

Role of Influencer Marketing and Its Influence on Customer Trust and Buying Decisions Towards Fashion and Lifestyle Products in Bangalore

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has established influencer marketing as a central strategy for promoting fashion and lifestyle products, yet empirical evidence on how this strategy operates within Indian metropolitan markets remains limited. This study examines the influence of social media influencer marketing on customer trust and buying decisions among consumers in Bengaluru, India. A descriptive-analytical research design was employed, and primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 180 respondents selected via convenience sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and one-way ANOVA. Results show a moderate positive association between belief in social media influencers' impact and actual purchase behaviour ($r = 0.323$, $p < .05$). Influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.205$, $p = .005$) and influencer engagement ($\beta = 0.157$, $p = .034$) were both significant, positive predictors of customer trust, though the model explained only a modest share of variance ($R^2 = 0.075$). Familiarity with influencer marketing was found to significantly differentiate buying-decision outcomes ($F = 8.735$, $p = .003$). The findings indicate that influencer marketing meaningfully shapes trust and purchase intention but functions as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, product quality and brand reputation, which respondents rated as stronger purchase drivers.

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Consumer Trust, Purchase Decision, Influencer Credibility, Influencer Engagement, Fashion and Lifestyle, Bangalore, India*

I. Introduction

Digital technology has fundamentally altered how consumers discover products and make purchase decisions, particularly in the fashion and lifestyle sector. Traditional advertising channels such as television and

print have receded in importance as social media platforms have become primary sources of product information, largely mediated by influencers who share reviews, recommendations, and personal experiences with their audiences. Influencer marketing is widely considered effective because consumers often perceive influencers as more relatable and authentic than conventional celebrity endorsers, and this perceived authenticity is believed to foster trust and, in turn, purchase behaviour.

Bengaluru offers a particularly relevant setting for this research given its high internet penetration, extensive smartphone adoption, and a large, digitally active consumer base with a growing fashion and lifestyle market. Despite the widespread adoption of influencer marketing in this context, limited empirical work has examined how influencer credibility, engagement, and consumer familiarity translate into trust and purchase decisions specifically within the Bangalore market. Consumers also frequently question the authenticity of sponsored content, raising the need for evidence on which influencer-related factors genuinely build trust and drive purchasing behaviour.

Existing studies have demonstrated that influencer marketing positively influences consumer attitudes, brand trust, and purchase intention. However, most previous research has examined this relationship from an international perspective, with comparatively little empirical work situated in Indian metropolitan markets. This study addresses that gap by examining how sustainable, credibility-driven influencer marketing shapes consumer sustainability perception and purchase decisions among fashion and lifestyle consumers in Bangalore, thereby contributing to the literature on digital marketing and consumer behaviour from an emerging urban market in India.

II. Review of Literature

Existing literature has examined the influence of influencer credibility, engagement, and parasocial bonds on consumer trust and purchase intention across both Indian and international markets. The following review summarises the major empirical studies relevant to the present research.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019) examined how message value and influencer credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media, using a quantitative survey design. The findings revealed that valuable content combined with a credible influencer strengthens consumer confidence in online recommendations and increases purchase intention, although the study did not extensively examine platform-specific differences.

Chetioui, Y., Benlafqih, H., & Lebdaoui, H. (2020) investigated how fashion influencers contribute to consumers' purchase intention using a quantitative survey among social media users. The results indicated that influencer attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness positively influence purchase intention by developing stronger emotional connections with followers, though the study focused specifically on the fashion segment.

Wiedmann, K., & von Mettenheim, W. (2021) explored attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as drivers of social influencers' persuasive power through a quantitative study. The findings identified expertise and authenticity as essential qualities that enhance consumer trust in influencer recommendations, with implications for brand-influencer partnership strategy.

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020) examined how credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions among Instagram and YouTube followers using a quantitative survey. The findings showed that persuasive communication by bloggers combined with close emotional relationships positively influences consumers' willingness to purchase recommended products, though the parasocial mechanism was not compared across platforms.

Mainolfi, G., & Vergura, D. T. (2022) investigated the influence of fashion blogger credibility, engagement, and homophily on purchase intention and e-WOM through a binational quantitative study. The results revealed that consumers are more likely to trust influencers who appear similar to them in interests and lifestyle, thereby improving purchase intention,

although cross-cultural comparisons remained limited to two countries.

Ahmed, S., Khan, R., & Farooq, A. (2024) examined how follower engagement and social attractiveness shape brand loyalty through social media influencers using a quantitative survey. The findings demonstrated that active engagement with followers strengthens brand loyalty because consumers develop stronger emotional attachment to highly interactive influencers, though the study did not isolate engagement from credibility effects.

Tiwari, A., Kumar, A., Kant, R., & Jaiswal, D. (2024) applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine fashion influencers' impact on consumers' purchase intentions using a quantitative survey. The study concluded that positive attitudes and customer trust significantly contribute to purchase intention toward fashion products promoted by influencers, with attitude acting as a key mediating mechanism.

Kanaveedu, A., & Kalapurackal, J. J. (2024) conducted a systematic literature review on influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. The review highlighted communication quality and engagement as primary elements contributing to consumer trust in influencer marketing, though it noted a lack of region-specific empirical validation in emerging markets such as India.

Feng, W., Zhao, Y., & Chen, X. (2023) examined how social media influencers' bragging language styles affect consumer attitudes toward luxury brands using a quantitative survey. The findings revealed that honest, non-exaggerated communication styles improve brand perception and increase consumer trust even when promotional intent is clearly disclosed.

George, A., Thomas, S., & Jose, R. (2025) conducted a systematic literature review on the impact of social media influencer marketing on customer purchase intention in the fashion industry. The review concluded that credibility, engagement, and authenticity remain the three most influential factors affecting consumer purchase intention across markets, reinforcing the need for context-specific empirical testing.

Overall, previous studies consistently indicate that influencer credibility, engagement, authenticity, and parasocial connection significantly influence consumers' trust and purchase behaviour. However, relatively few studies have specifically examined these relationships within the Indian FMCG-adjacent fashion and lifestyle sector, and research focusing on urban

consumers in Bangalore remains particularly scarce. This research gap provides the foundation for the present study, which investigates how influencer marketing shapes consumer trust and buying decisions among fashion and lifestyle consumers in Bangalore.

III. Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design using a quantitative research approach. The descriptive design is used to understand consumers' perceptions of influencer marketing, while the analytical design examines the relationship between influencer-related attributes and consumers' trust and purchase decisions.

The study was conducted in Bangalore, Karnataka, selected because of its high internet penetration, widespread smartphone usage, and a large population of digitally active, fashion-conscious consumers. The target population consists of social media users in Bangalore who follow influencers and purchase, or are willing to purchase, fashion and lifestyle products.

The study employs a non-probability convenience sampling technique, with respondents selected from across Central, North, South, East, and West Bangalore based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. A final sample of 180 respondents was achieved, considered adequate for descriptive, correlation, regression, and ANOVA analysis in line with comparable prior studies.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) to measure respondents' opinions regarding influencer credibility, engagement, familiarity, trust, and purchase decisions. Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles related to influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

The study measures social media influencer marketing (including credibility and engagement) as the independent variables and customer trust and buying decision as the dependent/mediating variables. The collected data were analysed using Microsoft Excel, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and one-way ANOVA.

Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the

research prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were maintained, and the information collected was used solely for academic and research purposes.

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): Social media influencer marketing has no significant influence on customer trust and buying decisions towards fashion and lifestyle products.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): Social media influencer marketing has a significant positive influence on customer trust and buying decisions towards fashion and lifestyle products.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Out of 180 respondents, 58.3% were female, 40.0% were male, and 1.7% preferred not to disclose their gender. Nearly two-thirds (61.1%) of respondents were aged between 21–30 years, indicating that young adults formed the dominant part of the consumer sample. In terms of education, 38.3% held a PUC/Diploma qualification and 26.1% were undergraduates. Occupation-wise, students (50.0%) and employees (38.9%) together formed the majority. Regarding monthly income, 49.4% of respondents earned below ₹25,000, reflecting a sample skewed toward younger, lower-income consumers. Most respondents resided in North Bangalore (37.2%) and South Bangalore (33.3%).

With respect to platform use, Instagram (48.3%) and YouTube (28.3%) were identified as the platforms with the greatest influence on buying decisions, and 78.9% of respondents indicated awareness of influencer marketing as a concept, with 64.4% describing themselves as familiar or very familiar with it. A majority (68.9%) reported having purchased a fashion or lifestyle product based on an influencer recommendation, and lifestyle influencers (41.7%) were the most commonly followed influencer type, ahead of beauty (23.3%) and fashion influencers (19.4%).

B. Correlation Analysis (H1)

A Pearson correlation was computed between belief that social media influencers affect buying behaviour and belief that influencer marketing affects final purchase

decisions, to examine the relationship between social media influencers and buying decisions towards fashion and lifestyle products.

Relationship	r	p
Influencer impact on buying behaviour ↔ Influence on final purchase decision	0.323	< .05

A positive, statistically significant, moderate correlation was found ($r = 0.323$, $p < .05$). Respondents who believed influencers shaped their buying behaviour were also more likely to report that influencer marketing affected their final purchase decisions, although the moderate strength of the relationship indicates that other factors also play a substantial role in the final purchase decision.

C. Multiple Regression Analysis (H2)

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of two influencer-related attributes — influencer credibility (expertise) and influencer engagement — on customer trust.

Regression Statistic	Value
Multiple R	0.274
R Square	0.075
Adjusted R Square	0.065
Observations	180

ANOVA results confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 177) = 7.190$, $p = .001$, indicating that the selected influencer-related attributes jointly have a significant influence on customer trust.

Predictor Variable	β	Std. Error	t-Stat	p-value
Influencer credibility (expertise)	0.205	0.072	2.866	.005
Influencer engagement	0.157	0.073	2.142	.034

The regression coefficients reveal that both predictors have a statistically significant positive influence on customer trust ($p < .05$ in each case). Influencer credibility recorded the higher regression coefficient of the two predictors ($\beta = 0.205$, $p = .005$), indicating that clearly demonstrated expertise plays the stronger role in building customer trust, followed by influencer engagement ($\beta = 0.157$, $p = .034$). Since the significance values of both independent variables are below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) — that social media influencer marketing has a significant positive influence on customer trust — is supported.

D. One-Way ANOVA (H3)

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the differences between respondents' familiarity with influencer marketing and their buying decisions.

Source	SS	df	F	p
Between Groups	8.403	1	8.735	.003
Within Groups	344.372	358	—	—

The mean familiarity score ($M = 3.79$) differed significantly from the mean purchase-decision score ($M = 3.49$), $F(1, 358) = 8.735$, $p = .003$, exceeding the critical value of $F(3.868$ at $\alpha = .05$). This confirms that respondents' familiarity with influencer marketing is significantly associated with differences in buying-decision outcomes.

V. Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of social media influencer marketing on customer trust and buying decisions among 180 fashion and lifestyle consumers in Bangalore. The findings confirm that influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer trust and purchase decisions in this market. Consumers who believed influencers shaped their buying behaviour were also more likely to report an effect on their final purchase decisions ($r = 0.323$, $p < .05$), and both influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.205$, $p = .005$) and influencer engagement ($\beta = 0.157$, $p = .034$) significantly and positively predicted customer trust, though the model explained only a modest share of variance ($R^2 = 0.075$), suggesting other unmeasured factors such as attractiveness and homophily also contribute to trust formation. Respondents' familiarity with influencer marketing was also found to significantly differentiate buying-decision outcomes ($F = 8.735$, $p = .003$).

These findings suggest that influencer marketing is not simply a promotional add-on but a credibility- and trust-building tool that complements, rather than replaces, product quality and brand reputation — both of which respondents rated as stronger direct drivers of purchase decisions. Brands should therefore prioritise influencers who demonstrate genuine expertise and maintain active engagement with followers, prominently feature honest and detailed reviews, and continue to invest in awareness campaigns that build familiarity with influencer-driven recommendations, while combining influencer marketing with a broader strategy that also emphasises product quality and brand image.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, consumer trust, and digital consumer behaviour by providing empirical evidence from an emerging urban market in India. The findings offer practical insights for fashion and lifestyle brands, marketers, and social media influencers seeking

to design evidence-based influencer marketing strategies in the Bangalore market.

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