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## **THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY, INTERACTIVITY, AND CONTENT ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF FASHION PRODUCTS**

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### **Abstract**

Malaysian companies have been using social media as a major platform for marketing their products or services. This trend is shared and preferred by various companies to interact with their customers in order to boost their sales. The primary objective of the study is to determine if the components of social media marketing, namely, social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content, impact on customer satisfaction, in particular online fashion stores. A quantitative approach is adopted where data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The respondents were consumers who use social media in their daily routine and those who have purchased any fashion product by using online platforms. A total of 393 useable questionnaires were collected using the online survey method. The collected data went through a process of analysis, where descriptive as well as inferential analyses were performed. Data analyses include reliability tests, validity tests, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and hypotheses testing using structural equation modeling. The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of social media marketing on consumer satisfaction. The study reveals that all three (3) factors related to social media marketing, namely: social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content, has been tested empirically and found that they all contribute significantly towards customer satisfaction. However, social media content emerged with a stronger positive impact than the other two factors. The result of this study should contribute to the body of knowledge and will be of significance to those companies who are interested/or using social media platforms for their marketing purposes.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Customer Satisfaction, Fashion Industry, Malaysia

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## 1. Introduction

Online stores have become important platforms for businesses to boost their sales, as they are less expensive to manage than a brick-and-mortar retail store. With the help of internet accessibility, businesses are utilizing social media for advertisement campaigns and are easily reaching their targeted customers. Not only that, social media has become an alternative marketing tools compared to traditional marketing where businesses can access the analytical data of their customers which help businesses to improve their product development in the future. With the help of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, businesses can run forums, future fashion campaign, and exchange ideas with their customers. Today, social media is considered a trend that could influence consumers to a certain extent in the buying process (Permatasari and Kartikowati, 2016). Customers can directly interact and share their buying experience (Kshetri and Jha, 2016). According to Singh *et al.* (2010), by using social media, consumers can directly respond to the opinions, comments, and suggestions about products offered to them. By doing so, they can more easily get the products of their choice. Satisfaction that they get from using the social media platform may have then trigger changes of online shoppers' intention in browsing or even purchasing the products (Leggatt, 2012). Therefore, companies have been using social media to attract new customers and retain old customers to engage in new online purchases or repeated ones.

Businesses utilize social media as their communication and marketing tools to connect with either new or existing customers. This results in word-of-mouth that undoubtedly works more quickly online compared to offline (Chen, 2014; Kshetri and Jha, 2016; Singh *et al.* 2010; Sianipar and Yudoko, 2014). Further, companies that include social media marketing in their customer service strategy have a higher chance of maintaining competitive advantages (Lee, 2013; Rezaei and Ismail, 2014). This eventually translates into customers getting influence by the social media communication of that company, resulting in a stronger intention to purchase and may result in a higher level of customer satisfaction (Kshetri and Jha, 2016; Singh *et al.* 2010). The three main components of social media marketing used in the present study are social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content. This study also aims at investigating the aforementioned factors of social media marketing that have an impact on customer satisfaction in online fashion stores in Malaysia.

The primary objective of this study is to determine the influence of social media marketing related variables (social media activity, social media interactivity and social media content) on customer satisfaction in online fashion stores. More specific, this study has the following secondary objectives: to investigate the impact of social media activity on customer satisfaction, to investigate the impact of social media interactivity on customer satisfaction, to investigate the impact of social media content on customer satisfaction.

The paper provides a brief literature study together with the development of hypotheses. This is followed by a proposed model, research methodology, data analysis and results and also conclusion and directives for future research.

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses development

The term customer satisfaction is not new. Organizations around the globe target the satisfaction of the customers one way or another, because it usually results in repeat customers and eventually loyal customers. It is also related to organizational performance and profitability. The main reason behind better performance by an organization and profitability is due to the use of positive word-of-mouth by satisfied customers. Generally, customer satisfaction can be defined as the happiness of consumer after purchasing a product or service (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Specifically, in the fashion industry, customer satisfaction can be defined as a post-consumption evaluation of how well a store or product meets or exceeds customer expectations (Levy and Weitz, 2009; Nelson *et al.* 2018).

Customer satisfaction can be determined by price and quality of products (Chi and Kilduff, 2011). Customers are primarily convinced by price, quality, and other attributes such as brand reputation, product features, and country of origin. Some of these attributes like brand reputation,

and country of origin can be easily communicated through social media marketing to the customers (Eder, 2012; Nelson *et al.* 2018). Agnihotri *et al.* (2016) found a positive relationship of social media marketing with customer satisfaction. This means that if companies use social media marketing properly it may result in enhancing the level of customer satisfaction. Today social media has changed the world. Businesses ask customers to “like” their pages on Facebook, or “follow” them on Twitter or Instagram. It results in a continuous connection between the company and the customers, eventually making the customers more satisfied.

With the growth of information and communication technology, and the emergence of social media networks, people on the internet are more active than ever. This is because of the interesting interface of the social media and the transfer of content generation to the common users. Today, connected peoples’ social media activity has grown exponentially, which influence the decision of other people (Rahman and Mannan, 2018; Redsicker, 2013). User’s activities on blogs and/or micro-blogs, for example, is reported to affect people intention to purchase a particular brand (Bouhlef *et al.* 2010). This is particularly true for fashion related blogs, which are ranked higher than Twitter and Facebook with regard to shaping peoples’ opinion and motivating their purchase decisions (Redsicker, 2013). This particular study attests the importance of understanding users’ activity on fashion related blogs, as it influences customers to a great extent with regard to their purchase decision and eventually their satisfaction with a brand. Nowadays people do not only rely on information acquired from mass media, but social media is playing a vital role, too. If we are active on social media, we can easily know what online retailers are pushing to the market, what type of fashionable dresses our friends are wearing in the tagged photos and how satisfied they are from the brands they are using.

Another interesting activity on social media is to follow/ like/ subscribe to famous people, like celebrities and stars. These famous people usually endorse products/ services, which influence people’s intention to buy a particular product and also impacts their satisfaction with the same product/ service (Dwivedi *et al.* 2016). Based on the above discussion, it is therefore, hypothesized that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Social media activity has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.*

Social media has revolutionized the way people interact with one another. It has widened the opportunity for the businesses to reach more people than ever before. Previously, traditional mass media like TV and radio were used to promote businesses. This method was indeed effective but with an inherited problem of one-way communication. The problem of one-sided communication is solved by modern technologies that has opened the opportunity for people to have two-way communication with the customers in real time. According to Manneh (2017), the internet has significantly improved the way of communication by enabling people to use various platforms like social media in order to interact without having the need to meet physically.

This new mode of communication, where interaction is so convenient, has opened new doors of opportunities for businesses. Today, customers do not only receive promotional messages from companies, but also indulge in interaction with other customers in order to motivate them to buy their products, and also to guide customers in the whole buying process. When customers face any kind of issues with the product/ service, the company can easily resolve that through social media interactivity, hence satisfying customers (Ramanathan *et al.* 2017).

Usually when customers intend to purchase products online, there is a certain level of risk that reduces their motivation to buy. This risk can be mitigated by the interaction between the buyer and the seller through social media, which will eventually result in customer buying that company’s product/service. Lowry *et al.* (2009) found that social media interactivity enhances communication quality, which further increase process satisfaction. It is, therefore, hypothesized that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Social media interactivity has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.*

Social media marketing has become so important for branding because of the brand’s ability to connect with customers in a more interactive and individualized manner. Brands also

have an increasing interest in social media based brand communities to build a good relationship with customers through community building activities. Studies agree that community building in social media will lead to more brand loyalty and trust, though there are still different perspectives on how to achieve it (Rahman and Mannan, 2018; Laroche *et al.* 2013). The widespread voluntary usage behavior of people on social media on a regular basis indicate that the users are generally pleased and satisfied with its usage. The popularity of social media sites has to do with both the new technology and its application, and the millions of its users. For companies to satisfy these customers, they do not only have to be involve in building relationship with them using online communities, but also provide useful content so that customers are attracted towards the product. The content provided on social media will also help customer in enhancing their satisfaction with the company (Ramanathan *et al.* 2017).

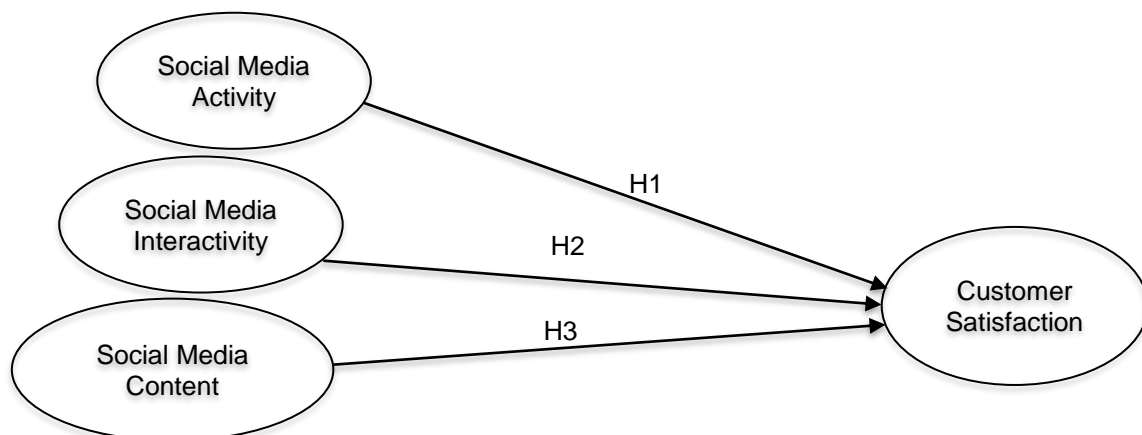
Content in marketing are usually considered quixotic, as it uses inappreciable pulling and not pushing techniques to attract customers to the brand's content (Huang and Liu, 2015). This term 'marketing content' stated by Pulizzi (2010) is not that new but it is still evolving. Defining content has been challenged as its meaning changes with the context. Marketers are mostly trying to adopt marketing content to replace the advertising styles and trying to attract more attention to the brand (du Plessis, 2015; Zahay, 2014). It also reflects the theories of marketing communications, integrated marketing communication (IMC) and relationship marketing (Cronin, 2016).

Unlike promoting products/ services, content marketing is a branding method that creates and distributes relevant and valuable brand content (brand's information) to entice and involve the target audience (Baltes, 2015). Through online content marketing (also, social media content marketing), stories are created and shared online to make the target customers more familiar and to interact with them in order to influence their purchasing decision and ultimately satisfaction (Baltes, 2015). Content is more likely seen as similar to publishing, native advertising, unfocused marketing, and storytelling (du Plessis, 2015; Holliman and Rowley, 2014). Yet, content has expanded beyond this definition with scholars such as du Plessis (2015), and Pazeraite and Repoviene (2016) acknowledging the complexities of the content marketing process which should be carefully managed, as it directly impacts customer satisfaction. Based on the above literature, it is, therefore, hypothesized that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Social media content has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.*

### 3. Proposed model

The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1. There are three independent variables, namely, social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content, and one dependent variable, which is customer satisfaction. The causal linkages are proposed based on the review of the literature.



**Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study**

The following section will highlight research methodology followed by data analyses and conclusion.

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### **4.1. Sampling**

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed for this study, out of which 393 usable questionnaires were returned and selected for data analyses. The questionnaire was distributed to various groups of respondents, including, working people and students, using online platform. More specifically, social media platform such as, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were used to collect data. The aforementioned methods were used by the researchers not only for convenience purposes but also to collect large number of usable responses, quickly. The sample comprised of 66.4% males and 33.6% females.

##### **4.2. Research instrument**

A structured questionnaire was used as measurement instrument. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections, where the first section was to collect information on the demographic profile of the respondents, and the second section was to collect data of the four variables of the model. The second section of the questionnaire included questions on social media activity, social media interactivity, social media content, and customer satisfaction. All the questions related to these constructs were adapted from previous study. In this case, the questions related to customer satisfaction were adapted from Jan and Abdullah (2014). Similarly, questions related to social media activity were designed based on the research of Heinonen (2011), social media content from Karjaluoto *et al.* (2015), and social media interactivity were adapted from Smith (2010). A five-point Likert scale (1 being strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree) was used to measure the levels of agreement with regards to these variables (see Appendix Table A1 for the constructs with the corresponding items). The data was gathered and captured over a period of two months. Once the data was collected, it was screened and cleaned to get it ready for analyses. Data analyses was an exhaustive process, where descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS computer software. The same software was also used to test reliability of the instrument and perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA). After successful EFA, structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS computer software. SEM is an advanced level statistical technique to find out the fitness of the proposed model, as well as, to test the hypotheses. In the following section, the results of the analyzed data are provided.

#### **5. Data analyses and results**

##### **5.1 Respondents profile**

As mentioned, the first section of the questionnaire was designed to acquire basic information on respondents' demographic. It included gender, age, income level, occupation, duration of social media usage, most visited ecommerce sites, and reasons to purchase online (see Table 1). With regard to the gender, male respondents are the highest number of respondents in this survey. In this case, males are 66.4% (or 261), whereas, female comprises 33.6% (or 132) of the sample. This also means that the present study was influenced mainly by the male population. Further, this survey was completed mostly by adults, aged between 21 and 30 comprising a total of 75.1 % (or 295) of the respondents. This indicate that our respondents are mostly below 30 years of age. With regards to respondents' race, the majority (63.6% or 250) are Malays and most (42.7% or 68) have at least an undergraduate degree.

Detailed descriptive analyses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents**

Research Sample (n = 393)			
<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender	Male	261	66.4
	Female	132	33.6
Age	<20 years	20	5.1
	21-30 years	295	75.1
	31-40 years	65	16.5
	41-50 years	8	2.0
	> 51 years	5	1.3
Race	Malay	250	63.6
	Chinese	23	5.9
	Indian	9	2.3
	Others	111	28.2
Occupation	Student	235	59.8
	Employed	146	37.2
	Unemployed	12	3.1
Income	< RM1000	176	44.8
	RM 1000-3000	135	34.4
	RM 3000-5000	59	15.0
	> RM 5000	23	5.9
Education level	O level	69	17.6
	Diploma/Foundation/Certificate	73	18.6
	A level	22	5.6
	Degree	168	42.7
	Master	35	8.9
	PhD	18	4.6
	Others	8	2.0

## 5.2. Attributes of the questionnaire

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and the item-to-total correlation were calculated to examine the stability and consistency of the research instrument. According to Nunnally (1978), the value of Cronbach's alpha closer to 1 indicates greater stability and consistency; however, the threshold value in most research studies is set at 0.60. The present research instrument resulted in an alpha value of 0.958, attesting an acceptable consistency and stability of the research instrument, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire**

Reliability Statistics		
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
0.958	0.958	20

## 5.3. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The next important step considered was to undertake exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in order to explore the dimensions underlying the data set. For this purpose, EFA with Varimax rotation with performed. In the whole process noteworthy suggestions by Hair *et al.* (2010) were taken into considerations, for example, removing items that had the loading of below 0.4 and also removing those items that had a cross loading below 0.35. Moreover, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were also analyzed to find out the correlations of the variables. In this case, KMO was 0.905 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at  $p < 0.001$ , which also clearly indicates that the current data was appropriate and suitable enough for factor analysis

and there are also enough correlations between the variables. See Table 3 for KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity.

**Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.905
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7474.59
	df	171
	Sig.	0.000

The result of EFA demonstrated a cumulative total variance of 79.15% with clean four factors, as envisaged. These factors are social media activity, social media interaction, social media content, and customer satisfaction. All the extracted factors had a loading higher than 0.5 on its own factor and therefore, each item stacked higher on its related construct than on any other construct; supporting discriminant validity of the estimation. The EFA table is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis**

Rotated Component Matrix				
Items (Variables)	Components			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	Social Content	Social Media Activity	Social Media Interactivity	Customer Satisfaction
SMC4	0.871			
SMC2	0.831			
SMC3	0.819			
SMC5	0.813			
SMC1	0.793			
SMA2		0.866		
SMA4		0.860		
SMA3		0.824		
SMA1		0.757		
SMA5		0.724		
SMI2			0.854	
SMI4			0.846	
SMI3			0.776	
SMI5			0.742	
SMI1			0.738	
CS3				0.814
CS5				0.774
CS2				0.762
CS4				0.731
Initial Eigenvalues	9.742	2.580	1.501	1.218
% of Variance	22.778	21.632	18.334	16.410
Cumulative %	22.778	44.410	62.744	79.154

Table 4 with the results of EFA clearly indicates a very clean four-factor structure, attesting a strong conceptualization of the variables. The next step followed is confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

#### 5.4. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

In this study, a two-stage structural equation modeling (SEM) approach was adopted, where the extracted factors during EFA underwent through a process of confirmation before testing the full-fledged model and hypotheses. For CFA, AMOS software was used with Maximum Likelihood

Estimation (MLE). The CFA, also commonly called measurement model, was assessed based on the fit indices as suggested by various scholars (e.g., Byrne, 2010; Hair *et al.* 2010; Kline, 2011). These indices include; chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the room mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Figure 2 depicts the final measurement model.

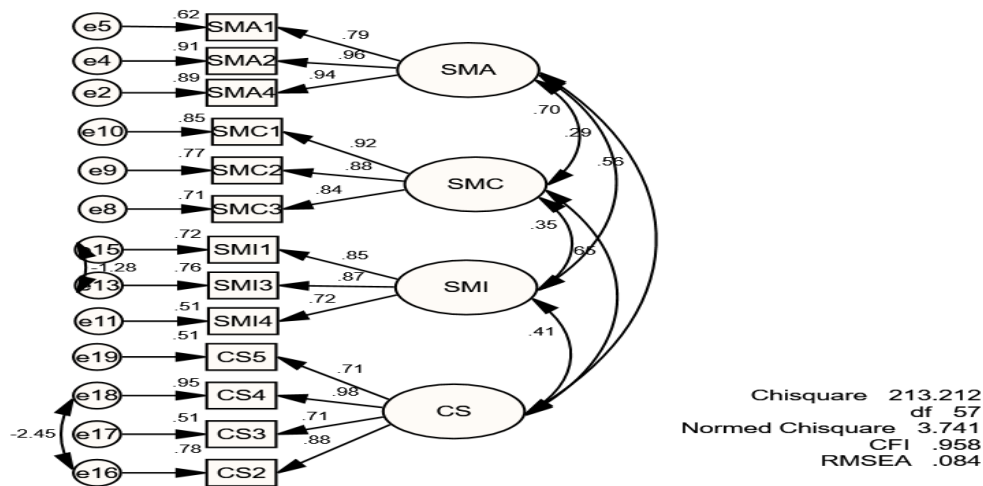


Figure 2. Measurement model

The review of the measurement model reveals that all the fit indices were above the threshold. For example, normed chi-square value is 3.74, which is below 5.0. Similarly, CFI is 0.958, which is above the recommended value of 0.90. Lastly, RMSEA emerged with a value of 0.08, which is also at an acceptable threshold. These values indicate that the measurement model fits well and is ready to be tested in full-fledged.

### 5.5. Hypotheses testing

In the two-stage approach of SEM, once the CFA gives acceptable values and the model also indicates good fit, one can proceed with testing the fitness of the full-fledge structural model and hypotheses. Figure 3 shows the final structural model along with the fit indices.

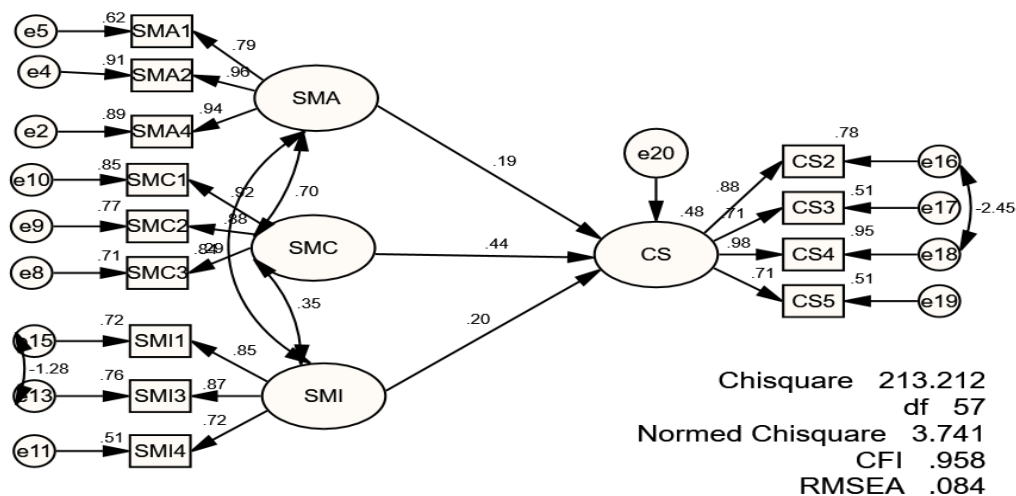


Figure 3. Final structural model



In this case, the normed chi-square value of 3.74, CFI value of 0.95, and RMSEA value of 0.08 indicate a good fit of final structural model. Further, all the causal linkages were significant at  $p < 0.001$ . However, by reviewing the standardized regression weights, it was observed that a causal link between “social media content” and “customer satisfaction” is the strongest with the regression weight of 0.444. It is followed by the link between “social media interaction” and “customer satisfaction” with the value of 0.198, and “social media activity” and “customer satisfaction” with the regression weight of 0.192. This also indicates that all the hypotheses are supported. A detailed result of hypotheses is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Estimates of the hypothesized model**

Structural path	Hypothesized Relationship	Std. Reg. Weight	S. E.	C. R.	P
Social Media Activity → Customer Satisfaction	H1 <sup>s</sup>	0.192	0.057	3.55	***
Social Media Interactivity → Customer Satisfaction	H2 <sup>s</sup>	0.198	0.047	5.19	***
Social Media Content → Customer Satisfaction	H3 <sup>s</sup>	0.444	0.036	7.74	***
Statistic		Suggested		Obtained	
Chi-square significance		≥ 0.05		0.000	
Normed chi-square (CMIN/df)		≤ 5.00		3.741	
Comparative fit index (CFI)		≥ 0.90		0.958	
Root mean error square of approximation (RMSEA)		≤ 0.08		0.084	

**Note:** s = Supported, \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

## 6. Conclusion and direction for future research

The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of social media marketing on consumer satisfaction. More specifically, three (3) important factors related to social media marketing, namely: social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content, has been tested empirically to see their impact on customer satisfaction. The objective was to find answer for two (2) important questions: whether the proposed model will result in a good fit? Furthermore, to find out which of the social media marketing factors will have a stronger impact on customer satisfaction. Both these questions have invaluable implications because nowadays the organizations spend a lot of money on social media. This study could be used as a guideline to know about some inevitable factors of social media marketing, as proposed in the model, and also to clearly find out which factors should be paid more attention too. In case of the present study, all the factors resulted in statistical significance, indicating that none of the factors (social media activity, social media interactivity, and social media content) should be ignored by organizations. However, as the results revealed, social media content emerged with stronger positive impact than the rest of the two factors. It also highlighted that, even though all the proposed factors are important but special attention should be given to the content that the companies provide on social media because it has a stronger influence customer satisfaction.

Future researchers may adopt this model and test it in other settings and perhaps in some other industries. A promising attempt would also be to take the same model and collect data from two different sectors and then compare the results to see if the variables of social media marketing results in same or different findings.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. Constructs with the relevant items**

<b>CONSTRUCT</b>		<b>ITEMS/ QUESTIONS</b>
Customer Satisfaction		Fashion brands' social media pages understand my specific needs.
		I am satisfied with the fashion brands social media page.
		The fashion brand social media pages I follow always meet my expectations.
		Considering everything, I am extremely satisfied with the fashion brand social media pages I follow.
		The overall quality of the services provided by fashion brand social media pages is excellent.
Social Media Activity		I like it when my favorite fashion brand posts on their social media pages.
		It is important for a fashion brand to have a social media fan page I can follow.
		I am more active on a fashion brand's social media than their official website.
		I keep up with the latest post on the fashion brand's social media pages.
		I usually depend on fashion brand's social media for enquiry rather than other platforms.
Social Media Content		The content of a fashion brand's post is important to me.
		The fashion brand's posts on their social media pages make me feel more engaged as a consumer.
		The fashion brand's post on social media provides me value.
		The information posted on fashion brand's social media pages are usually in a well-planned information architecture.
		The fashion brand's posts usually make me feel like the company is passionate about their customers.
Social Media Interactivity		I have posted an enquiry/comment on a fashion brand's social media page.
		I feel satisfied when the fashion brands reply to my enquiry/comment.
		It is important to me for the fashion brands to respond as soon as possible.
		The responses from fashion brands are usually useful.
		Interactions between consumers and fashion brands create a relationship.