A Paper on Influencers Reshaping the Consumers Preferences in the Fashion Industry – A Consumer Behaviour Study with an Instagram Perspective

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Abstract— **This study investigates the work of popular social media influencers and the impact they have on consumer behavior in the fashion segment. The social media influencer forum chosen are specific to Instagram. We seek to understand if the work of an influencer while posting, uploading a video, endorsing or reviewing a product influences the consumer's behaviour in the Fashion segment. The methodology was based on Qualitative research. We conducted the analysis based on Content and Sentiment. We studied the posting patterns of the bloggers and comment styles of consumers on those respective posts for about 2 months. Also, we considered the fan pages created by the users on Instagram for these 6 bloggers. We also focused our research specifically on posts related to fashion as our main scope of this research is about the aforementioned bloggers and their influence on the consumers. Around 250 comments were taken into consideration of 6 bloggers. The main Key performance indicators were based on Engagement and Volume.**

From this study our results show that consumers do get affected by the activity of the influencers. We feel this was mainly because people trust people, and not brands.

Index Terms— **Social Media Influencers, Instagram, Fashion, Product Reviews & Recommendations, Sentiment Analysis, Content Analysis.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Normally, the only source through which individuals could learn about fashion was from Newspapers or magazines unless and until they were lucky enough to attend fashion shows and glossy runways. However today we get exposed to fashion in so many different ways, one of them being influencers/bloggers.Influencers use platforms like **Instagram, Pinterest&YouTube.** They are knowledgeable about their audience and their needs, and these social media influencers encourage and influence consumers to buy what they want. Runways and fashion magazines might inspire consumers, but they don't always connect on an **emotional level**. Influencer marketing changes the fashion landscape. Consumers see the influencers as regular people like them in an outfit, and suddenly they realize that they can look just as fantastic. It's someone just like you. Real opportunity is lost if the brand doesn't have a social media presence. Just because the branddoesn'tinvest in time and energy or has no adequate knowledge to do it. That's where the influencers come in. Content and audience building are not required with influencer marketing. The influencer covers both the above

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tasks. Partnerships between social media influencers and fashion brands it's very successful. From casual mentions to fashion campaigns, any form of influencer engagement can **boost sales and increase brand recognition.**

II. INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing can be defined "as a process of identifying and activating individuals who influence a specific target audience or medium, to be part of a brand's campaign towards increased reach, sales, or engagement". Influencer marketing is another form of word of mouth marketing but focusing on social media and in a professional manner. It helps in building relations with brands to retain loyal customers and attract new customers through trust and credibility. Influencer marketing tends to be broken into two sub practices: The first one is **earned influencer** marketing and the second is **Paid influencer**. An influence can potentially be a person, group, brand or place. There are many applications towards Influencer marketing. Some marketers use influencer marketing to establish credibility in the market, others to create social media presence and conversations around the brand and the rest to drive online or in-store sales of the products. Therefore, the value that influencer marketing creates can be measured in multiple ways.

Influencer marketing derives its value from 3 sources namely **reach, relevance and resonance.** Reach is measured by the **audience size**. Influencers can **reach millions** of consumers through their social handles and blogs, whereas relevance looks upon the **degree of relevance to the reader**. That is if the content published is relevant to the reader. Resonance counts the **number of activities** an influencer generates by publishing content. Influencers tend to have strong relationships with their trusted audience, as they seem to have a certain trust in the influencer's opinion. To understand the role of influencers in the fashion industry it is imperative to understand different types of influencers.

Overall, the fashion industry is **driven** by influencer marketing as compared to any other industry. Nowadays, the fashion industry is, even more, prone to **using influencers** with a free hand. Fashion Industry being comfortable with influencer marketing offers various ways of **collaboration**

among the bloggers and the brands. This is not just limited to a blog or social media posts but can also include, Instagram handle takeovers, event hosting, modeling or even product design. Early collaboration between bloggers and brands in the **creative process** can pay off as the reach and idea generation is effective as they know their audience.

The English dictionary may have included the word **"Influencer"** only in May 2019, although individuals have been persuading other users on various social media platforms about what, when and how to wear, eat and drink since a very long time. But since 2011, the challenger was being an Instagram Influencer to celebrities and models, as ordinary people were gaining authority over content curation. Even if they were showing different looks, various food habits or complete bullshit, the game began and exploded people ordinary people just like us could make it happen. By this time, aspiration was to become an Instagram Influencer and this was because we were attracted by the lavish lifestyle and the attention they gained.

Overtime, influencer marketing emerged as a major percentage of the money spent by a brand to promote its products in India. **94%** of marketing strategists acknowledge its effectiveness**. 72%** of them are willing to make a larger budget allocation for it.

What next?

Leaving the algorithmic changes aside, the expectations from the audience and brands are changing.The new outfit of the day is **"Sustainability"**. Now, we want online creators to exercise responsibility more than exercising their abs. An influencer also commented on the topic saying, **"Social responsibility is a way to make content, but not template for the future. You need to have an individual voice, have a storyboard in mind, have a focus and understand who you're speaking to and trying to reach with your content". – Kusha Kapila**

What this probably means is that the current range of influencers are not pressured with destruction, as some might believe, but its probably just that the industry is simply evolving, and the smart ones in the lot are just learning how to navigate it and evolve with it.

Platform for influencers:

The most relevant platforms which are used for influencer marketing are –

1. **Fashion Blogs:** Material, fabric, occasions, commentary, descriptionof the outfit is put forward by the influencers in the fashion blogs. They have a highpower in the Fashion industry.
2. **YouTube Videos:**Uploading numerous fashion tips, beauty tips, makeup tutorials help to reach a large audience who are interested in the same category and most importantly help to get a good number ofviewers.
3. **Instagram, Pinterest:** These apps are targetted towards the younger generation. The postingof photos and short videos on a daily basis help get engagement from the audience and reach of the product to the targetted audience.

The Consumers and Decision making in fashion

Consumers are actors on the marketplace stage. Consumers, generally, are often referred as individuals who purchase or consume products and services; however, in terms of buyer and consumer, there's a small difference. Buyers are the people that are acting either as endmost, trade, or official purchasers. Consumer exhibits various behaviour patterns during purchase process and removing goods, services, ideas or experiences. They're eagerly observing the cues of the style industries with which they will set perceptions for fulfilling their needs. Unable to avoid, businesses experience gridlocks where the message isn't reaching their consumers and prospects, with the particular incontrovertible fact that, at times, consumers and prospects face significant blocks in their decision process. If not, each of them should be fully committed, loyal, enthusiastic, repeated consumers; however, this is often not the case. Today the accessibility and transparency of data has deeply influenced the decision-making process; therefore, it's vital to look at what are the obstacles and fiction points that hold prospects becoming consumers, or keeps consumers hesitating from repurchasing. Fashion is of great importance to several consumers; it's defined as "the process of social diffusion by which a replacement style is adopted by some group of consumers." Fashion influences many aspects of our lives; it's both economic and social value and provides individuals with a tool to precise themselves and make an identity. it's therefore important to know the method of deciding within the style industry.

Influencers on Decision Making

The decision making by a consumer in the fashion industry is influenced by varied information that is available through various sources namely – magazines, advertisements, friends, online, family and bloggers. Moreover, a purchase in the field of fashion needs deep interest and a high level of involvement from a consumer. Nowadays, in today's era, social media influencers and other influencers like celebrities, journalists are being known as "the most powerful force in the fashion marketplace." A customer purchasing decision is being influenced by the above mentioned based on their experience, expertise and the ability to put forward their opinion of the product to the consumers.Hence, we can say that the social media influencers play a major role in the field of influencing the consumers and put forward the current trend in front of the consumers as they have an expertise in the field. The consumers therefore are being influenced by the social media influencers in the current era to a larger extent.
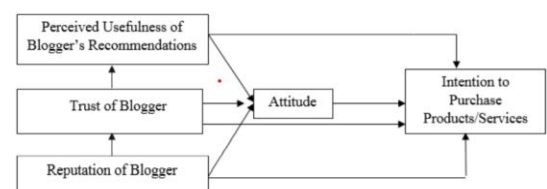
If we have to discuss the consumers buying process, it includes **five stages** –

1. Need Recognition
2. Search for information
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Purchase
5. Post Purchase

Need recognition can be when the influencer recommends on social media a product and the consumer get attracted to the product and follows the content. Information search is the next stage where the consumer searches more about the product the influencer recommended and browses through various serious to know more. After the stage of searching the information, the consumer considers the recommendation of the influencer and makes the final purchases after deeply evaluating the possible alternatives. After the purchase, the consumer would express their feelings through either word of mouth or on social media. Hence, the recommendations of influencers are multifaceted.

Once the consumers have complete trust and faith in the recommendation of the influencer, they would purchase the products without going through the whole process.

III. CONCEPTUAL INTRODUCTION

Social Media – "Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration." The various types of social media are websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis.

Social Media Influencer – "A Social Media Influencer is a **user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry**." They have access to a large audience either in lakhs or millions and hence can convince the audience through their authenticity and reach.

Types of Influencers –

1. Bloggers and Vloggers

Bloggers are people who have a blog dedicated to the category and would publish content daily. To promote their content, they are usually active on all social media platforms to reach out to their blog post.

2. Social Media Sensations

Social media sensations are the people who share peeks of their regular lives on either Instagram or YouTube. They usually do not rely on blogs or content to keep their audience engaged. They have a strong rapport with their audience.

3. Reality TV Stars

The television stars are also known as the "overnight sensation". Usually they are the bathroom singers, home chefs who become household names. They are a source of entertainment yet have a good audience base.

4. Micro-influencers

Micro-influencers are the individuals who have around a few hundred thousand of followers. The main strength is they have a community of fans who are daily engaging with the influencer either by commenting, liking or even mentioning them in their stories

5. Nano Influencers

For small companies, Nano influencers come in handy as they have around a few thousands of followers.

6. Activists

The activists are the individuals who are led by a political or a social cause. Their main mission is to bring in a positive change and influence others at the same time.

7. Journalists

Journalists are the individuals who have the power on media and help influence consumers to change the perception of your brand. In today's era, the journalists have an active role on platforms like Instagram and Twitter.

8. Thought Leaders

The thought leaders are the type of social media influencers who are supporters of cutting-edge innovations. These individuals are usually businessmen or any top-level decision-makers of a big company.

9. Mainstream Celebrities

Without the traditional counterparts, the various types of social media influencers are incomplete. This includes movie actors, sportspersons, singers, models, and other popular figures of the media.

Instagram –

"Instagram is an American photo and video-sharing social networking service".

Instagram Verified Account –

"A verified Instagram account (marked with blue badge/checkmark) means that the **selected profile has been verified by Instagram and is confirmed to be an official and authentic account of a celebrity, public figure or a brand**".

Research Title –

"Influencers reshape consumer preferences in the Fashion Industry – A consumer behaviour study with an Instagram Perspective"

Research Question –

Do Influencers have a direct impact on the consumer behaviour towards fashion on Instagram? Do they engage with the influencers in order to support them?

Objectives of the research -

1. An influencer publishes content regarding apparel and the consumers react to the content plus keep engaging with the influencer through Instagram.

2. Comments posted by the consumers have an impact on how they perceive the content published.

3. Fan Pages created by various users with unique names for the influencers show the factor of encouragement and trust in the influencer.

Need for Research –

The need for the current research is to prove that Instagram influencers play a crucial role in the fashion industry. Influencer becomes effective based on the followers. The followers or the audience for the content published are the consumers. So, if the fashion influencer publishes unique content then, the followership would increase building a frame of trust among consumers. This will have a direct impact on product sales and brand recognition.

The fashion influencers on Instagram have a strong audience base, these audience perceive the content published in various ways. This helps the consumers as it shapes their behaviour towards fashion or outfits. The consumers engage either by commenting on the posts published or crate various fan pages for the influencer.

#OOTD #FashionTheraphy #Fashion are some of the hashtags used by the influencers on Instagram which are then used by the consumers.

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Fashion and Social Media –

The **trending** factors in association with parts of clothing, furniture, etc are usually identified and highlighted by the Fashion industry. The whole industry is closely related to the manufacturing and the selling process of either clothes, accessories, cosmetics and other factors associated with the industry. Various studies have shown the difference between the fashion industry and the **apparel** industry.Mainly because the apparel industry is mostly related to making clothes or mass fashion and the fashion industry is connected closely with **high fashion.** Thus, the difference was identified and discussed and finally was eliminated in the 1970s(Major & Steele, 2017).

The most recent definition of the Fashion Industry is pointed out to defining various styles of clothing or simply the various kinds of styles worn by the people generally which is trending (Major & Steele, 2017). In the research study of Arvanitidou & Gasouka(2013), they said that the industry also contributes to the context of depicting items that are based on the gender differences i.e, feminine and masculine. In the past two centuries, they identified that gender identification is not clearly defined and hence have created cultural uncertainty in terms of **masculine** and **feminine.**The study has specifically highlighted that based on **social construction**;**gender** has been highly depicted.

Fashion is usually related to the concept of looking unique or having **a different outfit**, reshaping themselves whether male or female, and not portraying in the **general outlook** of people, generally. In the fashion industry, designers have to pull up their socks and play a significant role in this aspect.Arvanitidou & Gasouka(2013)"have highlighted dress movements of different periods for depicting the difference in trends that have been developed throughout different times".

Speaking of Fashion, several sections can be shown, such as the production of raw materials, fibers, leather, textiles and fur, which helps in generating fashion goods and products by associating designers, manufacturers and contractors and so on. Once these levels are met, comes the main aspect of retail and sales, which shows the strategies and steps that are taken to reach the fashion goods to the audience targeted. By this we can see the different ways of promotional and advertisement steps which are implemented in the Fashion Sector (Keane & te Velde, 2008). However, the above-mentioned factors also contribute to the advancement of trends in fashion in various categories.Also, there are a few factors such as **political**, **economic**, **technology** and **social** which play a crucial role in **affecting** the fashion trends.

In this context, the use and impact of social media gets highlighted when there are **technological** and **social changes** affecting the Fashion Industry.The above can be shown through the concept of internet technology which includes various **social media platforms** and **online retailers** that are developed to establish various **trends** in fashion and the industry. However, there was a study conducted by "Arvanitidou & Gasouka(2013) which mainly aimed at the concept of unisex style that has been associated with gender differences in the fashion industry." This shows that various studies have not been aimed at Social media's association with the purchase decisions of consumers as well as the factors.

As mentioned above, Social media plays a significant role in **improving** communication among brands and consumers in the Fashion Industry. This contemplates a very good relationship between the purchase decisions/ the process used and the **purchases made by a consumer via social media.** The higher number of purchases provides a higher profit for the entire industry which focuses on the importance of consumers purchase decisions. For the fashion industry, this has brought a different kind of **culture online** so that the consumers across the world can easily be conscious of **the variety** of **trends** that are being conveyed and delivered by the industry.(Magids, et al., 2015)

Instagram & Influencer Marketing – A Connection

There is no other industry except the Fashion industry which is also known as an **early adopter** as they adopted the technique of influencer marketing. Influencers usually **daily** market products of different numerous brands. Most of the influencers on Instagram are an example for young, easily accessible and successful or **"on fleek".**

For brands especially, the role of social media is becoming different. As there are various ways to become famous on social media, it is almost impossible for a brand to generate **organically.** However, the brand still uses people as **ambassadors.**That is the moment an influencer marketing has played a game, where influential and popular people on social media endorse the brand to the particular target audience.

- **Influencer marketing: why does it work?**

We live in a period where customers want to settle on their own choices. Simultaneously, these choices are unequivocally impacted by the individuals around us who share their experiences with various brands and items employing social media. Influencer marketing is booming lately. Rise in 2014 had been slow and , it is currently certain that, since 2017, we can never again deny the pattern.
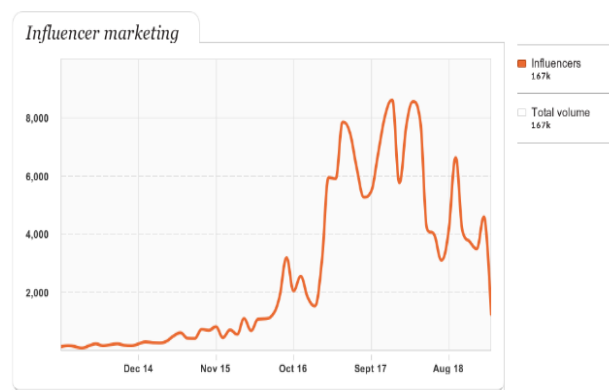
It can be seen from the chart above that, Influencer Marketing is growing year by year and at a very good pace which cannot be neglected by brands nor the fashion Industry.

The volume of Influencers is increasing in a tremendous speed.

Individuals trust Individuals, not brands, and this is the reason why influencer marketing is one powerful marketing tool, and mainly in the fashion industry. There are many studies which are conducted which have proven that word out mouth generates 2x sales as compared to paid advertising.

The retention rate is 37% higher when the consumers buy via word of mouth – according to an article by Forbes. Influencer marketing is a perfect "social proof" which means that individuals seek information about the products before they make the purchase or share their review whether its good or bad choice.

- **Fashion loves Instagram: The successes-**

The most used hashtag on Instagram is **#fashion**, according to social media monitoring tool. And thus, we can say that there is a match made between the influencer, fashion and Instagram.
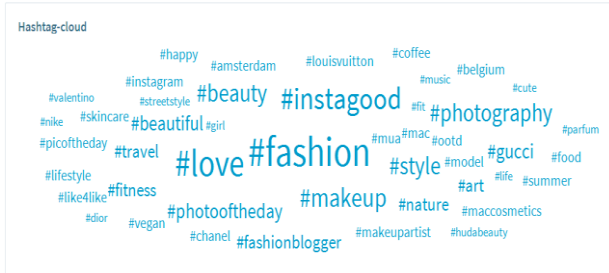
#fashion is the most used hashtag, according to hashtag-cloud data.

- **Is influencer marketing here to stay?**

Like it or not, influencer marketing seems as though it might last longer. However, there are as yet certain conditions that should be considered. For instance, the association between the influencer and your brand image must be certifiable and genuine, else it is entirely more than paid advertising, and consequently loses its effect. Give the influencer the space to even now act naturally concerning your brand image and look past simply the quantity of followers your influencer may have. It is regularly substantially more powerful and increasingly worthwhile to utilize numerous smaller influencers rather than one major one. These smaller influencers can regularly reach accurately that target bunch that you, as a brand, need to speak to.

The value of micro-influencers is now being reckoned as a major marketing force. Micro-influencers have a small following generally less than 1,00,000 but still capable of reaching the vast audience that they have gathered.

According to the US Internet marketing company fish bat, collaborating with a micro-influencer yields positive results to the brand.The main strength of micro-influencers over macro is that they have a **genuine interaction** with their audience.

A meaningful relationship can be achieved for the fashion industry with the help of the followers gained by the micro-influencer. Micro-influencers derive**good, unique content** and take pride in their relationships with audiences. Micro-influencers also offer the fashion industry access to a diverse and vast audience which is curated through content published by the influencer.

Besides reaching wide audiences, micro-influencers are effectively able to connect with consumers from **various backgrounds, cultures and interests.** As a micro-influencer has a broad audience and not narrow as they prefer, simply put they **benefit** those in the fashion industry.

Source - https://www.influencer.agency/influencer-marketing-in-the-fashion-industry/

Fashion and Social Media – An overview

Back then, the fashion industry was handled by a handful of designers, but now we can see a tremendous change because of the emergence of social media. Social media has shaped trends either by those who by the product or those who follow the brands.

- **What can the audience do?**

Nowadays, the consumers have started creating their styles by mixing and experimenting with their followers on social media especially Instagram and have acquired a large number of audiences. These consumers are now an influencer for their set of audiences and hence the traditional opinion setters aren't very influential as they were back then.

(**According to statistics reported in the Fashion Monitor and Consultancy report, The Rise of the Influencers, just 27% of US, and 23% of British consumers reported that their purchasing choices were "influenced by 'great' brand advertising". What's more, fashion marketers reported allocating between 30% and 75% of their total marketing budget to influencer marketing. Fifty-three percent said that they spent "a sizable chunk" of their budget on "social media community growth and engagement")**

- **Utilizing the reach of the Influencer**

The fashion brands would be keen to work with the influencers who have talent and can benefit the brand in ways like reach, followers & mentions. Looking at his or his number of followers, brands can tap the reach of the influencer.

Example - "Burberry worked with Brooklyn Beckham on the #THISISBRIT campaign, where his photography sat well alongside pictures by seasoned professionals".

"While they received significantly more likes on his own Instagram profile, Burberry did receive a lot of press attention for working with the youngster".

- **Consumers - the opinion makers**

Style, season, out of season is something that used to be dictated by Fashion and the industry. With the help of social media, consumers are now sharing their creations and attract a large number of followers who like and admire their taste. Universally, Consumers are now shaping the fashion industry by making opinions on media platforms or the creation of content for the same.

Facts -

1. **"84% ofMillennials** are likely to be influencedintomaking a purchasebasedon the user-generatedcontentbystrangers who have experienced the productorservice."
2. "The photo-sharing mobile application designedforstorytellingisconsidered a **perfect**fitfor**fashion**whichreliesheavilyon powerful visual and graphics."
3. "More than 80% of them use their phone to take pictures to post on social media. The **18-24** age group is the most **active on Instagram."**
4. "The study also observed that Indian users not only share pictures but also **follow brands**on**Instagram.**"

5. **"Over 50% of** Indian Instagrammers have frequently purchased products and services from the brands they follow. They also follow brands to keep in touch with the latest products, learn about deals and shop for products online — **one of the big motivators for fashion."**

Source – Economic Times.

Instagram Demographics of 2020 –
1. **Monthly Active users** are 1 Billion+
2. **Largest Age Category** – 18-24
3. **Gender** – 52% women
4. **Location** – Urban
5. **India** – 73 million Instagram users (Ranks 2nd)

Source   -
https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/

Literature Review –
1. A paper was published in 2018 about "The impact of attitudes towards influencers amongst millennial fashion buyers"

The main aim was to identify influencers and the way they affect the behavior of millennial buyers in the process of consuming fashion goods. The paper examines the literature on opinion leaders, ranging from the origins of the concept to its developments within the context of the Internet. The shift from influential to influencer and the different types of influencers are examined and certain hypotheses regarding the role of influencers (including all the influential players) regarding fashion-buying millennials are presented. **They found out that,** through these channels they generate wants and create needs throughout the time they spend viewing content online. They are hyper-informed, constantly discovering new products and seeking information about them through social media, leading them eventually, in many cases, to the store. The influence of the close circles (family and friends), the ones that Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955) analyzed explaining the role of influential, is stronger in the entire purchasing process of the analyzed young millennials than the influence of digital influencers. By contrast**, small influencers**, especially people from close circles, are associated with a passion for fashion as a **hobby**, not as a profit-making exercise. Their recommendations are made with genuine sincerity and they make them in your best interests. They know and advise you and do not have the end goal of wanting to sell you a product.**Instagram** is the most popular **social media** users. University women use it more actively by posting pictures and stories, while men use it more passively. Both genders spend an average of 5 hours a day using this means of social media.

2. The recent paper was published in 2018, "Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership", by Luis Casalo and Carlos Flavian - where the main aim of the study was to identify the key antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership in this context. The results were based on 808 followers of a fashion-focused Instagram account. The results suggested that **originality and uniqueness** are critical factors if a user is to be perceived as an opinion leader on Instagram. Also, opinion leadership influences consumer behavioral intentions towards both the influencer (intention to interact with the account and recommend it) and the fashion industry (intention to follow fashion advised posts). Instead of perceived quality or quantity, **uniqueness and originality** of the posts on an Instagram account are the key factors that lead a poster to be perceived as an opinion leader. The aspects such as **creativity,being one of a kind** seem to be crucial to becoming an **online influencer** in the **fashion industry**. Opinion leadership increases customer intention to follow the fashion advice posted on the account, which may have an impact on the company's sales.

3. Another paper was published in 2017, "Impact of influencers in the decision process: the fashion industry" by Sudha M. and Dr. Sheena K.

Tremendous changes are happening in the world of clothing retail. Internet and social media play a vital role in helping consumers find the items they are looking for. Companies will keenly try to retain a strong presence in the **social media platforms**; otherwise the target audience can easily change suppliers. The study was intended to explore the **influencer marketing** techniques used by fashion industries and also the impact of influencers on the **consumers buying decision** process in the fashion industry.

The paper analyzed the impact of influencers in various stages of the consumer decision process in the fashion industry. In the beginning stages of the buying process, consumers tend to realize the **need** for the product by following celebrities on **Facebook, Instagram, Twitter**, etc. The consumers have used **blogs** as a way to find out **information about** the product they were considering buying. The blogs also increase the amount of communication consumers conduct that occurs before the actual purchasing situation. With the use of blogs, the phenomena of **passing on the message** is highlighted in its efficiency. Research responses also suggest that readers use blogs as a way of **validating their purchasing decisions**. They go online to find reviews posted by bloggers about the product they might be interested in buying and by using the communication tools of the blogs, they ask opinions from the blogger and other readers, hoping to get help to their decision making. The results of the research indicate that blogs can have a significant impact on how young women behave after reading **a positive comment** on a purchase, as they enjoy not only having are liable source telling them their opinions on the products and having a source of information, but also that they enjoy reading texts by someone they relate to. The style of the blogger is what draws the reader to a specific blog, it is the pictures that attract readers coming back and trusting their reviews. Bloggers often provide **direct links to the specific** items they are talking about and provide the consumers with tips on good and safe places to shop from. It is important to note that several companies operating in the fashion industry have come to value and recognize the influence that bloggers can have in terms of reaching their target customers and have found an efficient way of marketing their products. With these recommendations of investing in relationship building

with a blogger and indirectly engaging the company's target customer base, company trust and customer loyalty can be built, resulting in higher sales and profitable long-term customer relationships.

4. Another paper was published in 2010, "Consumer Culture and Purchase Intentions towards Fashion Apparel"

The study examines the various determinants of consumer behavior and their impact on purchase intentions towards fashion apparel. The results revealed that **sociocultural** and **personality**-related factors induce the purchase intentions among consumers. One of the contributions that this research extends is the debate about the converging economic, **cognitive** and **brand**-related factors to induce purchase intentions. Fashion loving consumers typically patronage **multi-channel retail outlets, designer brands,** and invest time and cost towards an advantageous product search. The results of the study show a positive effect of **store** and **brand preferences** on developing purchase intentions for fashion apparel among consumers.

The majority of shoppers rely on store patronage, **brand value** and building loyalty over time to continue the benefits of the store and brand promotions. The shopping motivation, attributes of retailers and customer beliefs influence patronage behavior among shoppers. The discussions in the study also divulge that shopping arousal is largely driven by mall attractions, **inter-personal influences,** sales promotions and comparative gains among **urban shopper**s. Major factors that affect shopping arousal among fashion shoppers are simulation/trial facilities, brand reputation, personalization possibilities and **store attractiveness** about products and services, brand value, and price.

Gap Analysis –

As can be seen in the previous section, literature review 1, it can be seen that many small influencers take influencing as a hobby on social media. It is also concluded that Instagram is the most popular social media users. In the review 2, it is seen that Originality and Uniqueness are two crucial factors for an influencer to be an opinion leader. Creativity and being one of the kinds are factors to be the leaders in the fashion industry on Instagram. In the review 3, talks about the decision making of a consumer and the steps involved in purchasing a product. This includes Blogs and how they influence the consumer in the decision-making cycle. In the review 4, it can be said that socio-culture and personality play a major role in purchasing fashion products. Generally, it is done by consumers visiting the store, physically evaluating the product before making a purchase.

The gaps in the above reviews can be concluded thus.

In the fashion industry, **originality** and **uniqueness** are of utmost importance and for the influencer to be an opinion leader earlier practice (as in review 4), physically evaluating the product and then **making an opinion** was the norm. But recent papers as in review1 &2, effective tools like **Instagram are the most popular** used amongst the influencers in the Fashion Industry. It can also be seen that the preference of consumers generally women are Instagram and they spend about **5 hours daily** on this platform.

To connect the influencer and the consumer, it can be concluded that Instagram will be the most effective tool. In the context of the fashion industry, to be creative and one of a kind are the two crucial factors. This can be seen on Instagram where the fashion bloggers publish content daily which is unique to their identity.

The need for the current research is to prove that Instagram influencers play a crucial role in the fashion industry. Influencer becomes effective based on the followers. The followers or the audience for the content published are the consumers. So, if the fashion influencer publishes unique content then, the followership would increase building a frame of trust among consumers. This will have a direct impact on product sales and brand recognition.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. **Qualitative Research** – The research is based on of observation and gathering of non-numerical data. This research focuses on meaning-making. To do so, the process followed was to analyze, categorize and classify the comments of consumers on certain posts published by the influencers.

2. **Primary Data** – The second-hand sources through which the data was collected was the engagement through comments on Instagram and the volume through the profile. The primary source is the Instagram profiles of the Bloggers.

3. **Secondary Data** – The other sources through which data was collected to make observations and conclusions were research papers, blogs and magazine articles published on the internet.

4. **Content and Sentiment Analysis** – By analyzing the **comments** on the posts published by the influencers and the volume of comments/likes, the analysis was made. This was classified and categorized into positive, negative and reviews of comments. Another way of analyzing the engagement was, by going through the **fan pages** created by the consumers of the content. This helped in validating the content and prove the **cause and effect relationship.**

Analysis & Interpretation –

The survey was conducted based on content analysis and the sentiments of the followers on Instagram. The procedure followed was to enter into the social media handles of 6 bloggers as mentioned below. The comments and fan pages of the mentioned bloggers were analysed in order to conclude that the consumers usually engage with the influencers in the comment section and if the content and influencer seems to be very influential, a fan page/fan pages would be created by certain users on Instagram under various handles to show their "Love" and "encouragement" towards the blogger.
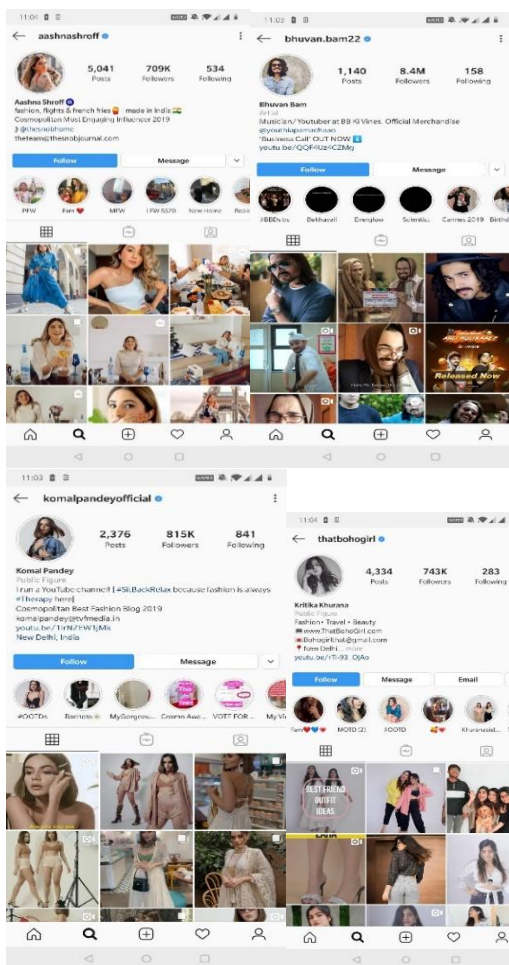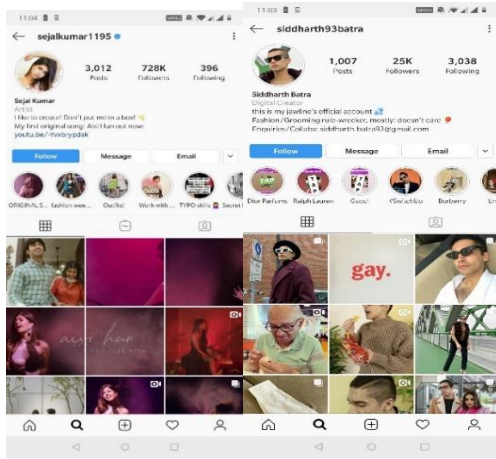
Komal Pandey – Indian YouTuber, Social Media Personality, started blogging under the name "The College Couture", she started off working as a hairstylist at PoPxo.

Sejal Kumar – Indian YouTuber and a Video Blogger, her content is mainly Fashion & Lifestyle, she has expanded more than 1 million subscribers on YouTube, Makes Haul videos for fashion.

Aashna Shroff – Also known as Beauty guru, has a YouTube channel named "The Snob Journal", makes content based on Fashion & Make-up.

Thatbohogirl – Has her YouTube channel, blogs about Fashion & lifestyle, traveler and enjoys talking about self-love.

Siddharth Batra – Style and grooming editor at MensXP,

a fashion chameleon, blogs about style and outfits.

Bhuvan Bam – Started with YouTube as a comedian, presently influences fashion and outfits too. He was the cover for Grazia and many more fashion magazines.

The bloggers selected are **Indians** and mainly **fashion influencers** on Instagram. Most of them started on YouTube by creating an audience for their blogs, became popular and found the need to start their own Instagram account for the audience. The content varies on the two platforms yet has a strong database and audience who get inspired daily.

	Number of Followers	Number of Posts	Max. Number of likes	Max. Number of comments	YouTube Channel	Videos
2	815K	2,376	98,300	4,324	897K	97
3	709K	5,040	71,000	202	171K	127
4	727K	3,011	1,30,000	400	1.21Million	461
5	742K	4,334	65,000	411	206K	135
6	8.4M	1,140	11,90,151	11700	16.6Million	158
7	25K	1,007	8,200	200	None	None

It can be seen from the above table that;a blogger has an audience size varying between 25,000 to 8,00,000 followers. The total number of posts ranges from 1,000 to 5,000 posts which creates alike of around 8,000 to 11,00,000. This attracted comments from the consumers in the range of 200 to 11,000.

The next step was to analyze the recent posts which were published and then selected around **250 comments** from the above **6 bloggers**. The main key performance indicators which were considered were **"Engagement"** and **"Volume"** indicated by comments made by the followers.

The comments were then classified into – **Positive, Negative and Queries/suggestions**. This helped in understanding the type of positive comments/negative comments made on posts as well as the questions asked to the bloggers in the comment section. The procedure helped to understand how users react to content published by the bloggers.

Another procedure considered was the **"Fan Pages"** created by the users on Instagram. Around **66 fan pages**were considered on Instagram for total of 5 bloggers. Siddharth Batra has no fan page created yet as he has just started off to be an influencer on Instagram. The Fan pages depict the **interest and trust factor** in the influencer/content published by the influencer and hence it was considered as a source to achieve better results. The main key performance indicator considered was **"Engagement".**

Fan Pages	handles	Followers	Posts
Sejal Kumar	Sejalites	14.3k	1111
	Sejalfanpage	863	48
	sejal_kumar_fan_club	225	16
	sej_fangrl	31	5
	we_love_sejal	121	40
	sejalite	193	6
	sejalfans	112	111
	sejalkumarfanbase	200	13
	sejalkumarfans	195	2
	sejal_kumar_fanclub	4	0
	sejal.kumar1195	240	47
	sejalings	101	0
	sejal_kumar_fc	33	2
	sejalkumar78	39	0
	sejalkumar.fam	106	17
	sejalkumarfanpage	235	47
	sejalfan78990	0	1
	sejal_fan	43	19
	sejalkumar_fans	74	7
Komal Pandey	komalities	304	29
	komalpandeyfan	87	10
	komalpandeyfans	95	77
	ilovekomalpandey	233	24
	komalpandeyfanpage	53	31
	komaledits	45	2
	komalpandey_fanpage	241	24
	komalp_fc	48	8
	komal_pandey_love	60	12
	komalpandeyfanc	48	4

Aashna Shroff	aashnashroff_		1043	604
	aashnashroff.fanpage		115	49
	snobjournalfan		321	6
	aashnaaashrofff		77	4
	aashnashroff_the_queen		59	36
	aashnashroffs_no.1_fans		4	0
	aashna_shroff_admirers		456	116
	aashna_shroff_world		8	9
	aashnashroff09		57	48
Thatbohogirl	thatbohogirl		384	0
	thatbohogirl_fan		24	1
	thatbohogirl_is_love		198	37
	thatbohogirl_fanclub		6	12
	thatbohogirl_fanpage		49	4
	thatbohogirlfanpage		312	81
	_thatbohogirlfan		22	104
Santoshi Shetty	santoshi_shetty_fanss		257	684
	santoshishetty_fans		222	73
	santoshishetty_fanclub		95	21
	thestyleedge		0	4
	santoshishetty_fanpage		56	28
	santoshi_styleledge		1	4
	santoshishettyfanclub		8	8
	santoshishetty_		44	23
	styling_the_edge		235	47
Bhuvan Bam	bhuvanbam22memes	21.8k		1018
	bhuvan.bam22	10.6k		80
	nikita_bhuvan22		287	206
	bhuvanbam_memes		1839	164
	bhuvan_bam22_	53.3k		605
	bhuvan_bam_vines		391	25
	bhuvan_bam_69		175	28
	bhuvanbamfeed	27.1k		1992
	bhuvan.bam22.fp	13.3k		139

Each fan page was created by a user who is deeply influenced by the influencer. The **fan pages** had posts of the influencers which were either reposted or uploaded by the user. The interpretation can be such that the users are being influenced by the content published by the influencer. The number of followers as can be seen in the sheet shows that there are numerous consumers for the content published by the influencer.

The fan pages show the **"Cause and effect"** relationship. The **influencer** and the content published by them is the **cause** and the **effect** are the consumers of the content kicking-off with **fan pages** in support of the influencer. This shows, the fashion influencers are having an impact on the lives of the consumers of their content as once the **consumer validates** and accepts the content published by the influencer, they become loyal to the content. New **customer acquisition** begins as these loyal consumers either through word-of-moth/posting on fan pages convey their message about the influencer.

It was interpreted that, the importance of fashion on Instagram is given both by men and women. The influence of negative comments is more **towards women** than that of men. Men follow the female fashion influencers and engage with them on the content published. Women follow these influencers as they are a form of **"inspiration"** and **"motivation"** to dress better and look better each day. One negative post published by an influencer can bring a backlash of comments which can also lead to loss of their audience base.

Signal Words –
Since   Because   As a result   Thus
So Thus   Therefore   Due to
Example –
Komal Pandey a fashion influencer, created content which was unique and creative as her routine, which was validated by the consumers/users of Instagram and **as a result** there were about 40+ Fan pages which was created in support of her and the content.

An overall structure of the research -
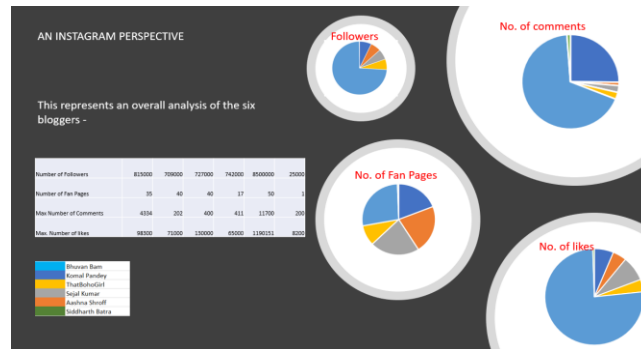
Analysing Comments:
While analyzing the 250 comments, there were few comments which involved statements like **"Inspiration"**, **"Motivation"**, **"Outfit details please"**, **"Beautiful"**, **"Please make videos on …"**, which helped in interpreting the analysis.

Main observations from the analysis -

Queries/suggestions –
Typical queries such as - details of the products and the outfit was worn/promoted by the influencer, suggestions for improvement of content, and details of other accessories worn/used by the influencer are observed in the comment section of the posts published.

Its also observed that the influencer takes the suggestions seriously and publish content to the satisfaction of the audience. For example – Sejal Kumar receives a suggestion to make a college wear tutorial. The next content published on her profile is about a tutorial for the same. This helps in the Engagement of the audience and keeps the audience needs going.

Positive Reviews –
Many catchphrases like "stunning", "great", "inspiration", "motivation", "loads of love" etc, indicate positive response from the audience towards the content published by the influencer.

It was observed that the phrases "Inspiration" and "Motivation" are used most by women in the comment section which indicates the real impact of the influencer on the audience and keeps them engaged.

Negative Reviews –

Most of the negative comments/ indecent comments are from the male audience such as – "makeup kidukaan", "pimples", "blonde", "fake" etc. Influencers generally do not react, or they ignore such comments to keep themselves motivated and publish content taking only the positive side of it.

"Perspectives bring threats to the Appropriateness of posts"

Her Perspective and Consumers belief –

According to the Blogger, the post was appropriate as she reached 800K followers and wanted to thank the audience with a small gesture.

What happened after she posted?

The moment she posted, there was a backlash of almost 4000 negative comments which led quite a few people to unfollow her. According to the followers, this post was inappropriate, and the caption was not appreciated.

This is one such example that shows us how one post published can affect the influencer in a manner never thought of.

The same case happens with almost all the influencers or bloggers on Instagram as they publish content thinking of the appropriateness of their audience, but it so happens that the audience might just dislike the content.

The impact will be borne by both the influencer (in terms of loss of audience, negative comments) and the consumer (As they were motivated by the influencer throughout).

After thorough research and observation, to **cross-check the information**, a google form was sent across to almost 50 individuals, out of which 34 people responded and the findings were as follows–

1. Instagram and YouTube are the two most online sites where the respondents either follow/subscribe to an influencer.
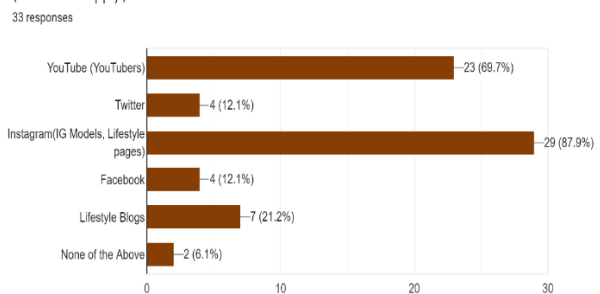

Through social media, ALL the respondents are informed about the new trends in the industry.

Do you find out about new trends on social media?
33 responses
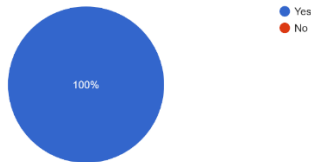
2. Almost 62% of the respondents consider the reviews of the influencers before making a purchase decision.

Do you actively seek out online reviews by influencers before making a purchasing decision?
33 responses
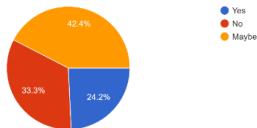
3. If the individuals are following the influencer from a good period of them, almost 45% of them are likely to buy the product. This shows the trust factor in the influencer.

If your favorite blogger/online personality recommends a brand, are you more likely to try it?
33 responses
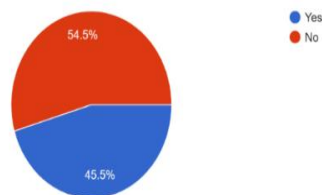
Findings –

Fashion influencers are not just an extra asset in fashion marketing campaigns: they become an integral part of the **storytelling** between the clothes and the consumer. As the influencers are common people, they know how to get the trust factor through storytelling to the outside world as they can connect on an **emotional level.**

Instagram was just a photo-sharing platform. Now, we can see that due to the emergence of influencers it has turned into a **knowledge-sharing platform**. It can be said so because the customers are now gaining knowledge about the **new trends** in the fashion industry through the outfits worn and accessories displayed by the influencers.

Through influencers women audience pick up styling tips which influenced them through the content and hence induces **self- confidence** in them. They either end up purchasing the product or browse through similar products. This was observed in the comment section where the consumers commented about their **post-purchase experience**.

On the contrary there are also scenarios where the consumers do not appreciate the content of the influencers which ensues to giving **negative comments** and unfollowing the influencer.

Consumers usually enquire about the influencers to understand the details of the outfits as per their choice. They contact the influencer via the comment section regarding to understand the details of the post. This shows that the **audience engages** with the influencer to know more.

The customer should match the **vibe** they are looking for and the influencer must connect with the kind of choices the consumer makes. **#fashion** is the most used hashtag on Instagram.

The influencer should be **educating the consumers** on the topic/content rather than posting a nice top or an outfit. They need to throw some **insight** and educate the consumers.

The influencers try out new styles and the consumer's voice out their opinion on the same. This helps in **engagement** and **better quality of content** which is further published by the influencer.

The customers to keep themselves updated in the fashion trends, they follow influencer to gain a world **fashion insight,** as they bring in content **from various cultures** and uniqueness in the industry.

Influencers can make a better influence on Instagram as they have an **upper hand** with content creation and engagement with the **large audience** base across the world.

- On Instagram, the influencers or the content published by the influencers are the **cause** and the **effect** is the fan pages created by the consumers of the content. Fan pages shows the encouragement factor by the consumers of the content and help in **new customer acquisition**.

V. DISCUSSION

1. Through the research, we explored various social media platforms like Instagram, Pinterest which were back then just a photo-sharing platform but now are capable of much more other than just sharing a picture. For example - **IGTV** which is Instagram TV where influencers and other users make short videos and share them.

2. By conducting the research, we got exposure to the concept of **Influencer marketing** as applicable to branding. For example – Daniel Wellington promoted their Brand by providing watches to the influencers and asking them to make a video of the product.

3. Also, we understood the mode of **consumer reaction** to content published on Instagram and the interpretation, classification, categorization of the comments. For example – the consumers even **mention** the influencer on their personal stories which is another form of engagement.

VI. CONCLUSION

Content and sentiment analysis were conducted on Instagram by taking the engagement and volume as the key indicator. Through this, we could understand that the consumers are continuously following the influencers and are engaging in **exploring** more details about the content published. The positive reviews show that the consumers are intrigued by the content and appreciate the work that's done. On the contrary, the negative comments show that certain posts are **heterogeneous** compared to other posts published on media and subsequently opposed by the consumers. The consumers propose a couple of changes in the content published. The number of comments and likes on the posts show that the influencers have made a benchmark on content and **reliability factor**. So, to put it in a nutshell, we can say that the consumers are reshaping their styles, their character depending on the content published by the influencers and **explicitly observed on Instagram**. It is observed from the Influencer's point of view, that the content published is not towards selling the item however to get the **trust factor** in consumers and to get however much engagement as could reasonably be expected on their Instagram Profile.

To sum it up, we could conclude saying that influencers are the **major contributors** in reshaping consumer behavior in the fashion industry by **educating them** and breaking the **interminablecycle** of following a fashion blog, not understanding the details of the blog and returning with no knowledge. Thus in the facts collected above the influencers on Instagram provide information on various **fashion trends** across the globe and providing them an interactive platform to express their doubts, get clarified and gain more insight on when/how/where to flaunt that particular style/fashion look posted by the influencer. Thus, Influencers on Instagram with the right content and staying active by clarifying the consumer's queries becomes a very **powerful** platform in reshaping the consumer behaviour in the Fashion Industry.

Limitations –

1. Difficulty in **reaching out to the consumers** who engage with the influencer. This would have been useful in assessing why such comments were made.
2. Difficulty in understanding and **reaching an influencer** to assess the parameters which he/she would be using before publishing content on Instagram. So related papers are found which have an interview with an influencer.
3. Time limitation which led to **limited study** of consumers and influencers.
4. **Incomplete demographic details** of the consumers who are engaging daily, which poses a limitation in classification and categorization.

Scope for further research –

1. Feedback forms distributed to all possible **influencers through email** to get their feedback would have a better outcome on the research conducted as this gives a glimpse of their point of view.

2. As Instagram is a fast-growing network, there is an emergence of numerous influencers daily in the field of fashion. However, if any **niche segment** within the industry is chosen for further research, the research would be more informative and meaningful.
3. Research can be conducted based on the **gender – Female Influencers vs Male Influencers**. The consumer reaction, Interaction, and Engagement through comments differ when it comes down to gender.

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