

A SLR and Thematic Analysis for Social Media Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behavior Concerning Fashion & Lifestyle

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of 21st century, the digital form of marketing has leaped to the sky, proving its mettle with a blend of strategic IT platforms that have enabled to the state of what is today. Social media influencer marketing is not a very new subject, however with the advent of technology and improvements in platforms, consumer needs also increasing day by day, it is prudent to understand the factors that drive a balance between the strategy of influencer marketing and consumer delight. A systematic literature review is employed to methodically derive themes from the secondary data available worldwide. The themes are then contrasted and compared against findings from each literature to come to a consensus of the predictors required for today, driving effective social media influencer marketing. The fashion and lifestyle sector is chosen for the study since it is the most trendy aspect amongst youth today and almost 50% of the influencers in India belong to this sector. The fan base and followers are seen more in this sector and Pune's vibrant youth with a socio-cultural mix has given it a choice for being part of the research frame. The findings of the themes were categorized into major three themes and factors such as trust, credibility, parasocial affluence, and content funding with early communications to the audience are some of the outcomes of the study. These factors can be used for further academic research and by marketers to validate their strategy on customer engagement.

KEYWORDS :

Influencer Marketing in Pune, Life Style Influencer, Fashion Influencer, consumer behavior, social media, advertisement using social media.

[1] INTRODUCTION

Marketing 4.0 emphasizes blending with consumers at both personal and purchase sensitivity levels Kotler et. al. (2017). Under this stage, the influencers need to bridge the gap between brands and consumers. As suggested by Marketing gurus such as Kotler et. al. (2017), this is expected to be achieved through humanizing the process of markets, advancing on personal connections, and trust building. The experts also advocated the human-centric strategy would

enable the marketers and the brands to build more authentic and personalized customer experience. Several studies on social media platforms and influencer marketing, specifically Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), outline that through recent years the rise of social media platforms has renovated the way all brands engage with consumers from the fashion and lifestyle sector. The work of Samuel Hudson Mrisha and Xixiang (2021), demonstrates that social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged as pivotal figures in this landscape, leveraging their personal brands and follower relationships to influence consumer perceptions and behavior. According to De Veirman et al. (2017), traditional advertising and campaign management saw the era of brand messages as pushy while trendy influencer marketing today offers an authentic and customer-centric approach. The latest approach has helped marketers to get consumers well-connected to their brands. The paradigm shift has invited many researchers and marketers to understand the dynamics that would drive consumer behavior concerning social media influencer marketing, Freberg et al. (2011).

Highlighting the thick influx of youth population in Pune City, Express News Service (2017), brought into manifestation that amid vibrant cultures there is an amalgamation observed between influencer marketing, social media, and consumer behavior. The census data produced by Express News Service (2017), rapid urbanization has led to an influx of youths in the city and 73 percent of its total population is below 50 years of age with 33 percent of the population below 30 years while 40 percent was between 30 years to 50 years.

This study considers the systematic literature review (SLR) approach to find out the themes of consumer behavior, and influencer marketing aspects from the fashion and lifestyle sector within Pune city. The objectives of the study are to explore : (a) factors that will drive social influencer marketing for the fashion and lifestyle sector, (b) understand customer centricity and its implications, (c) predictors from the derived themes that would help for further research study.

[2] METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to undertake a methodical way to unleash appropriate and relevant historical studies. According to Nightingale (2009), the critical consideration in systematic literature review is to remove the 'selection bias, which normally is observed in contemporary reviews of literature. Thus, the researchers have selected to take the approach of SLR for their study (refer figure A).

The following approach was taken to execute the systematic literature review:

(a) **Database used:** The following database was listed for searching for the secondary data.

a. Google Scholar

- b. JSTOR
- c. Web of Science
- d. Scopus

(b) Search Keywords: The following is the list of keywords and key phrases used to locate the relevant articles.

- a. “social media influencer marketing”
- b. “consumer behavior”
- c. “Pune”
- d. “Influencers” + “Fashion”+ ”Life Style”
- e. “Consumer Purchase Intention”
- f. “Digital marketing” + “Fashion”+”Lifestyle”

(c) Search Filters: The following filtration criteria were used to narrow the search results and these are:

- a. Studies published between 2000 and 2021 (to capture the transition of social media influencer marketing across the years).
- b. Journal articles that are peer-reviewed.
- c. Focus on studies related to consumers who follow fashion & lifestyle influencers
- d. Consider SMI's research paper of good reput published across the globe to gain insight into the findings.

(d) Inclusion Criteria: The following criteria were followed to cherry-pick the research articles based on the results of (a) to (c):

- a. Research studies that focused on influencer marketing strategies.
- b. Research papers that are consumer behavior-centric but influenced by social media influencers.
- c. Research articles that focus on both qualitative and quantitative methods.

(e) Exclusion Criteria: The following criteria were followed to discard the research articles based on the search results:

- a. Studies focusing on traditional marketing methods.
- b. Article published in foreign language
- c. Conference papers or editorials not giving any empirical evidence.

(f) Data Extraction Criteria: Data extraction focused on collecting critical information such as the article author, article publication month/year, research study design, what was the target population, and critical findings. The studies were reviewed for assessing the

influencer marketing effectiveness analysis, changes in consumer behavior, and metrics on engagement concerning urban areas such as Pune.

(g) Quality Assessment: Each research study was weighed for practical rigor. This was done to ensure that only studies having replicable research designs and content clear are included. Research articles were also valued based on their significance to the topic of social media influencer marketing in alignment with consumer behavior in urban settings. The preference was for studies that focused on Pune or similar Indian markets.

(h) Synthesis of Data: To synthesize the findings, Thematic analysis was employed with studies clustered according to recurring themes Specific devotion was given to studies that examined influencer marketing within urban contexts similar to Pune.

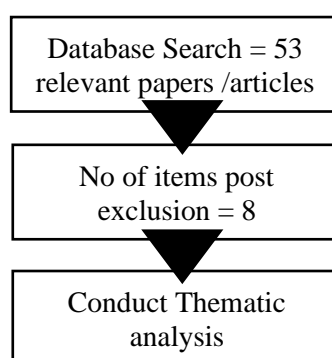


Figure A : Approach to SLR/

The following section details the thematic analysis which is the outcome of the systematic literature review process.

[3] THEMATIC ANALYSIS / FINDINGS

This section helps to manifest the critical themes identified by the researchers during a systematic literature review of the topic under consideration.

[3.1] Summary of the findings from relevant studies.

Theme 1	SMI's Authenticity and Credibility
Sharma et al. (2021) advocate that social media influencers must attain a balance between the promotion of products and services. They also should maintain their genuine to retain credibility specifically to fashion & lifestyle.	
Rani and Roy (2021) advocated that Fashion influencers, in particular, play a crucial role in disseminating information about new trends. The researcher put the findings that source credibility (the influencer) and platform credibility (the social media platform) affect the effectiveness of an influencer.	
Consistency:	
Both Sharma et al. (2021) and Rani and Roy (2021) accentuate the critical prominence of	

credibility concerning social media influencers dealing with fashion and lifestyle.

1. Balance in Promotion: Sharma et al. (2021) argue that social media influencers must build a balance between promoting fashion & lifestyle products and authenticity management. Retention of credibility could be achieved through a well-balanced approach with viewers. This is specifically important in the fashion and lifestyle functions.
2. Role of Credibility: Rani and Roy (2021) highlight that both platform credibility (the social media platform being used) and source credibility (the influencers themselves) are quite effective for fashion and lifestyle influencers. The perceived reliability of both the influencer and the platform can emphasize the idea of how well messages about new trends are received.
3. Integration of Findings: The two studies jointly suggest that (a) successfully absorb the consumers (viewers) when the fashion influencers promote products such that content resonates with authentic influencer personalities, and (b) platform credibility plays a pivotal role in delivery effectiveness and customer experience. Hence it is prudent that fashion and lifestyle influencers be mindful of (a) promotional strategies and (b) channel credibility.

Theme 2

Impact of Sponsored Content

Boerman et al. (2017) advocated that transparency in disclosing sponsored content affects consumer trust, finding that clear disclosure helps mitigate cynicism toward influencer marketing specific to fashion & lifestyle.

Stubb et al. (2019) researched the theme and provided insight into when fashion influencers explain why they are being paid for sponsorships. The response leads to more positive attitudes from fashion and lifestyle freak consumers. This research response also affects both the 'Fashion & Life Style' influencer and the message found more credible than if the influencer only discloses they are sponsored without any reason.

Boerman et al. (2014) provide insight through their research paper, Revealing sponsorship at the beginning of fashion and lifestyle content will make consumers feel comfortable. This is because the fashion and lifestyle influencer is perceived as highly transparent. This helps to build trust with the reduction of feelings of manipulation.

Consistency:

For all the studies carried out by different researchers Boerman et al. (2017), Stubb et al. (2019), and Boerman et al. (2014), communicate a coherent viewpoint on the importance and magnitude of openness in fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing. This is observed particularly involving the sponsored content. The following is the summary of the significant points and their uniformity across these research papers:

1. Trust and Transparency:

- Boerman et al. (2017) accentuate that clear release of funded content notably impacts the trust, the customer perceives from the influencer. This suggests transparency which mitigates suspicion towards the fashion and influencer lifestyle influencer marketing. This funding highlights the prominence of being direct with spectators about funding to promote trust.
- Boerman et al. (2014) further support this concept by asserting that illuminating sponsorship at the initiation of content develops consumer comfort since there is transparency. This helps to build trust and moderates judgment of manipulation which is closely aligned to the idea that transparency is significant for retaining consumer assurance.

2. Impact of Explanation on Credibility:

- Stubb et al. (2019) extend the discussion conversation by accentuating that when explanations are provided by the fashion and lifestyle influencers on the sponsorships, it advances to additional positive customer attitudes. The research study indicates that simply revealing a sponsorship is inadequate. It offers context enhancements ensuring the credibility of both the message communicated and the influencer. This concept builds upon the empirical evidence provided by Boerman et al. (2017) and Boerman et al. (2014), by strengthening that concentrated explanation which adds up to higher transparency from the influencer's side. Thus this becomes more effective than basic discoveries alone.

3. Consumer Perception of Influencer Authenticity:

- A convergence is observed between all three studies with the notion of transparency contributing to perceived authenticity. The fashion and lifestyle Influencers who disclose sponsorships give a clear context on their collaborations which is then seen as more trustworthy and genuine by their followers. This is commendable as the sense of authenticity is particularly

critical in the fashion and lifestyle sector. Here the consumers obtain relevant and trustworthy statistics.

Theme 3 Customer Engagement and Parasocial Relationships

Venus et al. (2021) carried out a study on Fashion Influencers and the results show that how Instagram accounts are set up, the type of posts they make, and the perceived social presence all interact to affect how trustworthy people find a brand.

1. For accounts run by fashion influencers, it doesn't matter whether the posts show a person or just the product; both types positively impact trustworthiness.
2. However, for accounts run by fashion brands, posts that feature a person are more effective in building trust than those that show only the product.

Overall, influencer-promoted posts can create a sense of social presence and trust, even if the influencer isn't visible in the content.

Chen et al. (2021) conducted research on the theme under consideration and the findings revealed that (a) there are psychological aspects that impact the consideration of fashion and lifestyle influencers, (b) how the consumers get engaged and their parasocial relationships define the connect with the influencers, impacting purchase intentions.

Consistency

in the fashion and lifestyle sectors as per the studies by Venus et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2021), a complementary insight is presented. It depicts how social media influencers affect engagement with the consumer and their level of trust. The decomposition of consistency between these studies is given below:

1. Role of Social Existence:

- Venus et al. (2021) stress the implication of social presence which helps to shape brand trust. Their findings propose trustworthy of a brand is conceptualized by the consumers when they set up Instagram accounts, followed by the type of posts made, and the perceived social existence. In cases where the social media influencer is practically not visible, the posts on channels with the logic of social existence can help to build trust amongst the consumers and followers.
- Chen et al. (2021) through the research underlines that there are psychological

aspects to consumer engagement. The one that in particular is critical is parasocial relationships. When consumers feel a personal connection with influencers, then these relationships develop. This often leads to increased trust and engagement. Social existence gets enhanced through psychological connection, and it supports the belief that for building trust it is crucial to have social dynamics.

2. Influence vs. Brand Accounts:

- Venus et al. (2021) have highlighted that fashion influencer posts are always effective irrespective of whether it is featuring a persona or a product. As per the researcher, this is representing the brand with trust. The fashion brands where a person is featured will always boost trustworthiness.
- Chen et al. (2021) advocate that the more influencers are communicating with the consumers/audiences, the more they are emotionally connected which alienates customer engagement. This theory aligns with the findings of Venus et al. (2021) suggest personal connections will always build trust.

3. Psychological Engagement and Trust:

- The psychological paradigms of ‘trust’ and ‘customer engagement’ are observed in both studies. Venus et al. (2021) focus on the theory that perceived trust is based on impacts from visual elements of posts while Chen et al. (2021) explore the deeper psychological aspects. The two antecedents that come up are engagement levels and parasocial relationships. Together, they illustrate a complete insight into how different factors enable effective fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing.

[4] DISCUSSION

[4-1] The Synthesis of findings below summarises the overall trends and insights which are obtained from thematic analysis and are presented below:

The body of research climaxes three main outcomes: (a) Multilayered role of social media influencers indulged in the fashion and lifestyle sector, (b) Emphasizes the balance between authenticity and promotional activities, and (c) provides insight through the importance of transparency and credibility. These can be understood from the findings of each study as described below:

- (a) **Creating a balance between Authenticity and Promotion:** Researchers Sharma et al. (2021) through their study promote that fashion and lifestyle influencers should play a balancing act while promoting the product they have endorsed and have a genuine connection with the audiences so that credibility can be restored.
- (b) **Role of Credibility:** Similarly, researchers, Rani and Roy (2021) determine the effect of source credibility (i.e. social media influencers belonging to the fashion and lifestyle sector) and credibility of the platform used such as Instagram. The researchers examine the relationships between the two factors and advocate that alongside new trends the influencers must take care of the consumer perceptions and how well they are connected to the influencers.
- (c) **Impact of Transparency and Disclosure:** On the other hand, researchers Boerman et al. (2017), clarify the role of transparency maintained by the fashion and lifestyle influencers. These researchers examined the role of transparency and cynicism, advocating that the influencers can be well in control of these predictors if they disclose the content sponsorship, viewed by the followers.
- (d) **Timing and Presentation:** in yet another research, Boerman et al. (2014), explained ‘trust building’. They revealed that once the influencer discloses the sponsorship at the start of the content presentation in the advertisement, the viewers shall get into a better comfortable position which would also reduce the feeling of manipulation. Drawing on the work of Boerman et al. (2014), the researchers Venus et al. (2021) claimed that brand trustworthiness is dependent upon the way it is presented, revealing the sponsorship as early as possible.
- All the research carried out at different periods, has collectively accentuated the importance of maintaining credibility and transparency in fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing. The customer’s trust and positive brand attitude can be achieved through predictors such as ; (a) balance between content promoted and genuine engagement, (b) early communication on sponsorship to the viewers, and (c) the parasocial relationship and content presentation.

[4-2] The limitations of the review derived is as follows:

(a) Limited Scope of Studies

- The number of research papers undertaken for the study is selected numbers, though providing valuable insights and findings may not comprehensively cover all aspects.
- The researchers might have overlooked the possibilities of predictors coming out of other relevant studies and might invite a small portion of biased understanding of the topic under study.

(b) Context-Specific Findings

Many of the researchers carried out and cited in this study their work such as the ones by Boerman et al. (2017) and Rani and Roy (2021). These studies may be based on context and cultural dimensions which are significantly different than the city of Pune. Also these Maybe based on contexts that differ significantly from Pune's cultural, social, and economic scenario. Thus, this could limit the applicability of their findings.

[4-3] The scope of future study is as follows:

- Need for study on how the local cultural, and socio-economic factors influence credibility, authenticity, and trust.
- Undertake longitudinal studies which would help to manifest over time, how the trend of fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing is transforming.
- Investigation required on the effectiveness of fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing concerning less studied platforms and established platforms.

[5] CONCLUSION

The undertaken study revealed various themes that provide insight to manifest the critical role played by factors such as authenticity, transparency, and psychological dynamics between the influencers and the consumers. It can be derived from this study that customer engagement and centricity would play a vital role in the shaping up of the fashion and lifestyle influence marketing. For the Influencers, in particular, the maintenance of promotions and content genuinely with a balancing act between the two is pivotal. The trust-building concept with transparency in highlighting the sponsorship content brings the consumer into comfort and the feeling of getting manipulated is eradicated.

For the brands getting promoted and marketers, factors such as collaboration with credible influencers who can authentically engage the customers and bring in higher customer delight are very much required for long-term competitive advantage. Once the parasocial relationships are well understood by the marketers, effective campaign management can be levied. The campaigns need to well resonate with what the customer wants today so that the brands can be well accepted by the consumer since the sense of belonging and trustworthiness exists.

From the context of Pune, there are academic and practical implications for the findings of the study. In terms of academics, a setting is built up already to undertake further studies to explore the dynamics and antecedents of fashion and lifestyle influencer marketing, within Pune's cultural and socio-economic settings.

From a practical implications point of view, the study offers strategic insight for marketers,

brands, and influencers of Pune to enhance their marketing communications with an emphasis on transparency, customer centricity, and authenticity. In an overall setting, the study has provided an array of predictors that contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for effective influencer marketing in the fast-trending fashion and lifestyle sector and offering a gateway for a more local, culturally sensitive emerging market of Pune.

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