

## **Influencer Marketing and its Role in Indian Retail Apparel Industry: A Quantitative Study**

**Sweta Chauhan**

Asst. Professor, School of Management, Graphic Era Hill University,  
Dehradun Uttarakhand India

### **Abstract**

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in the Indian retail apparel industry, transforming the way brands engage with their target audience. In India, where the retail apparel industry is highly competitive and rapidly evolving, influencers have the ability to sway consumer preferences and drive purchasing decisions. By leveraging their large followings and authentic relationships with their audiences, influencers are able to showcase and endorse clothing brands in a relatable and compelling manner. They create content such as outfit inspiration, styling tips, and product reviews, helping consumers envision themselves in those apparel items and making informed choices. Moreover, influencer marketing offers brands a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising and allows them to reach niche and specific target groups. Influencers possess a deep understanding of their followers' preferences, enabling brands to tap into highly engaged and receptive audiences. This personalized approach not only enhances brand awareness but also fosters trust and credibility among consumers, as they perceive influencers as genuine, trustworthy individuals rather than faceless corporations. The role of influencer marketing in the Indian retail apparel industry goes beyond mere promotion. It also aids in building long-term relationships between brands and consumers. By collaborating with influencers, brands can create immersive experiences through contests, giveaways, and exclusive collaborations. This fosters brand loyalty, generates word-of-mouth marketing, and helps brands stay relevant in a rapidly evolving market.

**Keywords:** *Influencer Marketing, Target Audience, Social Media Platforms, Digital Content Creators, Consumer Engagement, Authentic Relationships*

### **Introduction**

Brands have recognized the power of connecting with and engaging their target audience, influencers are working together. Influencer marketing goes beyond traditional advertising methods and offers a more personalized and authentic approach to connecting with consumers. By leveraging the large followings and genuine relationships that influencers have with their audiences, brands are able to showcase their apparel products in a relatable and compelling manner. Influencers create content beyond promotional material, providing outfit inspirations, styling tips, and even product reviews. Through this content, they help consumers envision themselves wearing the clothing items, making informed choices, and ultimately driving sales.

Reaching specialised and specialist target audiences is one of influencer marketing's main advantages in the Indian retail apparel sector. Unlike traditional advertising, which often casts a wide net in hopes of capturing a broad audience, influencers possess an in-depth understanding of their followers' preferences and demographics. This allows brands to tap into highly engaged and receptive audiences who are genuinely interested in the products they promote. The personalized approach of influencer marketing not only enhances brand awareness but also fosters trust and credibility among consumers. Influencers are perceived as genuine individuals rather than faceless corporations, which resonates with consumers seeking authenticity and relatability. By leveraging influencer marketing, brands can build stronger connections with their target audience, leading to long-term customer loyalty and advocacy.

Furthermore, influencer marketing offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising methods for brands operating in the Indian retail apparel industry. While traditional advertising often requires significant financial investments in print media, television commercials, or billboards, influencer

marketing can be more affordable and targeted. Additionally, influencer collaborations can lead to creative and immersive experiences for consumers. Brands can organize contests, giveaways, or exclusive collaborations with influencers, which not only generate excitement but also foster a sense of community and loyalty among consumers. These experiences further contribute to positive brand perception and word-of-mouth marketing, ultimately driving brand visibility and sales.

### **Literature Review**

Research explores the connection between customer purchase intentions, brand perceptions, and views regarding fashion influencers (FIs). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and theoretical findings from earlier influencer marketing literature are combined in the conceptual model that is suggested. It is the first study of its kind to look into how brand sentiments and purchase intentions are affected by attitudes towards FIs in the fashion industry. (Chetioui et. al., 2020). Another paper evaluates influencer marketing's efficacy, inventiveness, distinctiveness, and selectivity in promoting the brand. According to the findings, influencer marketing is more trusted by customers to promote a product, and because each influencer is unique, more selectivity is needed when coming up with ideas and promotional content based on their personas. (Purwaningwulan et. al., 2018).

An article states that the issue of a monopolistic firm supplying two comparable commodities to a series of sequential purchasers, whose decisions can be affected by previous buys, has three solutions. These methods include the use of influencers and a condensed product lineup, either ex-ante (before demand realisation) or ex-post (after production postponement). The company can capitalise on the way that social influence results in demand herding by responding to preorder information, taking advantage of the increased replaceability and reduced manufacturing expenses by reducing product variety before demand is realised, and using promotional incentives to entice customers to become influencers. (Hu et. al., 2014). Another article demonstrates how a psychological process called congruence might help influencer marketing initiatives succeed. Influencer marketing is a new type of persuasive communication. This results in more positive attitudes and better buy and recommendation intents. (Belanche et. al., 2021).

Research discovered that customers trust influencers highly, and influencer trust, content quality, product relevance, and consumer involvement all had a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. (Nam & Dân, 2018). Another paper tries to comprehend and examine the variables influencing Indian consumers' online purchase decisions. 200 students enrolled in graduation and post-graduation studies in the Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh were surveyed to gather the data. According to the study's findings, a customer's propensity to make an online purchase is significantly influenced by their gender, level of education, age, security concerns, technological comfort, previous online buy frequency, product type, frequency of purchases, and price. The research's framework helps to better understand the variables influencing customer online buying behaviour and assists in identifying typical Indian online consumers. It may also assist e-marketers in creating more targeted marketing tactics to boost e-commerce sales. (Kanchan et. al., 2015).

An article looked into whether an influencer's source traits— authenticity, expertise, homophily and physical beauty—could serve as relational resources for building follower trust. The findings indicated that homophily, sincerity, and expertise had a moderating effect on commitment and sales results. Physical appearance did not have a major impact on interpersonal trust. Linkages between loyalty and trust and authenticity were found to have strong relationships. The findings give us a better knowledge of persuasion mechanisms and implications for influencer marketing. (Kim & Kim, 2021). Another paper investigated the attitudes of marketing professionals towards Instagram influencer marketing initiatives and digital influencers. It employed a qualitative technique that includes convenience sampling of participants and semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts in the beauty business. The findings emphasised the importance of online influencers and the demand for their reliability, sincerity, and artistic independence. This study's key benefit is that it describes every step of the influencer promotion approach and emphasises the successes and obstacles of an influencer campaign. (Santiago & Castelo, 2020).

Research looked at how audience comments affect influencer marketing. The findings demonstrated that remarks made by other audience members moderated the effect while having a parasocial connection to the influencer raised their perceived credibility. Trust in the brand and purchase intention are positively impacted by the influencer's credibility. (Reinikainen et. al., 2020). Another article investigates the compatibility of the influencer's and the brand's personalities as well as of customers' real and ideal selves. Additionally, it takes into account how involvement influences post-engagement attitudes and beliefs, brand trust, and purchase intention. Congruence with customers' true selves becomes more crucial as involvement level increases, according to a structural equation modelling analysis of an online survey with 547 participants. The importance of having a good fit between a brand and an endorser increases when there is a high level of involvement. Overall, this study demonstrates how differently each of the three forms of congruency and engagement interacts with influencer marketing. (Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021).

A paper thoroughly explains how opinion leadership and parasocial relationships affect followers' buying intentions. 409 online followers of two accounts on Instagram provide empirical evidence that parasocial connections and thought leadership complement one another in influencer marketing. Post characteristics control these impacts, with storytelling posts amplifying both effects. The influence of a parasocial relationship is enhanced by correspondent inference, but not the impact of opinion leadership. These results contribute to influencer marketing research and practice by highlighting the significance of the social component of influencer marketing. (Farivar et. al., 2020). Another research looked at the connection between customer characteristics and impulsive purchases. SmartPLS 2.0 statistical software was used to study and measure 267 central Indian consumers. The findings demonstrated that while the shopping enjoyment propensity had negative impacts, the constructs of impulsive buying tendency, interpersonal influence, emotional connection, and materialism revealed substantial positive correlations with impulsive purchases. The results back up earlier studies in this area and give academics and marketers valuable information on the purchasing habits of Indian customers. (Atulkar & Kesari, 2018).

### Objective of the Study

To research the influencer marketing and its role in Indian retail apparel industry

### Methodology

This study utilized a structured questionnaire as a survey tool to collect data from 233 participants. Various statistical techniques, including mean calculation and t-test, were employed to analyze the gathered data. Convenience sampling was adopted as the sampling technique, wherein participants were selected based on their ease of access and voluntary participation.

**Table 1 Influencer Marketing and its Role in Indian Retail Apparel Industry**

Serial No.	Statement of Survey	Mean Value	t-value	p-value
1	By partnering with popular influencers, brands can reach a wider audience and gain exposure among their target market.	3.90	5.181	0.000
2	Influencers have built a strong relationship with their followers, who trust their opinions and recommendations.	4.03	6.379	0.000
3	Influencer marketing allows apparel brands to reach their specific target audience effectively.	4.43	10.987	0.000
4	Influencers can showcase apparel brands in a relatable and aspirational manner, making it easier for consumers to visualize themselves wearing the products.	3.78	2.819	0.003
5	By leveraging influencer partnerships, apparel brands	4.33	8.811	0.000

	can tap into the influencers' reach and amplify their message to a wider audience.			
6	Many apparel brands collaborate with influencers to create exclusive collections or limited-edition items.	3.61	1.312	0.096
7	Influencers facilitate two-way communication between brands and consumers through comments, direct messages, and live sessions.	4.10	7.499	0.000
8	Influencers have the power to set fashion trends and influence consumer preferences.	4.01	7.053	0.000
9	Brands can track key performance metrics, such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates, to evaluate the success of influencer campaigns.	3.67	2.225	0.014
10	Compared to traditional advertising methods, influencer marketing often provides a cost-effective solution for apparel brands.	3.68	2.352	0.010

Table 1 presents the mean scores for each statement in the study examining the “influencer marketing and its role in Indian retail apparel industry”. The statement with the highest mean score of 4.43 states that “Influencer marketing allows apparel brands to reach their specific target audience effectively”. Following closely behind is the statement with a mean score of 4.33, suggesting that “By leveraging influencer partnerships, apparel brands can tap into the influencers' reach and amplify their message to a wider audience”. With a mean score of 4.10, another statement highlights “Influencers facilitate two-way communication between brands and consumers through comments, direct messages, and live sessions”. Additionally, the statement expressing that “Influencers have built a strong relationship with their followers, who trust their opinions and recommendations” receives a mean score of 4.03. “Influencers have the power to set fashion trends and influence consumer preferences” is emphasized by a mean score of 4.01. Furthermore, the statement suggesting that “By partnering with popular influencers, brands can reach a wider audience and gain exposure among their target market” receives a mean score of 3.90, closely followed by the statement indicating that “Influencers can showcase apparel brands in a relatable and aspirational manner, making it easier for consumers to visualize themselves wearing the products”, with a mean score of 3.78. On the lower end, the statement highlighting “Compared to traditional advertising methods, influencer marketing often provides a cost-effective solution for apparel brands” receives a mean score of 3.68. Finally, the last two statements fall into the lowest category, “Brands can track key performance metrics, such as reach, engagement, and conversion rates, to evaluate the success of influencer campaigns” and “Many apparel brands collaborate with influencers to create exclusive collections or limited-edition items”, with mean scores of 3.67 and 3.61, respectively. The significance of the t-values for each statement the influencer marketing and its role in the Indian retail apparel industry, as the t-values were positive and their significance value was less than 0.05.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, influencer marketing has revolutionized the Indian retail apparel industry by providing brands with a powerful tool to connect and engage with their target audience. Through collaborations with influencers, brands can tap into the genuine relationships and large followings that influencers possess, promoting their products in a relatable and authentic manner. By leveraging influencer marketing, brands can reach niche target groups, foster trust and credibility, and create immersive experiences for consumers. As the industry continues to evolve, influencer marketing will remain a vital strategy for brands to drive brand visibility, consumer engagement, and ultimately, sales in the competitive Indian retail apparel market.

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