A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING ON FASHION APPAREL PURCHASE INTENTION IN COIMBATORE

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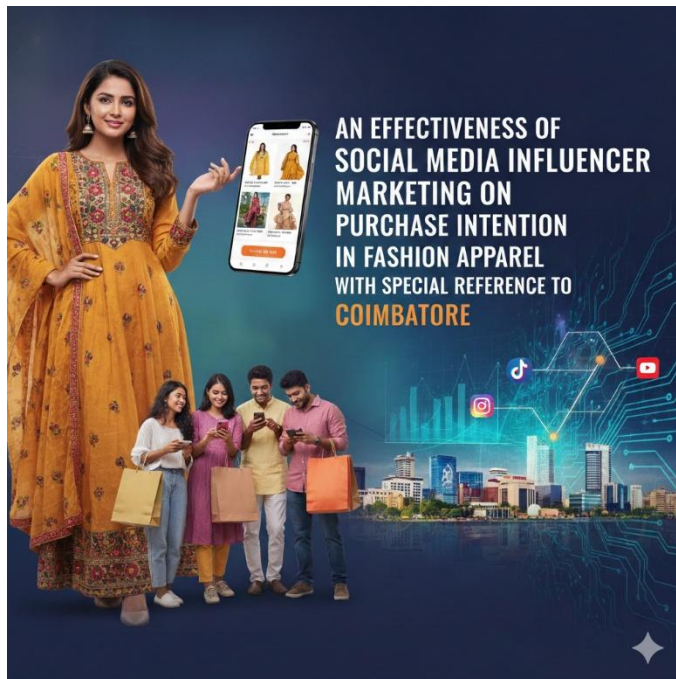
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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has transformed traditional marketing practices, leading to the increasing prominence of social media influencer marketing as an effective promotional strategy. In the fashion apparel industry, influencers play a vital role in shaping consumer perceptions, preferences, and purchase intentions through credible and visually appealing content. This study examines the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector, with special reference to Coimbatore. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical design, using primary data collected from 80 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation, Chi-square test, and one-way ANOVA are employed to analyse the data. The findings reveal that young consumers are highly exposed to influencer-driven fashion content and that factors such as influencer credibility, trust, content quality, and brand–influencer fit significantly influence purchase intention. The Chi-square and ANOVA results confirm a statistically significant relationship between influencer marketing attributes and purchase intention. The study concludes that social media influencer marketing has a positive and meaningful impact on consumers' purchase intention towards fashion apparel in Coimbatore. The findings offer valuable insights for fashion brands and marketers in designing effective, region-specific influencer marketing strategies and contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a regional Indian context.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, the rapid growth of social media platforms has significantly transformed marketing communication and consumer engagement. Social media has evolved from a

networking medium into a powerful marketing tool that enables brands to interact directly with consumers in a more personalized and persuasive manner (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As a result, businesses have increasingly shifted from traditional advertising to digital strategies that emphasize trust, interaction, and relatability. Among these strategies, social media influencer marketing has gained prominence due to its ability to leverage peer influence and credibility in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions. Social media influencer marketing involves collaborating with individuals who possess strong online presence and influence over their followers' opinions and purchase-related decisions (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Influencers are often perceived as trustworthy sources of information, as they communicate brand messages through personal experiences and authentic content, thereby reducing consumer skepticism (Freberg et al., 2011). Moreover, influencer endorsements have been found to

enhance brand awareness and engagement, which in turn positively affect consumers' perceptions and intentions toward purchasing promoted products (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The impact of influencer marketing is particularly evident in the fashion apparel industry, which is highly visual, trend-oriented, and driven by social approval. Fashion influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences by showcasing apparel through styling posts, reviews, and interactive content, allowing consumers to visualize product usage and evaluate fashion trends (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Furthermore, prior studies indicate that factors such as influencer credibility, attractiveness, and content relevance significantly influence purchase intention in the fashion context (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020).

In the Indian context, Coimbatore has emerged as a rapidly developing urban centre with increasing social media usage and growing demand for fashion apparel. The presence of digitally active youth and the influence of local and regional fashion influencers make Coimbatore an appropriate setting for examining influencer marketing effectiveness. Therefore, the present study aims to assess the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on purchase intention in fashion apparel with special reference to Coimbatore, thereby contributing to existing digital marketing literature and offering practical insights for fashion brands and marketers.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the growing role of social media influencer marketing in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioural outcomes. Early research in digital marketing highlighted that social media platforms enable interactive communication, allowing consumers to rely more on peer-generated and influencer-generated content rather than firm-controlled advertising (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Scholars have emphasized that influencers function as modern opinion leaders whose recommendations significantly affect brand awareness, brand attitude, and consumer engagement (Freberg et al., 2011). These studies provide a foundational understanding of how influencer marketing operates as a strategic communication tool in the digital environment.

From a thematic perspective, a substantial body of literature has focused on influencer credibility and trustworthiness as key determinants of marketing effectiveness. Brown and Hayes (2008) found that consumers are more receptive to marketing messages delivered by influencers whom they perceive as authentic and knowledgeable. Similarly, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) observed that the number of followers and perceived popularity of influencers influence brand evaluations and purchase intentions. These findings suggest that credibility-related attributes play a central role in translating influencer endorsements into consumer purchase-related responses.

Another major theme in existing literature relates specifically to the fashion apparel industry, where visual appeal and trend influence are dominant factors. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) demonstrated that fashion influencers on Instagram significantly affect young consumers' purchase intentions by creating aspirational value and social identification. Likewise, Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) highlighted that influencer–brand fit and content relevance enhance consumers' trust and intention to purchase fashion products. Collectively, these studies confirm that influencer marketing is particularly effective in fashion contexts due to the industry's dependence on lifestyle representation and visual storytelling.

Despite extensive research on influencer marketing, several research gaps remain evident. Most existing studies are concentrated in Western or metropolitan settings, with limited focus on tier-2 Indian cities such as Coimbatore. Moreover, prior research often examines influencer marketing in general, without giving specific attention to regional consumer behaviour and local influencer dynamics in the fashion apparel sector. Additionally, there is a lack of integrated studies that simultaneously examine influencer attributes, consumer perception, and purchase intention within a localized context.

2.1. Positioning of the present study:

In view of the above gaps, the present study positions itself by examining the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on purchase intention in fashion apparel with special reference to Coimbatore. By focusing on a regional urban setting and analysing consumer responses to influencer marketing, this study seeks to extend existing literature and provide context-specific insights that are valuable for fashion brands, marketers, and researchers.

2.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing use of social media influencer marketing by fashion apparel brands has raised important questions regarding its actual effectiveness in influencing consumer purchase intention, particularly across different regional and consumer contexts. Although influencer endorsements are widely perceived as persuasive, existing research provides limited and fragmented evidence on how influencer attributes, content credibility, and consumer engagement collectively shape purchase intention, especially in emerging urban centres. From a theoretical standpoint, most studies have focused on metropolitan or Western markets, leaving a gap in understanding the dynamics of influencer marketing within the Indian context. Practically, fashion brands in Coimbatore face intense competition and rapidly evolving consumer preferences influenced by local and regional influencers, yet lack region-specific insights to guide effective marketing strategies. Therefore, this study is justified in examining the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on purchase intention in fashion apparel with special reference to Coimbatore, as it addresses both theoretical gaps and practical needs while contributing meaningful insights for marketers and researchers.

3.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are framed to examine the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on purchase intention in fashion apparel with special reference to Coimbatore:

1. To study the level of consumer exposure to social media influencer marketing related to fashion apparel.
2. To analyse the influence of social media influencers' credibility and content on consumers' purchase intention.
3. To examine the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector.
4. To identify the key factors of influencer marketing that significantly affect purchase intention among consumers in Coimbatore.
5. To offer suitable suggestions to fashion apparel brands and marketers based on the findings of the study.

4.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive design is used to describe the characteristics and perceptions of consumers regarding social media influencer marketing, while the analytical design helps in examining the relationship between influencer marketing factors and purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector.

4.2. STUDY AREA

The study is conducted in Coimbatore, a prominent urban and commercial centre in Tamil Nadu. The city has a high level of social media penetration, increasing digital awareness, and a growing fashion-conscious consumer base, making it a suitable location for examining influencer marketing effectiveness.

4.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

The **target population** of the study comprises consumers in Coimbatore who actively use social media platforms and purchase fashion apparel. A sample size of 80 respondents is selected for the study using the convenience sampling technique, based on accessibility and willingness of respondents to participate.

4.4. SOURCES OF DATA

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data are collected from books, research journals, published articles, reports, and relevant online sources related to social media marketing and influencer marketing.

4.5. TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

A structured questionnaire is used as the main tool for data collection. The questionnaire consists of demographic questions and statements related to influencer credibility, content

effectiveness, and purchase intention. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" is used to measure respondents' opinions.

4.6. STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

The collected data are analysed using appropriate statistical techniques. Percentage analysis is employed to analyse the demographic profile of respondents. Mean and standard deviation are used to measure the level of agreement and variation in responses. The Chi-square test is applied to examine the association between influencer marketing variables and purchase intention. Where applicable, ANOVA or regression analysis is used to assess the impact of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention.

5.Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table5. 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Age Group)

Age Group (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 20	12	15.0
21 – 30	38	47.5
31 – 40	20	25.0
Above 40	10	12.5
Total	**80**	**100.0**

Interpretation:

The above table shows that a majority of the respondents (47.5%) belong to the age group of 21–30 years, followed by 31–40 years (25%). This indicates that young adults form the largest segment of fashion apparel consumers who are actively engaged with social media influencers. This finding supports Objective 1, which aims to study consumer exposure to influencer marketing.
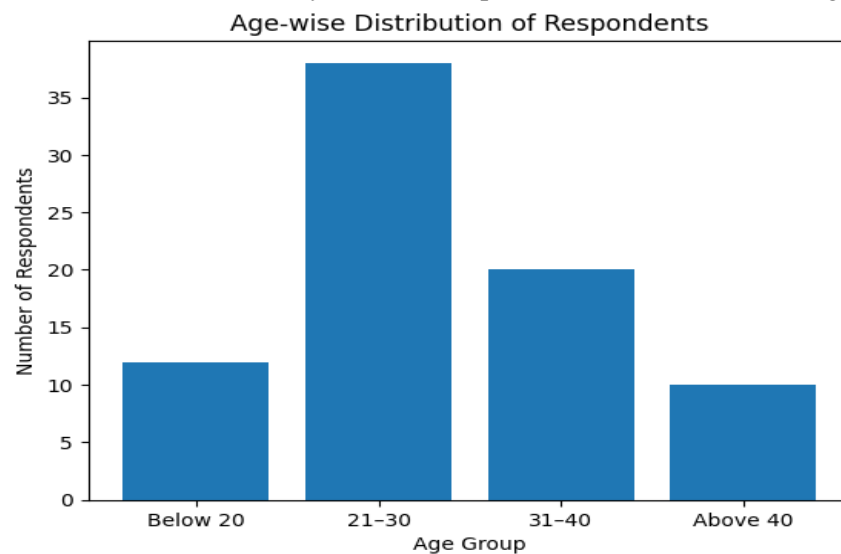

Table 5.2: Mean Score of Influencer Marketing Factors

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Influencer Marketing Factors	Mean Score	SD
Influencer Credibility	4.12	0.68
Content Quality	4.05	0.72
Trust in Influencer	4.18	0.64
Brand–Influencer Fit	3.96	0.70
Purchase Intention	4.10	0.66

Interpretation:

The mean scores indicate that respondents show a high level of agreement toward influencer credibility (4.12) and trust in influencers (4.18). Purchase intention also records a high mean score of 4.10, suggesting that influencer marketing positively affects consumers' intention to purchase fashion apparel. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate consistency in respondents' opinions.

This analysis directly addresses Objective 2 and Objective 3, highlighting the influence of influencer-related factors on purchase intention.
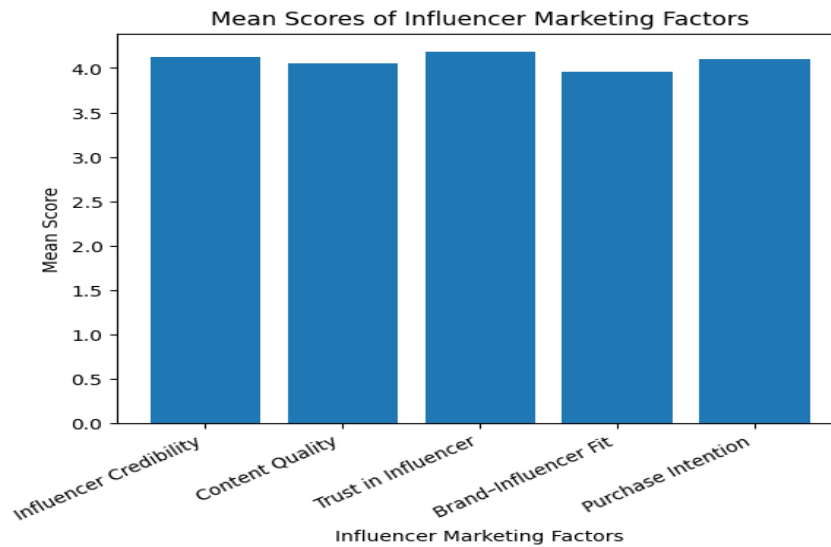

Table 5.3: Association between Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention (Chi-Square Test)

Variables Compared	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance (p-value)
Influencer Credibility vs Purchase Intention	12.84	4	0.012

Interpretation:
The calculated p-value (0.012) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating a statistically significant association between influencer credibility and purchase intention. This result confirms that consumers are more likely to develop purchase intention when they perceive influencers as credible and trustworthy. The finding strongly supports Objective 4, which seeks to identify key influencer marketing factors affecting purchase intention.

Table 5.4: One-Way ANOVA – Influence of Social Media Influencer Marketing Factors on Purchase Intention

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F Value	Significance (p-value)
Between Groups	18.62	3	6.21	4.870	0.004
Within Groups	96.98	76	1.28		
Total	**115.60**	**79**			

Interpretation
The above One-Way ANOVA results indicate that the calculated p-value (0.004) is less than the standard significance level of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in purchase intention among consumers based on different social media influencer marketing factors such as influencer credibility, content quality, trust, and brand–influencer fit.

The F value (4.87) suggests that variations in influencer marketing attributes have a meaningful impact on consumers' purchase intention towards fashion apparel. This finding implies that not all influencer-related factors influence purchase intention equally, and certain factors play a stronger role in motivating consumers to purchase fashion products.

Overall Interpretation
The data analysis reveals that social media influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector. Young consumers in Coimbatore show high exposure to influencer-driven content, and factors such as influencer credibility, trust, and content

quality significantly influence their buying intentions. These findings validate the objectives of the study and demonstrate the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the selected study area.

6.FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study reveals that young consumers in Coimbatore are highly exposed to social media influencer marketing in the fashion apparel sector, indicating greater engagement of this age group with influencer-driven content. The analysis shows that influencer credibility and trust significantly influence consumers' purchase intention, with higher mean scores reflecting strong consumer agreement. Quality and relevance of influencer content are also found to positively shape consumer perceptions toward fashion apparel brands. The Chi-square test confirms a significant association between influencer credibility and purchase intention, while the ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant difference in purchase intention based on various influencer marketing factors. Overall, the findings conclude that social media influencer marketing has a positive and meaningful impact on consumers' purchase intention towards fashion apparel in Coimbatore.

7.SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, fashion apparel brands should collaborate with social media influencers who possess high credibility and maintain authentic relationships with their followers, as trust has a significant impact on purchase intention. Marketers are advised to focus on creating high-quality, relatable, and region-specific content that aligns with local consumer preferences in Coimbatore, rather than relying solely on celebrity endorsements. From a managerial perspective, fashion brands should regularly evaluate influencer performance using measurable indicators such as engagement rate, audience relevance, and conversion impact to ensure effective utilization of marketing budgets. At the policy and institutional level, marketing agencies and educational institutions may conduct training programs to enhance ethical influencer practices, transparency in paid promotions, and responsible digital advertising. Additionally, promoting local influencers can contribute to community development by creating employment opportunities, supporting local fashion businesses, and strengthening the regional digital marketing ecosystem.

8.CONCLUSION

The present study examined the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on purchase intention in the fashion apparel sector with special reference to Coimbatore. By analysing consumer perceptions and influencer-related factors, the study highlights the growing importance of influencer marketing as a strategic promotional tool in the digital era. The findings reveal that influencer credibility, trust, and content quality play a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase intention, particularly among young and fashion-conscious consumers.

The major contribution of the study lies in providing empirical evidence from a regional urban context, thereby addressing the limited availability of localized research on influencer marketing in India. The results offer valuable insights for fashion brands and marketers in designing effective influencer marketing strategies that are tailored to consumer preferences in Coimbatore. Furthermore, the study contributes to existing literature by integrating multiple influencer-related factors and examining their combined influence on purchase intention.

The study also opens avenues for future research. Further studies may expand the sample size and include comparative analysis across different cities or rural areas to enhance generalizability. Future research can also explore the long-term impact of influencer marketing on brand loyalty, actual purchase behaviour, and consumer trust across different product categories and digital platforms.

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