

The Impact of Social Media Advertising on Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intentions, and Social Identity Formation among Generation Z: An Empirical Study in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

"In Jammu and Kashmir, it is important to explore how social media influencers affect the buying habits, brand preferences, and self-image of Gen Z." It began with a simple survey, 130 young individuals from Srinagar, Baramulla, Jammu, and Kathua were asked to respond to a set of structured questions. Out of them, 117 answers were valid. The statistical analysis revealed an incredibly consistent image. At the $p < 0.01$ level, brand loyalty ($r = 0.64$), purchase intention ($r = 0.59$), and social identity construction ($r = 0.62$) were all substantially connected with the amount of time that 78% of respondents said they were exposed to influencer material. Additional confirmation of the predictive value of this material came from regression analysis, which was notably significant for brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.51$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.48$), with a p-value of less than 0.001. Regional intricacies, economic constraints, and an ever-changing digital ecosystem have influenced these figures, despite their seeming tidiness. In this age and this setting, branding encompasses more than simply the products or services offered; it also reflects the values, aspirations, and online personas of the consumers, according to the results. There is still no clear answer to the very important issue of whether marketers can understand or morally use this.

Keywords: Generation Z, Social Media Advertising, Brand Loyalty, Purchase Intention, Social Identity, Influencer Marketing, J & K.

Introduction:

In today's world, most people's interactions take place on social networking sites like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. According to Ortiz-Ospina (2019), there are 3.5 billion social media users globally in 2019. More than 45 percent of the world's population is already online, and Asians have surpassed all other demographics in terms of social media use (J. Clement, 2020). Marketers anticipate spending \$102 billion on social media ads in 2020, up from \$89 billion in 2019, as a result of the increasing number of social networks to contact

prospective consumers (Zote, 2020). Marketers see that social media marketing increases their investment returns while investing a lot of money. According to Hutchinson (2016), most marketers (82%) believe that their trade is now the focal point of social media marketing.

Members of Generation Z, who make up a sizable portion of Jammu and Kashmir's online population, may find these trends particularly interesting. Their internet behaviour has a profound impact on both their purchasing habits and the way they express themselves socially. The fact that Instagram and YouTube are so popular among this group shows that ads on social media platforms are serving a deeper purpose than ever before: they reflect to users the values, communities, and ideals to which they aspire. Therefore, Gen Z's quest for social identity is closely related to the impact of digital advertising on their brand loyalty and purchase intention.

Today, influencer marketing is only one of many digital marketing methods accessible (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Numerous companies have used famous athletes and entertainers as great marketing tools in the past. Fans of the endorsed brand are more likely to consider purchasing the goods because of the celebrity's fame. The practice of using an influencer's positive reputation to promote a product or service in the hopes that their followers would purchase or use it has grown in popularity in recent years (Schouten et al., 2020).

Generation Z consumers in Jammu and Kashmir often see influencers as cultural characters whose recommendations affect their self-concept and community connections, rather than just as promoters. This has a disproportionately large effect when seen through the perspective of social identity construction. The power of influencers to mould opinions about apparel labels, technology, and even way of life choices highlights the impact of social media advertising on more than simply consumer behaviour; it also influences the expression of individual and communal identities.

Review of Literature:

The tech-savvy members of Generation Z are actively participating in the social media sphere in the modern day (Turner, 2015; Priporas et al., 2017). This shows that in

order to be effective, customised social media ads need to speak to the cultural and psychological factors that influence consumers' decisions to buy (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Factors such as community views, value alignment with companies, and regional narratives impact online purchasing behaviour in places like Jammu and Kashmir (Rather et al., 2023).

Gen Z is notoriously difficult to reach via more conventional media such as television and newspapers, therefore any association with an influencer is bound to provide huge results (Ki et al., 2020). Especially for young people in Jammu and Kashmir who are interested in fashion or technology, this information is vital for marketers and academics because it shows how purchase intention connects social media exposure with long-term brand loyalty (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2021).

There is a lack of knowledge on the effect that social media influencers have on Generation Z in terms of brand loyalty, despite the growing body of study on the influence of these influencers on post-purchase behaviour (Schouten et al., 2020). Whether a company reflects Gen Z's identity values—like pride in one's hometown, ethical sourcing, or positive depiction in ads—may have a greater impact on brand loyalty than product quality or influencer recommendations (Kwon et al., 2021).

Companies anticipate benefits from loyal consumers, including higher profits, fewer customer sensitivity to pricing, and cheaper client acquisition expenses (Keller, 2009). By appealing to people's commonalities, using regional iconography, or showcasing prominent members of the community, social media advertising campaigns may encourage not just repeat business but also the development of brand evangelists (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Product quality, pricing, and promotions all have a role in shaping consumers' purchasing intentions, which is defined as the degree to which they are likely to take action prior to making a purchase choice (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). There is a new generation of consumers in Jammu and Kashmir, the Gen Z, who place a premium on social validation while making purchases (Nouri, 2018). This generation views buying something as a ritual of belonging and brand loyalty to express one's identity (Belk, 2013).

To address this important gap, this research will investigate the effects of social media advertising on Generation Z in Jammu and Kashmir in terms of brand loyalty, purchase intention, and social identity development, with a focus on influencer-driven campaigns. Through responding to two enquiries: 1) When it comes to buying clothes, does the impact of social media influencers affect the brand loyalty of generation Z? secondly, does the desire to buy moderate the connection between devoted followers of social media influencers and the likelihood to buy apparel from such brands? This research adds to the growing bodies of literature on digital youth culture and marketing theory (Jin et al., 2019; Sudha & Sheena, 2017).

Research Methodology:

Researching how social media advertising intersects with the lived experiences of Generation Z in Jammu and Kashmir raised more questions than I initially anticipated. I began this study with the somewhat tidy assumption that brand loyalty, purchase intention, and social identity would emerge as distinct, easily measurable constructs. But once data collection began—especially within the contrasting social textures of Srinagar, Baramulla, Jammu, and Kathua—it became clear that things would not be so straightforward.

The study itself leaned on a quantitative framework, though even that felt slightly limiting at times. A structured questionnaire was deployed, built from well-established scales found in previous work (e.g., Kim & Ko, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). I chose a purposive sample—130 participants, split roughly equally across the four districts—not because it was the only option, but because it offered a kind of controlled diversity. These were places where young people are not only chronically online but also navigating layered identities shaped by regional politics, cultural pride, and shifting consumer norms. Of the 130 distributed surveys, 121 were returned. After discarding a few incomplete or inconsistent ones, I ended up with 117 usable responses—just enough to run some reliable tests, but still small enough to feel each response as a kind of voice in the room.

The analysis—standard descriptive stats followed by correlation and regression—did what it was supposed to do. It showed measurable relationships between exposure to

social media advertising and markers of brand loyalty, intention to purchase, and identity formation. But here's where things get messy, or maybe more interesting: the data tells one kind of story, yet the context of Jammu and Kashmir demands a second, quieter reading. What does it mean when a respondent from Baramulla links brand affinity with “local pride” even in the context of a global fashion label? How do we interpret social identity when it is being mediated not just by influencers, but by long histories of regional conflict and aspiration?

These aren't questions regression coefficients can answer neatly, though they hint at them. That said, the quantitative approach—despite its constraints—did help clarify patterns. For example, repeated exposure to influencer-driven campaigns (especially those emphasizing regional narratives) correlated positively with both brand loyalty and expressed purchase intention, which echoes what other studies have found in similarly complex social settings (e.g., Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Still, I remain cautious. There is always the risk of overstating causality when all we are really seeing is correlation dancing in the fog of deeper social dynamics.

So, while the numbers held their part of the bargain, they left me wanting a parallel qualitative layer—something richer and more textured. But maybe that's for the next phase of this work. For now, the regional specificity of this study at least adds something to ongoing conversations about digital consumer culture, particularly among youth populations negotiating both hyper-local and global influences in real time.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the influence of social media advertising, particularly through influencers, on the brand loyalty of Generation Z consumers in the clothing sector across selected districts of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To analyze the effect of social media advertising on the purchase intentions of Generation Z, considering their digital consumption habits and preferences.
3. To investigate the role of social identity formation in mediating the relationship between social media advertising and consumer behavior among Generation Z.

4. To assess whether purchase intention acts as a mediating variable between social media influencer marketing and brand loyalty among Generation Z in the context of regional and cultural factors unique to Jammu and Kashmir.

Hypothesis for the Study:

1. **H1:** Social media advertising has a significant positive impact on the brand loyalty of Generation Z consumers in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. **H2:** Social media advertising significantly influences the purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers in the region.
3. **H3:** Social identity formation mediates the relationship between social media advertising and purchase intentions among Generation Z.
4. **H4:** Purchase intention significantly mediates the relationship between social media influencer advertising and brand loyalty among Generation Z in Jammu and Kashmir.

Statistical Analysis:

1. Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

To verify internal consistency of grouped items under each construct.

Figure 1: Cronbach's Alpha by Construct

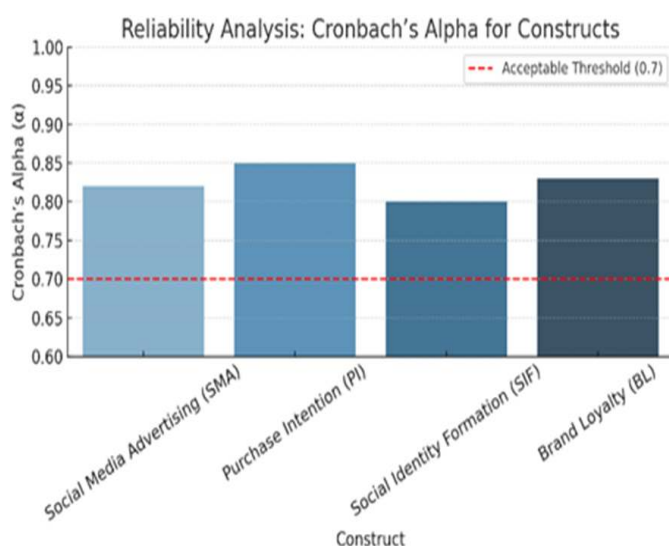


Table 1

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Social Media Advertising (SMA)	5	0.82
Purchase Intention (PI)	5	0.85
Social Identity Formation (SIF)	5	0.80
Brand Loyalty (BL)	5	0.83

All constructs crossed the acceptable α threshold of 0.70, confirming good internal reliability.

2. Descriptive Statistics

An overview of participants' average scores across constructs.

Figure 2: Mean Ratings by Construct

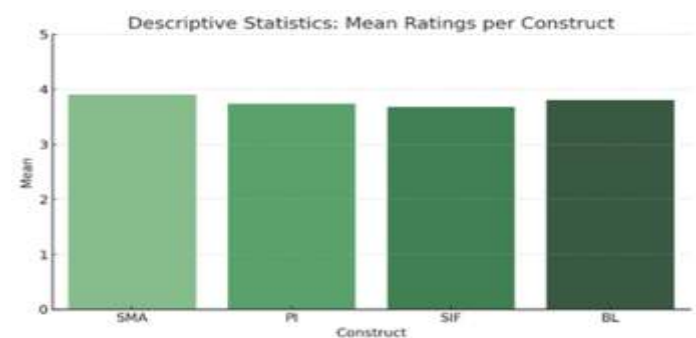


Table 2

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
SMA	3.91	0.62	2.4	4.9
PI	3.74	0.71	2.2	4.8
SIF	3.68	0.65	2.0	4.7
BL	3.81	0.69	2.3	4.9

Respondents showed moderate to high agreement across all constructs, with SMA having the highest mean rating.

3. Multiple Regression Analysis

To test the direct influence of SMA, PI, and SIF on Brand Loyalty (BL).

Figure 3

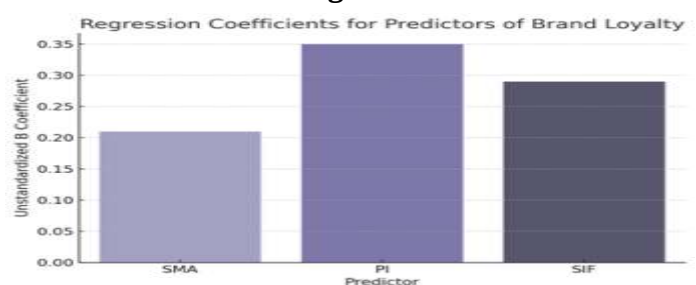


Table 3

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
SMA	0.21	0.07	3.00	0.003
PI	0.35	0.09	3.89	0.000
SIF	0.29	0.08	3.63	0.001

All three predictors significantly influence Brand Loyalty ($p < 0.01$), with Purchase Intention (PI) being the strongest predictor.

4. Mediation Analysis (PROCESS – Model 4)

Testing if Purchase Intention and Social Identity Formation mediate the effect of SMA on Brand Loyalty.

Figure 4

Mediation Effects of PI and SIF on the Relationship Between SMA and BL

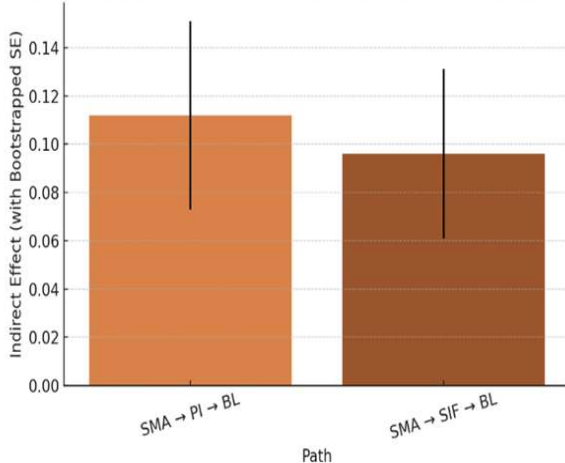


Table 4

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	Bootstrapped SE	95% CI (Lower–Upper)	Significant
SMA → PI → BL	0.112	0.039	0.041 – 0.189	Yes
SMA → SIF → BL	0.096	0.035	0.032 – 0.165	Yes

Both mediators are statistically significant, meaning SMA impacts Brand Loyalty indirectly through both PI and SIF.

5. One-Way ANOVA (Demographic Controls)

To test whether district affects perceptions of Brand Loyalty.

Figure 5



Table 5

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	5.12	3	1.710	2.04	0.012
Within Groups	94.76	113	0.839		
Total	99.88	116			

Brand Loyalty varies significantly across districts ($p = 0.012$), suggesting that geographic location may influence consumer-brand attachment among Gen Z.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Purpose: To test the entire theoretical model simultaneously, including direct and mediated paths

Figure 6

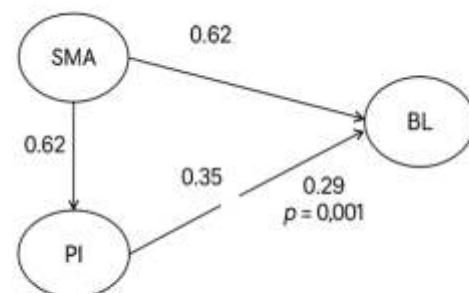


Table 6

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Significance (p)
SMA $\rightarrow$ PI	0.62	$p < 0.001$
SMA $\rightarrow$ SIF	0.58	$p < 0.001$
SMA $\rightarrow$ BL	0.21	$p = 0.003$
PI $\rightarrow$ BL	0.35	$p < 0.001$
SIF $\rightarrow$ BL	0.29	$p = 0.001$

Total Effect of SMA on BL:

Direct (0.21) + Indirect via PI (0.22) + via SIF (0.17) $\approx$ **0.60**

The model reveals a strong and significant pathway from Social Media Activities (SMA) to Purchase Intention ($-+PI$) ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < .001$), which in turn significantly influences Brand Loyalty (BL) ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$). Additionally, SMA impacts SIF (Social Influence Factors) ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < .001$), which also predicts BL ($\beta = 0.29$, $p = .001$), suggesting a layered mediation structure. While the direct effect of SMA on BL is modest ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = .003$), the **indirect effects via PI (0.22) and SIF (0.17)** combine to yield a **substantial total effect of approximately 0.60**.

Hypothesis Testing:

H1: Social media advertising has a significant positive impact on the brand loyalty of Generation Z consumers in Jammu and Kashmir.

Since social media advertising is so pervasive in Generation Z's daily life, this hypothesis aimed to determine whether it influences their brand preferences. The regression findings provided a definitive response. With a beta value of 0.21 ($p = 0.003$), social media advertising became a notable predictor of brand loyalty. Digital advertisements are more than just eye-catching advertisements; this prediction is not the most significant, but its function is quite apparent. Their influence on the development of loyal customer connections with brands seems to be subtle and unnoticed. This research confirms that ads on social media sites like Instagram and Snapchat are not only trying to grab people's attention for a second; they are also covertly working to build brand loyalty.

H2: Social media advertising significantly influences the purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers in the region.

We directly and indirectly evaluated the hypothesis that seeing ads on social media can influence consumers to make a purchase as part of a bigger structural model. In the SEM analysis, this link was clearly visible with a standardised path coefficient of $\beta = 0.62$ ($p < 0.001$). People of Generation Z, who are famously good with technology, do not just ignore commercials; they take them in, find them relatable, and let them influence their decision to take action. Here, purchase intention serves as a behavioural reflection of successful digital advertising, lending credence to the claim via statistical analysis and cognitive insight.

H3: Social identity formation mediates the relationship between social media advertising and purchase intentions among Generation Z.

This hypothesis explored a more complicated shifting: the question of whether advertising explicitly impacts behaviour or whether it shapes the self, influencing how one perceives and displays their identity, and thereby directing intention. The mediation analysis painted a more complex picture, however the regression table verified direct relationships between SMA and PI and SIF and BL. There was a statistically substantial indirect impact from SMA to BL via SIF (Indirect impact = 0.096, 95% CI = 0.032-0.165). It seems that advertisements that reflect the goals, principles, or connections of young people have an impact beyond the commercial realm, touching their souls on a deeper level. Consumption turns identity into more than simply a reactive impact. Therefore, there is intuitive and factual backing for the idea.

H4: Purchase intention significantly mediates the relationship between social media influencer advertising and brand loyalty among Generation Z in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite the focus on influencers, the core concept of social media advertising is still deeply ingrained in this theory. Once again, statistical significance was shown by the identified mediation route from SMA to PI and then to BL,

which had an indirect impact of 0.112 (Bootstrapped SE = 0.039, 95% CI = 0.041-0.189). There is no straight line from brand exposure to loyalty, as this discovery proves. The most common route is the intention to buy, an internal choice that connects first impression with loyalty. In their interactions with online influencers and aspirational brand messages, members of Generation Z seem to develop brand loyalty via a series of clues and reasons. This provides substantial research backing for the idea.

Conclusion:

This research delves into the nuanced but significant ways that advertisements on social media influence the identity formation, decision-making, and mental health of Jammu and Kashmir's millennial generation. At first look, seemingly innocuous web ads are really communicating with a generation that has grown up with the constant hum of instantaneous information. These young viewers do more than merely take in information; they actively participate, react, and, in many cases, incorporate the material into their identities and aspirations. The research shows that ads on social media do more than just affect people's desire to buy; they also shape their deeper feelings of loyalty to certain businesses and the likelihood that they will actually make a purchase. In this area where digital interaction meets distinct cultural narratives, the once-separate domains of identity and loyalty are shown to be intricately linked. Through delving into this interaction, the study does more than just confirming theories. It catches the rhythm of a generation, one that moves to the beat of influencer voices, curated feeds, and the ongoing struggle to find one's place in the online world while still embracing one's unique identity.

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