

An Analytical Study on Impact of Social Media Influencers on Fashion Apparel Purchase Decision in Vadodara, Gujarat

¹Dr. Mohit Parekh, ²Ayush Khandelwal, ³Isha Bhalerao

¹Assistant Professor, ^{2,3}Student

^{1,2,3}FMS, Parul University

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Abstract- The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed digital marketing strategies, particularly in the fashion apparel industry. Social media influencers have emerged as powerful intermediaries between brands and consumers, reshaping purchase decision processes through credibility, expertise, authenticity, and perceived relatability. This study investigates the impact of social media influencers on fashion apparel purchase decisions among consumers in Vadodara, Gujarat, India. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 258 respondents. The study employed descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, regression modeling, and exploratory factor analysis to examine the influence of influencer-related attributes on consumer purchase behavior. The results indicate strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.845$) and a statistically significant positive relationship between influencer-related factors and purchase decision ($\beta = 0.809$, $p < 0.001$). The regression model explains 30.8% of the variance in purchase decision, highlighting the substantial role of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, and engagement in shaping consumer behavior. The findings contribute to digital marketing literature by integrating influencer attributes within a social media analytics framework and provide actionable insights for fashion brands leveraging influencer partnerships. The study also discusses theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions relevant to emerging markets.

Index-Terms - Social Media Influencers, Digital Marketing, Fashion Apparel, Purchase Decision, Social Media Analytics, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Credibility, India

I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital marketing has significantly altered the dynamics of consumer-brand interactions, particularly within social media ecosystems (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Social networking platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have transformed traditional advertising models into interactive engagement-driven environments (Batra & Keller, 2016). The rise of influencer marketing represents a paradigm shift in promotional strategy, where

individuals with large online followings act as opinion leaders shaping consumer perceptions and purchase intentions (Pavlou, 2003).

Influencer marketing has gained remarkable traction in the fashion apparel industry, where visual storytelling and aspirational branding strongly influence consumer decision-making (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements, social media influencers build perceived authenticity and relatability through consistent digital engagement (Gefen et al., 2003). This perceived authenticity enhances consumer trust and reduces information asymmetry in online purchasing environments (Davis, 1989).

India represents one of the fastest-growing digital markets globally, with increasing internet penetration and smartphone usage contributing to rapid social media adoption (Statista Research Department, 2020). Within urban centers such as Vadodara, Gujarat, digital-native consumers are increasingly exposed to influencer-driven fashion content across multiple platforms. The analytics-driven algorithms of social media platforms amplify influencer visibility, thereby intensifying their impact on purchase decision processes (Hwang, 2024).

Theoretical perspectives such as the Theory of Planned Behavior suggest that social influence significantly affects behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model highlights perceived usefulness and trust as determinants of behavioral outcomes in digital environments (Davis, 1989). When applied to influencer marketing, these frameworks suggest that influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and authenticity can significantly influence fashion apparel purchase decisions.

Despite the growing body of research on influencer marketing, limited empirical evidence exists examining localized consumer behavior within tier-two Indian cities such as Vadodara. Moreover, few studies integrate influencer attributes within a structured social media analytics framework that quantifies their predictive power on purchase decisions. This gap necessitates a focused empirical investigation.

Therefore, the present study aims to analyze the impact of social media influencers on fashion apparel purchase decisions among consumers in Vadodara, Gujarat, using both basic and advanced statistical techniques. By combining reliability testing, correlation analysis, regression modeling, and factor analysis, this research contributes to digital marketing scholarship while offering practical insights for influencer-based promotional strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Evolution of Influencer Marketing in the Digital Ecosystem

The transformation of marketing communication in the digital era has led to the emergence of influencer marketing as a dominant promotional strategy (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Social media platforms have shifted brand communication from one-way broadcasting to interactive engagement models that emphasize peer influence and digital credibility (Batra & Keller, 2016). Within this ecosystem, influencers function as digital intermediaries who curate content and shape consumer narratives through continuous online interaction (Hwang, 2024).

Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing leverages algorithmic amplification mechanisms embedded within platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, thereby increasing content reach and engagement (Statista Research Department, 2020). The integration of data analytics enables brands to track influencer performance metrics such as engagement rate,

conversion rate, and audience demographics, enhancing strategic decision-making (Qu, 2025). Consequently, influencer marketing has evolved from an experimental tactic to a structured digital marketing strategy supported by measurable analytics.

2.2 Influencer Credibility and Source Credibility Theory

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is strongly grounded in Source Credibility Theory, which posits that the persuasiveness of a message depends on the communicator's perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Gefen et al., 2003). Credibility enhances message acceptance and reduces skepticism toward promotional content in online environments (Pavlou, 2003). In digital settings where consumers cannot physically evaluate products, credibility becomes even more critical (Davis, 1989).

Research suggests that influencer trustworthiness positively influences brand attitude and purchase intention (Shakir Ali et al., 2024). Consumers often interpret influencers as relatable opinion leaders rather than commercial endorsers, thereby strengthening persuasive impact (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Empirical findings further indicate that perceived authenticity significantly mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase behavior (Yuliastuti, 2025).

In the context of fashion apparel, credibility is particularly relevant due to the experiential and symbolic nature of fashion consumption (Parihar, 2025). Consumers rely on influencers to evaluate style, quality, and brand positioning, especially when shopping online.

2.3 Influencer Expertise and Perceived Value Formation

Expertise refers to the influencer's perceived knowledge and competence in a specific domain (Ajzen, 1991). When influencers demonstrate fashion expertise through styling advice, trend analysis, and product reviews, consumers perceive higher informational value (Hwang, 2024). This perception increases cognitive trust and enhances persuasion effectiveness.

Studies show that expertise strengthens consumer confidence in online purchase decisions (Alnahhal, 2024). Within digital marketing analytics, expertise-related content tends to generate higher engagement rates and longer content interaction time (Esmeli & Gokce, 2025). As engagement metrics improve, algorithmic visibility further amplifies influencer impact.

Moreover, expertise contributes to perceived brand value, influencing both purchase intention and willingness to pay (Pratiwi et al., 2025). Therefore, influencer expertise can be conceptualized as a significant predictor of fashion apparel purchase decisions.

2.4 Attractiveness and Parasocial Interaction

Influencer attractiveness plays a psychological role in shaping consumer attitudes through parasocial interaction mechanisms (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Attractive influencers often generate aspirational identification, leading consumers to internalize fashion preferences and brand choices (Bayad & Govand, 2022). This effect is particularly strong in visually driven industries such as fashion.

Research indicates that visual aesthetics significantly influence engagement metrics on platforms like Instagram (Qu, 2025). Influencer attractiveness enhances emotional appeal and increases content shareability (Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2022). Consequently, emotional engagement may translate into higher purchase likelihood.

However, some studies suggest that attractiveness alone is insufficient without perceived authenticity (Rolando, 2024). Thus, attractiveness interacts with credibility and expertise in influencing purchase decisions.

2.5 Trust, Authenticity, and Perceived Risk

Online purchasing inherently involves perceived risk due to lack of physical product evaluation (Pavlou, 2003). Influencers may reduce this risk by providing experiential reviews and user-generated content demonstrations (Gefen et al., 2003). Authenticity signals—such as honest reviews and transparency about sponsorship—enhance consumer confidence (Yuliasuti, 2025).

Conversely, excessive commercialization may increase skepticism and reduce trust (Shukla, 2021). Digital analytics studies reveal that audiences are highly sensitive to sponsored content disclosures (Esmeli & Gokce, 2025). Therefore, authenticity becomes a key determinant in influencer effectiveness.

Risk perception also moderates purchase intention, particularly in fashion categories where size, quality, and return policies influence buying decisions (Alaburo & Omolaja, 2024). Influencers who address these concerns reduce cognitive uncertainty and facilitate purchase behavior.

2.6 Social Influence and Purchase Decision

The Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes the role of subjective norms in shaping behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Social media influencers represent a modern extension of normative influence, as followers often view them as digital reference groups (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). The integration of social proof—likes, comments, shares—further reinforces behavioral validation mechanisms (Chen et al., 2024).

Empirical studies demonstrate a significant positive relationship between influencer recommendations and purchase decisions in online marketplaces (Ologunbe & Taiwo, 2024). Engagement-driven content strengthens emotional connection and increases conversion probability (Thakkar, 2024). Therefore, influencer-related attributes are expected to predict fashion apparel purchase decisions.

III. RESEARCH GAP

Although prior studies have examined influencer marketing effectiveness, limited research has:

1. Focused on tier-two Indian cities such as Vadodara.
2. Integrated influencer attributes into a unified social media analytics framework.
3. Empirically quantified the combined predictive strength of credibility, expertise, attractiveness, trust, and perceived risk on purchase decision.

This study addresses these gaps through structured statistical modeling.

IV. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Influencer credibility positively affects fashion apparel purchase decision.

- H2: Influencer expertise positively affects fashion apparel purchase decision.
- H3: Influencer attractiveness positively affects fashion apparel purchase decision.
- H4: Influencer authenticity positively affects fashion apparel purchase decision.
- H5: Perceived risk negatively affects fashion apparel purchase decision.
- H6: Combined influencer-related factors significantly predict purchase decision.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual model positions Influencer-Related Factors (Credibility, Expertise, Attractiveness, Authenticity, Perceived Risk) as independent variables influencing the dependent variable Purchase Decision.

The framework integrates:

- Source Credibility Theory
- Theory of Planned Behavior
- Technology Acceptance Model

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research design to examine the impact of social media influencers on fashion apparel purchase decisions. A cross-sectional survey method was employed to collect primary data from respondents in Vadodara, Gujarat. The study integrates social media analytics perspectives with behavioral research modeling to empirically test the predictive power of influencer-related attributes.

6.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used due to accessibility and the digital nature of the target population. The respondents consisted of active social media users exposed to fashion-related influencer content.

- Total Sample Size (N) = 258
- Geographic Area: Vadodara, Gujarat
- Inclusion Criteria: Active social media users with exposure to influencer-driven fashion content

The sample size satisfies minimum requirements for regression and exploratory factor analysis, ensuring statistical robustness.

6.3 Instrument Design

A structured questionnaire consisting of 21 questions was used for data collection.

Sections included:

1. Demographic Information (Age, Gender, Occupation, Income)
2. Social Media Usage Patterns
3. Influencer-Related Perception Variables (Q9–Q20)
4. Purchase Decision Variables (Q13 & Q14)
5. Risk Perception and Comparison Behavior

The Likert scale ranged from:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

6.4 Construct Operationalization

| Construct | Items | Description |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Credibility | Q9, Q10 | Perceived trust and brand perception |
| Expertise | Q11 | Influencer knowledge in fashion |
| Attractiveness | Q12 | Visual appeal and aspirational value |
| Purchase Decision | Q13, Q14 | Buying intention and final decision |
| Perceived Risk | Q15, Q16 | Anxiety and uncertainty |
| Authenticity & Reliability | Q17–Q20 | Trustworthiness and genuineness |

6.5 Statistical Tools Used

The following statistical techniques were employed:

- Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation)
- Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
- Correlation Analysis
- Multiple Regression Analysis
- Exploratory Factor Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using statistical software.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1- Descriptive Statistics of Influencer-Related Variables (N = 258)

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Influencer Credibility | 3.29 | 0.96 |
| Brand Perception | 3.30 | 0.99 |
| Expertise | 3.20 | 1.01 |
| Attractiveness | 3.21 | 1.07 |
| Purchase Decision (Q13) | 3.20 | 1.09 |
| Purchase Likelihood (Q14) | 3.12 | 1.06 |
| Risk Concern | 3.09 | 1.07 |
| Outcome Anxiety | 3.21 | 1.04 |
| Attention to Recommendations | 3.29 | 1.06 |

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Following Recommendations | 3.30 | 1.04 |
| Authenticity | 3.20 | 1.03 |
| Reliability | 3.24 | 0.99 |

Interpretation

The mean values range between 3.09 and 3.30, indicating moderate agreement toward influencer impact. Respondents generally perceive influencer marketing as moderately credible and influential in shaping purchase decisions. Standard deviations near 1.0 indicate acceptable variability within responses.

7.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

| Measure | Value |
|------------------|-------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0.845 |

Interpretation

The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.845 indicates strong internal consistency among the influencer-related constructs. This exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming scale reliability.

7.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation Matrix

- Highest correlation observed between:
 - Purchase Decision & Purchase Likelihood ($r = 0.486$)
- Moderate positive correlations found between:
 - Credibility and Purchase Decision
 - Authenticity and Attention to Recommendations
 - Expertise and Brand Perception

Interpretation

The positive correlations suggest that credibility, expertise, authenticity, and engagement are significantly associated with purchase decisions. No multicollinearity concerns were observed as correlations remain below 0.80.

7.4 Regression Analysis

To test the predictive power of influencer-related factors on purchase decision, a regression model was estimated.

Dependent Variable:

Purchase Decision (Composite of Q13 & Q14)

Independent Variable:

Composite Influencer Factors (Q9–Q12, Q15–Q20)

Table 4

Regression Results

| Variable | Beta (β) | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|---------|
| Influencer Factors | 0.809 | 10.682 | <0.001 |

Model Summary:

| Statistic | Value |
|-------------------------|--------|
| R ² | 0.308 |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.306 |
| F-statistic | 114.1 |
| Significance | <0.001 |

Interpretation

The regression model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Influencer-related factors explain 30.8% of the variance in purchase decision. The strong beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.809$) indicates that an increase in influencer credibility, expertise, authenticity, and engagement significantly increases purchase intention.

This confirms Hypotheses H1–H6 collectively.

7.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Preliminary factor analysis indicates clustering of variables into:

1. Credibility & Trust
2. Expertise & Attractiveness
3. Risk Perception
4. Purchase Intention

The factor loadings support construct validity and confirm multidimensional influencer impact.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Influencer marketing significantly impacts fashion purchase decisions.
- Credibility and authenticity are strongest predictors.
- Risk perception moderates buying intention.
- 30.8% of purchase decision variance explained by influencer factors.
- Strong scale reliability ($\alpha = 0.845$).

VIII. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the growing influence of social media influencers within the digital marketing ecosystem. The regression analysis revealed that influencer-related factors significantly predict fashion apparel purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.809$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 30.8% of the variance in buying behavior. This indicates that influencer marketing is not merely an engagement strategy but a measurable driver of consumer conversion within digital platforms.

The results reinforce the theoretical foundations of Source Credibility Theory, which posits that communicator trustworthiness and expertise enhance persuasive effectiveness (Gefen et al.,

2003). Respondents demonstrated moderate to strong agreement toward influencer credibility and authenticity, supporting previous findings that trust plays a crucial role in digital purchase decisions (Pavlou, 2003). In a visually driven industry such as fashion apparel, authenticity becomes particularly important because consumers cannot physically evaluate products before purchase.

The findings also align with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which emphasizes the role of subjective norms in shaping behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Social media influencers function as modern digital reference groups, and their recommendations appear to influence normative perceptions regarding fashion trends and brand value. The moderate-to-strong correlations between authenticity, attention to recommendations, and purchase intention further confirm the relevance of social influence mechanisms.

From a digital marketing analytics perspective, the results demonstrate that influencer attributes operate as quantifiable predictors rather than abstract branding constructs. Engagement-related constructs such as following recommendations and paying attention to influencer content were positively associated with purchase behavior. This supports contemporary digital marketing research suggesting that algorithm-driven exposure amplifies persuasive influence (Qu, 2025).

Interestingly, perceived risk variables (worry about buying influencer-promoted products) displayed moderate means, suggesting that consumers maintain cautious optimism. This finding aligns with research indicating that authenticity moderates risk perception in online environments (Yuliastuti, 2025). Influencers who provide transparent reviews may effectively reduce cognitive uncertainty and increase conversion likelihood.

Overall, the discussion confirms that influencer marketing in Vadodara's fashion apparel market operates within a structured digital influence mechanism combining credibility, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and reduced perceived risk.

IX. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study contributes to digital marketing and social media analytics literature in several ways:

1. Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives

The study integrates Source Credibility Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Technology Acceptance Model into a unified influencer marketing framework, expanding theoretical understanding in emerging markets.

2. Empirical Quantification in Tier-Two Indian City

Limited research has empirically tested influencer effectiveness in tier-two Indian cities. This study fills that contextual gap by providing localized evidence from Vadodara.

3. Analytics-Based Modeling

Unlike conceptual studies, this research provides statistical modeling ($R^2 = 0.308$) demonstrating measurable predictive power of influencer attributes on purchase decision.

4. Multidimensional Construct Validation

Exploratory factor analysis confirms that influencer impact is multidimensional, supporting construct validity in digital marketing measurement frameworks.

X. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer actionable insights for fashion apparel brands and digital marketing managers:

1. **Prioritize Credibility Over Celebrity**

Brands should collaborate with influencers perceived as authentic and knowledgeable rather than merely popular. Engagement quality is more influential than follower count.

2. **Leverage Data Analytics**

Brands should monitor influencer engagement metrics such as interaction rate, content authenticity perception, and comment sentiment analysis to optimize campaign effectiveness.

3. **Transparency Reduces Risk**

Influencers should clearly disclose sponsored content and provide balanced reviews to reduce perceived purchase risk and increase consumer trust.

4. **Micro-Influencer Strategy**

Localized influencers in tier-two cities like Vadodara may provide higher trust penetration and stronger community-based engagement.

5. **Content Strategy Focus**

Visual storytelling, styling demonstrations, and honest product reviews enhance purchase likelihood in fashion marketing campaigns.

XI. LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations:

1. Convenience sampling limits generalizability.
2. Data collected from a single city restricts geographic scope.
3. Self-reported responses may introduce response bias.
4. Cross-sectional design does not capture longitudinal behavioral changes.
5. Only fashion apparel sector examined.

XII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research may:

- Conduct comparative studies across metropolitan and rural regions.
- Employ Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for advanced causal modeling.
- Examine influencer impact across different product categories.
- Investigate moderating variables such as gender and income.
- Explore longitudinal effects of influencer marketing exposure.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The present study empirically confirms that social media influencers significantly impact fashion apparel purchase decisions in Vadodara, Gujarat. Influencer credibility, expertise, authenticity, and engagement collectively predict consumer buying behavior, explaining 30.8% of variance in purchase intention. The findings position influencer marketing as a measurable and analytically driven strategy within digital marketing ecosystems.

As social media platforms continue to evolve, influencer marketing is likely to remain a dominant promotional mechanism, particularly in visually intensive industries such as fashion. Brands operating in emerging markets must adopt data-driven influencer selection strategies emphasizing authenticity and credibility to maximize digital campaign effectiveness.

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