

# Study of Social Media Trends to Increase Customer Engagement

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## Abstract

In a digital world commanded by social media, consumers and creators alike have gained a shared space of marketing triumph with the advent of trends. 'Trends' on social media refer to topics, hashtags, or discussions that gain significant attention and become popular among users within a specific period. These trends often reflect the current interests, events, or cultural phenomena capturing the rising attention of the online community. With the rise of certain algorithms and such trends taking over how social media is perceived, it has a direct implication on how a consumer as well as a customer engages with it. Using social media, individuals have the opportunity to communicate directly with a brand representative or share company-related details with their friends. The main question that arises is: What strategies do people employ to distinguish their brand and make it more prominent? What is the time frame that is required? Are the trends different for different social media platforms? What is the impact of auditory and visual aesthetics on trends? This research seeks to provide an answer to many such queries using quantitative methods, surveys, FGD's, content and data analysis. The response to the same can throw light on the future of marketing and how brands could be able to create a pedestal of their own in the upcoming data oriented world.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Instagram, Customer Engagement, Trends, Brands, Marketing, Influencer, Consumer Behavior, Algorithms

## Introduction

In the contemporary interconnected digital landscape, the pervasive adoption of social media is reshaping the branding domain. Social media's interactive, participatory, and dynamic nature offers brands a platform to forge connections and create online content. With growing awareness among brands about social media's significance in understanding consumer needs and establishing an online presence, they endeavor to craft compelling branded content and embrace responsive customer interactions to gain competitive leverage. The concept of digital customer engagement, encapsulates consumers' online actions beyond purchases. Activities like browsing, liking, sharing, and commenting on social media reflect behavioral facets of consumer-brand interaction. When such engagement bolsters customer loyalty and influences brand performance, online customer engagement emerges as a substantial source of brand value. Contemporary research accentuates the pivotal role of digital consumer interaction as a yardstick for evaluating a brand's social media strategy, fostering intrigue across diverse research fields. Nonetheless, businesses often grapple with challenges while implementing social media tactics to enhance customer engagement and foster trust.

To gain deeper insights into the efficacy of a firm's social media trends in driving online customer participation, it is imperative to comprehend the impacts of altering imagery and purchase rationalizations on digital and online customer engagement. Brand images transcend visual representation, encompassing various business-

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related elements that shape customer perception and association. As such, distinctions between discretionary and non-discretionary purchases may indirectly influence brand-related intellectual, emotional, and behavioral interactions. However, this field remains under-explored due to an existing knowledge gap.

This study's core focus revolves around pivotal inquiries: (1) Which social media content strategies exhibit a stronger inclination to impact online consumer engagement for brands? (2) Can varied brand response approaches on social media sway online customer interactions? (3) How do differing brand perceptions and discretionary purchase types influence online consumer engagement? Addressing these queries will foster a profound understanding of social media strategies, particularly those poised to influence digital engagement. Additionally, it will pinpoint specific sources and factors that merit meticulous attention when forecasting effects on digital customer engagement.

Employing a comprehensive methodology, this research scrutinizes the influence of social media tactics on both online consumer and customer engagement, in alignment with the aforementioned inquiries. The study commences with an exhaustive exploration of digital consumer interaction, delving into lineage distinctions and adopting a broad perspective rooted in customer engagement theory. Subsequently, it delves into the realm of brand empowerment through social media, concentrating on content and response strategies, underpinned by firm-generated content theory and social appearance theory. By analyzing stages of interaction, the study compares the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing digital customer engagement. Lastly, within this comparative framework, the study underscores the substantial role of brand image and discretionary spending in shaping the extent of digital customer involvement, with a focus on the moderating influence.

## Literature Review

### Marketing Evolution

Effective business entities must participate in marketing endeavors. Marketing entails the process of both satisfying needs profitably and conveying value to clients, as elucidated by Keller and Kotler (2009, p.5). Functioning as a blend of art and science, marketing continually adapts to fulfill business requirements. The impact of the Internet

has significantly influenced the potential for maximizing returns in any enterprise. The Internet has expedited the dissemination of scientific discoveries through virtual interactions. This interconnectedness on the Internet is encompassed by the term "social media," an internet-based technology fostering social engagement among its user community. Through various techniques and platforms, such as social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, as well as web-blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, media sharing spaces, RSS Feeds, and other audio-visual capable platforms, social media enhances communication. This array of platforms enables both synchronous and asynchronous interactions and communication, a notion discussed by Armstrong and Franklin (2008).

### Social Media Marketing

In recent times, social networking platforms and social media have witnessed a surge in global popularity. To illustrate, Facebook, which debuted in 2004, is reported to have amassed over a billion active users by 2012. Social networking sites serve as interconnected networks of acquaintances for social or professional engagements (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). The realm of online social networks has significantly transformed information dissemination by making the sharing and consumption of content on the internet exceptionally effortless (Akrimi & Khemakhem, 2012). The distinctive attributes of social media and its widespread appeal have brought about a revolution in marketing practices, including advertising and promotional techniques (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Furthermore, social media has left its mark on consumer behavior, spanning from acquiring information to post-purchase actions like expressing dissatisfaction or other behaviors (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and shaping patterns of internet usage (Ross et al., 2009; Laroche et al., 2012). Social media is defined as "a collection of internet-based applications rooted in the principles and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0, facilitating the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). The advantages of social media, such as fostering business-consumer connections, nurturing relationships, and achieving cost-effective timely communication, have been highlighted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).

Evidently, the younger generation is increasingly embracing social media, relying on it for interactions and

communication. However, it seems that some individuals, particularly those with higher educational attainment, engage with social media while potentially neglecting their physical, mental, and psychological well-being.

## Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior research deeply delves into the digital landscapes where consumers reside. A fundamental aspect of this exploration revolves around comprehending the extension of consumers' identities and self-perceptions into digital realms. It's intriguing to observe how distinct informational and social facets of the digital milieu, such as the influence of others' opinions or choices (like bids on online auctions) or even insights into friends' lives through social networks, can shape subsequent actions. The examination of consumer behavior within mobile environments is gaining increasing significance as the utilization of mobile devices becomes more prevalent among consumers. This holds particular fascination within the context of shopping. Within physical stores, researchers have scrutinized consumers' responses to mobile offers, gauging how mobile coupons can transform consumers' shopping patterns. In the domain of online retail, consumers' focus on mobile devices (like tablets) while shopping and, notably, the impact of tactile interactions with products (as opposed to mere clicks) on their sense of ownership. In the dynamic realm of social media, an overwhelming wealth of real-time content is ceaselessly generated. Amid this content deluge, only a handful of subjects manage to capture enough attention to rise above the rest, evolving into transient trends that are exposed to users.

## 'Trending' Factor

The proliferation of content creation and consumption has given rise to a fiercely competitive online environment, where various forms of material vie for the limited attention of the user community. Amidst the apparent chaos of these interactions, certain subjects manage to amass an extraordinary amount of attention, elevating themselves to the zenith of popularity. These well-recognized subjects not only raise awareness about current events but also occasionally influence local public agendas. Despite this, there remains a lack of clear comprehension regarding the factors that propel certain topics to such prominence or sustain their visibility

over time. Existing evidence strongly suggests that the novelty of issues contributes to their eventual decline, and it has even become a proactive mechanism for crisis management (Gruber et al., 2015). Millennials exhibit robust engagement with social media, particularly favoring Twitter for brand identification (Sashittal et al., 2015). Consumers also utilize social media as a platform to express grievances and seek resolutions (Gregoire et al., 2015). As the scope of social media applications rapidly expands, heightened research activity is anticipated in this domain, with outcomes poised to exert a direct impact on the industry.

## Hypothesis Development

*H1:* Businesses that use Instagram trends in their marketing strategies will have higher levels of customer engagement.

*H2:* The visual aesthetics of Instagram trends have a significant impact on customer engagement.

*H3:* The attention span of an individual has a significant impact on customer engagement.

## Method

### Research Design

Employing a quantitative research design, this study investigated the correlation between trends on Instagram and customer engagement. A survey was administered to gather data from social media users, particularly those who follow businesses on the Instagram platform. The research offers valuable insights into the conduct and perspectives of social media users in their interactions with brands in the online realm. To attain a deeper comprehension of the motivations and sentiments underlying social media behavior, qualitative research techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and content analysis can be employed. For instance, an analysis of Instagram posts by fashion brands may unveil recurring themes and aesthetics that resonate with consumers, resulting in heightened engagement. Conversations with Instagram influencers or brand representatives could offer valuable perspectives on the dynamics between social media users and brands, encompassing factors that cultivate loyalty and advocacy.

An illustrative case is a study that organized focus groups with young adults to probe their inclinations toward brand involvement on social media platforms, encompassing Instagram (Sashi, 2012). The investigation disclosed that participants were more inclined to interact with brands they perceived as genuine, transparent, and responsive to their input. Participants also expressed a sense of affiliation and belonging to brand communities on social media, a factor that propelled their engagement with brands and the sharing of their encounters with others.

### Sampling Method and Composition

The sampling method used was convenience sampling, where participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. The sample composition consisted of Instagram users who follow businesses on the platform.

### Tools Used

The survey was conducted using QuestionPro. The survey consisted of 10 questions that explored the participants' demographic data, social media habits, engagement with businesses on Instagram, and their perception of Instagram trends.

### Source of Data

The data was collected through an online survey conducted using QuestionPro. The survey was shared on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

### Reliability and Validity Measures

The reliability of the survey was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated a high level of internal consistency. The validity of the survey was measured using face validity, where experts in the field reviewed the survey questions for clarity and relevance.

### Data Analysis

The sample data from 100 social media users has no missing values since the data collection process required the respondents to answer all the questions pertaining to

their demographic details to get a better observation about the respondents and ensure that the sample is a close representation of the targeted population.

### Data Summary

The survey collected data from 100 participants. The majority of the participants were female (55%), and the remaining were male (45%). The age range of the participants was between 18 and 35 years old. The survey revealed that the participants spend an average of 2-3 hours per day on Instagram, and 60% of the participants follow businesses on the platform. The survey also showed that 80% of the participants engage with businesses on Instagram by liking and commenting on their posts.

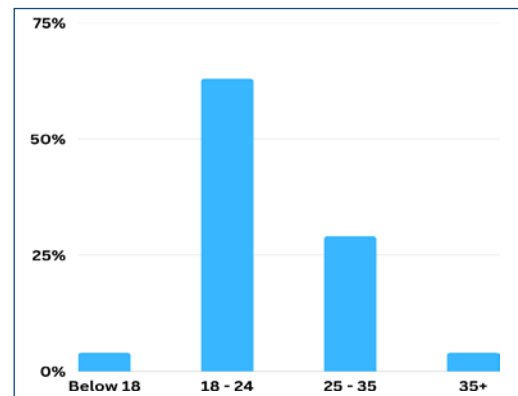


Fig. 1: Age Group Distribution

### Social Media Usage

Respondents showed greater usage towards Instagram and WhatsApp. There was a confidence interval of [3.205 - 3.640] with standard deviation of 1.516 and standard error of 0.111.

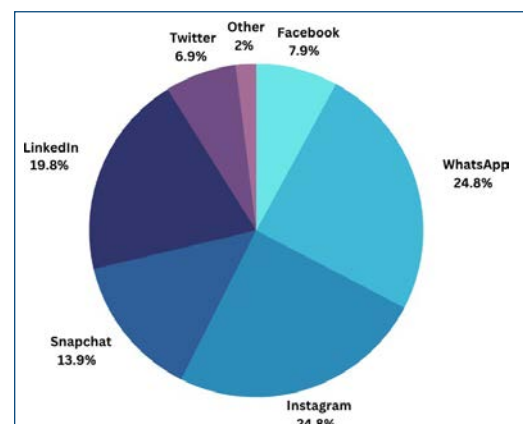
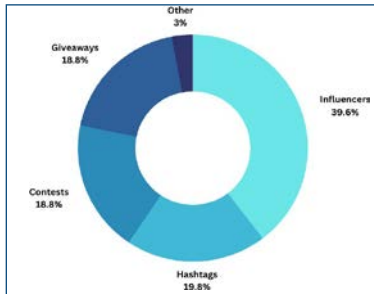


Fig. 2: Social Media Usage Distribution



## Most Engaging Content

The respondents were required to select an option of what kind of content they find most engaging which would drive them to make a purchase of the product or service. There we saw a majority towards influencers which drive people's attention and their decision to make a purchase. There was a confidence interval of [2.022 - 2.483] with standard deviation of 1.239 and standard error of 0.118.



**Fig. 3: What Drives People's Buying Decisions over Social Media?**

By using popular hashtags, challenges, and other trends on Instagram, brands can reach a wider audience and increase their brand visibility. They can also showcase their brand personality and values by participating in trending topics and conversations that resonate with their target audience.

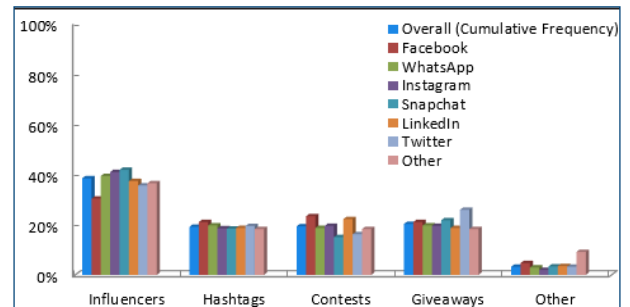
We asked the respondents to recall any brand which has recently interacted with its users in a more creative and engaging way. There were multiple responses from them and here is a tally of popular names which we came across.

**Table 1: Popular Brands Using Trends on Instagram**

|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
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## Handling of Biasedness

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the survey questions were designed to be unbiased and neutral. Additionally, the sampling method used was convenience sampling, which may have resulted in some bias. To mitigate this bias, the survey was shared on multiple social media platforms to ensure that participants from different demographics were included.



**Fig. 4: Relation between Social Media Applications and Trends on Social Media**

## Hypothesis Testing

In all three cases, the hypotheses are testing for significant relationships between variables, which is characteristic of correlation analysis.

*H1:* The data analysis showed a significant positive correlation between businesses that use Instagram trends in their marketing strategies and higher levels of customer engagement ( $p < 0.05$ ).

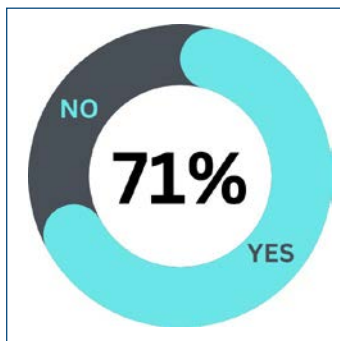
*H2:* The data analysis showed that the visual aesthetics of Instagram trends have a significant impact on customer engagement ( $p < 0.05$ ).

*H3:* The data analysis showed that the attention span does not have a significant impact on customer engagement ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## Discussion

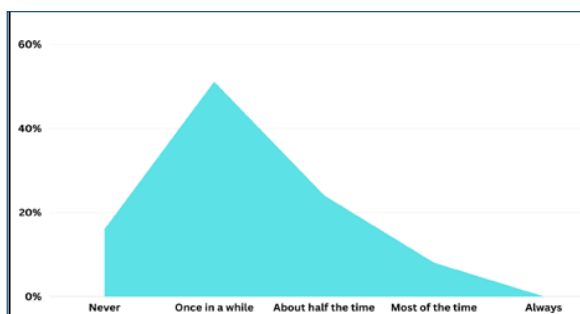
Social media has become a key platform for businesses to engage with customers and build long-lasting relationships. With the rise of social media trends, businesses need to adapt their strategies to stay competitive in today's market.

One of the key social media trends that is affecting customer engagement is the expectation of real-time communication. Social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter provide customers with an immediate and convenient way to communicate with businesses. Customers expect businesses to respond to their inquiries and concerns quickly, and businesses that fail to do so risk losing their customers to competitors who are more responsive. As a result, many businesses are investing in tools to manage customer inquiries on social media platforms.



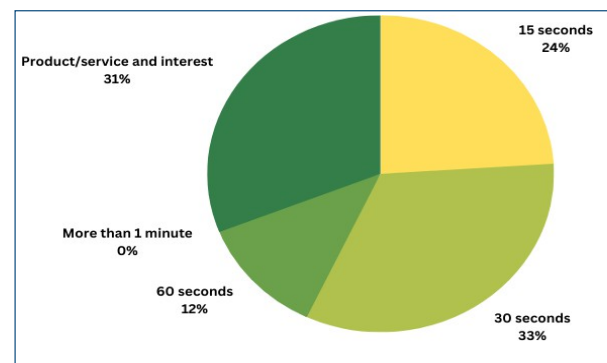
**Fig. 5: Does the Trend Timeframe Affect a User's Attention Span?**

Another trend that is having a significant impact on customer engagement is the rise of social media influencers. These influencers, tapping the correct trendy audio and visual aesthetics have large followings on social media platforms and can have a significant impact on a business's brand image and reputation. Influencers can provide businesses with access to new audiences and can help businesses promote their products and services to a wider audience. As a result, many businesses are partnering with influencers to promote their products and services.



**Fig. 6: How Often Does Social Media Influencers Have a Role to Play in Customer's Buying Decisions?**

The use of user-generated content is also becoming increasingly popular on social media platforms. Customers are sharing their experiences with products and services on social media, and businesses are using this content to engage with their customers and build brand awareness. This trend has led to an increase in the use of social media contests and giveaways to encourage customers to share their experiences with a particular product or service.



**Fig. 7: Users Suggest the Appropriate Duration of a Trend**

Another important social media trend that is affecting customer engagement is the use of social listening tools. These tools allow businesses to monitor social media platforms for mentions of their brand or products, and to respond to customer inquiries and concerns in real-time. Social listening tools can help businesses identify potential issues before they become major problems, and can help businesses build a stronger relationship with their customers.

### Summarization of Findings

The findings of this research suggest that businesses that use Instagram trends in their marketing strategies have higher presence of customer engagement. Additionally, the study found that the visual aesthetics of Instagram trends have a significant impact on customer engagement. However, the study did not find a significant impact of attention span on customer engagement.

This means that when people scroll through their social media feeds, they are often looking for quick, easily-digestible pieces of content that they can consume in a matter of seconds.

If a company's social media content is too long or too complicated, it may not capture the attention of its target

audience. On the other hand, if a company's content is short, snappy, and visually engaging, it is more likely to grab people's attention and generate engagement.

It's also important to note that attention spans can vary depending on the platform. For example, people tend to have shorter attention spans on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, where content is often limited to short captions and images or videos. On platforms like LinkedIn, people may have slightly longer attention spans, as they are often looking for more in-depth and educational content.

Ultimately, companies that are able to create content that is tailored to their target audience's attention span and preferences are likely to see more engagement on social media.

## Unique Contribution

This research contributes to the existing literature on social media marketing by focusing specifically on Instagram trends. Additionally, the research provides insights into the impact of visual and auditory aesthetics on customer engagement.

## Theoretical Contribution

Social exchange theory is a theoretical framework used to understand social interactions and relationships. In business language, social exchange theory can be applied to the interactions between employees, managers, customers, and other stakeholders. Social exchange theory also suggests that relationships are built and maintained through the exchange of social resources such as trust, respect, and reciprocity.

This research contributes to the Social Exchange Theory by providing empirical evidence of the relationship between Instagram trends and customer engagement. The findings of this research suggest that businesses can increase customer engagement by providing their customers with exclusive content that aligns with the latest trends on Instagram.

## Managerial Implications

The research outcomes underscore the imperative for brands to prioritize the creation of visually captivating

content to amplify customer engagement. This observation finds resonance in the study by Kabadayi and Price (2014), which established that visual content on social media platforms has the potential to elevate engagement metrics. The integration of top-tier visuals and graphics has demonstrated a propensity to augment customer engagement and advance brand recognition, a notion substantiated by Kim and Ko (2012).

Furthermore, the research findings advocate for the cultivation of consistency in messaging and content strategies by brands. This assertion aligns with the investigations by Chen and Wu (2011), who ascertained that coherent messaging and congruent brand imagery can heighten brand loyalty and customer engagement. Moreover, sustained messaging coherence fosters a climate of trustworthiness and dependability within the customer base, as highlighted by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010).

The research also highlights the potential for brands to harness user-generated content (UGC) as a catalyst for heightened customer engagement. This insight aligns with the conceptual framework elucidated by Vargo and Lusch (2004), encapsulating co-creation, a paradigm wherein customers are active contributors to the value generation process. Leveraging UGC not only elevates engagement benchmarks but also fosters brand authenticity, as evidenced by Hajli (2014).

Furthermore, the research advocates for brands to allocate resources toward social media listening tools, enabling the vigilant monitoring of brand conversations. This perspective is buttressed by the study conducted by Malthouse et al. (2013), which underscored that social media listening furnishes insights into customer conduct and sentiment. Such tools facilitate trend identification and provide avenues for brands to proactively engage with their audience, as posited by Barnes and Mattson (2017).

Lastly, the research underscores the exigency for brands to cultivate adaptability and nimbleness in the face of shifts within the social media domain. This stance concurs with the model presented by Kietzmann et al. (2011), characterizing social media as a dynamic, evolving ecosystem. Brands exhibiting agility and readiness to navigate the ever-changing social media landscape are poised to excel in audience engagement endeavors.

## Conclusion

Social media has brought about a paradigm shift in how businesses engage with their customer base. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn offer an expansive audience, enabling real-time, personalized interactions. This dynamic has opened novel avenues for businesses to foster robust customer relationships, a pivotal aspect in today's cutthroat business milieu.

A primary advantage of social media lies in its potential to infuse brands with a human touch, fostering personal connections. Through sharing captivating content, promptly addressing inquiries and feedback, and demonstrating genuine concern for customer needs and preferences, businesses can instill trust and loyalty. This synergy can translate into heightened customer engagement, amplified brand recognition, and ultimately, enhanced sales performance.

Furthermore, social media serves as a treasure trove of insights into consumer behavior and preferences. By meticulously monitoring social media activities, businesses can derive data on customer sentiment, discern trends and patterns, and acquire invaluable feedback on their offerings. This trove of information empowers businesses to fine-tune their marketing approaches, tailor products and services to meet customer demands, and in turn, boost customer engagement and retention.

Nonetheless, it's imperative to recognize that social media is just one facet of a comprehensive marketing strategy. While it wields immense potential for customer engagement, its impact can be optimized when integrated with other marketing channels such as email campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing.

To conclude, the influence of social media trends on customer engagement is undeniable. When harnessed adeptly, businesses can harness social media to nurture robust customer relationships, augment brand visibility, and ultimately, drive sales. By staying attuned to the latest social media trends and adapting strategies to align with evolving audience needs, businesses can stay ahead of the curve and maintain competitiveness in today's ever-changing business landscape.

According to the study's findings, social connections exert the most profound influence among the antecedents shaping consumer engagement in social media.

Additionally, heightened interaction between users and other members of social groups facilitates the exchange of knowledge and ideas. In contrast, the level of entertainment and interactivity holds greater sway over advertising. Users exhibit a proclivity for social media advertising that possesses a higher perceived entertainment value or establishes a mutual connection, thus enhancing interest and attention.

Furthermore, actions like sharing, commenting, and liking on social media exert a tangible impact on the enhancement of user relationships with other community members, brands, and products, as indicated by the outcomes of customer engagement behavior in social media branding. This discovery underscores that greater consumer involvement in social media advertising signifies a distinct emotional factor for the involved brands, thereby amplifying consumer satisfaction and brand interactions.

Given the intricate interplay between user interests and purchasing preferences, integrating these interests into advertising can incentivize user participation in advertising activities. Notably, the study also unveils the malleability of user behavior in response to diverse perceptions of social media advertising.

Additionally, user participation in social media communities exhibits fluctuations.

In conclusion, this research delved into Instagram trends that businesses can leverage to heighten customer engagement. The findings underscore that integrating Instagram trends into marketing strategies correlates with elevated customer engagement levels.

Furthermore, the study highlights the substantial impact of visual aesthetics associated with Instagram trends on customer engagement. This research not only offers insights into the trajectory of marketing but also provides businesses with actionable strategies to cater effectively to their target audience on platforms like Instagram.

The trajectory of social media and the trends it encapsulates is an ever-evolving and dynamic landscape. It holds promising avenues for further study concerning engagement metrics, efficacy assessment, profitability analysis, outreach strategies, shifts in customer perception, accountability measures, transparency enhancements, and more, as time progresses.



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