Exploring Customer Adoption Behavior in Social Media Marketing: A UTAUT2 – Based Conceptual Framework for Emerging Fashion Businesses

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In today's fast-paced digital world, social media is the central hub for fashion brands to connect with their audience. Emerging fashion businesses, in particular, have embraced these platforms to reach customers, tell their stories, and build meaningful relationships. However, what drives customers to engage with fashion brands online? This study explores that question through the lens of the UTAUT2 model, a framework that helps us understand how people adopt new technology. We dive deep into the psychology of customer behavior, looking at how elements like the fun factor (hedonic motivation, ease of use, peer influence, and even the habits we form shape how we interact with brands on social media. However, that is not all. We also add a touch of fashion-specific flavor, considering how brand image and personal style play into this decision. Moreover, in a world where trust is everything, we explore how much it matters that customers feel secure in their interactions with brands online. Ultimately, this study shines a light on the blend of technology and human emotion that drives social media marketing in fashion. Understanding these factors is critical for businesses to build more robust, authentic connections with their audience.

Keywords: UTAUT2 Model, Customer Adoption Behavior, Social Media Marketing, Emerging Fashion Business

1. Introduction

New opportunities are opening for marketers to advertise products and entice customers to be busy online as digital intelligence and technology develop (Auliarahman & Sumadi, 2020). A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature (AMA, 2017) applied to clothing, accessories, and other fashion items is referred to as a fashion brand. Customers are meeting and interacting with brands in online spaces, more and more like fashion brands on retail websites. Consumers increasingly turn to a combination of platforms to stay informed, make purchasing decisions, and acquire information and recommendations about business (Berthon et al., 2012).

To strengthen their bond and forge customer relationships, businesses spend more money on online customer-interaction technologies such as blogs, websites, and social networks (Rowley, 2019). In order to improve consumer behavior, brands are enhancing website design and interaction experience (Algharabat et al., 2017; Jung & Seock, 2017; Alden et al., 2016; Toufaily et al., 2013; Andrews Bianchi, 2013; Moss et al., 2006) and Credibility (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Park & Lee, 2008; Eroglu et al., 2003). Fashion brands adopt social media, the internet, and other digital technologies more frequently (Dhaoui, 2014).
It is a well-established argument made by several writers that users of websites and other online platforms (blogs, social networks, online brand communities, and web pages)trust peer recommendations more than content created by professionals (Baier & Stuber, 2010; Smith et al., 2005). Customers enjoy posting their feedback, sharing their experiences, and endorsing brands to others in exchange. They are taking on the role of brands' voice. Fashion firms use online platforms to communicate with customers and develop new fashion items(Lee et al., 2015; Tynan et al., 2010).

2. Literature Review

The fashion industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, primarily driven by the proliferation of social media and digital technologies. Emerging fashion businesses, in particular, have leveraged social media marketing to establish their brand presence, engage with customers, and drive sales. Understanding customer adoption behavior in this context is crucial for these businesses to effectively strategize their social media marketing efforts.

The UTAUT2 (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2) model, proposed by Venkatesh et al., 2012, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing consumer adoption and use of technology. This model extends the original UTAUT Model by incorporating three new constructs: Hedonic motivation, price value, and habit, making it more suitable for consumer contexts(Venkatesh et al., 2012).

The UTAUT2 model consists of seven key constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit. These constructs have been found to significantly influence behavioral intention and use behavior in various technology adoption contexts, including social media and e-commerce (Herrero et al., 2017)

In the context of social media marketing for emerging fashion businesses, the UTAUT2 model offers valuable insights into customer adoption behavior. For instance, the hedonic motivation construct is particularly relevant in fashion contexts where

aesthetic appeal and emotional engagement play crucial roles in consumer decision-making (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012). Moreover, the social influence construct of UTAUT2 aligns well with the inherently social nature of fashion consumption and the influence of peer recommendations on social media platforms (workman & cho., 2012). Emerging fashion businesses increasingly rely on social media for marketing. Understanding the factors influencing customer adoption behavior becomes crucial. The UTAUT2 model provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining these factors, offering insights to inform more effective social media marketing strategies.

The current study builds upon previous research by comprehensively integrating all relevant independent variables that influence purchase intention and use behavior, expanding the UTAUT2(Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2) with fashion-specific constructs relevant to the fashion industry. The study aims to (i) examine the impact of UTAUT2 and fashion-specific constraints on purchase intention and use behavior and (ii) develop a conceptual model that encompasses both UTAUT2 Constructs and the fashion-specific factors with trust to better understand customer adoption behavior in the context of social media marketing for emerging fashion businesses.

3.   Theoretical Background

The foundation for the current investigation is the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012). The seven primary constructs in the UTAUT that affect behavioral intention are performance expectancy (PE), Effort expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), Facilitating conditions (FC), Hedonic motivation (HM), Price Value(P), and Habit(HA).

Performance Expectancy refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using social media for fashion-related activities will help them attain gains in performance (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In fashion, this may include finding the latest trends, comparing prices, or getting personalized recommendations (Zhang et al., 2022). Effort expectancy (EE) is the degree of ease associated with consumers' use of social media for fashion-related activities (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This construct is particularly relevant when considering the user-friendliness of social media platforms and their integration with emerging technologies such as AR/VR (Poushneh,2021). Social influence represents consumers' perception that essential others (e.g., family, friends, influencers) believe they should use social media for fashion-related activities (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In the fashion industry, influencers and user-generated content significantly shape consumer behavior (Ki et al., 2022). Facilitating conditions (FC) refers to consumers' perceptions of the resources and support available to perform a behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Social media marketing for fashion may include access to high-speed Internet, smartphone ownership, or the availability of secure payment systems (Tran et al., 2022). Hedonic Motivation (HM) is the fun or pleasure of using social media for fashion-related activities (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Fashion consumption is often driven by hedonic motives, making this construct particularly relevant (Talwar et al., 2021). Price Value (PV) is consumers' cognitive trade-off between the perceived benefits of using social media for fashion-related activities and the monetary cost of doing so (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This construct can include the perceived value of products discovered through social media marketing (Sharma et al., 2021). Habit (HT) refers to how people perform behaviors automatically because of learning (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In the context of fashion, this may relate to the habitual use of specific social media platforms for fashion inspiration or shopping (Islam et al., 2021). Behavioral Intention (BI) is the person's subjective probability of performing the behavior in question (Venkatesh et al., 2012). In this study, BI refers to the intention to adopt and use social media for fashion-related activities such as following brands, engaging with content, or making purchases (Junaid et al., 2022). Use behavior (UB) is the actual use of social media for fashion-related activities (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This can be measured through self-reported usage of, when possible, actual behavioral data (Khoa et al., 2022).

The expanded version of UTAUT2 produced several theoretical advances. Applying the model to the consumer segment reveals good predictive validity, as it explains 52% of the variance in technology use and 74% in behavioral intention. Social media has revolutionized the fashion industry, transforming how emerging fashion businesses engage with customers and market their products (Anser et al., 2022). Understanding customer adoption behavior in this dynamic environment is crucial for the success of this business. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model offers a comprehensive framework to explain technology acceptance and use (Venkatesh et al., 2012). However, its application in social media marketing for emerging fashion businesses remains limited. This study extends the UTAUT2 model by incorporating fashion-specific factors and exploring their influence on customer adoption behavior in social media marketing for emerging fashion businesses.
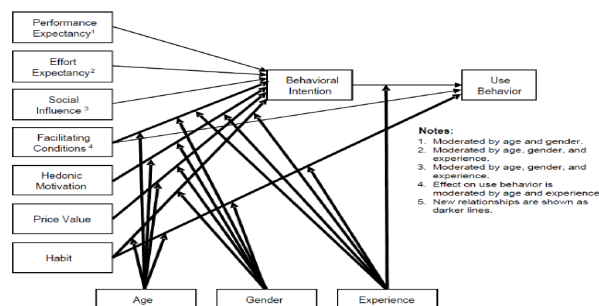

Figure 1 *UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012)*

4. Conceptual Formulation

Adoption

Adoption means utilizing a good or service in the behavioral intention. Behavioral intention indicates an individual or consumer's utilization of a service or product. The theory of reasoned action by Ajzen and Fishbein(1980) states that intentions closely related to conduct can predict behavior. Various technological adaptations of consumer behavior have used behavioral intention (Syed &Danish,2019; Soni et al., 2019; Frasquet et al., 2015; Pappas et al., 2014; Venkatesh &Davis, 2000). As a result, adoption is considered a crucial factor in creating the research framework.

Performance Expectancy

Performance expectancy is the degree to which consumers believe using a particular technology will help them achieve better results. In social media marketing for the fashion business, customers often adopt platforms that they perceive as enhancing their shopping experience by providing personalized recommendations, convenience, and access to exclusive offers. Studies have shown that performance expectancy significantly influences consumer behavior on social media platforms (Venkatesh et al.; Xu.,2012). PE is the extent to which a person believes that using the system will help him or her attain gains in job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and ease of use of the technologies (Panatan & Di Pietro., 2012; Thomas et al., 2013) as a part of the UTAUT2 theory by Venkatesh et al., 2012. In several studies (Juaneda Ayensa et al., 2016; Pascual Miguel et al., 2015), Performance expectancy is the best indicator of behavioral intention, and perceived usefulness was the source of the performance expectancy (SanMartin & Herrero, 2012).

Effort Expectancy

Effort Expectancy is the ease of use associated with technology adoption. In social media marketing, user-friendly, visually appealing, and easy-to-navigate platforms are more likely to attract and retain customers. In the fashion industry, where aesthetics and ease of browsing are crucial, effort expectancy significantly influences customer adoption behavior (Alalwan et al.; R., 2017). Effort expectancy measures how simple a system is to use (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and how touchpoint technology is used in purchasing (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Juanesa, Ayensa, et al., 2016). Effort expectancy is a critical concept in the theory of acceptance model (Venkatesh &Davis, 2000). Previous studies (Juaneda Ayensa et al., 2016; Pantano & DiPietro, 2012; Venkatesh et al., 2012) have shown the significance of effort expectancy in determining purchasing intention.

Social Influence

Social influence is a critical factor in fashion, as consumers often rely on the opinions and behaviors of others, including peers, influencers, and celebrities, when making purchasing decisions. Social media platforms amplify this influence by enabling the sharing of fashion trends, reviews, and endorsements, thus impacting consumer adoption behavior (Lu et al., P.Y.J., 2009). Social influence is the belief held by an individual that others think they should embrace the information system (Tan et al.., 2013).

Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions are the availability of resources and support that enable consumers to use technology effectively. In the context of social media marketing, this includes access to the internet, mobile devices, and customer support services. Consumers are more likely to adopt social media platforms for purchasing fashion if they have the necessary resources and support systems (Escobar-Rodriguez et al.; R., 2017). Facilitating condition is the degree to which the organizational and technological infrastructure needed to support the technologies is thought to exist (Thomas et al.., 2013) strongly influences user intention and reliably predicts technology adoption (Ajzen, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995).

Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic Motivation is the enjoyment or pleasure derived from using technology. In the fashion industry, social media platforms often provide an entertaining and visually stimulating environment, which can increase consumer engagement and adoption. The aesthetic appeal, interactive features, and content variety on these platforms compass the value associated with the hedonic motivation of consumers (Childers et al.; S., 2001). Hedonic motivation is the drive or justification for engaging in a particular task that stems from pleasure or enjoyment gained from employing technology (Brown & Venkatesh, 2005) or internal fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Hedonic experiences and qualities influence consumers' technology adoption (Lu et al., 2009). Hedonistic consumers are likelier to buy a product that makes them feel reasonably good and provides entertainment than when they are not (Diep & Sweeney, 2008; Teller et al., 2008; Babin & Attaway, 2000). Hedonistic consumers encompass the value associated with experience rather than emotion and product.

Price Value

The price value is the consumer's cogitative trade-off between the perceived benefits of the technology and the monetary cost. The fashion industry's social media platforms offering discounts, promotions, and competitive pricing will likely attract cost-sensitive customers. The perceived value of these offers influences the likelihood of platform adoption (Wang et al., P., 2012). The trade-off between the cost of utilizing the technology and the anticipated benefits is the price value in the UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This covers the costs associated with buying the product or using the service, such as hardware, software, and other fees (Wei et al., 2009). Price is among the most important factors influencing purchasing impulse (Zhou &

Wong, 2004). price plays a significant role in online purchases because saving money while buying online is a primary reason people purchase online (Monsuwe et al., 2004).

Habit
Habit is how consumers tend to perform behaviors automatically due to learning. In social media marketing, consumers who frequently use social media platforms for fashion-related activities are more likely to continue using them out of habit. Habitual behavior reinforces their adoption and engagement over time (Limayem et al., C.M.K., 2007). Habit is the degree to which people carry out actions without thinking about them (Limayem et al., 2007)

Habit is the degree to which people carry out actions without thinking about them (Limayem et al., 2007). According to Venkatesh et al. (2012), habit directly and indirectly influences technological intention. In empirical tests, purchase intention is influenced by habit (Khalifa & Liu, 2007; Chiu et al., 2012). Depending on the type of experience and how difficult or simple it is for the user to utilize, more experience could positively or negatively impact adoption (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Essentially, recurring events are what create habits.

Brand Image
According to Hsieh, Pan, and Setiono (2004), a strong brand image makes it easier for customers to judge a company's level of satisfaction, assess how it differs from its rivals, and decide whether or not to repurchase it. When consumers are making purchasing decisions, brand image is a crucial determinant. Positive brand information affects consumers' willingness to purchase, perceived value, and quality (Dodds et al., 1991; Monroe & Krishnan, 1985). Because a well-known brand with a positive image tends to reduce consumers' perceived risks (Akaah & Korgaonkar, 1988; Rao & Monroe, 1988) or increase consumers' perceived value (Loudon & Bitta, 1988; Fredericks & Slater, 1998; Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003; Aghekyan et al., 2012), consumers are more likely to purchase products from such brands.

Fashion Involvement
Fashion involvement is one of the most critical factors in a consumer's adopting new fashion (Goldsmith et al., 1999). A consumer's intention to purchase a product indicates their involvement in the fashion industry. According to O'Cass (2000), fashion involvement is related to the consumer's characteristics that echo their subjective knowledge of fashion, ultimately resulting in their intention to adopt new fashion. Involvement is defined as products relevant to the consumers' lives and their preference for the products (Khare & Rakesh, 2010).

According to O'Cass (2004), drive qualities demonstrate how motivational or enjoyable stimuli might arouse, which is what participation means. Customers' engagement indicates how they feel about a product (Cohen, 1983), but the product's immersion is a firm reflection of their individuality. Many academics have concurred that engagement might be a valuable criterion for classifying customer categories and describing consumer behavior.

Personal Innovativeness
A person's eagerness to experiment with new information technology is another name for personal innovativeness. It is a significant factor in deciding how users embrace technology (Yi et al., 2006). Research on innovation dissemination (Rogers, 2002, 2005) and information systems (Agarwal & Prasad, 1998) have examined personal innovativeness. Consumer innovation positively correlates with several technology-use decisions (Leung & Wei, 1998).

According to Jianlin and Qi (2010), customers who possess a higher level of personal innovativeness tend to adapt to online purchasing more readily than those with a lower or no level of personal innovativeness.
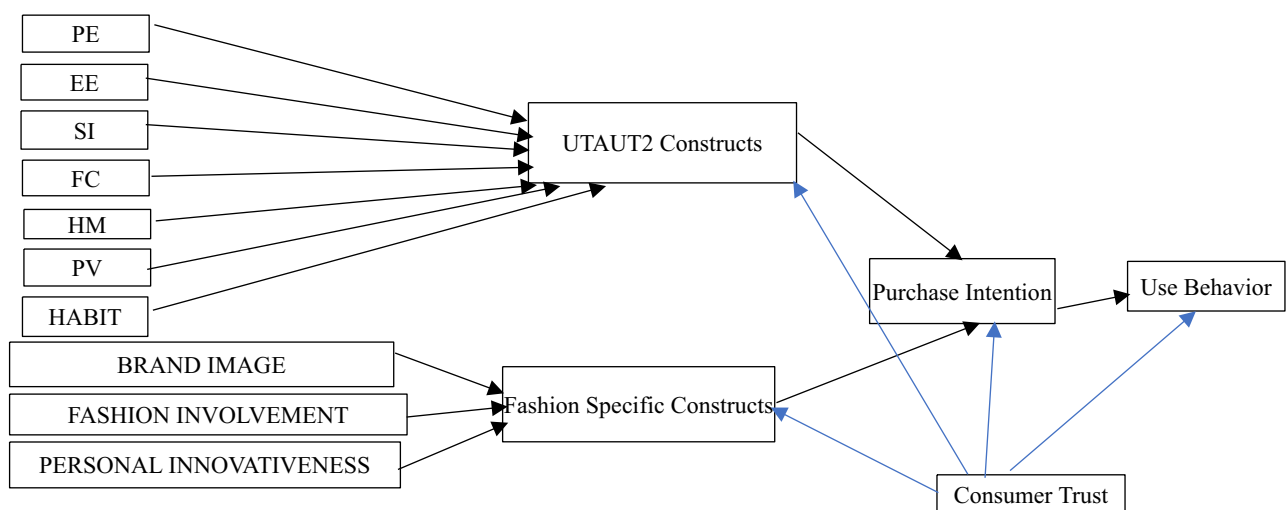
Consumer Trust

Figure 2 *Proposed Research Framework*

Trust has been highlighted as a significant factor influencing technology adoption, particularly in online and e-commerce contexts. According to Gefen et al. (2003), trust moderates the relationship between perceived usefulness and behavioral intention, enhancing consumers' confidence in online platforms. Applying this in the social media marketing context, trust in the brand's digital presence could strengthen the impact of constructs like Performance Expectancy and Effort Expectancy on customer behavior.

Lu et al. (2016) showed that trust in social media platforms and influencers moderates consumer behavior, impacting how consumers perceive the value and reliability of information shared on these platforms. This trust, therefore, can be crucial in moderating the relationship between Social Influence and Purchase Intention. Lee and Turban (2001) emphasized the importance of trust in digital transactions to encourage repeat purchases and technology adoption. This aligns with the fashion industry, where secure and trustworthy social media platforms enhance customer engagement and purchase behavior.

Adding Consumer Trust as a moderating variable could offer insights into how the perceived trustworthiness of social media platforms and fashion brands influences customer adoption behavior.

- **Independent Variables**: UTAUT2 Constructs (Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), Facilitating Conditions (FC), Hedonic Motivation (HM), Price Value (PV), and Habit (HT)) & Fashion Specific Constructs (Brand Image, Fashion Involvement, Personal Innovativeness)
- **Moderating Variable**: Consumer Trust, which moderates the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.
- **Dependent Variables**: Purchase Intention and Use Behavior.

5. Research Methodology

The fashion apparel sector was selected due to its rapid growth in digital sales and ability to draw in a diverse range of customers via online and offline channels (Rodriquez, 2016; Mosquera et al., 2018). The data collection method will be an online survey. For this research, Emerging fashion businesses are defined as new or relatively young companies developing and establishing their brand identity, product lines, and market presence within the fashion industry (Gertner & Gertner, 2019, p. 4).

A quantitative cross-sectional research technique will be used to meet best the study's goal (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Primary data will be collected through a web-based survey distributed to internet users to best achieve the study's objectives. A non-probabilistic sampling method, namely convenience and snowball sampling, will reach social media users and fashion consumers. Self-administered questionnaires will also be distributed in shopping malls, convenience stores, and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to maximize reach. The survey will be shared among participants' networks to facilitate a broad response base.

The study aims to gather a sample size of approximately 300 to 400 respondents, equally split between online and offline participants, to ensure a comprehensive view of consumer behavior across different contexts. The choice of sample size is based on previous research employing the UTAUT2 model and aims to ensure sufficient statistical power and representativeness. A pilot study will be conducted to validate the survey instrument and ensure data reliability, and measures such as face validity and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) will be applied.

The data collection process is planned over three months, with clear phases for survey development, pilot testing, distribution, and analysis. Ethical considerations are central to this methodology, ensuring participants' informed consent, anonymity, and data protection throughout the study. These measures are vital given the online nature of data collection and the sensitive information involved. This structured approach aims to provide robust and reliable insights into consumer adoption behavior in social media marketing for emerging fashion businesses.

6. Limitations, Future Research of Study, and Conclusion

Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, using a non-probabilistic sampling method may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as the sample may not be representative of the broader population. Focusing on social media users and fashion consumers may also introduce sampling bias, limiting respondents' diversity and behaviors. The study's reliance on self-reported data through surveys could also lead to response bias, as participants may not accurately reflect their actual behaviors or perceptions. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the research design restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between variables, as it captures data at a single point in time rather than observing changes over time.

Future Research

Future studies could address these limitations by employing probability sampling methods to enhance the representativeness and generalizability of findings. Longitudinal research designs could be adopted to observe changes in consumer behavior over time, enabling a better understanding of the causal relationships between variables. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methods, such as focus groups or in-depth interviews, may provide richer insights into the factors influencing customer adoption behavior. Expanding the scope of the research to include a broader range of demographics and geographical locations could also offer a more comprehensive view of consumer behavior in different contexts.

Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding customer adoption behavior in social media marketing within the emerging fashion industry using the UTAUT2 model. By integrating fashion-specific constructs and examining the moderating role of consumer trust, the research provides valuable insights for marketers aiming to engage consumers effectively. Despite its limitations, the findings highlight the importance of hedonic motivation, social influence, and facilitating conditions in shaping customer behavior. Future research efforts should aim to overcome these limitations and explore additional factors to develop a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in the dynamic and evolving landscape of social media marketing for fashion businesses.

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