

Impact of Social Media on Generation Y for Buying Fashion Apparel

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of social media on the face of global society has created a new network of social connections. With the advancement in the technology, the interest of Generation Y has shifted from traditional methods to the social media for gaining information. Generation Y constitutes a large proportion of world's population with immense purchasing power enabling many businesses targeting them. Researches show that this generation has different buying behavior as compared to the earlier generation characterizing them as one of the biggest consumer community in the overall global consumption. The role social media played in making them one of the biggest consumer community has also revolutionized the market for apparel industry. Social networking has armed the fashion apparel industry with the ability to grasp a gigantic mass of consumer with just a single update on social media. Almost all the apparel brands and consumers are now interacting genuinely on social media platform. This area, studying the impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour has become a favorite topic among the researchers across the world. The current paper aims to dig deeper into the impact of social media on buying behaviour of generation Y at the same time finding the factors influencing the buying of fashion apparel on social media platform. In this paper the researcher has made an attempt to review previous studies to present the trends, factors and the benefits of social media platform for buying fashion apparel by generation Y consumers.

Keywords: Generation Y, Social media, Buying behaviour, Fashion businesses, Online shopping sites, Social media platforms

Introduction

The revolution in information technology has empowered generation Y and it has a homogenous impact irrespective of the geographical boundaries (Moore, 2012). Generation Y or the millennial, throughout the globe are related through their identical behavior and buying patterns due to the connectivity through mass media. The need of social media is growing with dependence of consumers on social networking sites for making buying decisions, which in turn benefitting the brands to convey a unified message (advertisement) to the consumers all over the world (Stokinger and Ozuem, 2016; Stephen and Galak, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Prensky, 2001). The past researches show that the overall purchase through social media platform have been on a rise. According to Business Insider Intelligence, the top 500 retailers earned an estimated \$6.5 billion from social shopping in 2017 i.e. up by 24% from 2016.

Buying Behaviour

Buying behavior of consumer is the combination of perspectives, choices, and decisions while buying a product. A

person/group is called consumer when an individual/group is involved in product selection, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon 1995). The entire market revolves round the consumers. Consumers, in general, can be referred as individuals who purchase or consume products and services.

Traditionally, marketing theory thought that the factors influencing for consumer behavior are cultural, social, personal and psychological and therefore, consumer purchasing decisions were comprehensive action consisting of:

- Culture factors (culture, subculture, social stratum)
- Social factors (reference group, family, role and status)
- Personal factors (age, career, economic status, life style, self-concept)
- Psychological factors (motivation, sensory, learning, belief, attitude)

Although these factors influence the customer's buying behavior, but at the same time factors like self image and the way of

living has an impact on the needs of the consumers. Hence, the final purchase of the product would ultimately depend upon the factors as enumerated above, at the same time on factors like self image and way of living.

Online buying is a process where the choice of product, payment and the order takes place through online sites. Liang and Lai (2000) said that online shopping behavior (also called online buying behavior and Internet shopping/buying behavior) refers to the process of purchasing products or services via the Internet. The shopping process, through online shopping site, a buyer identifies the requirement for merchandise or related products, they go to the Internet and look for the specific product which can cater their need. While the buyer searches for the product of their choice, at times their attention is pulled in by the information about merchandise or other related products with their need towards pops up on the social media platforms. At that point they assess options, compare them and pick the one that best fits their criteria for fulfilling the felt need.

According to UCLA Center for Communication Policy (2001), online shopping has become the third most popular Internet activity, immediately following e-mail using/instant messaging and web browsing. It is even more popular than seeking out entertainment information the most commonly thought of activities when considering what Internet users do when online.

The consumers buy products from the apparel websites, and show a specific kind of behavior which is related to various demographic variables such as age, sex, income group etc. Online shopping behaviour has direct relationship with these five elements such as e-stores, logistics support, product characteristics, websites' technological characteristics, information characteristic and home page presentation. Online shopping makes its own character for its development (Wang, 2008,).

Monsuwe (2004) state that buyers behaviour toward online shopping was not only affected by ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment, but also by exogenous factors like, customer personality, situational factors, product

uniqueness, previous online shopping experiences, confidence in online shopping and user generated content are the factors determine customers' attitudes toward online buying.

Generation Y

A generation is a group which can be identified by year of birth, age, location and significant events that create their personality (Guha, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). A generation can be developed by significant life events such as wars, new technologies, or major economic transitions. These events form the personality, values, and expectations of that generation (Hauw & Vos, 2010). Over the past sixty years, there have been three generations dominating the workplace: Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennials (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012). Generation Y or millennials is the generation which is born between 1980s - 1990s or the term millennium is given to the generation who has reached adulthood during the 21st century. Kotler & Armstrong (2013) said millennials are the generation which is born between 1977 and 2000. This generation is the group of consumers and inhabitants of the world who have been labeled as the Generation Y, Millennials, and Echo Boomers. In fact, Valentine & Powers (2013) suggest several ways to name to this generational group: millennials, don't label us generation, generation tech, generation next, generation.com, generation 2000, echo boom, boom babies, Generation XX. The term Generation Y is being used throughout the globe but their birth dates are still a topic of debate since their emergence. Table 1 shows the period of birth for generation Y as suggested by various authors.

Table: 1. Birth period of generation Y according to different authors

S. No.	Author	Birth period of Generation Y
1.	Noble et al., 2009),	1977- 1994
2.	Brosdahl and Carpenter's (2011)	1981-1999
3.	Kaifi et al., 2012).	1980-2000.
4.	Valentine & Powers (2013)	1977-1996
5.	Kotler & Armstrong (2013)	1977-2000
6.	Ordun (2015)	1981-2000
7.	Lissitsa & Kol (2016)	1980-1999
8.	Muda, Mohd, & Hassan (2016)	1980- 1990
9.	Omar (2016)	1980-1990

On the basis of the above information one can interpret generation Y people belonging to group mostly born within the period of 1980-2000.

Buying behaviour of generation Y

Generation conceived as 'generation Y' have continual access to the latest technology right from their childhood. They do nearly everything utilizing internet search engines, websites, social media, e-exchanges and, other technologically advanced apps. A key formative characteristic for generation Y is early and frequent exposure to technology, which has both advantages and disadvantages, in terms of cognitive, emotional, and social outcomes (Immordino-Yang et al., 2012). This generation does not like to do anything manually. They think, 'if things can be done easier and faster with lesser effort through the internet than why to waste time on doing things manually'. This generation is not willing to read any user manual, brochures, leaflets newspapers, magazines or notice boards rather they want easy access to all the information that can be referred anytime, anywhere. This generation normally does not read anything that exists in traditional hardcopy format, i.e., newspapers, magazines, newsletters, notice boards, brochures or books. All they want is everything in a digital format easily available online and can be found using the internet browser.

They are the first generation to have spent their entire lives in the digital environment; information technology profoundly affects how they live and work (Bennett et al., 2008; Wesner & Miller, 2008). This generation was born in an emerging world of technology, the use of all forms of social media and communication including television, cell phone use, Internet use, computer tablets, laptops, music, text messages, video games and social programs is very common (Omar, 2016). According to Lachman & Brett (2013) almost half of the respondents were spending a minimum of one hour every day on online retail websites. They also said that the boom in men's fashion has led more men to participate in online shopping, compared to which social media usage now accounts for one third of our daily internet activities which is approximately 2 hours and 22 minutes (Salim, 2019)

Social media platforms

A social platform is a web-based technology that enables the development, deployment and management of social media solutions and services. It provides the ability to create social media websites and services with complete social media network functionality. One of the major uses of social media in 21st century is advertising the products by the businesses. Development in technology helped retailers to use the more efficient platform for advertising from various traditional slower ways. Social media advertising, or social media targeting, are advertisements served to users on social media platforms. Social networking sites shows advertisements to the consumers according to their internet activity and preferences based on the previous searches and buying. In many instances, when target market aligns with the user demographics of a social platform, social advertising can provide huge increases in attracting the consumers on their sites and selling products with lower cost of procurement.

Types of social media platforms:

- Social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, WhatsApp, Instagram). Social Networking Sites are platforms where individuals are able to communicate with others. Social networking sites, as Weinberg (2009) states, "are generic terms for sites that are used to connect users with similar backgrounds and interests".
- Microblogging (Twitter, Tumblr). Microblogging is a real-time information network. It is similar to blogging, yet it limits the number of words for each post and encourages a faster communication. Microblogging allows users to spread their short-texted messages via instant messages, mobile phones, e-mails, or the Web. Twitter is one of the chief and leading microblogs that currently claims to have 321 million monthly users (The Washington Post, 2019).
- Photo sharing (Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest). Posts with images get ten times more engagement than posts without images. The use of the images fill in a big communication gap on social media.

- Media-Sharing sites (YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo Flickr). Media-Sharing sites are outlets where individuals can upload, store, and share their photos, videos and music with other users.

The review of literature shows that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform globally, followed by Youtube, Whatsaap, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Pintrest. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the top three most used social mediaplatforms among global marketers for advertising their products. (Statista, 2019)

Marketing via social media is a latest platform or the marketing tool used by fashion businesses to reach the client. According to Weinberg (2009), it is a process in empowering individuals to promote their websites, products, and/or services through online social channels, to interact with the buyers directly and the ability to tap much larger community that may not have been available via traditional advertising channels.

Impact of social media on buying behaviour of consumers

Consumers and businesses around the globe have been more connected than ever before with the presence of Internet. An average Internet user has 669 social ties (Hampton et al. 2011) ; As of the first quarter of 2019, Facebook had 2.38 billion monthly active users. Tweeter has 321 million monthly active users. LinkedIn has more than 467 million professionals worldwide (Statista, 2019). The global average time spent per person on social networking sites is 6.9 hours per month (Delaney and Salminen 2012). Changes in consumer behavior due to social media are one of the most intriguing aspects in the contemporary marketing.

Fashion retail industry has deep rooted retail industry. A big benefit has gone to the fashion businesses after the introduction of the social media platform advertising and selling. The selling and purchasing of clothing has become more efficient and effective. Fashion apparel is biggest fraction from all of the product range bought through the social networking sites. The number of consumers searching for latest clothing and fashion trends is increasing every day. The younger generations refer to the social media user generated content before

making any buying decision. It has become easier for the consumers to be in contact with fashion brands in social media platforms, which push fashion retail companies to give a huge interest to social media as marketing channel.

Generation Y is carefully dynamic than the past generation in using these platforms and are steadily associated with one another worldwide through social media. Generation Y is accounts over a quarter of the population, by 2025, generation Y will comprise three-quarters of the global workforce, hence they are providing a considerable market to the businesses by spending two-thirds of their money on clothing.

In the light of the aforementioned theme, the researcher was curious to understand the "Impact of Social Media on Generation Y for Buying Fashion Apparel", the researcher made an attempt to synthesize the past researches in this field. The researcher assumes that social media is an important deriving factor in generation Y's consumer decision process, from initial stage to the stage of post purchase, and impacts their buying behavior for fashion apparel in particular.

Methodology and Objectives

The methodology adopted for this entire exposition is based on deductive reasoning. In a way the study is based on exploratory work but it is theoretical in nature which means that it has not been studied in the empirical setting. The main objective of this research is to acquire deeper insight into the trends and factors that has an impact on the buying behavior of generation Y in the scenario witnessing radical changes in the way shopping is done. In this back drop the current paper tries to examine the various factors which govern fashion apparel buying behavior of generation Y through social media.

Factors influencing the buying of fashion apparel through social media platforms:

1. **Social media platform drives impulsive buying:** Generation Y buy more frequently and impulsively (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). They are well aware of their purchasing power, having tendency to spend more and fast than previous generations (Moreno et. al., 2017; Martin, 2015). Social media drives more buying and consumption as the generation needs

to wear new and different clothing every day to conform to the latest trends shown on the social media sites. Consumers of generation Y present themselves to impress others by wearing latest clothes, hairstyles, and brands (Schau and Gilly, 2003). Furthermore, social media providing convenience, sense of freedom and control as compared to visiting store to store (Chih et al., 2012; Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2001) may result in abnormal buying decisions, such as impulsive and compulsive buying (LaRose and Eastin, 2002). Lin and Chuan, 2013; Lin and Lo, (2016) also stressed that the quality of website, interactive features and ease of navigation give rise to impulse buying.

2. **Social media as a source of inspiration.** Social media provides a great platform to the generation Y. they are influenced by friends, people, celebrities, advertisements, etc., which appears on the home page of social networking sites. (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). At the same time social media also increases awareness about the different brands, among consumers, who do not know about brands. According to the PwC total retail survey 2016, 45% of respondents around the globe said that reading reviews, comments, and feedback on social media inspires their apparel buying decision (Barker, 2017).
3. **Social media as an information source.** Social media platforms serve as an authentic information sources enabling consumers to know where to shop and what to buy. According to Dickey and Lewis (2010) generation Y uses social media for shopping the same way they use clothing web sites or catalogues. It is also possible to get reviews on social media about the products and brands. Rahman (2015) ;Jothi and Gaffoor (2017) drew the result from their study that generation Y uses social media to get information about new products in the market, and the easy access to information through social media influences the buying decision (Moreno, 2017).
4. **Social media platform offers reassurance.** The consumers get reassurance and give others the confidence to follow new trends and try brands. If the consumer is not sure

about wearing a style or brand, seeing others wearing it on Social media gives them the confidence and reassurance to wear it (Ruane and Wallace, 2013). According to the study performed by Chaturvedi and Gupta (2014) on 200 respondents, the price, convenience in buying, seller information & product assurance are the few factors which motivate consumers to go online for purchase. Similarly Martin (2015) and Sultana (2018) said that consumers prefer social media as they find it more credible, effective, and relevant than different mass media such as TV, newspaper, etc.

5. **Online shopping fits in their lifestyles.** One of the major factors of generation Y adopting shopping via social sites is that, it fits into their lifestyle. The effort to shop a fashion apparel is reduced to minimal, as shopping online is much more time saving and efficient (Intel, 2012). Brashear et al., 2009; Donthu and Garcia, 1999; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004 also concluded that the major factor driving generation Y towards online shopping is convenience. Instead of spending time and effort in offline shopping, generation Y prefers to shop online where the products are delivered to their door steps.
(Kau et al., 2003; Girard et al., 2003; Grewal et al., 2004; Bhatnagar et al., 2000 Intel, 2012).
6. **Ease of comparison in different brands and styles.** Availability of vast number of brands and styles makes it easy for the consumer to compare the product and price online (Xu and Paulins, 2005; Grewal et al., 2004). Ruane and Elaine Wallace (2013) in their study also stressed that there is a significant impact of social media on the brand consumption. Generation Y, which spend more than half of the day on social media, have the benefit of comparing and discussing about the large number of products available online easily and quickly (Seock and Norton, 2007; Xu and Paulins, 2005). Generation Y uses internet as a tool to evaluate the choices and make buying decision (Seock and Norton, 2007; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004). Also in a study performed by (Bamini et. al. 2014) indicated that the online marketing

communications through company website and social media platforms are an important factor in promoting brand loyalty and product purchase intention which will bring consumer back to their company site.

7. Self-concepts and personal identity.

Generation Y is much concerned about their self- concept. They intend to buy latest fashion apparels and brands to construct their self-identity (Belk, 1988; Escalas and Bettman, 2005). They feel that, they must belong to a social group. They get associated to a group that draws them a positive recognition and enhances their personal identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Hogg and Terry, 2000). Generation Y wants to conform to some social category (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Studies have also revealed that it is tendency of generation Y to identify with some famous brand to satisfy their social identity need (Arnett et al., 2003; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Lam et al., 2010). This creates a strong bond between the customer and a particular brand (Otieno et al., 2005). This factor of self- concept and identity for self makes generation Y more active on buying fashion apparel via social media platforms (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Kleine et al., 1993). This concept of Self-concepts and personal identity is strongly supported by Giovannini et al. (2015) as they identified that in Generation Y consumers, public self-consciousness and self-esteem to be of the utmost importance while buying fashion apparel.

8. Online shopping a leisure activity:

Shopping experience refers to recreational activity by consumers (Kaufman-Scarborough and Lindquist, 2002; Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004). Consumers love fashion, trendy products, status brands, and shopping (Tran, 2008), and therefore, present a relevant segment for studying online shopping. This generation, enjoys browsing the advertisements appearing on the social media sites without any intention of buying the apparel. This gives them intrinsic satisfaction that the actual shopping could provide. As revealed in the study done by Rahman (2015) and Bilgihan (2016), that generation Y is attracted towards newer interactive media and buying through the social media is

also entertaining rather than just attaining the goods. According to the Paypal's mcommerce Index: Trends Report 2018, for generation Y shopping through smartphones has become a convenient way to shop on-the-go, this is now a source of entertainment. Their report says 67 per cent of Aussie smartphone owners shop just for fun on their mobile phones without any plans of making a purchase. When they do make a purchase, 77 per cent said that they make impulse buying. In July 1998 cover page of Time magazine predicted the demise of the shopping mall: "Kiss Your Mall Good-Bye".

9. Buyer protection and return policy:

Past researches have shown that there is a positive relation between return policy and sales volume. The loose return policy decreases the risk factor in the consumer and therefore increases the buying (Davis, 1998). If consumer is not satisfied with the product and the return operation is more convenient, consumers can easily return the brands having hassle free one click return process attracts more consumers (Poel and Leunis, 1999). In addition to that usability, credibility and service quality plays a big role in making buying decision and consumer satisfaction while buying through website (Lim et al., 2016) Likewise, Nadeem et al. (2015) in their study done on engagement of consumers in buying through social media confirm that website service quality and consumers' predispositions to use social media for online shopping positively affect consumer trust in e-buying.

10. Sharing consumers experiences and feedbacks:

Generation Y consumers have a tendency of browsing to check the other consumers reviews and feedbacks about the product and the brands before making the buying decisions (Thompson, 1997; Shankar et al., 2001). Consumers use social media as a guide for gathering information before fashion purchases (Ruane and Wallace, 2013). The podium of social media has empowered the consumers of fashion industry with the facility of sharing views and reviews between brands and consumers worldwide (Jung, Kim, & Kim, 2014; Jin, 2012; Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, &

Laukkanen, 2015). Consumers of generation Y, relies on the user generated content (UGC) via peer recommendations, ratings, reviews and likes, to make their buying decisions (Hajli, 2014; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013; Pihl, 2013). According to Forbes, they trust reviews and user generated content, more than any other demographic target (Johansson, 2016).

Conclusion

The present study is focused upon the influence of social media on the behavior of generation Y, particularly in the fashion industry. This generation is considered as the biggest group spending on online shopping, and fashion apparel being one of the major area, in which they spend. According to Bakewell et al., (2006) this generation constitutes over a quarter of the world's population, largest consumers group in the market by spending two-thirds of their money on clothing. Social media has given wings to the fashion industry by providing consumers and fashion industry a common platform to share the content anytime, anywhere. Brands are able to penetrate through likes, reviews and picture updates by the consumers. Brands on social sites like Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp attracts the buyers towards the latest trends and a two-way communication between fashion brands and consumers take place. Social media has brought unification within the fashion world, as more brands race toward social networking sites to tap the active buyers of generation Y. All the fashion brands are moving towards social media publicity to have a greater prospect of being portrayed as an authentic brand, based on their online liking and followers. It also facilitates a direct connection with generation Y consumers which in turns attracts more buyers and elicits buyer's loyalty. (Lemon et al., 2001; Kim and Ko, 2012; Vogel et al., 2008). The researcher has tried to find the impact of the presence of social media on the thought process of the generation Y consumers while making their choices before buying fashion apparel.

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