

Influence of Fashion Bloggers on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper is a review of selected papers on the 'Impact of Fashion Bloggers on Consumer Buying Behavior', published during last 10 years, all over the world. A blogger is an individual who manages online blog which may relate to anything. A Fashion Blogger relies only on the content related to fashion and beauty. Fashion bloggers cover several facets of fashion and lifestyle on their blog. They post their pictures and videos, manifesting their outfits and lifestyle on a regular basis, to a number of followers and blog readers. Pictures play a vital part in their identification and existence. As of now, fashion blogging has evolved into a very latest way of branding. The bloggers are playing as an opinion of fashion institutions and enacting as one of the kinds of marketing. Fashion items, styling and beauty products that bloggers share on blog also affects the buying habits and purchases of the consumers. These bloggers inspire consumers to try new products, they have never used before. Pre-purchase decisions and activities of consumers are affected. Among consumers between the age group of 18-34, blogs have been marked as the most important source of inspiration to make buying decisions. This review paper focuses on the impacts fashion blogging has on consumers and the most considered characteristics of fashion bloggers that affect the consumers. The researcher has read the number of papers and has made certain conclusions in relation to the affect fashion bloggers have on consumers.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Behavior, Fashion Blogs, Fashion Blogger, Blogosphere, Social Media, Fashion and Lifestyle.

Introduction

- **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer Behavior is the study of 'how a consumer acts and reacts' while performing consumption and purchasing activities in prevailing market conditions. Consumer is an individual who avails or makes use of goods and services to satisfy his needs and wants. Consumer can be an individual as well as an organizational consumer, any end user, and not a purchaser merely. Behavior is the resulting action or response of an individual, regarding different situations. Hence consumer behavior is concerned with understanding how an individual behaves in different situations and why, and what influences this behavior. The study of consumer behavior is concerned with buying behavior mainly. It focuses on all aspects of

purchasing behavior, from pre-purchase decisions and activities, post-purchase consumption, to disposal activities. It is the study of how customers select, buy, avail, and dispose goods and services to satisfy their needs, wants and desires. It is also concerned with all the people involved in buying decisions and consumption activities.

- **Blogs**

A blog (shortening of weblog) is a website, consisting of informational posts related to all kind of subjects, often maintained by a blogger. It allows the blog readers to visit and leave comments, therefore allowing the bloggers to build social relations with their readers and other bloggers. It is a website which allows a blogger to write about subjects that interest them, usually with pictures and videos. These blogs display information in the reverse chronological order, with latest post appearing first. Blogs often reflect the personality of the blogger. These blogs are categorized mainly on the basis of content it provides. Personal and collaborative blogs are the most popular ones, amidst all other blogs. A blog mainly consists of text, pictures, links and videos. It also allows the bloggers to make money, through advertising and promotions. Each time a reader clicks on the ad, the blogger is paid for that click. Moreover it is a picturised record of one's thoughts, opinions, or experiences that are being put on the internet for the people to read. A blog is more of a personal diary, where one could talk or post about his/her daily life or share things he/she does. Blogs nowadays show many different forms of marketing techniques that appeal to the consumers.

- **Fashion Blogger**

A fashion blogger is an individual who manages a fashion blog, and relies only on the content related to fashion and styling. He/she plays with trends and styles a lot. Fashion bloggers experiments with their styles, interweave ideas and encourage the readers to try new things. The bloggers usually post updates on fashion trends, hauls, beauty product reviews, photos from fashion shows or of themselves in daily outfits. Sometimes videos are also shared on how to do make-up and what products to use. Bloggers share their knowledge and passion about fashion and spread it with the people reading their blog. Bloggers usually are ordinary girls who are passionate about fashion and beauty. Fashion bloggers are known for interweaving their ideas and muse and setting trends. Fashion blogs are often seen as a street of fashion, something beyond the catwalk. Fashion blogs are the most important point of supply of information to the readers, about new trends and styles. The readers look for information for making purchase decisions and to see trends on others first. Pictures play a major role in their identification and existence. These bloggers are anticipated as trend setters. Also, they unofficially announce Haute Couture on behalf of the fashion designers. Fashion bloggers have become a muse for the youth who are passionate about beauty and fashion. They introduce their clothing collection and recommend products to their followers. The fashion bloggers have achieved celebrity status lately and are also known as 'micro celebrities'

now. Many recent studies have focused on the impact of fashion bloggers on consumer buying behavior. Blogosphere is an area of blogs, bloggers and blog posts. Looking at the blogosphere, there are thousands of blog out there. Some of them have particularly done well and are currently considered leading blogs, locally or internationally. Bloggers are the main element of blogosphere. A blogger is an individual who maintains a blog online. These blogs could be about anything: fashion, food, cosmetics, apparel. Some of these blogs are paid. It is good to be a fashion blogger, but rocklike to be in major league. This influence is not merely page views and visitors, but something more than that. It is what people do afterwards that makes the difference. Information on blogs is not truth always, but can be different opinions, as every blogger has different opinion. They center their content throughout materialism, which would naturally attract any human being with a strong desire for the materialistic things in life. Social media has helped these bloggers in reaching 'difficult to contact' customers. Fashion blogging has become a sort of viral marketing, and is concerned with spreading messages to thousands with few clicks. But this form of marketing might be boon or bane, largely depends on the user's self concept. The bloggers are the normal everyday people, who have achieved celebrity status lately. The time consumers allocate in reading blogs, price, comparisons, opinions and browsing reviews, online shops etc. is termed as 'Zero Moment of Truth'. These blogs have a huge impact on consumers and therefore on the buying process. Among consumers between the age group of 18-34, blogs are marked as the most important point of supply of information to make buying decisions. According to some data from a research, 9 in every 10 consumers make purchase after seeking information about a product or service on a blog. The influence is so strong in Asian markets that even older consumers at the age of 55 and more check blogs at the time of making purchase decisions. Especially young women's buying habits in relation to cloths are influenced. Blogs have also influenced household purchase decisions of many. Credibility affected the decisions mostly. It is the believability and satisfactoriness. Also, customers are more attracted towards the ones who they relate the most to. Fashion blogger's characteristics, structure of the blog, self concept of user and motivation are expected to influence users. They trust and rely on social media influencers or the bloggers more than traditional ones or celebrity endorsements. Fashion bloggers are more effective and influencing than ad banners or PR statements. The marketing efforts that are found in blogs can have a huge impact on consumers and their preferences. Fashion blogs are totally serving as a voice and opinion of fashion institution.

Research Objectives

- 1) To review the literature related to the influence of fashion bloggers on consumers buying behavior.
- 2) To determine the most considered characteristics of fashion bloggers that affect the consumers buying behavior.

Research Methodology

The study is secondary in nature, based on literature review of papers collected from the online journals and books.

Literature Review

Reviewed Paper 1:

Stefanic Tiana (June 2010) in the paper titled 'Outsiders Looking In: How Everyday Bloggers are Gaining Access to the Elite Fashion World' aimed to find how creative possibilities enabled by the availability of the fashion-related information online allows active participation by any internet user who wants to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about fashion. The study was Descriptive in nature.

Conclusion: This article stated that tools for digital publishing expand the creative possibilities for the expression of consumer identities. It depicted that amateur bloggers are the creators of online spaces where their unique expression of identity can be enacted and shared, which is significant in relation to the use of blogs by young women. Young girls use their blogs and other social networking sites as the virtual equivalent to written diaries, scrapbooks and bedroom walls. By engaging in communication online they are both sharing their personal lives with peers who are known to them, as well as being aware that the contents of their blogs can reach a potentially broader public audience.

Reviewed Paper 2:

Sedeke, K., & Arora, P. (2013) in the paper titled 'Top Ranking Fashion Blogs and their role in the current Fashion industry' analyzed how fashion bloggers influence the public opinion of fashion and new fashion trends. The study was descriptive in nature.

Conclusion: This paper explained that fashion blog and bloggers in fashion industry act as new gatekeepers of fashion knowledge, and how fashion bloggers influencing public opinion of fashion and new fashion trends. It stated that fashion blogs have influenced traditional publishing industry, especially fashion magazines, and have become new marketing tool where bloggers receive feedbacks of their new trend. The extremely large number of visitors of fashion blogs has attracted eyes of advertisers, and made it new place of advertising. The effectiveness of blogs and the popularities of fashion blogs have made blogger become a new career.

Reviewed Paper 3:

Sedeke Kristina (2012) in the paper titled 'Effective Fashion Blogs and Their Impact on the Current Fashion Industry' aimed to analyze what determines an effective blog in contemporary fashion blogosphere. The study employed Qualitative content analysis.

Conclusion: This thesis summarizes the nature of social media and their impact on business communication in general and subsequently in fashion industry.

The central aim of this research is summarized into general Research Question "What determines an effective blog in contemporary fashion blogosphere?" and further Sub-Questions, concerning identity and background of current popular bloggers. Collected data represented (concerning identity of bloggers) 'no background in fashion industry and young age of analyzed bloggers' were found as the key findings of this area. Moreover the simplicity, personalization, valuation of first time experience, unusual coverage and approach to fashion, rich social media presence, were found as a key findings collectively shared by those blogs.

Reviewed Paper 4:

Bunina Tatiana (2013) in the paper titled 'Fashion Blogger's Methods of Communication of Consumption Experience'. The study examined the methods of consumption experience communication within fashion blogging context. Study is exploratory in nature.

Conclusion: This paper proposes a conceptual model of use of multiple communication methods taking place in fashion blogging, their co-existence, and influential aspects having an impact on the choice of the particular methods. It has been found that the fashion blogger may communicate personal consumption experience communication by combining different methods within a personal fashion blog: visual methods, textual methods, fashion blog design.

Reviewed Paper 5:

Hahn and Lee (2013) in the paper titled 'Effect of Psychological Closeness on Consumer Attitude towards Fashion Blogs: The Moderating Effect of Fashion Leadership and Interpersonal LOV.' The main objective of the study was to measure the psychological closeness of individuals to a personal fashion blogger. The study was Exploratory in nature.

Conclusion: This article stated that as fashion blogging has become a new way of branding, a number of major fashion brands have embraced blogging and other forms of social-media engagement, using them to connect to their consumers or reach out to potential customers. Psychological closeness of the relationship between blog readers and bloggers is somewhat different from traditional psychological closeness, as blogging can produce both one-sided and two-sided relationships, depending on the reader's activity level on the blog. The findings reveal direct influence on both attitudes towards a fashion blog and purchase intention toward the fashion products displayed by the fashion blogger.

Reviewed Article 6:

Jones Sarah (2014) in the paper titled 'How Much Influence do Fashion Blogs have?' aims to provide the knowledge of influence of fashion bloggers.

Conclusion: This article explained that since fashion bloggers have gained influence and grown to be leaders in the industry, brands began to partner with them for advertising campaigns, events, and other marketing efforts. The craze for fashion bloggers has only increased. They started off as fashion enthusiasts

having an opinion and willing to spread it across via digital means. The trend is only growing: just that bloggers are now the brand ambassadors and celebrities and vice-versa. Their following can rival magazines.

Reviewed Paper 7:

Fernandez & Karhawi (2015) in the paper title 'Usability and Consumption Influence of Fashion Blogs: An Exploratory Study.' They discussed the type of influence fashion blogs have on customers buying decisions. The study was Exploratory in nature.

Conclusion: This article focuses on understanding what type of influence fashion blogs have on customers buying decisions. Findings shown in this paper are the results of interviews with readers of fashion blogs. Certain tests showed that navigation problems frustrate readers, especially when it involves lack of outfit information or when navigation was disfavored over companies advertising interests. It explained how Brazilian fashion blogs are changing the way people consume and look for fashion information online.

Reviewed Paper 8:

Fink Ariel (2015) in the paper titled 'Fashion Blogging and Consumers: Examining the Uses and Gratifications of Readers of Fashion Blogs' aimed to identify motivations consumers have for accessing fashion blogs. The study was Exploratory (online survey).

Conclusion: This research focused on the motivations consumers have for accessing fashion blogs. The researcher was able to discover that the most important motivations were social surveillance and entertainment. Additionally, this research indicated that the millennial generation is more invested in blogs than most other demographics. Bloggers have built communities and reputations based on their knowledge and their dedication to sharing it through their favorite blog pages. Social surveillance appears to be the most important gratification. Entertainment was also important. However Socialization as well as Expression/Affiliation did not seem to be important.

Reviewed Paper 9:

Gema Martinez Navarro & Mencia de Garcillan Lopez-Rua (2016) in the paper titled 'The Influence of Blogs in Fashion in Consumer Behavior: An Exploratory Approach'. Determined how does the appearance of fashion blogs has influenced consumer behavior trends and particularly whether the decision process of buying fashion products has changed and how?

Conclusion: This research focuses on studying how does the appearance of fashion blogs has influenced consumer behavior trends, and particularly whether the decision process of buying fashion products has changed and the variables of consumer behavior that have been most influenced by the use of this new tool and how. It concluded that fashion blog arouses general interest in all respondents and is considered a way to express one's mood and personality. Also how fashion is an important element in their daily lives and part of their leisure time is

devoted to any activity related to it. Interviews concluded that when seeking information, now the first step is to browse the blog. It was recognized that fashion blogs have influenced considerably their process of deciding to purchase fashion products. Also the use of fashion blogs arouses in them a greater desire to purchase as they are exposed to many more stimuli.

Reviewed Paper 10:

Wiazewicz J., Zatwarnicka-Madura B. (2016) in the paper titled 'Fashion Blogs as the Information Sources about Trends and New Products in Fashion Management' analyzed about blogs readers' practices related to browsing and following fashion blogs. The study was Exploratory research (online survey).

Conclusion: This paper was mainly concerned with the reasons why one should avoid or follow fashion blogs. The conclusion of this research showed that the respondents sometimes bought same stuff that the fashion bloggers had. It stated that blogs have become an important communication channel. It also showed how companies use these blogs to advertise their products, communicate and develop relations with customers. These bloggers are trend setters and they introduce their clothing collection and advice and recommend products and hence impacting consumer's opinion. The findings revealed that the respondents sometimes bought clothes and accessories which were the same as or similar to those they had seen on fashion blogs. Credibility is a factor that greatly affected purchasing decisions of the respondents.

Reviewed Paper 11:

Nianiou Zoi (2016) in the paper titled 'The Effect of Fashion Blogging in Consumer Behavior in Greece' depicted how different factors like blogger's characteristics, user's self image, advertising or blog's layout affect the consumer's behavior in fashion. It was an exploratory study (questionnaire and online survey).

Conclusion: This paper identified that as consumers especially young women's buying habits in relation to clothes have been affected and how writing reviews about their buying experience impacts consumer buying behavior. It explains that buyers are encouraged to do more research on products and comment their experience. The research also explains various social media landscapes, blogs, webs, what exactly blogosphere is and about fashion blogs. It concluded that bloggers impact their attitude to fashion, buying habits and pre-purchase activities. Bargains for products can also be found by these blogs. Expertise and User's self concept is not a strong characteristic that influence consumer behavior, whilst authenticity, advertising, layout/content and authority does affect.

Reviewed Paper 12:

Rossi Alison M. (2016) in the paper titled 'Key Elements for Sustaining and Enhancing Influence for Fashion Bloggers' identified the key elements of blog content that fashion bloggers must possess to have any significant degree of influence on their readers. The study was Exploratory (online survey).

Conclusion: The objective of this research was to gain a better understanding of the perceived influence of fashion bloggers. This study seeks to identify the key elements of blog content that fashion bloggers must possess any significant degree of influence on their readers. Four key elements have been identified as fundamental to having and sustaining influence among blog readers: (1) Trustworthiness (2) Expertise (3) Personal Relevance and (4) Authenticity.

Reviewed Paper 13:

Sheena K. and Sudha M. (2017) in the paper titled 'Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: The Fashion Industry' explored the influencer marketing techniques used by fashion industries. The study was Exploratory in nature (questionnaire).

Conclusion: This study intended to explore the influencer marketing techniques used by fashion industries and also the impact of influencers on the consumers buying decision process in fashion industry. Tremendous changes are happening in the world of clothing retail. Internet and social media play vital role in helping consumers find the items they are looking for. Obviously companies will keenly try to retain a strong presence in the social media platforms otherwise the target audience can easily change suppliers. Several companies operating in the fashion industry have come to value and recognize the influence that bloggers can have in terms of reaching their target customers, and have found an efficient way of marketing their products.

Conclusion

In relation to the first objective, the influence of fashion bloggers on consumer buying behaviour, following conclusions were obtained:

- Fashion blogs/bloggers have influenced the process of making buying decisions and purchasing fashion products.
- Availing fashion blogs has inflamed a greater desire in consumers to purchase, as of now they are exposed to many more stimuli.
- While seeking information, the first step is to browse and read the blog.
- Sometimes the perception of a consumer in relation to a brand may vary after reading about it on the blog, as it is being used and recommended by the blogger.
- It is noted that what the bloggers wear, recommend or post about strongly influences the attitude of consumers towards the brand and their purchase decision simultaneously.
- Conclusions regarding the most considered characteristics of fashion bloggers that affect the consumers buying behavior.
- The most valued and considered is related to the type of information blogs consist. Consumers prefer those blogs the most that are complete in various aspects i.e. those blogs which in addition to providing information on fashion brands and beauty products, provide information on lifestyle, travel and trend in general.

- An aspect that stands out as very interesting and fascinating is related to the frequency of blogs. Consumers highly value those blogs which are updated regularly and contribute some content daily.
- The possibility and chances to learn new things through the bloggers is another feature most valued and considered by the consumers.
- The consumers also value much the overall aesthetics of the blog. They seek the details and quality of the photos and the location, if the content is easy to access or not, if the blogger is friendly and blogs with well organized information.
- Many prefer blogs in which they are reflected. This characteristic is closely related to who the blogger is, both physically and in relation to his/her lifestyle.

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