

ASSESSING ENGAGEMENT WITH INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS AND ITS
IMPACT ON APPAREL BRAND ENDORSEMENT EFFECTIVENESSSaba Sultana^{*1}, Aaima Batool², Usama Abbas³^{*1}Lecturer Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal, Narowal.²Visiting Lecturer Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal, Narowal³Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal¹saba.sultana@uon.edu.pk, ²visiting.aaima.mcm@uon.edu.pk, ³Abbasusama374@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18150210>**Keywords**

Social Networking platforms, Instagram Influencers, fashion sense, Apparel branding, University students.

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Abstract

Aims of the Study: This study explains how interaction with Instagram influencers influence the effectiveness of apparel brand endorsements among university students of Narowal. It intends to assess the level of usage and engagement with Instagram influencers in the promotion of apparel brands and to analyze the role of demographic characteristics like age, gender, and educational level in forming the influence.

Methodology: This empirical study utilizes a quantitative research design employed purposive sampling method to represent sample.

Findings: The findings show a significant relationship between influencer engagement and apparel brand promotion. Moreover, influencers increasingly shape students' fashion sense and clothing preferences. In addition, differences were observed across demographic groups, suggesting that age and gender influence the level of engagement and responsiveness to influencer promotions.

Conclusion: Instagram functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as a powerful marketing platform that significantly contributes to attitude formation, brand recall, and preference development in the context of apparel branding among university students.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking is becoming more accessible day by day. Social media users use visual, text-based graphics and hashtags to refuse false information, get support from others. Instagram is a social networking site where users may post videos and photos with others all around the world. (Kerr et al., 2020). The Instagram offers well-paid advertising opportunities and keeps pace with technological advancements. Many businesses leverage Instagram to enhance their online presence, particularly benefiting smaller enterprises. However, the company faces

challenges such as photo rights concerns and intense competition in the social media landscape. Instagram was created as portable app for smartphones. After achieving extraordinary results and high user engagement, it is now available on all smartphones and computers. Earlier, it was not a desktop application. After being a computer application, Instagram has been used widely over the course of time for many purposes especially for branding of products. Now you can find a lot of pages that are promoting many brands and products related to those brands (Green &

Martinez, 2018). Social media's impact is changing how brands communicate with their target markets. Social media platforms provide brands with never-before-seen avenues for audience engagement and connection. Communication techniques are changing as a result of the increase of user-generated material on these platforms (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017)

Moreover, Instagram have the potential to alleviate loneliness due to the heightened affection they provide. In contrast, platforms primarily relying on text, such as Twitter are believed to offer minimal relationship and, consequently, are expected to have little impact on loneliness. This standpoint highlights the varying impacts that respective forms of social networking sites have on their follower cognition (Pittman & Reich, 2016). Social networking sites, such as Instagram, have become an intrinsic relation with everyday life for university students. A ample number of students on a regular basis pursue with content shared by Instagram influencers, including content related to fashion and apparel. Influencers often show several apparel brands and clothing styles, that can influence students' interests, taste and representation about dressing. Its social control is mostly motivated by its fashionable representations and its conceptualization as a contemporary and dapper attribute, encouraging students from various backgrounds to show their pressence on Instagram (Latiff & Safiee, 2015).

1.1: Problem Statement

Increasing popularity of Instagram, influencers have become center of attention in supporting apparel brands. However, to narrow research gap on how engagement with Instagram influencers affects students exposure of apparel brands and how demographic elements like age, gender, and education influence this contact. This study further aims to infer university students of Narowal pursuance towards apparel brands promoted by Instagram influencers.

1.2: Rational of the study

This study is crucial because it highlights the role of Instagram influencers in apparel branding among university students of Narowal. By examining how students engage with influencers and accessing the consequence of demographic factors. This study provide a clear apprehension of followers conduct in relation with social media marketing. In addition, it spotlight Instagram's prospective as an emerging social networking site for brand promotion and explain how influencers act as opinion leaders and play role in shaping brand perception.

By examining the content shared by influencers, as well as the responses and influence they have on university students, this study seeks to shed light on the significant and prominent role Instagram influencers play in formation of brand perceptions. The research also aims to provide a deeper understanding of Instagram as a rapidly growing platform in city Narowal for business and to highlight the important function of influencers as opinion leaders in promoting the apparel brands they endorse.

1.3: Objectives of the Study

- 1) To figure out how university students of Narowal engage with Instagram influencers in apparel branding.
- 2) To observe the influence of Instagram influencers in endorsing apparel brands among different demographics (age, gender and education) of university students of Narowal.

1.4: Hypotheses

- **H1:** Engagement with Instagram influencers significantly affect the promotion of Apparal brand.
- H2:** Demographic factors like age, gender and Education level significantly influence the relationship between Instagram influencers and apparel brand promotion among university students of Narowal.

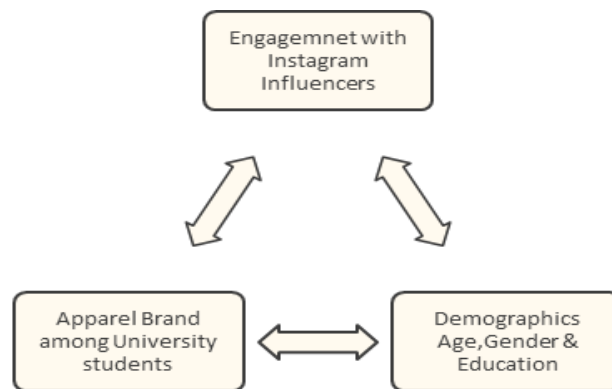


Figure 1: Hypotheses

Literature Review

Parwal & Kumar (2023) stated that the attributes and traits tenable Instagram influencers to draw attention towards devoted followers and hold up operational engagement with their followers. Morais, Esteves, & Raposo (2023) connected this phenomena with accepting the effectivity of relationship between social media influencers and clothing brands. This marketing plan of action is usually used to shape consumer engagement on social networking sites. Influencers are key players in promoting brands and trends by employing their substantive follower communication system.

Milošević et al., (2022) indicated that in influencer marketing, brands can achieve success by accessing out to macro-influencers for outstanding collaborations, suggesting that influencers take into account factors beyond direct benefits. Compared to micro-influencers, macro-influencers with larger follower bases provide a wider audience, which can offset lower engagement rates. Therefore, small businesses should consider incorporating macro-influencers (100K–500K followers) into their strategies, rather than focusing solely on micro-influencers, to achieve a broader and more effective influencer marketing approach.

However, Castillo-Abdul et al. (2022) advanced the understanding of lifestyle branding by clearly defining its scope and examining its relationship with fashion branding. Although the concept was widely applied in management practice, it lacked a

precise definition and has received limited attention in scholarly research.

Ghaphery (2021) narrated the growth of influencer marketing is widely recognized as beneficial for improving brand communication and boosting business revenue. Research demonstrate that social media influencers have an increasing effect on brand promotion and marketing strategies. Particularly, micro-celebrity, word-of-mouth marketing on social networking sites such as Instagram. It present a unsubstle nexus between the content shared out by influencers and their target audience's buying behaviour, ueventually contributing to high brand promotion.

However, Duh & Thabethe (2021) striked that influencers, in particular on social media like Instagram, maintain a momentous consequence on how consumers comprehend and engage themselves with brands. Their ability lies in their quality to form opinions, activeness, and behaviours.

Cuevas-Molano, Matosas-López, & Bernal-Bravo (2021) pointed out that video content on Instagram offer more information and content richness as compared to still images, breaking the platform's photographic homogeneity. Posts using these formats are more attractive to consumers, leading to increased engagement. Belanche et al., (2021) states that besides, the influencer, the follower and the brand in order to infer their behavioral intentions when they come across the recommendation of product from style influencers on Instagram. Lidgren and Major (2021)

examined the relationship between sustainability awareness and the rapid pace of fashion trends, highlighting the challenges the fashion industry faces in implementing sustainable patterns. The study emphasized the role of social factors, particularly the influence of influencers on consumers' clothing buy in decisions. The findings highlighted the complex role of influencers in shaping sustainable fashion choices among users.

Abidin (2020) stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing income uncertainty and increased internet usage, Influencers were setting their goals to stay relevant in terms of commercial opportunities, earn revenue, and hold viewers' attention. They were also experimenting with new forms and messaging. In certain industries like fashion, and travel, economic recovery efforts were more successful for influencers with visual lifestyle content. However, gendered genre norms favored predominantly feminine, young, and luxurious influencers, leaving those unable to adapt to new content creation norms excluded from economic opportunities.

Yilmaz, Sezerel, & Uzuner(2020) stated that ensuring that an influencer's values and image align with those of the brand is vital for establishing audience trust and securing successful results from such collaborations. This highlights the professional responsibilities of influencers and the significance of maintaining strategic alignment between them and the brands they promote . Sashittal and Jassawalla (2020) found that Instagram bloggers (IBs) act as social group leaders, guiding their followers views and elevating brands to the status of tribal artifacts.

Moreover, Tjandrawibawa (2020) spotlight a flourishing way in social networks where brands progressively use social media like Instagram to raise awareness about their products and services. In particular, influencer marketing on Instagram has appear as an efficient move to increase brand importance and awareness by rendering satisfying advantages to the industry. Alassani and Göretz (2019) argued that influencer marketing has appear as an progressively impressive plan of action in the development of digital media genre, especially on Instagram.

Kim, Seely, & Jung (2017) stated that being an influencer relate more than an easy or insouciant role, which involve accomplishment, expertise, and responsibility. Influencers act as a connection between the brands and the consumers by influencing conceptuality and inspiring engagement. .According to De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders (2017) social media influencers utilize social media sites like Instagram to advertize goods and services and diffuse widely circulated brand propositions.

Theoretical Framework

The Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory explains that media content often influence audience instantly. Instead, information initially reaches opinion leaders, who execute it and forward it on to others through personal communication (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). On social networking sites, like Instagram influencers enact as contemporary opinion leaders by communicating brand awareness in manners that are engaging and attractive for their followers. In apparel business, social media influencers share vlogs, other content, stories, and personal recommendations that can be helpful in forming university students' fashion sense and apparel decision making. Social media Followers are more probably to follow influencers they apprehend as knowledgeable and reliable, highlight the continuing worth of opinion leaders in defining students fashion behaviour (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Breves, Liebers, Abt, & Kunze, 2019)

Nevertheless, Social learning theory has a momentous effect on customer behaviour in influencer merchandising by poignant audience engagement and choices. According to (Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2020) social learning theory and planned behavior theory influence consumer behavior by highlighting aspects such as attitude toward influencers, perceived behavior control, personal significance, inspiration, and trust.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach to systematically investigate examine the Instagram influencers and its influence on apparel

brand endorsement effectiveness. Data was collected employing a structured and self-administrated questionnaire. A representative sample of 400 of male and female students was selected through purposive sampling, aged between 18 to 26. Moreover, university students of Narowal engage with diverse apparel styles, making them a more representative sample for drawing meaningful conclusions compared to other sectors. According Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, there are 233,559 mobile users in

district Narowal and 19,539 internet users (PBS, 2022). As a result, more content is being consumed online via social networking sites. Inferential statistical analyses, including correlation, regression, and chi-square tests, were applied to examine the imperial data. The reliability of the research instrument was reasoned, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of $\alpha = 0.923$.

Findings

Table 1: Instagram influencers Engagement with Students

Instagram influencers Engagement with Students	N	Minimm	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviat ion
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
	400	1.35	6.00	3.3485	.03831
					.46523

Table 1 shows statistical data designed to measure the level of engagement or usage of Instagram influencers among university students of Narowal. The mean value of 3.3485 indicates that, on average, participants demonstrate a moderate to high level of exposure to Instagram. This finding supports the view that Instagram is widely known

and frequently used among university students of Narowal. The standard deviation error of 0.03831 suggests minimal variation in responses, indicating a low likelihood that Instagram is unfamiliar to the students. Overall, these statistics classify university students of Narowal as active Instagram users.

Table 2: Influence by Demographics

Influence by Demographics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
	400	1.00	5.00	3.7480	.03566
					.71314

Table 2 shows statistics for which is designed to measure the influence of Instagram influencers on apparel branding among university students of Narowal with reference to demographics. The researcher has chosen three factors which are gender, age (18-26), and education. The statistical values are ranging in between 1 to 5 for responses. The mean value indicates that on average 3.7480 participants has influenced by change in

demographics and shape their choices of attires. Thus, it highlights a low positive relationship between demographic factors and choices of apparel. The standard deviation error is 0.03566 which means that there is very less possibility that any change in demographic factors (gender, age & education) did not lead to significant change in choices of Apparel.

Table 3: Correlations Promoting Apparel Brands among University Students

		Apparel brands	Choices of Attires
Apparel brands	Pearson Correlation	1	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000 ^b
	N	400	400
Selection of Apparel	Pearson Correlation	.437**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000 ^b	
	N	400	400

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient (r) for Apparel selection is 0.437, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The p-value is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, confirming that the relationship is statistically

significant. These results suggest that university students of Narowal show a significant inclination toward their apparel selection. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Table 4: Correlations analysis Usage of Instagram and Demographic Factors.

		Usage of Instagram	Demographic Factors
Usage of Instagram	Pearson Correlation	1	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000 ^b
	N	400	400
Demographic Factors	Pearson Correlation	.318**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000 ^b	
	N	400	400

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient (r) value for demographic factors is 0.318 which found to be low positive. The p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 which suggest that the relationship is statistically significant. So we can say that

demographic factors like gender, age (18-24), and education control the influence of Instagram influencers on Apparel branding among university students of Narowal. Hence, H2 is supported.

Table 5: Summary of Correlation Analyses of Promoting Apparel Brand and Demographic Factors

Predictor	Dependent	r	P value	Relationship
Instagram	Apparel Brands	0.448	0.000	Moderate Positive
	Demographic factors	0.318	0.000	Low Positive

The table 5 shows correlations between usage of Instagram, brand choices and demographic factors. Positive relationships are observed: a moderate correlation ($r=0.448$, $p=0.000$) with

brand choices, a low moderate one ($r=0.318$, $p=0.000$) with demographic factors. All correlations are statistically significant.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Engagement of Instagram & influence of Instagram influencers on Promotion of Apparel Brands and Demographics Factors

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.318 ^a	.101	.099	.67685

Table 6, indicates that the R-square value is 0.101, suggest that our independent variable that is usage of Instagram causes 10.1% change in dependent

variable that is demographic factors (age, gender & education).

Table 7: Summary of Regression Analyses

Predictor	Dependent	r	P value	R Square	Relationship
Engagement of Instagram	Apparel Brands	0.448	0.000	0.201	Moderate Positive
	Demographic factors	0.318	0.000	0.101	Low Positive

Table 7 the regression analysis reveals compelling insights into the relationships between predictor variables and its impact on the dependent variables. Usage of Instagram displays a significant but moderate positive relationship with Attire choices made by university students of Narowal ($r=0.448$, $p=0.000$, R Square=0.201), indicating that the use of Instagram may have a moderate influence on shaping attire perceptions among

university students of Narowal. Similarly, for demographic factors, there's a low positive association ($r=0.318$, $p=0.000$, R Square=0.101), suggesting, factors may act as shaping attire perceptions. These results emphasize the importance of Instagram in influencing not only attire perceptions and beliefs but also contributing significantly to build trust with individuals.

Table 8: Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	505.610 ^a	255	.000 ^b
Likelihood Ratio	250.480	255	.568
Linear-by-Linear Association	40.475	1	.000 ^b
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 263 cells (91.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

The table 8 indicates the results of Chi-square test. The p value 0.000 is less than the standard

threshold of 0.05. So we can say that the relationship between independent variable i.e. Usage of Instagram and dependent variable i.e. demographic factors (age, gender & education) is

statistically significant. Hence, H1 and H2 is supported.

Discussion & Analysis

The synthesis of empirical findings and existing research render encompass the understanding of the relationship between Instagram influencers and apparel branding among university students. Among the total participants, 47.50% were male students, while 52.50% were female. This gender distribution provides crucial demographic insight into the study's focus on how Instagram influencers influence choices of apparel selection of university students of Narowal. The data reveals that 4.25% of participants strongly disagree, and 17.25% disagree that their trust in an Instagram influencer affects their intention to purchase the apparel brands they recommend. In contrast, 26.50% express a neutral stance, 36.50% agree, and 15.50% were strongly agreed.

While, the distribution of responses regarding the influence Instagram influencers on choices of attire made by university students of Narowal. The data reveals that 3.25% of participants strongly disagree, and 16.25% disagree that Trustworthy Instagram influencers shape my preferences for certain apparel brands. In contrast, 29.75% express a neutral stance, 34.25% agree, and 16.50% strongly agree with the statement.

While, the distribution of responses regarding the influence Instagram influencers on choices of attire made by university students of Narowal. The data reveals that 2.75% of participants strongly disagree, and 10.25% disagree that female students are more influenced by Instagram influencers in choosing apparel brands as compared to male students. In contrast, 18.50% express a neutral stance, 43.75% agree, and 24.75% strongly agree with the statement.

Likewise, the distribution of responses regarding the influence Instagram influencers on choices of attire made by university students of Narowal. The data reveals that 1.50% of participants strongly disagree, and 10.50% disagree that Adult age group is more likely to be influenced by Instagram influencers while choosing apparel brands. In contrast, 28.50% express a neutral stance, 37.75%

agree, and 21.75% strongly agree with the statement.

Moreover, the distribution of responses regarding the influence Instagram influencers on choices of attire made by university students of Narowal. The data reveals that 3.75% of participants strongly disagree, and 17.25% disagree that they are more likely to purchase attire recommended by Instagram influencers who are close to your age. In contrast, 32.50% express a neutral stance, 35.50% agree, and 11.00% strongly agree with the statement.

In reference to H1 Abidin (2016), Leban et al. (2020), Joshua Woods et al. (2023), Khamis and Welling (2017), and Pedroni (2016) highlight Instagram as an active and influential communication platform. Instagram influencers use this platform to engage with audiences and build trust. This reliance make them able them to encourage cognitive content, goods, and services efficaciously. The findings revealed that followers oftenly follow Instagram influencers, who play the role of an opinion leaders. Therefore, the coercive trust-based relation between influencers and the audience has brought to the beginning of fresh inclinations in enterprise and promotional activities.

On the other hand, in reference to H2 Aires (2020), De Veirman et al. (2017), Vladimirova (2022), Schoutenet et al. (2020) and Argyris et al. (2020) highlight the how the usage of Instagram changes with demographics like age, gender and level of education. This emerging platform is quiet popular among university students. The statistics has proven this notion. Statistics have also proven that female students are more likely to influence than male students. The changing demographics also change the level of perception that how they react to influencers' content and how they follow them.

Conclusion

This research concludes that demographic factors like gender, age, and education level determines apparel decision makings and variance in these factors lead to occurrence in audience preferences. The literature review and the analysis of empirical data inferred the crucial role that Instagram and

its influencers play in apparel branding among university students in Narowal. The study present that Instagram performs as a powerful platform that influences users perceived behaviours, attitudes, and decision making related to apparel. The findings underscore the substance of effective apparel branding, responsible usage of social networking sites, and thoughtful engagement with social media content in shaping students brand preferences.

Limitations of the study

1. The study chosen respondents viewpoint at a particular point in time.
2. This research did not studied the other demographics such as socioeconomic status, sociocultural background.
3. The study focuses on preferences instead of analyzing the long-term effects of influencer merchandising on potential purchasing behavior.

Future Recommendations for Researchers

1. Future researchers can follow longitudinal research designs to analyze occurrence in apparel orientation and the long term effects of Instagram influencers.
2. Researchers may employ qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, or case studies, to explore students' perceptions, motivations, and trust in influencers.
3. Future research could investigate the relationship between exposure to influencer content and existent purchasing behaviour.
4. Further studies could also enquire psychological factors.

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