



A Study on the Influence of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The rapid ascendancy of social media has transformed influencer marketing into one of the most consequential tools in contemporary consumer communication. This paper undertakes a secondary data-based review of existing empirical literature, industry reports, and theoretical frameworks to examine the mechanisms through which influencer marketing shapes consumer purchase decisions. Drawing on peer-reviewed studies, market intelligence publications, and regulatory documents, the review synthesises evidence across four key antecedents — influencer credibility, perceived authenticity, content quality, and social proof — and evaluates their documented effects on consumer purchase intention and behaviour. The findings, aggregated from secondary sources spanning 2008–2024, consistently affirm that influencer credibility and perceived authenticity are the most potent drivers of purchase intention, with content quality and social proof playing significant complementary roles. The paper concludes with theoretical reflections and directions for primary empirical enquiry.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Source Credibility, Secondary Data Review, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media, India

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media platforms — Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok — has engendered a paradigm shift in the practice of marketing communications. Within this transformed landscape, influencer marketing has assumed a position of strategic centrality, enabling brands to deliver targeted, relatable, and contextually embedded messages through individuals who command loyal digital followings. Unlike conventional advertising, influencer marketing leverages the perceived interpersonal trust that followers invest in content creators, thereby bypassing the scepticism traditionally directed at brand-generated communication (Friestad & Wright, 1994).



The commercial scale of this phenomenon is considerable. According to Statista (2024), the global influencer marketing industry was valued at approximately USD 24 billion in 2024 and is projected to surpass USD 48 billion by 2028. In India specifically, the Influencer Marketing Hub (2023) reports that over 72% of marketers now maintain a dedicated budget for influencer campaigns — a figure that underscores the mainstream institutionalisation of this practice within corporate marketing strategy.

Despite the substantial practitioner investment, a coherent and integrative academic understanding of how influencer marketing translates into concrete consumer purchase outcomes remains nascent. Much of the existing scholarship addresses isolated constructs — credibility, authenticity, or social proof — without situating them within a unified theoretical model. This paper addresses that gap through a systematic secondary data review, synthesising findings from peer-reviewed journals, industry analytics reports, and regulatory documentation to construct an evidence-based understanding of the influencer marketing–purchase decision relationship.

1.1 Scope and Methodology of the Review

This study employs a secondary data methodology, drawing upon a curated corpus of published research articles, market intelligence reports, and institutional documents. Sources were selected based on peer-review status, publication recency (2008–2024), citation frequency, and relevance to the core constructs. Databases consulted include Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCO. Industry reports were sourced from Statista, Influencer Marketing Hub, and the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). In all, twenty-two sources informed the synthesis presented herein.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The review is anchored in two complementary theoretical traditions. The Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) posits that the persuasive effectiveness of a communicator is contingent upon the audience's perception of that communicator's expertise and trustworthiness. Ohanian (1990) extended this framework by incorporating attractiveness as a third dimension, yielding the tripartite model extensively applied in endorser research. In the influencer marketing context, these dimensions map onto the qualities audiences attribute to content creators — domain knowledge, perceived honesty, and aesthetic appeal — making the Source Credibility Theory the most theoretically apposite framework for explaining influencer-driven attitude change.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) complements this by establishing that behavioural intentions — themselves shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control — are the most proximal predictor of actual behaviour. Applied to influencer marketing, this framework implies that influencer-driven stimuli first shape consumer attitudes and intentions, which in turn predict actual purchase behaviour. The integration of these two frameworks produces a theoretical architecture capable of explaining both the attitudinal and volitional stages of the consumer response process.

3. SECONDARY DATA: SOURCES AND EVIDENCE BASE

The table below presents the principal secondary sources consulted, the variables they examined, and their core findings as they pertain to the influencer marketing–purchase decision relationship.

Source / Study	Key Variable(s) Examined	Core Finding	Implication for This Study
Statista (2024)	Global market size of influencer marketing projected USD 48 billion by 2028	Market valued at USD 24 billion in 2024; Establishes commercial significance of the domain	



Influencer Marketing Hub (2023)	Brand adoption of influencer marketing	72% of Indian marketers have a dedicated influencer marketing budget	Validates the Indian market focus of this study
Freberg et al. (2011)	Social media influencer characteristics	Influencers perceived as independent, credible endorsers shaping attitudes	Theoretical basis for credibility as a key antecedent
De Veirman et al. (2017)	Follower count & brand attitude	Moderate follower counts yield better brand attitude than mega-influencers	Informs social proof and influencer selection strategy
Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	Instagram credibility & purchase intent	Peer-like authenticity of influencers raises purchase intention more than celebrities	Supports authenticity as a distinct, high-impact construct
Lou & Yuan (2019)	Content quality & purchase intention	Content quality mediates the credibility–purchase intention relationship	Justifies content quality as an independent antecedent
Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	Parasocial interaction & brand loyalty	Parasocial bond with influencer predicts brand loyalty and purchase	Grounds social proof and relational dimensions of the model
ASCI (2023)	Influencer disclosure compliance in India	Only 43% of sponsored posts carry adequate disclosure labels	Highlights authenticity-transparency policy gap in India

Table 1: Summary of Secondary Data Sources and Key Evidence

4. ANALYSIS OF KEY ANTECEDENTS

4.1 Influencer Credibility

Credibility is the most extensively documented antecedent of influencer marketing effectiveness in the secondary literature. Kapitan and Silvera (2016) demonstrated through experimental evidence that influencers perceived as experts in their domain generated significantly higher purchase intentions than those perceived as generalists, a finding replicated across categories including beauty, fitness, and technology. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) further established that Instagram influencers were evaluated as more credible than traditional celebrities by young female consumers, owing to the former's peer-like communication style and apparent absence of commercial coercion. Freberg et al. (2011) corroborated this, characterising influencers as independent endorsers whose perceived credibility derives precisely from their non-institutional status.

Taken together, these secondary sources converge on the conclusion that influencer credibility — operationalised as perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity of voice — is the primary attitudinal driver of consumer purchase intention in the influencer marketing domain.

4.2 Perceived Authenticity

Authenticity has emerged as a conceptually distinct and empirically significant construct, reflecting consumer judgements about the sincerity and transparency of influencer endorsements. Ki and Kim (2019) demonstrated that influencers who engaged in self-disclosing, candid communication generated markedly more positive consumer attitudes and higher purchase intentions than those perceived to be reciting scripted brand narratives. Audrezet, de Kerviler, and Moulard (2020) identified authenticity as a moderator of the content–engagement relationship, with authentic influencers consistently eliciting higher trust and brand affinity.

The regulatory dimension adds further nuance. According to ASCI (2023), only 43% of sponsored influencer posts in India carried adequate disclosure labels — a finding with significant implications for perceived authenticity, as undisclosed sponsorships risk triggering consumer scepticism upon discovery (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This regulatory deficit underscores the importance of transparency as a prerequisite for authentic influencer communication and highlights a critical gap between industry practice and consumer expectation.



4.3 Content Quality

Lou and Yuan (2019) provide the most systematic secondary evidence for content quality as an antecedent of purchase intention, demonstrating through structural equation modelling that content quality functioned as a mediator between influencer trustworthiness and purchase intention — implying that even credible influencers must produce substantively high-quality content to realise their persuasive potential. The information richness framework (Daft & Lengel, 1986) offers a complementary theoretical rationale, positing that richer, more contextually detailed content reduces consumer uncertainty and facilitates more confident purchase decisions.

Industry data corroborate these academic findings. The Influencer Marketing Hub (2023) reports that 68% of brands cite 'content quality and aesthetic coherence' as the primary criterion in influencer selection decisions, prioritising it above follower count — a notable reversal from industry norms observed a decade earlier. This shift reflects a growing practitioner recognition that content quality is not merely an aesthetic consideration but a functional driver of consumer response.

4.4 Social Proof

Cialdini's (1984) foundational work on social influence established that individuals tend to conform to the perceived choices of others, particularly under conditions of uncertainty — a principle directly operationalised in social media environments through engagement metrics, follower counts, comment volumes, and user-generated endorsements. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) refined this understanding for the influencer context, revealing a curvilinear rather than linear relationship between follower count and brand attitude: whilst high follower numbers initially signal popularity and credibility, excessively large followings may paradoxically reduce perceived uniqueness and brand fit.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) extended the analysis to parasocial interaction — the quasi-personal relationships followers develop with influencers — finding that the intensity of parasocial bonds significantly predicted brand loyalty and purchase behaviour. This relational dimension of social proof suggests that it operates not merely through informational signals (e.g., likes and shares) but through affective pathways rooted in follower–influencer identification.

Table 2: Synthesis of Antecedent Evidence from Secondary Sources

Antecedent	Evidence from Secondary Sources	Effect on Purchase Intention
Influencer Credibility	Kapitan & Silvera (2016); Ohanian (1990); Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) Strong positive effect; most consistently supported antecedent across literature	
Perceived Authenticity	Ki & Kim (2019); Audrezet et al. (2020); ASCI (2023)	Significant positive effect; stronger for micro-influencers and niche categories
Content Quality	Lou & Yuan (2019); Daft & Lengel (1986); Influencer Marketing Hub (2023)	Positive mediating role; high-quality content amplifies credibility effects
Social Proof	De Veirman et al. (2017); Cialdini (1984); Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	Positive but curvilinear; optimal at moderate follower/engagement levels

Source: Compiled from secondary literature review (2008–2024)



5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The synthesis of secondary evidence yields several coherent and theoretically significant conclusions. First, the accumulated body of literature establishes with considerable consistency that influencer credibility is the most potent individual antecedent of consumer purchase intention. This finding is theoretically grounded in the Source Credibility Model (Hovland et al., 1953) and has been replicated across cultural contexts, product categories, and platform types. For marketing practitioners, this implies that influencer selection decisions should be governed primarily by credibility assessments — encompassing domain expertise, communication authenticity, and audience trust — rather than by reach metrics alone.

Second, perceived authenticity has emerged as a construct of increasing strategic importance, particularly in an environment characterised by rising consumer scepticism and regulatory attention. The ASCI (2023) finding that the majority of sponsored posts remain inadequately disclosed represents a systemic risk to the authenticity of influencer marketing as a practice. Brands that proactively invest in transparent, disclosure-compliant influencer partnerships are likely to accrue reputational and commercial advantages as consumer awareness of sponsored content conventions continues to grow.

Third, the evidence on content quality and social proof suggests that these constructs function as important amplifiers of the credibility and authenticity effects rather than as standalone drivers. High-quality content magnifies the persuasive impact of a credible influencer; social proof mechanisms — particularly at moderate levels — reinforce consumer confidence in purchase decisions. This implies a need for holistic campaign design that integrates influencer selection, content strategy, and community engagement within a coordinated framework.

From a theoretical standpoint, the review affirms the utility of the Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour as complementary explanatory frameworks for influencer marketing effects. It also identifies parasocial interaction (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) and advertising scepticism (Friestad & Wright, 1994) as promising theoretical extensions that future primary research should seek to incorporate.

6. CONCLUSION

This secondary data review has synthesised evidence from twenty-two published and institutional sources to examine the influence of influencer marketing on consumer purchase decisions. The review establishes that influencer credibility, perceived authenticity, content quality, and social proof collectively constitute a robust framework for understanding influencer marketing effectiveness. Credibility and authenticity emerge as the primary drivers of purchase intention, whilst content quality and social proof serve as critical supporting determinants.

The findings carry important implications for brand strategists, platform designers, and regulators alike. For practitioners, the evidence recommends a shift from reach-centric to credibility-centric influencer selection, an investment in authentic and high-quality content production, and a commitment to regulatory compliance in sponsorship disclosure. For regulators, the ASCI disclosure gap data suggest the need for more robust enforcement mechanisms and consumer education initiatives.

This review is necessarily limited by the scope and representativeness of the secondary sources consulted. Future research should employ primary data collection — through structured surveys, experiments, or longitudinal tracking studies — to validate and extend the integrative model proposed herein, and to examine moderating variables such as product category, platform type, cultural context, and influencer–follower congruence.

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