.56$). Value-conscious, Generation Z buyers frequently weigh costs and benefits while making decisions.

It is advised that brands include targeted promotions and discounts in their online presence schedules. These may manifest as:

- "First-time buyer" offers via swipe-up links;
- Gamified campaigns (such as spin-to-win or polls that result in a discount);
- Influencer partnerships that provide special coupon codes;
- Limited-time discount coupons.

These strategies boost engagement and shareability, in addition to redevelopment, particularly when displayed in a visually appealing, brand-consistent manner.

Update content to boost interaction

The fairly low engagement rating ($M = 2.93$) indicates a gap in content design, even though categories such as appeal ($M = 3.38$) and attractiveness ($M = 3.36$) received high scores. This implies that although the aesthetic might be sufficient, the content is unengaging and emotionally detached.

Fashion firms ought to concentrate on producing content that is both interactive and emotionally compelling, such as:

- Surveys, tests, and "this or that"-style interactions,
- Brief forms of video storytelling (Instagram Reels, TikTok challenges), influencer-led livestream shopping events, and user-generated content initiatives (like #MyStyleMyWay).

In addition to increasing engagement metrics, these formats help build understanding of the community, which is crucial to Gen Z loyalty to a company.

Make multiplatform distribution a priority

The variable measuring the utilization of multiple platforms had the highest mean score ($M = 4.11$). This suggests that Generation Z consumes fashion content across a range of media rather than being restricted to a single digital realm.

It is advised that brands implement a cohesive multiplatform strategy to ensure message and aesthetic coherence across all platforms, including highly aesthetic content on Instagram; originality and popularity on TikTok; in-depth information on YouTube; encouragement and future planning on Pinterest; and real-time communication on Twitter or Threads. By ensuring a brand is always present, this strategy increases the likelihood of recurring exposure, which improves recall and ultimately conversion.

Reframe influencers' role

According to the results, influencers have a reasonably significant impact ($M = 3.33$). This implies that conventional influencer tactics may adequately or fully influence Gen Z's purchasing decisions.

It is suggested that fashion firms switch from endorsements by famous people to micro- and nano-influencers, who often have more devoted, trustworthy followings. These people can effectively target specific populations, achieve higher interaction rates, and are also seen as more personable and genuine. Additionally, brands should collaborate with influencers to create joint content, emphasizing storytelling, lifestyle integration, and ideological alignment over overt product placement. For Gen Z, authenticity—rather than polish—is their measure of influence.

Establish and share trust

A neutral position is suggested by the mean for brand trust ($M = 3.19$). The principles of Generation Z, transparency, environmentalism, inclusion, and social responsibility, often guide their brand preferences.

It is advised that brands establish trust by:

- Publicly supporting social causes (but refraining from performative activism),
- Disseminating impact assessments or behind-the-scenes ethical behaviors,
- Responding promptly and truthfully in customer service encounters,
- Including actual customers in advertisements is an example.

More than just a token gesture, a commitment to values-driven branding must be ingrained in the company's messaging and behavior.

Promote advocacy via recommendations and shareability

If Gen Z is satisfied, they are receptive to brand support, as seen by their mean propensity to refer of 3.36. Given the group's strong peer influence, this is an important opportunity area.

In order to initiate advocacy, it is important to:

- Feature happy customers on the brand's social media pages ("tag to be featured"),
- Develop shareable material (memes, motivational sayings, and beautiful moodboards),
- Start referral programs that offer rewards to both the new customer and the referrer.

In Gen Z circles, peer-to-peer marketing is especially effective; facilitating the sharing and endorsement of material is a strategic goal.

Consider local vs. global branding again

The mean score for views on multinational brands ($M = 3.11$) indicates a neutral to slightly favorable emotion. Despite their global connectivity, Gen Z frequently favors companies that align with their local identity, culture, and challenges.

When doing business in Romania or similarly localized environments, foreign brands should:

- Collaborate with regional influencers,
- Highlight regionally important ideals or causes,
- Address regional fashion preferences,
- Translate information natively, including colloquial language.

This aids in bridging the cultural divide and establishes the brand as one that respects and acknowledges local culture in addition to being a worldwide organization.

Table 1 summarizes the support for the proposed hypothesis.

Table 1. Hypothesis validation

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Status</i>
H1	Social media reduces impulsive buying	Mean=1.28	Supported
H2	Social media encourages product research	Mean=3.62	Supported
H3	Promotional content influences purchase decisions	Mean=3.56	Supported
H4	Discounts increase purchase intention	Mean=3.72	Supported
H5	Visual content increases brand attraction	Mean=3.36	Supported
H6	Direct interaction improves brand perception	Moderate effect	Supported
H7	Influencers influence fashion choices	Mean=3.33	Partially supported
H8	Followers trust brands	Mean=3.19	Partially supported
H9	Users recommend brands	Mean=3.36	Partially supported
H10	Multi-platform exposure needed	Mean=4.11	Supported
H11	Communication quality affects perception	Positive effect	Supported
H12	Time on social media influences perception	Positive correlation	Supported
H13	Global brands weakly adapt culturally	Mean=3.11	Supported
H14	Personalized content improves perception	Positive effect	Supported

Conclusions

This study examines the complex impact of social media on Generation Z females' views and buying habits regarding women's fashion businesses. The study has shed light on the complex relationships between social media use and purchasing patterns in this group by thoroughly examining the theories and empirical questions that were developed. We can reach several important conclusions that deepen our understanding of this phenomenon by combining the study's results with previously published works.

Overall, the empirical findings confirm most of the proposed hypotheses, indicating that social media plays a significant role in shaping Generation Z women's engagement, perceptions, and purchasing behavior toward fashion brands. The results particularly highlight the importance of visual communication, promotional incentives, and influencer marketing, while also demonstrating that Generation Z consumers adopt a relatively rational, information-oriented decision-making process rather than purely impulsive purchasing behavior.

Integration of research results

The study's results support the idea that social media has a significant influence on how Generation Z women buy apparel. In particular, the study demonstrates that exposure to fashion-related social media posts reduces impulsivity (H1) and promotes careful product evaluation before purchase (H2), leading to more thoughtful purchasing decisions. These results are consistent with earlier research showing that social media is an instructional tool that helps young individuals make educated purchasing decisions. Additionally, the study emphasizes that social media advertising tactics, such as discounts and exclusive deals, can positively influence consumers' purchase decisions (H3 and H4). This result aligns with previous research showing that targeted promotions can increase customer engagement and boost revenue among Generation Z.

One of the most important factors in attracting Generation Z customers to fashion firms is the visual appeal and originality of online content (H5). This group responds well to creative presentations and

high-quality images, underscoring the value of visual storytelling in brand communication. Studies that highlight the importance of imagery in engaging younger audiences' attention provide credence to this idea. It has been demonstrated that Generation Z women's perceptions of fashion brands are enhanced by direct interaction with them through features such as comments and direct messages (H6). This result is consistent with the parasocial interaction theory, which holds that customer attitudes and loyalty can be influenced by perceived personal relationships with companies.

Another important finding is the impact of social media influencers on fashion decisions (H7). Influencer marketing can shape consumer tastes, as evidenced by Generation Z consumers frequently turning to influencers for style guidance. Young consumers view influencers as relatable and credible, a trend that has been extensively examined in the literature. Continuous social media participation and exposure help build moderate trust in clothing companies (H8 and H9). Frequent exposure to brand material across a variety of channels builds trust and familiarity, two factors crucial to consumer decision-making. This aligns with research showing that consistent brand messaging increases customer trust.

Given that Generation Z customers anticipate seeing brand content on their most-used platforms, it is clear that fashion brands must have an active presence across a variety of digital platforms (H10). This omnichannel strategy, backed by current marketing research, reaches a wider audience and strengthens brand awareness. Perceptions of company visual appeal, post attractiveness, and creativity are strongly influenced by the quality of Romanian clothing companies' online communication (H11). Building a positive reputation requires effective communication methods that address consumer expectations and cultural peculiarities. This result aligns with research highlighting the importance of culturally aware marketing strategies.

More positive opinions of female fashion communication from brands are associated with greater time devoted to social media (H12). Research on consumer involvement, along with brand loyalty, supports the idea that greater levels of participation might improve brand familiarity and affinity. According to Generation Z females, there is a moderate degree of cultural adaptation in how international fashion firms are perceived as sensitive to local cultural preferences (H13). As multicultural marketing literature suggests, multinational corporations can further customize their approaches to suit regional cultural tastes. Lastly, Generation Z females' opinions of clothing companies are positively impacted by personalized social media content, such as customized suggestions and targeted ads (H14). According to current studies on personalized advertising, personalization increases relevance and engagement, thereby strengthening the efficacy of tailored marketing strategies.

Research limitations

Notwithstanding the insightful discoveries, it is important to recognize the limits of this study. The study's sample may not accurately reflect the diversity of Gen Z women, which could limit how broadly the results can be applied. Furthermore, biases in recall accuracy or social desirability may be introduced when relying too much on self-reported data. The study's cross-sectional design further limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationship between consumer behavior and social media use.

Suggestions for upcoming studies

Further studies could use longitudinal methods to evaluate shifts in consumer behavior over time, building on the results of this research. Examining how new social media platforms and technological advancements affect Generation Z women's fashion consumption could reveal insights into changing trends. Additionally, comparative research across various cultural contexts may deepen understanding of how cultural elements shape customers' reactions to social media promotions. Lastly, using qualitative techniques such as focus groups or interviews may provide a more in-depth understanding of the attitudes and driving forces behind Generation Z females' social media relationships with clothing firms.

The study's findings demonstrate the substantial impact of online platforms on Generation Z women's views and buying patterns regarding female clothing labels. Brands can successfully engage Generation Z and build lasting connections in the age of technology by tailoring their marketing strategies to their tastes and aspirations.

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