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From Likes to Purchases: Social Media Fashion Influencers and Consumer Decision-Making

Abstract

Customers collect information largely from social media platform, on the basis of this information they take their decisions. A lot of number of influencers has emerged and they prove to be a source of advice for the consumers. Social media is one of the top most application used by these influencers in the fashion industry and this is going to be the same trend in near future. Moreover these influencers affect the behavioral intentions of consumers towards fashion advice they post. This work aims to investigate customer attitudes about Social media fashion influencers. Companies must comprehend how consumers feel about Instagram fashion influencers in order to establish effective digital strategies. They must therefore determine the extent of consumer trust in influencers as well as the effects of that trust on consumer purchase intent. This study's research goals are to (1) create a framework of the relationship between consumer behavior and factors including trust, influencer trust, and purchase intention, and (2) test and validate that framework using a sample of real customers. An online survey was carried out (n=23) among those who follow fashion influencers on Instagram to fulfil the goal of this study. We study how social media and particularly Social media helps in the promotion of different brands. We choose fashion industry for this article because, this industry occupy a significant part of the worldwide economy and is therefore regarded as one of the important industry. Our work has two different angles. One angle is that of academia in which we extend the study done by different researchers regarding the consumer's behavior towards Instagram fashion influencers. The second angle of our work is the business angle. In this article we investigate the drastic growth use of Instagram and its importance to promote the industry. Our work also emphasized that in order to build a strong and consistent relationship among consumers and fashion professional the Instagram fashion influencers can play a vital role. The main objective of our work is to analyze the point of view of consumers towards Instagram fashion influencers and narrate how this perception affect the intent of purchasing. We answered the research question raised in this paper successfully. A detailed framework about the behavior of consumers toward Instagram fashion influencers is presented, tested, and validated through a questionnaire from consumers. Keeping in mind the research problem which states to explore the behavior of consumers towards Instagram fashion influencers and its consequences on the potential purchasing

Keywords: Instagram, influencers, framework, consumers, fashion

1. Introduction

In this section I will briefly introduce my topic of research, its background, and in the last I will summarize the reasons due to which I choose the topic.

1.1 Topic of research

My topic of research is “Impact of Instagram fashion influencers on consumer buying behavior”. In the last few years the method of traditional buying and selling process changed dramatically due to wide spread of Instagram. People can express their point of views and reviews about various products on social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram, and twitter. Therefore it is now necessary for companies to produce quality products so that they can get positive customer experience and avoid negative comments or reviews. The mind of people can be molded by influencers in the form of messages, and reviews which are definitely followed by these influencer’s followers on Instagram. These followers can be turned into potential customers. The Instagram has witness growth and a hot spot for fashionable women who use it only for the purpose of fashion blogs. The fashion influencers on Instagram can effectively reach out to their customers through fashion blogs.

1.1.1 Fashion influencers

For a company to introduce its product to the market there are various methods to promote the product and attract customers. One of the method is through people endorsing who understands and are interested in fashion and who can influence their followers. These people are called fashion influencers.

1.2 Background

Fashion industry occupy a significant part of the worldwide economy and is therefore regarded as one of the important industry. In order to fulfill the need of dressing clothes are required, because everybody needs to dress and dress well. People want to gain and show their status to the society and others around and wearing trendy, fashionable, and stylish clothes is a way to do it. As in the fashion industry changes are so fast due to the reason that people always want to wear new clothes, so companies continuously promote their products to earn a place for their brand in the heart and mind of customers.

With the growth of online retailers challenges for brands have also increases, this makes the fashion market more competitive. For brands to get success in the market it is necessary that they understand the attitude of customers related to impulse purchasing. Influencers give growing sources of information and innovation to the followers. The description of influencers might be as self-made micro celebrities. They are actually a new type of opinion leaders from somewhere among friends and celebrities, which has arises with the increasing social media opportunities.

Social media is now a reality and part of everyday life and is shaped a well-known medium of information gathering on the basis of which customers make their decisions. Visuals always play an important role to promote fashion products therefore, Instagram is very important for fashion brands. It gives enjoyment to the users while using the app which is related to impulsive buying due to which most of the customers did not do evaluation before the decision making, in this way Instagram the buying process.

1.3 Motivation

Instagram is currently having more than one billion active users and is one of the most downloaded application (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021). Different brands have made accounts on Instagram to take advantage this huge number of potential customers. Though almost every industry’s brands have made accounts, fashion industry in specific find the platform of Instagram pretty helpful. Same goes for the influencers who have the reputation of fashion experts. With this, the influencer marketing continue to

flourish, in influencer marketing various influencers promote and advertise a brand on their own social media platforms. It is estimated that this influencer marketing will be nearly doubled than its current value \$8 billion by the end of 2022. Moreover, influencer marketing has capability to attract more customers than the traditional media advertising which involve celebrities. This is due to the fact that Instagram offers strong customers engagement, and it provide feel of close relation to customers with their favorite influencers. The new generation is likely to be more exposed to the advertisements on social media as they give a check to Instagram five times a day (Chen, Lu, Wang, & Pan, 2019). Due to these facts we motivate to work on this topic.

1.4 Literature review

Important sources of advice for customers are the opinion leaders and most of them uses Instagram as a platform in fashion industry. The goal of (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020) is to provide a study about the background and future consequences of the opinion leaders in this context. The authors collected data from an Instagram account which is fashion focused and having 808 followers. The results which are generated based on the collected data demonstrates that originality and uniqueness is the key to inspire a user on Instagram. These results put interesting impact on the fashion industry. The authors find that instead of focusing on quality or quantity focusing on the originality and uniqueness of the post on Instagram are the key and it leads a poster to be perceived. The result generated in (Casaló et al., 2020) emphasis on the fact the influencers play an important role in the fashion industry because a lot of customers follow them and want to imitate their sense of fashion.

The authors of (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021) examine the types of Instagram marketing tool which are effective in current generation's impulse purchasing attitude in the fashion industry. The authors use the famous Stimulus-Organism-Response mechanism on Instagram. They do a qualitative study. The authors conclude from their findings in context of impulse purchasing behavior on Instagram there exist some obvious gender differences. Instagram play an important role to influence the impulse purchase among female, but when participants are male then the case is different.

Companies and academia both have already acknowledged the importance of digital influencers. In (Santiago, Magueta, & Dias, 2020) authors attempt to dig out the level of trust on influencers and the consequent intention of purchase. It is necessary for companies to consider behavior of customer towards these influencers. The authors follow a quantities approach with a non-probabilistic convince sampling. In order to get the objective of their work the authors perform an online survey among 242 individuals who follow fashion influencers on Instagram. The results demonstrate that trust on influencers and credibility of brands have definitely an impact on purchase intention.

Internet is playing and important role to facilitate customers in finding their desired products online. With the growth of social media platforms and Instagram specially, it has become one of the popular shopping platform among youth. Reviews from Instagram influencers are associated with customer's trust and their purchasing intention. Now a days companies try their best to show their presence on the platform and keep their customers aware of recent trends. The authors of (Negi & Pabalkar, 2020) try to explore those marketing strategies which are used by Instagram fashion influencers which leave an impact on decision making of customers. The authors record views of 200 female customers and analyze these responses and the influence on purchasing decision process.

Recommendation of fashion influencer on Instagram is one of the reason due to which people buy a product that they intended to buy. The work presented in (Gunawan & Iskandar, 2020) focus to examine and identify how much the Instagram fashion influencer affect the impulse buying behavior of consumers. The authors validated the data through both qualitative and quantities approaches. The qualitative approach is used with a with

semi-structured and detailed interview while the quantitative approach is used through a questionnaire. The results demonstrate that 80% of the participants are opting a fashion product and are influenced purely by a particular fashion influencer.

2. Research question

In this article we study the purchasing behavior of consumers with the aim of identifying and analyzing various factors that have an impact on consumer's buying behavior. First we introduce customer's buying behavior, and then we see the role of social media and influencers. We created the research question "What is the Impact of Instagram fashion influencers on consumer buying behavior?". In this research question we also find what fashion influencers are and how they made people buy products that they did not intended to buy.

3. Research objective

This research proposal provide in-depth understanding of the fashion influencers, and their role on social media from the perspective of users. First of all we describe the role of social media platform in modern era especially the role of Instagram, its usage, and how it is used to promote different brands. We provide some facts and figure about how many users use the platform of Instagram. Then we narrate what fashion influencers are, the ways in which these influencers promote different brands on their social media pages. We also discuss the fashion industry briefly, its history, market share, and other factors. We comprehensively write the reasons due to which we choose to work on this topic in the motivation section. We also discuss the most related works done by other researchers in this filed in detail. The ultimate objectives of this work are (1) create a framework of the relationship between consumer behavior and factors including trust, influencer trust, and purchase intention, and (2) test and validate that framework using a sample of real customers

4. Contributions

From the perspective of academia our work extended the current literature related to the behavior of customers towards Instagram fashion influencers. Hence our work provide new evidence to the underlying theories. The area in which it is investigated the point of view of customers about Instagram influencers is not yet widely explored. Surely this work provide some assistance to understand the behavior of customers. We also explore the work of other scholars in this area and try to give a much comprehensive understanding of the topic.

From the business perspective the investigation provide in this article about the emergence and drastic use of Instagram is of huge importance. Because, the future influencer choice can be predicted from the point of view of customers about Instagram fashion influencers. Our work also emphasized that in order to build a strong and consistent relationship among consumers and fashion professional the Instagram fashion influencers can play a vital role. Last but not the least keeping in mind there is little work done in this area our work has the capability to contribute to the marketers who invest in this market tactic.

5. Limitations

This work has some limitations. One limitation arise when it comes choice of industry. There is no doubt that fashion industry is a huge industry but, other industries such as cosmetic industry, personal care industry, and beauty industry could also be considered. Another drawback is to the approach taken, in this case, the one way that solely uses a quantitative analysis. The results are not generalizable to the entire population because a non-probabilistic convenience sample was used. It's also vital to note that the majority of the sample being studied consists of young people who are from various regions of Pakistan.

6. Methodology

In this section we present the methodology in detail which we adopt to answer our research question. Moreover data and methods of data collection are also included in this section.

6.1 Data collection

In our work we have use a survey by a questionnaire. Our questionnaire consist of ten questions. To weed out people who don't use Instagram or don't follow fashion influencers there, two filter questions were used. Total by 23 individuals (n=23) participate in our survey. We propagate this questionnaire via messages forward through social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and via emails. The social networking platform “Instagram” facilitate its users to share pictures, and videos with each other. The platform enable its users to share their activities in daily life instantly with family and friends in the form of photos and videos. Instagram is the platform which is used by a large number of fashion influencers, thus it is observe that a vast communication of brands is done through the platform. Instagram has gain the reputation as an instrument influence marketing due to the fact that on Instagram the consumers can be communicated with photos or videos which helped them to absorb the transmitted information.

Presentation of collected data:

Table no 1: What is your age?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
18 to 24	2	12	52.17	52.17	52.17
25 to 34	3	11	47.83	47.83	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table no 2: Do you use Instagram regularly?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	23	100.00	100.00	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 3: Do you use Instagram for fashion inspiration?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	13	56.52	56.52	56.52
no	2	10	43.48	43.48	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 4: Do you follow fashion influencers on Instagram?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	18	78.26	78.26	78.26
No	2	5	21.74	21.74	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 5: Does Instagram fashion influencers' content make you interested in a product you were not interested in before?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	18	78.26	78.26	78.26
No	2	5	21.74	21.74	100.00

Total	23	100.0	100.0	
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Table No 6: Have you bought items directly from an influencers affiliated link?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	7	30.43	30.43	30.43
No	2	16	69.57	69.57	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 7: Do you believe fashion influencers set trends?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
strongly disagree	1	2	8.70	8.70	8.70
disagree	2	4	17.39	17.39	26.09
neutral	3	8	34.78	34.78	60.87
agree	4	5	21.74	21.74	82.61
strongly agree	5	4	17.39	17.39	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 8: Does your perception of a brand change when influencers postpaid content with a brand?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
always	1	1	4.35	4.35	4.35
usually	2	6	26.09	26.09	30.43
sometime	3	13	56.52	56.52	86.96
rarely	4	2	8.70	8.70	95.65
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
never	5	1	4.35	4.35	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 9: Does it bother you when influencers do paid adverts or sponsorships on Instagram in regards to fashion brands?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	17	73.91	73.91	73.91
No	2	6	26.09	26.09	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

Table No 10: Do you think Instagram influencers are having a negative effect on sustainability in fashion?

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
yes	1	9	39.13	39.13	39.13

No	2	14	60.87	60.87	100.00
Total		23	100.0	100.0	

6.2 Data analyzing

We examine data on a number of metrics in this work, including brand credibility, purchase intent, message, and influencer trust. Additionally, we don't include people who don't use Instagram or don't follow Instagram fashion influencers. There are roughly 23 total responses that we record, and all of those are considered valid for our work (these 23 people are confirm that they are users of Instagram). The majority of responders (52.2%) are between the ages of 18 and 24 and between 25 and 34 (47.8%). All the 23 individuals are regular users of Instagram. Majority of the individuals who participate in our survey follow fashion influencers on Instagram (around 78.3%). The same number of participants show that their buying intent is influenced by fashion influencers i.e. they opt to buy a product in which they are not interested before. Among the participants only 30.4% individuals state that they buy products directly from the link affiliated to fashion influencers. About 34.8% (8 individuals) believe that these fashion influencers set trends which is followed by their followers. About 90% individuals show that their perception about certain product changes when the saw fashion influencers promoting that product. 60.9 % participants state that in their opinion Instagram fashion influencers have a positive impact on sustainability in fashion.

7. Conclusion

It is undeniable that with the emergence of information and communication technologies, people have gain easy access to information. Considering the internet evolution those marketing strategies which focus on traditional salesperson are no longer effective. Nowadays, most companies have realized the fact that social media is the new strategic communication tool. Moreover brands have also recognize the power of online influencers on these social media platforms. When the role of social media influencers gain more attention, then the companies recognize them as a tool to reach out to more loyal and more involved and more potential customers. The fashion industry is of those industry which has invested more in this communication strategy getting more involved with Instagrammers, Youtubers, and bloggers. The main objective or our work is to analyze the point of view of consumers towards Instagram fashion influencers and narrate how this perception affect the intent of purchasing.

We answered the research question raised in this paper successfully. A detailed framework about the behavior of consumers toward Instagram fashion influencers is presented, tested, and validated through a questionnaire from consumers. Keeping in mind the research problem which states to explore the behavior of consumers towards Instagram fashion influencers and its consequences on the potential purchasing, we can say that the objective of our is accomplished. There is no doubt about the relation between what the customers think about the fashion influencers and the trust in these influencers. Above all this credibility of brand is the most important factor in this relation. Talking about the consumer's point of view and its relation with buying behavior of customers, we conclude it that the similarity with fashion influencer, credibility of the influencer, brand credibility, and message credibility build a strong relation with the buying intention of consumers. Our work demonstrates that the trust has a positive impact on the purchase intention of customers.

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