

Influence Of Social Media on Emotional Connection with Indian Brands: A Study

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[Abstract] The purpose of the study is to examine how social media is a fine tool for shaping emotional ties between Indian consumers and brands as well as how such interfaces can influence broader worldwide brand strategies and international management practices. The findings revealed that among the socio demographics, the low- and middle-income group of motivated young, educated females exhibited the highest emotional brand attachment, with Instagram and TikTok snuggling up as the most engaging platforms. However, this study implied that the feelings of the customers are secondary to purchase decisions, which, in most cases, are driven by product quality and favorable reviews. The study brings to light the necessity for brands to leverage social media for the implementation of strategies that go beyond interactions and complete relationship-building; hence the contributions for such important brands that are driving their incredible customer loyalty and market successes in the international and domestic market.

[Keywords] emotional connection, social media, influence, engagement, brands

Introduction

Social media is a way to connect with others, share ideas, and build relationships through a variety of online platforms and virtual communities. Users can create and share content, participate in discussions, and engage with others through likes, shares, and comments. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. People use these platforms to stay connected with family and friends and to build social networks with those who share similar interests and preferences.

For businesses, social media plays a key role in marketing products, addressing customer concerns, and building relationships with followers. It has significantly transformed how consumers form emotional connections with brands. Social media enables instant communication and the sharing of experiences, fostering a sense of belonging. People can find support groups, share personal stories, and connect with others facing similar challenges, which strengthens emotional bonds.

In India, where consumers are often brand-conscious, emotional connections are vital for fostering brand loyalty, increasing sales, and boosting brand recognition. Brands can forge emotional connections with consumers on social media through emotional advertisements, colors, celebrations, social causes, and user-generated content. Many marketers are now leveraging human emotions to create lasting connections with their audiences. Examples of Indian brands successfully tapping into emotions to build strong, lasting relationships with their consumers include Dabur Vatika, Birla Sun Life Insurance, Fortune, and Naukri.

Research Objectives

1. Explore how demographic factors affect brand emotional connections on social media.
2. Identify most influential social media platform for Indian brands.
3. Examine the type of content in social media, evoke strong emotional responses.

Review Of Literature

To explore the influence of emotional branding on consumer purchasing behavior through social media, an analysis was conducted using a large-scale dataset from social media platforms. This analysis aimed to extract the key factors that affect consumer behavior in response to emotional branding. These influencing factors were further refined and validated through expert interviews conducted via the **Delphi method**. Following this, a model was constructed to replicate the effects of emotional branding on consumers' purchasing decisions through social media platforms.

In the study by Bin (2023), the mechanism through which social media influences consumer purchase behavior was examined from an emotional perspective, incorporating factors such as **trustworthiness** and **engagement**. The study used a questionnaire to gather survey data, which was then analyzed using statistical methods to verify the proposed model and research hypotheses.

Further, Yulia Rahmadini (2018) highlighted the rapid growth of social media use, with **72% of users in Indonesia** accessing social media platforms via the internet. This statistic underscores the significant role of social media in brand communication and promotion. In particular, the music industry has leveraged social media as a powerful tool for communication and promotion, especially when marketing music concerts.

The Bin (2023) study also provides a detailed discussion on emotional marketing in social networks and its impact on consumer purchase intention. It emphasizes the importance of building **trust** and **attachment** between consumers and brands. Trust is crucial for the success and sustainability of marketing efforts, while attachment to a brand helps maintain long-term consumer loyalty, ultimately adding sustained value to the enterprise.

A case study by Yulia Rahmadini (2018), identifies the impact and relation of the social media towards emotional attachment and brand relationship quality, both of which are tested as ranked against word of mouth on the concert attendees. This research question is descriptive research that sits in the framework of cross-sectional design. It involved 160 respondents, consisting of concert attendees from the previous year as a sample. The research model comprising five hypotheses that was tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The findings of the research, therefore, indicate that social media interaction may account for some emotional attachment. This emotional attachment felt by concertgoers was found to work positively and significantly towards brand relationship quality and word of mouth created amongst concert attendees. So based on these results, the conclusions are various to answer the study objectives. Such minor results might be due to brand relationship quality more seriously concerning the artists or themselves, depending on the depth and strength of the relationship a consumer holds with the brand.

Affective involvement has a significant positive influence on the quality of the brand relationship with consumers. This reinforces the idea that a stronger relationship with a brand leads to a greater willingness to engage in word of mouth, as emotional attachment also plays a role in eliciting emotional responses that encourage WOM behavior. The study suggests that high emotional attachment increases the likelihood of word-of-mouth practices, which are vital for brand promotion (Yulia Rahmadini, 2018).

However, it also implies that excessive time spent on social media can negatively impact emotional well-being and relationship quality. Key negative effects of social media use include distraction, irritation, and wasted time, which can lead to frustration, depression, and social comparison (Christensen & Spencer Palmer, 2018). These insights highlight the complex emotional responses that social media use can trigger, and the potential implications for users' emotional states.

From a practical standpoint, brands on social media face constant pressure due to issues such as data protection concerns and public criticism, creating stress for social media managers. Therefore, managers should focus on building strong emotional connections with their social media audiences, as these relationships can enhance Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), increase credibility, and improve customer satisfaction. Socially, there has been a growing trust crisis surrounding social media platforms (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Social media platforms themselves are perceived as brands, and consumers often form emotional attachments to them, further influencing their interactions and relationships with these platforms (Dwivedi, A., Johnson, L.W., Wilkie, D.C., & De Araujo-Gil, L., 2019).

In today's competitive market, brands must emotionally connect with customers to remain relevant, particularly those that are nationally recognized. To stand out, brands need to position themselves in a way that makes them both recognizable and unique, while also addressing the needs and desires of their customers (G. Ambika, 2017). This emotional connection allows brands to create a lasting impression, fostering loyalty and differentiation in a crowded marketplace.

Research Methodology

The primary aim of this research is to explore the influence of various social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) on the emotional connection consumers form with Indian brands. Convenience sampling will be used to select respondents from different social media groups, brand follower lists, and online communities. This research is both descriptive and analytical, aiming to understand how social media marketing, content, and engagement strategies affect consumer emotions and brand loyalty.

The population and sample will consist of Indian social media users who follow Indian brands on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. A sample size of 110 will provide sufficient data while optimizing resource usage. Data will be collected through structured surveys, including Likert scale questions to quantify emotional connections and their drivers. Open-ended questions will capture qualitative insights on consumer-brand interactions. Additionally, the data will be segmented by demographic variables (such as age, gender, income, and education) to identify patterns in brand attachment.

Significance of Study

This research is valuable for global marketers, brand managers, and industry leaders looking to establish deeper emotional connections with customers through social media. By examining the intersection of demographic factors, content strategies, and emotional responses, the findings are applicable across various industries, including retail, technology, entertainment, and consumer goods. The focus on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube demonstrates how to build brand loyalty and engagement on a global scale.

The methodology, which combines both quantitative and qualitative analysis, makes this research highly relevant for academic scholars studying cross-cultural consumer insights and the impact of social media on global brand strategies. The insights can be used to inform localized marketing campaigns and multinational operations, enabling brands to maintain a consistent

message while adapting to the unique preferences of different consumer markets worldwide.

Results and Discussions

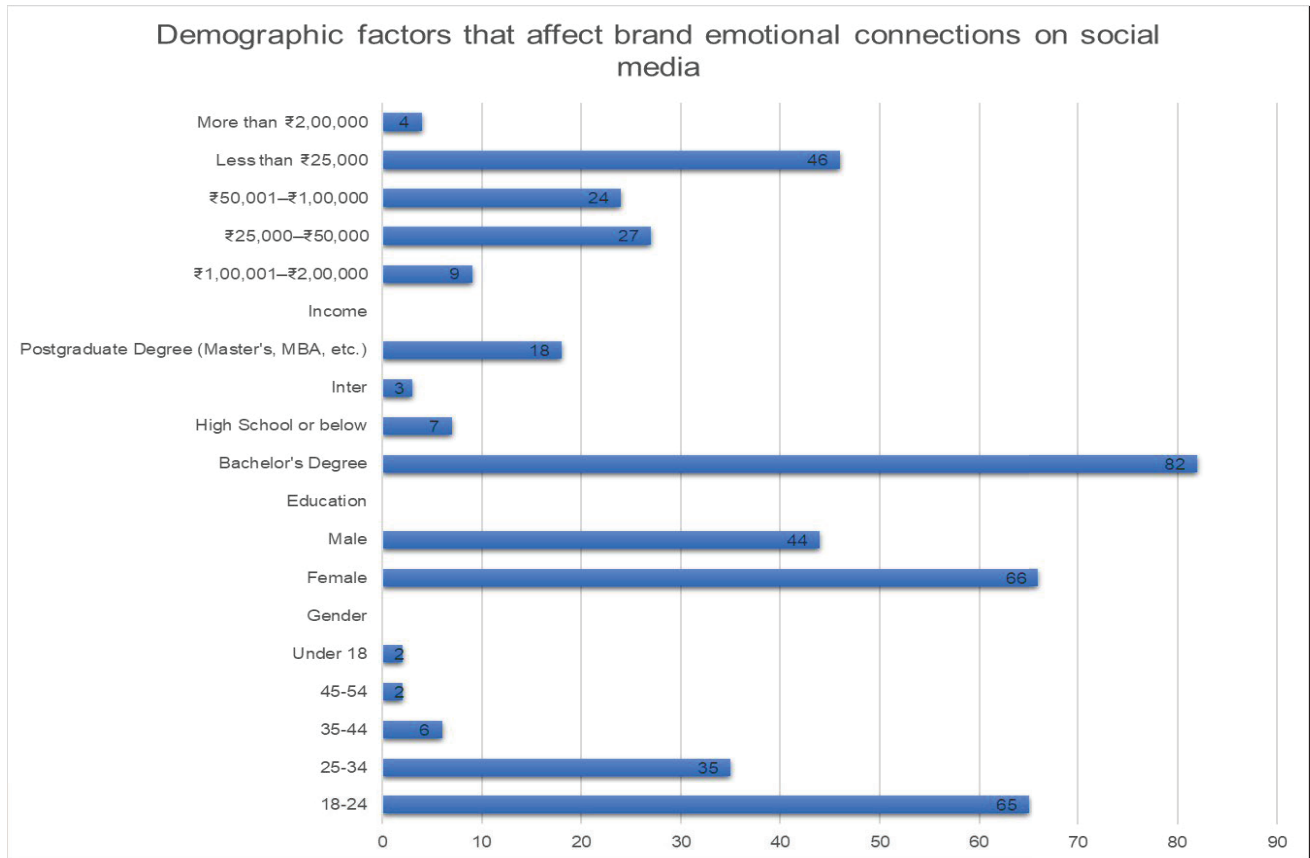
Demographic Analysis

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	66	60
	Male	44	40
Age	18-24	65	59.09
	25-34	35	31.8
	35-44	6	5.45
	45-54	2	1.81
	Under 18	2	1.81
	Highest Level of Education Completed	Bachelor's Degree	82
High School or below		7	6.36
Inter		1	0.9
Intermediate		2	0.9
Postgraduate Degree (Master's, MBA, etc.)		18	16.36
Monthly Household Income	₹1,00,001–₹2,00,000	9	8.1818182
	₹25,000–₹50,000	27	24.54545455
	₹50,001–₹1,00,000	24	21.81818182
	Less than ₹25,000	46	41.81818182
	More than ₹2,00,000	4	3.636363636

The table above shows that females comprise 60% of the respondents, while males account for 40%. This gender distribution may influence the findings, particularly regarding gender-related factors. The majority of respondents fall within the 18–24 age range, making up about 60% of the sample, followed by the 25–34 age group, which represents 31.8%. Older age groups and those under 18 are represented by a very small percentage, indicating a focus on a younger demographic.

In terms of education, the sample is highly educated, with 75% of respondents holding a Bachelor's degree and 16.36% holding a postgraduate qualification. Less than 10% of respondents have education levels at or below high school. Regarding monthly household income, the highest percentage (41.82%) reported earnings of ₹25,000 or less, followed by 24.55% of respondents earning between ₹25,000 and ₹50,000. Only 11.82% reported a monthly income of over ₹1,00,000.

Figure 1
Demographic Factors

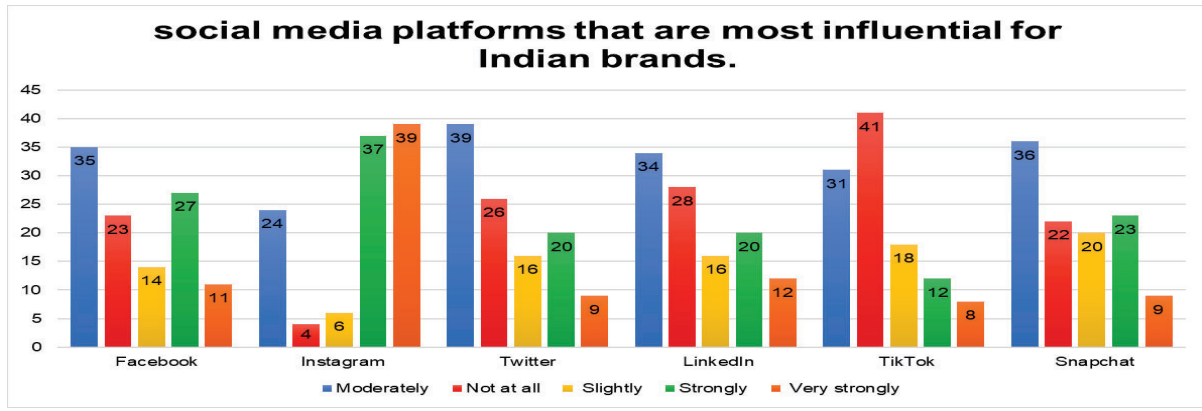


The 18–24 age group shows the strongest emotional brand connections, with 65 responses, followed closely by the 25–34 age group, which has 35 responses. In contrast, the 35–44, 45–54, and below 18 age groups exhibit much lower engagement levels, with only 2 to 6 responses each. From a gender perspective, female respondents (66 responses) reported stronger brand connections compared to their male counterparts (44 responses). Respondents with an undergraduate degree lead in terms of brand connections, with 82 responses, while postgraduate degree holders had 18 responses. Although fewer in number, those with a high school education (7 responses) and intermediate qualifications (3 responses) were not entirely insignificant.

In terms of income, respondents earning less than ₹25,000 showed the highest engagement, with 46 responses. Other income brackets, including ₹25,000–₹50,000 and ₹50,001–₹1,00,000, had 27 and 24 responses, respectively. The higher income brackets, such as ₹1,00,001–₹2,00,000 and above ₹2,00,000, ranked lowest in terms of responses, with just 9 and 4 responses, respectively.

Figure 2

Social Media Platforms



The figure 2 illustrates the impact of various social media platforms on brand progression in India. Notably, Instagram and Facebook exhibit strong to very strong engagement with brands, while TikTok shows a mixed response, with some “Not at all” feedback. Instagram emerges as the most powerful platform, with 39 responses for "Very Strongly" and 37 for "Strongly." In contrast, only 4 responses indicated “Not at all” regarding Instagram's effect.

Facebook also boosts brand engagement, with 35 responses indicating “Moderately” and 27 indicating “Strongly.” Interestingly, 14 respondents felt that Facebook had no impact ("Not at all"). TikTok shows a high "Very Strong" influence with 41 responses, but it also has the highest “Not at all” responses (28).

Snapchat demonstrates a moderate impact, with 36 responses indicating “Moderately,” while only 9 responses indicated “Very Strongly.” LinkedIn, a platform favored by professionals, garnered 31 responses for “Moderately” and 20 for “Strongly,” with 16 respondents indicating “Not at all.” Lastly, Twitter showed a neutral response, with 39 “Moderately” answers, while 26 respondents answered “Strongly” and 9 answered “Very Strongly,” indicating a moderate impact.

Figure 3

Types of Social Media Content

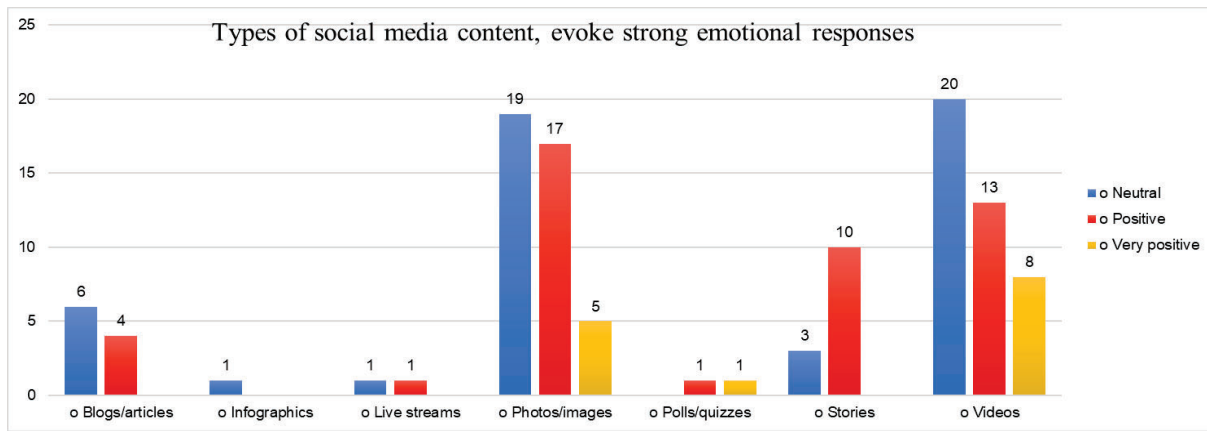


Figure 3 illustrates that videos and photos/images evoke the strongest emotional responses on social media, generating significant positive and very positive reactions. In comparison, blogs/articles and other content types receive lower levels of emotional engagement.

Videos are the most impactful content type, with 20 responses indicating "Neutral," 13 indicating "Positive," and 8 indicating "Very Positive." Photos/Images are the second most effective, with 19 responses for "Neutral," 17 for "Positive," and 5 for "Very Positive." Stories show moderate emotional engagement, with 10 responses for "Positive," 3 for "Neutral," and 1 for "Very Positive." Blogs/Articles receive mixed responses, with 6 responses for "Neutral," 4 for "Positive," and no responses for "Very Positive." Infographics, Live Streams, and Polls/Quizzes are the least effective in evoking emotions, with minimal responses across all categories (1 each for "Neutral" or "Positive"), and no "Very Positive" reactions.

Figure 4

Figure 5

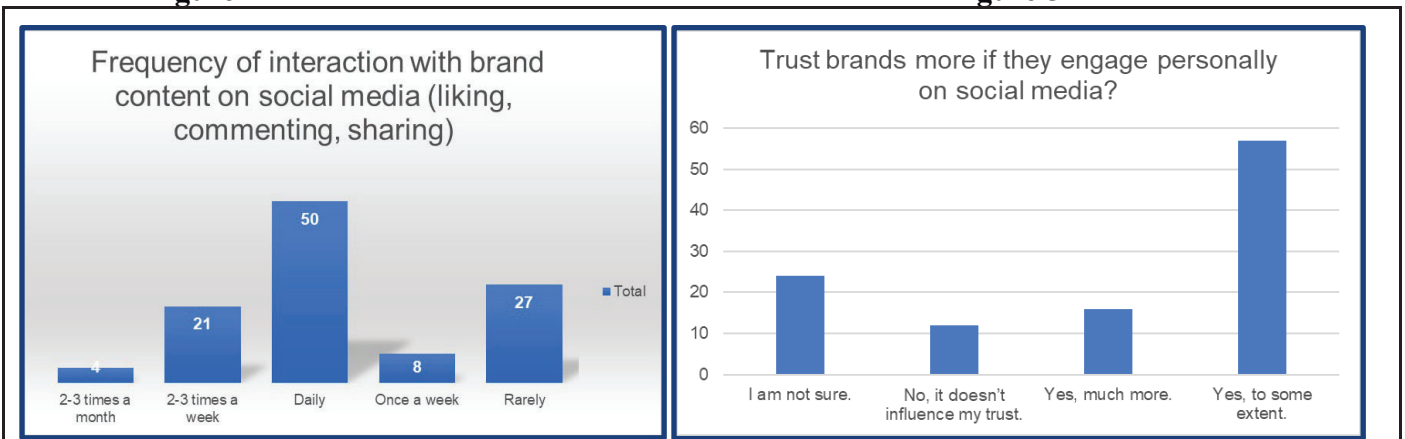


Figure 6

Figure 7

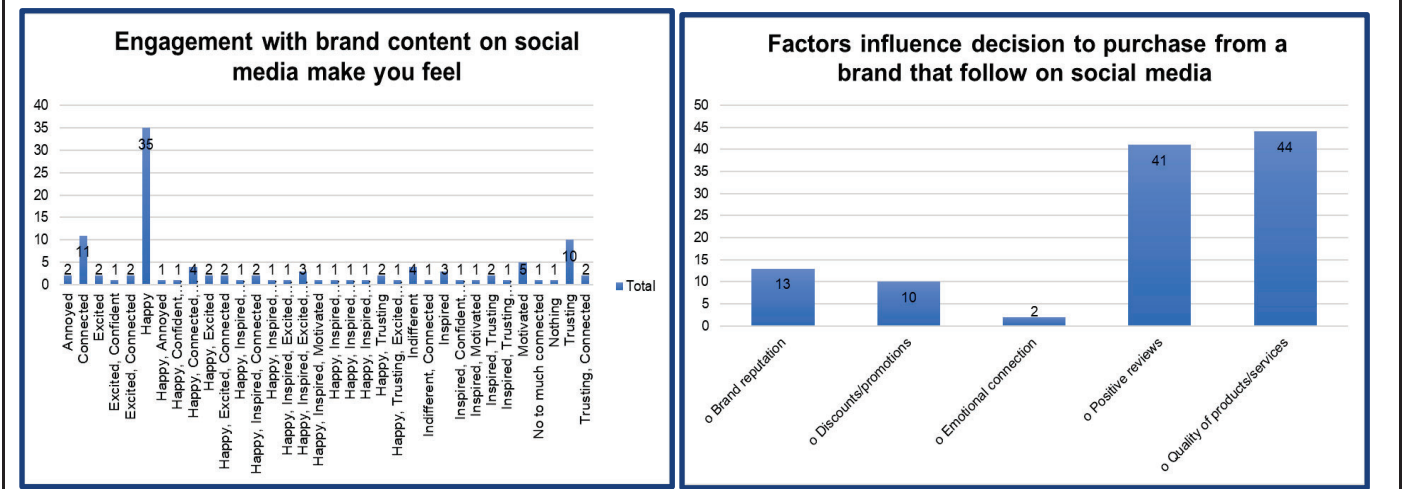


Figure 4: Interaction with Brand Content on Social Media Frequency

Interact Every Day: Half of the users (50%) engage with brand content on social media daily, indicating strong brand engagement. Rarely Interact: 27% of respondents rarely interact with

brand content, representing a segment of users who are less enthusiastic about engaging with brands. *Moderate Interaction*: A smaller proportion of users interact with brand content 2-3 times a week (21%) or once a week (8%), while only 4% engage 2-3 times a month. *Implication*: Brands should tailor their strategies to engage both frequent users and occasional ones, while also creating strategies to effectively interact with users who engage less often.

Figure 5: Trust in Brands Based on Personal Engagement

Partial Influence: The majority of respondents (60%) are willing to trust brands if they engage with them personally on social media. This suggests that personal engagement can positively impact brand trust. *Strong Influence*: 20% of respondents trust brands "much more" due to personal engagement, highlighting the potential for deeper trust through interaction. *Uncertainty*: 20% are unsure, indicating an opportunity for brands to clarify the value of social media engagement. *No Interaction*: The smallest segment (10%) feels no impact from personal engagement on trust, likely relying on other sources for brand trust.

Figure 6: Emotions in Terms of Engagement

Happy Moments: 35 respondents reported feeling "Happy," the strongest emotional response driven by content engagement. *Diverse Feelings*: Reactions such as "Excited," "Connected," and "Inspired" were less common, with only 1-2 responses for each. *Trust and Connection*: A small percentage (2-10 responses) expressed feelings of trust or connection, reflecting positive brand engagement experiences. *Inferences*: Brands should focus on creating content that evokes joy and positive emotions, while also targeting other uplifting feelings to enhance the overall user experience.

Figure 7: Determinants of Purchase Decisions

Quality and Reviews Lead: The quality of products/services (44 responses) and positive reviews (41 responses) are the most influential factors driving purchase decisions, highlighting the importance of delivering high-quality products and maintaining a strong reputation. *Secondary Factors*: Brand reputation (13 responses) and discounts/promotions (10 responses) have a moderate influence, while emotional connection (2 responses) is the least impactful. *Implications*: Brands should prioritize maintaining high product quality and accumulating positive reviews, while also considering discounts and promotions to attract price-sensitive consumers.

To further enhance the relevance of international business strategies, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights. The effectiveness of video and photo content should influence how marketing budgets are allocated, ensuring that investments are directed toward the most impactful content formats. The study identifies Instagram and TikTok as the largest engagement platforms in India. This insight can help managers focus their advertising expenditure on these platforms to foster strong emotional connections that drive customer loyalty.

Given the demographic focus on age and education, marketers can target campaigns to specific consumer profiles, benefiting from a more tailored approach. This methodology can be adapted across other countries to develop localized strategies that resonate with diverse consumer groups.

Causal evidence suggests that trust is built through daily brand interactions. As a result, global brand managers can adopt strategies such as using chatbots, local social media managers, or influencer collaborations to nurture these relationships. International brands can also leverage emotional branding strategies, like those used by Dabur Vatika and Fortune in India, to evoke

cultural connections and create a stronger bond with consumers worldwide. This expanded discussion not only summarizes the research findings but also offers guidance on how these insights can shape global strategies and operational frameworks.

Conclusion

Overall, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter emerge as the most influential social media platforms, with varying preferences across different levels of engagement. Brands should focus their efforts on these platforms to foster stronger consumer engagement. Visual content, such as videos and photos/images, proves to be highly effective in triggering strong emotional responses, making it ideal for brands looking to emotionally connect with global audiences. In contrast, written content (blogs/articles) and interactive formats (polls, live streams) show limited emotional appeal. Frequent engagement and personal interactions on social media are key to building trust and positive feelings toward brands. The primary drivers of purchase decisions are positive reviews and product quality, while emotional connection plays a lesser role. Therefore, brands must balance creating engaging, joyful content with maintaining trust and delivering high-quality products and services globally to ensure success with their social media and corporate strategies.

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