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# Issues and Perspectives in Business and Social Sciences

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## Instagram marketing and customer satisfaction in the fashion industry: a systematic review

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### Abstract

This study systematically examines the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer satisfaction among Malaysian local fashion small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with particular attention paid to the brands SAOI, Astrid McStella, and Hanya. Utilizing a descriptive research approach and targeting young adult female customers in Malaysia, this study investigates the effects of digital marketing factors, such as social media marketing, on customer satisfaction within local fashion SME. The research framework is grounded in expectation-confirmation theory (ECT), which explains how satisfaction emerges when customers' perceptions exceed their expectations, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which clarifies how perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness influence customers' willingness to engage with digital marketing platforms. This systematic review highlights critical success factors, including user-friendliness, up-to-date content, content quality, and engagement activities on Instagram, which together drive positive satisfaction outcomes. The findings suggest that while Instagram marketing substantially improves satisfaction and brand loyalty, challenges such as limited resources, content restrictions, and inconsistent strategies constrain SMEs' competitiveness of SMEs. This study contributes by integrating the ECT and TAM, offering a dual theoretical perspective on how Instagram marketing enhances satisfaction and long-term competitiveness in Malaysia's fashion industry.

### Keywords:

Digital marketing transformation; Social media marketing; User-friendliness; Content quality; Engagement activity.

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## 1. Introduction

Digital marketing offers numerous opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction and the overall brand experience of local fashion companies. Customer satisfaction and a brand's capacity to implement a successful marketing plan are closely related to the right target market. Moreover, small and medium fashion enterprises have largely benefited from the worldwide expansion of digital marketing, which plays a major role in achieving customer satisfaction (Hazim, 2022). The Internet and new technologies have changed digital marketing, giving businesses new ways to interact with customers (Sirvi et al., 2021). Malaysian fashion brands are popular for their combination of traditional and current styles, which provide a wide range of clothing, accessories, and shoes for both men and women (Ajlee, 2024). Well-established Malaysian brands such as Padini, dUck by Fashion Valet, Poplook, and Bonia are ideal examples because they provide a

variety of fashion options, from casual to formal wear, and are devoted to supplying high-quality products worldwide (Aero Leads, 2024; R-Mag, 2024). According to Hassani (2020), marketers frequently consider new platforms that allow them to stop depending on banner ads, email newsletters, and simple outdated websites to establish an online presence that is more engaging in interacting with people in previously impossible ways.

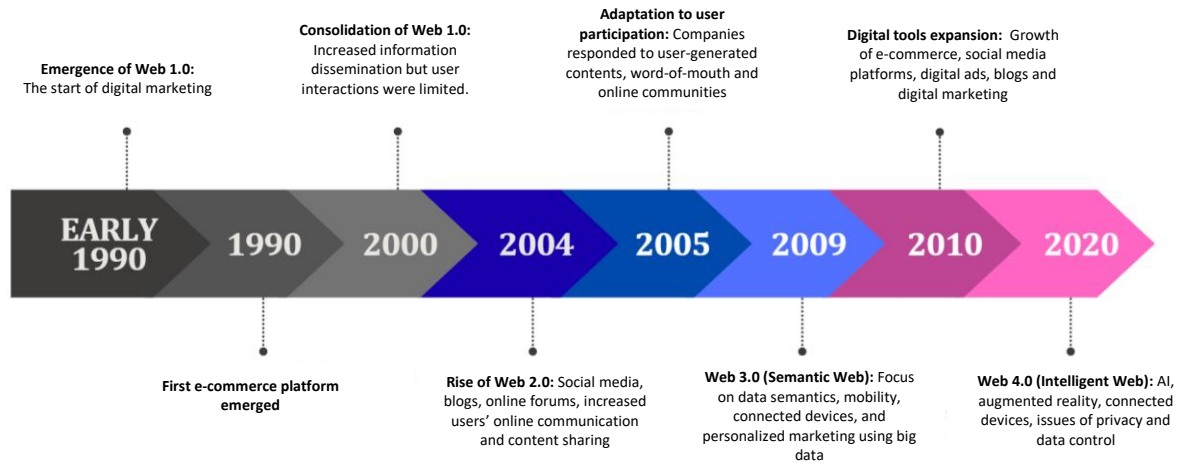


Figure 1: The evolution of digital marketing  
Source: Adapted from Hassani (2020).

Determining a structure to illustrate how Instagram marketing influences brand success is the main goal of this study. Investigating how local fashion businesses use Instagram marketing tools to achieve customer satisfaction and competitiveness in the market is crucial (Tarmizi, 2021). This research is important because it can close the current information gaps and offer practical advice to Malaysian and local fashion brands. This study aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the role of Instagram marketing in local fashion brand performance by analyzing how well marketing techniques, specifically in social media, can enhance customer satisfaction. Today, many marketing and branding strategies leverage social media to reach potential customers, as it now boasts 3.397 billion active users out of the global population of 7.7 billion (Tsvetkova, 2023).

The purpose of this study is to discuss the use of social media marketing and potential future developments to undertake a systematic review of the existing literature on the use of Instagram in fashion marketing. Literature was accessed using Lens and Scopus, a search engine that combines scholarly works and patents on a single platform. Lens and Scopus feature graphical tools that present geographical information and analyze the search results. For instance, the platform compiled the search outcomes and generated charts for various categories, including field of study, source name, journal name, country of origin, top-cited papers, and notable researchers. It also provides a comprehensive set of filters, allowing users to refine search results efficiently and save time in manual filtering. Additionally, Lens and Scopus integrate various tools such as Microsoft Academic. The research objectives of the study are as follows: (i) to explore the impact of Instagram marketing on user friendliness, up-to-date content, content quality, and customer engagement activities within the fashion industry, and (ii) to analyze the role of Instagram as a tool for enhancing customer satisfaction among local small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

This systematic literature review consolidates the findings from multiple studies on Instagram marketing in the fashion SME industry, offering a holistic understanding of how platforms such

as Instagram influence customer engagement, brand visibility, and purchasing decisions. This synthesis helps to identify trends, gaps, and emerging strategies. The review also identifies critical success factors for fashion brands, such as content quality, user friendliness, trendiness, and relevant content. Organizing and categorizing these factors provides a clear framework for understanding what drives social media marketing effectiveness.

### **1.1 Social media marketing**

Currently, digital marketing can easily deliver a brand's social media pages. The brand's social media aim is to create seamless customer experiences, with a focus on consistency and convenience to facilitate smooth customer journeys. Social media marketing adoption is becoming a top priority for brands to achieve long-term success and maintain customer loyalty. The successful implementation of social media marketing positively impacts the expansion of a company's target market (Chandra, 2023). To ensure that customers notice their brand's social media page, businesses may utilize the advanced targeting features offered by social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok, to target specific age groups, interests, and behaviors to provide accurate insights and statistical outcomes, in contrast to traditional marketing strategies that regularly lack measurable data (Jeswani, 2023). In the past, customers mostly depended on word-of-mouth with local neighbors and store employees to find out about available goods and services, because communication was severely limited by limited time and physical distance (Kafadar, 2022). Most importantly, it makes customer communication with brands more flexible and adaptable.

Social media marketing will continue to progress and shape brand-customer engagements in the digital age as customer preferences and technology change. Nevertheless, many local fashion SMEs in Malaysia still find it difficult to fully utilize digital marketing's potential to increase customer satisfaction (Yong, 2023). This is caused by several factors, such as lack of knowledge, inadequate resources, and difficulty navigating the complexity of the digital world (Sharabati et al., 2024). In Instagram marketing for the fashion industry, customers face challenges such as unclear product images, inconsistent sizing across brands, concerns about material quality, price visibility, and limited access to personalized assistance, all of which can affect the online shopping experience (Rasty et al., 2020; De Bellis & Johar, 2020; Wood et al., 2021). In addition, fashion businesses in Malaysia are a varied field that reflects the rich heritage of culture and the modern influences of the nation (Ahmad & Tajuddin, 2022).

Local fashion brands play an important role in shaping Malaysia's fashion social media environment because of their ability to integrate traditional and modern characteristics in a manner that appeals to a wide variety of customer tastes. An example of a local fashion brand that has failed in social media marketing is FashionValet (FV) with 680k followers on Instagram; FV was one of the biggest local brands owned by Vivvy Yusof and Fadzardudin Shah Anuar that thrived during a few previous years and built an established online fashion brand presence; however, it was revealed in 2019 that the brand is facing difficulties and challenges leading to the sale of government-linked investments that involve a business failing to sustain itself in the market and its eventual shutdown (Cheong, 2022). The company faced severe financial Both Khazanah Nasional and Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), two major government-backed investors, invested RM47 million in FashionValet to support its growth; However, the business struggled, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to consistent financial losses (Yunus et al., 2024; The Malaysian Reserve, 2024).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in the economies of many countries. The number of social media users continues to increase every year (Barnhart, 2021), accompanied by the ongoing growth of various types of social media platforms (Afandi, 2020);

According to industry reports, with 86% of marketers considering social media channels a crucial part of their marketing initiatives (Er & Wardati, 2020). Social media have been used for various marketing purposes, including branding, research, customer relationship management, service, and sales promotion. Customers use social media to identify products and services for online purchases because they increasingly want simple access that fulfills their demands, whether they are exploring or shopping (Subagja, et al., 2022). SMEs engage in social media marketing because of their perceived usefulness, affordability, ease of use, and compatibility (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). Furthermore, numerous other studies have analyzed how social media adoption affects a brand's performance, specifically within the Malaysian context. In addition, Instagram's popularity as a communication medium has grown significantly in recent years, making it the fourth most popular social networking site overall (Statista, 2021). Thus, this study focuses on Instagram, the world's fastest-growing social media network with over one billion active users, making it a significant field for studying methods of digital marketing and customer engagement (Jawaid & Rajadurai, 2021).

## **2. Underlying theories**

This study is grounded in existing theories that explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Scientific literature has identified various theories and concepts of satisfaction when approaching social media platforms. Theories in marketing and information technology fields and are based on Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989).

### **2.1 Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT)**

Based on Figure 2, Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) is the second theoretical framework for this study, as it provides insights into customer satisfaction. ECT, proposed by Oliver (1980), explains customer satisfaction as the outcome of expectations and their subsequent confirmation or disconfirmation after a product or service is experienced. In this study, in the context of Instagram as a platform for fashion SMEs, user satisfaction depends on whether Instagram meets or exceeds the expectations users have from the social media profile of the brand (Bhattacharjee, 2001). Regarding the use of Instagram marketing tools to measure satisfaction, researchers have adopted the ECT approach. For example, if a product exceeds expectations, "positive disconfirmation" satisfaction will be achieved; however, conversely, if the product does not meet expectations "negative disconfirmation", customers tend to be dissatisfied (Mehraboun, 2024). In this theory, four main constructs are developed in the model: expectations, perceived performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction (Hasibuan, 2024). Satisfaction plays an important role in affecting customer viewpoints on a specific service, because the feeling of pleasure adjusts their primary motivation to continue shopping through the brand's social media. To support this, several studies have used ECT to show that expectations aligned with the performance achieved will encourage satisfaction with the use of information technology (Alruwaie et al., 2020; Li, 2022; Khayer et al., 2020). In summary, users may evaluate Instagram based on their expectations of the independent variables of user-friendliness, content quality, and up-to-date content.

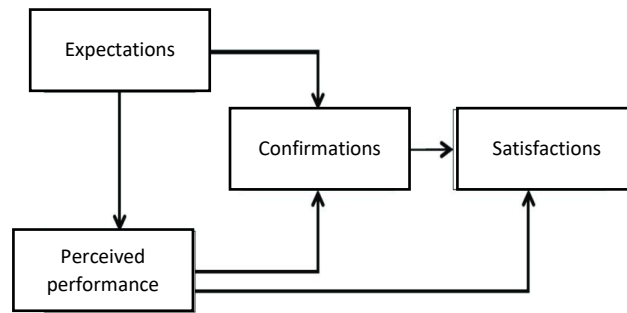


Figure 2: Expectation confirmation theory  
 Source: Adapted from Oliver (1980)

## 2.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) is the core theoretical framework for this study, as this study focuses on digital marketing for Instagram (Figure 3). This theory is the most widely used framework to understand how individuals use different technology-based solutions. TAM is recognized as the leading model for explaining user behavior towards technology (Sukmadewi, et al., 2023). TAM has been used by a vast number of researchers in a variety of fields to evaluate behavioral factors that impact the adoption of technology at both the individual and organizational levels (Al-Adwan et al., 2020; Trawnih, et al., 2021). Davis (1989) explains that there are two important antecedents to explain the behavioral intensity of using technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Hidayat & Rohana, 2019). TAM states that people plan to exhibit their intentions to use a new system when they believe it is “useful” and “easy to use,” which is also considered a predictor of usefulness (Chatterjee, et al., 2021). Based on previous research by Salam et al. (2021), PU refers to the utility of technology in improving performance, whereas PEOU refers to the perceived convenience of using a particular technology. Hence, when Instagram marketing effectively delivers PU and PEOU, customers are more likely to develop a positive behavioral intention to engage with the platform.

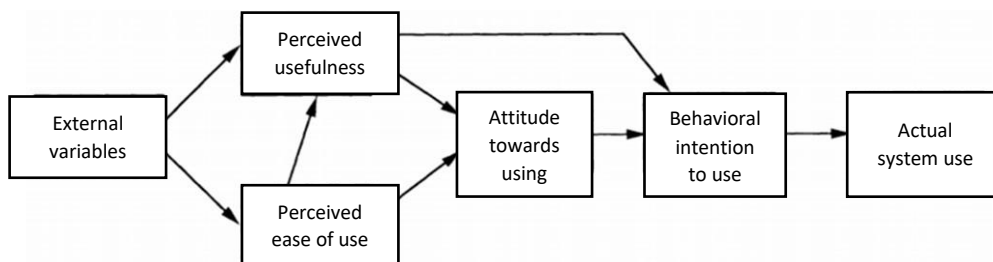


Figure 3: Technology Acceptance Model  
 Source: Adopted from Davis (1986)

TAM has been used as a theoretical base for the adoption of Instagram marketing and for many intentions and behaviors related to the adoption of technology. Like TAM, the ECT model has also been utilized as a base for the analysis of intention for many Internet marketing (Sukma & Leelasantitham, 2022). Analyses and comparisons were performed between the two theories. Perceived usefulness is a similar construct comparable to both theories. Additionally, a construct that may be employed as an intention in TAM is continuity intention in ECT. The ECT and TAM have been proven to work well when combined in terms of the use of technology (Wu and Wang,

2005; Al-Amin et al., 2021). Thus, this study conjoined TAM and ECT models to examine user-friendly, up-to-date content and information quality to achieve customer satisfaction in the context of Instagram marketing.

### **3. Methods**

The search process was conducted systematically using the search terms “marketing,” “digital marketing,” “fashion brands,” “fashion marketing,” “Instagram marketing,” and “social media.” These keywords were necessary to find related research papers. The strategies used for the search process included: (marketing OR “digital marketing”) AND “fashion brands” AND “fashion marketing,” and Instagram AND marketing AND fashion AND brand AND social AND media. The search resulted in 423 papers from Lens and 86 papers from Scopus.

Both the Lens and Scopus databases have integrated filters that automate the filtering process. The papers included were from the past five years, which were limited to the years 2020 to 2024, and the initial filtering in Lens removed six papers. The search period began in 2020 and ended in 2024. To ensure that all papers could be accessed, only open-access papers were included, excluding 112 papers from Lens and 23 from Scopus. Additionally, journal articles were selected from both databases, which removed 12 papers from Lens and 32 from Scopus. In addition, studies that were not in English, unrelated to the research questions, published before 2020, and open access were not included in this review. Only research articles were included in the study, whereas other studies, such as review articles and books, were excluded.

After filtering the search results, 121 papers remained in Lens and 23 papers in Scopus. The next step was to screen titles and abstracts based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria: The next step was to screen and filter the titles and abstracts of articles. The inclusion criteria that the articles needed to satisfy were as follows:

- Peer-reviewed studies that provided answers to research questions.
- Studies focusing on social media marketing

The Exclusion criteria are as follows:

- Studies not in English
- Studies not related to the research questions.
- Duplicated studies
- Studies that cannot be accessed.

Finally, after screening the titles and abstracts, 60 papers from Lens and 16 from Scopus satisfied all requirements. A full-text screening was then applied, resulting in 21 articles from Lens and eight from Scopus being excluded, as they did not fully satisfy the inclusion criteria. The final selection process is represented by the PRISMA diagram in Figure 4.

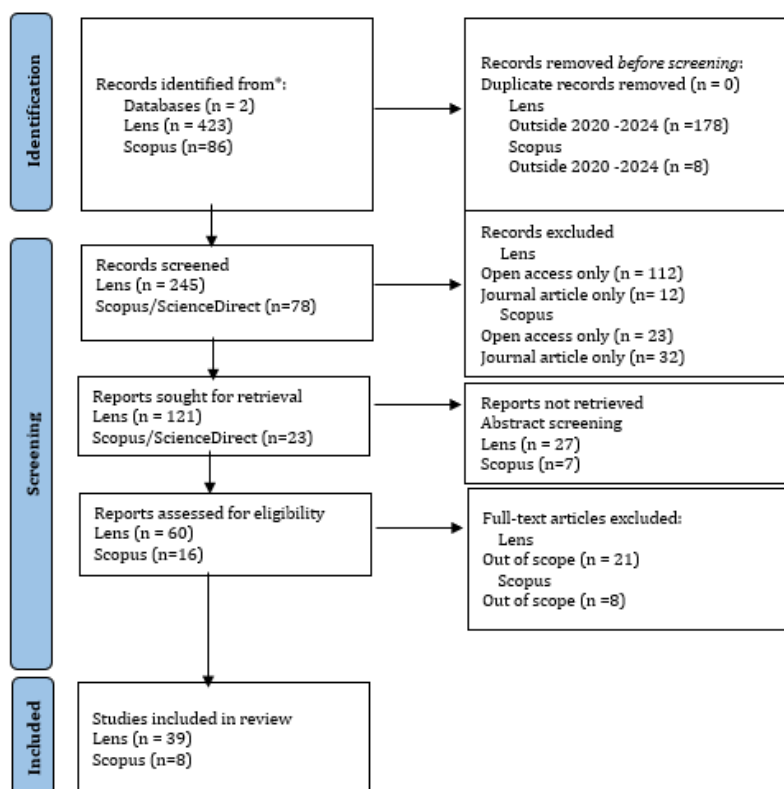


Figure 4: PRISMA diagram

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Social media utilization in the fashion industry

Social media marketing can significantly influence customer purchasing decisions by shaping perceptions through targeted promotions, ultimately forming consumption habits and highlighting its crucial role in modern marketing (Arjang et al., 2024; Mutmainah & Romadhon, 2023). According to Kartikajati et al. (2023), digital marketing involves promoting products and services through digital distribution channels, including online advertising, which delivers marketing messages to customers. According to industry statistics and market research, the global fast fashion business has reached hundreds of billions of dollars and is expected to continue increasing gradually in the years ahead (Wu & Yang, 2024).

The fashion industry, growing episodically and making significant economic impacts on people and nations, has been notably enhanced by technological advancements over the past decade; According to many fashion industries, social media has greatly benefited them as a brand marketing and promotional tool (Moses & Sarah, 2023). Social media has transformed customer interactions, allowing customers to connect with brands by commenting on their content, recommending products, and sharing their experiences, whether positive or negative. Furthermore, fashion plays a major role in international trade, with garments and accessories crossing borders to satisfy worldwide demand (Afifah, 2024).

#### **4.2 Social media marketing – Instagram**

The advantage is that social media marketing campaigns enable direct user interactions and keep customers informed of the latest trends and updates on the brand's products and services (Prameswari, 2022). Van and Fah (2022) indicated that social media marketing encompasses various dimensions, such as trendiness, entertainment, interaction, and electronic word-of-mouth, collectively creating an integrated experience. Social media marketing is a form of Internet marketing that creates and shares content through social media to achieve organizational goals and market brands (Fonseka, 2024). Digital marketing strategies include sharing product photos, broadening market reach through Instagram Ads, and leveraging influencers' endorsements (Kartikajati et al., 2023).

Moreover, the business version of Instagram offers an additional feature that allows users to access engagement data, enabling them to analyze how viewers respond to their posts (Prianka, 2021). Fashion brands rely heavily on user interaction, visual content, and trend setting to build brand image and loyalty. However, fashion brands often face challenges on Instagram because of algorithms and automated moderation. Fake images, discriminatory comments, and selective exposure can distort messages and affect user perception. Algorithmic bias may mistakenly restrict legitimate content, such as posts promoting body positivity or diverse representation, thus impacting brand visibility and interaction (Ognibene et al., 2023). Sponsorship disclosures on Instagram, such as hashtags (#ad) or "Paid Partnership" tags, aim to reveal the commercial nature of posts. Instagram enforces guidelines to ensure disclosure, with penalties for noncompliance. For fashion brands, following these rules is essential for maintaining credibility and avoiding the negative impacts of Instagram's policies and algorithms (Musiyiwa & Jacobson, 2023).

The growing customer demand for sustainability has put pressure on fashion companies to publish clear environmental policy statements, including those on social media platforms such as Instagram. To promote transparency, Instagram may restrict or penalize content that leads to misleading environmental claims by reducing its reach or flagging posts, emphasizing the need for fashion brands to provide genuine, evidence-backed sustainability efforts in their messaging (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022). Social media platforms, initially promoting diverse bodies and sexual expression, impose stricter content policies on nudity and sexual content due to advertiser pressures. This shift underscores the conflict between user freedom and commercial interests, reinforcing more conservative standards (Are, 2021). Fashion brands that focus on modesty can align with conservative content policies on social media, thereby avoiding risks such as content removal. However, they still need to navigate platform guidelines carefully in order to effectively present their products.

The analysis shows that undisclosed-sponsored content often receives more likes than non-sponsored posts, suggesting that users might engage more with such content, despite a lack of clear disclosure. This underscores the complex relationship among sponsorship visibility, user trust, and engagement, highlighting the need for further research on the impact of disclosure practices on social media (Ershov & Mitchell, 2020). If customers engage more with undisclosed-sponsored content, fashion brands that strictly follow disclosure rules might see reduced engagement, which could impact their visibility on Instagram. Brands need to balance transparency while maintaining an organic and appealing feed, as excessive disclosure may make posts seem less natural and alienate to some users. For example, Instagram's visibility limits may limit customers' perceived control, which might negatively affect customer satisfaction, even in the face of good opinions about the content or high engagement activities. Therefore, the degree to which fashion brands' digital marketing efforts contribute to customer satisfaction may depend on their capacity to negotiate and adapt to Instagram's limitations.

### **4.3 User-friendly**

Social networks serve multiple purposes such as web publishing, information sharing, and collaboration. Instagram seamlessly integrates these functions, allowing users to complete all stages instantly through mobile device technologies. Today, finding and purchasing products has become increasingly easy through social media and e-commerce platforms, where customers can effortlessly view offers, provide feedback, and communicate directly with brands (Bernadus et al., 2023). The ease of use and fun of doing so motivated users to shop via social media compared to other platforms (Prameswari, 2022). Unlike other marketing communication media, Instagram is characterized by its "Always on and Everywhere" nature, enabling users to access it anytime and anywhere (Jacobson et al., 2020). Instagram is the preferred platform for sending mobile marketing messages that first drive engagement and then prompt action (Azemi et al., 2022).

According to Kartikajati et al. (2023), the primary reasons for online shopping using Instagram are saving time and energy as well as the ease of comparing prices between different stores. When customers receive guidance on effectively using a brand via social media to meet their needs and desires, this enhances their positive brand experience (Rahmawati & Hidayati, 2023). Social media makes it easier to introduce a brand and increase brand awareness by sharing high-quality content. Favorable customer experience may lead to word-of-mouth marketing, which helps the business grow and expand through shares and likes, minimizing the need for costly advertising (Chambhare & Anute, 2022). Social media also demonstrates how easily customers can access brand information about brands (Mayasari et al., 2023). As a digital platform, Instagram enables ease of use for real-time communication by allowing users to share text, photos, and videos, with features accessible to all who frequently post to share their daily stories.

Evaluating ease of use, navigation simplicity, and feature effectiveness offers valuable insights into a platform's efforts to enhance user satisfaction, optimize processes, and improve overall user experience (Christanto et al., 2023). Thus, Instagram allows businesses to connect with customers worldwide more efficiently than traditional retail by leveraging user-generated content, enabling customers to collaborate online, share product and service information, seek guidance from trusted sources, and make informed purchasing decisions (Kafadar, 2022).

### **4.4 Up-to-date content**

Brands use social media to accomplish their goals, such as exchanging market knowledge and managing content that matches the brand's values to share information (Kafadar, 2022). The emergence of brand trends influences how a brand is perceived as a leader, encouraging customers to actively seek updated information through brand pages, where trendy and current content enhance engagement by effectively capturing customers' interests (Juliawan et al., 2023). For a fashion brand, using social media marketing, particularly on Instagram, is essential as it effectively captures the growing fashion trends, provides an ideal platform for fashion brands and customers to interact online, and shows trendy styles (Paramita, 2023).

Trendiness is analyzed as sharing up-to-date information about a product or service. Trendiness on social media reflects a brand's ability to share and promote the latest and most fashionable information about a product or service (Fetais et al., 2022). However, the new trend was not a prominent motivation for social media marketing, as fundamental developments in digital marketing and smartphone-based social media communication have created new trends in online experiences (Prameswari, 2022). The entry of some international fast fashion brands into the market has prompted local fast fashion brands to keep up with trends and analyze the current market environment, which presents both opportunities and challenges (Hao et al., 2024). In terms of trendiness, customers use the latest information on social media as inspiration for their fashion choices; Customers are increasingly fashion-conscious, with fashion trends significantly impacting their purchasing behavior (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022). Trendiness

involves a brand's capacity to provide the latest, fashionable, and current information through social media platforms such as updates about the brand, product reviews, and fresh ideas (Van & Fah, 2022).

External analysis reveals the opportunities for the brand, such as the increasing number of social media users and the growing trend of influencers to enhance brand awareness (Najla & Belgiawan, 2023). Customers now want to stay updated on trends and new collections from various clothing brands; therefore, social media marketing can foster customer loyalty by providing trendy strategies that influence purchasing decisions and maintaining up-to-date trends (Muhsina & Mou, 2023).

#### **4.5 Content quality**

Social media marketing involves posting sales advertisements on social media, publishing texts, and uploading videos or images (Jokila, 2021). Social media, developed within the Internet-based framework of Web 2.0, encompasses a range of applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Among these platforms, Instagram is a widely used social networking application that enables users to express themselves by sharing content on their accounts and enhancing it with various creative contents (Kafadar, 2022). Social media enables fashion brands to build a strong and consistent brand image using engaging and uniform visual content to reinforce their identity, values, and design aesthetics (Vidyanata et al., 2024).

The quality of information carriers refers to the ability of the information communication media to accurately, timely, safely, and reliably complete information transmission tasks, including security, operability, integration, and system functions (Chen et al., 2024). To effectively communicate with an online community, there needs to be a focus on investing in content and implementation strategies to promote social marketing information (Sang et al., 2023). Augmented reality and virtual fitting rooms provide customers with cutting-edge methods to experience and interact with fashion before making purchase decisions, and AI significantly impacts the entertainment industry by shaping content recommendation algorithms, enhancing virtual reality experiences, and influencing creative processes (Afifah, 2024). Engage users by posting creative and stylish content on social media platforms, including fashion styling, dressing tutorials, and behind-the-scenes insights, which effectively showcase products while conveying a distinct lifestyle and fashion philosophy (Wu & Yang, 2024).

In addition, creating content using influencer endorsements has effectively increased Instagram followers, boosted product sales, and enhanced brand awareness driven by influencers' ability to influence customer trust in the product and brand (Kartikajati et al., 2023). Viewers can easily enjoy advertising that blends with ordinary content. For example, Instagram videos or photographs shared as content, along with "A Day in My Life" posts created by influencers, can be utilized for native advertising (Najla & Belgiawan, 2023). Previous research on fashion brand cultural content marketing primarily focused on defining concepts and categorizing dimensions of how to convey brand culture and enhance customer interactivity to boost purchase intentions through content marketing (Chen et al., 2024). Businesses that use Instagram for marketing must develop high-quality content (Raheem & Tang, 2023) that increases customer satisfaction and, as a result, influences their buying intentions (Shandy, Mulyana, & Harsanto, 2023).

#### **4.6 Customer engagement**

Several studies have examined customer engagement as a moderator in the context of customer satisfaction (Mohammad et al., 2020; Gao & Huang, 2021). Brands can effectively build customer brand engagement with the help of digital marketing, particularly through social media

marketing (Ilmi et al., 2023); in the fashion industry has evolved to include social media accounts for selling clothing, with brands generating customer engagement through high-quality content such as videos, blogs, quotes, and free giveaways. Social media engagement is context-specific, particularly within platforms such as social media communities. Previous research has identified engagement activity as customer interactions with others, considering it a form of social media engagement, including engaging with existing and potential customers, boosting customer interaction, strengthening brand relationships, enhancing brand image and equity, and ultimately improving customer experience and fostering positive feedback (Fetais et al., 2022).

In addition to linear relationships, the importance of studying variables as moderators in the prediction of customer behavior is well conceded (Khan et al., 2020). The popularity of social media has led brand owners to adopt customer-focused marketing strategies, in which they leverage positive comments about their brand on Instagram to attract potential customers. One example of this type of engagement is when users see or receive notifications about a brand's updates through Instagram (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Instagram and similar platforms have streamlined brand engagement for fashion companies by facilitating visual storytelling that aligns with the aesthetic standards of popular brands. These marketing activities demonstrate a positive impact on customers' purchasing intentions (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023).

To effectively resonate with today's digitally aware young adults seeking connections, brands must shift from a customer-focused approach to a life-centered one, creating authentic brand engagement experiences (Bevan-Dye & Motaung, 2023). When people engage in communication through speaking, writing, or other methods, they participate in concrete events, such as conversations, newspapers, and articles, which illustrates the relationships between these different communication occurrences (Hartanti et al., 2023). While sustainable brands generally receive less engagement in sustainability-related posts, mainstream and traditional brands that emphasize sustainability tend to gain more engagement, with social media and interactions with others playing a vital role in shaping customers' purchasing decisions (Vladimirova et al., 2023). Similarly, research by Bonilla-Quijada et al. (2024) indicates that messages containing direct information, such as prices or offers, tend to have lower engagement when presented alone but achieve higher engagement when combined with content that reflects the brand's personality, and found that images of fashion brands featuring only the product are less effective at generating likes and comments.

Despite the high risk of receiving criticism or negative feedback, immersive content can democratize interactions between companies and customers by creating more realistic experiences, increasing user engagement, and allowing for content co-creation, which ultimately enhances a brand's perceived value (Bebegal-Mirabent & Caballero, 2023). Therefore, a brand's image can no longer be shaped solely through one-way communication; it now necessitates active engagement on social media and involving customers, with the engagement rate (ER) determined by adding together the likes and comments on each post (Brambilla et al., 2022). Furthermore, customer engagement tends to be conceptualized as a series of customer behaviors owing to similarities in the various ways customers may contribute to brands (Barari et al., 2021).

Customers like to connect with a brand's social media that replies to their communications swiftly, effectively, and appropriately; customers readily experience pleasure and share their experiences with like-minded friends by liking, commenting on, and sharing social media content (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022). Therefore, brands may turn customers' negative responses to positive engagement by properly handling their social pages properly (Bozkurt et al., 2021). Customer engagement in social media brand communities is one of the main areas of interest, as user-brand interactions are vital in determining customer behavior and brand loyalty (Juliawan et al., 2023). Therefore, Instagram is widely recognized as a popular social media platform that is accessible to diverse users and frequently used for online interactions.

#### **4.7 Customer satisfaction**

The rapid expansion of social networking platforms in the fashion industry has led many businesses to double their number of social media followers, reflecting increased customer engagement as young adults are the primary users of social media and frequently interact with their favorite fashion brands, especially in the online retail sector (Moses & Sarah, 2023). Instagram helps brands build emotional connections with customers because interesting information is more likely to be accepted, meet entertainment needs, evoke positive emotions, and encourage satisfaction (Rungruangjit & Charoenpornpanichkul, 2022).

Customers who are satisfied and respond positively and enthusiastically tend to form a strong bond with the brand. However, some researchers argue that brand loyalty should go beyond simply eliciting a positive response from customers (Prameswari, 2022). Specifically, this leads to customers developing positive feelings towards the brand, being more willing to make repeat purchases, and maintaining a long-term commitment to using that brand. Additionally, social media allows customers to openly share their experiences and express their satisfaction regarding aspects such as product quality, service, or pricing (Van & Fah, 2022). Customers who have a satisfying and enjoyable experience of interacting and engaging with a brand are more likely to choose the brand again (Vidyanata et al., 2024).

In an e-commerce environment, understanding how to achieve customer satisfaction is important for Internet companies to sustain growth and market share, as this leads to greater loyalty and provides opportunities for predictable sales and increased profits (Quan et al., 2020). The company must understand customer behavior and satisfaction, as they directly impact responses and help ensure that products are well received and exceed expectations, while also assessing whether current marketing strategies need further improvement (Bernadus et al., 2023). As social media and social networks increasingly affect purchasing decisions, they also have a greater impact on customer satisfaction. Hence, social media brands provide enjoyment, emotions, and information to customers, allowing them to achieve customer satisfaction (Mayasari et al., 2023).

### **5. Discussion**

This section presents the main results of a literature review. First, it examines the reasons for the recent interest in examining the role of Instagram marketing in SMEs. It then offers an assessment of the main results derived from the analysis, based on the proposed research framework. Finally, we discuss the relationships that will be tested in this study. The main goal of this study is to theoretically test these relationships to comprehend how various social media platform characteristics, such as user-friendliness, up-to-date content, and content quality, affect the success of social media marketing initiatives and how those initiatives, in turn, affect customer satisfaction (Sritanakorn & Nuangjamnong, 2021).

Regarding SMEs' Instagram marketing, the papers in the literature review related to the results of Chatterjee and Kar (2020) demonstrate a positive correlation between ease of use and the adoption of Instagram marketing. The findings indicate that perceived ease of use positively influences the adoption of social media marketing to improve customers' brand experience (Syaifulloh et al., 2021). Perceived ease of use significantly and positively influences social media marketing (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). It is believed that ease of use positively drives the adoption of social media, a relationship that has been well-documented in previous studies (Patma et al., 2021). Instagram's success in the competitive social media market is due to its easy-to-use features and business-friendly tools that help increase customer engagement (Kim et al., 2021).

As fashion SMEs improve their online presence, the results indicate that a visually attractive and easy-to-use platform is a key driver for enhancing customer engagement and maximizing satisfaction (Arjang et al., 2024). SME brands should ensure that Instagram is perceived as both a valuable tool for enhancing customer engagement and user-friendly, without any unnecessary complications (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). Engagement is enhanced through interactive platforms that offer user-friendly interfaces (Senyapar et al., 2024). A brand can improve customer experience through a user-friendly interface, such as promoting fast response times and page load speed, delivering relevant content, and easily accessible information, which in turn creates customer engagement (Felix & Rembulan, 2023).

Instagram platforms allow people to keep up with current trends and understand customer expectations and preferences (Muhsina & Mou, 2023). Marketers that focus on developing and executing social media strategies will highlight current trends and align with evolving customer preferences that create customer satisfaction when scrolling through a brand page (Anas et al., 2023). Likewise, trendiness significantly influences fashion brands' Instagram marketing activities of fashion brands (Sharma et al., 2020). Customers favor engaging with trendy content on social media, such as the latest trends, brand updates, and popular topics related to their interests (Cheung et al., 2020(a); Cheung et al., 2020(b)). Trendy content may attract customer attention, which motivates them to engage with content through actions such as liking, reposting, and commenting (Park & Jiang, 2020). A recent study on customer engagement in social media found that increasing the frequency of posts or focusing solely on one type of content may not significantly impact customer engagement; consistently posting a variety of up-to-date content such as informational, entertainment, and social content positively enhances customer engagement (Grover & Kar, 2020; Shawky et al., 2020). Wang et al. (2019) focus on social presence and content type selection as key elements of brand communication on social media, since these factors are thought to influence engagement. Engaged customers who share stylish and iconic content about their favorite brands on Instagram tend to experience higher customer satisfaction as their active participation strengthens their connection with the brand and promotes a positive community experience (Liu et al., 2018). According to Juliawan et al. (2023), trends are the most significant element in determining how customers perceive companies and how they are engaged in up-to-date content.

Content marketing profoundly enhances customer satisfaction by effectively delivering relevant, impactful messages and values, regardless of the platform or brand, thereby promoting stronger connections with customers (Jalantina & Minarsih, 2021). In a study of brand content marketing, Tajvidi et al. (2018) believe that engaging in brand-building activities, such as sharing brand information, has a beneficial impact on how well customers perceive the quality of the material. This finding reinforces that within the Malaysian context, the quality of content positively influences customer satisfaction, which leads to the customer buying decision process (Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021). Customers use content from various media as a tool for social interaction, and when they have satisfying experiences with social media, this engagement strengthens the positive relationship between content quality and customer satisfaction (Thakur, 2019). On a brand page, customers interact with a particular brand while searching for information related to brand attributes, benefits, and associations that can have a profound impact on customers' experiences, such as favorable or unfavorable experiences towards the brand (Carlson et al., 2018). According to Mohammad et al. (2020), high-quality content enhances both the functional and emotional value perceived by customers, leading to increased brand engagement. When customers perceive these benefits from high-quality content, they experience greater satisfaction and respond with increased psychological and behavioral engagement (Lee et al., 2019; Gao & Huang, 2021).

## 6. Future research directions

Based on the key findings of this literature review, this section outlines potential directions for the further study of local SMEs. It evaluates future developments from a theoretical perspective before offering recommendations for further study of SMEs' Instagram marketing strategies and tactics. Although Instagram marketing has proven essential for enhancing customer satisfaction among Malaysian fashion SMEs, several key areas warrant further investigation. Future research could explore the specific challenges that these businesses face in effectively leveraging Instagram marketing tools effectively (Dwivedi et al., 2020). Given that most of the existing literature focuses on global fashion brands, comparative studies are needed to assess how local Malaysian brands can adapt and compete using strategic Instagram marketing approaches (Sharabati et al., 2024; Iqbal, Ahmad, & Halim, 2020).

There is also a pressing need to understand how Instagram-based content fosters customer engagement, especially in non-Western cultural contexts. Current research in this area lacks depth, and more empirical studies could help clarify this dimension (Casaló et al., 2021). Future studies should examine Malaysian consumers' perceptions of Instagram's platform restrictions and evolving features, which may significantly affect brand interaction and loyalty (Puspaningrum, 2020; Dangelico et al., 2022).

Another crucial area for future research is the role of brand identity in building resilience among local fashion SMEs. Exploring how brands can reinforce their identity through Instagram could help them remain competitive in an increasingly saturated fashion market (McKinsey; Deloitte Group, 2019). Moreover, scholars could investigate the reasons behind the limited international appeal of some local brands despite the vast potential offered by digital marketing platforms (Khoa, 2020; Gonda et al., 2020).

Influencer marketing remains an underdeveloped area in academic literature. Although influencers are recognized for their impact on customer engagement, few studies offer guidance on how fashion entrepreneurs can identify influencers with high mobilization potential (Grover & Kar, 2020; Ishola, 2022). Future research should establish concrete criteria or models for selecting influencers who align with brand values and target audience-engagement goals.

Finally, the evolution of digital marketing strategies over time presents a valuable research direction. Investigating how Malaysian-fashion SMEs adapt to changes in the Instagram algorithm and feature updates can help improve the effectiveness of digital campaigns (Aljuhmani et al., 2023). Aligning these strategies with evolving customer preferences may ultimately lead to more sustainable business growth (Sritanakorn & Nuangjamnong, 2021).

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