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The Power of Reactions: Emotional and Content Cues in Fashion Brand Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the determinants of consumer engagement with fashion brands on social media, focusing on U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans. Using a quantitative explanatory design and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the research examines how post type, post hours, workdays, positive reactions, and negative reactions influence engagement, measured through likes, comments, and shares. The findings demonstrate that content-related and emotional factors play a decisive role in shaping user interaction, while temporal dimensions have little or no effect. Among the predictors, post type shows a significant positive influence, with vivid and visual formats such as photos and videos outperforming plain text or external links. Positive reactions, including “like,” “love,” “wow,” and “haha,” strongly enhance engagement by reinforcing user approval and improving the visibility of brand-related posts. In contrast, negative reactions such as “angry” and “sad” reduce engagement, suggesting that unfavorable emotions discourage further interaction even if they initially capture attention. The results also confirm that posting hours and weekdays do not significantly impact engagement, indicating that scheduling strategies are less relevant in the current algorithm-driven environment where content quality dominates user reach. This research contributes to the literature by integrating content, emotional, and temporal variables into a single framework and applying it to the fashion retail sector in an emerging market context. It also offers practical implications for brand managers, emphasizing the need to prioritize creative, visual-first communication and strategies that evoke positive emotions to maximize engagement on social media platforms.

Keywords: Social media engagement; Fashion brands; Post type; Emotional reactions.

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the way brands interact with consumers, particularly in the fashion industry where visual appeal and emotional resonance play a decisive role. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram provide fashion brands an opportunity to engage directly with customers, enhance brand visibility, and build long-term relationships. Engagement on these platforms is typically reflected through measurable actions such as likes, shares, comments, and reactions, which not only signal consumer interest but also determine the reach and visibility of posts in algorithm-driven feeds. Consequently, understanding the factors that drive engagement has become a critical concern for marketers and brand managers seeking to strengthen digital presence and competitiveness.

Existing literature has emphasized the role of content design, vividness, and emotional reactions in shaping consumer engagement. Studies have shown that photo-based content often generates more interactions than videos (Barger & Childkorn, 2014; Sabate et al., 2014), while posts with medium vividness, such as a combination of text and visuals, perform better than either plain text or highly vivid video formats (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Emotional cues are equally important, with positive reactions like “love” or “wow” enhancing engagement (Vish et al., 2015; Ceesay et al., 2017), whereas negative reactions such as “angry” or “sad” may dampen likes and shares (Schultz, 2017). At the same

time, temporal factors such as posting hours and weekdays have produced mixed or negligible effects (Sabate et al., 2014; Kumar, 2015), raising questions about whether timing strategies still matter in the current algorithm-driven context.

Despite these insights, there remains limited integrated research that simultaneously evaluates **content type, temporal factors, and emotional reactions** within the fashion retail sector, particularly in emerging markets such as India. Global brands like **U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans** are highly popular among young consumers and rely extensively on social media for customer engagement, yet academic evidence on how their engagement is shaped by different post attributes is scarce. Addressing this gap, the present study develops and tests a research model that examines the influence of **Post Type, Post Hours, Workdays, Positive Reactions, and Negative Reactions** on **Engagement**, thereby contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for digital branding in the fashion industry.

In line with these considerations, the study adopts a quantitative and explanatory design, using structural equation modelling (SEM) to validate the hypothesized relationships. By analyzing social media interactions with U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans, the research not only extends existing knowledge on engagement drivers but also provides evidence from the fashion retail context in India. The findings are expected to guide brand managers in crafting more effective social media strategies, while also offering theoretical contributions by clarifying the relative importance of content design, emotional reactions, and temporal factors in shaping digital engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Post Type and Vividness of Content

A substantial body of research has emphasized that the **type and vividness of posts** significantly influence consumer engagement on social media. **Barger and Childkorn (2014)** and **Sabate et al. (2014)** found that photo-based content attracts more engagement than video content, challenging the common assumption that videos are inherently superior. Similarly, **Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013)** argued that posts with a medium level of vividness, such as a combination of photos and status updates, receive higher engagement compared to either plain photos or video-heavy formats.

Expanding on this perspective, **Chahal and Bansal (2015)** highlighted that vivid and visually enriched posts are more effective in driving user activity, including likes, shares, and comments. **Vish et al. (2015)** reinforced these findings by showing that vividness increases the likelihood of clicking the “like” button, establishing a direct link between visual richness and positive user behavior. Furthermore, **Ceesay et al. (2017)** demonstrated that images foster more favorable attitudes toward a brand’s Facebook page than plain text or external links. However, vividness also shows complexity; **Schultz (2017)** found that while vivid content boosts likes and shares, it can have a negative effect on comments, suggesting that rich visuals may satisfy users without prompting deeper discussions. **Derison et al. (2016)** advanced this argument by proposing that an **optimum level of vividness** exists, where engagement is maximized, while over-saturation with videos may not guarantee higher interaction.

Together, these studies affirm that **Post Type**—particularly image-rich or balanced content—serves as a critical determinant of engagement, aligning with the proposed path in the research model.

2.2 Temporal Dimensions: Post Hours and Workdays

The role of timing in driving engagement has been studied with mixed outcomes. **Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013)** noted that posting during **peak activity hours** has a measurable effect on engagement, suggesting that content visibility aligns with audience availability. In contrast, **Sabate et al. (2014)** and **Kumar (2015)** found that **day-of-week (workdays vs. weekends)** had little or no impact on engagement. This indicates that while momentary posting windows may provide a tactical advantage, broader temporal patterns such as weekdays versus weekends may be less influential in the context of algorithm-driven feeds.

In line with these findings, the current study considers **Post Hours** and **Workdays** as independent constructs but anticipates their overall influence to be weaker compared to emotional and content-related factors.

2.3 Positive Emotional Reactions

Emotional responses represent a powerful determinant of social media engagement. **Vish et al. (2015)** found that positive emotions associated with vivid content encourage higher use of the “like” button, reinforcing the role of affect in user behavior. **Ceesay et al. (2017)** further demonstrated that the inclusion of images generates favorable attitudes, indirectly fueling more likes, shares, and visibility. Similarly, **Schultz (2017)** reported that vividness positively influences likes and shares, showing that **positive emotional cues embedded in visual content amplify engagement levels**.

These findings support the idea that **Positive Reactions** such as “love,” “haha,” and “wow” extend beyond symbolic gestures to enhance reach, strengthen brand-user ties, and contribute to viral effects in digital ecosystems.

2.4 Negative Emotional Reactions

Unlike positive cues, negative emotional responses show a more complex pattern. **Schultz (2017)** observed that while vividness can increase likes and shares, it also correlates with negative reactions that suppress comments. This aligns with the idea that negative emotions (e.g., “angry” or “sad”) may attract attention but discourage further engagement such as sharing or liking. Prior studies suggest that although such reactions highlight user dissatisfaction, they are less likely to translate into constructive interaction and may even harm brand visibility. Thus, the current study treats Negative Reactions as an important predictor but anticipates a negative or mixed effect on overall engagement, consistent with the literature.

2.5 Research Gap

Although prior studies have examined the role of content vividness, post formats, and emotional reactions in influencing engagement on social media (Barger & Childkorn, 2014; Sabate et al., 2014; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Schultz, 2017), the literature remains fragmented in several ways. First, existing research offers mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of videos versus photos, with some studies emphasizing photos as superior while others advocate for higher vividness. Second, temporal dimensions such as posting hours and workdays have received limited attention, and the few available studies report inconsistent or negligible effects, leaving uncertainty about their true relevance in the algorithm-driven environment. Third, while emotional reactions have been studied broadly, the differential impact of **positive versus negative responses** on engagement outcomes has not been systematically analyzed within a single framework. Finally, limited empirical work has focused on the **fashion retail context**, particularly in emerging markets such as India, where global brands like U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans are actively shaping consumer interaction patterns. Addressing these gaps, the present study integrates content, temporal, and emotional dimensions into a unified research model, offering a comprehensive explanation of engagement dynamics in the fashion brand domain.

“In view of these gaps, the present study aims to examine the effect of post type, post hours, workdays, positive reactions, and negative reactions on consumer engagement with fashion brands on social media.”

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **quantitative and casual research design**, using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach to investigate the determinants of consumer engagement on social media platforms.

3.2 Population, Sample, and Measurement of Constructs

The target population of the study comprised **social media users engaging with the official Facebook brand pages of fashion brands U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans in India**. Data was collected through Fan page karma database. The final sample size was adequate to meet the requirements of PLS-SEM analysis, ensuring statistical power and reliability.

The study measured constructs based on validated indicators from prior literature and actual social media engagement metrics:

- **Engagement:** Number of likes, shares, and comments.
- **Positive Reactions:** Likes, love, wow, haha.
- **Negative Reactions:** Angry and sad reactions.
- **Post Type:** Categorized as video posts, picture posts, status updates, and links.
- **Post Hours:** Business hours vs. non-business hours.
- **Workdays:** Weekday vs. weekend postings.

All constructs were subjected to reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (HTMT) to ensure measurement robustness before proceeding to the structural model.

3.3 Hypotheses of the study

H₀₁: Positive Reactions do not have a significant effect on Engagement.

H₀₂: Negative Reactions do not have a significant effect on Engagement.

H₀₃: Post Type does not have a significant effect on Engagement.

H₀₄: Post Hours do not have a significant effect on Engagement.

H₀₅: Workdays do not have a significant effect on Engagement.

3.3 Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

The study employed **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)** using SmartPLS software. The analysis followed a two-stage approach: **Measurement Model Evaluation** – Outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE were examined for indicator reliability and convergent validity, while HTMT ratios established discriminant validity; **Structural Model Evaluation** – Path coefficients, T-statistics, and p-values were used to test hypotheses. R² values were computed to determine explanatory power.

4. Results and Interpretation

This section presents the findings of the measurement model and the structural model. The analysis includes outer loadings, reliability and validity testing, discriminant validity (HTMT), structural model results, and explanatory power of the model (R²). Each subsection is supported with interpretation to highlight the statistical soundness of the model and its implications.

4.1 Measurement Model

4.1.1 Outer Loadings

Outer loadings demonstrate the strength of the relationship between observed indicators and their respective latent constructs. Values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, indicating good indicator reliability. Table 1 presents the outer loadings for all items.

Table 1: Outer Loadings of Indicators

Construct	Indicators	Outer Loading
Post_Hours	Business_Hours	0.948
	Non-business_Hours	0.973
Post_Type	Link-posts	0.774
	Picture Posts	0.717
	Status posts	0.973
	Video-posts	0.904
Workdays	Weekday-posts	0.981
	Weekend-posts	0.914
Positive_Reactions	No of positive reactions	0.916
	No of Haha	0.902
	No of Love	0.878
	No of Wow	0.933
Negative_Reactions	No of negative reactions	0.999
	No of Angry	0.997
	No of Sad	0.993
Engagement	Number of Likes	0.953
	Number of Shares	0.770
	Number of Comments	0.990

Source:

Author

All outer loadings are above the threshold of 0.70, except for Picture Posts (0.717) and Link-posts (0.774), which are still acceptable. This indicates that the indicators strongly represent their respective constructs, confirming indicator reliability.

4.1.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Reliability and convergent validity were tested using Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (pa)	Composite Reliability (pc)	AVE
Engagement	0.893	0.941	0.934	0.828
Negative_Reactions	0.997	0.997	0.998	0.993
Positive_Reactions	0.930	0.949	0.949	0.823
Post_Type	0.874	0.930	0.910	0.719
Post_Hours	0.917	0.986	0.959	0.922
Workdays	0.900	1.283	0.947	0.899

Source: Author

All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha and CR values greater than 0.70, confirming internal consistency. The AVE values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, establishing convergent validity. Notably, constructs like Negative_Reactions and Post_Hours exhibit extremely high reliability, indicating strong measurement quality.

4.1.3 Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion, where values below 0.85 (conservative) or 0.90 (liberal) confirm adequate discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the HTMT results.

Table 3: HTMT Discriminant Validity

Constructs	Engagement	Negative_Reactions	Positive_Reactions	Post_Type	Post_Hours	Workdays
Engagement	–	0.950	0.934	0.805	0.880	0.697
Negative_Reactions		–	0.892	0.695	0.688	0.450
Positive_Reactions			–	0.603	0.651	0.457
Post_Type				–	0.668	0.440
Post_Hours					–	0.451
Workdays						–

Source: Author

Most HTMT values are below 0.90, confirming discriminant validity. However, the relationship between Engagement and Negative_Reactions (0.950) is slightly above the liberal threshold, suggesting some overlap. Despite this, overall discriminant validity remains acceptable.

4.2 Structural Model

Figure 1 depicts the structural model of the study, illustrating the hypothesized relationships between independent constructs—Positive Reactions, Negative Reactions, Post Type, Post Hours, and Workdays—and the dependent construct, Engagement.

4.2.1 Path Coefficients

The structural model was assessed through path coefficients, T-statistics, and p-values. Table 4 summarizes the results.

Table 4: Structural Model Results

Path	Path Coeff.	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Positive_Reactions -> Engagement	0.718	0.138	5.214	0.000 ***	H ₀ 1 Rejected
Negative_Reactions -> Engagement	-0.615	0.205	3.002	0.009 **	H ₀ 2 Rejected
Post_Type -> Engagement	0.712	0.173	4.112	0.001 ***	H ₀ 3 Rejected
Post_Hours -> Engagement	0.157	0.084	1.861	0.082	H ₀ 4 Not Rejected
Workdays -> Engagement	0.085	0.076	1.124	0.279	H ₀ 5 Not Rejected

Source: Author

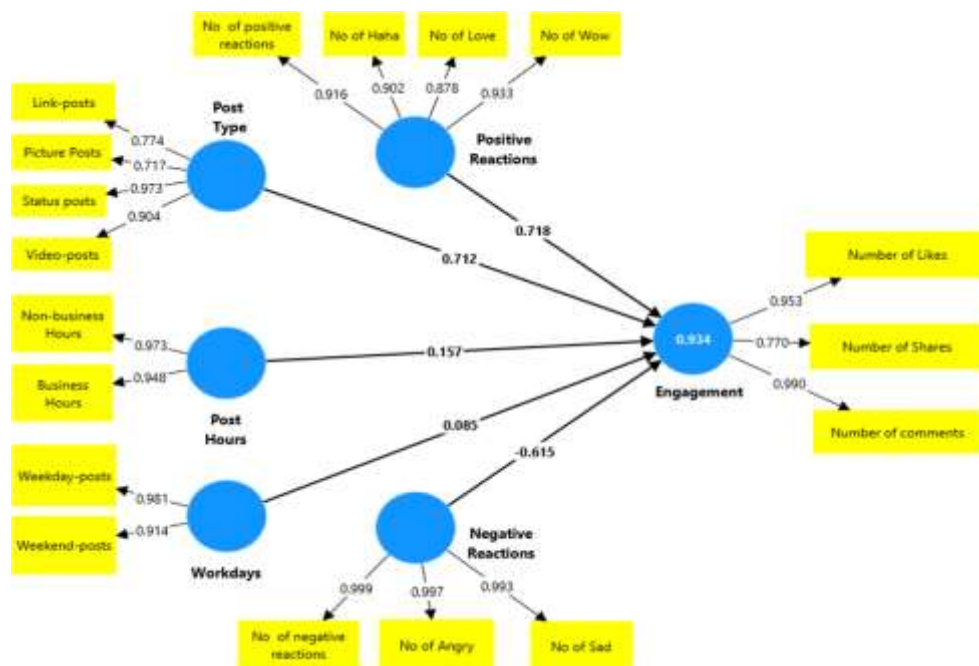


Figure 1: Structural Model

☐ Positive Reactions and Engagement

The analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between Positive Reactions and Engagement ($\beta = 0.718$, $T = 5.214$, $p = 0.000$). This result highlights that affirmative responses such as “likes,” “love,” “haha,” and “wow” significantly increase user interaction levels. The findings confirm that when audiences express positive emotions, the visibility and popularity of posts are enhanced, leading to higher shares, comments, and sustained attention.

Decision: The null hypothesis (H_01) is **rejected**. The relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level.

☐ Negative Reactions and Engagement

A negative and significant relationship is found between Negative Reactions and Engagement ($\beta = -0.615$, $T = 3.002$, $p = 0.009$). This demonstrates that unfavorable emotional responses such as “angry” or “sad” reduce engagement. Although such reactions may initially attract attention, they discourage prolonged interaction or sharing, thereby lowering overall engagement levels. This outcome is consistent with prior studies showing that negative sentiment reduces trust and willingness to interact with content.

Decision: The null hypothesis (H_02) is **rejected**. The relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level.

☐ Post Type and Engagement

The effect of Post Type on Engagement is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.712$, $T = 4.112$, $p = 0.001$). This implies that the content format (status updates, pictures, videos, or links) has a substantial influence on engagement outcomes. Posts in the form of videos and status updates, which had higher loadings in the measurement model, are more effective in eliciting responses from users. These findings underline the importance of content strategy in driving social media engagement.

Decision: The null hypothesis (H_03) is **rejected**. The relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level.

☐ Post Hours and Engagement

The coefficient for Post Hours is positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.157$, $T = 1.861$, $p = 0.082$). This indicates that the timing of posting—whether during business hours or non-business hours—does not meaningfully impact engagement levels. The increasing role of algorithm-driven feeds and diverse audience browsing patterns reduces the influence of specific posting times.

Decision: The null hypothesis (H_04) is **not rejected**. The relationship is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

☐ Workdays and Engagement

Finally, the relationship between Workdays and Engagement is weak and statistically insignificant ($\beta = 0.085$, $T = 1.124$, $p = 0.279$). This result shows that engagement levels do not differ significantly between weekday and weekend postings. Audiences appear to engage consistently across days, possibly due to mobile accessibility and continuous platform usage.

Decision: The null hypothesis (H_05) is **not rejected**. The relationship is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

4.3 Model Summary

The explanatory power of the structural model was evaluated using **R² (coefficient of determination)** and **adjusted R²** values. These values indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent construct (Engagement) explained by its predictors.

Table 5: Model Summary (R² and Adjusted R²)

Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Engagement	0.934	0.897

The model summary demonstrates that the predictors—**Positive Reactions, Negative Reactions, Post Type, Post Hours, and Workdays**—jointly explain **93.4% of the variance in Engagement (R² = 0.934)**. This is an exceptionally high level of explanatory power, well above the threshold of 0.26 suggested by Cohen (1988) for substantial models. The adjusted R² value of **0.897** confirms that even after accounting for the number of predictors in the model, the explained variance remains very strong. This indicates that the model is highly robust and that the selected constructs are highly relevant in predicting engagement on social media platforms. It also suggests that emotional responses and content-related factors contribute meaningfully to explaining engagement patterns, with minimal loss in explanatory power due to model complexity.

4.4 Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence regarding the determinants of consumer engagement on social media in the context of fashion brands U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans. Three hypotheses (H₀₁, H₀₂, H₀₃) were supported, while two (H₀₄, H₀₅) were not. The outcomes broadly align with earlier research, yet they also extend our understanding by testing the relative impact of emotional reactions, content type, and temporal factors within a high explanatory power model (R² = 0.934).

Positive Reactions and Engagement. The results reveal that positive reactions (likes, love, wow, haha) exert a strong and statistically significant influence on engagement. This aligns with the findings of Vish et al. (2015), who reported that vivid and positively valenced content enhances the probability of clicking the “like” button, thereby increasing visibility and interaction. Similarly, Ceesay et al. (2017) found that the inclusion of images creates favorable attitudes toward Facebook posts, which indirectly fosters higher levels of engagement. Schultz (2017) also emphasized that vividness and positive sentiment boost likes and shares, supporting the conclusion that affective approval acts as a catalyst for sustained engagement.

Negative Reactions and Engagement. The study also confirms that negative reactions (angry, sad) significantly reduce engagement. This finding supports Schultz (2017), who reported that negative sentiments are associated with lower likes and shares, although they may provoke comments in some cases. The present results extend this argument by showing that the net impact of negative reactions is detrimental to engagement, suggesting that while negative emotions capture attention, they do not translate into constructive interactions.

Post Type and Engagement. Another significant outcome is the positive effect of post type on engagement, with video and status posts exerting greater influence. This result is consistent with the work of Barger & Childkorn (2014) and Sabate et al. (2014), who found that photo-based and vividly designed content drives more interactions compared to plain text or external links. Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013) and Chahal & Bansal (2015) also highlight the importance of vividness in enhancing engagement, while Vish et al. (2015) further confirm that vivid posts increase the likelihood of user approval. Taken together, the findings reaffirm that content design and format are more critical than temporal dimensions in stimulating user activity.

Post Hours and Workdays. In contrast, Post Hours and Workdays were found to have no significant impact on engagement. These results are consistent with the findings of Sabate et al. (2014) and Kumar (2015), who noted that day-of-week effects are negligible in shaping post engagement. While Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013) observed that peak-hour posting can have some effect, the present study suggests that algorithmic feeds and continuous platform usage dilute such temporal influences. This outcome reflects the shifting dynamics of social media platforms, where content visibility is increasingly determined by algorithmic ranking rather than strict posting schedules.

The findings collectively suggest that **emotional responses (positive/negative) and content type are the dominant drivers of engagement**, while temporal factors have little influence. This contributes to the literature by confirming earlier studies (Sabate et al., 2014; Schultz, 2017; Vish et al., 2015) and extending them into the fashion brand context. Furthermore, the study validates the “optimum vividness” argument (Derison et al., 2016), as not all highly vivid formats (e.g., videos) guarantee superior engagement; rather, carefully designed content such as photos and mixed formats are more effective.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the factors influencing consumer engagement with fashion brands on social media, with a specific focus on U.S. Polo Assn. and Lee Jeans. The findings highlight that emotional responses and content design are the primary drivers of online engagement. Positive reactions such as likes, love, wow, and haha significantly enhance interaction, while negative reactions like angry and sad reduce meaningful engagement. The type of post also emerged as an important determinant, with visual and vivid formats generating more attention and interaction compared to plain text or external links. In contrast, temporal factors such as posting hours and the day of posting were found to have little or no effect, suggesting that in today’s algorithm-driven platforms, content quality outweighs timing considerations. By confirming the central role of emotions and content design in shaping engagement, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital branding and social media marketing, particularly in the fashion industry context.

6. Policy and Managerial Implications

The outcomes of this research provide actionable insights for brand managers, marketers, and policymakers in the fashion retail sector:

- **Content over Timing:** Since posting hours and days show minimal influence, brands should focus more on creating impactful content rather than over-optimizing posting schedules.
- **Stimulate Positive Emotions:** Marketing strategies should be designed to evoke positive emotional reactions, as they amplify engagement and enhance the visibility of posts.
- **Visual-First Communication:** Photo-based and vivid content should be prioritized, as visual elements consistently outperform plain text or links in driving user interaction.
- **Address Negative Sentiment:** Negative reactions should be closely monitored and addressed through timely response strategies to safeguard brand reputation.
- **Leverage Algorithmic Preferences:** Platforms reward content that attracts reactions and shares; brands should align their strategies with these mechanics to maximize organic reach.
- **Policy Support:** At a broader level, digital literacy programs and guidelines for effective social media branding can help both global and domestic fashion brands strengthen their consumer engagement strategies.

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