



Influence of Social Media Marketing on Fashion Purchase Intentions

Dr. Sofia Lindström

Nordic Commerce University, Sweden

Received: 11/10/2025

Accepted: 25/04/2026

Published: 08/06/2026

Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped marketing strategies within the global fashion industry. Brands increasingly rely on digital channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to engage consumers, promote new collections, and cultivate brand communities. Unlike traditional advertising, social media marketing emphasizes interactive communication, influencer partnerships, user-generated content, and real-time engagement. This shift has significantly influenced consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in fashion markets. This study explores how social media marketing strategies affect fashion purchase intentions by analyzing factors such as content quality, influencer credibility, brand authenticity, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and peer engagement. Visual storytelling and aspirational imagery play a critical role in shaping brand perception, while influencer endorsements often function as social proof that reduces perceived purchase risk. Engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments contribute to perceived popularity and trustworthiness.

Keywords: Social media marketing; Fashion purchase intention; Influencer marketing; Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

Introduction

The fashion industry has experienced a profound transformation with the rise of social media platforms as dominant marketing channels. Traditional advertising models centered on television, print media, and in-store promotion have gradually been supplemented or replaced by digital strategies that prioritize interactivity, visual storytelling, and real-time engagement. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest have become central spaces where fashion trends are introduced, discussed, and rapidly disseminated across global audiences. Social media marketing differs from conventional promotional approaches in its ability to foster two-way communication between brands and consumers. Rather than passively receiving advertisements, consumers actively engage with content through likes, comments, shares, and direct messages. This participatory environment allows brands to build communities, encourage user-generated content, and create a sense of belonging that extends beyond transactional relationships. Influencer marketing has emerged as a particularly influential component of social media strategy in the fashion sector. Influencers act as opinion leaders who shape perceptions of style, quality, and desirability. Their endorsements often function as social proof, reducing perceived risk and strengthening purchase confidence. The visual nature of fashion content further enhances the persuasive impact of curated imagery, styling demonstrations, and behind-the-scenes storytelling.



At the same time, the effectiveness of social media marketing depends on factors such as content credibility, perceived authenticity, and alignment with consumer values. Overexposure to sponsored content or misleading promotions can generate skepticism and reduce trust. Consumers increasingly evaluate whether brand messaging feels genuine or purely commercial. Understanding how social media marketing influences fashion purchase intentions requires examining both psychological and behavioral dimensions. Consumer attitudes, brand awareness, emotional engagement, and peer influence interact to shape decision-making processes. The rapid diffusion of trends through digital networks also accelerates impulse buying and shortens product life cycles.

Role of Influencer Marketing in Fashion Purchase Decisions

Influencer marketing has become one of the most powerful drivers of consumer behavior in the fashion industry. Social media influencers, ranging from celebrities to micro-influencers, act as opinion leaders who shape trends, validate brand choices, and influence purchase decisions through curated content and personal endorsements. Their ability to connect with audiences in relatable and visually engaging ways has redefined promotional strategies in digital fashion markets.

1. Influencers as Opinion Leaders

Influencers function as trusted intermediaries between brands and consumers. Unlike traditional advertising, influencer content often feels personal and authentic, blending lifestyle narratives with product promotion. Followers perceive influencers as peers or aspirational figures, which enhances credibility and reduces skepticism toward brand messages.

2. Credibility and Trust

The effectiveness of influencer marketing largely depends on perceived credibility. Factors such as expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and consistency influence how audiences interpret endorsements. When followers believe that influencers genuinely use and value promoted products, purchase intention tends to increase. Conversely, excessive sponsored content or lack of transparency can weaken trust.

3. Social Proof and Normative Influence

Influencers create social proof by demonstrating how products fit into everyday life or aspirational lifestyles. Engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments reinforce perceived popularity and desirability. This normative influence can reduce perceived risk and encourage consumers to align their purchasing behavior with prevailing trends.

4. Micro-Influencers and Niche Markets

While celebrity influencers provide wide reach, micro-influencers often achieve higher engagement rates within specific communities. Their smaller but more targeted audiences may perceive them as more authentic and accessible. In fashion markets, niche influencers specializing in streetwear, sustainable fashion, or luxury styling can significantly shape consumer preferences.

5. Emotional Engagement and Brand Attachment

Influencer storytelling often fosters emotional connections. Through daily posts, styling tips, and behind-the-scenes content, influencers build parasocial relationships with followers. These



one-sided emotional bonds increase brand attachment and strengthen purchase intention, particularly among younger demographics.

6. Transparency and Disclosure

Regulatory frameworks increasingly require clear disclosure of sponsored partnerships. Transparency about paid collaborations is critical for maintaining credibility. When disclosures are clear and endorsements align with the influencer's established identity, consumer trust remains intact.

7. Impact on Conversion and Sales

Influencer campaigns often integrate direct shopping links, discount codes, or limited-edition collaborations, shortening the path from exposure to purchase. Real-time interaction and immediate access to products amplify conversion potential.

Influencer marketing plays a central role in shaping fashion purchase decisions by leveraging credibility, social proof, emotional engagement, and targeted reach. Its effectiveness depends on authenticity, transparency, and alignment between influencer identity and brand values. As digital platforms continue to evolve, influencer-driven strategies remain a key component of contemporary fashion marketing.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Peer Engagement

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to consumer-generated opinions, reviews, comments, and recommendations shared through digital platforms. In the fashion industry, where trends evolve rapidly and visual appeal strongly influences preferences, eWOM plays a significant role in shaping purchase intentions. Unlike brand-generated advertising, peer communication is often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy.

1. Nature of eWOM in Fashion Markets

Fashion consumers frequently rely on online reviews, unboxing videos, styling posts, and customer testimonials before making purchasing decisions. Social media platforms and e-commerce websites enable users to publicly share their experiences regarding product quality, fit, delivery, and overall satisfaction. Positive eWOM can enhance brand reputation, while negative feedback may deter potential buyers.

2. Credibility and Perceived Trustworthiness

Consumers tend to trust peer-generated content more than corporate marketing messages. Reviews from individuals who have purchased and used a product reduce uncertainty, particularly in online shopping environments where physical inspection is not possible. The perceived honesty of eWOM influences brand attitudes and confidence in purchase decisions.

3. Peer Engagement and Social Interaction

Engagement through likes, comments, shares, and reposts amplifies the reach of eWOM. Interactive discussions about styling choices, product comparisons, and trend recommendations create a participatory environment. Peer endorsement within social networks can strengthen normative influence, encouraging individuals to align their purchases with group preferences.



4. Impact of Visual User-Generated Content

Fashion is inherently visual, making user-generated photos and videos particularly persuasive. Seeing garments worn by real customers provides realistic expectations regarding fit and appearance. This visual validation reduces perceived risk and strengthens purchase intention.

5. Negative eWOM and Risk Amplification

While positive reviews support sales growth, negative eWOM can spread quickly and damage brand perception. Complaints about poor quality, misleading sizing, or delayed delivery may significantly influence consumer attitudes. The viral nature of digital platforms amplifies both praise and criticism.

6. Community Building and Brand Loyalty

Brands that actively engage with consumer feedback foster stronger community ties. Responding to reviews, addressing concerns, and encouraging user participation demonstrate attentiveness and transparency. This interaction can transform satisfied customers into brand advocates.

7. Algorithmic Influence and Visibility

Platform algorithms often prioritize highly engaged content, increasing the visibility of popular reviews or trending posts. As a result, peer engagement can magnify certain narratives about a brand, shaping broader public perception.

electronic word-of-mouth and peer engagement significantly influence fashion purchase intentions. By shaping perceptions of credibility, reducing uncertainty, and amplifying social proof, eWOM serves as a powerful driver of consumer decision-making in digitally connected fashion markets. Brands that cultivate positive engagement and actively manage online feedback are better positioned to enhance trust and long-term loyalty.

Conclusion

Social media marketing has become a decisive force in shaping fashion purchase intentions in the digital age. Platforms that prioritize visual storytelling, interactivity, and peer engagement have transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase apparel products. Influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and user-generated content collectively influence perceptions of desirability, credibility, and brand authenticity. Influencers act as powerful intermediaries by blending lifestyle narratives with brand promotion, creating emotional connections that strengthen purchase motivation. At the same time, peer reviews and online discussions provide social proof, reducing uncertainty and increasing trust in product quality and fit. The interactive nature of social media accelerates trend diffusion and shortens the path from exposure to transaction. However, effectiveness depends on maintaining authenticity and transparency. Over-commercialization, misleading promotions, or excessive sponsored content can generate skepticism and weaken consumer trust. Brands must balance persuasive communication with genuine engagement and clear disclosure practices. Ultimately, social media marketing influences fashion purchase intentions not only through visibility but through relational dynamics. By fostering trust, emotional engagement, and community interaction, digital platforms have shifted fashion consumption toward a more socially mediated and experience-driven process. Brands that strategically integrate influencer partnerships, peer



engagement, and transparent communication are better positioned to convert digital interaction into sustained purchasing behavior and long-term loyalty.

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