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The Role of Brand Image and Customer Experience on Purchase Intention in the Salon Industry: Reassessing the Impact of Social Media Marketing

Keerthana Venkatesan ¹, Heavena Amirdaa ¹, Rahul B. Casmier ¹, Sethupathy K. ¹

1. Marketing, Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Chennai, IND

Corresponding authors: Keerthana Venkatesan, keerthi452002@gmail.com, Heavena Amirdaa, f23065.heavena@liba.edu, Rahul B. Casmier, f23120.rahul@liba.edu, Sethupathy K., sethupathy@liba.edu

Abstract

Introduction

This research studies how brand image and customer experience set purchase intentions within the salon industry concerning social media marketing. It intends to evaluate how specific social media activities, customer experience elements, and brand image factors influence trust and loyalty.

Methods

Regression analysis and descriptive statistics approaches are utilized by the study, based on responses from 465 salon customers who regularly visit the salon and engage with salon-related content in social media.

Results

Findings show that brand image and customer experience make significant contributions toward purchase intentions, explaining 88.1% and 82.8% of variance, respectively. Significant predictors included social media content's ability to stir emotional insight and credibility about salon services. Social media marketing activities do have some effect, yet are significant in increasing purchase intentions by way of the development of interactive features creating customer interactions. Mean rankings list factors like ease of interaction between customers and digital content and rather powerful feature service quality from suppliers contributing to a critical consumer perception.

Conclusion

Therefore, salons need to create participative and trustworthy digital content that supports service quality and superior personalized consumer experiences as a means of enhancing customer loyalty and purchase intention. This would enhance competitive marketing strategies by making use of available channels of social media for these salons.

Categories: Social media and customer relationship management, Digital Marketing, Marketing Communication

Keywords: brand image, customer experience, social media marketing, purchase intention, salon industry

Introduction

The evolution of digital content transformed how businesses can influence consumer behavior, thereby creating opportunities to shape brand image, enhance customer experience, and ultimately influence the purchasing intention. Social media marketing has emerged as one of the most important ways of creating awareness, trust, and loyalty in brand patronage by marketers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In the salon business, where customer experience is paramount and so is the brand image, successful use of social media can significantly sway or influence consumer buying behavior and interest. For example, social media allows salons to show off their services, testimonials, and direct communication with customers, thereby promoting key factors to the brand image, such as service, ambiance, and customer satisfaction (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). Through curated, visually stunning, and interactive content, salons can create immersive experiences to embody what customers want in self-care and lifestyle enhancement, thereby reinforcing their purchase intentions (Kim and Ko, 2012).

This research is necessary because, although reliance on social media marketing has always been increasing in service-based businesses, there is little understanding of its direct effect on purchase intentions through brand image and customer experience in the context of the salon industry. Customer experience influences purchase intentions through the cultivation of emotional bonds and loyalty.

How to cite this article

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Through social media, salons simulate what happens in-store by using visuals, client reviews, and real-time updates to foster community engagement and influence customer expectations and satisfaction (Verhoef et al., 2009). Pertinent to this are trust, perceived value, and social influence. As consumers increasingly rely on social media for recommendations and reassurance, it has become essential that salons establish authenticity and credibility online (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) and (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of image and customer experience on the intention to buy in the salon sector while also reflecting on the changing dynamics brought about by social media marketing on this interaction. It intends to evaluate the extent to which customer experience relates to purchase intention; the role of brand image in influencing purchase intention; identify appreciated social media marketing characteristics and their role in building brand image and customer experience; and give salons valuable insights toward realignment of social media strategy and service delivery with consumer preferences and behavioral trends.

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Literature review

Brand Image

According to (Keller, 1993) (Aaker, 1996), brand image is defined as a multi-dimensional and broad concept covering emotional, social, symbolic, and functional responses to a brand. It plays a very significant role in helping brands differ from one another within competing markets (Keller and Lehmann, 2006) and exerts considerable influence on consumer behavior, especially in highly visual and experience-based industries such as salons. In fact, social media enhances this because they facilitate the brands to highlight their attributes and create better connections with their consumers to prime purchase intention (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). These experiences tend to be very strong emotions driving brand loyalty and intention to purchase, especially in services-oriented industries such as salons.

Emotional branding, such as testimonials or transformational stories shared on social media by clients, builds trust and loyalty (Seo and Park, 2018) and (Ladhari et al., 2017). An excellent example of this is Instagram, where a salon may create uplifting sentiments from storytelling and empathy-creating ties at self-care and well-being (Chen and Lin, 2015). Such emotional appeals through personalized posts and unique touchpoints will directly translate into forceful outputs in purchase intention regarding service.

Furthermore, symbolic benefits that enable consumers to project their identity or status are also essential in the beauty and wellness industries. This is further intensified by utilizing social media to target various lifestyle segments and sharing curated content that speaks to the values consumers appreciate (Cheung et al., 2019). Reference groups tend to influence sourcing on what is termed symbolic consumption since consumers are more inclined to favor brands that reflect their people's desirable image (Escalas and Bettman, 2005).

Social media is one way that salons can set a name for themselves, creating a more profound movement toward their consumers as identifying themselves by the picture and the values of the brand. Such benefits are those that spell community and belonging fostered by the brand, which is a powerful stimulant of loyalty and purchase behavior. Participation in brands' communities translates to an increased trust, loyalty, and purchase intention among customers (Schau et al., 2009) and (McAlexander et al., 2002). These social benefits are enhanced with customer interactions created by social networking and create a feeling of belongingness (Manzoor et al., 2020) and (Rafique Khattak et al., 2024). This model can be applied, for instance, by salons that would like to build a call on loyal customers through creating and nurturing such a community of active followers who have a connection with the brand.

Functional benefits such as perception of service quality will have a direct impact on the level of the customer's satisfaction and purchase intentions (Zeithaml, 1988) (Aaker, 1996). Such benefits are practical ones, including those services that come with the firm since they promise reliability and expertise through interesting content and influencers' campaigns (Pandey and Yadav, 2024) and (Ao et al., 2023). Practical benefits such as these can be used to further the value proposition of salons and, in so doing, improve perceptions held by consumers, which can directly boost their intentions to purchase.

Also the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are influenced by factors like attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Research by (Sanyal et al., 2014) on luxury brand consumption found that consumers perceive high-status brands as more socially desirable, which increases their likelihood of purchasing them to conform to social expectations

Purchase Intention

To make a purchase intention a likelihood from the consumer end, the brand's image, perceived value, and consumer trust come in as factors to be considered. The theoretical groundwork in the understanding of planned behavior as having a direct bearing on many of the thoughts on purchase intention was established during the early years by (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). (Dodds et al., 1991) studied another area in the relationship of price, perceived quality, and purchase intention. (Zhang et al., 2023) further explored how digital community platforms influence purchase intention.

(Zeithaml, 1988) indicates that perceived quality is also one of the main predictors of the purchase intention. Moreover, as pointed out from (Aaker, 1996) study, the contribution of perceived quality becomes highly significant in patronage for service-based industries. (Parasuraman et al., 1988) created SERVQUAL Model, remaining relevant to assessing service quality. (Zong et al., 2023) extended these findings to cultural contexts, underscoring its influence on consumer behavior in traditional industries.

According to (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), then, consumer-brand relationships are completely reliant on trust. (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) note that it is one of the determinants of loyalty and repeat purchases. (Zhang et al., 2023) demonstrate this in the use of direct social media engagement in broadening the concept of trust in the digital era. The study done by (Dodds et al., 1991) offers early findings on how perceived value affects purchases. (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) resulted in functional and emotional value measurement in purchases made by consumers. Developed by (Davis, 1989), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that two primary factors, such as perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, determine an individual's intention to use a technology. (Permatasari, 2024) explored how an Android-based digital system for salon and spa reservations enhances customer experience and satisfaction by streamlining the booking process and improving service accessibility.

(Venkatesh and Davis, 2000) suggested that purchase intention should be based on perceived social acceptance rather than on direct peer pressure. (Escalas and Bettman, 2008), conducted research whereby they investigated reference groups' effects on consumers' associations with brands. (Kapoor et al., 2017) stated how social influence was enhanced through growing micro-influencers or social media reviews. (Grazzini et al., 2021) found that consumers' implicit attitudes toward sustainable luxury brands, particularly those perceived as warm and socially responsible, positively influence purchase intentions by fostering trust and ethical alignment.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) is a new way for brands to interact with consumers through open, two-way channels that can influence purchase decisions. Emerging slowly through the BlogOn 2004 conference, SMM has evolved since, allowing companies to communicate with audiences in more personal and meaningful ways (Kelly et al., 2013). Because social media has become a major part of our everyday routines, researchers have begun to study how consumers interact with content, as well as the drivers behind their interactions (Bolton et al., 2013) and (Rosen et al., 2013). (Prakash et al., 2024) combined TAM and TPB to study the behavioral intentions of small and medium business entrepreneurs using social networking sites. Their research demonstrated that perceived usefulness, attitudes, and subjective norms significantly influence the intention to use social media platforms for business purposes.

According to (Kim and Ko, 2012), entertainment, interaction, trendiness, and customization were determined to be the main elements of effective SMM that help shape consumer perceptions and ultimately impact their decision-making (Jo, 2013). (Wirtz and Balzer, 2024) and (Bartoloni and Ancillai, 2023) question whether the SMM should be designed really around the needs of the consumer, based on the emotional involvement of consumers to obtain tangible results for brands.

SMM captures users thanks to emotion-driven and visually pleasing content, generating positive associations for brand loyalty (Zhu and Zhang, 2010) and (Manthiou et al., 2013). Hence, storytelling becomes crucial, as similar relatable stories would create a strong bond and convert passive followers to loyal customers (Machrafi and Charef, 2024). Social media enables two-way exchanges through user-generated content (UGC), from happy customer testimonials to comments, to build trust and a community around brands (Daugherty et al., 2008) and (Gallaughier and Ransbotham, 2010). (Wirtz and Balzer, 2024) highlight how occasions for meaningful engagement, such as timely responses to inquiries, convert incidental followers into advocates.

Consumers are attracted to brands that stay up-to-date, and those playing to the trends have their strength in building credibility through social media's real-time dimension (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). For salons, showing the trending hairstyles and joining seasonal campaigns will enhance visibility and tighten brand credibility (Machrafi and Charef, 2024) and (Bartoloni and Ancillai, 2023). Further, personalization, such as making content relevant to the target, reinforces customer loyalty by enhancing one's feeling of personal value about the interaction (Ding and Keh, 2016). (Banerji and Singh, 2024) argue

that personalized content reduces anxiety in decision-making, thereby enhancing trust and satisfaction.

Social media reduces uncertainty for consumers through transparency and open communication. Customer feedback and the resolution of frequently asked questions combined with real-time interactions foster trust while mitigating perceived risk (Bauer, 1960) (Sano, 2015). (Wirtz and Balzer, 2024) also state that consumer trust is built through the timely addressing of concerns, as well as through the use of behind-the-scenes content, and (Bartoloni and Ancillai, 2023) point out that authenticity is another key element of successful SMM campaigns to help decrease perceived risk and build stronger consumer relationships.

Customer Experience

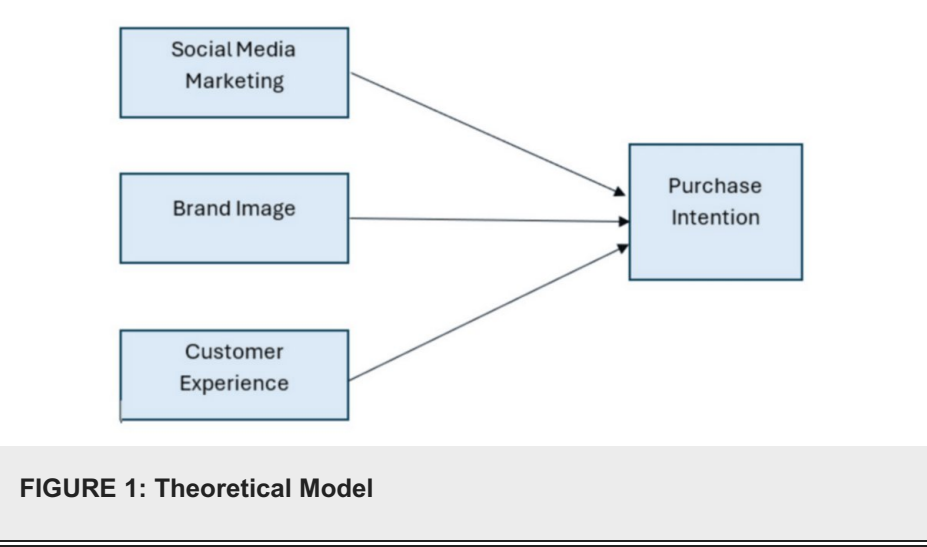
(Pine and Gilmore, 1998) discussed this notion when they defined experience as an economic offering, a means for companies to overcome extreme competition by providing memorable and meaningful interactions. These experiences stimulate the senses, evoke emotions, and challenge intellect, drawing in customers at a very human level (Schmitt, 2010). Today's consumers are not just interested in the product; they also look for the journey, the story, and the emotions spent in getting there (Holbrook, 2000). As (Berry et al., 2002) depict, brands now orchestrate a multitude of sensory and emotional "cues" to form such moments. Recently, research has intensified these arguments. (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020) claim that customer experience is about the entire journey that a customer has with a brand, the emotions that the customer feels, the thoughts that he or she processes, and the relations that he or she builds with the brand.

Schmitt explains that high-quality images, videos, and even snippets of sound attract the attention of users and develop an attachment that remains (Schmitt, 2010). Hultén observes that it is important to ensure all sensory experiences are consistent across all customer touchpoints, both online and offline (Hultén, 2011). In all senses, the eye is said to capture attention through sensory experiences. With experience online as the look and feel of a social media page or a physical store, sensory integration makes an impact customers will not soon forget.

Blogs create welcoming and emotionally loaded spaces that generate good moods and emotional ties with their audiences (Schmitt, 2010). Schmitt states that storytelling is one of the best ways to trigger emotions (Schmitt, 2011). When a brand shares relatable stories, it becomes more than just a company; it becomes a companion, a part of the customer's life. Building social ties is essential for cultivating loyalty (Hultén, 2011). When a social network page becomes a forum where people contribute their thoughts, ideas, and experiences, it moves beyond being just a marketing tool to a social hub.

Theoretical model

The theoretical model provided in Figure 1 plays a crucial role in explaining the relationship between brand image, customer experience, and purchase intention in the salon industry. It highlights the mediating effect of social media marketing as a key influence on consumer behavior. By integrating established theories such as the TAM or TPB, the model offers a structured framework to analyze how digital engagement enhances customer perception and loyalty. This model aids in guiding salon businesses in designing targeted marketing strategies to improve customer retention and satisfaction.



Research Method

Data collection and analysis

The structured questionnaire was developed from existing literature and practical experience to gather data directly from customers interacting with the salon's social media. We compiled a list of salons based on the number of establishments that have actively promoted their services on social media for a minimum of 1 year. A total of 500 survey questionnaires were administered to customers in Chennai city and its vicinity through in-person meetings. We excluded incomplete responses from the survey due to their insufficient validity to accurately represent the population, resulting in a total of 465 employee respondents. Ninety-three percent of the participants in the study responded. The data collection period spanned from September 2024 to November 2024.

Sample selection and sampling

Shops in key areas of Chennai were chosen based on their active social media advertising. We have identified 50 salon establishments situated in and around Chennai. This study considers customers who visited the shop after viewing its social media advertisement.

The number of customers visiting varied among shops based on their size and the availability of customers meeting the selection criteria. We distributed questionnaires to 500 customers who met our selection criteria and visited the salons. According to the Rao Soft online sample size calculator, a sample of 377 is required for the study. Consequently, the researcher opted for a sample size of 500, exceeding the minimum requirement. However, after correcting errors, the final sample size determined for this study is 465. This study employed G*Power to determine a sample size of 465 (tested predictors = 2, power = 0.80, $\alpha = 0.05$, and effect size = 0.03), which is sufficient for the sample size of this research (Faul et al., 2009). This study employs convenience and purposive sampling to gather data from accessible respondents.

Measurement

The questionnaire comprises two sections: Section I includes demographic variables, while Section II encompasses variables pertaining to brand image, purchase intention, social media marketing, and customer experience. Previously validated measurement items from the literature were employed with slight modifications to evaluate each variable. Brand image, purchase intention, social media marketing, and customer experience. Items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree."

The brand image scale is adapted with items from (Tsai, 2005) and (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) after changing in semantics that will have 14 items in total into an emotional experience, symbolic benefit, social benefit, and functional benefit.

Purchase intention scale was adopted and modified from (Wistedt, 2024) and (Wang, 2024). This scale has 15 items comprising dimensions of commitment, trust, perceived ease of use, and usefulness, as well as the outcome of purchase intentions.

The social media marketing scale was drawn from (Seo and Park, 2018) after modifying the semantics. The resulting modified scale was 11 items on entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customized, and risk perceived for measuring social media marketing.

The customer experience scale was adopted from (Chen and Lin, 2015). This scale has 10 items for measuring the experience customer level based on the dimensions: sense, think, feel, act, and relate.

Questionnaire face validity

The questionnaire was pre-tested in two stages. First, four academician and researchers reviewed the questionnaire content. They analyzed the questions, phrases, translation, and congruence with the study context. The procedure for such expert analysis followed the recommendation of (Okoli and Pawlowski, 2004) and (Worrell et al., 2013). Second, three saloon shop owners analyzed the second version of the questionnaire.

Reliability

The reliability assesses the consistency of the responses. This research utilized Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to measure consistency. The computed values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are more than 0.80. This shows that the respective constructs have high reliability. The results exhibit that all constructs account for more than 0.50, thus meeting the recommended standards.

Analytic technique

The study data has been analyzed utilizing statistical tools including descriptive statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), mean ranking, correlation, and regression via SPSS 29.

Results

The study reveals a number of key findings relating to the influence of digital content on customer perceptions and buying intentions in the salon industry. In terms of responses related to brand image, the highest mean attribute at 3.67 in Table 1 is that the digital content of the salon is not distressing, which reflects a positive and calming digital presence. Among other things, the salon's digital content, like promotional posts or service descriptions, does not confuse or disturb the audience; instead, it induces clarity and confidence.

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
The salon's digital content is pleasant to senses	465	1	5	3.07
The salon's digital product feels comfortable	465	1	5	3.43
There is no distress elicited by the salon's digital content	465	1	5	3.67
There is no boredom caused by the salon's digital content	465	1	5	3.04
Usage of the salon's service will indicate that I am a person with taste	465	1	5	3.42
Usage of the salon's service will prevent me from looking cheap	465	1	5	3.61
The salon's service enhances the perception that I have a desirable life style	465	1	5	3.65
The salon's service will help me to better fit into my social setting	465	1	5	3.46
The salon's service if used would create a favorable perception of me among other people	465	1	5	3.55
The salon's service has a positive social image	465	1	5	3.49
The salon provides service as it has promised	465	1	5	3.22
The salon is low in failure rate	465	1	5	3.05
The design of the salon makes it perform well in service	465	1	5	3.47
A speedy and competent service is provided by the salon	465	1	5	3.45
Valid N (listwise)	465			

TABLE 1: Mean Ranking: Brand Image

The highest-ranking attribute for responses related to social media marketing, with an average score of 3.79 in Table 2, is that the salon's digital product feels comfortable. This is indicative that the respondents generally agree that salons succeed in providing a web-based consumer experience that is intuitive and user-friendly.

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
The social media of the salon is enjoyable	465	1	5	2.65
The salon's digital product feels comfortable	465	1	5	3.79
Information sharing is possible in the social media of the salon	465	1	5	3.75
The expression of opinions is easy in the social media of the salon	465	1	5	3.61
The information shared in the social media of the salon is up to date	465	1	5	3.09
The use of social media by the salon is fashionable	465	1	5	3.11
The information that I need can be found in the social media of the salon	465	1	5	2.89
The social media of the salon alleviated my concern(s) regarding the salon's services	465	1	5	3.19
Valid N (listwise)	465			

TABLE 2: Mean Ranking: Social Media Marketing

For customer experience, the highest-rated attribute, with a mean score of 3.93 in Table 3, is that the customers value content that reminds them of available services that stimulate personal reflection of their relationship with beauty and self-care. Thus, making it highly meaningful to have thoughtful and engaging content that resonates with consumers.

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
The social media of the salon tries to engage my senses	465	1	5	2.65
Participation in the salon's social media is perceptually interesting	465	1	5	2.86
The social media of the salon tries to put me in a certain mood	465	1	5	2.82
The social media of the salon makes me respond in an emotional manner	465	1	5	2.71
The social media of the salon tries to intrigue me	465	1	5	2.84
The social media of the salon stimulates my curiosity	465	1	5	3.10
The social media of the salon tries to make me think about my lifestyle	465	1	5	3.23
The social media of the salon reminds me of services I can engage with	465	1	5	3.93
The social media of the salon tries to get me to think about my relationships with beauty and self-care	465	1	5	3.73
I can relate to other people through the salon's social media, such as sharing beauty tips and routines	465	1	5	3.01
Valid N (listwise)	465			

TABLE 3: Mean Ranking: Customer Experience

With respect to purchase intention, the highest rated element, with an average of 3.60 in Table 4, is "the salon's digital content is useful in understanding services and making bookings." This provides evidence that the respondents highly regard the functional value that digital content provides in facilitating service selection and booking.

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
If I were going to use salon services, I would consider engaging with the salon's digital platform	465	1	5	3.08
I would consider using the salon's digital content for my beauty needs	465	1	5	2.78
The probability that I would consider using the salon's digital content is high	465	1	5	2.68
I am willing to support the salon's success by using their digital content	465	1	5	3.09
I think the salon's digital content would be among the best to use	465	1	5	2.62
I believe the salon understands the needs of its digital audience	465	1	5	3.38
I believe the salon knows a lot about beauty services and content	465	1	5	3.55
I believe the salon's digital content is reliable and accurate	465	1	5	3.33
It is easy to interact with the salon's digital platform	465	1	5	3.54
My interaction with the salon's digital content is clear and understandable	465	1	5	3.23
The salon's digital content is useful for learning about services and booking appointments	465	1	5	3.60
The salon's digital content improves my experience with beauty service selection	465	1	5	3.50
Valid N (listwise)	465			

TABLE 4: Mean Ranking: Purchase Intention

ANOVA found statistically significant results ($p \leq 0.05$) between gender and purchase intentions in Table 5, indicating that perceptions of digitally engaging content from salons differ markedly between men and women. Consequently, salons are to make changes to their digital content strategies if they are going with perceptions held in a gender-specific way, thus enhancing engagement and satisfaction.

The statements that showed no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in Table 5 indicate that both men and women perceive the salon's digital content in a similar way. There is no need to tailor messages differently when promoting reliability, accuracy, or support for the salon via digital content, as these aspects of digital engagement are not gender-dependent.

		F	Sig.
If I were going to use salon services, I would consider engaging with the salon's digital platform	Between Groups	4.805	.009
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I would consider using the salon's digital content for my beauty needs	Between Groups	5.430	.005
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The probability that I would consider using the salon's digital content is high	Between Groups	4.478	.012
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I am willing to support the salon's success by using their digital content	Between Groups	2.697	.068
	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	9.619	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

I think the salon's digital content would be among the best to use	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	5.255	.006
I believe the salon understands the needs of its digital audience	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	11.976	.000
I believe the salon knows a lot about beauty services and content	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	1.114	.329
I believe the salon's digital content is reliable and accurate	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	8.886	.000
It is easy to interact with the salon's digital platform	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	2.915	.055
My interaction with the salon's digital content is clear and understandable	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	39.658	.000
The salon's digital content is useful for learning about services and booking appointments	Within Groups		
	Total		
	Between Groups	10.866	.000
The salon's digital content improves my experience with beauty service selection	Within Groups		
	Total		

TABLE 5: ANOVA: Gender and Purchase Intention
ANOVA, Analysis of Variance

Further differences existed between age groups and intention to purchase ($p < 0.05$) in Table 6, suggesting age influences one's engagement with the salon's online presence. The youth are thought to be more consumed in social media marketing and more intentional in making purchases due to that. In contrast, older groups might look closely into trust-building content and clarity of value propositions before arriving at the purchase decision. Salons can tailor their campaigns better by sorting the audience as per age and giving trend-driven interactive content for the young consumers and informative, reliability-driven content for older customers.

For statements that show no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in Table 6 in how different age groups consider using the salon's digital content, this suggests that age is not a major factor influencing whether people will use the salon's digital content. Given that consideration of this, salons do not need to create highly age-specific campaigns to encourage consideration of their digital content.

If I were going to use salon services, I would consider engaging with the salon's digital platform			
		F	Sig.
	Between Groups	8.504	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

I would consider using the salon's digital content for my beauty needs	Between Groups	2.615	.035
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The probability that I would consider using the salon's digital content is high	Between Groups	1.987	.095
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I am willing to support the salon's success by using their digital content	Between Groups	3.023	.018
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I think the salon's digital content would be among the best to use	Between Groups	27.889	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I believe the salon understands the needs of its digital audience	Between Groups	5.669	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I believe the salon knows a lot about beauty services and content	Between Groups	4.335	.002
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I believe the salon's digital content is reliable and accurate	Between Groups	24.079	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
It is easy to interact with the salon's digital platform	Between Groups	6.405	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
My interaction with the salon's digital content is clear and understandable	Between Groups	4.687	.001
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The salon's digital content is useful for learning about services and booking appointments	Between Groups	3.732	.005
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The salon's digital content improves my experience with beauty service selection	Between Groups	7.284	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

TABLE 6: ANOVA: Age and Purchase Intention

ANOVA, Analysis of Variance

There existed significant differences between the genders ($p < 0.05$) and customer experience in Table 7, establishing that men and women might have different expectations from digital engagement. Women tend to focus more on aesthetic appeal and brand trust, while men prefer functional and efficient services. According to this, while creating digital marketing campaigns, salons should focus on creating gender-sensitive campaigns, as they will help drive purchase patterns among these groups.

The statements that are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) in Table 7 imply that gender does not have a strong influence on customer experience in those aspects, as the salon’s social media strategy is equally engaging, mood-influencing, and emotionally stimulating for both male and female customers.

		F	Sig.
The social media of the salon tries to engage my senses	Between Groups	6.541	.002
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Participation in the salon's social media is perceptually interesting	Between Groups	.236	.790
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to put me in a certain mood	Between Groups	2.748	.065
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon makes me respond in an emotional manner	Between Groups	2.909	.056
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to intrigue me	Between Groups	5.262	.005
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to make me think about my lifestyle	Between Groups	31.662	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon reminds me of services I can engage with	Between Groups	46.665	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to get me to think about my relationships with beauty and self-care	Between Groups	15.124	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I can relate to other people through the salon's social media, such as sharing beauty tips and routines	Between Groups	10.512	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

TABLE 7: ANOVA: Gender and Customer Experience

ANOVA, Analysis of Variance

Customer experience perception further differed among age categories ($p < 0.05$) in Table 8, implying that expectations and responses to digital content are different. Younger audiences possibly value interactive and visually pleasing content, while older audiences may attach more value to reliability and ease of access. For optimum inclusion, salons should tailor digital content according to the preferences of each age group.

		F	Sig.
The social media of the salon tries to engage my senses	Between Groups	37.050	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
Participation in the salon's social media is perceptually interesting	Between Groups	60.504	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to put me in a certain mood	Between Groups	7.869	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon makes me respond in an emotional manner	Between Groups	10.162	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to intrigue me	Between Groups	17.861	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon stimulates my curiosity	Between Groups	9.378	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to make me think about my lifestyle	Between Groups	9.796	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon reminds me of services I can engage with	Between Groups	5.936	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
The social media of the salon tries to get me to think about my relationships with beauty and self-care	Between Groups	9.235	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		
I can relate to other people through the salon's social media, such as sharing beauty tips and routines	Between Groups	12.701	.000
	Within Groups		
	Total		

TABLE 8: ANOVA: Age and Customer Experience

ANOVA, Analysis of Variance

The regression analysis found that social media marketing activities explain 28.7% of the variance of purchase intention, as mentioned in Table 9; it indicates that this is a moderate effect.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics
					R ² Change
1	.536 ^a	.287	.231	2.74762	.287
a. Predictors: (Constant)					

TABLE 9: Regression: Purchase Intention and Social Media Marketing

However, customer experience could explain 82.8% of the variation in Table 10, which shows that this factor is crucial in determining purchase intentions within the beauty salon industry.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics
					R ² Change
1	.910 ^a	.828	.825	2.30397	.828

TABLE 10: Regression: Purchase Intention and Customer Experience

With the highest significance value of 88.1% variance in Table 11, it therefore concludes that brand image is the strongest predictor of purchase intention. A positive brand image will boost consumer purchases. This leads to the conclusion that in the salon industry, firms should provide a service of quality to instill confidence and assurance in consumers by minimizing error in any operations and frequently showcasing their expertise through an excellent social media presence that will build an unquestionable level of confidence with consumers and drive purchase intentions upward.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics
					R ² Change
1	.939 ^a	.881	.878	1.92479	.881

TABLE 11: Regression: Purchase Intention and Brand Image

Discussion

The results of the study present significant new data concerning the variables influencing consumer intentions to buy and attitudes in the salon industry. In line with the mean ranking study, the ability of the salon to provide a social media marketing service is the most valued attribute. Good online experience, with an average rating of 3.79, supports the notion that consumers enjoy a simple digital platform to navigate, which encourages greater involvement within the platform and ease of use. (Hollebeek and Macky, 2022) also found that digital content marketing fosters consumer engagement, trust, and value, emphasizing the role of an intuitive and user-friendly interface in enhancing customer experience. Furthermore, content that encourages reflection on one's attractiveness and self-care is the most highly rated attribute in terms of customer experience, with a mean score of 3.93. This highlights the importance of creating intelligent, engaging content that emotionally resonates with customers, a sentiment reinforced by (Rigby and Lee, 2024), who emphasize the role of emotional resonance in digital advertising.

With a mean score of 3.67 for brand image, the non-distressing nature of the salon's online content is the most highly valued feature. Respondents noted that the salon's online presence is clear, cheerful, and reassuring (Table 12). This supports (Thakur and John, 2024), who state that a comforting brand image

fosters customer engagement and builds cognitive and behavioral trust. The ability of the salon's digital content to make treatment selection and booking easier is the most valued feature, with a mean score of 3.60 for purchase intention. (Zia et al., 2024) emphasize that brand trust and digital media have a major influence on consumers' intentions to buy, which is consistent with the results of this study regarding the practical utility of digital platforms.

ANOVA analysis ($p < 0.05$) reveals significant differences in purchase intention between gender groups. This suggests that men and women may have different expectations when engaging with digital content. Women, for instance, may be more focused on aesthetics and brand reputation, whereas men may prioritize efficiency and functionality, as suggested by (Dittmar et al., 2007), who found that self-discrepancies influence gender-specific motives in consumer behavior. Additionally, significant age-group disparities in purchase intention were noted ($p < 0.05$), indicating the necessity of audience segmentation. While older consumers may prioritize informational and trust-building content, younger consumers, who are more accustomed to digital platforms, tend to favor interactive and trend-driven content. (Bolton et al., 2013) similarly noted generational differences in digital engagement, suggesting that businesses must tailor their online strategies to different age demographics. Furthermore, the ANOVA analysis reveals substantial differences in customer experience between age groups ($p < 0.05$), highlighting that younger consumers prefer dynamic and visually engaging content, whereas older consumers value reliability and accessibility, as supported by (Gursoy et al., 2013). Gender differences in customer experience ($p < 0.05$) also show that women are more concerned with aesthetics and trust in the brand, whereas men are concerned with functionality and efficiency. This supports the importance of gender-sensitive marketing strategies, as argued by (Wolin, 2003), who highlighted gender-specific preferences in advertising effectiveness.

Regression analysis is also used to validate these findings. Social media marketing accounts for 28.7% of the variance in purchase intention. This suggests that while social media marketing has a big impact on consumers, it is still only one factor that influences their behavior (Hollebeek and Macky, 2022). A total of 82.8% of the variance in purchasing behavior can be attributed to customer experience. With 88.1% of the variation in purchase intention explained by brand image, it is the strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of a strong, positive brand image in shaping consumer behavior. These findings suggest that in order to achieve the highest purchase intentions, salons should strategically use social media marketing to engage and interact with their target market while concentrating on enhanced customer experience and brand reputation.

Conclusions

This research offers actionable insights for salon proprietors and digital marketers by converting theoretical frameworks into pragmatic strategies. The research indicates that brand image is the predominant factor, contributing 88.1% to the variance in purchase intention, followed by customer experience at 82.8%, and social media marketing at 28.7%. These findings underscore the necessity for salons to develop a robust, trustworthy, and emotionally resonant brand identity.

To stimulate purchase intentions, salons must synchronize their social media communications with their brand values while improving customer experience through digital engagement tools, including virtual consultations, behind-the-scenes content, testimonials, and booking platforms. Emotional engagement can be enhanced through storytelling components such as transformation narratives and commemorative milestones.

Moreover, strategic personalization informed by demographic insights-such as content preferences based on gender-can enhance relevance and attractiveness. Highlighting symbolic attributes such as sustainability, authenticity, and style alignment further strengthens brand resonance, especially among image-conscious consumer demographics.

In summary, the amalgamation of brand authenticity, digital content strategy, and customer experience cultivates customer trust, loyalty, and purchase intention. These findings provide a framework for salons to cultivate enduring customer relationships by integrating emotional engagement with data-informed decision-making. Future research may broaden the study's scope to various geographies and integrate longitudinal designs to examine changing consumer dynamics.

Limitations

Since participants were selected based on accessibility, the results may not accurately reflect the wide variety of salon patrons. This restriction raises the possibility that the findings do not accurately reflect the experiences of clients from various geographic or cultural backgrounds. This study was focused on the salon industry. Thus, the conclusions reached might not be as relevant to businesses like retail or even technology, wherein customer experiences and purchasing decisions are altered by entirely other factors, though it is very relevant to service-driven companies. Another limitation of the research is that it studied

only a few variables like brand image, customer experience, and social media marketing. These omissions enable further study of other aspects of consumer decision-making.

Future research agenda

With consumers from various geographic locations and cultural backgrounds, the viewpoint of these consumers might vary depending upon these factors; due to this, future research might strive for a more representative and varied sample. This would increase the findings' generalizability and validate them. Other variables might be included in future studies, which can affect buying decisions, like cultural preferences, emotional branding, or trust. With the help of these enhancements, a more thorough understanding of the factors influencing consumer decisions can be produced in the future.

Appendices

Section I

1. Age:

- 18-24
- 25-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- >55

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other

Section II

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
3. The salon's digital content is pleasant to senses					
4. The salon's digital product feels comfortable					
5. There is no distress elicited by the salon's digital content					
6. There is no boredom caused by the salon's digital content					
7. Usage of the salon's service will indicate that I am a person with taste					
8. Usage of the salon's service will prevent me from looking cheap					
9. The salon's service enhances the perception that I have a desirable life style					
10. The salon's service will help me to better fit into my social setting					
11. The salon's service if used would create a favorable perception of me among other people					
12. The salon's service has a positive social image					
13. The salon provides service as it has promised					
14. The salon is low in failure rate					
15. The design of the salon makes it perform well in service					
16. A speedy and competent service is provided by the salon					

17. The social media of the salon is enjoyable					
18. Information sharing is possible in the social media of the salon					
19. The expression of opinions is easy in the social media of the salon					
20. The information shared in the social media of the salon is up to date					
21. The use of social media by the salon is fashionable					
22. The information that I need can be found in the social media of the salon					
23. The social media of the salon alleviated my concern(s) regarding the salon's services					
24. The social media of the salon tries to engage my senses					
25. Participation in the salon's social media is perceptually interesting					
26. The social media of the salon tries to put me in a certain mood					
27. The social media of the salon makes me respond in an emotional manner					
28. The social media of the salon tries to intrigue me					
29. The social media of the salon stimulates my curiosity					
30. The social media of the salon tries to make me think about my lifestyle					
31. The social media of the salon reminds me of services I can engage with					
32. The social media of the salon tries to get me to think about my relationships with beauty and self-care					
33. I can relate to other people through the salon's social media, such as sharing beauty tips and routines					
34. If I were going to use salon services, I would consider engaging with the salon's digital platform					
35. I would consider using the salon's digital content for my beauty needs					
36. The probability that I would consider using the salon's digital content is high					
37. I am willing to support the salon's success by using their digital content					
38. I think the salon's digital content would be among the best to use					
39. I believe the salon understands the needs of its digital audience					
40. I believe the salon knows a lot about beauty services and content					
41. I believe the salon's digital content is reliable and accurate					
42. It is easy to interact with the salon's digital platform					
43. My interaction with the salon's digital content is clear and understandable					
44. The salon's digital content is useful for learning about services and booking appointments					
45. The salon's digital content improves my experience with beauty service selection					

TABLE 12: Questionnaire

Additional Information

Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Concept and design: Keerthana Venkatesan, Heavena Amirdaa, Rahul B. Casmier, Sethupathy K.

Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data: Keerthana Venkatesan, Heavena Amirdaa, Rahul B.

Casmier, Sethupathy K.

Drafting of the manuscript: Keerthana Venkatesan, Heavena Amirdaa, Rahul B. Casmier, Sethupathy K.

Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Keerthana Venkatesan, Heavena Amirdaa, Rahul B. Casmier, Sethupathy K.

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Human subjects: Consent was obtained or waived by all participants in this study. **Animal subjects:** All authors have confirmed that this study did not involve animal subjects or tissue. **Conflicts of interest:** In compliance with the ICMJE uniform disclosure form, all authors declare the following: **Payment/services info:** All authors have declared that no financial support was received from any organization for the submitted work. **Financial relationships:** All authors have declared that they have no financial relationships at present or within the previous three years with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work. **Other relationships:** All authors have declared that there are no other relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

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