Introduction

There has been a remarkable outburst in social media usage in the past decade. Social media platforms are increasingly growing as developers come up with better applications and new features. Consequently, the adoption of such platforms is growing. Such fast adoption is evidenced by the growing number of users in various social media networks ranging from social media platforms such as Twitter, Snapchat and Facebook. The trend is especially noticeable among tech-savvy teenagers who are among the first people to know of new emerging platforms. Evidently, social media and other applications of web 2.0 have had tremendous influence on people's lives. The world has progressively been transformed into a global village where trans-continental communication is ubiquitous. Consequently, sharing of ideas, cultural exchange among other factors is faster and easier. The use and consequent impacts of social media in spending habits is a particularly critical area in understanding consumer behavior. By understanding social media usage and preferences for particular goods, organizational marketers can develop strategies for product positioning. In addition, such knowledge is of fundamental importance when it comes down to development of social media marketing campaigns. Thus, it is imperative for marketers to understand the use of social media among teenagers who comprise a higher fraction of social media users globally. Failure to understand the consumer behavior can present great marketing challenges.

Objectives of the study

Primary Objectives

1. To investigate use of social media and its implications on spending habits of teenagers when purchasing fashion products.
2. To explore the primary trends/major themes associated with discussing influence of social media on consumer spending.
3. To classify social media as a significant influential factor on teenage fashion.

Specific objectives

1. To analyze the profiles of teenagers/consumers.
2. To classify fashion products depending on the number of purchases made by teenagers. The following research questions were formulated to achieve the research aims mentioned above.
3. To identify the influence index of social media, as a marketing platform, on teenage fashion.

Research Questions

- How specifically does social media usage affect the spending habits of high school teenagers?
- What are the common features/ characteristics or attributes of consumers who are influenced by similar social media platforms?
- How can fashion products be classified on the basis of searches or purchases made?
- To what extent does social media, as a dominant marketing platform affect consumer spending?

Significance of study

Understanding consumer behavior is a strategic activity that can be applied in the overall improvement of the organization's marketing approach. As such, understanding the implications of social media in spending habits of teenage shoppers of fashion products can be of help to marketing strategists around the target region. Moreover, the findings of the study could be generalized to apply to a wider population. Nonetheless, if the generalizability of the findings generated from the study is questionable, the researcher will propose

future research areas for studying.

Scope of the study

The aim of the study is as stipulated earlier. The study setting will be 3 high schools located in an urban setting, preferably Boston. The study will be conducted for a period of 6 months starting from May 2017 to November 2017.

Literature Review

Social media plays major roles in the lives of teenagers as it is a key communication platform. Through social media, many people are able to connect remotely and share life experiences and spending views. In the current world, many marketers and business owners have turned to social media as their brand awareness platform to showcase their products to their customers of interest. In fashion industry, marketers rely on the customer retention through promotion of classic items to a wide range of persons. In the United States, use of the Internet is very frequent especially amongst the teenage groups, and hence sharing of products is highly convenient. Research has identified digital behavior, or the use of Internet, as an influential factor on consumer behavior and expectations (Fardouly et al., 2015). The consumer expectations tend to be evolving at a rapid rate and fashion designers and marketers have to identify with the most convenient way to get access to potential customers. In the real essence, every marketer seeks to satisfy the needs of the current customers for retention whereas at the same time attracting new customers through presentation of products (Fardouly et al., 2015; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

The Internet has brought about what is referred to as digital influence in consumer behaviors. This entails the ease of access to social media and the use of social media as a marketing platform. The teenage group of consumers entails peer groups that pose influence on major spending activities, whereby the schools are characterized by virtual fashion shows, especially with the teenage girls. In the high school experience, every student wants to look good in front of his/her peers and that plays great roles in the use of social media in promoting fashion (Fardouly et al., 2015). Basically, almost every high school teenager in the United States operates a social media account, including Facebook, WhatsApp, MySpace, Yahoo, Google+, Twitter, etc. The social media platforms facilitate the sharing of experiences through personal photos that are highly based on fashion competitiveness amongst the teen group (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015).

The use of digital ads by fashion marketers creates a big opportunity for the populations to view and share the products before actual purchase, which tends to influence the spending habits during the actual purchase (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Teenagers and other consumer groups have turned to social media for fashion inspiration and digital purchase of these products. In the digital platforms created through social media, the consumer is able to access and view diverse products before the actual purchase of the products. Peer influence plays significant roles in the sharing of fashion products and product referrals that influence the spending habits.

Fashion tastes and preferences are based on an individual's perception of body image. Additionally, they form the primary basis for spending behavior. According to research in the use of social media, it has been identified that customers who use these platforms during their shopping experiences are likely to spend more than those who do not. According to research, 68% of American teenagers use Facebook as their primary social networking platform and teenagers are highly vulnerable in terms of self-development and they are faced by decision making challenges when it comes to fashion spending, especially for the young women adolescents (Perloff, 2014).

Conceptually, images act as intensive expressions of self-confidence and self-management especially if they are personalized. In the social media platforms, teenagers are able to share photos of themselves and events characterized by fashion designs, which influences the fashion trends of the peer groups. Fashion is an industry of competition as it is considered as a major representation of one's taste and actually affects the confidence in the presence of peers (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

Globally, social media has become a major interconnection platform for fashion designers, marketers, and the end-users based on the inspiration for designs and fashion trends. Teenagers spend significant amount of time in social media, viewing and sharing the current trends in fashion news, or other trending news. In real essence, the fashion industry is one of the most trending industries in the social media platforms, and hence most of the Internet users who have social media accounts are able to connect with the fashion industry as a digital industry. In the United States, most of the teenagers have access to smartphones, laptops, iPads, tablets, desktop computers, and other Internet access devices. More than 70% of the American teenagers have access to smartphones and use it as a primary Internet access tool, whereby most of the Internet-using teens have social media accounts (Fardouly et al., 2015).

The use of social media as a fashion platform allows teenagers to seek attention through criticism and praise of their fashion, especially from their local and global peers (Perloff, 2014). Social media has created major shifts in the fashion industry through influence on the consumer behaviors and the creation of a close contact between the fashion designers, marketers, and their customers. Social media has natural interactive characteristics that allow the consumers to be part of the fashion making process through online access to fashion products and the actual purchase that satisfies taste (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). The digitization of the fashion industry presents a great opportunity for the classification of fashion products based on the number of purchases or the access level. Therefore, social media has significant influence on the teenage spending patterns on fashion products.

Project Description

Design

The cross-sectional research design will be used to answer the research question. Due to the nature of the research variables, the researcher targets to collect nominal data and numerical data covering such areas as frequency of using articular platforms among others. As such, the qualitative and quantitative research approaches will be applied. The researcher preferred the cross-sectional research design as he aims to collect specific sets of information from groups of respondents with similar attributes. Moreover, the participants originate from three study settings spread across Boston Metro area. The effectiveness of cross-sectional study design in such settings as the one targeted by the researcher has been explored by Sedgewick (2014). The guiding paradigm will be the constructivist paradigm. Its assumptions will equally be adopted.

A paradigm is a way of thinking which is based on a specific set of assumptions. Adopting and observing a paradigm forms the basis of theoretical framework applied in research (Weaver & Oslon, 2006). The research setting is Boston metro area, Massachusetts. The researcher intends to identify prospective schools that are located in the area of interest. Although the area contains numerous schools that can be potential target areas for research, the researcher is limited by time and resources. As such his target is three schools with high population and a diversity of people, covering respondents from different backgrounds, ethnicities and racial orientations. Afterwards, the researcher will seek permission from the appropriate authorities before going forth with data collection.

Target population, Sampling and Data collection

According to the design of the study, the researcher targets between 250 and 300 high school teenagers aged between 16 and 19 years. Although the researcher does not apply any formal methods of sample size calculation, he feels that the sample of between 250 and 300 participants will be sufficient for representing the general population of high school students around Boston. Nonetheless, he is limited by constraints of time and resources, especially because this is an academic non-funded research. Simple random sampling, a probability sampling method, will be used to recruit participants of the study. Simple random sampling is best suited because the participants have similar characteristics that are considered for eligibility. That is, many students are users of social media platforms, are aged 16-19yrs, come from different backgrounds and genders as well as have different preferences of fashion products.

An invalidated questionnaire will be used to collect the primary data required for the study. The researcher will develop a questionnaire and will test it through a pilot study comprising of approximately 20 high school teenagers. It will comprise of 15-20 simple, clearly spelled out and brief questions covering the topics of social media preference, fashion preference, social media use involving frequency of using particular platforms on daily or monthly basis. Statistical methods will be used to analyze numerical data whereas thematic analysis will be applied to analyze the nominal data.

Expected Learning Outcomes

By completing the research project, the researcher aims at having grasped a deeper understanding of proposal writing and project execution. In addition, the researcher will understand the basics of proposal writing for future purposes of grants proposal writing. Moreover, he will learn how to identify relevant sources of information how to synthesize these and critically evaluate similarities or common themes to support his point of view. Also, he will develop the much required technical writing skills for drafting of high quality proposals. Again, successful completion of the project will shed light into project planning, execution, management and such critical skills required in the business niche.

Besides these basic learning outcomes, the researcher aims at gathering data that will assist in answering the research question. Specifically, he intends to realize the factors that link social media use and spending habits, ranging from social media marketing, influence from social media friends and such implications. Moreover, the researcher expects that social media usage propagates information dissemination so that teenagers access information about new brands, designs, trendy clothing styles, hair styles and such fashion-related data. More importantly, it is irrefutable that social media has resulted in increased connectivity where teenagers can connect with their peers and influential celebrities whose dressing styles and fashion choices have profound implications on a teenager's fashion preferences.

Structure of the project and execution schedule

The project is structured in several phases which started with identification of study topic and development of researcher proposal. The proposal is then to be presented for approval after which the study will commence with the development of the questionnaire and carrying out the pilot study. Afterwards, other phases comprising of secondary data collection/ sources identification and collection; primary data collection in the field; data analysis and presentation; compilation; documentation of research report and finally report presentation will be done. The following work plan shows the proposed timelines for each activity.

Identification of research topic; identifying secondary data sources; Drafting and writing a proposal	May-June	June-Sept	October	November
Obtaining approval to conduct the study (from University)				
Passing gatekeepers (Parents, School heads)				
Testing of data collection instrument/ fine-tuning questionnaire	■	■		
Data collection		■	■	
Data presentation and analysis.			■	
Writing the research report			■	■
Project presentation				

Criteria proposed to check results

An audit trail will be used to evaluate whether all processes were conducted as per the outlined procedures. The results generated from the pilot study could be correlated with data generated from various participants to check validity and reliability. Equally, responses from different respondents can be compared through correlation.