Original Researcher Article

Marketing in the age of consent: leveraging permission-based strategies for visual indie artists' social media marketing.

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ABSTRACT

Every piece of content posted by a visual indie artist brand invites strangers to engage and follow them on social media, granting permission to share various launches, deals, and sponsorships. This study explores the applicability of permission marketing principles in social media marketing by visual indie artists. To test empirically, followers on Instagram and YouTube were surveyed, employing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Findings indicate that entertainment and virtual community positively influence consumer attitude which leads to improved purchase intentions when moderated by permission marketing. This research highlights the potential of permission-based strategies for effective social media marketing.

Keywords: Permission marketing, Social media marketing, Online marketing, Social commerce, Visual art marketing.

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INTRODUCTION:

The advent of social media has caused a radical change in the way people communicate. Mass media had the dominant role as the distributors of recreational and informative content for over a century, but social media created a world of network-based communication where everyone can participate, from traditional media to ordinary people (Stamenković and Đukić, 2022). Boundaries between producers and consumers of content are increasingly blurry and each day new channels of communication emerge where individuals and groups connect with others to share valuable information over mutual interests.

This revolutionary way of communication has created opportunities for marketers and companies and one key aspect to have in mind is the sustained spread of social media and their increasing number of users. For example, an average person will spend >5 hours every day using their social media accounts (De Hesselle & Montag, 2024) and it is not surprising that marketers have noticed the potential of these platforms to promote products and services from their customers.

Initially, the approach was to reach potential customers through Interruptive Marketing (Dakouan et al, 2019) but unsolicited and interruptive ads tend to produce ad avoidance behaviour among prospective clients (Lahmidi and Dadouh, 2023). Permission Marketing emerged as an alternative where relevant and effective promotional messages are sent only after explicit consent is obtained, hence they tend to be more effective because customers have already expressed interest in those products (Mahmoud et al, 2019). Creative products such as paintings, drawings, sculptures and ceramics may also be promoted using permission marketing and their creators can turn their hobbies into a profitable business with an appropriate permission-based marketing strategy to generate purchase intention. The purpose of this research is to study the role of permission marketing as a moderator to create purchase intention toward visual indie artists as brands.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Icek Ajzen (1991) theorised that the intention of a person is formed through their attitude toward the behaviour, their subjective norms and their perceived behavioural control. As this theory suggests, these intentions would be formed through one's attitude toward art, toward purchasing art pieces and products and toward the artist, the subjective norms they've imbibed, and their perceived behavioural control which, as explained by Icek Ajzen (1985) in his book, is the actual control that one may have on their behaviour.

Azhar et al. (2023) found that enjoyable and informative content improves consumer attitude, virtual communities influence peoples' perception of desirability impacting their subjective norms, interactivity enhances peoples' sense of control or their perceived behavioural control over the purchasing process. So, entertainment, information, virtual community, vividness and interactivity are identified as key antecedents forming consumer attitude which leads to purchase intention. The impact of consumer attitude on purchase intention is moderated by permission-based marketing by the brand to evaluate whether permission-based marketing efforts impact consumers' purchase intentions. Subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are studied as mediators in the relationship between the attributes of social media and purchase intentions.

In the context of this research, we shall study the purchase intention of consumers toward fine art pieces, visual art products and services from visual indie artists. This study utilises the Theory of Planned Behaviour as a base to conceptualise the research model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing

Online shopping has expanded considerably in the past few years and internet marketing tools offer new opportunities to effectively reach out to existing and potential customers (Suman et al, 2019). Smartphones account for 94% of internet usage worldwide (Statista, 2023) and recent advances in mobile technologies highlight the role of these devices as an important marketing tool (Tarnanidis, 2024). As of July 2024, 5.17 billion people use social media (Datareportal, 2024) and platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp are constantly adding features to enhance their e-commerce capabilities (Raza et al, 2021). Given its widespread use, social media exerts a considerable influence on the customers' attitudes, although this influence has not been characterized entirely. Different studies, however, have shed some light on some aspects of social media marketing. Al-Nsour et al (2021) found that entertainment directly affects users' attitudes towards advertising and is one of the dimensions of value and aesthetics of social networks. Sindhuja et al (2023) found that consumers use social media to collect extensive information before the actual transaction, in order to identify alternatives and validate purchase decisions. Jamil et al (2022) found that buying goods and services is not the sole interest of customers, they also want to create meaningful experiences and solid relationships with other users of the virtual community; this enhances cohesion, which impacts the market.

Wismiarsi et al (2024) found a significant correlation between content interactivity and social media engagement (a measurement of overall efficiency of social media posts), which in turn was associated with purchase intention. Similar results were found by Aydin et al. (2021). Soares et al (2019) showed that content with high vividness attracts higher numbers of likes, which implies higher engagement. If marketers decide to use several social networks for a given customer, Reimer (2023) suggests tailoring content and media to each social media platform instead of replicating the same content, this will maximize their engagement with customers and will help connect better with the audience.

Permission Marketing

A recognised form of marketing used by companies since the invention of mass media, called interruption marketing, is aimed to interrupt the potential customer's attention with unsolicited high-intensity advertising (Abashidze, 2023). Spam, a frequent technique of interruption marketing which accounts for most of all emails sent worldwide (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018), is unsolicited by nature. Since, certain countries have made it illegal to push unsolicited marketing material (Everitt, 2012; Tan et al, 2023), permission marketing represents a convenient solution to legal and privacy issues while providing companies a competitive advantage over their business rivals, since consumers usually grant permission to only a few firms (Krafft et al, 2017) and was found to be the more effective' way to shape consumer behaviour efficiently (Abashidze, 2023). However, before implementing this strategy, companies need to understand the elements driving attitude toward permission marketing (Aftab et al, 2023).

People usually consent to share their data with businesses in exchange for relevant and personalized information (Devi and Lata, 2023). Relevance has favourable effects on the attitude towards direct marketing activities and personalization reduces uncertainty (Bozkurt and Odzic, 2023). Content created to connect with customers on an emotional level may help to build engagement, which will lead to positive results in terms of good reputation and sales (Kemp et al, 2021). The fact that consumers opt-in to receive personalized ads will increase their trust and the willingness to provide data (Schneider, 2022). Additionally, permission marketing has the potential to generate a loyal customer base, a positive word-of-mouth both online and offline and a high return on investment (Abashidze, 2023). As a result, companies can become increasingly competitive as they are not only able to use targeted media to engage with current customers, but might also be able to use the existing relationship for cross-selling activities (Krafft et al, 2017).

According to Aftab et al (2023), marketers must ensure a short and simple opt-in process because a confusing and frustrating one might lead customers to cancel it. Also, consumers are less likely to consent to receive marketing promotions when a lot of information is being requested from them, and a large quantity of marketing messages will make it difficult for consumers to distinguish them from spam (i.e. less is more). Lastly, customers are more likely to embrace and approve advertisement messages if they perceive they can profit from them.

A process just as important is the opt-out procedure that will allow recipients to unsubscribe from receiving any newsletters or promotions, since recipients that will not engage with marketing emails are not valuable for the company. As stated by Everitt (2012), the unsubscribe option will give people the opportunity to unsubscribe from the marketing database when they click it, and while some marketers could be tempted to follow up and ask why these users unsubscribed, this is usually not worth it unless they were a particularly valuable client.

Visual Arts Marketing

For decades, it was perceived that art should be non-commercial to be considered art. Famous art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann argued that a money-oriented society would interfere with art practice, while philosopher Immanuel Kant insisted that only art created freely (for no monetary considerations) could be considered art; Kant even coined a name for paid art: mercenary art (Hulst, 2023).

Eventually, artists found in art not only a means of expression but a way to make a living out of it. During renaissance, painters were very enterprising in finding business and all of their paintings were the result of a commission from, for example, when a wealthy individual decided to sponsor the making of an altarpiece or the painting of a fresco to pursue a political strategy (Piano and Al-Bawwab, 2021). They would also rely on local artists or their social network to identify potential candidates; thus, both reputation and word-of-mouth played a crucial role as marketing tactics.

Nowadays, established artists produce physical objects (sculptures, paintings, etc.) to be exhibited for sale or auctioned in galleries. This will allow them to generate

sufficient annual income to make art a full-time occupation so that they can function as professionals, without the need of a side income (Walker, 2017). Is not uncommon that a single impression by a single viewership via the masses can create popularity for an artist well beyond a yearlong gallery show (Forrest and Piper, 2017). For new artists, however, social media marketing and self-promotion are the most efficient tools to launch their careers. Many modern artists work more and more as entrepreneurs, and they need to promote their work proactively in order to build a lasting career. In fact, these artists need to embrace the brand concept and act like underground brand-managers and entrepreneurs to have successful careers and enjoy international and national recognition (Colzani, 2017).

As Lee and Lee (2017) state, one of the most remarkable changes in contemporary art marketing is the growing importance of new intermediaries such as art fairs and digital platforms. The increased popularity of these platforms, including social media networks, gives artists a chance to reach global audiences without the need of leaving their workshops.

However, effective art marketing is essential to succeed as an artist, because no one will buy art that cannot be seen. An art career cannot be built on spontaneous sales, repeat exposure to prospective buyers is critical to get the attention, interest and desire needed to make a sale (Adegunloye, 2014). According to Yang (2024), in the age of social media, artists need to become both curators and marketers of their artworks, using their accounts as online stores to sell their art to fans worldwide without having to look for alternative purchase channels.

Based on this extensive review of literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Attributes of Social Media have a significant impact on Consumer Attitude toward Artist/brand.

H1a: Entertainment positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H1b: Information positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H1c: Virtual Community positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H1d: Vividness positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H1e: Interactivity positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H2: Demographics have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H2a: Age of consumer moderates the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H2b: Gender of consumer moderates the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand.

H3: Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand positively affects Purchase Intention.

H4: Permission marketing positively moderates the relationship between Consumer Attitude toward Artist/brand and Purchase Intention.

H5: Subjective Norms mediate the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Purchase Intention.

H6: Perceived Behavioural Control mediates the

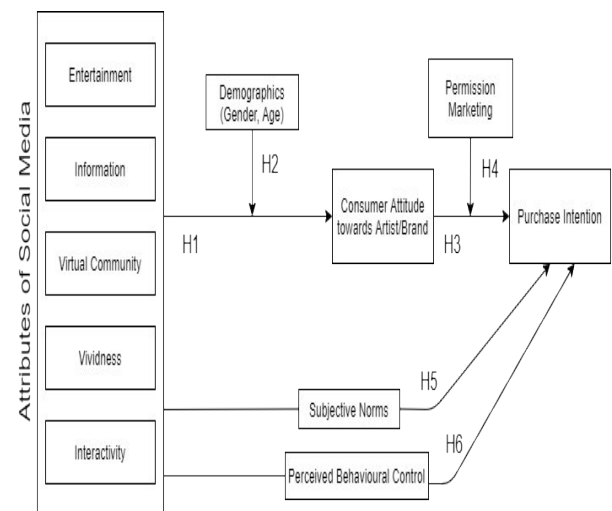relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Purchase Intention.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Study Designs

A positivist approach with quantitative research methodology was used to analyse the moderating effect of permission marketing on the relationship between consumer attitude toward artists as brands and the purchase intentions toward the brand. The research used a deductive approach to increase understanding of the various construct relations hypothesised in the conceptual model.

Data Sources

A self-administered structured questionnaire was distributed online as well as offline using google forms as well as printed forms. The respondents were given a brief introduction to the subject and were also asked a qualifying question to ensure the selection of the right participants for the research. The first few questionnaires were administered to and filled by the respondents with close supervision to ensure that the respondents understood the questionnaire, didn't misinterpret any of the statements and to refine the questionnaire if needed. Secondary data sources like journals and marketing reports were used during the course of the research.

Data Collection Strategy

The success of this research depended on the selection of the right respondents as visual arts culture in India isn't nearly as widespread as it is in the western countries. Visual indie artists promoting themselves on social media are a niche segment. Their followers are the respondents for this study which means that there is no database available to identify the accurate size of the universe. Applying probability sampling techniques would not be possible in this scenario, so, the data for this study was collected by using the justified sampling technique to gather responses from the social media followers of visual indie artists and people who hold an interest in visual arts and could be prospective buyers. No geographical boundaries were placed, the data was collected from Indian as well as foreign respondents provided that they fit the criteria. The participants must have followed the

social media pages of any of the visual artists' who don't rely on heavy advertising as a means to gather their followers on their social media profiles.

1358 people were approached through follower lists of visual indie artists established on any of the social media platforms, of which, 902 never responded, 160 responses had to be discarded due to them answering the name of a motivational speaker or actor or comedian when asked the name of the artist they followed, another 16 responses had to be discarded due to incomplete or incongruent response. Remaining 280 responses were found appropriate for analysis
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Measures
Questionnaire responses were collected on a five-point Likert scale and coded from '1' to '5' where '1 = strongly disagree' and '5 = strongly agree'. Three items for the construct 'entertainment' were adapted from Croes & Bartels (2021), four items for the construct 'information' were adopted from Fernandez & Castillo (2021), three items for the construct 'virtual community' were adapted from the sense of virtual community - membership construct developed by Koh and Kim (2003) and Naranjo-Zolotov et al. (2021), four items for 'vividness' were adapted from Oh (2017) and Vazquez (2019), four items for interactivity were adapted from Bozkurt et al. (2020), four items for 'subjective norm' were adapted from Jain (2020), four items for 'perceived behavioural control' were adapted from Jain (2020), of which, the third and fourth statements were adapted into negative statements. The fifth item for 'perceived behavioural control' was adapted from Peña-García et al. (2020). Four items for 'attitude toward the brand' were adapted from Spears & Singh (2004), the last of which is a negative statement. Six items for the scale 'permission' were created through the five basic rules of permission given by Godin . Two items for 'purchase intention' were adapted from Hung et al. (2011).

A negative item was added as the last item of all constructs except 'subjective norms' to be able to differentiate between respondents who were and weren't able to comprehend the statements and to identify carelessly filled responses.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to examine construct reliability and validity, and also to evaluate the goodness of model fit. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The AMOS 26.0 and IBM® SPSS 22 software suites were used for CFA and SEM.

Respondents' demographic profile
The gender breakdown of the respondents is shown on table 1. The study population had a nearly equal representation of both genders, with a slight difference favouring males (50.7%) over females (49.3%), which is in line with recent reports (Statista, 2024; Sprout Social, 2024). Most of the subjects had 20-29 years old or younger (47.9%), consistently with findings from other authors (*Moran, 2024; Shepard, 2024*)

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Gender	Respondents
Male	138 (50.7%)
Female	142 (49.3%)
Age	**Respondents**
≤19	112 (40.0%)
20-29	134 (47.9%)
30-39	21 (7.5%)
40-49	9 (3.2%)
≥50	4 (1.4%)

Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)
CFA was used for validation and reliability checks, by examining reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. It also analysed the model fit indices. Composite reliability values were used to determine internal consistency of observed variables and to verify construct reliability. Table 2 presents the results derived for factor loading, CR and AVE for each construct.

Table 2. Composite Reliability and Convergent Reliability

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
Perceived Behavioural Control	pbc1	0.807	0.946	0.779
	pbc2	0.901		
	pbc3	0.921		
	pbc4	0.934		
	pbc5	0.843		
Entertainment	ent1	0.741	0.879	0.646
	ent2	0.890		
	ent3	0.787		
	ent4	0.789		
Information	info1	0.696	0.882	0.600
	info2	0.886		
	info3	0.756		
	info4	0.736		
	info5	0.787		
Virtual Community	com1	0.702	0.898	0.639
	com2	0.839		
	com3	0.898		
	com4	0.754		
	com5	0.790		
Interactivity	int1	0.753	0.917	0.689
	int2	0.891		
	int3	0.848		
	int4	0.876		
	int5	0.773		
Purchase Intention	pi1	0.655	0.753	0.506
	pi2	0.800		
	pi3	0.670		
Attitude	att1	0.774	0.907	0.710
	att2	0.875		
	att3	0.842		

	att4	0.876		
Permission	per1	0.721	0.934	0.704
	per2	0.872		
	per3	0.916		
	per4	0.940		
	per5	0.808		
	per6	0.752		
Subjective Norms	sn1	0.795	0.865	0.616
	sn2	0.830		
	sn3	0.723		
	sn4	0.788		
Vividness	viv1	0.790	0.937	0.790
	viv2	0.894		
	viv3	0.927		
	viv4	0.937		

All the primary factor loadings showed values ≥0.5 without cross-loadings and all CR values were above 0.7, as recommended by Hair at al. (2010). Standardized factor loadings and AVE are used to assess convergent validity, and both were above 0.5, confirming convergent validity, meeting the criteria of adequacy of discriminant validity proposed by Chin (1998) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	PBC	Ent	Inf	VC	Int	PI	Att	Per	SN	Viv
Perceived Behavioural Control	**0,883**									
Entertainment	0,061	**0,804**								
Information	-0,059	0,025	**0,775**							
Virtual Community	0,084	0,284	0,077	**0,799**						
Interactivity	-0,037	-0,049	0,363	0,024	**0,830**					
Purchase Intention	0,033	0,421	-0,030	0,101	0,037	**0,711**				
Attitude	0,001	0,540	-0,062	0,415	-0,016	0,331	**0,843**			
Permission	-0,005	0,357	-0,214	0,585	0,017	0,260	0,521	**0,839**		
Subjective Norms	0,006	-0,05	-0,01	-0,01	0,152	070	-0,02	-0,02	**0,785**	

		4	7	3			3	2		
Vividness	-0,029	0,116	-0,060	0,052	0,025	0,050	-0,009	0,025	0,102	**0,889**

Table 3 shows all diagonal AVE values exceed the squared correlations between the constructs, hence the results demonstrate the presence of discriminant validity for the measurement model.

CFA was used to examine goodness of model fit. For the CMIN/DF test, a value ≤ 5 ensures an adequate fit between the model proposed and the data (Wheaton et al, 1977). A value close to 0.90 for indices NFI, CFI, TLI and IFI indicates acceptable model fit (*Ho, 2006*); for RMR, a cutoff value of <0.05 indicatesof a very good fit (Kayan, 2011). A RMSEA value <0.08 is an indication of fair fit (Hooper et al, 2008). Results of the present study indicate achievement of cut-off criteria for all fit indicators: CMIN/DF (1.444), CFI (0.955), NFI (0.869), GFI (0.833), IFI (0.956), TLI (0.951), RMR (0.028) and RMSEA (0.040), hence the structural model satisfied the fit indices.

Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
The hypotheses of the research model were tested with a structural equation path model for hypotheses H1, H3, H4, H5 and H6 using the full sample (N = 280). Hypothesis H2 related to the moderating effect of age and gender was tested with one model each. The entire sample was divided into two subgroups according to gender (males and females) and age (≤19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, ≥50).
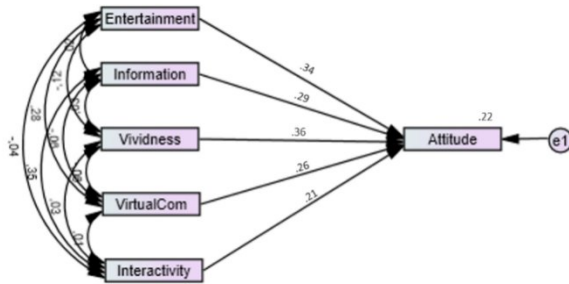
Direct effects analysis

Table 4. Direct effects of independent variables

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Estimate	CR	P*	Outcome
H1a	Entertainment		0.36	7.995	0.000	Supported
H1b	Information		-0.95	-1.098	0.047	Not supported
H1c	Virtual Community	Consumer Attitude	0.33	6.199	0.000	Supported
H1d	Vividness		0.56	1.18	0.237	Not supported
H1e	Interactivity		0.03	0.	0.	Not supp

				6 7	4 9 9	orte d
H3	Consu mer Attitud e	Purcha se Intenti on	0. 35	5 . 0 7	0 . 0 0 0	Sup port ed

*p<0.05

Only hypotheses with a significance level (p-value) under 0.05 are supported (Hair et al., 2010) and their CR must be higher than 1.96 (Awang, 2014). As shown in Table 4, only Entertainment and Virtual Community variables are supported at p < .05 significance level.

H1
Figure 1. Structural models of Direct Effects
Moderation analysis
The effect of Demographics and Permission Marketing as moderator variables was also tested using multi-group analysis. The objective was to determine whether the path coefficients between independent and dependent variables were equivalent across the groups. SEM showed that both age and gender have an impact on Consumer Attitude towards Artists/Brands and similar results were found on the Chi square (χ2) test (Table 5).

Table 5. Results for the Moderation Effect of Age

H. No.	Variables			Individual eff	
	Independent	Moderator	Dependent		
				Estim .	CR
H2a	Entertainmen t	Age	Consumer Attitude	0.74	6.4 9
	Information			0.06	0.6 7
	VirtualCom			0.91	5.7 2
	Vividness			0.48	3.8 0
	Interactivity			0.23	2.7 0

Higher regression values imply greater changes for the mean of the dependent variable for each one-unit shift in the independent variables while other values remain constant. As shown on table 5, higher values were shown for the joint effect of the independent variables and age, as compared to their individual effect, implying that they have a moderation effect. Therefore, hypothesis H2a is supported.

Table 6. Results for the Moderation Effect of Gender

H. No.	Variables			Individual effect			Joint effect			Outc ome
	Indepe ndent	Mode rator	Depe ndent	Est im.	C R	P *	Est im.	C R	P *	
H2 b	Entertai nment	Gende r	Consu mer Attitu de	0.3 6	8. 2 3	0. 00 0	0.8 8	13 .7 5	0. 00 0	Supp orted
	Informa tion			- 0.8 7	- 1. 8 7	0. 06 1	0.9 0	13 .7 3	0. 00 0	Supp orted
	Virtual Com			0.3 5	6. 7 1	0. 00 0	1.2 1	16 .2 4	0. 00 0	Supp orted
	Vividne ss			0.0 8	1. 7 0	0. 09 0	1.3 2	16 .4 3	0. 00 0	Supp orted
	Interacti vity			0.0 5	1. 0 9	0. 27 4	1.1 3	14 .7 7	0. 00 0	Supp orted

Similarly to the results of table 5, higher values were shown for the joint effect of the independent variables and gender, as compared to their individual effect, implying that H2b is supported.
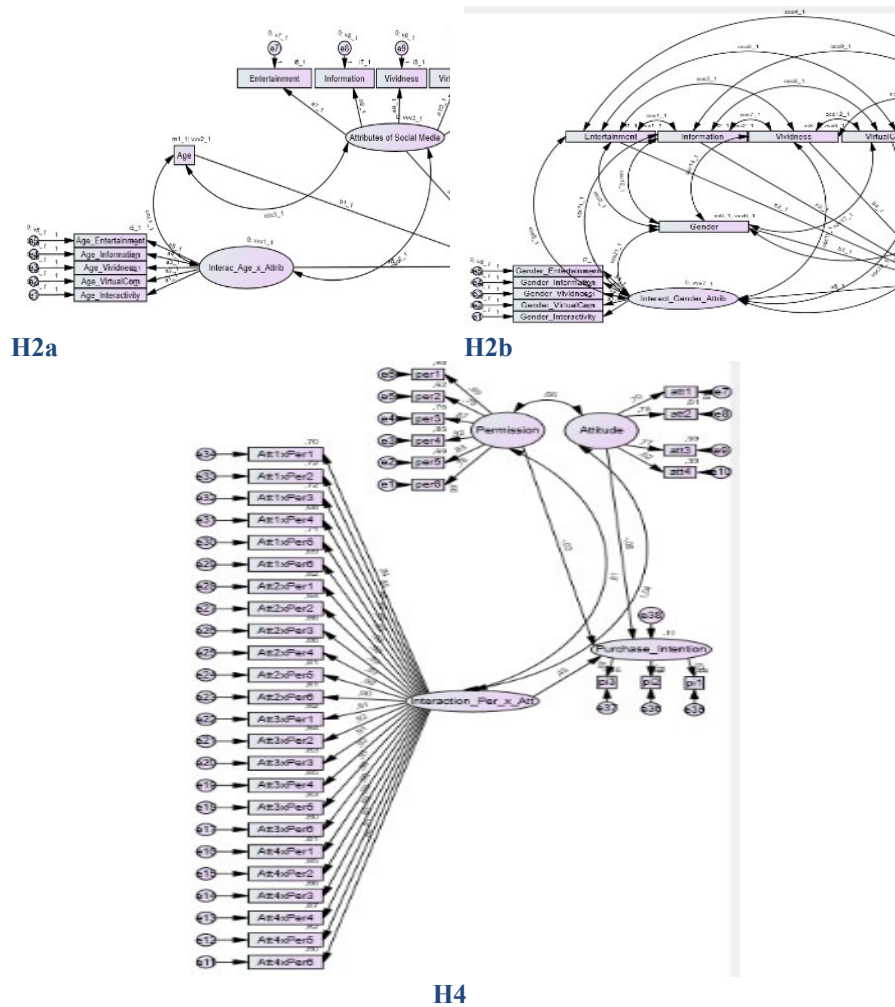
H2a   H2b

H4

Figure 2. Structural models of Moderation Effects

Table 7. Results for the Moderator Effect of variable Permission Marketing

H.No.	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Outcome
H4	Consumer Attitude	Purchase Intention	0.346	0.68	5.071	0.000	Supported

As for the Permission Marketing moderating effect, the variable showed stronger and significant effects on Purchase Intention, supporting H4.

Mediation Analysis
The mediation analysis was conducted by treating the Attributes of Social Media (Entertainment, Information, Virtual Community, Vividness and Interactivity) as independent variables, Purchase Intention as dependent variable, and Subjective Norms as mediator (see Table 8).

Table 6. Mediation analysis

#	Relationship	Direct effect	Indirect effect	P-value	Conclusion	
H 5	Entertainment > Subjective Norms > Purchase Intention	0.431	-0.002	0.425	Not supported	
	Information > Subjective Norms > Purchase Intention	-0.077	-0.006	0.239	Not supported	
	Virtual Community > Subjective Norms > Purchase Intention	0.007	-0.001	0.671	Not supported	
	Vividness > Subjective Norms > Purchase Intention	0.101	0.007	0.210	Not supported	
	Interactivity > Subjective Norms > Purchase Intention	0.067	0.012	0.231	Not supported	
H	Entertainment > Perceived Behavioural	0.040	0.000	0.728	Not supported	

6	Control > Purchase Intention					
	Information > Perceived Behavioural Control > Purchase Intention	-0.040	0.000	0.763	Not supported	
	Virtual Community > Perceived Behavioural Control > Purchase Intention	0.074	0.000	0.229	Not supported	
	Vividness > Perceived Behavioural Control > Purchase Intention	0.037	0.000	0.857	Not supported	
	Interactivity > Perceived Behavioural Control > Purchase Intention	-0.016	0.000	0.896	Not supported	

P values were non-significant in all cases. Thus, both H5 and H6 are rejected.

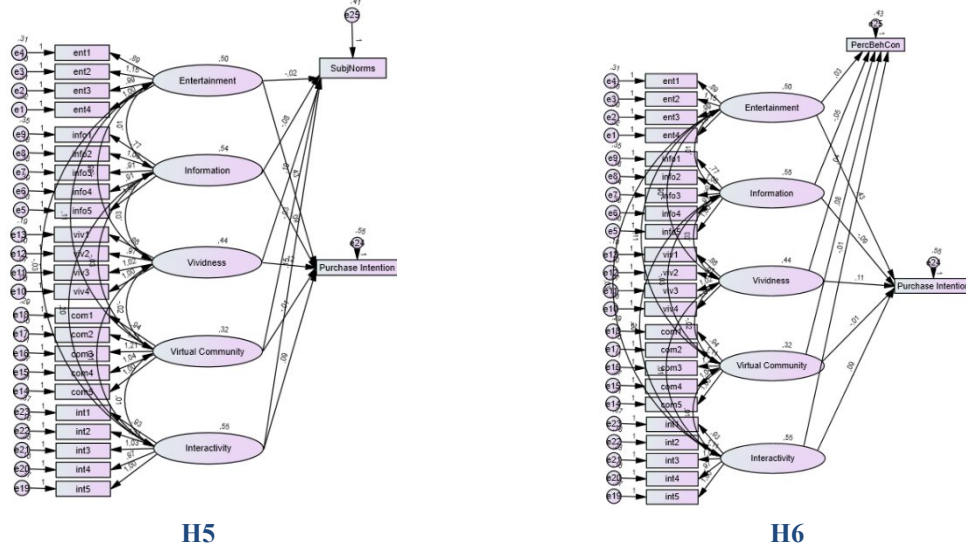
H5   H6

Figure 3. Structural models of Mediation Effects

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Table 7. Research Hypotheses

#	Hypotheses	Supported
H1	Attributes of Social Media have a significant impact on Consumer Attitude toward Artist/brand	Partially
H1a	Entertainment positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	No
H1b	Information positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	Yes
H1c	Virtual Community positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	No
H1d	Vividness positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	No
H1e	Interactivity positively affects Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	Yes
H2	Demographics have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	Yes
H2a	Age of consumer moderates the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	Yes
H2b	Gender of consumer moderates the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand	Yes
H3	Consumer Attitude towards Artist/brand positively affects Purchase Intention	Yes
H4	Permission marketing positively moderates the relationship between Consumer Attitude toward Artist/brand and Purchase Intention	Yes
H5	Subjective Norms mediate the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Purchase Intention	No

H6	Perceived Behavioural Control mediates the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Purchase Intention	No

DISCUSSION

This empirical analysis sheds light on a set of interesting insights, specifically those related to the attributes of social media. entertainment and virtual communities demonstrated a positive effect on consumer attitude. As stated earlier in this paper, entertainment contributes to building virtual communities around artists and also reinforces their emotional connection with brands (Sheth & Kim, 2011). Virtual communities have been traditionally considered a non-profitable business model and most of them have only generated revenue from advertising (Kim and Koh, 2004), but in recent years these communities have become a very successful business model, since they allow brands and creators to engage and interact extensively with their members; additionally, online communities bring together active participants, unlike conventional social media platforms that attract mostly passive audiences (Chatelier, 2023). This is valuable for both creators and brands, since users tend to share their positive experiences and this information will result in a stronger product image and influence people to make a purchase decision (Ayunu, 2024).

On the other hand, demographics showed a significant effect on Consumer Attitude in this research. Previous studies confirmed the role of demographic variables on the purchase intention (Kumar and Parmar, 2018; Bhat et al, 2021; Fekete-Farkas et al, 2021). Suman et al (2019) found that females were more willing to satisfy their need of social interaction and emotional satisfaction and buy items that fulfil their emotional and social needs, while males are more functionally motivated and will be highly concerned regarding saving time and money. Therefore, brands must adapt their marketing strategies in order to attract the attention of the consumers they could be interested in.

Our results demonstrated that Consumer Attitude had a positive influence on Purchase Intention, which confirms findings by Wang et al (2023), Khan et al (2022), Charton-Vachet et al (2020) and Venugopal (2023). Attitudes are context-dependent and related to particular objects or situations; understanding these attitudes is crucial for brands and marketing agencies so they can position their brands in the market and distinguish them from competitors, while appealing to specific consumer preferences.

Unsurprisingly, Permission Marketing tested positively and significantly in our study, resulting a primary factor leading to purchase behaviour, as confirmed by Salem, Althuwaini & Habib (2018), Khalifa (2023), Qotrunnada and Aprilanty (2024), among others. Permission marketing is an effective way to create relationships with potential customers, with financial advantages over traditional marketing channels. Upon choosing to receive commercial messages from a specific brand, users are more likely to be high quality leads for marketers, because they already have a demonstrated interest in their products. Thus, permission marketing helps to build more valuable relationships and interactions with potential future customers.

In our study, variables associated with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control) showed no mediator effect on the relationship between Attributes of Social Media and Purchase Intention. These results coincide with those by Peña-García et al (2020) and Suk et al (2021) but contradicts those by Ham et al (2015), Xu et al (2022) and Khaulia (2022). These differences could be explained by certain factors that represent limitations of the Theory of Planned Behaviour such as emotions, past experiences, and economic or environmental factors. All these factors may have an impact on the purchase intention and could explain different behaviours of the same consumer or different consumers in different stages of their lives. This would imply that even if the consumers have the intention to buy, factors such as their financial status, past experiences or emotions would potentially prevent them from buying.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of the current study were in line with our existing knowledge on the role of permission-based social media marketing in generating purchase intention towards visual indie artists as brands. These artists need to know their audiences, build empathy with them and be active on trendy social media platforms. Large communities with extensive engagement will represent a launching pad for success and the creation of a human brand and these artists will benefit enormously from understanding how this works to stand out in a more and more competitive and crowded environment.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study provide valuable insights on certain relationships between social media, demographics, permission marketing and the theory of planned behaviour. However, the relationship between social influence and consumers' behaviour is relatively complex and cannot be explained entirely by a single mechanism, but evidences a process of multiple potential causal relationships, which highlights the need for different approaches to exploring models, as well as a more complex psychological mechanism in the research model.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study has limitations related to the amount of gathered data and the platforms used to collect such data. For instance, the data collection was solely done online through Instagram and YouTube. If more platforms were collected, data from a wider audience could have been captured. Still, the theoretical contributions of this study represent a good start for further research on the subject and they may be used to explore other paths related to human brands. This is particularly important for indie visual artists, because of the strong bond between an artist and his followers, augmented by the continuity of artworks being released and the pleasure that comes with it..

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