

A Study on Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Buying Behaviour of Consumer

Atharv S. Sonar¹, Dr. S. A. Chourasia²

Author 1- PG student- Department of Business Administration, SIPNA C.O.E.T., Amravati, Maharashtra, India

Author 2- Assistant Professor- Department of Business Administration, SIPNA C.O.E.T., Amravati, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT: The increasing use of social media platforms has transformed traditional marketing approaches, leading to the rapid growth of social media influencer marketing. Influencer marketing leverages the credibility, authenticity, and engagement of social media personalities to influence consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. This study examines the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior in the Indian context, with specific focus on influencer trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, and brand influencer alignment. The research adopts a descriptive and quantitative research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 30 - 50 active social media users within the young age group. Secondary data were obtained from academic journals, industry reports, and relevant digital marketing literature. The study is supported by theoretical frameworks such as Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which explain the persuasive role of influencers in shaping consumer behavior. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention. Respondents showed higher trust and buying inclination toward products promoted by influencers perceived as honest, relatable, and knowledgeable. The study also highlights that micro and nano influencers generate stronger engagement and credibility among consumers. The research concludes that social media influencer marketing is an effective strategic tool for building consumer trust, enhancing brand awareness, and influencing purchase decisions in the digital marketplace. The research offers practical insights for marketers in selecting suitable influencers, designing ethical campaigns, and optimizing digital marketing strategies. It also contributes academically by bridging traditional consumer behavior theories with emerging

influencer- driven marketing practices in India's evolving digital ecosystem.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behavior, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention, Consumer Trust, Digital Marketing, Brand Engagement.

INTRODUCTION: In the contemporary digital era, marketing has undergone a significant transformation driven by rapid technological advancements and the widespread adoption of social media platforms. Traditional marketing methods such as television advertisements, print media, and outdoor promotions are increasingly being complemented and in many cases replaced by digital marketing strategies that emphasize interaction, personalization, and engagement. Among these emerging strategies, social media influencer marketing has gained considerable prominence as an effective tool for influencing consumer behavior.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have reshaped the way consumers communicate, seek information, and make purchasing decisions. Influencers individuals who have built credibility, expertise, and loyal followings on social media play a crucial role in shaping opinions and consumer preferences. Unlike conventional celebrity endorsements, social media influencers are perceived as more relatable and authentic, allowing them to establish emotional connections with their audience. Among these emerging strategies, social media influencer marketing has evolved as one of the most impactful and dynamic forms of brand communication, significantly influencing consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. This authenticity enhances trust, making influencer recommendations a powerful form of digital word of mouth communication.

Influencer marketing is not an entirely new concept; historically, brands have relied on celebrities

and public figures to promote products. However, the rise of social media has democratized influence, enabling ordinary individuals with niche expertise to emerge as opinion leaders. These influencers bridge the gap between brands and consumers by creating engaging, informative, and experience-based content that directly impacts purchase intentions.

In the Indian context, influencer marketing has experienced rapid growth due to increasing internet penetration, affordable data services, and a young, digitally active population. Indian consumers particularly young age consumers actively follow influencers in categories such as fashion, beauty, technology, fitness, food, and lifestyle. Their purchasing decisions are significantly shaped by influencer credibility, transparency, engagement levels, and perceived brand alignment. Understanding the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior is therefore essential for marketers and businesses. This study aims to analyze how influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, and engagement influence consumer purchase decisions, while also examining the effectiveness and ethical considerations of influencer marketing in India's evolving digital marketplace.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: The review of literature provides the academic foundation for understanding the concept of social media influencer marketing and its impact on consumer buying behavior. It examines previous studies, theories, and empirical findings related to influencer credibility, consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intention.

The emergence of social media influencer marketing has significantly reshaped the landscape of digital marketing by introducing a more personalized and trust-based form of brand communication. Early work by **Freberg et al. (2011)** conceptualized social media influencers as credible opinion leaders whose persuasive power stems from relatability, authenticity, and consistent engagement rather than traditional celebrity status. This marked a shift from mass-media persuasion to relationship-driven influence.

Several studies emphasize the importance of credibility and authenticity in influencer effectiveness. **Smith and Yang (2017)** found that consumer confidence in influencers is strongly influenced by perceived honesty and expertise. Similarly, **Hsu and Tsou (2018)** demonstrated that trustworthiness and parasocial

interaction significantly enhance purchase intention, indicating that emotional bonds mediate the influencer–consumer relationship. Extending this perspective, **Lou and Yuan (2019)** highlighted that high-value content informative, entertaining, and relevant strengthens consumer trust, while overt commercialization weakens persuasive impact.

Research has also examined ethical and strategic dimensions of influencer marketing. **Boerman et al. (2020)** revealed that sponsorship disclosures increase transparency but may reduce persuasion if content appears excessively promotional. **Belanche et al. (2021)** further showed that perceived influencer–brand fit enhances authenticity and positive brand attitudes, reinforcing the importance of strategic alignment.

In the Indian context, **Naidu and Agrawal (2013)** identified early evidence of social media's influence on youth consumer behavior. Subsequent studies by **Dutta and Bhattacharya (2023)** and **Kumar and Tripathi (2021)** confirmed that influencer trust, engagement, and relatability significantly shape purchase decisions. **Sahaf and Nazir (2024)** find that influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising in persuading consumers, particularly when targeting segmented audiences through interactive multimedia content.

Overall, existing literature establishes that social media influencer marketing positively influences consumer buying behavior through trust, authenticity, engagement, and emotional connection. However, variations across demographics and ethical challenges indicate the need for continued research, particularly within emerging digital markets such as India.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. Social media influencer marketing has emerged as a prominent digital marketing strategy, enabling brands to promote products and services through influencers who possess credibility, relatability, and strong audience engagement. In India, brands increasingly collaborate with influencers to build brand awareness, trust, and customer engagement, particularly among young and digitally active consumers.

Despite its growing popularity, there remains uncertainty regarding the actual effectiveness of social media influencer marketing in influencing consumer buying behavior. While influencers generate high levels of visibility and engagement, it is unclear whether these interactions consistently translate into purchase intentions and actual buying decisions. Additionally,

concerns related to influencer credibility, authenticity, transparency of sponsored content, and ethical disclosures raise questions about consumer trust.

Consumers today are more informed and cautious, often comparing influencer recommendations with alternative information sources such as online reviews and peer opinions. Moreover, variations in influencer type, content quality, and level of engagement may lead to differing impacts on consumer behavior. As a result, marketers face challenges in identifying which influencer attributes and strategies most effectively influence purchase decisions.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to examine to what extent social media influencer marketing affects consumer buying behavior, and to identify the key factors such as influencer trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility, and engagement that significantly influence consumers' purchase decisions in the Indian digital marketplace.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The present study has been undertaken to examine the growing significance of social media influencer marketing and its influence on consumer buying behavior in the contemporary digital environment. With the increasing use of social media platforms by consumers and marketers alike, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful promotional tool. In this context, the study aims to achieve the following objectives in detail:

1. **To study the impact of social media influencer marketing on the buying behavior of consumers:** -The primary objective of this study is to analyze how social media influencer marketing affects the buying behavior of consumers. This includes understanding the extent to which influencer-generated content influences consumers' awareness of products and brands, shapes their attitudes, and ultimately impacts their purchase decisions. The study seeks to examine whether exposure to influencer endorsements motivates consumers to try new products, develop brand preferences, or change their purchasing patterns. It also focuses on identifying how influencer promotions affect various stages of the consumer decision-making process, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and post-purchase behavior.

2. **To examine the level of consumer trust in social media influencers and its influence on purchasing decisions:** - Another important objective of the study is to examine the degree of trust consumers place in social media influencers. Trust is a critical factor in influencer marketing, as consumers are more likely to

act on recommendations from influencers they perceive as honest, knowledgeable, and authentic. This objective aims to analyze how influencer credibility, transparency in sponsored content, expertise, and consistency contribute to building consumer trust. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand how this trust influences consumers' willingness to rely on influencer recommendations while making purchase decisions and whether trust enhances purchase intention and brand loyalty.

3. **To identify and analyze effective strategies adopted by brands to build genuine connections with consumers through social media influencer marketing:** - This objective focuses on identifying the various strategies used by brands and influencers to establish meaningful and long-term relationships with consumers. It aims to analyze factors such as influencer-brand fit, content quality, storytelling techniques, engagement practices, and platform selection that help brands connect emotionally with their target audience. The study also examines how interactive content, regular engagement, and relatable messaging contribute to strengthening consumer-brand relationships.

4. **To suggest best practices for brands to implement social media influencer marketing in an ethical and effective manner:** - The final objective of the study is to provide practical suggestions and recommendations for brands to adopt influencer marketing in a responsible, ethical, and effective way. Based on the findings of the study, this objective emphasizes the importance of transparency in sponsored content, ethical disclosure practices, careful selection of influencers, and maintaining authenticity in promotional messages. The study also aims to suggest best practices that help brands build long-term consumer trust while avoiding misleading or deceptive promotional tactics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed in Google Forms and circulated among respondents who actively use social media platforms and follow influencers. The questionnaire included demographic questions and statements measured on a five-point Likert scale to assess consumer perceptions regarding influencer credibility, trust, engagement, and purchase behavior.

The study used a convenience sampling method, and data were collected from 30 to 50 respondents representing different age groups, occupations, and income levels within the Indian context. Secondary data were collected from research journals, academic articles, books, websites, and previous studies related to social media influencer marketing.

The collected data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentage analysis, charts, and tables to interpret consumer responses. The results obtained from the analysis were used to draw conclusions and to provide suggestions for effective and ethical influencer marketing practices.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:The primary data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms, and responses were obtained from 30-50 respondents. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and descriptive interpretation to understand the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic data reveal that a majority of respondents belong to the young age group, indicating that young consumers are more actively engaged with social media platforms. Most respondents are students, followed by working individuals, suggesting that influencer marketing is particularly influential among the younger and academically active population. The average social media usage among respondents ranges between 3-4 hours per day, highlighting high exposure to influencer content.

Social Media Usage and Influencer Awareness

The analysis shows that most respondents regularly use social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube and actively follow social media influencers. A significant number of respondents indicated that they frequently watch influencer content for product information, reviews, and recommendations. This suggests that influencers play an important role in spreading product awareness and shaping consumer opinions.

Influencer Credibility and Trust

Data interpretation indicates that a majority of respondents agree that influencers appear knowledgeable and relatable. Trust in influencers was found to be moderate to high, especially when influencers provide honest reviews and clearly disclose paid partnerships. Responses to the question on sponsorship disclosure show that transparency increases trust among consumers,

confirming the importance of ethical influencer marketing practices.

Impact on Buying Behavior

The analysis reveals that many respondents have purchased products after seeing them promoted by influencers, indicating a positive influence on buying behavior. Influencer recommendations were found to increase purchase intention, although several respondents reported comparing influencer suggestions with online reviews before making a final decision. This reflects a rational and informed buying approach among consumers.

Comparison with Traditional Advertising

Most respondents perceive influencer marketing as more relatable and engaging than traditional advertising methods. Influencer content was found to create stronger emotional connections, leading to better brand recall and interest.

Overall Interpretation

Overall, the data clearly indicate that social media influencer marketing has a positive impact on consumer buying behavior, particularly among young consumers. Factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and transparency significantly influence purchase decisions. However, consumers remain cautious and often verify influencer recommendations through additional information sources before purchasing. The findings from secondary data strongly support the results obtained from the primary data. The combined analysis of primary and secondary data confirms that social media influencer marketing significantly influences consumer buying behavior.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: The analysis of both primary and secondary data reveals that social media influencer marketing has a considerable impact on consumer buying behavior, particularly among young and digitally active consumers. The primary data indicate that a majority of respondents belong to the young age group and spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. This high level of social media usage increases exposure to influencer content and enhances its effectiveness as a marketing tool.

The findings show that most respondents actively follow social media influencers and frequently view influencer content for product information, reviews, and recommendations. Influencer marketing was found to play an important role in increasing brand awareness and shaping consumer attitudes. Many respondents agreed that influencer promotions help them discover new

products and develop interest in brands. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Hsu and Tsou (2018) and Lou and Yuan (2019), which highlighted the importance of influencer credibility and content value in influencing purchase intention.

Trust emerged as a key determinant of consumer buying behavior. The study found that consumers tend to trust influencers who are perceived as authentic, knowledgeable, and transparent in their promotional activities. Disclosure of paid partnerships was observed to increase consumer trust, supporting the findings of Boerman et al. (2020), who emphasized the role of ethical transparency in influencer marketing. The findings further reveal that influencer marketing is perceived as more relatable and engaging than traditional advertising methods. Engagement activities such as likes, comments, shares, and interactions strengthen the influencer–consumer relationship and positively influence purchase intention. This supports the conclusions of Singh and Sharma (2022) and Tanwar (2021), who found that consumer engagement plays a mediating role between influencer content and buying behavior.

Overall, the findings and discussion confirm that social media influencer marketing positively influences consumer buying behavior through trust, authenticity, and engagement. However, its effectiveness depends on ethical practices, credible influencer selection, and meaningful consumer interaction, highlighting the need for transparent and consumer-focused influencer marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION: The present study concludes that social media influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful and effective digital marketing strategy that significantly influences consumer buying behavior, particularly among young and digitally active consumers. The findings indicate that influencers play an important role in creating product awareness, shaping brand perceptions, and influencing purchase intentions through their content on social media platforms.

The study highlights that influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement are the most important factors affecting consumer trust. Consumers are more likely to rely on influencer recommendations when influencers are perceived as honest, knowledgeable, and transparent about sponsored content. Ethical practices such as proper disclosure of paid partnerships were found to strengthen consumer confidence and credibility.

However, the study also reveals that consumers are becoming increasingly cautious and informed. While

influencer promotions positively affect buying behavior, many consumers compare influencer recommendations with online reviews and peer opinions before making final purchasing decisions. Overall, the study emphasizes that brands must adopt ethical, transparent, and consumer-focused influencer marketing strategies to build long-term trust, enhance brand loyalty, and achieve sustainable marketing success.

SUGGESTIONS: Based on the findings of the study, it is suggested that brands should carefully select social media influencers who are credible, authentic, and relevant to their target audience rather than focusing only on the number of followers. Collaborating with influencers whose values and content style align with the brand can help build stronger consumer trust and improve campaign effectiveness. Influencers should maintain transparency by clearly disclosing sponsored content and paid partnerships. Ethical disclosure practices enhance credibility and positively influence consumer trust. Brands and influencers are encouraged to focus on creating high-quality, informative, and engaging content such as product reviews, tutorials, and real-life experiences instead of overly promotional messages.

Finally, future research can be conducted with a larger and more diverse sample size to gain deeper insights into consumer buying behavior and the long-term impact of influencer marketing.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY: Despite careful planning and execution, the present study has certain limitations. The sample size used for the study is relatively small and confined to a limited number of respondents, which may restrict the generalization of the findings to a broader population. The study primarily focuses on young and digitally active consumers; therefore, the views of older age groups may not be adequately represented.

The data collected are based on self-reported responses obtained through a questionnaire, which may be subject to personal bias, misunderstanding of questions, or inaccurate responses. The study is confined to a specific time period, and consumer perceptions of influencer marketing may change over time due to evolving social media trends and platform algorithms. Furthermore, the research focuses mainly on selected social media platforms and does not cover all emerging platforms.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:-**1. Influence of Emerging Platforms and Formats**

Focus: Explore the role of newer platforms (e.g., TikTok, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp Communities) and content formats (e.g., live streaming, podcasts, AR/VR) in influencer marketing.

Rationale: The study primarily focuses on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Emerging platforms may engage different demographics and influence behavior differently.

2. Cross-Cultural and Regional Comparisons

Focus: Compare influencer marketing effectiveness across different Indian regions (North vs. South, urban vs. rural) and cultural contexts.

Rationale: India's diversity means that regional languages, values, and media consumption habits may significantly moderate influencer impact.

3. Ethical and Regulatory Compliance in Influencer Marketing

Focus: Analyze consumer awareness and response to disclosure norms (e.g., ASCI guidelines), and how transparency affects credibility and purchase intent.

Rationale: As regulations evolve, understanding consumer sensitivity to ethical marketing practices is crucial for brand strategy.

4. Psychological and Emotional Drivers

Focus: Investigate deeper psychological constructs such as emotional attachment, identity projection, and parasocial relationships in influencer marketing.

Rationale: Beyond trust and credibility, emotional and psychological factors may drive long-term brand loyalty and advocacy.

5. Micro- vs. Nano-Influencers in Rural and Tier 2/3 Markets

Focus: Examine the effectiveness of micro- and nano-influencers in smaller cities and rural India, where digital penetration is growing.

Rationale: These influencers may have stronger local credibility and engagement, offering targeted reach for regional brands.

6. Integration of AI and Influencer Marketing

Focus: Investigate how AI tools (e.g., for influencer selection, content personalization, performance tracking) are reshaping influencer marketing strategies.

Rationale: AI is increasingly used to optimize campaigns, but its impact on authenticity and consumer trust is under-researched.

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