

Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Buying Decisions: A Study of Youth in India

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Abstract

This paper looks at how social media influencers impact the consumer purchase behaviour, particularly the youthful consumers. In the age of the digital world, young buyers are extremely exposed to the content created by influencers through Instagram, YouTube, and other social media outlets, which in turn play an influential role in the purchasing behavior. The research is to identify the impact of the influencer characteristics to youth purchasing behaviour, including credibility, trust, emotional connection, and engagement. Quantitative research methodology is taken, and a structured questionnaire is used to get the primary data among the youths. The data is analyzed with the help of smart pls tools that test the proposed objectives. The research results emphasize the expanding role of social media influencers in the formation of consumer preferences in the youth and give practical recommendations to marketers and brands to create a successful digital marketing strategy.

Keywords

Social Media Influencers, Purchase Intention, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Youth Consumers.

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media is become a part of everyday life. Nearly every day, people engage with social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok. In the past, these platforms were solely used for amusement or for staying in touch with loved ones. Their function has evolved over time. Today, people use social media to find information, follow the fashion, and do research before buying brands and goods. Many consumers nowadays use online content in making their product decisions. People generally read online reviews, videos and opinions and make any kind of purchase. It is claimed that social media has become an increasingly significant source of information (Dhingra, 2023). to decision-makers in the consumer market. When other people tell their observations or observe other people. consumers are more confident, discussing their real experience with the products. Days are gone when the traditional methods of advertising such as television commercials and newspaper ads were used. because customer behavior has changed and this makes them ineffective as before. A lot of individuals don't believe advertisements and forget it. Consequently, companies have

started employing new technologies. marketing tactics to reach the customers. One of the influencer marketing is on social media. the most fashionable tactics used nowadays. Social media influencers are people who post content regularly and who have subscribers who are. they are interested in what they say. Influencer marketing appears more relatable and compared to ordinary advertisements. intimate. The influencers do not push products but display the products they are using. use on a regular basis. Influencers are trusted by consumers as per the study of (Lou and Yuan, 2019). and brands in their reputable, entertaining and educative content. Additionally, this trust plays a very important role in the decision making of consumers in buying. Most of the studies suggest that one of the most important components of influencer marketing. is the credibility of the influencers. As per a study conducted by (Lim et al., 2017), purchase intention is affected when influencer product and source credibility are consistent with the consumers. mindset. Similarly, (Al Kurdi et al., 2022) discover that the amount of purchase made by consumers is significantly. influenced by credibility of the influencer. Influencers have a serious effect on customers. when they are perceived as learned, respectable and upright. The emotional aspect is also a major aspect in influencer marketing. Influencers reach out to their followers through stories, live sessions and comments. The followers recognize the influencer as a close person in relation to his or her contact. According to Lou, (2022) Such a relationship is parasocial whereby followers are emotionally manipulated by the influencer and feel a part of it even though the relationship is one-sided. The This emotional connection helps in strengthening the relationship in terms of trust and involvement. The use of influencer marketing in the travel, fashion, cosmetics, electronics, health, and has become common lifestyle industries. A study conducted by (Zak and Hasprova, 2020) indicates that the influence of influencers is a. great influence on customers in the case of technology, clothes, cosmetics and footwear. The Gen Z consumers are more influenced by influencers because they have more social media Activity.

According to research carried out by (Sun et al., 2022) and (Shi, 2024), Gen G consumers trust influencers more than celebrities because they are more approachable and genuine.

1.2 Research Problem

Influencer marketing is expanding quickly, yet it's unclear exactly how influencers affect customer behavior. The majority of research focuses on the intention to buy. However, actual purchasing behavior is not necessarily the same as purchase intention. Although consumers may express interest in a product, this desire may not always result in a purchase.

The primary emphasis of the research conducted by (Jamil et al., 2024) and (Lim et al., 2017) was consumer attitudes and purchasing intention. However, research on actual purchasing habits is few. An significant argument made by (Kanwar and Huang, 2022) is that decision-making is not directly influenced by influencers. Influencers first establish a parasocial connection and emotional bond before influencing consumer behavior. We can conclude that influencer marketing is a complicated process based on this procedure.

The main problem is that foreign nations are the focus of the majority of influencer marketing study. (Haque et al., 2023) conducted study on Pakistan, (Sun et al., 2022) on Chinese consumers, and (Fouroughi et al., 2023) on Instagram users in Iran. Because consumer behavior varies depending on culture and societal values, research from other countries cannot be straightaway applied to Indian consumers.

Aside from this, influencer qualities have been studied independently in previous study. (Taillon et al., 2020) investigate likability and emotional intimacy, while Han and (Balabanis, 2024) concentrated on parasocial interaction and believability. Studies that examine all of these variables collectively are, nevertheless, comparatively rare.

Influencer kinds also lead to misunderstandings in literature. While (Borges-Tiago et al., 2023) stated that micro influencers are perceived as more trustworthy and mega influencers produce more interaction, (Jamil et al., 2024) claim that mega influencers have greater credibility. Because of this, it is challenging for marketers to choose influencers.

There are also insufficient city-level studies in India. Urban areas like Delhi use social media extensively and have increased exposure to influencers, yet there aren't many research in this area. This led to the emergence of the research problem.

1.3 Novelty and Contribution of the Study

This study's primary contribution focuses on the Indian context, particularly Delhi consumers. Due to the fact that Delhi is a significant marketplace where influencer marketing is frequently employed, there is a dearth of scholarly study.

Buying intention is not the only important element of the study. It explores areas of customer. purchasing behavior, emotional attachment, trust and involvement. While (Lou and Yuan, 2019) and (Al Kurdi et al., 2022) was focused on trust and credibility, the present research is focused on the. elements more comprehensively

1.4 Contemporary Relevance of the Study

The role of influencer marketing is growing. According to Dhingra (2023), the most of the customers use word-of-mouth or reviews. This is also the word-of-mouth of this. influencer. There are also issues of wellbeing and ethics that are arising. Research done by Powell and Ping (2024) and Alves de Castro et al. (2021) show that the influencers influence the way of life. mental health, and body image. Unreported partnerships According to Putri and Setiwan (2025), unreported partnerships. and fake followers destroy credibility among the clients. Thanks to this, we consider influencer marketing as a social and not a promotional influence. tool.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

- It is also restricted to youth consumers (18-30-years-old), and thus the results might not be applicable generalized to other age groups.
- The study is grounded on the primary data gathered with the help of a questionnaire, which relies on self-report responses, and can be subject to bias in responding.
- Only a few factors are chosen like credibility of the influencer, trust, emotional attachment and engagement are taken into consideration, and other variables that influence it are not addressed.
- This research is limited to a particular sample and locality, which can restrict the. externalization of the findings

Chapter-2

Literature Review

Jamil, Qayyum, Hassan and Khan (2024) implement a research based on the effects of social media influencers on consumer well-being and purchase intentions according to tik Tok perspective. Do research on the role of social media influencers in influencing consumer attitudes on purchase decisions. And use the ELM model (elaboration likelihood model) which is essentially concerned with three attributes of the influencer: quality of arguments, credibility of source and benevolence. In addition, this research also indicates that in cases where the influencer puts himself squarely and persuasively, they look trustworthy and knowledgeable. . The research also compares the mega and macro influencers such as mega (1 million+ followers) and macro influencers (100000). Findings indicate that mega influencers are more likely to make stronger. credibility In his research, Zak and Hasprova (2020) discovered that the role of influencer on social media has an effect. consumer behavior by his strong personality, knowledge, likability or lifestyle. In the survey they survey 430 individuals. The study found that influencers are effective in particular areas, like in clothing, shoes, cosmetics, laptops, phones, and certain services.

Overall on this research conclude that influencer marketing is effective when the influencer identity and his product are strong and the consumer or follower trusts the influencer honesty and expertise. Like poor product influencer alignment or negative influencer reputation can harm the brand and consumer trust. So making careful selection is important.

Dhingra's (2023) study shows how social media has influenced consumer behavior and purchasing preferences in the digital era. In this study they highlighted the shows that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have become an integral part of. And social media is part of daily life. IA plays a part of daily life. plays a major role in consumer searches for information and evaluation of products. And consumer evaluation of products. On social media the brands provide consumers to evaluate their evaluation of products. consumers the opportunity to compare the product

with other products, seek consumers the opportunity to seek products, seek recommendations for products, and also get time to review before the purchasing decision.

In this study they find that most of the consumers believe in, like, word-of-mouth recommendations, and around 70% trust online reviews, even from unknown users.

Lim, Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) in this study find how social media influencers control or shape the consumer attitude and purchase intention related to the product or services.

They are focused on 4 influencer characteristics: 1. source credibility 2. Product match-up 3. Meaning transfer. So in this study they used 200 respondents (mostly young social media users) and analyzed the data using **PLS-SEM** to examine the relationship between influencer features and purchasing behavior.

Kanwar and Huang's (2022) research on Exploring the impact of social media influencers on customers' purchase intention: A sequential mediation model in the Taiwan context. In this study he collected data from 384 responses from the social media users in Taiwan. In his research, he finds that influencers do not directly increase the purchase intention; instead, their influence works indirectly, like by creating an emotional or one-sided friendship bond between follower and influencer.

Gentile and Persson (2022) study in his research of how social media influencers shape different stages of the consumer buying decision process. The influencers are continuously visible on social media platforms. So they influence the consumer's thinking and his buying decision.

female Instagram users aged between 20 and 30 years to basically understand the consumer's own perspective from being influenced by SMI

He finds 4 key factors that affect consumer decision-making: 1. Influencer characteristics (like personality, relatability, and communication style) 2. Trust (followers think the influencers are honest, transparent, and consistent in their content and do less paid promotion) 3. Perceived risk (regarding the product quality and value) 4. Internal and external drivers (like internal self-image, desire for improvement, and personal identity and external like social trends, peer opinions, and brand visibility).

Alves et al. (2021) The paper does a thorough evaluation of the research on the effects of social media influencers on the identity, behavior, and consumption habits of teenagers. It concludes that because of their high social media usage and psychological susceptibility, teenagers are greatly impacted by SMIs. Alcohol intake, eating habits, body image, and mental health are all impacted by SMIs. Gen Z is the most affected generation. The article brings to the fore some important issues. research gaps with regard to the vulnerability of adolescents, risky content of influencers, and the absence of restrictions. Regarding methodology, the authors merely utilized secondary information in form of data. quality web sources, reports, and peer-reviewed articles. Al Kurdi et al. (2022), Social media usage increased during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the creators with large fan base began shaping the opinion, attitudes and consumers. purchase decisions. Also, influencer marketing establishes an effective personal relationship with. customers unlike in traditional advertising. It has been found that unlike conventional advertising, influencers attract. subscribers or customers through the sharing of personal experiences, product reviews and lifestyle content. The most important component is credibility. Credibility refers to the level of trust of the consumers. influencers. Studies indicate that if the influencers are trustworthy, informed, and honest.

In general, social media influencers have an impact on customer purchases, and their credibility strengthens the relationship. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature because few studies have examined the mediating function of credibility, leaving room for more investigation.

Koay, K. Y., & Lim, W. M. (2025). In this study the social media influencer is an important marketing tool in the digital age. Influencers create content and build a strong relationship with followers. Because of this trust, influencers easily influence the consumer buying decision, especially online.

This study is based on self-congruence theory, which says that consumers prefer products and people that match their own personality, value, or self-image. In influencer marketing the self-congruence can happen. Mainly three ways:

1. Consumer influence congruence: when consumers feel that the influencer and his personality are the same
2. Consumer-product congruence: when consumers feel that the product style matches their style or class.
3. Influencer-product congruence: when the influencer and product both fit with each other

And the consumer influencer congruence does not lead to impulse buying. However, when they combine with wishful identification, like when a consumer also wants to become an influencer, that type of thing.

Sun, Y., Wang, R., Cao, D., & Lee, R. (2022). This study shows that social media influence plays an important role in shaping luxury fashion product consumption in Chinese Gen Z consumers. Gen Z are more active digitally, and before buying anything, they follow influencers, friends, and celebrities.

This study uses the social networking theory to explain how the different influences influence the buying decision of consumers. Social networks work on mainly two ideas: social connectedness (how close a relationship is) and network interactivity (interaction activity based on online activity). Based on this two-dimensional study, they are categorized into 4 groups: advertising, celebrities, opinion leaders, and friends.

Earlier research focused on celebrity, but results were inconsistent. Some studies showed celebrities influence buying decisions, and others suggested that opinion leaders are more powerful.

In a collective society like China, people trust recommendations from their friends and peers more than paid advertisements.

Overall the literature shows that different types of social media influencers influence consumers differently, and their relationships play an important role in them.

Powell, J., & Pring, T. (2024). Social media influencers play an important role in shaping the health behavior of especially young youth or users. Influencers regularly create content related to food, fitness, or body image health habits and their benefits. Which directly or indirectly influence or affect the consumer behavior.

Research shows that the influencer promoting the unhealthy food will raise children's calorie consumption. While the promotion of healthy food by influencers does not create much impact or have any positive effect.

The review highlighted that influencers play an important positive role in health campaigns. During covid-19 the influencer and the traditional media helped to make the people aware.

Overall the literature suggests that social media influencers have both positive and negative effects on health.

Jalali, S. S., & Khalid, H. B. (2021). Environmental problems like pollution, global warming, and waste disposal are becoming major concerns. From this situation some consumers are slowly shifting toward green consumption behavior, where the people start using the environmentally friendly product.

Recent studies said that social media, especially Instagram influencers, plays an important role in spreading green awareness. On Instagram, influencers are becoming opinion leaders, and their followers trust them and follow them too.

According to literature, the influencers use photo content, green concern, and green word of mouth (WOM) to shape the followers' green attitude. Because the visual content (photos/videos) is more appealing or impactful than the text content. So when the influencer uses an environmentally friendly lifestyle or product in their green awareness videos, then their followers develop a positive green attitude impact.

Studies show that when the influencer talks about personal green concerns for the environment. So their followers are also inspired to adopt the green behavior. And when the influencer talks about the green product and activities like green WOM, then the followers increase the green consumption.

The important thing to talk about in this literature is **perceived credibility**. If the followers think that influencer is trustworthy and reliable, then their green WOM impact on consumers is stronger.

Suuronen, A., Reinikainen, H., Borchers, N. S., & Strandberg, K. (2022) In previous studies social media influencers (SMIs) are used mainly for marketing and brand promotion. Because the influencer influences the purchase decision or

brand attitudes. But in recent years the influencers talk about political and social issues like elections, climate change, health, gender equality, etc.

The existing literature shows influencers as opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are those leaders who have expertise and have a network of people to shape their opinion. The influencer creates a regular parasocial relationship (emotional connection) or uses self-branding to build trust. For this reason the influencer talks on some topic, and their followers listen seriously.

This study of literature review talks about the important concept of “**political third spaces.**” This is a digital space that was originally nonpolitical (like lifestyle, entertainment, and travel), but the political discussions emerged automatically. And this space of political discussion influences political awareness and behavior.

They divide political topics into two categories.

1. Formal political topics—like political parties, policies, and institutions.
2. Lifestyle-based political topics—like health, climate change, consumer behavior, and gender equality.

Previous research suggests that the political discussions on social media are risky because the influencers get **negative comments, trolling, and online abuse.** For this reason, many influencers don’t want to talk about political topics and avoid them.

So overall, this literature indicates that the influencers are not only the marketers but also a new political communication channel. Which shapes the followers' political thinking.

Putri, L. W. B., & Setiawan, B. L. T. (2025) In this digital era, the rapid growth of e-commerce and, with this, the social media influencer has become an important marketing tool. Compared to traditional advertisement, the influencers are more authentic, relatable, and trustworthy, and then the consumers take their recommendations seriously.

Existing studies also highlight that the influencer marketing success does not only depend on the influencer but also depends on the **content strategy** (like storytelling, unboxing videos, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive posts.) It increases the consumer engagement.

However, the study also points out the challenges and ethical issues. Like undisclosed sponsorships, fake followers, and breaking the algorithmic bias of consumer trust. If the influencer doesn’t disclose the paid promotion, then in the long run the brand credibility reduces.

Overall the study discusses social media influencer effectiveness on e-commerce marketing. But their impact is only sustainable when credibility, content quality, and ethics are maintained.

Lou, C. (2022) In this study, talk about at the time of traditional media, the relationship between celebrities and audiences is a **parasocial relationship** (meaning only a one-sided connection, where audiences only see the celebrities and do not interact with them). But in the case of social media, the relationship is changed between the influencer and his followers.

Literature says that the influencers are not only the content creators but also become the opinion leaders. And the followers feel more connected and interactive. Followers do comment, ask questions, and even give suggestions sometimes on influencer content. And also the influencer does reply and give away to his followers.

And also the literature highlights that if the influencer discloses the sponsored post to their followers, they don’t always show negative reactions. In most cases trust becomes stronger because they think the influencer is honest and transparent with them.

Overall the existing study suggests influencer and follower relationships and challenges the traditional advertising theories.

In this work, Koay, Cheung, Soh and Teoh (2021) discuss the fact that social media influencers are an. high aspect of digital marketing. According to literature, the influencer affects the purchase. decision of the consumer. Available research predominantly dwells on the source credibility theory. And divide this into 3 parts: good character, beauty and competency. Another concept is discussed in this literature concerning materialism. Materialism means material success and happiness (possessions) are based on the brands and luxury goods. According to social comparison theory, the followers make a comparison of themselves to the influencer. When People who are materialistic would begin to emulate the influencer and purchase items the same way as him. The literature in general concludes that the credibility of the influencer has a positive influence on the consumer. behavior and the materialism factor plays a role in other cases to make the stronger. relationship.

In this research, Mueller, Kowalczyk, Taillon & Jones (2020) demonstrate the correlation between. influencers and followers in the aspect of proximity. The influencers are not explained by the author. not only the advertisers, but they are also human brands who establish emotional attachment to their. engages the audience via social media such as Instagram and YouTube. This study will analyze the 3 influencer traits, which include attractiveness, likeability, and. similarity- and their influence on the attitude of followers to influencers and purchase. intentions. The research was done in two phases. The initial exploratory qualitative research was conducted with the help of. open-ended questions to know why people subscribe to influencers. And a second qualitative The 201 respondents who were chosen to take part in the survey were surveyed through an online questionnaire. Data was analyzed path analysis and moderation testing. This paper has found that proximity is a major influencing factor in influencer marketing. Even if an influencer is not quite the same or pretty, an emotional attachment to the followers still may result to. positive consumer behavior.

Haque et al.(2023) This paper demonstrates the impact of social media influencers on the consumer purchase. Pakistan behavior of branded luxury fashion clothing. The researcher concentrated on various sources of influence such as mainstream celebrities in this study. Social circles, platforms, and micro-influencers, bloggers/vloggers, and social media platforms. Data was a sample of 123 Pakistani consumers collected with the help of online questionnaire and the analysis was performed. by PLS-SEM. The findings indicate that mainstream celebrities, bloggers, and micro-influencers do not have a direct one. influence on buying intention. But the social networks (peers/ friends) and social media. interaction largely has a bearing on the consumer buying decision. The study is restricted to the Pakistani and luxury fashion products having a small sample size. It also leaves out the influencer credibility or relationship factor. On the whole the research points out that trust in the social networks is more important than celebrity. popularity in Pakistan.

Koay, Cheung, Soh & Teoh (2021): The article explores the social media influencer Instagram and its impact on the social network. marketing operations have an effect on the online purchase behavior. And the study is founded on the stimulus. organism-response (S-O-R) in which influencer marketing activities are the stimuli and source. credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness). An online questionnaire was used to gather data on 273 users of Instagram in Malaysia. PLS-SEM was used to do the analysis. And according to the research findings, influencer marketing. activities have a positive influence on the three dimensions of credibility. However, attractiveness and The trustworthiness influences the impulse online buying in a significant positive way. In general, the research supports the fact that attractiveness and trustworthiness mediate the relationship. between influencer marketing and purchase decisions. This is to say influencers who appear. good-looking and truthful may have a great impact on the consumer decision. The sample is restricted to the Malaysian Instagram users and concentrated on the impulse buying behavior; it does not take into account other platforms such as YouTube or Tik Tok.

Foroughi, Iranmanesh, Nilashi, Ghobakhloo, Asadi & Khoshkam (2023): This paper analyses. the impact of social media influencers on the intention to purchase endorsed brands. The research had two variables: credibility of sources (trustworthiness, attractiveness)

The data of this research is gathered based on a survey of 429 Instagram users in Iran via online survey. And the researchers used a hybrid approach of PLS-SEM and fsQCA.

The research results show that credibility and content influence brand engagement and attitude and purchase intention. And the fsQCA research shows that attractiveness, entertainment value, and attitude are important conditions for high purchase intention.

Overall the study shows that the credibility and content quality strongly influence the consumer buying behavior.

Borges-Tiago, Santiago & Tiago (2023): This study compares the micro- and macro-influencers to understand who endorses brands on social media.

The research mainly focuses on how endorser credibility, brand credibility, customer involvement, and customer brand engagement influence brand equity.

In this study data was analyzed by PLS-SEM.

And the research findings show that the brand credibility strongly improves brand equity and engagement. and macro influencers create higher customer engagement, while the mega influencers are effective in improving brand equity.

The study is limited to Portugal, with two brands, and focuses mainly on brand equity and engagement.

Overall the result of this research supports that sometimes small influencers engage consumers more than the celebrities.

G. Mammadli (2021). Influencer marketing is still in its infancy in Azerbaijan, where the study was carried out. Influencer traits like attractiveness and reliability are the primary focus of this study.

The researcher uses SEM to analyze the data in this study.

Additionally, the study's findings demonstrate that influencers have a greater influence on purchasing decisions when they are trusted, not just when they are attractive or well-liked.

According to the study, consumers in Azerbaijan are more influenced by reliability and knowledge than by attractiveness.

This study only looks at Azerbaijan; it doesn't look at other products or platforms. The current study intends to investigate various consumer segments, regions, and cultures in the future.

Guptaa, M. (2021). This study explains the pandemic time. During lockdown people spent more time on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, which increased the exposure of influencer content, and influencers acted as virtual friends, which created trust and reliability.

And the research results show that most respondents frequently encountered influencer-promoted content, and many had purchased or considered purchasing products. And also the likeability, discount, and content style strongly influence the buying decision.

In pandemic times influencer marketing is more effective than traditional marketing.

And the research gap is that the sample size of the research is small and mainly uses the descriptive analysis. Future research can use larger samples, quantitative models, and different regions to better understand the influencer impact on consumer behavior.

Cheung, Leung, Yang, Koay & Chang (2021) the research uses the **uses and gratification theory (UGT)** and **observational learning theory (OLT)**. It explains that the consumer engages with the influencer to satisfy his motives, like entertainment, information seeking, social interaction, and reward.

The research findings show that entertainment, social interaction, and reward motivate contribution and content creation. The consumption and contribution significantly increase engagement with endorsed brands, whereas content creation does not have a strong effect.

The study concludes that the influencer creates brand engagement by satisfying the consumer's emotional and social needs rather than only providing information.

The research gap is that the study is only conducted in Malaysia and does not differentiate between types of influencers or platforms. The research focuses on engagement outcome, not directly on purchase intention or consumer buying behavior.

Future study can be done in a different region or country and examine how engagement leads to actual buying decisions, which is the present study's aim.

Sijabat et al. (2023), Results indicate that brand engagement and brand perception are positively and significantly impacted by social media influencers. Moreover, it was found that brand. Consumer brand engagement has a positive effect on perception. Most significantly, the brand partially mediates relationship between influencers and brand perception. engagement. It means that influencers enhance the perception of the brand by the consumers, first. increasing engagement.

Lou and Yuan (2019) This paper describes the process of influencer marketing as a means of consumer trust and affects buying behaviour. The authors discovered that the influencer content should be informative, whereby. and amusing, and believable, consumers will trust more the branded message. Influencer traits like trust, attractiveness and similarity are very strong boosters of trust. This trust then leads to increased brand awareness and intention to buy. In general, the research finds a conclusion that trust is the. not only influencer popularity but also the main reason why influencer marketing is effective.

Sari et al. (2021) This paper illustrates the influence of social media influencers in the travel sector. purchases. Influencers help in building positive brand and destination. perceptions, which augments the interest of travelers. Other products and other products can also be studied in the future. countries like India since this study limits itself to one tourist destination.

Lou and Yuan (2019) This article describes the real-life functionality of influencer marketing on social. media. The authors discovered that individuals rely on posts of influencers when the content is helpful. educative, and appears natural. Such characteristics of an influencer as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity with followers contribute to creation of this trust. When the followers have confidence in the branded post of the influencer, they recollect the brand better and are more ready to purchase the product. The study shows that it is not necessarily about the number of large followers, but the degree of reality and trustworthiness of the influencer. On balance, the role of trust in the consumer buying behaviour is the most significant.

Davlembayeva et al. (2024), This paper explains the effect of virtual influencers -computer. created personalities in advertising--on consumer behavior. The authors point out that people are the ones. react to these influencers on the basis of such emotions as warmth, credibility, empathy, and interaction. although these are not real people. The study proves that using a large survey, it is possible to demonstrate that. people tend to more readily believe the influence of virtual influencers and even take them into account. buying the products they promote when they feel like they can be trusted and relate to. The study uses social influence theory to describe consumer behavior and shows that virtual influencers must be a good one, and only when they are touching and close to human beings.

Bhardwaj et al. (2024), The researchers reviewed approximately 90 prior studies based on the adherence to the. PRISMA review approach to find out the role of influencers in determining consumer behaviour. Their research was based on such aspects as consumer attention, consumer decision-making, brand liking, self. expression, and purchase intention. The results indicate that influencers work well primarily. since viewers perceive them to be relatable, trustworthy and interesting, instead of direct. advertisers. The elements such as credibility, usefulness of information, among others, are also indicated in the review. emotional attachment, and the quality of shared content has a strong impact on consumer reaction. Comprehensively, the research gives a general insight into the concept of influencer marketing and offers helpful information. understandings of how and why influencers influence consumers in the present digital world.

Chavda & Chauhan (2024) This paper will describe the influence of social media influencers on consumer. behave with trust, genuineness and brand involvement. It shows that people trust influencers are more than regular advertisements since they are authentic and relatable, almost like a friend. This trust enhances brand liking and purchasing intention. The research is largely however founded on existing. literature and general discussion. It is not targeted at particular regions, platforms or consumer. groups, as these factors can be practically tested in the future by conducting research, particularly in such local markets as India.

Rolando (2024), as well as the recommendations of previous review-based research, offers a general. knowledge on how the social media influencers and associated trends affect consumer behaviour in the digital marketplace. Through a

review of a significant amount of existing research through structured review. techniques, these researches clarify that the impact of influencers is not limited to the intention to purchase but to other aspects as well. attention of consumers, admiration of brand, and self-expression. The results imply that influencer Trust, relatability, and engaging content are the major factors that drive effectiveness as opposed to direct. advertising strategies like conventional advertising. Moreover, some factors, including source, were taken into account. credibility, emotional appeal, usefulness of information and content quality are recurrently reiterated. determined as the main factors that affect consumer reactions. Another point that is brought out in the literature is that functions such as user-created content and in-app shopping ensure the process of purchasing is quicker and more. convenient for consumers. Nevertheless, majority of these studies are based on secondary data and are not. entail direct contact with consumers or country-specific analysis. As a result, there is a clear necessity of future study using primary data, especially in the developing markets like India, to gain more insight into the real-life consumer buying behaviour.

Shi, Z. (2024), writes about the great power of Chinese social media influencers who are usually very famous. referred to as KOLs, the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z consumers. The study explains that Instead, gen Z consumers believe in influencers who look natural, engaging, and relatable. than very polished celebrities. Influencers contribute to the development of trust, social, as stated in the paper. identity, and build emotional relationships with followers. They also have the effect of generating fear of. missing out (FOMO), which also stimulates the intention to purchase, especially in the case of live. live events and Internet sales promotion. In spite of these observations, the research is broad conceptual and founded on available literature. It does not presuppose primary data collection or testing of hypothesized relationships statistically. Thus, this can be enhanced in future studies. work through empirical means, i.e. surveys or experiments, and through extension of the analysis. to other markets, such as countries such as India, to have a more realistic overview of consumer buying behaviour

Ahmed, Islam & Ghaffar (2024) examined the role of social media influencers in developing brand loyalty by focusing on follower engagement and social attractiveness. The study explains that influencers by themselves do not automatically create loyal customers. Instead, loyalty tends to increase when followers feel actively engaged and perceive influencers as attractive, relatable, and easy to connect with. The research also highlights the importance of parasocial relationships, suggesting that these one-sided emotional connections can further strengthen brand loyalty in certain situations. Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations. It is restricted to the laptop industry in Pakistan, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research may extend this model to different product categories, countries, and consumer groups, particularly in emerging markets such as India, to gain broader insights into influencer-driven brand loyalty.

Chan, F. (2022) The paper will discuss the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer purchasing behaviour in the United Kingdom. The study aims at explaining the reason behind why influencers tend to be more convincing compared to conventional celebrities. It finds that influencers establish closer and more interactive relationships with their followers, which makes it less difficult to persuade them and more likely to trust them. Consumer loyalty is highly influenced by two attributes of influencers including personality traits (including closeness and interactivity) and content traits (including attractiveness and credibility). This loyalty in turn creates a tendency to copy the decisions taken by influencers resulting in an enhancement of purchase intention. The study also looks at demographic factors using the data of survey on UK consumers aged 18-65. Findings indicate that influencer content has a stronger impact on imitation behaviour with income level, although gender and education do not support these differences. On the whole, the paper demonstrates that influencer marketing is successful in this way due to the presence of parasocial bonds that lead to loyalty and trust between influencers and followers, increasing the chances of the latter adopting the products and lifestyles suggested to them.

Ferreira, M. F. (2023) The paper examines the effects of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer behaviour with a particular emphasis on purchase intention as a mediator variable. Located in the Portuguese environment, the article explores the group of students of higher education who are active users of influencers in social media. On the basis of a quantitative method and PLS-SEM analysis of the research results presented on the basis of 204 respondents, the main features of an influencer, trustworthiness, attractiveness, engagement, and expertise, are assessed, and their impact on purchase intention and consumer behaviour is evaluated. It can be seen that the impact of influencer characteristics are direct but at an indirect level, the impact is through purchase intention. In straightforward terms, the influence is initiated

first by the influencers on the consumers on what they want to purchase and the intention to make a purchase is then converted to actual purchase. Remarkably, attractiveness influencer traits had negative direct effects, which emphasize the point that excessive persuasion or overexposure could make influencer traits less effective. In general, the research can add to the body of literature on influencer marketing as it illuminates the idea that purchase intention serves as an important conduit between the influencer attributes and the actual consumer behavior, which can be of great help to brands that are crafting influencer-based strategies.

Cooley, D., & Parks-Yancy, R. (2019) The paper will explore the impact of social media on perceived information credibility and decision making among millennial consumers in the context of apparel, cosmetic and hair products. Based on the survey data of U.S college students, the study contrasts the plausibility of information presented by celebrities and social media influencers versus followers and individuals who know the person personally (IRL). The results also indicate that celebrities and influencers are successful in generating product awareness, but not the most reliable sources when it comes to making a purchase. Rather, millennials put the most trust in their friends and people they know personally, the role of social capital and trust-based relationships is important. The credibility of the platform also depends on the type of product since Instagram is more reliable to get an answer about fashion, whereas YouTube is used to learn about cosmetics and hair products because there is visual representation and perceived authenticity. In general, the research demonstrates that the phenomenon of influencer marketing will never replace personal credibility, and credibility, not popularity, is the driving force that leads to consumer decision-making.

Varghese, S., and Agrawal, M. (2021) This paper examines the impact of social media on consumer buying behaviour particularly in complex and high involvement purchases. The study relies on survey data of 200 urban consumers to implement the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) consumer decision-making model to determine the impact of social media content on each of the steps involved in the purchasing decision. The results indicate that some of the most prevalent platforms include Facebook and Instagram that in most cases offer convenient access to information, save time, and have peer reviews and recommendations. Discounts, promotions, visual adverts, and content created by influencers especially appeal to consumers, leading them into unplanned buying behaviors. The paper also indicates that advertisement frequency and visuals have greater influence on students and display of attractive products has more impact on salaried people. All in all, the findings affirm that social media is a strong force in influencing consumer perceptions, purchase behaviour, and expenditure, hence a relatively economical and interactive marketing communication tool that can be utilized by business organizations that aim at achieving stronger customer contact and sales improvement.

Chakala, A. (2022) The dissertation explores the impact social media influencers have on the purchase behaviour of Generation Z in India, which is a digitally native generation spending a considerable amount of time on social media platforms. The investigation is based on survey data of 200 members of Gen Z in India, analyzing how a particular set of credibility characteristics of an influencer, which include knowledge, relatability, helpfulness, confidence, and articulation, is associated with the establishment of trust, which in turn determines the purchasing decision. The results indicate that Gen Z actively buys the content of several influencers and continuously interacts with it. The influencers are viewed as opinion leaders that deliver genuine, pathos, and useful product knowledge. Trust is the most significant of all characteristics in terms of influencer recommendation translation into buying behaviour. New, trendy and fashionable, and emotionally striking products become easily bought in case the endorsement is given by the influencers that are trusted. On the whole, influencer marketing has proven to be an incredibly effective method of targeting Gen Z in India since an influencer has a dominant influence on attitudes, perceived risk, and direct purchase intentions and decisions.

Romadhoni et al.(2023) This paper discusses the effects of social media marketing (SMM) and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) on the purchasing decisions of consumers where the purchasing decision is mediated by purchase intention. As a target population, the researchers selected consumers of Zoya hijab products in Indonesia collecting survey data of 70 people and evaluating it with the help of PLS-SEM path analysis. The findings clearly indicate that social media marketing as well as the e-WOM have a direct and positive influence on making purchase decisions. More to the point, they have a significant impact on purchase intention which consequently results in actual purchasing decisions. The e-WOM is more effective than other, which means that consumers put a lot of confidence in online reviews, comments, and ratings. The results prove that the intention to make a purchase raises in case consumers often watch interesting

social media content and read positive reviews online, which finally translates into actual purchases. All in all, the research emphasizes the fact that purchase intention is an important bridging factor between digital marketing communication and ultimate consumer decision.

Subitha et al(2024) This study examines how social media influencers shape the buying behaviour of college students in Ernakulam district, Kerala, a region with high digital literacy and social media usage. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 100 college students through structured questionnaires. The findings show that social media influencers significantly affect students' purchase decisions, mainly through authenticity, credibility, relatability, and content relevance. Influencers are often perceived as trustworthy peers rather than traditional advertisers, which increases their persuasive power. Statistical analysis reveals a strong relationship between influencer exposure and purchase decisions, while the link between social media usage and product awareness is positive but weaker. The study also highlights gender-based differences and variations across influencer categories such as beauty, cooking, and lifestyle content. Importantly, students express growing ethical concerns, preferring influencers who clearly disclose sponsorships and promote honest content. Overall, the research emphasizes that ethical, culturally aligned, and content-driven influencer marketing is most effective in influencing young consumers' buying behaviour.

Javed et al (2022) This study investigates how digital influencers, especially fashion influencers on Instagram, shape consumer decision-making and content outreach using the Dual AISAS model. Based on data from 969 Instagram users in Pakistan, the research explains that influencers first capture attention through visually appealing content, which then builds interest, encourages information search, and finally leads to purchase action. Beyond buying behaviour, the study highlights an equally important outcome: content sharing. Consumers do not just buy products recommended by influencers; they also repost, comment, and share this content within their private and extended networks. This sharing behaviour activates friends, gains acceptance (likes and comments), and spreads information further, creating a strong ripple effect. The findings confirm that influencers play a dual role--as drivers of purchase decisions and as catalysts for content diffusion. Overall, the study shows that influencer marketing is powerful not only because it motivates purchases but also because it amplifies brand reach through consumer-driven sharing and engagement.

Nguyen, T. (2021) This bachelor's thesis investigates how social media influences the consumer purchasing decision process, focusing on the five classic stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Using a quantitative survey of 41 respondents in Finland, the study shows that social media plays its strongest role during the information search and alternative evaluation stages. Most respondents actively search for product information, reviews, and feedback on social media before making a purchase, and many change their initial preferences after reading online opinions. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram act as key sources of electronic word of mouth, making decision-making faster and easier for consumers. The findings also reveal that online reviews and customer feedback significantly shape trust and confidence in purchasing decisions. Overall, the study concludes that social media does not directly force consumers to buy but strongly guides and shapes their decisions by providing accessible, diverse, and experience-based information throughout the purchasing journey.

Liu et al (2023) This study examines how social media influencers trigger impulsive buying behaviour by applying the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Based on survey data from 500 social media users, the research explains that consumers process influencer content through two routes: the central route (focused on product value) and the peripheral route (focused on influencer reputation). The findings show that functional value (usefulness and quality) and emotional value (excitement and enjoyment) significantly lead to impulse purchases, while social value does not strongly motivate impulsive buying. On the influencer side, authenticity and influence positively affect impulsive buying behaviour, but expertise alone is not enough to trigger sudden purchases. In simple terms, consumers are more likely to buy impulsively when influencer recommendations feel genuine and emotionally appealing rather than overly technical. Overall, the study highlights that impulse buying on social media is driven more by feelings, trust, and authenticity than by rational evaluation, offering important insights for influencer marketing strategies.

Tiwari et al. (2024) This study explores the role of fashion influencers in shaping consumers' purchase intentions and examines how consumer attitudes help explain the overall impact of influencer marketing in the fashion industry. The

research is built on an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, where perceived trust is added to better understand consumer responses. Data were collected from 341 respondents across different regions of the country and analysed using direct path and mediation analysis techniques. The findings indicate that consumers' attitudes toward fashion influencers are positively influenced by perceived trust, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. However, perceived behavioural control does not show a direct relationship with purchase intention in the proposed model. Overall, the results confirm that consumer attitudes play an important role in influencing purchase intention, both directly and through partial mediation. The study further highlights that marketers and advertisers should recognise the growing importance of influencer marketing, particularly when promoting fashion products in emerging markets. By focusing on the Indian context, this research adds meaningful insights to existing literature by explaining both the direct influence on purchase intention and the mediating role of consumer attitudes in influencer marketing. and

Duan (2024) explored the role of social media influencers in generating different forms of consumer engagement, including comments and content sharing, rather than focusing only on likes. The study suggests that while influencers help capture initial attention, meaningful engagement depends more on content quality and the level of trust consumers place in the influencer. It was also observed that consumers are more likely to engage when the content is perceived as useful and when encouragement comes from their social circles. However, the study mainly concentrates on engagement outcomes and does not directly examine purchase behaviour. Additionally, as the research is limited to the Chinese market, future studies could extend this work by analysing actual buying decisions in other countries, such as India, to gain broader insights.

2.1 Impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviors

Social media influencers (SMIs) have a significant impact on consumer behavior in the current digital era. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have become commonplace in today's world. Influencers frequently post product reviews, firsthand accounts, and lifestyle content, which influences consumers' opinions of brands.

Numerous studies demonstrate that influencers influence consumer behavior by establishing credibility and trust. Customers are more likely to trust recommendations from influencers who are trustworthy, informed, and approachable. Customers' attitudes are influenced by this trust, which raises the likelihood of a purchase. Additionally, influencers build an emotional bond with their followers, which can help them feel more connected to their customers and increase their impact.

Influencers have an impact on brand engagement through likes, comments, and sharing, which subsequently enhances brand loyalty and perception.

In addition to promoting the product, influencers also serve as opinion leaders, content producers, relationship builders, and shapers of attitudes, trust, and engagement.

2.2.1 Influencer credibility & source characteristics

Social media influencers have an impact on customer purchases, and their credibility strengthens the relationship (Al Kurdi et al., 2022). Because when it comes to persuading consumers, reliability and knowledge are more crucial than beauty (Mammadli, G., 2021). Additionally, when influencer material is credible, amusing, and educational, consumers are more likely to trust the branded message (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This is because consumers are more likely to believe if the influencer is trustworthy, competent, or authentic (Han & Balabanis, 2024).

According to these findings, consumers react more favorably to influencers who are sincere and honest instead of to those who are overtly commercial. According to a number of academics, trustworthiness frequently acts as a mediator, enhancing the connection between consumer purchasing decisions and influencer exposure.

2.2.2 Parasocial interaction & Emotional bonding

The one-sided emotional bond in which followers feel a connection to the social media influencer is known as parasocial interaction. Therefore, the influencers' impact works indirectly by forging an emotional tie or a one-sided relationship rather than directly increasing purchase intentions (Kanwar and Huang, 2022). The followers feel more engaged and connected. According to Lou (2022), followers do leave comments, pose questions, and occasionally even offer suggestions on influencer content. The three characteristics of influencers—attractiveness, likeability, and similarity—have an impact on followers' attitudes about them and their intentions to make purchases. (Kowalczyk Taillon, Jones, & Mueller, 2020). how social media influencers use social attractiveness and follower engagement to foster brand loyalty (Ahmed, Islam & Ghaffar, 2024).

2.2.3 Platform-specific studies

Influencer marketing that is platform-specific is the subject of several studies. According to studies conducted on Instagram (Lim et al., 2017; Foroughi et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021), attractiveness and reliability have a significant impact on impulsive purchases. Tiktok-based research (Jamil et al., 2024). Emphasize the compelling clarity and brief form material. Studies on YouTube and other platforms (Gupta, 2021; Dhingra, 2023) highlight the value of reviews, narrative, and word-of-mouth. According to this research, platform features have a big impact on influencer effectiveness.

2.2.4 Type of influencers(micro/macro/mega/celebrity)

It is evident from the literature on influencer marketing that different influencers operate differently. Influencers have been divided into several categories by researchers, including micro, macro, mega, and celebrity influencers. These categories are mostly determined by the size, exposure, and audience relationships of the influencers. Numerous studies indicate that an influencer's effectiveness is influenced by both their audience connection and number of followers.

According to studies by Jamil et al. (2024) and Borges-Tiago et al. (2023), mega influencers have a strong brand image and credibility due to their widespread following. But occasionally, they are perceived as being overly commercial, which can diminish authenticity.

Macro influencers are regarded as a compromise between dependability and reach. Because followers have a personal connection to the influencer, researchers propose that they create more engagement than mega influence. Because of this, macro influencers are a good fit for brands that desire visibility and connection.

Micro influencers typically have a smaller but more devoted following. According to studies, people view them as more relatable, genuine, and trustworthy.

2.2.5 Engagement, brand & Loyalty Outcomes

Research indicates that social media influencers have a significant impact on brand management, brand perception, and brand loyalty in addition to influencing consumer purchasing decisions. According to the majority of research, engagement—likes, comments, and sharing—is how influencers first have an impact.

According to a study by Sijabat et al. (2023), social media influencers greatly boost brand engagement. This indicates that interaction serves as a link between the brand image and the influencer. In a similar vein, Cheung et al. (2021) discover that influencers engage consumers by meeting their emotional and social requirements as opposed to merely providing knowledge. Additionally, Gu and Duan (2024) shown that high engagement is more dependent on content quality and trust than influencer popularity. Additionally, Ahmed et al. (2024) discover that a strong emotional bond with the influencer contributes to sustained brand loyalty.

2.2.6 cultural/ Regional context studies

Research demonstrates that social media influencers have different effects in different nations and cultures. Numerous factors, including cultural values, regional environment, and social norms, influence how consumers react to influencers.

According to Chinese studies (Sun et al., 2022; Shi, 2024), people in collectivist cultures rely more on recommendations from friends, peers, and members of their intimate social circles than on celebrities or paid influencers. Influencers are more successful when they have social connections and engage with their followers.

Studies conducted in Pakistan (Haque et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2024) demonstrate that social trust and peer pressure have a greater impact on consumer decision-making than celebrity fame.

Research from Iran and Malaysia (Foroughi et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2021) demonstrates that while content quality and trustworthiness are crucial, the development of trust depends on cultural expectations. According to a study conducted in Europe (Gentile & Persson, 2022), perceived risk and transparency are crucial factors. All things considered, these studies indicate that the results of influencer marketing fluctuate depending on the location. In order to comprehend the industry, nation and city-specific studies are crucial.

2.2.7 Ethical, social & wellbeing Impact

Recent literature show that the social media influencer not only limited to buying behavior but they strongly affect the ethical, social and wellbeing. Especially the adolescents and GENZ user are easily influenced by the influencer because they are emotionally more vulnerable and use heavy social media.

According to Powell & Pring (2024), influencers can affect a person's eating habits, lifestyle choices, mental health, and body image. Positive influencer material about health awareness and social causes can have positive benefits, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, if the influencer promotes unhealthy diet or unsanitary body standards that might impair wellbeing.

According to Putri and Setiawan's (2025) research, influencers who fail to reveal paid agreements may eventually lose the trust of their audience due to unreported sponsorships, phony followers, and deceptive promotions. Influencer marketing offers both advantages and disadvantages, according to research.

2.3 Synthesis of Literature

The literature review is lengthy and shows that the social media influencers are strong players in the modern digital world when it comes to consumer behaviour. As social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become more popular, influencers are no longer just content producers—they're opinion leaders with a distinct impact on consumer perceptions, attitudes, and decisions. In all of the studies analysed, it is clear that the psychological, social and behavioural processes combine to affect consumer reactions to influencer marketing.

One thing that has been evident in the literature is that credibility and trust are integral to the success of influencer marketing. Multiple research studies have highlighted the fact that consumers prefer to trust influencers who are knowledgeable, honest and authentic. Credibility adds to the credibility of information being communicated and trust increases consumer trust in recommendations made. All of these factors contribute to and build the backbone of what makes an influencer an effective influencer and play a significant role in influencing positive brand and product perceptions by consumers.

Along with credibility and trust, the engagement has been recognized as another key driver in consumer behaviour. Engagement is the amount of interaction that's happening between influencers and their followers via likes, comments, shares, and direct interactions. According to literature, engagement can positively impact the relationship between brand influencers and consumers, thereby improving brand awareness, recall, and purchase-related outcomes. Passive Advertisement vs Active Advertisement: Passive is the traditional method of advertising, whereas active is the influencer marketing that allows people to interact with the ad directly, making it more powerful in persuading consumers to make a decision.

Emotional connection, frequently referred to as 'parasocial interaction' is another important dimension identified in the literature. One of the ways it is defined is the sense of emotional connection that followers feel with influencers, feeling like they could relate to and be the same. There are some studies which suggest that emotional attachment is a means of achieving consumer involvement and loyalty, while others have mixed findings as to the direct effect of emotional attachment on consumers' purchase behaviour. According to some researchers, emotional connection is more of an intervening variable that doesn't necessarily result in consumer purchase actions, but rather trust and engagement.

In addition, conflicting results have been found in the literature about the effectiveness of the various types of influencers, whether micro, macro or mega influencers. Some studies found that the mega influencers may have higher credibility and extent of reach, while others found that the micro influencers have a higher level of authenticity and relatability leading to high engagement. This discrepancy is an ambiguity for marketers when deciding what type of influencers is the most effective, and it is important to study this phenomenon further empirically.

A prominent finding is that many of the already available studies are carried out in international settings such as China, Pakistan, Iran, and the European countries. The cultural, social and economic contexts of consumer behavior in different parts of the world might not be directly applicable for the Indian context, especially in the case of youth consumers, who have their own behavioral patterns and high usage of social media. Further, most studies are conducted mainly on purchase intention, and not on actual purchase behaviour, which reduces the applicability of the results of the study in practice, since intention doesn't always lead to actual purchasing.

Furthermore, the majority of previous studies have focused on specific factors related to influencers without addressing them comparatively and in combination. A fragmented approach only allows for an understanding of multiple characteristics of influencers acting separately, rather than together.

To summarize, although much research has already been conducted on the role of SMIs, there are some conceptual and empirical gaps that need to be addressed. The need of the hour is an all-encompassing study of the influencers, considering multiple factors related to them and analyzing the same in the context of real-world consumer behaviour and especially within the Indian youth segment. In the present study, the aim is to fill these gaps by using the empirical method and applying advanced statistical analysis for the combined effect of credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement.

2.4 Identification of Research Gap

Although there has been a rise in the literature of social media influencer marketing, there are a number of significant gaps that need to be filled through research.

- To begin with, most of the current literature has mainly concentrated on purchase intention as opposed to the actual consumer buying behaviour. Although purchase intention is the willingness or the probability of a consumer to purchase a product, it is not always related to actual purchasing behavior. This brings a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and reality of consumer behaviour and this is where the actual purchasing decisions come in, offering a much more realistic and applicable viewpoint.
- The available research has been carried out mostly in the international contexts such as China, Pakistan, Iran and other European regions. Cultural, social and economic factors have a very strong influence on the consumer behaviour and thus, the results of these regions cannot be directly applied to the Indian context. Specifically, the literature on the topic of Indian youth is rather scarce, as this is a highly active and influential group of social media users, particularly in cities such as Delhi.
- Much of the previous research has tended to analyse influencer-related factors (credibility, trust, emotional connection, and engagement) in isolation, instead of analysing them as a group, within a single framework. This disjointed method does not give an insight into how these factors interplay at the same time to affect consumer behaviour. It is necessary to have an extensive model that investigates the joint effect of these variables on consumer decision-making.
- The importance of emotional connection in influencing consumer behaviour is unclear and inconsistent in the literature. Although a number of studies indicate its significance in relationship development and purchase

intention, there is a lack of empirical research to test its direct influence on actual buying behaviour. This leaves a knowledge gap as to whether emotional bonding alone will be enough to motivate purchase choices.

- The literature demonstrates the existence of conflicting findings concerning the different types of influencers (micro, macro, and mega influencers), resulting in the ambiguity of determining which type works better. Nevertheless, little focus has been placed on the comprehension of the underlying behavioural factors, which may be more critical than the influencer size or popularity.

Lastly, Although the existing literature has a combination of conceptual and empirical studies, a significant proportion of the research is conceptual or review based with a relatively fewer number of studies that focus on empirical analysis using primary data and advanced statistical methods.

2.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media influencers on consumer buying behaviour among youth.

Specific Objectives:

1. To analyze the impact of **influencer credibility** on consumer buying behaviour
2. To examine the effect of **trust** on consumer purchase decisions
3. To evaluate the role of **emotional connection** in influencing buying behaviour
4. To assess the impact of **engagement** on consumer buying decisions
5. To study the **combined effect** of influencer-related factors on buying behaviour

To provide insights into influencer marketing effectiveness in the **Indian youth context**

2.6 Hypothesis Development

In accordance with the analysis of the literature and the determination of the gaps in research, the current study formulates hypotheses to investigate the connection between influencer-related factors and consumer buying behaviour. The four main independent variables that are studied and their effects on the dependent variable consumer buying behaviour are credibility, trust, emotional connection, and engagement

Influencer Credibility and Buying Behaviour

Credibility is deemed as one of the most crucial aspects that impact consumer decision-making. It refers to the extent to which an influencer is perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic. According to previous research (Al Kurdi et al., 2022; Lou and Yuan, 2019; Mammadli, 2021), the consumers are more inclined to use influencers who share correct, honest, and reliable information. Authoritative influencers lead to increased consumer trust and perceived risk reduction when it comes to making purchase decisions. Thus, it is assumed that:

H1: The credibility of influencers is significantly positive on consumer buying behaviour

Trust and Buying Behaviour

Trust is an important element in influencer marketing because it is used to determine the degree of confidence that consumers have in the recommendations of the influencer. Research (Lim et al., 2017; Koay et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2024) indicates that trust enhances the relationship between influencers and followers so that consumers will be more willing to accept product endorsements. Consumers tend to believe an influencer and will be more ready to turn their attitudes into real buying behaviour.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Trust has a significant positive impact on consumer buying behaviour

Emotional Connection and Buying Behaviour

Emotional connection is the psychological and relational association among influencers and their followers which is often described in terms of parasocial interaction. Previous studies (Kanwar and Huang, 2022; Lou, 2022; Mueller et al., 2020) indicate that emotional attachment enhances consumer involvement and loyalty. Nevertheless, there are mixed findings in the literature on its direct effect on real buying behaviour, as emotional bonding can have an effect on attitudes but not immediate buying decisions.

Thus the hypothesis is that:

H3: Emotional connection has a significant impact on consumer buying behaviour

Engagement and Buying Behaviour

Engagement is the degree of interaction between the influencers and the consumers, such as likes, comments, shares, and involvement in content. The research (Sijabat et al., 2023; Cheung et al., 2021; Duan, 2024) emphasizes that increased engagement will result in greater consumer involvement and will increase brand recall and the probability to make purchases. Engagement is an expression of active participation, which is why it is a strong element in altering consumer decision-making.

Thus, a hypothesis is that:

H4: Engagement has a significant positive impact on consumer buying behaviour

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter outlines the research methodology which has been adopted in the study on the effects of social media influencers on consumer buying behaviour in youth. It gives an elaborate description of the methods and procedures that will be employed to carry out the research in a systematic and structured way. The chapter describes the type of research, research approach, research design, and data collection methods used in the research. The aim of this chapter is to make sure that the research process is transparent, reliable and has the ability to meet the set research objectives. It also describes how the data gathered is suitable to be used in testing the hypotheses proposed and making meaningful conclusions.

3.2 Research Type and Approach

The current research is empirical because it is founded on primary data gathered first hand through the respondents and not basing its discussion solely on theoretical or secondary sources. Empirical research contributes to offering practical knowledge, as it analyzes the real world data.

The research approach adopted in this research is a quantitative research approach. Quantitative approach involves gathering of numerical data and the analysis of such data through statistical methods. This method is appropriate in the current study since it will be used to analyse the relation between factors of influencer-related factors including credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement, and their influence on consumer buying behaviour.

The use of a quantitative approach allows for objective measurement, comparison, and interpretation of data, making the results more reliable and generalizable. It also allows the application of the more advanced statistical methods like PLS-SEM in testing the hypothesis.).

3.3 Research Design

The research is a blend of descriptive and causal research design, which will assist in both understanding and explaining the consumer behaviour.

- The descriptive research design is applied to explain the aspects, preference and behaviour of consumers in regard to social media influencers. It assists in offering insights into the frequency of consumer engagement with influencer content and the perception consumers have of the various influencer attributes.
- The cause-and-effect relationship of variables is tested using the causal research design. It assists in the analysis of the effect of the independent variables credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement on the dependent variable which in this case is consumer buying behaviour.

The descriptive and causal design offers a complete insight into the research problem not only by describing consumer behaviour but also explaining the relationship between variables.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The research is founded on primary data collection, which assures the research findings to be based on first-hand information taken directly by the researcher on the respondents. Primary data is more accurate and relevant because it is reflection of the present perception and behaviour of consumers.

A structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was created to capture some of the constructs of the research such as credibility, trust, emotional connection, engagement, and buying behaviour. The questions in the questionnaire were rated on a Likert scale, which involves rating the items with the scale, and the respondents are asked to use the scale to describe the items in the questionnaire. The means to collect data was a combination of:

- Online mode (Google Forms).
- Offline mode

The respondents were mainly young social media users who are being actively exposed to influencer content.

The research is particularly targeted to the Delhi area and the data was gathered by the respondents who are the residents of Delhi. This local area will contribute to the comprehension of the behaviour of youth consumers, where the use of social media and exposure to influencers are relatively elevated. The research results are thus especially applicable to the situation in Delhi.

The use of both online and offline methods helped in increasing the response rate and improving the reliability of the data collected.

3.5 Sampling Design

3.5.1 Target Population

The study target population comprises of the young consumers aged between 18-30 years who are active users of the social media platforms such as the Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. This group is chosen due to being the most exposed to the influencer content and are more likely to be influenced in their purchasing decisions.

3.5.2 Sampling Technique

The research employs a convenience sampling method, which is not probabilistic. This was used because it is easy to access, time is limited and respondents are available. It enables the researcher to gather data by respondents who are easily accessible and are willing to participate.

3.5.3 Sample Size

The study was able to gather 250 valid responses. This size is believed to be sufficient to be subjected to statistical analysis using PLS-SEM and helps in coming up with credible findings.

3.5.4 Sampling Area

The region being studied is the Delhi region and all the data was obtained through respondents who lived in the region of Delhi. This assists in the analysis of the behaviour of urban youth consumers whereby the consumption of social media and the exposure to influencers is relatively high.

3.6 Variables of the Study

The research involves both independent and dependent variables:

Independent Variables (IVs):

- Influencer Credibility
- Trust
- Emotional Connection
- Engagement

Dependent Variable (DV):

- Consumer Buying Behaviour

These variables are chosen according to the literature review and are applied to investigate the influence of the features of influencers on consumer behaviour.

3.7 Measurement of Variables

The measures of variables in this study were taken through a structured questionnaire that had several items in each construct. All the questions were rated by a Likert scale (between strongly disagree and strongly agree) which assists in capturing the opinions held by the respondents.

To achieve content validity and reliability, the measurement items were adapted based on the previous studies. All constructs were assessed with a number of indicators to enhance reliability and constancy in responses.

3.8 Data Analysis Technique

The gathered data was processed with the help of SmartPLS software, with the application of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique.

The analysis was carried out in two main stages:

1.Measurement Model Evaluation

- Reliability (Cronbachs Alpha, Composite Reliability)
- Convergent Validity (Average Variance Extracted - AVE)
- Indicator Loadings

2.Structural Model Evaluation

- Path Coefficients (β values)
- Hypothesis Testing (t-values and p-values)
- Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The approach is appropriate to examine complicated relationships among variables and test the hypotheses suggested efficiently.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The research adheres to the ethics of the research to guarantee the integrity and credibility of the research:

- Participation of respondents was voluntary
- The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents.
- All the respondents were kept confidential and anonymous.
- Data was only used on academic purposes only

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected to examine the influence of social media influencer-related factors on the buying behaviour of the youth, namely credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement. Primary data gathered from 250 respondents from the Delhi region and the analysis was contextualized accordingly, addressing the urban consumers who are in constant exposure to social media influencers.

The research method used in analyzing the data is Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in the program of SmartPLS. This technique can be used to analyze complex relationships between several independent and dependent variables and to test hypotheses from a study.

The analysis is done in 2 steps. The first step is to assess the reliability and validity of constructs, which are performed by using indicator loadings, internal consistency measure and convergent validity. Second, the structural model is analyzed to determine the relationship among the variables by using path coefficient and to determine the explanatory power of the model using coefficient of determination (R²).

The results discussed in this chapter give empirical evidence on the influence of the various factors related to the influencer on the buying behavior of consumers and form the basis for the conclusions and discussion of the study.

4.2 Data Analysis (PLS-SEM)

Measurement Model Evaluation

To test the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study, namely influencers credibility, trust, emotional attachment, engagement, and consumers buying behaviour, The measurement model was evaluated. The assessment guarantees that the measurement items are representative for their constructs and the results from the model are reliable and valid.

The evaluation of the measure model was conducted by the following criteria: indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity.

4.2.1 Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

	Outer loadings
BD1 <- BD	0.857
BD2 <- BD	0.865
BD3 <- BD	0.859
BD4 <- BD	0.825
BD5 <- BD	0.840
EC1 <- EC	0.826
EC2 <- EC	0.838
EC3 <- EC	0.832
EC4 <- EC	0.777

ENG1 <- ENG	0.736
ENG2 <- ENG	0.782
ENG3 <- ENG	0.790
ENG4 <- ENG	0.816
IC1 <- IC	0.830
IC2 <- IC	0.650
IC3 <- IC	0.769
IC4 <- IC	0.817
TI1 <- TI	0.802
TI2 <- TI	0.691
TI3 <- TI	0.848
TI4 <- TI	0.832

Source: SmartPLS Output

The reliability of indicators was evaluated by looking at the outer loadings of each measurement item. The outer loadings suggested as "high" are 0.7 or greater, meaning the indicators share high levels of variance with their construct.

the outer loadings of most of the indicators are above the acceptable criterion suggesting high indicator reliability. The overall construct reliability is good, with a few items having slightly lower loadings which are deemed acceptable.

This confirms that the measurement items are reliable and adequately represent their respective constructs.

4.2.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)
BD	0.903	0.904
EC	0.836	0.836
ENG	0.790	0.807
IC	0.767	0.774
TI	0.806	0.824

Source: SmartPLS Output

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to measure internal consistency reliability. Both of these are acceptable at 0.7.

As per the results, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability is above 0.7 recommended value for all the constructs, thus having high level of internal consistency. This implies that the questions under each construct are able to measure the same underlying concept.

4.2.3 Convergent Validity

	Average variance extracted (AVE)
BD	0.721
EC	0.670
ENG	0.611
IC	0.593
TI	0.633

Source: SmartPLS Output

For AVE, the threshold is set at 0.5, meaning that the construct has more than half of the variance of its indicators.

According to the results, all constructs have AVE values more than 0.5 which means that convergent validity is achieved. This means that the indicators for each construct are strongly correlated as they measure the same concept well

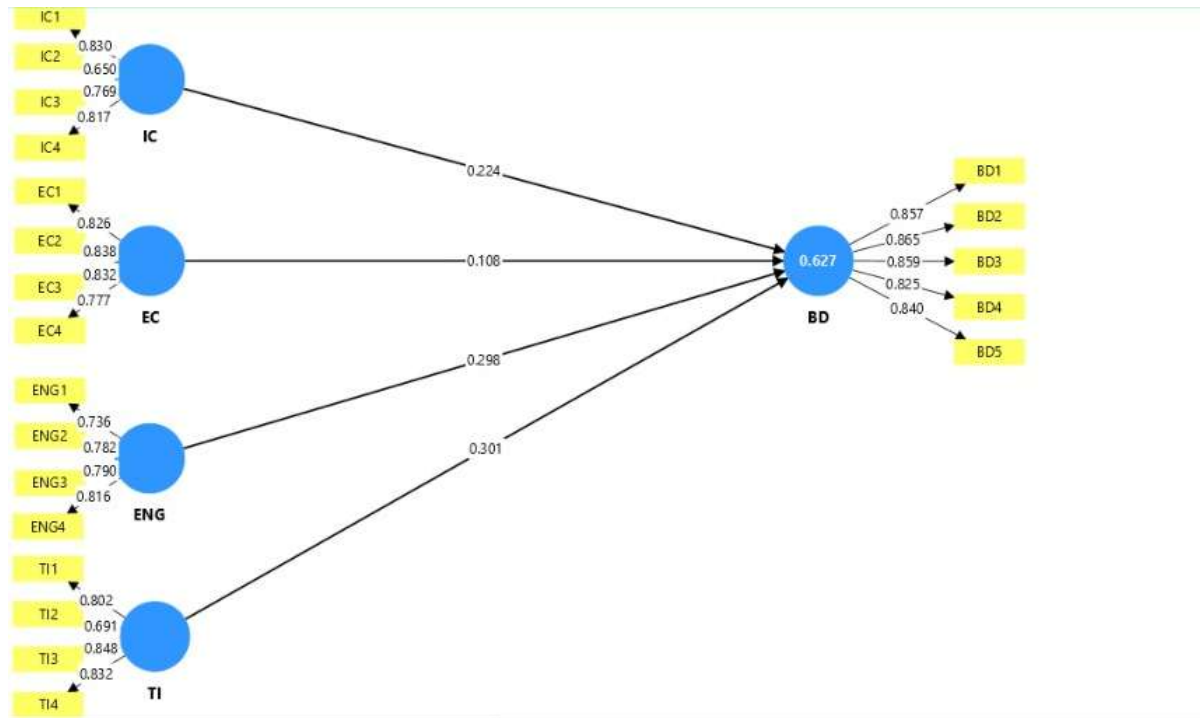
Conclusion of Measurement Model

From the results of indicators reliability, indicators internal consistency reliability and convergent validity, it can be concluded that the measurement model is reliable and valid. Therefore, the constructs used in the study are suitable for further analysis in the structural model.

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated to investigate the relationships among the independent variables and consumer buying behaviour.

4.3.1 Structural Model (Path Model)



Source: SmartPLS Output

The structural model represents the relationships between the independent variables: influencer credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement and the dependent variable: consumer buying behaviour. The model gives a visual depiction of the direction and strength of these relationships in terms of path coefficients.

The results indicate that all independent variables have a positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. Of these, the effect of trust and engagement are relatively strong, and credibility has moderate effect. Emotional connection has a relatively low correlation with the buying behaviour.

The model also has an R^2 of 0.627 for consumer buying behaviour, meaning that the variables selected in the model explain a significant amount of variance in the dependent variable. This is indicative of the overall strength and relevance of the proposed research model.

Overall, the structural model is validated, indicating that the factors related to influencers have a considerable influence on consumer buying behaviour.

4.3.2 Path Coefficients

	Path coefficients
EC → BD	0.108
ENG → BD	0.298
IC → BD	0.224
TI → BD	0.301

Source: SmartPLS Output

The path coefficients (β values) were examined to see the direction and the strength of the relationship between the independent variables (influencer credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement) and the dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour).

The results of the path coefficients are presented as follows:

- Influencer Credibility $\rightarrow$ Consumer Buying Behaviour ($\beta = 0.224$)
- Emotional Connection $\rightarrow$ Consumer Buying Behaviour ($\beta = 0.108$)
- Engagement $\rightarrow$ Consumer Buying Behaviour ($\beta = 0.298$)
- Trust $\rightarrow$ Consumer Buying Behaviour ($\beta = 0.301$)

The results show that all the variables have positive effect on consumer buying behaviour except emotional connection. Of these, trust has the greatest influence with engagement following closely, with credibility having a moderate influence. Compared to the other variables studied, emotional connection has the lowest impact.

These findings show that, more than just emotional attachment, factors related to trust and active interaction with influencers are more influential on consumers. This underscores the value of authenticity, reliability and involvement in influencing consumer buying choices when it comes to social media influencers.

4.3.3 Hypothesis Testing

	Original sample (O)	T value	P values
EC $\rightarrow$ BD	0.108	1.649	0.099
ENG $\rightarrow$ BD	0.298	4.296	0.000
IC $\rightarrow$ BD	0.224	3.909	0.000
TI $\rightarrow$ BD	0.301	4.239	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Output

The results show that the p values of influencer credibility, trust and engagement are less than 0.05 and therefore statistically significant and positively affect consumer buying behaviour. Of these, trust and engagement are two instances that have a more pronounced effect relative to the others.

The emotional connection, however, does not have a statistically significant impact with a p-value of > 0.05 . This implies, even though the emotional bond with influencers may seem to affect consumers emotionally, it is not enough to affect their buying behavior.

Therefore, H1, H2 and H4 are supported, but H3 is not. The results of the bootstrapping exercise also support the validity of the proposed model and support the empirical validation of most of the hypothesized relationships.

4.3.4 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Consumer buying behaviour in this study was explained by 62.7% of the influence of the factors that are credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement related to the influencer.

The R^2 value > 0.50 would imply moderate to strong explanatory power, based on established guidelines. Thus, the found R^2 value indicates the high level of predictive accuracy of the model and its high value of explaining the consumer buying behavior.

This finding emphasises that the decision to buy products by youth consumers is significantly influenced by the influencers' attributes, especially the use of social media in the Delhi region.

4.4 Discussion of Results

The findings of the study give some insights on the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing behaviour of the youth in the Delhi region. The results are explained according to the objectives of the research and literature.

The analysis indicates that trust is most influencing factor on consumers purchasing behaviours. This means that if a consumer feels that the influencer is honest, reliable and transparent, they are more likely to buy the products. This finding is consistent with previous studies, which highlight trust as a key determinant in influencer marketing effectiveness. In India, particularly for urban youth, the consumers believe in recommendations that they trust more than the traditional ads.

The second most influential is engagement, indicating that active engagement with influencers and followers (likes, comments, shares, replies, etc.) matters greatly to consumer decision-making. The more people engage with your content, the more likely they are to feel connected and involved, and the more your content will impact them. This aligns with previous studies that have highlighted the importance of interactive communication in digital marketing.

Credibility of influencers also has a positive and moderate effect on buying behaviour. The consumers feel influencers who are knowledgeable, authentic and experienced are more reliable source of information. This confirms the source credibility theory that states that credible communicators are more effective in changing the attitude and behavior of consumers.

But the emotional relationship does not statistically affect the consumer's purchasing behavior, although it is positively correlated. This indicates that consumers can be emotionally attached to the influencers but that's not enough to have a direct impact on their purchasing decisions. The reason could be that the Indian consumers, especially in urban areas, are more rational and value-oriented and are more concerned with trust and utility of information than with emotional attachment.

Overall, the results confirm that functional and relational variables like trust and engagement have greater impact on actual buying behaviour than the emotional variables. The findings also help in addressing the research goal of determining the significant influencer related factors that influence the consumer decision.

The study also points out that although emotional connection is a part of relationship development, it could also serve as a facilitator, but not necessarily a catalyst of purchases. The discovery opens up opportunities for further study in the future to examine how emotional connection could play an indirect or mediating role in influencer marketing.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Key Findings

The most significant findings of the study are based on the analysis of primary data with 250 respondents through the use of the PLS-SEM method. The results give a good explanation of the influence of factors related to influencers to consumer buying behaviour among the youth.

- The study concludes that the most significant factor that influences consumer buying behaviour is trust. People will tend to buy the products that influencers recommend to them as the ones who are honest, reliable, and transparent. It signifies that trust is vital in translating influencer recommendations into a real purchase decision.
- The second factor that is most critical in consumer behaviour is the engagement. The more interaction there is (likes, comments, shares, etc.), the more the consumer is involved and the stronger influence the influencer has. This demonstrates that the quality of a communication between influencers and followers can increase the performance of the influencer marketing.

- The credibility of the influencer moderately affects the consumer buying behaviour positively. Influencers who are knowledgeable, authentic and experienced are more persuasive to the consumers. Credibility assists in instilling confidence amongst consumers and assists in the decision-making process.

The study however concludes that emotional connection is not statistically significant to influence consumer buying behaviour. Though consumers can be emotionally attached to the influencers, this is not enough to positively influence the actual purchase decisions. This implies that consumers are more concerned with trust, and practical value rather than emotional attachment.

It also indicates that the model accounts a significant percentage of consumer behaviour and this indicates that the variables chosen are effective in explaining buying decisions among youth.

On the whole, the results indicate that trust and engagement are the most important drivers of consumer buying behaviour, whereas credibility is a secondary driver and emotional connection is a minor driver. These results are in line with the research objectives and give valuable insights into influencer marketing effectiveness in the Indian context.

5.2 Conclusion

This research was conducted to learn how social media influencers can impact the purchasing behaviour of young people in the Delhi area in particular. The primary area of concern was the four key factors of credibility, trust, emotional connection, and engagement and their impact on actual purchase decisions.

Depending on the analysis, it is evident that the influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour is noticeable. Out of all the factors, trust was revealed as the most significant factor. When the consumer believes that an influencer is truthful and sincere, then the consumer is more likely to trust his or her suggestions and buy something. It demonstrates that trust is more important to build than mere promotion of products.

Another result of the study was that engagement is a powerful factor. When the influencers communicate with their followers via comments, likes, and replies, it establishes a connection. Through this interaction, the followers are likely to consider their advice.

Credibility positively influences the effect as well but not so much as trust and engagement. people are more likely to follow influencers who seem to be knowledgeable and authentic and this will aid in influencing their purchasing behaviors.

On the other hand, emotional connection did not show a significant impact on buying behaviour. Although individuals might have a sense of belonging to influencers, this sense alone cannot have an impact on their buying decisions. This indicates that consumers, particularly in an urban Indian environment are more prone to value and trust in their practical value rather than simply passing on emotions.

Generally, the research indicates that such variables as trust and engagement have greater potential to impact purchasing behaviour than emotional attachment. It also underscores the fact that influencer marketing is most effective when it is authentic and interactive as opposed to being strictly promotional.

To sum up, influencers on social media can be very influential in the choices of consumers, yet it will depend on their abilities and readiness to build trust and maintain real interaction with their audience.

5.3 Managerial Implications / Suggestions

The results of this research can provide valuable information to marketers, brands, and social media influencers to enhance the efficacy of influencer marketing strategies.

- **Focus on building trust rather than just promotion**
Influencers must be honest, transparent, and consistent brands should collaborate with them. Consumers tend to be more convinced of advice that seems sincere as opposed to advice that seems overly commercial.

- **Encourage higher engagement with the audience**

Influencers must be engaged to actively communicate with their followers in comments, replies, polls, and live sessions. This communication assists in developing closer relationships and enhances the effectiveness of marketing activities. The choice of influential people

- **Select credible and knowledgeable influencers**

Influencers should be brands that are knowledgeable or experienced in their fields. More believable and trustworthy content can be developed by the credible influencer, which has a positive impact on consumer decisions.

- **Avoid over-commercialization of content**

Excessive advertisement messages can lessen the level of trust. Promoters must balance the promotional and non-promotional contents to ensure their followers are entertained.

- **Prioritize authenticity in content creation**

Real-life stories, candid reviews and content that one can relate to are more effective than the scripted advertisements. Authentic content assists in developing long-term relations with consumers.

- **Design campaigns that create interaction, not just visibility**

Marketing plans must be focused at attracting the audience instead of just broadening reach. Consumer involvement can be enhanced with the help of interactive campaigns (contests, Q&A sessions, feedback polls, etc).

- **Use emotional connection as a supporting factor**

Even though an emotional connection by itself might not directly influence purchases, it could help in strengthening the relationship between influencers and followers when implemented in combination with trust and engagement.

All in all, the key point that marketers must concentrate on is developing trust-based and engagement-driven marketing strategies instead of focusing on emotional appeal alone. The practice will result in more efficient influencer marketing and consumer response will improve.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

As in any research, there are certain limitations of this study that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this research.

- **Limited sample size and area**

The study has been conducted with 250 respondents from Delhi region only. This means that the results may not be representative of consumers in other cities and rural areas.

- **Focus only on youth**

The research deals with the younger consumers (aged 18 to 30). The findings may, therefore, not be generalized to the older age groups as these age groups may exhibit different purchasing attitude.

- **Use of self-reported data**

This data has been obtained by using a questionnaire based on the opinion and perception of the respondents. May be subject to bias, in that not everyone may provide totally accurate answers.

- **Limited variables considered**

The study examines just four factors: credibility, trust, emotional connection and engagement. Other factors such as brand image, peer influence, or price were not considered.

- **Cross-sectional nature of the study**

Data was obtained in one instance. Consumer behaviour can evolve over time, particularly in light of the evolution of social media – not captured in this study.

However, despite these constraints, the study offers valuable insights into the phenomenon of influencer marketing and consumer buying behaviour in the youth segment.

5.5 Future Scope

This study suggests some useful avenues for future research.

- **Larger and wider sample**

Larger sample size from other cities and states in the future to allow for results to be generalized.

- **Different age groups**

Further research could be conducted to compare youth consumers with other age groups and determine if the influence of the influencers is different in these groups of consumers.

- **More variables**

Other factors like price sensitivity, brand image, peer influence, and purchase frequency can be added to the research to gain deeper insight into the buying behaviour.

- **Comparative study of platforms**

Future research can be conducted to compare platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok to determine which has the greatest impact on consumer decisions.

- **Group-wise comparison**

A comparison and contrast by gender, income or education level would also be beneficial to learn about so as to understand how different consumers might react to influencers.

- **Long-term behaviour**

A longitudinal study can be used in the future to observe the progression of the impact of influencers over time rather than at a single moment.

Overall, future studies can be based on this study to provide a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of social media influencers and their impact on consumer behavior.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Title:

Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Buying Decisions: A Study of Youth in India

Instructions:

This survey is conducted for academic research to understand how social media influencers affect consumer buying decisions.

Please answer all questions based on your experience with social media and online shopping.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

The survey will take approximately 3–5 minutes to complete.

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Section A: Demographic Information

1. **Age Group**

- ☐ 18–21
- ☐ 22–25
- ☐ 25–30

2. **Gender**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Others

3. **Educational Level**

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Postgraduate
- ☐ Other

4. **Monthly Personal Expenditure**

- ☐ Less than ₹10,000
- ☐ ₹10,000–₹25,000
- ☐ ₹25,000–₹50,000
- ☐ Above ₹50,000

5. **Which social media platforms do you commonly use? (Multiple choice)**

- ☐ Instagram
 - ☐ YouTube
 - ☐ Facebook
 - ☐ Snapchat
 - ☐ Other
-

Section B: Social Media Usage

6. How much time do you spend on social media per day?

- 1 – Less than 1 hour
- 2 – 1–2 hours
- 3 – 2–4 hours
- 4 – 4–6 hours
- 5 – More than 6 hours

- 7. I view content created by social media influencers on social media platforms.
 - 8. I watch influencer content about products and brands on social media.
 - 9. I have purchased a product after seeing it recommended by a social media influencer.
-

Section C: Influencer Credibility

- 10. I feel that influencers have good knowledge about the products they promote.
 - 11. I find influencers more credible when they mention both positive and negative points.
 - 12. Influencers usually explain products in a clear and understandable manner.
 - 13. I believe influencers give honest opinions about products.
-

Section D: Trust in Influencers

- 14. If an influencer knows the product well, I trust it more.
 - 15. I trust influencers more when they clearly mention paid promotions.
 - 16. I trust influencers when they recommend products they have used themselves.
 - 17. I feel influencers are more trustworthy than traditional advertisements.
-

Section E: Emotional Connection

- 18. I feel emotionally connected to some influencers I follow.
 - 19. I feel more connected when I watch content from influencers I like.
 - 20. I feel like some influencers understand people like me.
 - 21. I like influencers whose personality matches my interests.
-

Section F: Engagement with Influencers

- 22. I often like, comment on, or share influencer posts.
 - 23. I watch influencer stories, reels, or videos.
 - 24. Interactive influencer content grabs my attention.
 - 25. Influencer content keeps me interested in brands.
-

Section G: Consumer Buying Behaviour

26. Influencer recommendations affect my buying decisions.
27. I consider influencer recommendations before making a purchase decision.
28. Influencer content increases my interest in buying products.
29. I prefer brands promoted by influencers I trust.
30. Influencers help me compare products before buying.