

Integrated Marketing Communication Model for the Indian Fashion Retail Industry

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Abstract

The survival of small-scale shops is in danger because to the growth of large-scale wealthy retailers. In order to send consistent messages to their target audience, firms use an approach known as integrated marketing communications, or IMC. The influence of pop-up shops and other IMC tactics that small businesses can employ to compete with upscale rivals is examined in this study. Online platforms are now widely used by consumers to study products, but many small shops are reluctant to go online because of the perceived complexity. In order for Indian fashion shops to stay competitive, a multi-channel mix for advertising is being developed. During the epidemic, data was gathered with the goal of enhancing existing business models. Responses from 270 individuals in Ernakulam city via a Google Form employing convenience sampling comprise the primary data. Journals and publications addressing market trends and tactics served as the source of secondary data. In order to create marketing campaigns that increase client value, retention, and loyalty, the study examines consumer behaviour. The suggested IMC model is adaptable, cost-conscious, and a guide for managers and business owners creating winning plans.

Keywords: Customer buying behaviour, Products and services, Customer loyalty, Integrated Marketing Communications

INTRODUCTION

The advent of technology in today's world has pushed the retailers from just marketing their products during the physical point of sale to providing a networked shopping experience. This gives the customers a platform to give out feedback and also to maintain a digitally mediated relation with the retailers even after the physical touch point of the transaction. The human nature to seek attention is one area where marketers can tap in to customers to enhance their satisfaction levels with an organisation.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) model deals with leveraging all possible means of technology and other possible ways to deliver promotions and awareness messages and product offerings to reach out to prospective customers and maintain a positive relationship with them to enhance customer satisfaction and engagement. Such marketing techniques makes a sense of attachment for the customers towards the organization and they tend to become ideal customers of the brand.

The main objective of this study is to develop a business marketing model using different marketing tools to drive customer satisfaction to improve the business in retail apparel industry. To start with developing a marketing model for a specific industry a prior research and knowledge has to be developed. For this the market knowledge is very necessary. Hence The study begins with reviewing papers related to the Indian fashion retail industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Muhammad Sabbir Rahman and Mahafuz Mannan, the authors of the paper **Consumer online purchase behavior of local fashion clothing brands (2017)**. investigates the consumer online purchase behavior of local clothing apparels using certain factors (e-WOM, online brand experience and online brand familiarity). They also mention that traditional ways marketing are no more profitable rather a marketing mix approach is required using online marketing tools. The study is focused on Bangladesh, Being the second largest clothing market after china. The model of study examines the influence of central and peripheral route on the consumer information adoption process and then how the factors like perceived e-WOM, online brand experience and online brand familiarity affects the final consumer buying behavior.

2. Arpita Khare (2016) in her paper **Consumer Shopping Styles and Online Shopping: An Empirical Study of Indian Consumer(2016)** which was published by IIM Rohtak studies the generalizability and applicability of consumer shopping inventory (CSI) scale on an Indian sample to predict the consumer online buying behavior. The author used variables (Consumer shopping styles; convenience; fashion-conscious shopper; impulsive shopper; information availability). Online shopping behavior was categorized under convenience, information availability, and cost factors. Findings suggest that Demographic factors do not influence consumers' decision to shop online. Consumers shopping online frequently and Impulsive shoppers are likely to look at convenience factor of online shopping. Information availability was important for fashion-conscious shoppers, consumers frequently shopping online, and impulsive

shoppers. Quality conscious and brand aware shoppers do not usually prefer to purchase online. The paper focus on importance of online channel for the growth of apparel industry in the country currently.

3. Once a model is created it has to be evaluated and reviewed. Oleg V. Pavenkov and Mariia V. Rubtcova in their paper “**Approaches To The Estimation Of Efficiency Of Integrated Marketing Communications**” designed a model to evaluate the performance of IMC model based on simple linear relationship between the level of sales and advertising. They mentioned that a IMC model preferably should be competitive based on Comparative simplicity, High accuracy and The model must take into account the mutual influence of funds marketing communications on each other. They expanded the linear model by introducing additional marketing communications tools. Also they mentioned that the synergistic effect of using an integrated marketing communications is multiplicative. Problems of IMC model was mentioned as follows,

- target audience may receive contradictory information
- integration of funds marketing communications in time
- Uncontrollable factors like the effect of previous ads
- Price should be continuously integrated in all mediums

4. Oleg V. Pavenkov and Mariia V. Rubtcova in their paper “**Traditional model of marketing communications and integrated marketing communications: comparative research**” does a comparison between IMC marketing model and traditional marketing models. They proved the necessity of IMC model in building relations with the consumer in the traditional model. They say that effective use of integrated marketing communications helps organizations to gain competitive advantages, increase sales and profits, and impact positively on consumers. It can help the organisation from giving out contradictory messages and it’s a huge leap over the traditional marketing model.

5. Laura Macchion , Pamela Danese & Andrea Vinelli The authors of the paper **Redefining supply network strategies to face changing environments. A study from the fashion and luxury industry (2015)** describes the redefining of (marketing and operations, location of production, outsourcing and networking etc.) in the fashion and luxury retail industry to face the changing environments. The case of 11 Italian companies (how they encountered the contextual changes in the dynamic market) were taken to make an exploratory research. The author says The fashion and luxury industry is characterized by short product life cycles, high volatility and low predictability of product demand, and hence supply and demand needs to be met very carefully. Findings of the study states that contextual changes significantly compel a growing alignment between marketing and supply network activities. Most of the successful fashion retailers was observed to maintain a partnership and collaboration between supply and marketing activities.

6. Henninger C et.al(2017) in their paper “**IMC, social media, and UK fashion micro-organisations (2017)**” Studied the integrated marketing communications (IMC) with special preference to online social media in the UK fashion micro-organizations. The author describes the evolution of definition of IMC from 1989 to 2005 in a table format initially. Due to evolution of technologies and digital platforms these descriptions seems to be dated. Hence the author mentions new trends, barriers in IMC over different levels. The study was exploratory through semi structured interviews, semiotics, Twitter feed, and Facebook to examine the level of IMC used by micro organizations. The findings suggest that there is a limited understanding of IMC communications by the micro-organizations. Their efforts are not reaching the customers effectively due to lack of knowledge of the organizations. There are also external factors that try to hinder the messages reaching the customers.

7. Michael Heller, the author of the paper “**The development of integrated marketing communications at the British General Post Office, 1931–39**” mentions the case of British General Post Office which gained lot of attention way back in 1930s due to their approach to an integrated marketing communication. The organisation received many criticisms back in 1920s due to their conservative use of resources for marketing. As a result they enrolled a creative marketing technique wherein they used all possible ways to gain publicity that applied, amongst other methods, advertising, public relations, promotions, cinema, events and artistic posters This paper here studies 3 cases that mainly focus on the GPO case and claims that most innovative of their marketing strategies adopted was Integrated marketing strategy.

8. The author Dr. Kumar Joshua Selva in his paper titled “**A Study on the Performance and Outcome of Integrated Marketing Communication in the Apparel Retail Trade**” mentions the changes occurred in IMC over a couple of years and how it stands out as an effective solution to marketers from the clutter and create an impact on the brand. Here the author develops a model to evaluate the performance of IMC model with respect to an organisation so that it can be presented for approval from a top management of any organisation. The author says that The main aim of the study is to explore the relationships between factors influencing IMC performance and the resulting outcome in terms of business performance, customer satisfaction and brand advantage. He also says that IMC is no more a side function in

an organisation, rather it is one of the core areas based on which strategies have to be planned so that organisations stand out from their competitors.

9. Mart Ots Gergely Nyilasy(2017) in his paper titled “**Just doing it: theorizing Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) practices**” says there is insufficient theorization on what it means ‘to do’ IMC in practice, despite broad acceptance for IMC. This paper elaborates on the concept of ‘IMC practice’ and provides an empirical exposition of how integration is enacted in the practical worlds of marketing practitioners. Using qualitative coding and interpretative analysis, the framework was operationalized in a leading Swedish retailer. Findings of the paper demonstrate how practitioners develop explicit and implicit strategies to enact strategic integration. The study conceptualizes IMC as set of interrelated practices, or routinized behaviors, which are repeated and organized by social/formal rules and conventions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND FORMATION OF PROPOSED MODEL

Customer buying behaviour,

Customer buying behaviour is the key input to shape the integrated marketing plan for a specific location. The IMC plan leverages all possible and viable means so as to reach out to the consumers efficiently to meet the objective of a store. In case of fashion store the different strategies that could be included can be the store layout, Planogram, social media marketing, Offers and vouchers etc. The response to these factors would vary according to different demographics and geographical areas. The buying behaviour depends on a number of factors which could be influenced by social and psychological factors. Hence it is necessary to identify these factors to effectively cater to their needs.

Integrated Marketing Communications

It refers to leveraging all brand promotional activities to reach out to the customers and send out a message that reflects the brand image. Integrated marketing is an approach to creating a unified and seamless experience for consumers to interact with the brand/enterprise; it attempts to meld all aspects of marketing communication such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and social media, through their respective mix of tactics, methods, channels, media, and activities, so that all work together as a unified force. It is a process designed to ensure that all messaging and communications strategies are consistent across all channels and are centred on the customer. Components of IMC can be used for different objectives according to the need of the retailer. It could be aimed at visibility, brand awareness, social awareness campaign, customer engagement or for branding purposes.

All retailers use an IMC strategy either big scale or small scale as per their requirements. A proper usage of this model will yield huge success for the company and at the same time it could also come out wrong to backfire a company. A brilliant example of a company that uses IMC Model is Reliance Retail. Through JIO services they acquired their customer details. They have Reliance Trends, Reliance Fresh, Reliance Footprints, Jiomart, Ajio brand. They have integrated all these channels to serve one another very effectively and successfully and are growing at a very rapid pace. It must be ensured in IMC that all the activities support each other. There should not be any discrepancies across channels which will lead to confuse the customers. Each campaign should align and serve the other for the effective growth of the brand.

VALUE CREATION

By providing high-quality goods and services, a shop can add value for consumers, which is crucial for fostering client loyalty. In the retail clothing industry, design, quality, pricing, price reductions, packaging, and freshness are important product variables that affect value. Personalised service increases the likelihood that happy customers will return and refer others to the store. Maintaining freshness in the store and preventing product spoilage require regular inventory movement.

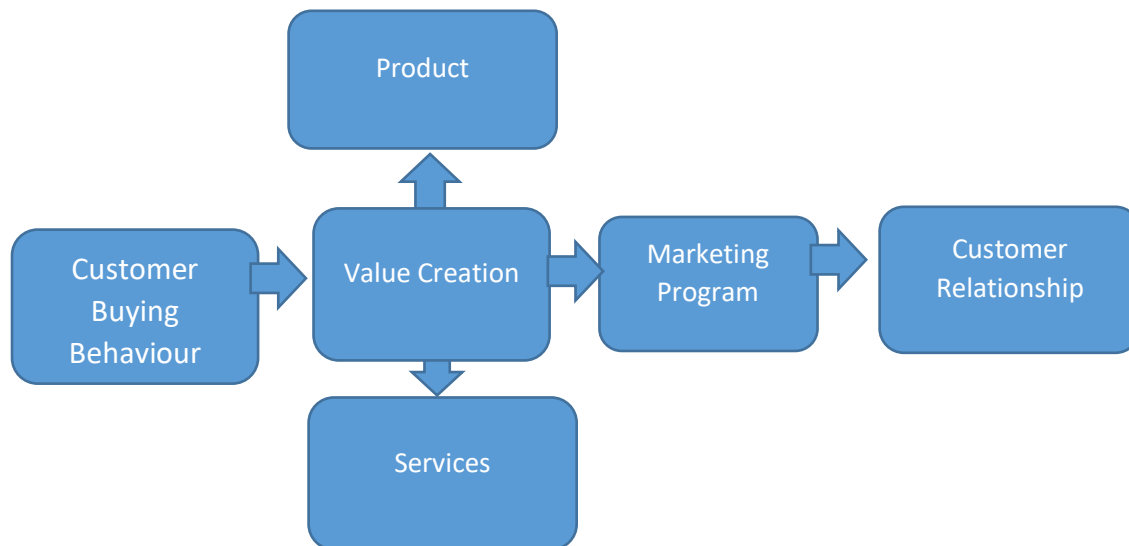
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP

Customer is the King in a business. However, the case is somewhat extraordinary in clothing retail locations. Thus, customer service rules! Any storekeeper can go far just in the event that he conveys the best support of his clients. The magnificence of an attire retail location and its administration isolates it from different stores on the lookout. Customers are in any event, ready to address a gigantic cost in kind of good help.

"The goal as a company is to have customer service that is not just the best, but legendary," says Sam Walton, Founder, Walmart.

Distinctive apparel retail locations have various sorts of definitions for good customer support. For a few, it is to convey all that is guaranteed. They will make sure that they satisfy their responsibilities, notwithstanding all chances. They will give limits and endowments as vowed to clients. They won't focus on whatever they can't convey. They will make sure that their clients leave the reason fulfilled.

PROPOSED MODEL



VARIABLES

Independent variables: Customer buying behaviour,

Dependent Variables: Products, services, Marketing program, Customer relationship.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Digital technologies are developing in the country at a very rapid pace. The Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have a huge opportunity here in taking up their business online to scale up their activities. But most of them are lacking due to the lack of knowledge. There is a huge digital platform here to advertise their products online and increase their reach to a large set of consumers at a lower cost. Here comes the application of an integrated marketing communication mix model which aims at tapping all possible means to reach consumers very effectively at a lower cost and manage all the marketing activities using simple and manageable tools.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the consumer buying behavior towards fashion apparels in Ernakulam.
2. To identify the factors to be considered by retailers while developing a marketing strategy
3. To identify the pitfalls in the current fashion retail stores and to suggest corrective actions through service and product offerings.
4. To develop an Integrated Marketing Communication Plan for a retailer for the Ernakulam City.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is intended to make an exploratory research on the current marketing opportunities for the Indian retailers in the fashion apparel industry. It focus on the different marketing strategies that could be used by the retailers to increase the visibility, reach, returns and objectives of their business

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data source:

The study utilizes secondary data sources such as research journals, articles etc. to analyse trends related to Indian fashion industry, E-retail market, major apparel retail players in the market, operational strategies of retailers in each of these aspects, integrated marketing communication models and . Furthermore, the study also utilizes primary data in the form of a self-administered questionnaire.

Sample collection and sampling method:

The primary data will be collected through self-administered survey that was distributed to respondents through Google forms. Convenience sampling method is used in order to find the sample size. Convenience sampling is a type of sampling method that relies on data that is most convenient or easily available to the researcher.

Questionnaire and Measurement of Variables

Respondents are expected to answer a series of questions regarding the various variables of the proposed model, purchase intention of the customer. Due to the nature of the variables of the model, the Likert scale was used to measure the opinions of the customer. The five-point scale represented the opinion of the consumer in the following manner:5 represents Strongly Agree, 4 represents Agree, 3 represents Neutral, 2 represents Disagree,1 represents Strongly Disagree

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION; Primary data was collected from 270 respondents by rolling out Google forms to record the customer buying behaviour. The city chosen for the study was Ernakulam. Data was analysed for reliability and adequacy(KMO Bartlett) using SPSS software.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.917	23

Cronbach's Alpha value is obtained as 0.917. The value measures the internal consistency of the dataset obtained. The value ranges from 0 to 1 where values closer to 1 represents high internal consistency and ultimately reliability.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.852
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5599.652
	df	253
	Sig.	0

The KMO Bartlett test returns values between 0 and 1. The values between 0.8 and 1 are considered to provide an adequate sample. KMO values less than 0.6 indicate that the sample is not adequate. Here we have a value of 0.852 which means that our sample is adequate.

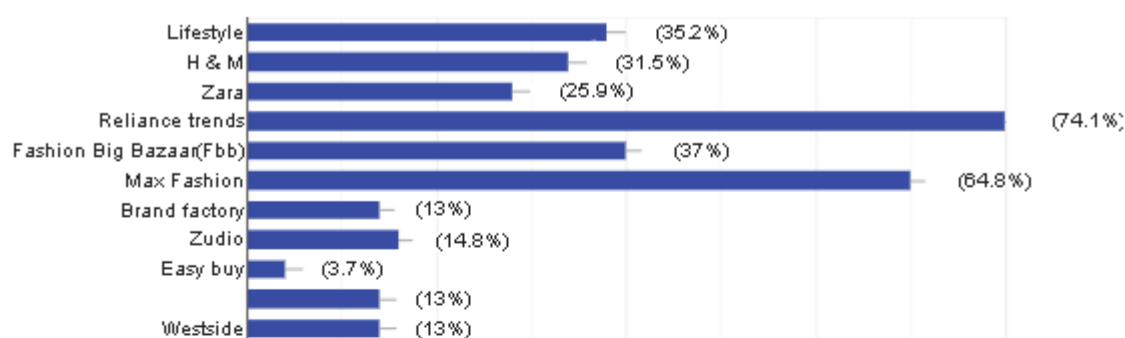
Demographic Details

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	125	46.2962963
Male	145	53.7037037
Grand Total	270	100
Age	Count of Age	Percentage
less than 18	15	5.555555556
18 to 25	155	57.40740741
26 to 40	80	29.62962963
Above 40	20	7.407407407
Grand Total	270	100
Educational level	Count of Education Level	Percentage
Elementary level	35	12.96296296
Graduate	65	24.07407407
Post Graduate	170	62.96296296
Grand Total	270	100
Income	Count of Income	Percentage
less than 2 Lakhs	85	31.48148148
2-8 lakhs	95	35.18518519
8 - 12 lakhs	45	16.66666667

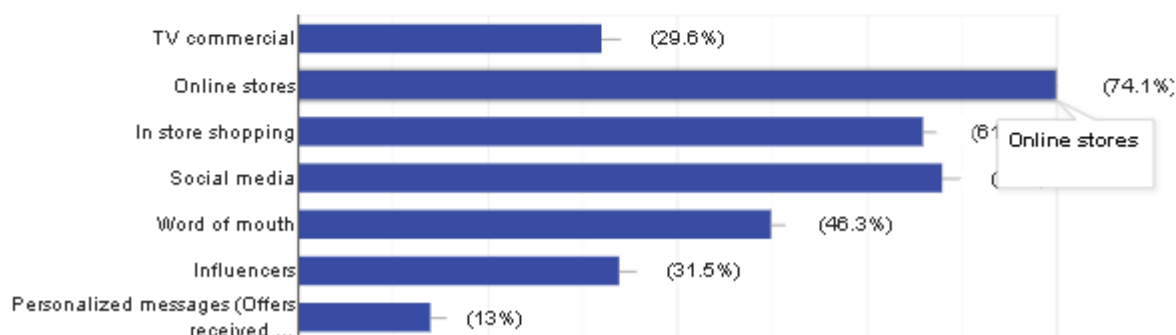
Above 12 Lakhs	45	16.66666667
Grand Total	270	100

The demographics of the respondents are described in the table. We see that out of the 270 respondents 46 percent are male and 53% are female respondents. While 5 % belong to the age group below 18, 57 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 18 to 25, 30 percent in the age group of 26 to 40 and the rest above 40. Most of the respondents were educated in a postgraduate level which constitute to 63 % while 24% were graduates and only 12 percent belong have elementary education. Out of 270 respondents 31% have income less than 2 lakhs, 35% with an income of 2-8 lakhs. 16% had income above 12 lakhs.

Study Specific Variables



I find out brands in this product category through (Mark all factors that apply)

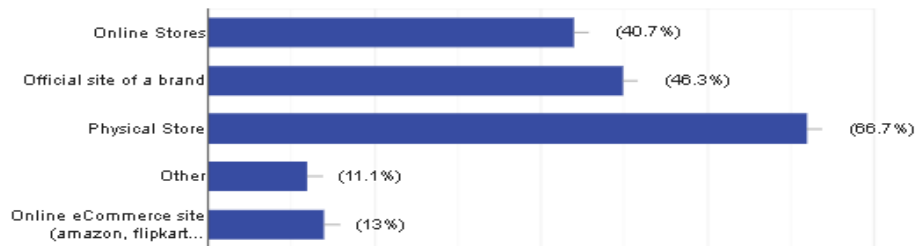


Marketing Model

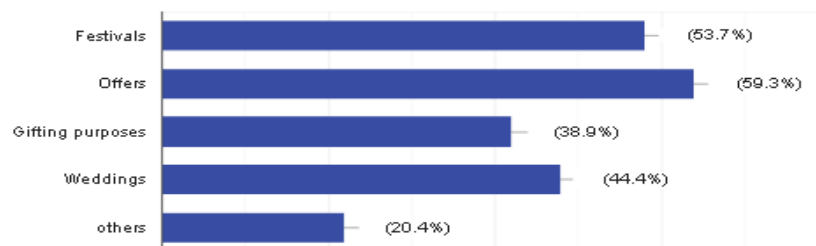
Assessing consumer awareness, preferences, and preferred clothing categories was the goal of the preferred fashion stores survey. Retailers like Reliance Trends, Max Fashion, and FBB target middle-class consumers more than premium labels like Lifestyle, Zara, and H&M. Affordable labels like Easybuy, Brand Factory, and Zudio have been introduced by major retail chains like Landmark, Future, and TATA in an effort to reach the expanding lower-middle-class and middle-class market. Max Fashion and Reliance Trends were the most popular brands, probably as a result of their extensive national reach and solid value offerings. A movement in consumer choice toward retailers like Easybuy and Zudio is anticipated as awareness of low-cost products increases.

Marketing Channel

Typically I purchase Apparels from? (Select all that apply)



I usually buy clothes because of?



It is observed that 67% of respondents have opted to purchase from physical stores and 60% of the respondents are reactive to offers on apparels. Therefore the physical business is still preferred by the consumers for this category even during the Covid times. For online apparel industry an addition of technology like that of Virtual Dressing Kiosk would increase the traffic and conversions in from the store. Customers prefer convenience which is the reason why online ecommerce is booming and in such a situation if apparel shopping comes under convenience with surety of the size fit and material assurance, customers will prefer to buy online. Since customers are more powerful with more exposure to information in the online space additional assurance over products will motivate customers to purchase online with more convenience and price offers.

Value Offered Through Offline Stores

Offline store preferences	Familiarity with a brand	Price	Availability of Stores	Online Presence	Customer Service offered	Packaging and freshness of product	Offers and discount vouchers
Score	3.981481481	4	4.018518519	3.851852	4.037037037	4.074074074	4.203703704
Garret Rank	6	5	4	7	3	2	1

It is observed that Offers and discounts are the most ranked factor that customers prefer in a physical store. Second factor happens to be the packaging and freshness of the product. It often happens that offers are given to products that are old stock. In such conditions the retailer often ignores the condition of the product and try to push them with offers. This can often lead to customer dissatisfaction as he might feel that he has bought an old product. From a retailers point it is easier and much cheaper to package the products well than acquiring a customer. Hence it is always recommended to keep the products fresh and well packed. Next comes the customer service offered in the 3rd garret rank. Price of the products are ranked 5th while offers are ranked 1st. which means that customers in this area prefer more offers and discounts than having a low price initially. Lower price reflects low quality associated with a product. Hence it is advisable to price the apparels strategically with a higher price and higher discount rate.

Value offered through Online Store

Online Store Preferences	Brand awareness of the webpage	Price of the products	Web store Aesthetics	Product Information	Post order convenience	Store Facilities	Offers, Vouchers, membership cards
Score	3.703703	3.907a40	3.75925	4.09259	4	4.055	4.10995
Rank	7	5	6	2	4	3	1

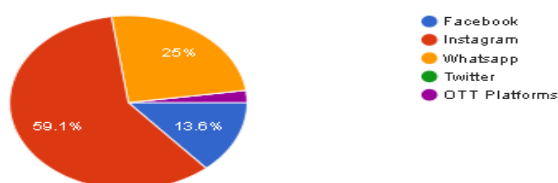
Offers, vouchers and discount cards are ranked 1st among the values that could be offered through the online store. Here also since the apparel material is not felt by the customers while ordering the second ranking goes to the Product information that is given. It must be noted by the retailers that the information given online adhere to the real condition of the product. It often happens that product information is copy pasted for different products of the same category. For example the sizes of polo's varies with different brands offered. For the convenience of copy pasting same information will be provided for different T-Shirts of different brands. Genuine customers will get irritated if they get a product information wrong. They might have ordered for some urgent requirement and this could lead to losing the brand loyalty. Also details must be provided transparently.

Many internet retailers rebrand inexpensive goods and resell them for more money, which might drive away customers. Online retailers need to have strong webstore features like mobile compatibility, easy navigation, and cutting-edge technologies like AI and gamification to stay ahead of the competition and keep customers. Convenience after the purchase, such as order tracking and return procedures, is essential for fostering confidence and avoiding false impressions. Long-term client loyalty is ensured and transparency is improved by dependable after-sales support.

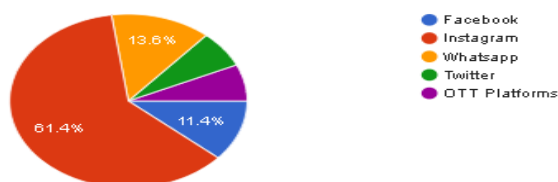
Social Media Marketing

Given that younger generations use social media for a median of six hours every day, it is an essential component of the integrated communication in marketing mix. Using techniques like sponsored advertisements, influencer partnerships, and affiliate marketing—especially on Instagram—can help clothing manufacturers increase the visibility of their products. Staying competitive in today's data-driven environment requires identifying customer tastes via digital channels and using AI and SEO tactics to respond.

My favourite and most used social media platform is



I respond to ads appearing on



DISCUSSION According to the report, the garment sector is quite profitable, with profit margins frequently exceeding 100%. A solid IMC strategy that targets the appropriate demographic can generate a sizable amount of cash. Smaller shops are at risk as major businesses like TATA, Reliance, and Landmark Group turn their attention to the sizable lower-class and middle-class markets. Small merchants must use long-term planning and clever marketing to stay afloat and compete in order to prevent being surpassed by these growing behemoths.

CONCLUSION In the study a sample population from city of Ernakulam were surveyed and based on the results the customer buying behaviour could be captured. The different variables captured were analysed and touch points of customer where the retailer can cater to was discussed for different variables separately. The study also includes data captured from interview of top executives of the landmark group and future group.

Practical Implications

This model is a very effective marketing tool in today's scenario. Such a model should be flexible to be changed according to the market requirements. The basic data is collected from the consumers. After knowing their required needs only values are created to meet their needs. Such a model can be referred by entrepreneurs and manager who are looking out to build effective strategies for their business or career progress. Integrated marketing communication model is one such model that looks into all possible aspects of a business and can be designed according to the requirements of the business. The effectiveness of the model might depend mainly on budget allocated for this. It employs all the marketing tools needed for the business to achieve the business goal at the least cost possible.

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