An Analysis of Factors Affecting Consumer Engagement with Brand Pages on Social Media

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Consumer Engagement, Social Media Marketing, Social Media Dependency, Digital Advertising

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the determinants influencing customer involvement with brand sites on social media in the Indian setting. Primary data were gathered from 272 respondents living in Prayagraj via a standardized questionnaire. The study utilizes statistical methods, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and multiple regression analysis, to ascertain and assess the principal factors influencing participation.

The results show that Indian consumers mostly interact with brand content to get knowledge, rewards, and a sense of belonging to a community. Moreover, Social Media Dependency (SMD), Parasocial Interaction (PSI), and Community Identification (CI) are identified as having a substantial favourable impact on engagement behaviour. The research enhances the current literature by situating global consumer engagement theories inside a developing economy and offers practical recommendations for digital marketers aiming to improve engagement methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media usage is rising rapidly in India, yet most consumer engagement research originate from wealthier nations like the US and China, which may not apply to India's numerous cities and cultures. How developing country consumers engage with companies online is unclear. Urban consumers' particular use of social media in their lives and marketing techniques need further investigation. This understanding will improve brand communication and relationships in new areas.

Prayagraj, noted for its rich culture and quick digital development, presents a unique opportunity to examine how traditional yet modernizing customers interact with brand communities on social media. This research collects data from 272 Indians using Tsai and Men theories of parasocial interaction, community identity and social media reliance. It examines Indian consumers' genuine behaviour to determine what drives active and passive content consumption, unlike previous studies on luxury brands or Western platforms. This research analyses the Indian social media activity to assist marketers build relevant, emotive and targeted digital campaigns that boost consumer engagement and loyalty.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Consumer Engagement in Social Media Backgrounds

Consumer engagement on social media is an interdisciplinary construct that involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects (Brodie et al., 2013). The digital evolution of marketing has changed the way brands are defined from content broadcasters to community facilitators that promote participatory engagement and value co-creation. In one of the most in-depth analyses on advertising on social media, Lee et al. (2018) were able to show that humorous and emotion-driven content has a significant positive effect on engagement metrics such as likes, shares and comments on Facebook. In contrast, information-driven content such as product information or promotions had little effect unless it was combined

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with emotional storytelling. The study of 782 companies and more than 106,000 Facebook posts by Lee et al. (2018) emphasizes the importance of emotional storytelling over information-driven content.

Likewise, the study by Liu et al. (2019) analysed luxury brand communication on Twitter and concluded that entertainment trendiness and interactive tone and not personalization, were the most effective drivers of consumer engagement. However, the applicability of this study is limited to luxury brands only due to its exclusive focus on the same. Based on this, Tsai and Men (2013-2014) further investigated relationship-building engagement strategies by combining parasocial interaction and community identification concepts using the construct of social media dependency. This study proved that the emotional tie and dependency of consumers on social media sites are crucial in building engagement behaviours among consumers. These results are especially significant in collectivist societies such as India, where social identity and relationship-building communication significantly influence consumer-brand interactions

Engagement Types: Consumption Contribution and Creation

The authors Schivinski et al. (2016) conceptualized consumer engagement as a continuum that includes three behavioural stages of consumption contribution and creation. Consumption is the passive action of viewing or scrolling through posts. Contribution can also mean active engagement such as liking, sharing or commenting. Creation is the process of creating original content concerning brands, for example, reviews, testimonials or memes. These categories form a lens through which not only the engagement of consumers can be assessed but also the manner in which they are engaging. In the Indian background, a large number of users are in the consumption phase and are merely passively engaging with the branded content. However, a rising number of users, especially Gen Z and young professionals, are showing higher levels of contribution and content creation is slowly becoming a part of their identity. As a result, the efficacy of social media marketing is contingent upon the ability of a brand to encourage users to move along these levels of engagement in order to develop from passive observers to active co-creators, which is particularly evident in culturally diverse cities such as Prayagraj.

Cross-Cultural Insights and the Indian Background

The cross-cultural study conducted by Tsai and Men (2014) on China and the United States found that collectivist cultures (such as China) tend to have stronger community identification and parasocial relationship dependence than individualist cultures (such as the USA). The findings are highly transferable to the Indian market, which is also a collectivist culture where brand affection and engagement tend to be influenced by peer, family and cultural factors. However, the Indian digital consumer also displays hybrid behavioural traits that integrate traditional collectivist values with new individualistic traits such as self-expression, opinion leadership and identity signalling. The hybridization of these traits underlines the importance of localized empirical research that goes beyond the engagement paradigm in the West. This study fills this research gap by examining the motivational architecture of consumer engagement in the rapidly changing digital environment of India through primary research with 272 respondents in Prayagraj.

Theoretical Framework

H1: Higher levels of social media dependency are positively associated with greater consumer engagement on brand pages.

H2: Brand site parasocial contact boosts emotions and behaviour.

H3: Stronger community identification greatly improves branded content development.

Research Objectives

To explore the function of parasocial interaction and community identification in promoting emotional and behavioural engagement.

To determine the extent of social media dependency among consumers and its impact on engagement with branded social media content.

To categorize engagement behaviours into consumption contribution and creation and examine their distribution among urban Indian users.

To statistically confirm the impact of the identified antecedents (SMD PSI CI) on the levels of engagement using primary data collected from Prayagraj.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by situationalizing global engagement models in the Indian urban background and providing actionable insights for marketers operating in similar cultural markets.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants were selected using inclusion criteria such as being active Facebook users with minimum engagement and recent exposure to brand content and a continuous residence in Prayagraj for at least one year. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was adopted, resulting in 272 valid responses from 300 distributed questionnaires - an adequate sample size for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and multiple regression analysis. The structured questionnaire

utilized validated scales from prior research, measuring all constructs with multiple items on a five-point Likert scale. Before conducting the main survey, a questionnaire was validated for face validity and content validity by three academic reviewers. A pilot test was conducted on 30 participants and the results showed that the questionnaire was reliable and easily understood, requiring no major modifications.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The findings confirm the sampling adequacy and factorability of the data, thus validating the construct validity of the measurement model. Analysis showed that the largest number of participants displayed consumption level engagement, while a smaller but significant number of participants showed contribution activities such as liking, commenting or sharing branded content. The creation of content is still small but increasing, especially among Gen Z users, a trend that is consistent with Tsai and Men (2014).

The results indicate that emotional and hybrid messages are significantly more effective than purely informational messages in engaging the audience interactively. This is consistent with Lee et al. (2018) who reaffirmed that emotional engagement increases the intensity of engagement. The results of the correlation analysis showed moderate to strong positive correlations between SMD PSI CI and engagement behaviour (p < 0.01). This offered preliminary support for the proposed relationships. The three predictors significantly explain 42.8 percent of the variance in engagement behaviour. The findings support that Social Media Dependency Parasocial Interaction and Community Identification are significant drivers of consumer engagement, thereby supporting H1-H3. These results highlight the importance of emotional engagement, social belonging and dependence on the platform as factors that cumulatively create a deeper level of engagement on brand pages, a phenomenon that is driven by both psychological and cultural factors of online behaviour in the emerging digital market of India.

4. DISCUSSION

The importance of social media dependency as a predictor of user engagement behaviour is brought out in the study, especially in the background of Prayagraj, where digital literacy and mobile internet accessibility are increasingly on the rise. The dependency of users on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for their informational, social and entertainment needs results in users becoming more responsive to brand stimuli, as evident in activities such as liking and sharing brand content. This dependency results in a digital environment where brand content becomes an essential part of the digital routine.

Parasocial interaction (PSI) is recognized as an important predictor of engagement and the emotional dimension of brand relationships is highlighted. Engagement is observed to be higher when brands convey authenticity and empathy, which creates a perception of social closeness, similar to that experienced in interpersonal relationships. This is in line with the findings of Tsai and Men's study on the relationship between emotional reciprocity and brand commitment. In India, where emotional engagement is important, PSI helps to shift passive observation to active participation.

Conclusion & Managerial Implications

This study examines why urban Indians like marketed social media material. Social media reliance, parasocial connection and community impact involvement, validating cross-cultural theories in a novel scenario with 272 participants. Parasocial contact is the primary motivator, emphasizing the need of emotive, human-centered digital branding. Emotional and informational content encourages user engagement and co-creation best. Western approaches are used to a culturally varied, developing market to expand engagement research. It emphasizes customized digital methods that address Indian customers' emotional and social demands for management. The results show that developing market social media marketing will establish brand-consumer interactions via emotional authenticity, community feeling and cultural relevance. User-generated content may increase cultural event participation and identity and Indians adore touching, helpful tales.

5. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Convenience sampling reduces Indian generalizability in rural or Tier-3 cities with different digital technologies and cultures. The causal links between social media reliance, parasocial interaction, community identity and involvement are unclear in cross-sectional studies. Studying brand-consumer connections throughout time is vital. Facebook restricts results to sites with diverse content and activity. Self-reported social favourability may be normative. AI-powered Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube user engagement. Compare platform-specific and content resonance trends to understand India's digital ecosystem. Study engagement patterns and how content strategies and algorithms affect brand-consumer interactions longitudinally or experimentally. Awards, recognition and gamification may increase consumer loyalty and advocacy and Early studies show incentives growing.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tables

Table 1. Demographic Profile (N = 272)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	148	54.40%
	Female	124	45.60%
Age	18–25	129	47.40%
	26–35	94	34.60%
	36 and above	49	18.00%
Occupation	Student	113	41.50%
	Working Professional	104	38.20%
	Self-employed/Other	55	20.30%

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Social Media Dependency	3.91	0.72	0.801
Parasocial Interaction	3.84	0.69	0.777
Community Identification	3.97	0.74	0.821
Engagement Score (0–10)	6.33	2.21	N/A

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variables	SMD	PSI	CI	Engagement
Social Media Dependency	1			
Parasocial Interaction	0.436**	1		
Community Identification	0.389**	0.413**	1	
Engagement Level (ET)	0.481**	0.524**	0.497**	1

Table 4. Regression Analysis Summary

Predictor	β (Beta)	SE	t	p-value
Social Media Dependency	0.249	0.067	4.24	0
Parasocial Interaction	0.301	0.062	5.34	0
Community Identification	0.289	0.059	5.24	0
Model Summary: R² = 0.428 Adj. R² = 0.419 F = 52.671 p < 0.001				

Figures

Figure 1. Engagement Levels
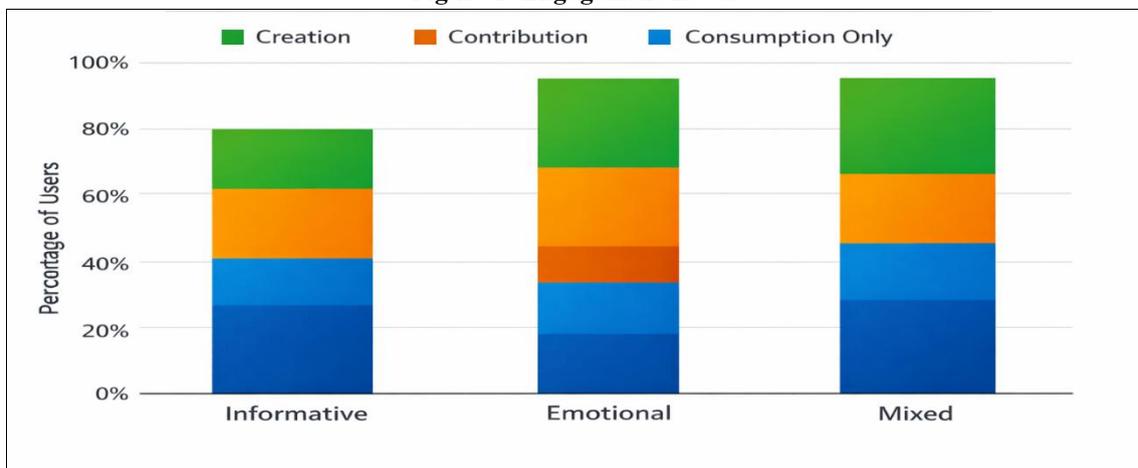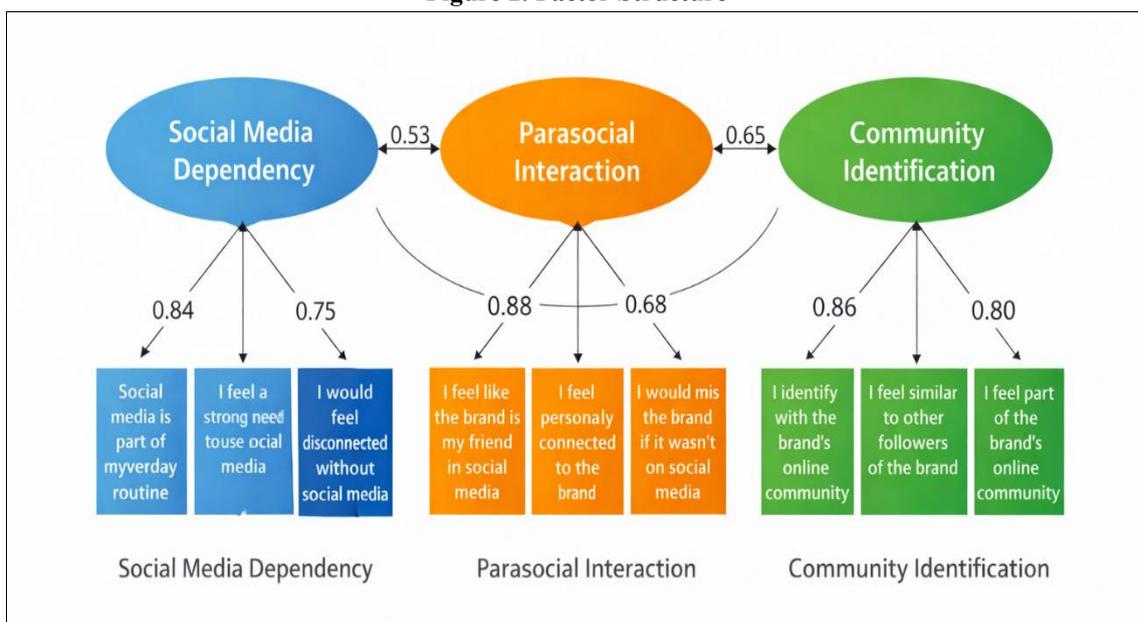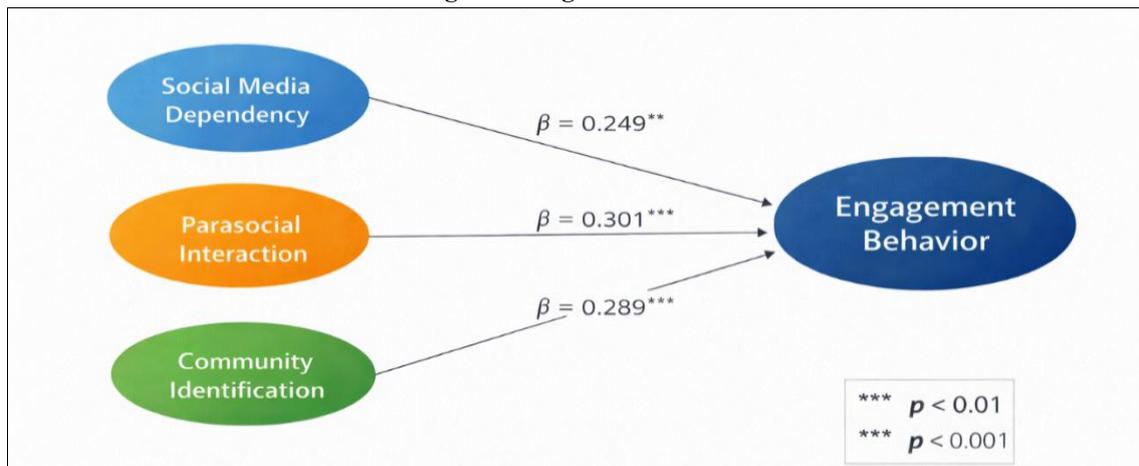

Figure 2. Factor Structure

Figure 3. Regression Model

Appendix

Part I: Demographics

Age (in years):

Gender: Male, Female, Other

Job: Student, Working Professional, Self-Employed, Other

Part II: Social Media

I use Facebook a lot to follow or talk to brand pages.

Part III: Dependence on Social Media (Based on Tsai & Men 2013)

1. I use social media to keep up with brands.

2. I mostly use social media to learn about goods and services.

3. If I don't check brand updates on social media, I feel like I'm not connected.

4. I often utilize social media to talk to brands.

5. I use social media to find out what my friends are buying or saying about brands.

Adapted from Tsai & Men 2014, Parasocial Interaction

1. I feel like I know the brand's online personality.

2. The brand's posts on social media make me feel like they are talking to me.

3. The brand's social media posts make me feel like I know them personally.

4. I think of the brand's social media page as a friend.

Identification with the Community (Adapted from Liu et al. 2019)

1. I feel like I belong to the group of people that follow this brand.

2. I think that the brand's social media community is made up of folks like me.

3. Being a part of the brand's community makes me feel proud.

4. I feel like I have something in common with other people that follow this brand

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