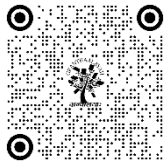


EXPLORING PR AGENCY PERSPECTIVES ON INFLUENCER MARKETING IN DELHI NCR

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of influencer marketing in the fashion retail sector of Delhi NCR, focusing on qualitative insights from PR agencies that actively manage influencer campaigns. With the growing dominance of digital marketing, influencer collaborations have become a key strategy for brands seeking to enhance consumer engagement and brand positioning. Using QDA Lite for data analysis, the research identifies critical themes shaping influencer marketing strategies, including authenticity, appeal, trustworthiness, competence, and inventiveness.

Through in-depth interviews with PR professionals, this study examines how these attributes influence consumer perception and purchasing behavior. The research adopts a systematic coding approach to extract meaningful insights from interview data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive successful influencer-brand partnerships. Findings suggest that authenticity and trustworthiness serve as fundamental pillars of effective influencer collaborations, ensuring credibility and long-term consumer loyalty. Additionally, appeal and inventiveness play a crucial role in capturing audience attention and fostering deeper engagement, while competence enhances an influencer's ability to communicate brand messages effectively.

The study also highlights the challenges faced by PR agencies, including measuring campaign effectiveness, selecting the right influencers, and managing audience skepticism. It offers practical recommendations for brands and PR agencies to refine their influencer marketing strategies by leveraging industry expertise and addressing real-world obstacles. By bridging the gap between academic research and industry practice, this study provides valuable insights for marketing professionals looking to optimize influencer collaborations in the dynamic and competitive landscape of Delhi NCR's fashion retail sector.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, PR Agencies, QDA Lite, Qualitative Analysis, Consumer Engagement, Fashion Retail, Delhi NCR

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital connectivity, influencer marketing has emerged as a transformative strategy in the fashion retail industry, particularly among female consumers in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR). Unlike traditional advertising, which relies on direct brand messaging, influencer marketing is rooted in social influence, authenticity, and relatability (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok play an instrumental role in shaping consumer preferences, with their recommendations often perceived as genuine and experience-based rather than commercially driven (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020).

1.1. THE SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING TO INFLUENCER MARKETING

With the decline of traditional advertising effectiveness, modern consumers, especially younger demographics, seek more personalized and interactive brand experiences (Hudders et al., 2021). Unlike conventional celebrity

endorsements, where the focus is on mass appeal, influencers establish long-term narratives by seamlessly integrating branded content into lifestyle storytelling (Jin & Muqaddam, 2022). This shift has led to the rise of micro-influencers, who, despite having smaller followings, cultivate deeper engagement with niche audiences. The effectiveness of such strategies is reinforced by the perceived authenticity and transparency of influencers, making their endorsements more persuasive than direct brand promotions (Erkan & Evans, 2018).

1.2. THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES IN CONSUMER TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT

The success of influencer marketing is shaped by several key qualitative themes, including authenticity, credibility, and engagement. Consumers express higher trust levels toward influencers who provide transparent, experience-based endorsements rather than overt promotional content (Chetoui, Benlafqih, & Lebdaoui, 2020). Influencers who consistently showcase fashion knowledge, styling techniques, and trend expertise are perceived as more credible, strengthening consumer confidence in their recommendations (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Moreover, engagement-driven attributes, such as interactive storytelling and real-time audience interactions, further enhance an influencer's ability to connect with followers (Keller, 2020). The rise of visual-first platforms like Instagram and TikTok has amplified this effect, enabling influencers to create immersive brand narratives that resonate deeply with their audience. Through reels, IGTV, and live sessions, fashion influencers cultivate a sense of intimacy with their followers, reinforcing brand trust and purchase intent (Verma & Pandey, 2022).

1.3. SOCIAL PROOF AND EMOTIONAL BRANDING IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

One of the fundamental drivers of influencer marketing success is social proof, where consumer behavior is influenced by peer recommendations and community validation (Islam et al., 2012). The number of likes, comments, shares, and endorsements an influencer receives serves as an indirect indicator of brand credibility. This aligns with the concept of emotional branding, where influencers use relatable storytelling techniques to create aspirational yet achievable lifestyle portrayals (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). For instance, many Delhi NCR-based influencers curate content that integrates sustainability, ethical fashion, and cultural identity, tapping into the values and sentiments of their audience (Sharma & Chawla, 2023). Similarly, festival seasons and wedding trends offer unique opportunities for influencer-led campaigns, as regional influencers become trusted sources of styling inspiration (Singh & Srivastava, 2022).

1.4. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND THE DIGITAL FASHION LANDSCAPE IN DELHI NCR

Delhi NCR represents a dynamic hub of fashion-conscious and digitally engaged consumers, ranging from young professionals to university students and high-net-worth individuals. The rapid adoption of social media platforms has accelerated the influence of fashion bloggers and digital creators, making influencer marketing an indispensable strategy for retail brands targeting this demographic (Singh & Srivastava, 2022). The increasing reliance on digital content consumption has also contributed to hyper-personalized marketing, where brands leverage data analytics to align influencer campaigns with consumer preferences. This evolution reflects a broader shift in marketing strategies, where interactive and data-driven approaches outperform traditional media advertising in capturing consumer attention and driving engagement (Hudders et al., 2021).

1.5. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the evolving role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior within Delhi NCR's fashion retail landscape. By employing qualitative data analysis (QDA Lite), the research investigates the effectiveness of key influencer attributes—trustworthiness, competence, and relatability, in driving consumer purchase decisions. Additionally, this study provides insights for brands seeking to refine their digital marketing strategies in response to shifting consumer expectations.

As the digital ecosystem continues to evolve, understanding consumer-influencer dynamics will be critical for fashion retailers aiming to sustain competitive advantage. By leveraging qualitative insights, this research contributes to

the broader discourse on brand-consumer engagement strategies, offering practical implications for future influencer marketing campaigns.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer engagement and purchase intentions. It has evolved into a strategic tool for fashion brands, particularly in digital retail, where influencers function as intermediaries between brands and consumers.

2.1. INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY AND CONSUMER TRUST

Boerman and Müller (2021) examined Instagram users' awareness of influencer marketing and found that while users recognize paid partnerships, they often overlook disclosure cues such as "#ad." Their study highlighted how brand presence and influencer type influence persuasion knowledge, reinforcing that the boundaries between commercial and non-commercial content remain blurred. Similarly, Helme (2023) emphasized that authenticity, transparency, and two-way communication significantly enhance influencer credibility, leading to greater engagement and stronger purchase intent.

Kim and Kim (2021) explored the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer trust, noting that excessive sponsorships can reduce influencer credibility. They emphasized that endorsements are most effective when aligned with an influencer's personal brand and content style. A meta-analysis by Pan and Chiou (2024) further identified authenticity, trustworthiness, and expertise as the strongest predictors of purchase intention. Their findings suggest that interactive engagement strategies, such as live-streaming, Q&A sessions, and real-time content interactions, significantly enhance consumer trust and purchase likelihood.

2.2. INFLUENCER CHARACTERISTICS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Pereira et al. (2023) investigated the role of influencer attributes—such as attitude homophily, attractiveness, and trustworthiness—in consumer decision-making. Their study concluded that influencers perceived as socially attractive and trustworthy had a greater impact on purchase intention, particularly for high-involvement product categories like luxury fashion and skincare. Meghrajani and Zunjur (2023) conducted a systematic review on influencer marketing's effect on brand perception and purchase decisions, identifying credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and relatability as key drivers of consumer engagement. They found that micro-influencers, due to their perceived authenticity and closer audience relationships, tend to be more effective in driving consumer trust and brand affinity.

Aggarwal et al. (2022) explored social media's role during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting its impact on information exchange, community support, and digital commerce. However, they called for further research on long-term behavioral shifts, misinformation, and the pandemic's influence on consumer trust. Similarly, Leung et al. (2022) investigated the evolution of influencer marketing, identifying key influencer resources such as follower networks, personal branding, and content strategies that enhance marketing effectiveness. Their research highlighted that aligning influencer attributes with brand messaging is crucial for maintaining long-term authenticity and consumer trust.

2.3. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Qalati et al. (2024) examined how social media engagement mediates consumer decision-making, concluding that influencers who provide value-driven content, such as product reviews and tutorials, enhance consumer trust and brand loyalty. Their study underscored trust as a key determinant of purchase intention, with engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) playing a reinforcing role in brand perception and consumer retention. Zhao et al. (2024) further analyzed how credibility, attractiveness, and interactivity shape consumer attitudes toward brands. They found that influencers engaging in personalized interactions—such as responding to comments, conducting polls, and creating audience-driven content—build stronger brand trust and drive higher purchase conversion rates.

Wang et al. (2023) used QDA Lite to analyze consumer discussions on social media, revealing that themes of authenticity, emotional relatability, and engagement frequency significantly impact influencer effectiveness. They found that influencers who share personal experiences and behind-the-scenes content create deeper psychological connections

with their audiences. Similarly, Chatterjee and Roy (2024) applied QDA Lite in a study on digital brand storytelling, demonstrating that narrative-driven influencer content increases consumer emotional investment and long-term brand loyalty.

2.4. EMERGING TRENDS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The existing literature underscores the importance of authenticity, transparency, and strategic engagement in influencer marketing. Pan and Chiou (2024) suggest that future research should explore industry-specific influencer strategies, while Boerman (2020) calls for further studies on disclosure regulations and consumer skepticism. Haenlein et al. (2020) highlight the growing role of AI-driven influencer selection and predictive analytics in enhancing campaign success.

Overall, influencer marketing continues to evolve as a dominant force in shaping consumer behavior. Authenticity, expertise, and engagement remain the most influential factors driving purchase intent and brand loyalty. Future studies should examine long-term influencer marketing impacts and cross-platform strategies, leveraging advanced analytical techniques like QDA Lite to optimize marketing effectiveness in dynamic digital landscapes.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer purchase intentions and engagement within the fashion retail sector of Delhi NCR. Qualitative research is particularly suited for understanding complex social phenomena, allowing for an in-depth examination of perceptions, motivations, and behavioral patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By leveraging QDA Lite, a qualitative data analysis software, this study systematically examines brand managers' perspectives on the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

3.1. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

The research involved conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with brand managers from various fashion start-ups operating in Delhi NCR. The purposive sampling method was employed to ensure that participants had direct experience with influencer marketing campaigns, thereby providing rich and relevant insights (Palinkas et al., 2015). The interviews focused on understanding key influencer attributes, their impact on consumer engagement, and how brands evaluate the effectiveness of influencer partnerships. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was recorded with participants' consent for accuracy and reliability.

3.2. DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The collected interview data were transcribed verbatim and imported into QDA Lite for systematic coding and analysis. The coding process was structured to identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships within the data. Codes were assigned to key concepts emerging from the responses, such as authenticity, trustworthiness, appeal, competence, and inventiveness. These codes were further categorized into broader themes to discern underlying trends influencing consumer decision-making.

The iterative coding approach ensured a rigorous analysis, refining initial codes through multiple rounds of review to capture the depth of participants' insights (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019). To enhance the reliability of the findings, a minimum threshold of three occurrences was maintained for each code, ensuring that only significant themes were considered.

3.3. USE OF QDA LITE FOR THEMATIC MAPPING

QDA Lite enabled the visualization of thematic relationships through analysis trees and frequency tables, offering a structured representation of the most influential factors driving consumer engagement. The analysis tree (Figure 1) illustrated hierarchical connections between different themes, showcasing how elements like authenticity and credibility influence consumer perceptions. The frequency table (Table 1) provided a quantitative representation of code occurrences, helping to validate the importance of specific influencer attributes.

Through this analysis, the study identified authenticity, expertise, credibility, content quality, and creativity as the most impactful factors shaping consumer trust and purchase behavior. These findings offer valuable insights into the strategic elements that fashion brands should prioritize when implementing influencer marketing campaigns.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The qualitative analysis in this study was conducted using QDA Lite, a specialized qualitative data analysis software that facilitates the systematic organization, coding, and interpretation of textual data. QDA Lite enabled a structured approach to analyzing interview transcripts, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and themes within the data. Qualitative research methods, particularly thematic analysis, are widely used to uncover underlying meanings and relationships in textual data, ensuring a rigorous interpretation of qualitative insights (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The analysis began with the importation of interview transcripts into QDA Lite, followed by an iterative coding process. Codes were systematically assigned to text segments, capturing key themes emerging from the discussions. The coding structure was designed to reflect influencer marketing attributes such as authenticity, trustworthiness, competence, appeal, and inventiveness. These attributes have been widely recognized as significant factors influencing consumer perceptions and brand engagement (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The identified codes were further categorized into broader themes based on conceptual similarities and relevance.

The findings are systematically presented in Table 1 (Analysis Table), which provides a quantitative summary of the categorized codes, their frequency of occurrence, and their distribution across different cases. The threshold for inclusion in the analysis was set at a minimum of three occurrences per code to ensure the reliability of the findings. This threshold-based approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research, where recurring themes indicate consistent patterns within the dataset (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). The table highlights key influencer attributes, demonstrating the prominence of credibility and trust within the trustworthiness category, while quality of content emerged as the most significant factor under appeal. Similarly, honesty and popularity were dominant within the authenticity category, reinforcing the importance of perceived genuineness in influencer marketing strategies.





















Table 1. The Analysis Table using QDA Lite

<i>Category</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>% Codes</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>% Cases</i>
Authenticity	Honesty	15	5.2%	3	100%
Authenticity	Sincerity	8	2.8%	3	100%
Authenticity	Popularity	12	4.2%	3	100%
Competence	Similarity	7	2.4%	3	100%
Competence	Knowledge	6	2.1%	3	100%
Competence	Expertise	7	2.4%	3	100%
Trustworthiness	Experience	6	2.1%	3	100%
Trustworthiness	Trust	21	7.3%	3	100%
Trustworthiness	Reliability	5	1.7%	3	100%
Trustworthiness	Credibility	24	8.4%	3	100%
Appeal	Quality of Content	34	11.9%	3	100%
Appeal	Attractive	6	2.1%	3	100%
Appeal	Beauty	3	1.0%	3	100%
Appeal	Appearance	4	1.4%	3	100%
Inventiveness	Innovation	6	2.1%	3	100%
Inventiveness	Creativity	15	5.2%	3	100%

Source: QDA Lite

To complement the analysis table, Figure 1 (Analysis Tree) visually represents the hierarchical structure of the identified themes. The analysis tree provides a conceptual mapping of the relationships between different influencer attributes and their impact on consumer engagement. Visualization techniques such as analysis trees enhance the interpretability of qualitative data, making it easier to trace how specific codes contribute to overarching themes (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The structured visualization underscores how various factors interplay to shape consumer perceptions, offering a comprehensive understanding of influencer effectiveness in the fashion retail sector.

Figure 1. The Analysis Tree using QDA Lite

	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
 Authenticity				
 Honesty	15	5.2%	3	100.0%
 Sincerity	8	2.8%	3	100.0%
 Popularity	12	4.2%	3	100.0%
 Competence				
 Knowledge	6	2.1%	3	100.0%
 Expertise	7	2.4%	3	100.0%
 Experience	6	2.1%	3	100.0%
 Trustworthiness				
 Trust	21	7.3%	3	100.0%
 Reliability	5	1.7%	3	100.0%
 Credibility	24	8.4%	3	100.0%
 Appeal				
 Quality of Content	34	11.9%	3	100.0%
 Attractive	6	2.1%	3	100.0%
 Beauty	3	1.0%	3	100.0%
 Appearance	4	1.4%	3	100.0%
 Inventiveness				
 Innovation	6	2.1%	3	100.0%
 Creativity	15	5.2%	3	100.0%

Source: QDA Lite

The use of QDA Lite facilitated an in-depth exploration of influencer marketing dynamics by systematically categorizing and visualizing qualitative data. The analysis process ensured that key influencer attributes were identified based on empirical patterns rather than subjective assumptions. By integrating structured coding techniques with visualization tools, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of qualitative data analysis in deriving meaningful insights from textual data. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors driving influencer credibility and effectiveness, offering valuable implications for brands seeking to optimize their influencer marketing strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study employed QDA Lite to conduct a rigorous qualitative analysis of influencer marketing in the fashion retail sector, highlighting key attributes that contribute to consumer engagement. The findings revealed that authenticity, trustworthiness, competence, appeal, and inventiveness are critical determinants of influencer effectiveness, reinforcing prior research on the impact of digital influencers on consumer decision-making (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Among these, credibility and trust within the trustworthiness category, quality of content under appeal, and honesty within authenticity emerged as the most influential factors shaping consumer perceptions. These insights align with previous studies emphasizing the role of influencer credibility in enhancing brand trust and purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The structured coding and visualization techniques used in this study ensured a systematic interpretation of qualitative data, demonstrating the efficacy of QDA Lite in extracting meaningful insights from textual sources. The

analysis tree (Figure 1) and analysis table (Table 1) provided a comprehensive mapping of influencer attributes, illustrating their interconnections and relative significance. This methodological approach underscores the importance of qualitative data analysis tools in modern marketing research, particularly in understanding evolving consumer behavior in digital environments (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

The study contributes to existing literature by offering empirical evidence on the factors that drive influencer marketing success. The findings have practical implications for fashion retail brands seeking to optimize their influencer marketing strategies by selecting influencers who demonstrate credibility, authenticity, and engaging content. Future research could build upon these insights by integrating quantitative methodologies to measure the direct impact of these attributes on consumer purchase behavior. Additionally, exploring different industry sectors beyond fashion retail could provide a broader perspective on influencer effectiveness.

By employing a robust qualitative approach, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how influencer marketing shapes consumer engagement. The integration of systematic coding, frequency analysis, and visualization techniques enhances the reliability of findings, making a valuable contribution to both academic research and industry practices in digital marketing.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the fashion retail sector. These recommendations focus on optimizing influencer selection, content strategy, and consumer engagement tactics to maximize brand impact.

Prioritize Influencer Credibility and Authenticity

Brands should collaborate with influencers who exhibit high levels of credibility and authenticity, as these factors significantly influence consumer trust and engagement (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The study found that credibility and trustworthiness were among the most impactful attributes. To ensure authenticity, brands can engage influencers who have a history of genuine interactions with their followers and who align with the brand's core values (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Focus on High-Quality and Engaging Content

The results highlighted that quality of content is a key determinant of influencer effectiveness. Brands should encourage influencers to create visually appealing, informative, and interactive content that resonates with target audiences (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). Providing influencers with creative freedom while maintaining brand messaging consistency can result in more authentic and engaging campaigns.

Leverage Data-Driven Influencer Selection

Implementing data analytics in influencer selection can enhance campaign effectiveness. Brands can use AI-driven influencer marketing platforms to assess key performance indicators (KPIs) such as audience demographics, engagement rates, and content effectiveness (Evans, Phua, & Lim, 2017). This approach ensures that collaborations are backed by insights rather than subjective decision-making.

Strengthen Long-Term Influencer Partnerships

Establishing long-term relationships with influencers can lead to sustained consumer trust and loyalty. Studies indicate that ongoing collaborations contribute to stronger brand-influencer alignment, making marketing efforts more impactful over time (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Rather than one-off promotions, brands should invest in building ambassador programs that foster deeper connections with both influencers and their audiences.

Incorporate Consumer Feedback and Interaction

Consumer engagement plays a crucial role in influencer marketing success. Brands should encourage influencers to interact with followers through Q&A sessions, live streams, and personalized responses to build community trust (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Monitoring consumer feedback on influencer campaigns can help brands refine their marketing strategies to better meet audience expectations.

Expand Research Beyond Fashion Retail

While this study focused on influencer marketing in the fashion retail industry, future research should explore its impact across different sectors, such as beauty, technology, and lifestyle. Understanding how influencer attributes vary across industries can provide a more comprehensive perspective on influencer marketing effectiveness (Hudders et al., 2021).

By implementing these recommendations, brands can enhance their influencer marketing strategies, improve audience engagement, and drive higher conversion rates. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital marketing by emphasizing the importance of credibility, content quality, and strategic influencer-brand alignment in shaping consumer behavior.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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