

The Influence of Micro-Influencers on Young Consumer Behavior

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Abstract—This paper presents a concise IEEE-style version of a longer quantitative study on the influence of micro-influencers on young consumer behaviour. The study investigates whether micro-influencer source credibility, parasocial interaction, and consumer brand engagement shape purchase intention in a digital marketplace. The underlying evidence is based on 185 survey responses collected through a structured questionnaire from young consumers who actively use social-media platforms. The original analysis employed descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, chi-square testing, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Across the reported items, respondents show low to moderate agreement with statements related to knowledgeable, trust, personal connection, emotional closeness, brand engagement, and intention to purchase. Chi-square results indicate that age, gender, and education level are not significantly associated with engagement frequency or platform preference in the sample. The overall regression model is weak, but one variable emerges as significant: online interaction with a brand because of micro-influencer endorsements positively predicts purchase intention. The condensed paper therefore argues that micro-influencer campaigns work most effectively when they encourage active brand engagement rather than depending only on perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, or parasocial familiarity. This short paper is useful for student submission, conference-style formatting, and practitioner-oriented interpretation of the original study.

Keywords—micro-influencers; young consumer behaviour; source credibility; parasocial interaction; consumer brand engagement; purchase intention; digital marketing; social media.

I. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of social media has fundamentally changed the way brands communicate with consumers. Marketing messages are no longer transmitted only through traditional channels such as television, print advertising, and celebrity endorsement. Instead, digital platforms allow creators, reviewers, and lifestyle personalities to function as visible intermediaries between firms and audiences. Among these actors, micro-influencers have emerged as particularly important because they often combine niche expertise with perceived authenticity. Unlike macro- or mega-influencers, they do not depend solely on mass fame. Their persuasive value is more strongly connected to the quality of their relationship with followers, the relevance of the content they produce, and the trust they cultivate over time [11], [18].

This matters especially for young consumers. Younger audiences spend substantial time on mobile-first platforms and frequently use these environments not only for entertainment but also for product discovery, social comparison, and lifestyle guidance. As a result, influencer content becomes embedded in everyday decision making. A promoted product appears within the same feed as friendship updates, entertainment videos, and personal recommendations. In such settings, micro-influencer communication can appear less like formal advertising and more like socially situated advice. The source manuscript therefore treats influencer marketing as a behavioural issue rather than merely a communication channel.

The original paper is built around four interrelated constructs: source credibility, parasocial interaction, consumer brand engagement, and purchase intention. Source credibility refers to whether the follower views the influencer as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and attractive. Parasocial interaction refers to the one-sided but meaningful sense of connection that a follower may develop through repeated digital exposure. Consumer brand engagement refers to

cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement with promoted brands, such as paying attention to brand content, following the brand online, or searching for more information. Purchase intention reflects the consumer's stated likelihood of considering or buying the endorsed offering. These constructs appear repeatedly in recent scholarship and together provide a strong framework for understanding micro-influencer persuasion [1], [2], [7], [10], [17].

A. Problem Statement and Gap

Although firms increasingly invest in micro-influencer marketing, the behavioural pathway through which influence occurs remains insufficiently clear. Much of the literature addresses one variable at a time: some studies focus on credibility, some on trust, some on platform usage, and some on purchase intention as a direct response. The source manuscript argues that this fragmentation limits understanding. A consumer may see an influencer as credible without immediately wanting to buy. Another consumer may feel socially close to the influencer but still take no brand-related action. The more relevant question is whether these perceptions convert into concrete brand engagement and whether engagement then increases purchase intention. Recent reviews of influencer research have similarly called for more integrated and theory-driven models [12], [18].

B. Objectives of the Condensed Paper

This reformatted paper has a practical and a scholarly purpose. Practically, it converts a much longer student-style research document into a submission-ready short paper aligned with IEEE visual conventions. Scholarly, it retains the study's main quantitative logic and communicates the results in a clearer conference-paper structure. The paper seeks to answer three central questions: whether perceived credibility affects purchase intention, whether parasocial interaction helps build brand engagement, and whether brand engagement contributes to purchase intention among young consumers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Micro-influencers as Distinct Digital Endorsers

The review in the source manuscript highlights that micro-influencers deserve separate analysis rather than treatment as a small version of celebrity endorsers. Casais, Fernandes, and Sarmiento compare micro-, macro-, and mega-influencers and show that follower count alone does not determine persuasive power [11]. Instead, audience perceptions of popularity, opinion leadership, relatability, and parasocial closeness shape whether recommendations are adopted. This distinction is particularly relevant in youth-oriented digital settings where authenticity and similarity can matter more than mass visibility.

Broader studies on influencer effectiveness reinforce the same idea. Ooi et al. present influencers as a mainstream marketing approach rather than a passing digital trend, while Joshi et al. map the field's rapid expansion and identify the need for more refined context-specific analyses [12], [18]. Together, these studies justify the present focus on young consumers and micro-influencers as a distinct persuasive category.

B. Source Credibility

A major strand of the reviewed literature argues that consumer response depends strongly on source-related cues. Research on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, fashion influencing, and beauty vlogging all indicate that expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and related credibility signals continue to influence purchase-oriented outcomes [2], [9], [14], [17]. Even when sponsorship disclosure is present, credibility often remains central because followers may still respond positively if the influencer appears genuine and competent [8].

At the same time, credibility should not be interpreted as a guaranteed direct route to purchase. Li and Peng show that influencer attributes shape self-brand connection and positive attitudes, which in turn influence purchase intention [4]. Chen et al. similarly emphasize the role of broader attitudinal processes in translating influencer exposure into buying intention [16]. These studies support the argument that credibility is important, but it may be most powerful when combined with relational and engagement mechanisms.

C. Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial interaction is the second major pillar of the source study. Sokolova and Kefi demonstrate that both credibility and parasocial interaction positively affect purchase intention, while Yang and Ha place parasocial ties at the centre of platform-based influencer persuasion [2], [3]. Balaban et al. and Masuda et al. further show that parasocial relations can strengthen persuasive power, though their effect may vary with product involvement, consumer characteristics, and how the influencer is perceived [5], [6].

The importance of parasocial interaction in the present study lies not only in its possible direct connection to purchase intention, but in its ability to create a bridge between influencer content and brand reaction. If followers feel familiarity, personal connection, or emotional closeness, they may become more attentive to the endorsed brand, more willing to follow brand pages, and more likely to explore product information. The source manuscript therefore uses

parasocial interaction as a relational catalyst rather than a stand-alone predictor.

D. Consumer Brand Engagement and Purchase Intention

The reviewed work by Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández is particularly important because it shows that digital influencers affect purchase-related outcomes through engagement-related processes and expected value [1]. Onofrei, Filieri, and Kennedy likewise connect social-media interaction, source and content factors, behavioural engagement, and purchase intention within a single framework [7]. Ao et al.'s meta-analysis reinforces the broader point that customer engagement and purchase intention are among the most robust outcomes in influencer marketing [10].

Accordingly, the current paper interprets consumer brand engagement as the most behaviourally concrete pathway in the model. Unlike admiration or familiarity, engagement leaves observable traces: followers like, comment, share, save, search, subscribe, or move toward a purchase. If the study ultimately finds engagement to be stronger than credibility or parasocial attachment, then the managerial lesson is that action-oriented campaigns matter more than image-oriented campaigns.

TABLE I. SELECTED LITERATURE THEMES FROM THE SOURCE REVIEW

Theme	Representative studies	Core implication
Credibility	[2], [8], [14], [17]	Trust and expertise still shape response
Parasocial ties	[2], [3], [5], [6], [11]	Closeness can increase persuasion
Engagement pathway	[1], [7], [10]	Influencer impact often works through brand engagement
Field development	[12], [18]	More integrated models are still needed

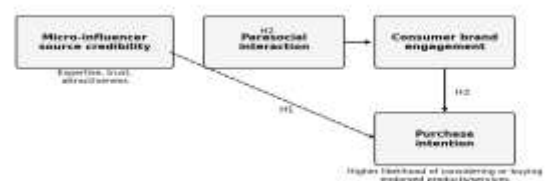


Fig. 1. Condensed conceptual pathway adapted from the source manuscript.

E. Research Logic

Based on the review, the study assumes three broad propositions: first, that micro-influencer source credibility should positively affect purchase intention; second, that parasocial interaction should strengthen consumer brand engagement; and third, that consumer brand engagement should contribute positively to purchase intention. The empirical results reported in the source manuscript allow these relationships to be examined through descriptive and inferential evidence, even though the original study does not estimate a full latent structural model.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design, Sample, and Data Source

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical design and is based primarily on survey data. The questionnaire generated 185 valid responses from young consumers, providing the empirical basis for the paper. A convenience-sampling strategy was used because the respondents needed to be accessible, active on social media, and sufficiently familiar with influencer content. Although this approach restricts broader generalization, it is appropriate for identifying patterns in digitally engaged youth audiences. The demographic section of the questionnaire captured age group, gender, education level, preferred social-media platform, and frequency of following or engaging with micro-influencers. The opinion section consisted of fifteen Likert-scale items. These items were designed to capture perceptions of knowledgeability, trust, attractiveness, parasocial connection, emotional closeness, brand engagement, information search, and buying intention. The five-point scale converted qualitative views into analyzable numerical form and allowed the study to examine both response intensity and variation.

B. Variable Structure and Analytical Tools

The source manuscript treats source credibility as the core independent influence, brand engagement as the most visible relational response, and purchase intention as the main behavioural outcome. Parasocial interaction occupies an intermediate role by capturing the social bond that followers feel with the influencer. The study uses descriptive statistics to summarize the overall pattern of responses, percentage analysis to interpret demographic and categorical trends, chi-square testing to examine associations among selected demographic variables, correlation analysis to identify the direction and strength of relationships, and regression analysis to evaluate the contribution of selected predictors to purchase intention.

An important methodological feature of this condensed paper is that it does not invent new empirical results. Instead, it preserves and reorganizes the reported statistics of the original document. The visual material included here—bar charts, construct-average chart, and conceptual model—has been redrawn from the frequencies and mean scores already presented in the source manuscript. This allows the paper to improve presentation quality while remaining faithful to the underlying evidence.

TABLE II. METHODOLOGICAL SUMMARY

Component	Description
Research design	Quantitative, descriptive, analytical, cross-sectional
Data source	Primary survey data from 185 respondents
Sampling	Non-probability convenience sampling
Instrument	Structured questionnaire with 5 demographic and 15 Likert items
Main tools	Descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, chi-square, correlation, regression

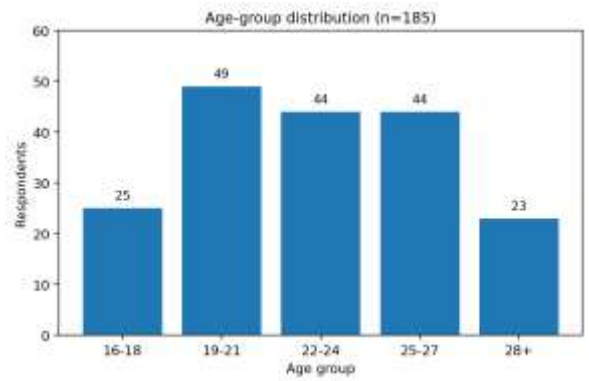


Fig. 2. Age-group distribution redrawn from the reported sample frequencies.

IV. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

A. Demographic Profile

The reported sample is clearly concentrated in the young-adult categories. Respondents aged 19-21 years form the largest group, followed closely by the 22-24 and 25-27 categories. This composition is appropriate because such age groups are heavy users of social and mobile media and are highly exposed to influencer-led brand communication. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with female respondents slightly outnumbering male respondents. Education levels are also notable: undergraduate and postgraduate participants dominate the sample, implying that many respondents are likely to be digitally literate, socially networked, and capable of critically interpreting online endorsements.

Platform preference is an especially relevant finding. Snapchat is the most preferred platform in the sample, followed by TikTok and YouTube. This pattern highlights a preference for fast, visually engaging, and media-rich environments rather than text-heavy or purely informational platforms. It also suggests that influencer strategies targeting young consumers cannot assume a single-platform logic. Instead, marketers should recognize that youth engagement is distributed across highly visual and interaction-driven channels.

TABLE III. SELECTED RESPONDENT PROFILE

Category	Count	Percent
16-18 years	25	13.5
19-21 years	49	26.5
22-24 years	44	23.8
25-27 years	44	23.8
28 years and above	23	12.4
Female	100	54.1
Male	85	45.9
Undergraduate	64	34.6
Postgraduate	51	27.6

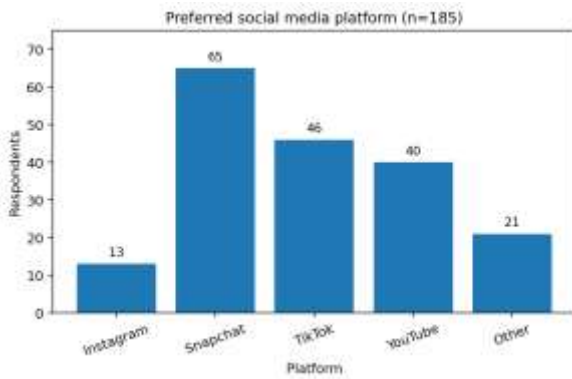


Fig. 3. Preferred platform based on the reported percentage analysis.

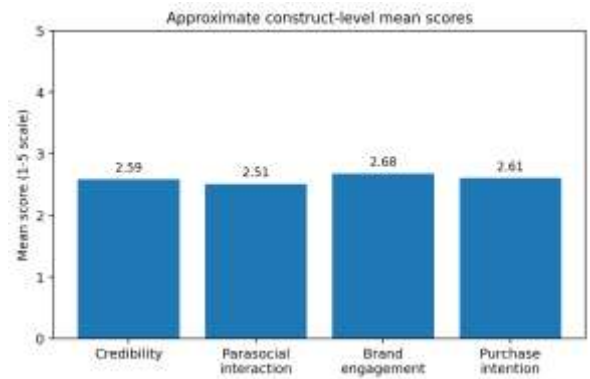


Fig. 4. Construct-level means derived from the reported item averages.

B. Descriptive Interpretation of Core Variables

The descriptive statistics provide an overall picture of how respondents evaluate micro-influencer content. Most mean scores are clustered between 2.33 and 2.72, which indicates low to moderate agreement rather than strong endorsement. For source credibility, means of 2.49, 2.63, and 2.70 are reported for knowledgeable ability, trust, and attractiveness-related influence respectively. These figures suggest that respondents do not completely reject influencer credibility, but they do not embrace it uncritically either. In effect, the sample sees micro-influencers as somewhat persuasive but not unquestionably authoritative.

Parasocial indicators are even more restrained. The mean for feeling personally connected to a micro-influencer is 2.33, the lowest among the reported variables. The mean for feeling as though one knows the influencer despite never having met them is only 2.57. These scores indicate that many respondents consume influencer content without experiencing intense emotional closeness. This is an important corrective to the assumption that influencer culture always creates deep pseudo-social relationships.

Consumer brand engagement appears somewhat stronger. The source study reports means of 2.72 for increased online interaction with a brand because of influencer endorsements, 2.71 for paying more attention to promoted brands, 2.65 for emotional involvement, and 2.64 for information search. These values suggest that brand-related action is more common than personal attachment to the influencer. In other words, followers may not strongly identify with the influencer, but they may still respond to the brand when content is relevant or compelling.

The purchase-intention indicators are similarly moderate. Means of 2.51 and 2.61 are reported for credibility-based purchase consideration and increased intention to purchase, while 2.59 and 2.72 are reported for the role of online engagement in strengthening buying intention. This pattern already hints at the study's eventual conclusion: behavioural engagement seems slightly more influential than credibility-based perception alone.

TABLE IV. SELECTED DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Item	Mean	Std. dev.
Knowledgeable about promoted products	2.49	1.352
Trust recommendations from followed influencers	2.63	1.361
Feel personally connected to influencers	2.33	1.213
Know the influencer without meeting them	2.57	1.330
More likely to interact with a brand online	2.72	1.398
Pay more attention to promoted brands	2.71	1.229
Emotionally involved with recommended brands	2.65	1.315
Engagement with promoted brands raises buying intention	2.72	1.341

C. Chi-square, Correlation, and Regression Evidence

The chi-square findings reported in the source manuscript indicate that the main demographic variables do not significantly shape engagement patterns in this dataset. There is no significant association between age group and frequency of following or engaging with micro-influencers (chi-square = 12.568, df = 16, p = 0.704). Likewise, there is no significant association between gender and preferred social-media platform (chi-square = 4.503, df = 4, p = 0.342). Education level is also not significantly associated with engagement frequency (chi-square = 12.837, df = 12, p = 0.381). These results imply that exposure to micro-influencer content is relatively dispersed across the sample and not driven by sharp demographic differences.

The correlation analysis is similarly modest. Most relationships among demographic and behavioural variables are weak and statistically insignificant. However, the manuscript reports a weak but significant positive correlation between education level and the likelihood of exploring or searching for more information about endorsed brands (r = 0.195, p = 0.008). This suggests that more educated respondents may act more cautiously or analytically before moving toward purchase. A second notable result is a weak negative relationship between information search and purchase through online brand engagement (r = -0.152, p = 0.039), implying that consumers who search more actively

may resist immediate conversion and rely on a more evaluative decision style.

The regression analysis provides the study's strongest practical result. The overall model is weak and not statistically significant ($R = 0.234$, $R\text{-square} = 0.055$, $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-square} = 0.012$, $F = 1.273$, $p = 0.260$). This means that the selected set of predictors explains only a small share of the variation in the dependent item: 'My engagement with brands promoted by micro-influencers increases my intention to buy their products.' Yet one predictor is significant. The variable capturing likelihood of interacting with a brand online because of influencer endorsements shows a positive coefficient ($B = 0.146$, $\beta = 0.152$, $t = 2.032$, $p = 0.044$). No other predictor in the reported model reaches significance.

Substantively, this means that the most effective route from influencer exposure to purchase intention is neither pure trust nor parasocial closeness. Rather, it is active brand interaction. Once a follower starts liking, commenting, sharing, following, or otherwise engaging with the brand, the probability of purchase intention becomes meaningfully stronger. This finding is consistent with the argument that behaviourally measurable engagement is more important than passive admiration.

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF KEY INFERENTIAL RESULTS

Result	Statistic	Meaning
Age x engagement frequency	chi-square = 12.568, p = 0.704	No significant association
Gender x platform preference	chi-square = 4.503, p = 0.342	No significant association
Education x engagement frequency	chi-square = 12.837, p = 0.381	No significant association
Education -> brand information search	r = 0.195, p = 0.008	Weak positive relationship
Search behaviour -> purchase by engagement	r = -0.152, p = 0.039	Weak negative relationship
Overall regression model	R-square = 0.055, p = 0.260	Model not significant
Brand interaction predictor	B = 0.146, p = 0.044	Only significant positive predictor

D. Main Empirical Insight

The empirical story of the paper can therefore be summarized succinctly. Micro-influencers do have an effect on young consumers, but the effect is moderate, conditional, and more action-driven than image-driven. Respondents do not strongly report deep personal attachment or unquestioned trust. What matters more is whether influencer content translates into brand-level behaviour.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings refine common assumptions about influencer marketing. Popular discourse often suggests that consumers buy because they admire or identify with the influencer. The current results tell a more restrained story. Admiration and familiarity may be present, but they are not strong enough on their own to explain purchase intention. This interpretation aligns well with the literature showing that influencer communication operates through layered social and behavioural processes rather than one-step persuasion [1], [7], [10].

From a theoretical perspective, the study points toward an engagement-first view of micro-influencer impact. Source

credibility remains relevant because followers still evaluate whether an influencer seems knowledgeable and honest. Parasocial interaction also remains important because social familiarity can lower resistance and make recommendations feel personally meaningful. However, neither pathway becomes especially persuasive unless it results in concrete attention to the brand. In this sense, brand engagement acts as a behavioural filter: only influence that moves the consumer closer to the brand becomes practically consequential.

The platform findings deepen this interpretation. Since Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube dominate the sample, the study reflects a media environment built around visual immediacy, short-form content, repeat exposure, and algorithmic discovery. These conditions favour creators who can repeatedly trigger micro-actions from audiences. A like, a view, a save, a swipe, or a follow may appear small, but collectively these micro-actions represent the behavioural infrastructure of brand engagement. The reported regression result fits this environment especially well.

The weak but significant role of education in predicting information search is also revealing. It suggests that some young consumers do not move passively from influencer exposure to purchase. Instead, they verify, compare, or seek brand information before responding. This finding complicates any simplistic view of young audiences as easily persuaded. Even in highly social digital settings, a portion of the audience remains cautious and evaluative.

VI. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

For marketers, the most direct implication is that influencer selection should not stop at surface-level criteria such as follower count, aesthetics, or perceived relatability. Brands should prioritize creators who can reliably generate meaningful interactions with the promoted brand. Campaign evaluation should therefore track metrics such as comments leading to brand pages, clicks to additional information, saves, shares, follows, and content-driven enquiries rather than relying only on reach or impressions.

Campaign design also matters. The results imply that action-oriented formats may outperform simple endorsement statements. Demonstrations, reviews, tutorials, comparisons, live Q&A formats, limited-time offers, and prompts that encourage user responses can create a stronger behavioural bridge between influencer and brand. When the campaign moves the consumer from passive viewing to active participation, the likelihood of purchase intention increases.

Finally, the platform distribution suggests that brand strategy must be tailored to media logic. Snapchat and TikTok reward speed, relatability, and visual dynamism; YouTube allows more explanation and product depth. A uniform cross-platform message may therefore be less effective than platform-specific storytelling. The study also implies that brand-side information should be strong and accessible, because some respondents search for additional information before making decisions.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The paper inherits several limitations from the source study. First, the sample is modest and non-random, which means the results should be interpreted as indicative rather than universally representative. Second, the analysis is based on

self-reported perceptions and intentions rather than observed purchases, so the behavioural outcome remains attitudinal. Third, the study examines individual survey items and summary statistics rather than estimating a full measurement model with latent constructs.

These limitations also generate useful avenues for future work. Larger and more diverse samples could compare different age groups, occupational categories, or regional user segments. Comparative studies could also separate platform effects more explicitly, testing whether micro-influencer persuasion works differently on TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, or YouTube. Additional variables such as perceived authenticity, influencer-brand fit, consumer involvement, product category, and actual buying behaviour may explain purchase intention more strongly than the present model.

A further step would be the use of structural equation modeling or experimental design. Such approaches could test whether credibility and parasocial interaction have indirect effects through brand engagement, or whether different influencer types produce different response chains. These extensions would strengthen both theory and managerial relevance.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This condensed IEEE-style paper reformats a much longer research document while preserving its central empirical message. The study shows that micro-influencers play a meaningful but moderate role in shaping the behaviour of young social-media users. The strongest practical insight is that micro-influencer marketing becomes more effective when it stimulates active consumer interaction with the brand. Accordingly, the study concludes that brand engagement is the most important practical pathway connecting micro-influencer exposure to purchase intention in the reported dataset. Perceived trust, attractiveness, and familiarity still matter, but they are less decisive than interaction itself. For both researchers and practitioners, the paper therefore encourages a shift from image-centred views of influencer persuasion toward a more behaviour-centred understanding of digital influence

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