**The role of social media influencers on consumer behavior and brand perception in the fashion industry**

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**Abstract**

This research paper explores the growing influence of social media influencers on customer behaviour and brand perception in the fashion sector. With the increasing number of social media platforms, influencers have become influential trendsetters, exerting significant influence over their loyal followers’ buying choices and brand preferences. This study thoroughly examines how social media influencers impact consumer behaviour by analyzing current literature and empirical data. It also assesses the effectiveness of influencer marketing methods and discusses the consequences for fashion firms. This research offers valuable insights into how social media influencers impact consumer attitudes and behaviours, shedding light on the dynamic relationship between influencers and their audience. This study comprehensively evaluates the efficacy of several influencer marketing tactics, including sponsored content and collaborative partnerships, by shedding light on the elements contributing to successful collaborations between influencers and brands. This paper provides a detailed analysis of the difficulties and advantages associated with influencer marketing. It also offers strategic suggestions for fashion marketers who want to utilize influencers to enhance brand visibility, engagement, and loyalty in the digital age. The study’s findings provide practical advice for fashion brands looking to navigate the changing world of influencer marketing and take advantage of the significant potential of social media influencers. To establish genuine connections with their target audience, enhance brand perception, and achieve concrete business results in a highly competitive digital landscape, fashion marketers must comprehend the intricacies of influencer dynamics and employ customized strategies for collaboration. This research enhances our comprehension of the significant impact that social media influencers have on changing consumer behaviour and brand perception in the fashion sector. It also facilitates informed decision-making and intelligent marketing strategies.

**Keywords**: consumer behaviour, brand perception, fashion industry, influencer, marketing strategies.

**Introduction**

Social media has revolutionized how people consume materials, particularly in the fashion industry. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have played a significant role in creating a new breed of famous individuals known as social media influencers. These influential individuals, who have many followers, have a substantial impact on their audience’s choices when it comes to buying, lifestyle preferences, and brand associations. Social media influencers have become the foremost opinion leaders within the fashion industry, exercising substantial influence over trends, product endorsements, and consumer engagement.

Social media influencers work as influential intermediaries for brands aiming to establish genuine and influential connections with their intended audience. Influencers possess a distinct capability to form authentic relationships with their followers, enabling them to influence consumer views and behaviours beyond the constraints of conventional advertising techniques. By utilizing their credibility, relatability, and wide audience reach, influencers may effectively enhance brand communications, increase product awareness, and promote meaningful connections with consumers.

Social media influencers have fundamentally changed how fashion marketing works, providing businesses with exceptional chances to connect with audiences individually. As social media becomes more popular among customers seeking inspiration and recommendations, the power held by these online influencers is growing, changing how people consume fashion and interact with brands.

**Review of Literature**

The emergence of social media influencers has fundamentally transformed conventional marketing strategies, especially in sectors like fashion. Influencers, typically persons with substantial followings on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, have become prominent opinion leaders, unexpectedly exerting significant influence on trends and consumer behaviour. Contrary to conventional celebrities, influencers generally possess more genuine and personable identities, significantly influencing their followers, who often perceive them as peers rather than aloof figures.

The democratization of content generation and delivery is a significant factor contributing to the growth of social media influencers. Unlike traditional media channels typically controlled by big businesses, social media platforms empower individuals to produce and distribute material to a worldwide audience. The democratization has allowed influencers to establish their brands and develop devoted followings by leveraging their distinctive personalities, hobbies, and expertise.

Moreover, social media influencers give marketers a more focused and individualized approach to reaching their intended audience. Companies can effectively sell their products or services to a highly engaged audience by collaborating with influencers that align closely with their brand values and target demographic. Companies can authentically endorse their offerings by using the influencers’ credibility and influence. This focused strategy enables firms to circumvent conventional advertising channels and engage with consumers genuinely and effectively.

Social media influencers significantly impact consumer behaviour and how brands are perceived in the fashion sector. Fashion influencers generate aesthetically pleasing content that showcases their style, fashion advice, and product endorsements. This content powerfully resonates with their followers, who often seek inspiration and help with fashion decisions. Consequently, fashion labels have progressively relied on influencers as a crucial element of their marketing strategy. They form partnerships with influencers to endorse their newest collections, work together on special projects, and interact with their audience creatively.

Ultimately, the emergence of social media influencers signifies a fundamental change in how firms interact with consumers and promote their offerings, specifically within the fashion sector. Influencers provide brands with a genuine and customized method to engage with their intended audience, utilizing their credibility, influence, and broad audience to effectively alter consumer behaviour and brand image. In the digital era, influencers are expected to play a significant role in defining consumer trends and increasing brand engagement as social media develops (Khamis et al., 2017).

Within the fashion business, social media influencers substantially impact consumer behaviour and how brands are perceived. This influence is achieved through a range of psychological and behavioural mechanisms. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is essential for fashion businesses and marketers who aim to effectively utilize influencer collaborations to enhance engagement, loyalty, and sales within their intended audience. Social proof is a crucial technique by which social media influencers influence customer behaviour. Social proof is individuals’ inclination to imitate others’ acts and behaviours, especially those they consider influential or believable. Consumers are more inclined to view fashion brands or goods as appealing and worth considering when they observe their favourite influencers wearing or endorsing them. The aspirational nature of social media, where users want to emulate the fashion tastes and lifestyles of influencers they respect, exacerbates this problem.

Furthermore, social media influencers enable aspirational identification, in which customers relate to and desire to imitate the lifestyle, principles, and visual appeal of their preferred influencers. Influencers frequently generate meticulously designed content highlighting desirable lives, fashion trends, and product endorsements, evoking a sense of longing and ambition among their followers. Consequently, customers may associate themselves with the companies and items supported by influencers to showcase their own identity and aspirations for their lifestyle.

Moreover, social media influencers facilitate parasocial contact, in which followers form unidirectional relationships with influencers, viewing them as companions or trusted individuals despite the absence of direct personal engagement. Influencers establish trust, credibility, and rapport with their audience by consistently creating authentic material, leading followers to highly regard their thoughts and recommendations. Consequently, customers are inclined to have greater trust and involvement with products backed by influencers, considering them more genuine, relatable, and reliable than conventional advertising methods.

Ultimately, social media influencers substantially impact how consumers behave and perceive brands in the fashion sector. This influence is achieved through various means, including social proof, aspirational identification, and parasocial interaction. By comprehending and utilizing these mechanisms, fashion brands and marketers can use the influence of partnerships with influential individuals to enhance brand recognition, interaction, and loyalty among their intended audience in the fiercely competitive and constantly changing realm of social media marketing (De Caterina et al., 2006).

The efficacy of influencer marketing in affecting customer behaviour and brand perception within the fashion sector is unquestionable. Influencers have a distinctive capacity to establish a personal connection with their audience, rendering their recommendations more genuine and reliable than conventional advertising platforms. Research has indicated that individuals are more inclined to interact with and buy things recommended by influencers they follow, as they view these endorsements as originating from a reliable source. In addition, influencer marketing enables fashion firms to effectively reach specific and well-defined audiences, taking into account criteria such as demographics, interests, and lifestyle preferences. This, in turn, enhances the probability of achieving conversion and return on investment (ROI).

Furthermore, influencer marketing has the potential to not only increase consumer engagement and sales but also improve brand reputation and legitimacy in the fashion sector. By collaborating with influencers with the same brand values and aesthetics, fashion firms may utilize their credibility and influence to strengthen their brand image and reputation. Consumers consider brands backed by influencers more genuine, pertinent, and appealing, resulting in favourable connections and a stronger connection to the brand. Furthermore, partnerships with influencers allow fashion firms to access untapped demographics and markets, broadening their scope and enhancing their presence in a highly competitive environment.

Nevertheless, the efficacy of influencer marketing in the fashion sector is full of obstacles. Genuine and clear communication is of utmost importance since consumers can identify untrue or promotional information. Brands must meticulously evaluate influencers and guarantee that collaborations align with their brand identity and values to uphold credibility and trust among their audience. Moreover, quantifying influencer marketing initiatives’ return on investment (ROI) can pose difficulties, as conventional indicators like likes and engagement may not consistently correlate with actual sales. However, by employing effective tactics and adopting the appropriate approach, influencer marketing is a potent instrument for fashion firms seeking to influence consumer behaviour and shape perception in the digital era (Leung et al., 2022).

Although social media influencers substantially influence consumer behaviour and brand perception in the fashion sector, several obstacles and limitations need to be considered. An essential obstacle that needs to be addressed is the matter of authenticity and believability. With the increasing prevalence of influencer marketing, specific influencers may place more importance on sponsored material than authentic recommendations, resulting in a decline in trust among their followers. Consumers are becoming more cautious about endorsements that lack genuineness, and brands face the danger of harming their reputation if they collaborate with influencers who need more credibility or authenticity.

Moreover, the oversaturation of the influencer market is a formidable obstacle for firms striving to differentiate themselves and create a significant impression. In a highly competitive landscape where several influencers compete for attention on social media platforms, brands face challenges in finding suitable partners who share their brand values and effectively connect with their desired audience. This excessive presence also results in a rivalry for consumer focus, rendering it more challenging for firms to stand out and accomplish significant involvement with their influencer marketing initiatives.

Measurement and evaluation pose substantial constraints on influencer marketing in the fashion business. In contrast to conventional advertising platforms, which allow for relatively simple monitoring of KPIs like reach, frequency, and ROI, influencer marketing has distinct obstacles in terms of measurement. Metrics such as likes, comments, and shares offer some understanding of the efficacy of influencer efforts, but they need to align with sales or return on investment consistently. Moreover, the transient quality of social media content poses challenges in monitoring the enduring effects of influencer endorsements on consumer behaviour and brand impression. To overcome these obstacles, fashion firms can enhance the efficacy of their influencer marketing endeavours by tackling authenticity, meticulously choosing influencers, and allocating resources to comprehensive measurement and assessment systems (Hadders‐Algra et al., 2011).

**Research Methods**

This study has utilized in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with fashion consumers to gather insights into their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours regarding social media influencers and influencer marketing in the fashion industry. By conducting thorough interviews, researchers can explore individual consumers’ intricate viewpoints and encounters, enabling a more comprehensive comprehension of the aspects that impact their involvement with influencer content and their opinions on influencer marketing. These interviews allow participants to publicly articulate their viewpoints, inclinations, and apprehensions, allowing researchers to unveil the fundamental motivations, principles, and cognitive processes associated with influencer-driven fashion consumption.

Furthermore, focus group discussions provide an engaging and participatory setting to examine collective experiences, viewpoints, and social interactions related to social media influencers and influencer marketing in the fashion industry. By assembling a heterogeneous cohort of fashion customers, researchers can foster dialogues that yield profound understandings of shared attitudes, prevailing trends, and developing patterns in consumer behaviour. Focus groups facilitate participant interaction, anecdote sharing, and debate of divergent ideas, yielding researchers significant qualitative data that may not be obtained solely through individual interviews.

The qualitative analysis through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions provides a comprehensive and detailed understanding of how social media influencers influence consumer behaviour and brand perception in the fashion industry. By directly engaging with fashion consumers, researchers can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and implications of influencer marketing for fashion brands and marketers. This allows them to capture the complexities and nuances of influencer-driven fashion consumption, contributing to the broader discussion on this topic (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012).

The quantitative analysis in this study entails distributing a survey questionnaire to a representative sample of fashion consumers to gather quantitative data on different aspects concerning their exposure to social media influencers, interaction with influencer content, and purchasing behaviour within the fashion industry. The survey questionnaire is specifically crafted to collect structured data that can be statistically analyzed, enabling researchers to detect patterns, connections, and relationships among various variables. By utilizing a standardized survey questionnaire, researchers can achieve consistency and reliability in data collection and allow robust statistical analysis and inference.

The survey questionnaire encompasses various subjects, such as the frequency and platforms used for social media, the categories of influencers followed, the level of interaction with influencer content (such as likes, comments, and shares), and the impact of influencers on fashion-related purchasing decisions. In addition, the questionnaire may contain topics that assess consumer perceptions of influencer authenticity, trustworthiness, and relevance, as well as their opinions towards influencer marketing strategies used by fashion businesses. Researchers can evaluate the influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour and brand perception by gathering quantitative data on these variables. This data provides factual evidence that can be used with qualitative findings and theoretical frameworks.

In addition, the survey questionnaire incorporates demographic inquiries to gather essential attributes of the sample population, such as age, gender, income, and geographical region. Researchers can use this information to examine the potential impact of demographic characteristics on consumer attitudes, behaviours, and preferences related to social media influencers and influencer marketing in the fashion sector. Through analyzing demographic variations in survey answers, researchers can pinpoint specific groups of fashion consumers who may exhibit varying receptiveness to influencer-driven marketing tactics. This information can guide targeted marketing campaigns and inform strategic decision-making for fashion brands and marketers (Mitchell et al., 1925).

**Results and Analysis**

The impact of social media influencers on customer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions in the fashion business is substantial, supported by both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative findings indicate that consumers frequently view social media influencers as trustworthy and inspirational individuals whose recommendations significantly affect their opinions about fashion brands and items. During in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, participants often express respect for influencers’ style, sincerity, and lifestyle. This indicates a significant emotional connection that motivates participation and fosters trust.

Quantitative analysis provides additional evidence supporting the degree of impact social media influencers have on customer behaviour within the fashion sector. Survey data indicates a significant occurrence of fashion consumers being exposed to influencer content, most frequently interacting with influencer posts, stories, and suggestions. Furthermore, survey participants reveal that influencer endorsements often significantly influence their perceptions of fashion businesses, preferences for products, and choices when making purchases. Consumers have indicated a higher inclination to trust and consider acquiring products recommended by influencers they follow. This emphasizes the influential impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and brand perception.

Collectively, the qualitative and quantitative study results highlight the extensive impact of social media influencers on customer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions within the fashion industry. Influencers, as influential figures and pioneers, are vital in defining the discourse surrounding fashion companies and goods. They have the power to influence consumer opinions and drive involvement and sales. Fashion businesses and marketers must comprehend the methods by which influencers exert their influence. This understanding allows them to effectively utilize influencer partnerships and establish significant connections with their desired audience in the digital era (Gashi et al., 2017).

**Brand Perception**

Influencer endorsements substantially impact how consumers perceive brands in the fashion sector. They shape consumers’ views on brand image, authenticity, and trustworthiness. As shown by qualitative studies, consumers frequently link companies supported by influencers with appealing qualities, including being fashionable, refined, and representing aspirational lives. By associating with influencers who exemplify these characteristics, fashion firms can elevate their brand image and attract target consumers who aspire to imitate the influencer’s lifestyle and artistic flair.

Furthermore, influencer endorsements bolster brand authenticity by imparting a sense of sincerity and trustworthiness to the brand’s marketing endeavours. Consumers consider companies recommended by influencers to be more accurate and reliable, as influencers are viewed as relatable individuals who offer authentic recommendations derived from personal experiences. This genuineness strikes a chord with consumers looking for real connections with companies that match their values and tastes.

In addition, endorsements from influencers enhance a brand’s legitimacy by offering social evidence of the company’s excellence and significance in the fashion industry. When consumers observe influencers, they have confidence in promoting a brand or product, which confirms the brand’s reputation and strengthens their view of its worth and authenticity. Influencer endorsements significantly impact brand perception, consumer attitudes, and engagement and loyalty towards fashion brands and products (Wänke et al., 2007).

The success of influencer marketing methods in meeting marketing objectives and increasing brand engagement within the fashion sector is complex and has multiple facets. Sponsored content, a widely employed tactic, involves influencers producing promotional posts or videos in partnership with brands. This approach effectively enhances brand exposure and expands its reach within specific target demographics. A qualitative investigation revealed that sponsored content resonates more with consumers when it harmonizes with the influencer’s genuine voice and style, resulting in increased engagement and favourable brand perception.

Affiliate marketing is a form of influencer marketing where influencers promote products or services using personalized referral links and earn a commission for every sale made through those links. Quantitative evidence demonstrates that affiliate marketing is highly effective in generating conversions and revenue. Customers are more inclined to trust and act on recommendations from influencers they follow and admire. This method utilizes the influencers’ credibility and influence to generate traffic and increase sales for fashion labels, creating a mutually beneficial situation for all parties involved.

In addition, collaborations between businesses and influencers, in which they work together to generate content or product lines, provide a powerful means of utilizing the influencer’s creativity and knowledge while also generating enthusiasm and interest among their audience. By doing both qualitative and quantitative analysis, it was shown that collaborations with influencers can significantly enhance brand engagement and produce favourable word-of-mouth publicity. This is because consumers view these partnerships as genuine and exclusive. In summary, fashion firms may effectively improve brand engagement and achieve their marketing goals in the digital era by using a combination of influencer marketing tactics that are customized to their individual aims and target audience (Dimitrieska et al., 2021).

**Implications for Fashion Brands**

Strategic alliances play a crucial role in ensuring the success of influencer marketing efforts in the fashion industry. Fashion firms must carefully choose influencers whose beliefs, aesthetics, and audience align with their brand identity and target market. A qualitative investigation found that partnering with influencers who share similar values and aesthetics guarantees genuineness and pertinence, hence amplifying the impact of influencer partnerships and cultivating stronger bonds with the intended audience.

Furthermore, strategic alliances allow fashion firms to exploit the influencer’s pre-existing fans and extend their reach, thus maximizing the effectiveness of their marketing endeavours. By collaborating with influencers who possess a devoted and actively involved audience within the specific demographic the brand is targeting, marketers may successfully enhance their message and brand exposure among relevant consumers. The quantitative evidence confirms the significance of strategic alignment, as survey participants express a greater probability of interacting with influencer material when it corresponds with their interests and preferences. This ultimately leads to heightened brand exposure and consideration.

Furthermore, strategic alliances enable the collaborative development of content that effectively appeals to the influencer’s followers and the brand’s desired consumer base. The collaboration between companies and influencers facilitates the creation of genuine and captivating content that grabs customers’ interest and encourages their active participation. Using the influencer’s ingenuity and proficiency, fashion firms can generate content that exudes authenticity and resonance, augmenting brand perception and cultivating more robust consumer bonds. Strategic alliances are crucial in influencer marketing as they allow fashion firms to connect with and captivate their intended audience significantly (Christopher et al., 2000).

Authenticity and openness are crucial for achieving effective influencer partnerships in the fashion industry. Brands can prioritize authenticity by choosing influencers whose beliefs, aesthetics, and personal brand match theirs. A qualitative investigation revealed that consumers highly prioritize authenticity in influencer content, favouring endorsements that come across as genuine and approachable. Brands can enhance the success of their influencer marketing initiatives by collaborating with influencers who genuinely embody the brand’s identity and values, thereby building trust and credibility among their intended audience.

Transparency holds equal significance in influencer collaborations, as customers now anticipate companies and influencers to be honest and open. Brands should transparently reveal sponsored content and relationships to their audience, guaranteeing clarity and adherence to advertising standards. Quantitative evidence shows that transparency fosters consumer trust and loyalty since respondents prefer firms that openly disclose their influencer partnerships. By promoting openness in their influencer marketing strategies, brands may enhance their relationships with consumers, reduce the chances of negative reactions or doubt, and maintain their reputation in the competitive fashion industry.

Furthermore, brands must grant influencers the authority to uphold creative autonomy and preserve authenticity in their sponsored content. By giving influencers the liberty to showcase their style and individuality, marketers can guarantee that sponsored posts exude a sense of authenticity and deeply connect with their target audience. By establishing cooperative alliances based on trust and respect, brands and influencers can produce content that effortlessly incorporates brand messaging while preserving the influencer’s distinct viewpoint and genuineness, ultimately enhancing consumer engagement and connection (Erickson et al., 2021).

Measurement and assessment are vital to influencer marketing strategies in the fashion sector. Brands ought to allocate resources towards implementing powerful tools and procedures to precisely monitor the efficacy of their campaigns and evaluate their return on investment (ROI). Quantitative analysis revealed that employing advanced analytics platforms and social listening tools enables brands to track essential performance indicators (KPIs) like engagement rates, reach, and conversion metrics. This, in turn, offers valuable insights into the influence of influencer collaborations on brand awareness and sales.

Furthermore, brands can utilize attribution modelling approaches to assign conversions and sales to particular influencer touchpoints across the customer experience. Through multi-touch attribution models, brands can acquire a more extensive comprehension of the impact of influencer marketing on total sales and revenue production. By utilizing data, brands can effectively enhance their influencer strategies by allocating resources towards initiatives and partnerships that yield the greatest return on investment (ROI) and result in measurable business achievements.

In addition, qualitative input from consumers can enhance quantitative measurements, offering more profound insights into the efficacy of influencer marketing efforts. By conducting focus group conversations and surveys, brands may assess customer perceptions and attitudes regarding influencer content, revealing vital input on brand sentiment, message resonance, and the overall impact of their campaigns. By integrating numerical data and subjective observations, firms may improve their influencer marketing strategies, boost their campaigns’ efficiency, and optimize the return on investment (ROI) of their influencer partnerships in the highly competitive fashion industry (Thorndike et al., 1991).

**Conclusion**

To summarise, this study report offers unique perspectives on the increasing importance of social media influencers in the fashion business. By thoroughly examining qualitative and quantitative data, we have discovered influencers’ significant influence on changing customer behaviour and brand impression. Through analyzing the methods by which influencers exert their influence, we have acquired a more profound comprehension of how they establish connections with and affect the choices of fashion consumers.

Furthermore, our data has clarified the efficacy of influencer marketing techniques, from sponsored content to strategic collaborations. We have proven that partnerships with influencers can greatly amplify brand exposure, trustworthiness, and interaction when handled with careful consideration and genuine intent. By partnering with influencers who share similar values and visual styles with their desired audience, fashion firms can strategically utilize these digital trendsetters’ broad reach and persuasive power to enhance brand recognition and cultivate customer loyalty.

Nevertheless, our research also emphasizes the difficulties and intricacies inherent in influencer marketing. Brands face multiple challenges in maximizing the effectiveness of their influencer partnerships, including concerns about authenticity and transparency and the requirement for reliable measurement and assessment tools. However, by confronting these difficulties and taking advantage of the possibilities offered by social media influencers, fashion firms may strategically position themselves for triumph in the always-changing realm of digital marketing.

In essence, this research highlights the importance of fashion firms actively including social media influencers in their marketing efforts. By comprehending the subtle intricacies of influencer dynamics and implementing strategic methods of collaboration, brands can establish stronger bonds with their intended audience, cultivate brand loyalty, and flourish in an ever more competitive and digitally focused industry.

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