

Exploring Consumer Perception of Social Media Marketing and Its Impact on Apparel Purchase Decisions in India

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to present the marketers with the benefits of using digital platforms for sustainable business practices, and offer a pathway for future research in this field of study.

Data Collection: Primary data of the study was collected using a structured questionnaire; where 181 data was collected from 181 respondents and secondary data was gathered from previous research articles Research articles books, journals, e-books, etc.

Findings: The findings of the study reveals that business practices can sustain only by applying digital marketing tools to attract and retain customers as every information that a customer seeks for is just doorstep away. Also, the determinants of consumer perception of Social Media Influencers for purchase decisions of fashion products for sustainable business practices. Age is one of the significant variables of consumers for their perception for purchasing products digitally.

Limitation: The limitation of the study is that the above findings can only be generalized up to a certain population of India for the above research and is not applicable to the whole universe.

Originality: This paper is original and unique as no empirical study has been conducted to study the determinants of consumer perception particularly of Social Media Influencers for purchase decisions of fashion, particularly in Indian context.

Keywords: Consumer Perception, Social media influencers, digital sustainability, India, empirical study

1. Introduction

Social media is becoming inevitable as it has become the source of daily news, entertainment, communicating platforms with friends and family, for reviews and feedbacks on different products and services to places and trending fashion clothing (Kapoor et al., 2018). It has been observed by Statista that In Februarys 2025 social media users globally were 5.56 billion, approx. 70% of the total population. And it has been found that approx. 60% of these internet users actively uses social media platforms (Satista, 2025). In this GEN-Z era where everything is digitalized, it is important to understand the significance of social media. Social media is becoming a powerful tool to influence buying decisions; this is because of the availability of information, expressing individuals' opinions, and ease of communication (Ellison et al., 2015). Social media marketing will aid marketers in gathering consumer-related information, their needs, expectations, and

their opinions for a particular brand or product (Ahmad et al., 2015). One of the communication tools of social media marketing is Social Media Influencers (SMIs), who are the people with a huge number of followers on different social media platforms (Liu & Zheng, 2024). A survey by Blog HubSpot (2024) showed us the top five social media tools for Influencer marketing are Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. In addition, millions of people use social media every day for entertainment, motivation, and buying ideas, it's understandable that influencer marketing has been so successful in recent years. As the industry evolves, influencer marketing platforms continue to grow in size and importance. This continual expansion is making brand-creator partnerships more profitable year after year (Statista, 2025). Influencer marketing is all about promoting sponsored products on their social media platforms, aiding those brands to become viral and forming a manner of advertisement, and they receive payment and products in return (Campbell & Grimm, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017). SMI's constantly posts reels and other paid and non-paid content to gain audience's attention through photos and videos, and therefore para-social relationship is established between influencer and audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Marketing through social media has become inevitable as it has become a huge part of the daily lives of people and has become a marketplace for searching for desired products (Dr. Constanza Bianchi, Lynda Andrews, 2002; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Social media influencers have a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention, as they create a sense of belongingness and credibility in the mind of their followers. Secondly, it creates e-WOM, where consumers gather information through a new source of channel, which is electronic and it has become one of the significant factors in influencing consumers' purchase behaviour (Hoffman & Novak, 1996 ; Martínez-López et al. 2020; Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez 2020). Now e-wom has become more reliable and trustworthy in providing product-related information, as it has reduced anonymity (Samoggia et al., 2020). According to (Leong et al., 2022) word of mouth on social media can also reduce purchase intention because of negative comments and reviews by social media users. Social media has ease of access, and it gives an advantage to people to create an account, and sometimes, without identity revelation, they can promote products. It is imperative to understand the role of these influencers and word of mouth for a better understanding of consumers' buying behaviour and need recognition. Hence, taking this into account, this study aims to determine the consumer's purchase intention and the effect of SMI's in modifying the consumer's preferences of buying products, particularly in the fashion product category.

Social media influencers have become a very effective digital engagement technique, outperforming traditional marketing methods in terms of customer trust and ROI. Social media influencers are people who use their existing relationships with followers to increase brand awareness and trust. This strategy has proven beneficial in increasing customer participation and sales, so it is vital to examine its impact on consumer intentions. Understanding how influencer marketing efforts impact consumer perceptions and behaviours can help organisations optimize their digital marketing strategy and achieve better results (Adesokan et al., 2024). Brands are increasingly using social media influencers to promote their products due to their enduring popularity across several channels (e.g., blogs, streams, and vlogs) (Wall Street Journal, 2019). High school students, who serve Social media influencers as their role model, prioritize security and relaxation. Four out of ten Millennials say their favorite influencer is like an old friend.

2/3 of the Millennial says that they create Para-social relationship with influencers and get closer to them. No advertising can outperform Social media influencer marketing when it comes to influences and communicating with general public (Chavda & Chauhan, 2024).

1.1 Research Gap

The research will help us in understanding how social media influencers' role as marketing campaigns has been rapidly increasing throughout the world and how influencers influence the consumer's perception towards purchase intention of the product, whereby recently SMIs are gaining more popularity as Bloggers, Celebrities, Gaming Influencers, Photographers, and Thought Leaders. This research will try to find the factors of these influencers' impact on consumers' purchase intention, where recently no study has been found related to identifying the factors creating consumer perception for the purchase intention of fashion products, particularly in the context of SMIs endorsing fashion products. This will be done by gathering primary data through a structured questionnaire, which will assist us in confirming our inferences for the study. Presently, no one has collected data in Delhi-NCR; this research will help academicians and marketers to understand the significance of social media influencers for sustainability in this digital era.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the determinants of the consumer perception towards social media influencers for the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by social media influencers.
2. To examine the significant association between the demographic profile (age, gender, income, occupation, education) of the consumers with the determinants influencing the purchase intention towards fashion products endorsed by social media influencers.
3. To propose a model depicting the effective determinants of the purchase intention of consumers for fashion products endorsed by SMIs and consumer demographic profile, leading to sustainable business practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Influencers – An Introduction

De Veirman et al. (2017) and Lou & Yuan (2019) highlighted the growing importance of social media influencers in modern marketing, leveraging their online presence to shape consumer behaviour and brand perception.. These influencers are trusted figures with large followings on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. Their credibility and authenticity enable them to shape consumer behavior, influence brand perception, and boost visibility and engagement for businesses.

Social media has significantly transformed marketing, with influencer marketing emerging as a dominant force (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Ye et al., 2021). Projected to reach \$480 billion by 2027 (Rossum, 2024), influencer marketing has reshaped consumer behavior and brand strategies (Mallipeddi et al., 2022; Li & Peng, 2021; Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). Around 60% of consumers trust social media influencers (SMIs), whose endorsements impact nearly half of purchasing decisions (Digital Marketing Institute,

2024). Brands now focus on long-term collaborations with SMIs to enhance authenticity and consumer trust (Whateley, 2024).

Despite their perceived authenticity, influencers often blur the lines between genuine recommendations and paid endorsements, raising ethical concerns about transparency and integrity. The social media environment, driven by metrics such as popularity and engagement, complicates the perception of authenticity. Beyond marketing, influencers impact psychological and societal perceptions of beauty, success, and self-worth, aligning with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986; Ekinci et al., 2025), which emphasizes the role of observed behavior in shaping individual beliefs and actions.

2.2 Impact of Social Media Influencers on Marketing Practices

Social media influencers have revolutionized modern marketing, becoming pivotal in shaping consumer behavior and brand strategies. Their impact spans various aspects of marketing, from increasing brand visibility to driving sales and fostering customer loyalty. To name a few marketing practices undertaken by marketers to create value for the product through social media influencers are enhancing brand visibility (Lou & Yuan, 2019); building trust and authenticity (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017) where the viewers perceive influencers as relatable and genuine, and take into account their recommendations as more credible. Driving consumer purchase decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), when influencers review or recommend a product, their followers are more likely to consider and purchase it, leading to increased sales for brands. SMIs create high-quality content (Godey et al., 2016), where they are adept at creating content that resonates with their audience in their marketing campaigns, which can save costs on content creation and provide a steady stream of relatable, impactful material. This content can be repurposed across various marketing channels, enhancing the brand's overall marketing strategy. Finally, this also enhances customer loyalty, where the influencers who align with their brand values, and companies can foster a sense of community and loyalty among consumers. Influencers help humanize brands, making them more approachable and applicable. This emotional connection can lead to higher customer retention and long-term loyalty (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020).

Existing research shows that Social media influencers have the power to improve consumer outcomes using social media platforms like on social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Also, some of the attributes including social attractiveness, physical beauty, and attitude homophily somehow creates positive influence on brands views and purchase intention (Lee and Watkins (2016). Similarly, Hughes et al. (2019) discovered that sponsored blogging influences customer involvement (via comments and likes). Other beneficial results include improved brand attitude, persuasion, and endorsement (Farivar et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2022). Considering the benefits of using an influencer, prior study have also shown some potential negative consequences. Like Audrezet et al. (2020) reveals that when social media influencers disclose paid-promotion technique, it increases the risk of brand authenticity, because of consumer perception, that influencers receives money from certain brand for promoting the product and not using it personally (Dumas & Stough, 2022). Marketers confront a difficult problem in determining which SMIs to invest in while allocating their advertising budget. The study found that SMI's credibility effects consumer behaviour. Brands aim to select trustworthy influencers. Consumers develop a sense of shared cultural values and mindsets through

repeated contacts. Companies with a worldwide vision can benefit from the intimate relationship between SMIs and their audiences. They may work with a variety of SMIs from different regions, taking into account the cultural differences between each. For example, several cosmetic businesses, including Estée Lauder, Clinique, Becca Cosmetics, L'Oréal, Mac, NYX, Glossier, Kylie Cosmetics, Lush, and Milk Makeup, employ SMIs to sell their products (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). This study recommends that marketers select social media influencers that have a strong PSR(Para social relationship) With their selected audiences, to market/ recommend their products or services, also PSR plays a significant role in creating positive impact of influencer. Marketers can further assess such relationships by looking at followers' impressions of influencers' authenticity, homophily, and the value of information they give (Liu & Zheng, 2024).

The factors influencing consumer perception through social media marketer are Product quality, Brand Image, Price of the product, Customer service, Marketing communication, Personal experience on digital platforms, customer reviews and Word of mouth.

2.3 Challenges and Trends in Influencer Marketing

Despite its benefits, influencer marketing is not without challenges. One of the primary issues is searching the suitable influencer whose audience is interested in purchasing such products and services, additionally; there is a risk of over-commercialization, where too many sponsored posts can lead to skepticism among followers. Proper measuring tools must be used to analyze the investment done on influencers marketing as it can be a complex process for marketers. (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

The future of influencer marketing is poised for further evolution, with emerging trends such as virtual influencers, micro-influencers, and increased use of artificial intelligence (AI). Virtual influencers, though not real, are gaining popularity for their unique appeal and control over content. Micro-influencers, with their highly engaged niche audiences, are becoming more attractive to brands for their cost-effectiveness and authenticity. AI is expected to play a significant role in identifying the right influencers, predicting campaign outcomes, and personalizing marketing efforts (Moustakas & Shafiee, 2020).

- *Vilkaite-Vaitone (2024)* finds that an influencer's *importance* enhances their credibility, which positively impacts *cognitive*, *affective*, and *conative* dimensions of sustainable consumption behavior—affirming the nuanced influence of influencers in sustainable marketing strategies [MDPI](#).
- Promoting **Sustainability Through Influencer-Driven Endorsements** *Apostol, Zaharia, Miu, & Constantin (2024)* explore how influencers shape consumer perceptions and buying behaviors in the sustainable cosmetics sector. They emphasize that *authentic content* and social platforms are critical in moving consumers toward environmentally conscious purchases [ResearchGateSciendo](#).
- **Micro-Influencers as Catalysts for Green Messaging** *Malhotra & Seth (2024)* illustrate that micro-influencers on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok can effectively elevate awareness and bolster trust in eco-friendly practices—demonstrating their value as credible messengers for green marketing [wjarr.co.in](#).
- **Luxury Brands Reconfiguring Influencer Roles** *International Journal of Research in Marketing (2024)* reveals that luxury brands face

evolving challenges in integrating creators strategically. This highlights that sustainable fashion must account for the shifting power dynamics between creators and high-end labels [ScienceDirect](#).

- **Integrated Influence on Sustainable Purchase Intention**
Ge (2024) explores how influencers' experience, perceived similarity to Gen Z, and expertise in sustainable fashion shape Gen Z's intentions to purchase sustainable apparel in the UK and China. The study also considers how attitudes, subjective norms, and affordability drive these intentions [scioasis.mycpanel.rs](#).
- **TikTok Influencer Credibility & Trust Driving Loyalty**
A Shanghai-based study (2024) incorporated the SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model and Commitment-Trust theory to analyze TikTok users. Findings confirm that influencer credibility significantly boosts purchase intentions, recommendation behavior, and brand loyalty [ScienceDirect](#).
- **Influencer Source Credibility & Content Traits Boost Engagement & Purchases**
Research in *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* (July 2024) reveals that both the credibility of the influencer (source factors) and characteristics of their content synergistically drive consumer engagement, which then enhances purchase intention. Product involvement was also found to moderate these effects [ScienceDirect](#).
- **Influencers' Credibility and Professionalism Enhance Purchase Intentions**
A *Sustainability* journal study (June 2024) using a fuzzy evaluation model showed that influencers' professionalism, credibility, and live-stream satisfaction significantly elevate consumers' purchase intentions. Authors recommend transparent brand collaborations, real user experiences, and data-backed endorsements [MDPI](#).

Challenges

- **Under-Disclosure of Influencer Partnerships**
Gui, Bertaglia, Goanta, de Vries & Spanakis (2024) expose pervasive legal non-compliance: many influencers on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube fail to properly disclose sponsored content—even among high-profile accounts—posing a transparency and trust risk for sustainable marketing efforts [arXiv](#).
- **Influencer Cartels and the Risk to Engagement Quality**
Hinnosaar & Hinnosaar (2024) discuss “influencer cartels” where creators collude to inflate engagement metrics. This artificial engagement undermines authentic influencer marketing and presents ethical challenges for brands seeking sustainable credibility [arXiv](#).
- **Generational Eco-Paradox in Fashion Consumption**
Although not academic, *The New York Post* (2024) covers findings that Gen Z—despite high eco-awareness—continues to engage heavily with fast fashion. This reflects an *intention-behavior gap* that influencers must navigate carefully in sustainability messaging [New York Post](#).
- **Cultural Consumption Paradox Among Gen Z**
Despite 58% of Gen Z expressing eco-conscious values, many persist in purchasing fast fashion (e.g., from Shein or Temu). This contradiction underscores the ongoing attitude-behavior gap. Research suggests using influencers to redirect this through sustainable narratives, minimalism, and de-influencing trends [New York Post](#).

- **Transparency in Influencer Partnerships Remains Weak**
Many influencers still fail to clearly disclose brand partnerships, which undermines trust in sustainable marketing claims and presents ethical and regulatory risks—even among high-profile creators [ReutersThe Wall Street JournalScienceDirect](#).

2.5 Importance of Social Media Influencers as Marketing Strategy

One of the tool of marketing is social media marketing, which has been popular from quite a time and is growing speedily. Influencer marketing or SMI's are the person who have gained popularity from the social media users with same interest in certain areas like, products, clothing, food, travelling, education music and other relevant areas, It has been analysed they are better than conventional celebrities advertisement method. (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These inflweuncers are the independent parties which helps audiences in identifying reliability in products and services through their expertise in that particular area. They promote products and services through content creation, post, blogs and videos. (Freberg et al.,2010). They post photographs, videos, and updates on social media about their area of expertise, capturing followers who are interested in that matter. Influencer marketing is increasingly popular as an economical alternative to celebrity endorsements (Hall, 2016). Companies can use social media influencer marketing to achieve certain goals, such as raising awareness of a new product, promoting online or offline sales, or establishing a positive market reputation. Traditionally ads were provided for products and services which social media users used to ignore but when the same product is promoted or used by any influencer it is given more attention (Saima & M. Altaf Khan, 2020). Scholars and marketers are studying new ways to utilize social media for promotion, conducting extensive research on internet marketing, social media, and celebrity endorsements (Kumar et al., 2020). Most research stressed social media influencers' distinctiveness (e.g., credibility, number of followers) and discovered that this uniqueness is the underlying cause of their efficacy. It has been found that social media influencers, including 'YouTubers' and 'Instafamous' characters, have more influence than traditional celebrities. Additionally, perceived trustworthiness of Youtubers and video bloggers might positively impact brand perception (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019). An expanding subject of interest in the field of influencer marketing is the transparency of influencers' advertising (i.e., if they are paid to promote a company) (Evans et.al.,2017). Some of the factors of social media influencer which affect consumer purchase intention are e-Wom, trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise (Sokolova, Kefi, 2019). According to (Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018) influencers who are good looking or physically attractive are perceived smarter and are trusted more. So, with the help of extensive literature review, we can say that social media influencers have a great impact on consumer's purchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

In the above section, we have elaborated on the literature review in detail, which discusses the importance and role of Social Media Influencers as an innovative business practice by marketers in the digital era to sustain. Further, this section discusses the statement of the problem, research design, and conducting of survey, hypotheses of the study, sampling technique and sample size, variables, scaling techniques and research tools applied for the study.

3.1 Statement of the problem

Social media uses computer-aided technology to interact with people around, and anyone who has an internet connection can access it. Nowadays, with the advent of the smart mobile phone, most people around the globe spend their enormous amount of time on different types of social media. According to (Freberg et al., 2010), around 5.1 billion people, which is more than half of the world's population, use social media. This has definitely opened avenues for marketers to capitalize on these new media communication channels by developing an advertising campaign, targeting a specific demographic on social media. Presently, Influencer marketing on social media is growing exponentially, particularly as a customer acquisition strategy by marketers. Here comes the significant role of Social Media Influencer as one of the most important advertising strategies in today's digital era for sustainability.

Social media influencers are usually popular on social media for their content as well as recommendations of products and brands, and they have fans and followers who usually view their content on authentic social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Talavera (2015) has pointed out that with the emergence of intense competition across industries; customers perceive influencer-generated branded content to be more authentic, relevant, and approachable as compared to brand-generated advertisements. The role of social media influencer in promoting a brand or product through social media is more in vogue today; a lot many research has been done on social media influencer (e.g., De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders 2017; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Evans et al. 2017; Johansen and Guldvik 2017). None of this research has taken into account investigating the consumer perception towards social media influencers for purchase intention, particularly for fashion products in India. None of these research studies focuses on the important reason that makes social media influencers an effective marketing strategy. The process by which products endorsed by social media influencers are effective in creating customer perception towards purchase intention, particularly for fashion products in India, has not been extensively studied. As a result, this study is being conducted to fill this research gap.

3.2. Research Design and conducting of survey

The present study applies exploratory-cum-descriptive research design as it is concerned with more flexibility, no formal approach is used in this method.. A descriptive research design is used because the survey method is used to conduct the research work. The data was collected through secondary as well as primary sources. A few sources of secondary data sources were books, research papers, journals, and academic magazines; whereas for primary data collection, a structured questionnaire with multiple-choice questions was designed and administered among the respondents. Both the Google form as well a hard copy of the questionnaire was circulated among the respondents for their participation in the survey. The data was gathered using a structured questionnaire was either through email or personal visit. Other details and comprehensive information was gathered by reaching to their offices and meeting them in person. The reliability test of the instrument was measured by applying Cronbach's Alpha during pilot study, and the value of the Cronbach's alpha value for the customer's perception towards social media influencers endorsing the fashion products was found to be 0.955, which is very higher than the cut off value of 0.7 (Cronbach, 1951) and hence the questionnaire was found to be reliable.

The study was carried out by gathering primary data from the mentioned sample size representing population. The respondents are the ones who are following at least one popular SMI to take a decision regarding the purchase of a product, particularly in the fashion category.

3.3 Hypothesis of the study

To measure objective 3, a few hypotheses were formulated which are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the *gender* of the consumers and the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the *age* of the consumers and the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the *income* of the consumers and the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between the *occupation* of the consumers and the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

3.4 Sampling Techniques and sample size

The study was conducted in the districts of Delhi and NCR region, the units of analysis considered were the respondents following the opinion of social media influencers endorsing fashion products, before taking purchase decision regarding buying the fashion products through the online mode. Random sampling technique and snowball technique were used for collecting data from the respondents. Around 500 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents of Delhi/NCR using the online mode to purchase fashion products. All in all, 181 questionnaires were received at the end of the survey; hence the sample size taken for this study is 181.

3.5 Variables, Scaling techniques, and research tools

The scales of demographic variables like age, gender, occupation, and income were nominal in nature, whereas the interval scale was used to measure the customer perception towards social media influencers for the purchase intention of fashion products. There were 21 statements that were related to consumer perception of fashion products endorsed by social media influencers. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 stood for “highly disagree” to 5 denoting “highly agree”. To identify the determinants for the consumer’s purchase intention for fashion products endorsed by SMIs, exploratory factor analysis was applied. Further, to examine the relationship of various demographic factors of customers like age, gender, income, and occupation on customer perception towards social media influencers for purchase intention of fashion products, Independent sample T-Test and ANOVA were applied.

To meet the objectives, SPSS software was used to determine the factors of customer perception towards social media influencers for the purchase intention of fashion products. The scale is tested

4. Analysis and Interpretation

This section discusses in detail about the test result, by analysing and interpreting the results.

As discussed in the above section, to meet the first objective, exploratory factor analysis was applied. The various steps involved in conducting exploratory factor analysis are as follows: a) to test the suitability of data by conducting KMO and Bartlett's test, b) to decide the method of factor analysis, c) to rotate the factors, and d) to extract and interpret the factors.

KMO (Kaiser Meyer Olkin) is conducted to identify the suitability and adequacy of the data, which is the foremost step in conducting exploratory factor analysis.

KMO value should be > 0.6 and significance level should be < 0.05 in Bartlett's test.

Table Number 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.904
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3281.659
	df	210
	Sig.	.000

Table no.1 explains the KMO static is quite high which is $0.904 > 0.6$, meaning the value lies in acceptance region of the factor analysis model. Also the significance of Bartlett's test is < 0.0001 which is less than 0.05 , which is also acceptable for factor analysis model. This confirms that we can conduct factor analysis for the data collected.

From the above table it can be seen, the KMO data computed as 0.904 , which is higher than required value which is 0.6 , so it falls in acceptance region for factor analysis. Also the significance level is 0.000 which is less than required value which is 0.05 . Concurrently, both values indicate an appropriate factor analysis model.

Principal Component analysis method was decided by researcher to be conducted for analysing the data in factor analysis model. The primary objective of this method is to understand the minimum factors required for maximum variance. To increase the interpretability of the factors, the factor loaded is rotated, varimax rotation was employed in this study and it is an orthogonal rotation (Bajpai,2017).

All the items of customer perception for social media influencers are taken into consideration for this study as the communality values for all items lie between $.858$ to $.584$. Higher communalities are better as it shows the extent to which an item correlates with all the other items. So with the above value factor analysis can be conducted. Other variances are mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.203	53.346	53.346	11.203	53.346	53.346	4.494	21.400	21.400
2	1.558	7.418	60.764	1.558	7.418	60.764	4.182	19.915	41.315

3	1.369	6.519	67.283	1.369	6.519	67.283	3.591	17.098	58.413
4	1.265	6.025	73.308	1.265	6.025	73.308	3.128	14.895	73.308
5	.865	4.118	77.426						
6	.815	3.879	81.305						
7	.530	2.525	83.830						
8	.470	2.237	86.067						
9	.417	1.987	88.054						
10	.364	1.735	89.789						
11	.338	1.609	91.398						
12	.304	1.446	92.844						
13	.261	1.242	94.087						
14	.230	1.095	95.182						
15	.206	.982	96.163						
16	.174	.831	96.994						
17	.159	.759	97.753						
18	.154	.736	98.488						
19	.142	.679	99.167						
20	.098	.469	99.636						
21	.077	.364	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table number 2 presents the rotation sum of squared loadings; it is important to note that for the extraction sum of squared loadings and the rotation sums of squared loadings, the cumulative percentage for the set of factors always remains the same (Bajpai, 2017), and it is true in the above case. This table clearly indicates that the cumulative percentage of rotation sums of squared loadings confirms that four factors of customer perception for purchase intention of social media influencer endorsing fashion product explain closely 73.308% of the variance. According to the percentage of variance criteria, the general recommendation is that the factors that explained 60-70% of the variance are retained in the model, and here, four factors explain 73.308 of % variance.

In this study, the eigenvalue criteria were used to determine the number of factors to be retrieved. The amount of variance explained by each factor defines an eigenvalue. According to this criterion, the factor having a value of more than one eigenvalue is included in the model. A factor that has an eigenvalue of less than one is not better than a single variable and hence cannot be considered a factor. From the above table, it is quite clear that only four components have a value of more than one, and therefore, it is decided that there are four factors that determine the consumer perception for the purchase intention of a social media influencer endorsing a fashion product.

Next, in the below table the result of Varimax rotated factor loading matrix is presented.

Table Number 3: Result of Varimax Rotated Factor

Variables Code	Factor Name	Variable description	F1	F2	F3	F4
SMIF1PSR1	PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP	[Contents shared by social media influencers keep me informed about the latest fashion products, services, and trends]	.831			
SMIF1PSR2		[I find the information shared in their posts to be relevant regarding fashion]	.648			
SMIF1PSR3		[I read/watch only the content/posts I find entertaining.]	.705			
SMIF1PSR4		[The reason I started following any influencer was that I felt inspired by them and their content.]	.663			
SMIF1PSR5		[The Social Media Influencers' endorsement of the fashion products is appropriate.]	.584			
SMIF1PSR6		[I have developed a good interpersonal bond with the social media influencers leading to my purchase of the fashion product].	.778			
SMIF1PSR7		I look forward to watch videos and reading posts and reviews of social media influencer]	.586			
SMIF2DCE1		[I believe the social media influencer is honest.]		.662		
SMIF2DCE2		[I consider social media influencer		.781		

		presenters to be trustworthy]				
SMIF2DCE3	DIGITAL CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	I believe social media influencers must have used the products personally]		.781		
SMIF2DCE4		[I consider the influencer an expert on the brand endorsed]		.634		
SMIF2DCE5		[Social Media Influencers respond to product-related queries through direct online interaction.]		.718		
SMIF2DCE6		[Interactions with Social Media Influencers help to understand the pros and cons of the fashion products to be purchased.]		.625		
SMIF3DCBB1	DIGITAL CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR	[Social Media Influencer makes me feel comfortable as if I am with a friend]			.617	
SMIF3DCBB2		[I would consider purchasing the product promoted by social media influencer]			.809	
SMIF3DCBB3		[Next time I need this type of product, I will probably buy this one]			.792	
SMIF3DCBB4		[I am willing to pay a premium price for the product because of its stronger image, created by the social media influencer.]			.745	
SMIF4PPT1		I consider social media influencers				.845

	DIGITAL PRESENCE AND PERSONALITY TRAITS OF SMIs	with good looks are preferred]				
SMIF4PPT1		[I consider social media influencers with a classy style are preferred]				.748
SMIF4PPT1		[I consider social media influencers with good communication and presentation skills]				.757
SMIF4PPT1		[I consider social media influencers with an unbiased attitude while explaining about a product]				.670

From the above table No 3, it is quite clear that out of 21 variables, all the variables have high factor loading after rotation. The first factor comprises of 7 variables; the second factor comprises of 6 variables; the third factor comprises of 4 variables; and the fourth factor comprises of 4 variables.

In total 7 variables were used to form the **first factor** as mentioned in table below. These variables are associated with how social media influencer endorsing a fashion product develops an a parasocial relationship with its customers by forming a trustworthy resource for gathering purchase information by being regular in touch with the influencer (Lee and Watkins 2016; Colliander and Dahlen 2011) about the relevant and latest trend in the fashion products product. Consumers find the information entertaining and appropriate, eventually leading the consumer from the stage of awareness about the product to the stage of interest and desire. This eventually creates purchase intention among consumers to buy fashion products through social media. Hence, this factor is named **Digital Parasocial Relationship**. This can lead to sustainable digital marketing practices for marketers. Hence, the marketers can seek support from SMIs through digital platforms to promote their product, and at the same time, consumers may rely on the SMIs endorsing the fashion products to make decisions for purchasing the product. Hence, SMIs benefit both the marketers and the consumers.

In total 6 variables were used to form the **second factor** as mentioned in table below. These variables are associated with how social media influencers engage the customers through digital platforms by being prompt in responding to their product-related queries through direct online interaction and engaging them to understand the differences and similarities of the fashion products to be purchased. The consumer believes and gets engaged with the social media influencer because they get attracted to the personal attributes of SMIs like honesty, trustworthy, believe that SMI must be personally using that product and consider SMI as an expert on the endorsed brand (Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse 2016). Hence, this factor is named as **Digital Customer engagement**. This can lead to sustainable digital marketing practices for marketers, particularly designing the marketing

campaigns to promote the fashion products through Social Media Influencers leading to digital sustainability and the consumers have more variety of choices to select the fashion products.

In total 4 variables were used to form the **third factor** as mentioned in table below. These variables are associated with the consumer buying behaviour, eventually creating kindle of desire among the consumers to purchase the product. As mentioned in the table above, now the consumers would consider purchasing the product promoted by social media influencers, would probably buy one after considering the opinion of SMIs endorsing fashion product so much so that sometimes he may willingly pay premium price for the product because of stronger brand image created by SMI as SMI make the customer feel comfortable and is friendly in his approach to handle their queries. Hence this factor is named as **Digital consumer buying behaviour**. This includes personal characteristics of the SMIs endorsing the fashion products along with creating marketing stimulus for the consumers by creating stronger brand image. This will definitely leads to sustainable marketing practices in this digital era.

Lastly, In total 4 variables were used to form the **third factor** as mentioned in table below. These variables are connected with the way a social media influencer conduct themselves in front of their audience, by having a few personal characteristics like good looks, classy style, good communication and presentation skills, along with appropriately designed advertisement for each suitable fashion product, and where the social media influencers are considered to have an unbiased attitude towards consumers while endorsing fashion products. Hence this factor is named as **Digital presence and personality traits of social media influencers**.

The result of objective 2 is discussed in the following paragraphs.

To test the hypotheses which examine the association between demographic variables (age, gender, income, occupation, education) with the determinants influencing the consumer perception endorsed by SMI for purchase intention of fashion products, independent sample t-test was conducted for demographic variable having only two grouping variable like gender and age, whereas ANOVA was conducted for demographic variable having more than two grouping variable like income and occupation.

The results of the hypothesis testing are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the *male and female* consumers for the determinants of the purchase intention for fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

Table No 4: Independent Sample Test Result for consumer purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by SMI among Indian males and female consumers.

Independent Sample T Test		
	Levene's Test for Equality of variance	T-Test for Equality of Means

		F	Sig	T	Df	Sig (2- taile d)	Mean Differne ce	Std.Erro r Differen ce	95% confidence Interval of the difference	
F 1	Equal Varianc e Assume d	.066	.79 8	- 2.72 3	178	.007	-.47183	.17330	- .8138 1	- .1298 5
	Equal Varianc e not Assume d			- 2.72 8	176.90 1	.007	-.47183	.17298	- .8131 9	- .1304 6
F 2	Equal Varianc e Assume d	.086	.76 9	- 2.24 4	178	.026	-.40186	.17910	- .7553 0	- .0484 2
	Equal Varianc e not Assume d			- 2.23 4	172.05 2	.027	-.40186	.17985	- .7568 5	- .0468 6
F 3	Equal Varianc e Assume d	.789	.37 5	- 2.94 4	178	.004	-.51950	.17645	- .8677 1	- .1713 0
	Equal Varianc e not Assume d			- 2.93 9	174.55 1	.004	-.51950	.17673	- .8683 2	- .1706 9
F 4	Equal Varianc e Assume d	1.10 1	.29 5	- 1.23 4	178	.219	-.23034	.18673	- .5988 2	.1381 4
	Equal Varianc e not Assume d			- 1.22 7	170.57 1	.222	-.23034	.18775	- .6009 4	.1402 6

From the above table, Number 4, we get the following results.

In the above table the p-value of Levene's test for Factor 1 is 0.798, for Factor 2 is .769, for factor 3 is .789 and for factor 4 is 1.101, where all the values are greater than .05. Hence, we **accept** the null hypothesis and conclude that there is **no significant difference** regarding the perception among the males and females consumers for the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the *young and middle-aged group* of the consumers for the factors determining the purchase intention for fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

Table No 5: Independent Sample Test Result for consumer purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by SMI among Indian young and middle-aged consumers.

Independent Sample T Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% confidence Interval of the difference	
F 1	Equal Variance Assumed	4.122	.044	-.770	177	.442	-.13784	.17896	-.49100	.21533
	Equal Variance not Assumed			-.754	148.362	.452	-.13784	.18271	-.49888	.22320
F 2	Equal Variance Assumed	6.828	.001	-1.183	177	.238	-.21730	.17896	-.57984	.14525
	Equal Variance not Assumed			-1.163	151.255	.246	-.21730	.18676	-.58630	.15170
F 3	Equal Variance	4.013	.002	-1.793	177	.075	-.32601	.17676	-.68492	.03290

	Assumed									
	Equal Variance not Assumed			-1.773	154.775	.078	-.32601	.18391	-.68930	.03729
F4	Equal Variance Assumed	4.545	.030	-.976	177	.331	-.18383	.17656	-.55563	.18797
	Equal Variance not Assumed			-.956	148.554	.341	-.18383	.19229	-.56381	.19615

From the above table number 5, we get the following results.

In the above table the p-value of Levene's test for Factor 1 is 0.044, for Factor 2 is .001, for factor 3 is .003 and for factor 4 is .030, where all the values are lesser than .05. Hence, we **reject** the null hypothesis and conclude that there is **significant difference** regarding the perception of the young and middle age group consumers for the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

Table number 6: The mean value for the Young and Middle-aged group consumers

Factors	Age Category	N	Mean Value
Digital Parasocial Relationship with SMIs	Young	103	2.9806
	Middle	76	3.1184
Digital Customer Engagement with SMIs	Young	103	2.6117
	Middle	76	3.8289
Digital Consumer buying Behaviour	Young	103	2.6214
	Middle	76	3.9474
Digital presence and personality traits of SMIs	Young	103	2.7767
	Middle	76	3.9605

From the above table number 6, it can be inferred that middle-aged consumers more strongly agree for purchasing the fashion products endorsed by the SMIs.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between the *low, middle and high-income level* of the consumers for the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

Table No 7: ANOVA Test Result for consumer purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by SMI among low, middle and high income level consumers.

Factors		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
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F1	Between Groups	1.780	2	.890	.635	.531
	Within Groups	248.020	177	1.401		
	Total	249.800	179			
F2	Between Groups	2.456	2	1.228	.833	.436
	Within Groups	260.938	177	1.474		
	Total	263.394	179			
F3	Between Groups	2.739	2	1.369	.939	.393
	Within Groups	257.989	177	1.458		
	Total	260.728	179			
F4	Between Groups	3.723	2	1.862	1.189	.307
	Within Groups	277.077	177	1.565		
	Total	280.800	179			

From the above table representation, we get the following results.

In the above table, the significance value for Factor 1 is 0.531, for Factor 2 is .436, for factor 3 is .393 and for factor 4 is .307, where all the values are greater than .05. Hence, we **accept** the null hypothesis and conclude that there is **no significant difference** among the low, middle and high income level consumer's perception regarding the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between the *employed, self-employed and students* consumers for the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

Table No 8: ANOVA Test Result for consumer purchase intention for fashion products endorsed by SMI among Indian employed, self-employed and students consumers.

Factors		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
F1	Between Groups	1.664	2	.832	.594	.553
	Within Groups	248.136	177	1.402		
	Total	249.800	179			
F2	Between Groups	2.599	2	1.299	.882	.416
	Within Groups	260.796	177	1.473		
	Total	263.394	179			

F3	Between Groups	1.427	2	.713	.487	.615
	Within Groups	259.301	177	1.465		
	Total	260.728	179			
F4	Between Groups	5.565	2	2.782	1.789	.170
	Within Groups	275.235	177	1.555		
	Total	280.800	179			

From the above table representation, we get the following results.

In the above table, the significant p -value for Factor 1 is 0.553, for Factor 2 is .416, for factor 3 is .615 and for factor 4 is .170, where all the values are greater than .05. Hence, we **accept** the null hypothesis and conclude that there is **no significant difference** among the service, self-employed and student consumer's perception regarding the factors determining the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI.

6. Findings and Suggestions

From the above section of analysis and interpretation, it is quite clear that in this digital era, Social media Influencers play a major role in influencing the purchase intention of consumers, particularly for fashion products. Gone are the days when consumers used the brand image of the product for purchasing a product, and celebrity endorsement of the brands was the only marketing communication strategy for marketers. Today, even small-scale marketers can become popular in the market by adapting this innovative marketing practice with the help of a digital platform and make his/her presence felt in the market. Today, in this global village, it has become quite easier to approach customers, though the next step to kindle the desire among the customers to purchase the product is quite challenging.

From this study, the authors have been able to identify four factors that are determinants for consumers' perception regarding the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI. These factors are elaborated in the previous section. To sum up, these factors are:

1. Digital Para-social relationship between consumers and SMIs, which is a two-way process between the marketers and consumers to create purchase intention in the mind of consumer
2. Digital customer engagement is again a two-way process between the marketers and the consumers to create purchase intention in the mind of consumer by SMIs endorsing fashion products.
3. Digital consumer buying behaviour is a two-way process between the marketers and the consumers to create purchase intention in the mind of consumer by SMIs endorsing fashion products.
4. Digital presence and personality traits of SMIs is one-way process between the marketers and the consumers where SMIs endorsing the fashion products, need to

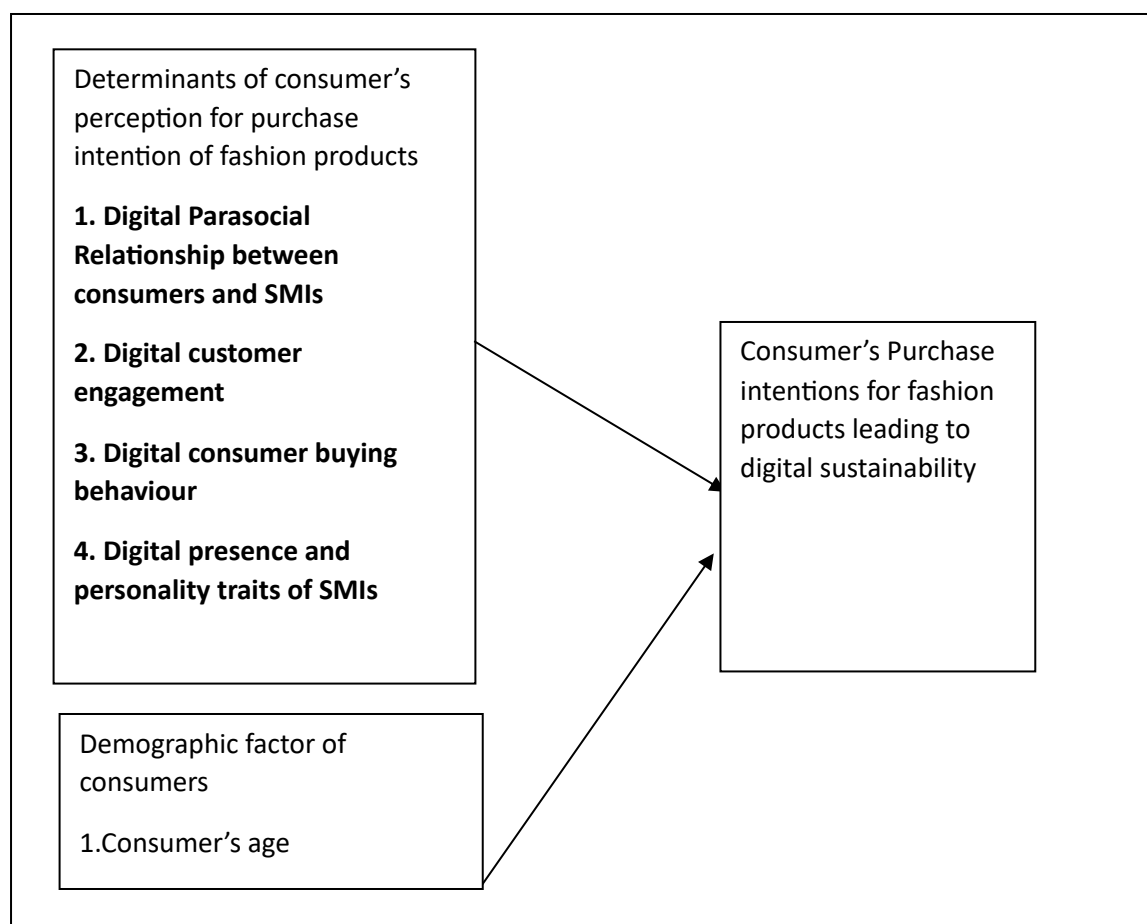
know how to make their presence felt digitally to create purchase intention in the mind of consumer.

Further, among the demographic factors gender, age, income and occupation of the consumers *age* is the only factor which influences consumer's perception for the purchase intention of fashion products endorsed by the SMI. From the study, one can infer that middle-aged consumers are more likely to purchase the fashion products endorsed by the SMIs as compared to the young ones.

7. Proposed framework of consumer purchase intention for fashion products endorsed by SMIs leading to Digital Sustainability

From the above study, the authors have proposed a framework concerning the determinants that influence the purchase intention of consumers for fashion products. This area of marketing is still not explored to a greater extent as this is recent development after the digitalization going local from global. Of course, SMIs are considered to be one of the phenomenal advertising strategies by the marketers for sustainable development. This study reveals that today marketers cannot survive in the business world without applying these new innovation marketing strategies through online mode which is the outcome of digitalization across the globe and it has become a global cum local phenomenon. The result of this study is depicted in figure 1 given below.

Figure 1: The proposed model for consumer purchase intention for fashion products through SMIs



Source: Authors

6. Conclusion of the study

Hence, one can conclude that SMIs are an effective marketing strategy that can be used by marketers to influence consumers to buy a product. Definitely, with the advent of digitalization in every sphere of life, marketers can reach their consumers both physically as well as through online mode. No marketer can survive in the market without the support of the internet and digital platforms to reach their customers. Today, digitalization is everywhere, which has led to hyper hyper-competitive environment, where adopting innovative digital platforms for sustainable marketing practices has become indispensable.

This research study proposes that SMIs can be an effective marketing strategy to attract consumers to buy products online and offline, leading to sustainable business practices. In this competitive dynamic environment, a marketer who is applying these innovative digital marketing tools like SMIs, which is considered an impactful marketing campaign, can only sustain the hyper-competitive environment.

Hence, to be at the forefront of business practices, such innovative marketing business practices need to be implemented by the marketers for their sustainability.

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