Sri Balaji Societys The Balajian Journal of Management Research
3(2) 2026, 126-141
www.publishingindia.com/journals/bjmr/
ISSN: 3049-317X(Online)

The Unfolding Power of Influencers on Purchase Decision of Consumers

Neetu Petkar*, Nitesh Behare**

Abstract

As social media has developed through the years, social media influencers have emerged as a critical method for driving consumers' attitudes and buying choices. This study explores the impact of social media influencers on consumers' buying decisions and focuses on three main variables: influencer attributes, social media platforms preferences, and consumers' demographics, willingness to buy and actual purchasing behaviour. The novelty of this study is that both the criteria that make up the belief in an influencer and the willingness to purchase a product or service are assessed in an integrated approach and the purchase willingness is translated to actual purchase within one empirical model. Descriptive and quantitative research design was used. The primary data were gathered by a structured questionnaire and Google Forms were used to collect the data from 110 respondents. Data were analysed by descriptive statistics, ranking analysis, a demographic comparison tests, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The results show that Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the top three platforms that have the highest preference for content related to influencers. The qualities that had the most impact on consumers' trust in influencers were expertise, training, authenticity, sincerity and persuasiveness. There were no significant differences in relation to influencer-following behaviour, perceptions of physical appearance and preference for influencer traits between the age, gender, occupation, qualification and monthly income. Willingness to buy products recommended by influencers was however found to be a positive and significant predictor of actual buying behaviour (r = 0.700). Theoretically, the study provides insight into the application of the concept of influencer credibility and purchase-behaviour in the social media environment. In real terms, the results imply companies need to work with influencers who are knowledgeable, genuine, and trustworthy, while choosing the right platforms to reach their audience. The study offers valuable insights for marketers aiming to enhance their digital marketing strategies for better engagement and conversion rates with consumers using influencers.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Decision, Influencer Credibility

Introduction

Technology has grown in speed and social media channels have become a great deal more sophisticated, changing the way a consumer gathers information, analyzes products, interacts with the brand and makes its buying decision (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kietzmann et al., 2011). The use of social media allows for interacting, sharing thoughts and content creation with others in a larger online community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). It's a form of advertising that is different from line-item TV advertising because with social media, the communication is two-way, it may be user-generated, and it's more believable and more relatable to the consumer (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Johnson et al., 2019).

Today's ever-evolving digital landscape makes the influence marketing strategy crucial for marketing communications in today's world (Lou & Yuan, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017). Social media influencers are individuals who can generate an audience via the dissemination of information, opinion, experience, knowledge, lifestyle or even product suggestions on the internet (Freberg et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019). It is through the ability to create a bond and interact with their audience that they are able to influence consumer

* Research Scholar, School of Commerce and Management, Sri Balaji University, Pune, Maharashtra, India.
Email: neetupetkar@gmail.com (Corresponding author)
** Professor, Balaji Institute of International Business, Sri Balaji University, Pune, Maharashtra, India.
Email: beharenb@gmail.com

perceptions and attitudes towards certain brands, product evaluations, and purchase behavior. Previous research has shown that the social media influencers characteristics such as credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, content quality and transparency can impact consumer reactions (Lee & Kim, 2020; Saima & Khan, 2021; Masuda, Han, & Lee, 2022).

Besides that, the concept of influencer marketing is not restricted to well-known celebrities or popular bloggers. There could be various levels of reach and engagement within the followers of influencers. Based on the number of followers, influencers are divided into mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers. Normally, mega-influencers have over one million followers, while the number of followers of macro-influencers lies between 100,000 and one million, micro-influencers' number of followers lies between 10,000 and 100,000, and nano-influencers have from 1,000 to 10,000 followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). While the latter may provide more reach, the former can establish closer relationships and engage better.

Influencers communicate with their followers through videos, reels, stories, pictures, demos, reviews, tutorials, and face-to-face communication through social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snapchat, X (Twitter), and TikTok. By these social media, the influencers provide information about their products/services and share their own experiences with them (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They are trusted sources of assistance due to their knowledge, experience, authenticity, attraction, sincerity and relatability (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). This implies that influencer marketing not only serves as a form of promotion but interpersonal digital communication as well.

But influencer marketing isn't merely about the followers an individual has, but other factors such as credibility, authenticity, expertise, sincerity, physical beauty, persuasiveness and similarity. In practice, however, it is observed that credibility and trustworthiness are effective variables in the development of purchase intentions, and parasocial interaction and expertise contribute to the influence (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2022; Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024; Garg & Bakshi, 2024). Another study revealed that the transparency and credibility of the sponsors affect consumers' evaluation of promotional messages sent by influencers (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Research Gap

Previous studies on influencer marketing have largely focused on individual factors such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, trust, parasocial interaction, sponsorship disclosure and purchase intention, often within specific platforms, product categories or demographic groups (Saima & Khan, 2021; Masuda et al., 2022; Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). Comparatively limited research has integrated consumers' platform preferences, influencer-related attributes, demographic differences, purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour within a single empirical framework. Moreover, much of the existing literature has examined purchase intention rather than whether such intention is ultimately reflected in actual purchasing behaviour. The present study therefore attempts to address this gap by examining both consumers' willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and their actual purchase behaviour.

Contribution of the Study

The research paper aims to fill the gap mentioned above by studying factors such as platform preferences, influencer skills, trustworthiness characteristics, demographics, purchase intentions, and purchase behaviour. The research aims to examine if there is any difference in the reaction of consumers towards influencers based on their age, gender, occupation, education, and monthly income. The research will further aim to investigate the correlation between purchase intentions and purchases made after the recommendation by influencers. The uniqueness of this study lies in its attempt to not only focus on the analysis of individual influencer characteristics but also include the descriptive, demographic, ranking, correlation and prediction aspect of research. The evaluation of the link between purchase intent and actual purchase behaviour of users in this study is very behaviour-oriented.

Theoretical Significance

In this context, the current research paper is associated with the domain of influencer credibility, digital persuasion, and consumer choice behaviour. The study of various aspects such as expertise, authenticity, sincerity, physical attractiveness, and trustworthy characteristics in conjunction with purchase intentions and purchase

behaviour enables us to understand the idea that the success of influencer marketing depends on the source of communication. Moreover, through investigating the role that the demographic profile plays in the presence of statistical differences in consumer reactions to the impact of influencers, the research adds to the existing body of literature on the matter. The study also offers the empirical foundation for exploring the transformation process from intention to purchase.

Practical Significance

The findings of the study may help firms, brand managers, digital marketers and advertisers select suitable platforms and influencers and develop more credible influencer-marketing strategies. The study may also contribute to consumer awareness regarding factors influencing online purchase decisions, while highlighting the importance of transparency and responsible communication in influencer promotions. In addition, the findings may provide a useful basis for further academic research in influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

Research Objectives

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To investigate the significance of social media influencers in the consumer's purchasing activities.
- To identify and prioritize consumer preference in regard to social media, skills of the influencer, trust-related attributes, and recommendation medium.
- To investigate whether there is any significant difference between consumers' interest in social media influencers in terms of age, gender, occupation, education, and monthly income.
- To investigate whether the consumers' perception about the physique and personality attributes of the influencer varies significantly among various demographics.
- To investigate the connection between consumers' willingness to buy influencer recommended products and actual purchase of those products.
- To find out the predictive effect of willingness to buy recommended product by influencers on actual purchasing behaviour.

Literature Review

An analysis of literature was conducted to explore previous studies on influencer marketing, influencer credibility, consumer trust, platform choices, and shopping behaviours. It brings together existing studies to provide the theoretical basis for the study, the unsolved problems and the rationale for the variables and hypotheses tested in the current study.

Influencer Marketing and Changing Consumer Behaviour

The world of social media has rapidly changed how consumers get information, how they judge products, how they communicate with brands, and how they make decisions. The world of social media has evolved the way consumers are getting information, how they are judging products, how they are communicating with brands, and how they are making purchase decisions. Social media influencers are becoming key partners in digital marketing due to the fact that they engage in two-way communication with users, demonstrate products, provide entertainment and entertainment, and incorporate promotion into their personal experience and opinion. Content created by influencers is generally seen as more personal, relatable, and interactive, in contrast to traditional ads.

Ozeum and Willis (2022) noted that the perception and reaction of consumers to marketing communication has changed completely in the wake of influencer marketing. Consumers no longer just sit and take promotional messages; they now engage with influencers, listen to others' opinions, read reviews, and interact with digital content before making buying decisions. The distinctive traits of Generation Z and how they affect consumer purchasing behaviour were investigated by conducting a systematic review employing the PRISMA approach, as done by Espejo et al. (2024). The research revealed that consumers in Generation Z are very involved in technology, online shopping, social media usage, and digital content. They value price, sustainability, technology, authenticity and personalised experiences when making their purchases and are dealing with contemporary and traditional values. Social media sites like TikTok were found as key channels to affect younger consumers' purchasing habits. In another study, Rizomyliotis, Konstantoulaki and Giovanis (2026) studied how the credibility of social media influencers

affects brand consideration and purchase intent among consumers of Generation Z, who are interested in beauty-related content. They found that the credibility of influencers has a positive influence on brand consideration and purchase intention, but that consumers' green values can weaken or alter the relationships.

The studies are relevant to the present research as they show the importance of social media and the presence of content created by influencers as a part of contemporary consumer decision-making. The focus of much of the previous research has been on Generation Z or particular product categories, however. This study brings a new contribution to the literature by using the different age groups, qualifications, occupations, income groups and gender groups of the respondents.

Influencer Credibility, Expertise, and Trustworthiness

One of the most critical attributes that can make or break whether an influencer's recommendation will be accepted by the consumer is credibility. Overall, the level of credibility of the influencer is defined based on their level of knowledge, competence, trustworthiness, honesty, dependability and ability to present accurate information.

In the beauty industry, Rathnayake and Lakshika (2022) studied the effect of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention of consumers. Authenticity and credibility play a key role in the success of influencer marketing campaigns, as revealed in their study. If the influencer seems to be knowledgeable, sincere, and trustworthy, the consumers will be more likely to accept their recommendation.

Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) discussed the impact of expertise, beauty, and trustworthiness on consumers' buying intention of the Shopee platform during the era of COVID-19. The research confirmed these dimensions of credibility as factors that affect consumers' willingness to buy products recommended by influencers. The results show that the content of the recommendation and the sender of the message are both evaluated by the consumers.

In this study, Saima and Khan 2021 examined the impact of influencer attributes on the perceived credibility and how the perceived credibility influences the consumer's purchasing intentions and whether it acted as a mediator between the influencer characteristics and the consumer's purchasing intention. They found that info quality, entertainment value and trustworthiness did have a significant influence on perceived credibility. The influence of the credibility of the influencer then indirectly and significantly influenced the consumers' purchase intentions.

The results of these studies combined show that the effectiveness of influencer marketing isn't just about the numbers or the popularity of the audience. Consumers look to see if the influencer has the needed knowledge, if he or she provides accurate information, if he or she communicates honestly, and if he or she has knowledge about the product he or she offers.

The present research makes use of these studies as they act as a strong support for the inclusion of expertise, knowledge, experience, skills, training, qualification, and certification as important characteristics related to the influencer. The present study also builds on this body of literature by ranking the relative importance of these consumer-combined skill-related attributes.

Authenticity, Sincerity and Perceived Genuineness

Authenticity is becoming a leading factor in trust in influencer marketing. When the communication looks authentic, original, sincere and congruent with the usual content and personality of the influencer, consumers may be more receptive to the influencer's recommendations. Recommendations that seem overly commercial or inaccurate on the other hand, will have a negative impact on consumer confidence. Rathnayake and Lakshika (2022) stated that authenticity enhances the credibility of the influencers and affects the intention to purchase. Consumers are more inclined to assess whether the influencer actually uses or understands the product that he/she is recommending, or whether it is done purely for business. In a similar study, Saima and Khan (2021) also discovered that influencer credibility is crucial to build trustworthiness and quality content. According to their findings, the influencers need not only entertain their audience or be popular, but they also need to communicate useful and honest information. Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) did explore the impact of

credibility and trustworthiness in TikTok influencer marketing. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was followed by neural network analysis to determine and validate key predictors of purchase intention, loyalty and recommendability behaviour in the study. The findings revealed that influencer factors related to trust are significant factors in consumer responses. The findings are related to the present study as they serve as a justification of the assessment of authenticity, sincerity, honesty, originality, genuineness, persuasiveness and reliability as characteristics of influencers that promote trust. In the present study, these attributes are further explored in terms of relative weights assigned to them in reaching the evaluation of influencers by the consumers.

Paid Promotion, Sponsorship, Transparency, and Brand Credibility

These are the common feature of an influencer marketing campaign that usually includes paid promotions, sponsorships, brand partnerships, and commercial endorsements. Thus, it is now important for all of us to be transparent about the commercial nature of influencer content, as it has become an ethical and behavioural concern. Sesar et al. (2023) investigated the correlation between advertising exposure, influencer credibility, brand awareness, and purchase intention. They found that clear disclosure of the sponsorship was more likely to be seen as credible than was the nondisclosure. This study also looked into the influence of brand awareness as a mediator between influencer credibility and purchase intention. In their study, Lee and Kim (2020) looked at the disclosure of sponsorship, the credibility of the influencers and the credibility of the brands in the promotional posts on Instagram. Their research showed that consumers are not always "put off" by the commercial nature of a post, even when they realize the intent of the post is to promote a product or service. Rather, the influence marketing success is dependent on the combined credibility of the influencer and the promoted brand. The study also showed that brand credibility is a significant factor in determining the success of advertising. While consumers may feel confident to buy when the brand being promoted has a positive reputation or appears trustworthy, they may not make the purchase if the brand's reputation is questionable or not trusted. The studies are relevant to the present research, showing that transparency, disclosure and honesty are critical to fostering consumer trust. They offer a theoretical framework to understand the authenticity, sincerity, honesty, genuineness, and reliability of influencers as vital parameters that affect consumer confidence.

Physical Attractiveness, Social Attractiveness, and Similarity

Physical attractiveness has been considered an important factor in endorsement and persuasive communication, although attractiveness alone does not determine influencer effectiveness. Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) found that attractiveness, along with expertise and trustworthiness, influences consumers' purchase intention. Li and Peng (2021) similarly reported that attractiveness, uniqueness, expertise, perceived similarity and interactivity significantly affect consumer responses and purchase intentions. Masuda, Han, and Lee (2022) further showed that physical and social attractiveness, perceived expertise, trustworthiness and parasocial relationships contribute to purchase intention, with parasocial relationships playing an important role. These findings suggest that physical appearance may attract initial attention, but sustained influence also depends on similarity, expertise, trustworthiness and relational closeness. Accordingly, the present study examines whether perceptions of influencers' physical appearance differ across age, gender, occupation, qualification and monthly income groups.

Parasocial Relationships and Consumer–Influencer Connection

Parasocial relationships refer to one-sided psychological connections in which audiences feel familiar or emotionally close to influencers. Social media can strengthen such relationships through influencers' repeated sharing of personal experiences, opinions and interactive content. Masuda et al. (2022) found that physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, attitude homophily, expertise and trustworthiness contribute to parasocial relationships, which in turn influence purchase intention. Similarly, Li and Peng (2021) reported that influencer interactivity and perceived similarity enhance consumer attitudes and self-brand connection. These studies help explain why

consumers may place greater trust in influencers they perceive as relatable and familiar, thereby influencing their purchase-related decisions.

Platform-Specific Influencer Marketing

Each social media platform differs in content format, interaction style, reach and communication features, which may influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Rathnayake and Lakshika (2022) identified Instagram as an important platform, particularly for beauty and lifestyle content. Lee and Kim (2020) further showed that consumer responses to Instagram promotions are influenced by influencer credibility, sponsorship disclosure and brand credibility.

Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) found that credibility and trustworthiness are important determinants of purchase intention, loyalty and recommendation behaviour on TikTok, while Espejo et al. (2024) highlighted the relevance of TikTok among Generation Z consumers. These studies indicate that platform characteristics shape consumer engagement with influencer content. Accordingly, the present study compares consumer preferences across Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, X and Snapchat rather than focusing on a single platform.

Influencer Skills and Professional Competence

Expertise, knowledge, experience, training, skills, qualification and certification are important factors consumers may use to evaluate influencers, particularly when products require specialised knowledge. Saima and Khan (2021) found that information quality and trustworthiness contribute significantly to influencer credibility, while Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) highlighted the role of expertise in influencing purchase intention. Masuda et al. (2022) further identified perceived expertise as an important factor contributing to parasocial relationships and purchase intention. These studies establish expertise as a key dimension of influencer effectiveness. Accordingly, the present study extends this perspective by separately ranking expertise, knowledge, experience, qualification, skills, training and certification.

Demographic Characteristics and Influencer Responses

Consumers' responses to influencer marketing may vary across demographic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, education and income. Espejo et al. (2024) highlighted the strong engagement of Generation Z consumers with digital technology, social media and online shopping, while also noting the influence of values such as sustainability and authenticity. Rizomyliotis et al. (2026) similarly found that influencer credibility affects brand consideration and purchase intention among Generation Z beauty-content consumers, with green consumption values shaping these relationships. These findings indicate that demographic and individual characteristics can influence responses to influencer marketing. Accordingly, the present study examines differences in influencer-following behaviour and perceptions of influencer characteristics across age, gender, occupation, qualification and monthly income groups.

Purchase Intention vs Actual Purchase Behaviour

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's willingness or likelihood to purchase a product, whereas actual purchase behaviour represents the completed buying action. Much of the influencer-marketing literature has concentrated on purchase intention as the primary behavioural outcome. Saima and Khan (2021) found that influencer credibility affects purchase intention through information quality, entertainment value and trustworthiness, while Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) identified attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness as important determinants of purchase intention. Masuda et al. (2022) further demonstrated the importance of parasocial relationships, and Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) linked influencer credibility with purchase intention, loyalty and recommendation behaviour.

Rizomyliotis et al. (2026) also found that influencer credibility influences brand consideration and purchase intention, although individual values may shape the strength of these relationships. However, willingness

to purchase does not necessarily result in actual buying behaviour, as the final decision may also depend on factors such as price, availability, product suitability and perceived risk. Therefore, the present study extends existing research by examining the relationship between willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and actual purchase behaviour and by testing whether purchase willingness significantly predicts actual purchase.

Synthesis of Prior Research

The reviewed literature shows that influencer marketing affects consumer purchase intention through interrelated factors such as credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, authenticity, attractiveness, similarity, interactivity, sponsorship disclosure, parasocial relationships and platform characteristics (Lee & Kim, 2020; Masuda et al., 2022; Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). Consumers generally respond more positively to influencers perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, authentic and relatable. However, many previous studies have concentrated on particular platforms such as Instagram or TikTok, specific product categories such as beauty and fashion, or particular consumer groups such as Generation Z.

Comparatively limited research has examined multiple influencer skill-related and trust-related attributes together or compared consumer responses across age, gender, occupation, education and income groups. Most importantly, prior research has largely focused on purchase intention, while the transition from willingness to purchase to actual purchase behaviour has received less attention. The present study addresses these limitations by integrating platform preferences, influencer attributes, demographic differences, purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour within a single empirical framework.

Research Gap and Research Relevance to the Present Study

Although influencer credibility and purchase intention have been widely studied, integrated research combining platform preferences, influencer skill sets, trust-related attributes, physical appearance, demographic differences, purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour remains limited (Lee & Kim, 2020; Masuda et al., 2022; Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024). The present study addresses this gap by comparing multiple social media platforms, ranking influencer skills and trust-related qualities, examining demographic differences in consumer perceptions, and assessing the relationship between willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and actual purchase behaviour. Thus, the study provides a broader empirical framework for understanding how influencer-related factors translate into consumer purchasing decisions.

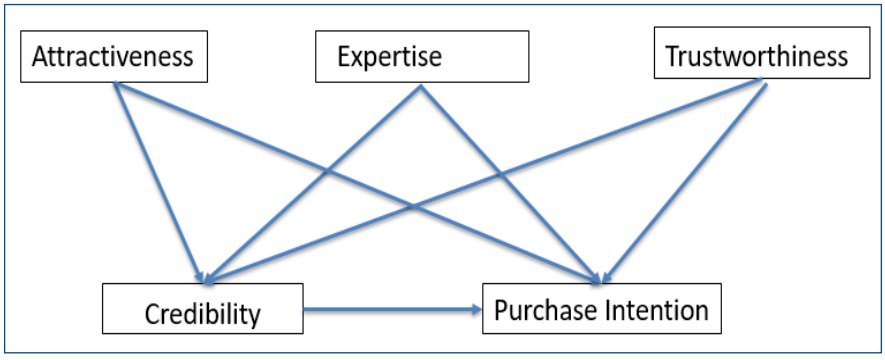


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model by Author

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional research design to examine consumers' perceptions of social media influencers and the relationship between willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and actual purchase behaviour. Since the data were collected at a particular point in time, the study followed a cross-sectional approach (Setia, 2016).

Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered using Google Forms, while secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, research

papers, books and published reports related to influencer marketing, consumer behaviour and purchase intention.

The target population consisted of social media users aged 15 years and above who had awareness of social media influencers or influencer-generated content. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was adopted because a complete sampling frame was unavailable. Although convenient for accessing respondents, this method limits the generalisability of findings (Etikan et al., 2016). A total of 110 complete and usable responses were considered for final analysis.

The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, social media usage, platform preferences, influencer-related attributes, willingness to purchase and actual purchase behaviour. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarise respondent characteristics, while ranking analysis was applied to identify preferences for social media platforms, influencer skills, trust-related attributes and product recommendation sources.

Normality was examined before applying parametric tests (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to examine demographic differences. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to measure the relationship between purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour (Schober et al., 2018), followed by simple linear regression to determine whether purchase willingness significantly predicted actual purchase behaviour. All hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level, with $p < .05$ considered statistically significant.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings obtained from the primary data and interprets them in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses. Descriptive and inferential analyses are used to explain respondents' characteristics, preferences, and the relationship between purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile provides an overview of respondents according to age, gender, occupation, educational qualification, monthly income, and influencer-following behaviour. This analysis helps in understanding the composition of the sample and the background characteristics of the participants included in the study.

Table 1: Demographic and Influencer-Following Profile of Respondents

Variable	*Category*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Age	15–20 years	51	46.4
	21–25 years	13	11.8
	26–30 years	11	10.0
	Above 30 years	35	31.8
Gender	Female	46	41.8
	Male	64	58.2
Occupation	Salaried	36	32.7
	Non-salaried	74	67.3
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	50	45.5
	Graduate	28	25.5
	Postgraduate	32	29.1
Monthly Income	Less than ₹1 lakh	87	79.1
	₹1 lakh–₹2 lakh	10	9.1
	Above ₹2 lakh	13	11.8
Following Social Media Influencers	Always	10	9.1
	Often	14	12.7
	Sometimes	42	38.2
	Rarely	24	21.8
	Never	20	18.2
Total Respondents		**110**	**100.0**

Source: Primary data.

Interpretation: The demographic profile indicates that 46.4% of the respondents belonged to the 15–20-year age group, representing the largest category. Respondents above 30 years accounted for 31.8%, while those aged 21–25 years and 26–30 years constituted 11.8% and 10.0%, respectively. The sample therefore included a relatively high proportion of younger respondents, along with meaningful representation from respondents above 30 years.

Male respondents represented 58.2% of the sample, while female respondents accounted for 41.8%. Regarding occupational status, 67.3% were non-salaried and 32.7% were salaried. The high proportion of non-salaried respondents may be associated with the substantial representation of younger and undergraduate participants.

In terms of educational qualification, undergraduate respondents formed the largest category at 45.5%, followed by postgraduate respondents at 29.1% and graduates at 25.5%. Regarding monthly income, 79.1% earned less than ₹1 lakh per month, 11.8% earned above ₹2 lakh, and 9.1% earned between ₹1 lakh and ₹2 lakh.

The influencer-following profile shows that 38.2% of respondents followed social media influencers sometimes, which was the largest category. A further 21.8% rarely followed influencers, while 18.2% never followed them. Only 12.7% followed influencers often and 9.1% always followed them. Overall, 60.0% of the respondents followed social media influencers at least sometimes, whereas 40.0% followed them rarely or never. This indicates moderate exposure to influencer-generated content, although consistent influencer-following behaviour was limited.

Table 2: Social Media Usage and Preferred Content of Respondents

Variable	*Category*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 2 hours	52	47.3
	2–4 hours	50	45.5
	Above 4 hours	8	7.3
Fashion Content	Yes	59	53.6
	No	51	46.4
Cosmetics Content	Yes	51	46.4
	No	59	53.6
Fitness Content	Yes	56	50.9
	No	54	49.1
Food Content	Yes	56	50.9
	No	54	49.1
Music Content	Yes	60	54.5
	No	50	45.5
Travel Content	Yes	60	54.5
	No	50	45.5
Following Social Media Influencers	Always	10	9.1
	Often	14	12.7
	Sometimes	42	38.2
	Rarely	24	21.8
	Never	20	18.2
Total Respondents		**110**	**100.0**

Source: Primary Data.

Interpretation: Regarding social media usage, 47.3% of respondents spent less than two hours per day on social media, while 45.5% spent between two and four hours. Only 7.3% reported spending more than four hours. Thus, 92.8% of respondents spent up to four hours per day on social media, indicating moderate but regular exposure

to social media content. Music and travel emerged as the most preferred content categories, with 54.5% of respondents indicating an interest in each.

Fashion content was preferred by 53.6%, while fitness and food content were each preferred by 50.9%. Cosmetics content was preferred by 46.4% of respondents. The differences across content categories were relatively small, suggesting that respondents had diversified interests rather than a strong concentration in a single content category. With regard to influencer-following behaviour, 38.2% of respondents indicated that they sometimes followed social media influencers, representing the largest group.

A further 21.8% rarely followed influencers, while 18.2% never followed them. Only 12.7% often followed influencers and 9.1% always followed them. Therefore, 60.0% of respondents followed influencers at least sometimes, whereas 40.0% followed them rarely or never. This distribution suggests that influencer exposure was present among a majority of respondents, although regular and intensive influencer-following behaviour was limited.

Ranking Analysis

Table 3: Summary of Ranking Analysis

Ranking Dimension	*Particular*	*Rank*
Preferred Social Media Platform	Instagram	1
	YouTube	2
	WhatsApp	3
	Facebook	4
	LinkedIn	5
	Twitter	6
	Snapchat	7
Preferred Skill Set of Influencers	Expertise	1
	Training	2
	Certification	3
	Experience	4
	Skills	5
	Qualification	6
	Knowledge	7
Parameters Influencing Trust in Influencers	Authenticity	1
	Sincerity	2
	Persuasiveness	3
	Genuineness	4
	Originality	5
	Honesty	6
	Reliability	7
Preferred Sources of Product Suggestions	Friends	1
	Influencers	2
	Family	3
	Newspapers	4
	Television advertisements	5

Source: Primary data.

Interpretation: The ranking analysis showed that Instagram was the most preferred platform for influencer-related content, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp, indicating a stronger preference for visual and video-based platforms. Among influencer characteristics, expertise ranked first, followed by training and certification, while authenticity, sincerity and persuasiveness were the leading trust-related attributes.

For product suggestions, friends ranked first, followed by influencers and family, whereas newspapers and television advertisements received lower preferences. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents valued influencer competence, authenticity and interpersonal recommendations more than traditional advertising sources.

Normality Analysis

Table 4: Normality Analysis

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	d.f.	Sig.	Statistic	d.f.	Sig.
Following towards Social media influencers	.073	110	.198	.966	110	.159
Physical appearance	.104	110	.125	.935	110	.110
Traits	.057	110	.130	.125	110	.156
Attributes	.117	110	.184	.932	110	.169
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Interpretation: The Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests show significance values above 0.05 for following social media influencers, physical appearance, traits, and attributes. Therefore, the null hypothesis of normality is not rejected, indicating that these variables are approximately normally distributed and suitable for parametric analysis. However, the Shapiro–Wilk statistic reported as 0.125 for Traits appears inconsistent with its p-value and should be verified from the original SPSS output. This table confirms normality only for the variables listed and not automatically for purchase willingness and actual purchase behaviour.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis testing was undertaken to examine the relationship between consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers and their actual purchase behaviour. Based on the statistical outputs available in the study, Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression were applied. Correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the association between the two variables, while regression analysis was used to determine whether willingness to purchase significantly predicts actual purchase behaviour. All hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance, where a p-value below 0.05 indicated statistical significance.

Group I: Correlation Between Willingness to Purchase and Actual Purchase Behaviour

The correlation hypothesis examines whether consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers is associated with their actual purchase behaviour. Pearson's correlation coefficient was considered suitable because both variables were measured numerically and the purpose was to determine the strength, direction, and statistical significance of their relationship.

The test identifies whether higher willingness to purchase is accompanied by a corresponding increase in actual purchase behaviour; however, it does not

establish causality. Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to determine whether willingness to purchase a product recommended by social media influencers is significantly associated with the actual purchase of the recommended product.

Null Hypothesis $H_0$1: There is no statistically significant relationship between consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers and their actual purchase behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis Ha1: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers and their actual purchase behaviour.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Correlations			
		Willingness to Purchase of a product recommended by Influencers	Actual purchase of product suggested by influencers
Willingness to Purchase a product recommended by Influencers	Pearson Correlation	1	.700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Actual purchase of product suggested by influencers	Pearson Correlation	.700**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Authors' own calculation.

Pearson's correlation showed a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and actual purchase behaviour ($r = .700$, $p < .001$, $N = 110$). Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .490$) indicates that the two variables share approximately 49% of their variation. Thus, greater willingness to purchase is associated with higher actual purchase behaviour, although the relationship should be interpreted as association rather than causation.

Regression analysis was then used to examine whether willingness to purchase significantly predicts actual purchase behaviour. In the model, willingness to purchase was treated as the independent variable and actual purchase behaviour as the dependent variable, allowing the predictive strength and explained variance of the relationship to be assessed.

Null Hypothesis $H_0$2: Consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers does not significantly predict their actual purchase behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis Ha2: Consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers positively and significantly predicts their actual purchase behaviour.

The model summary indicates a strong positive relationship between willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products and actual purchase behaviour, as reflected by $R = 0.700$. The reported Durbin–Watson value of 1.948 is close to 2, suggesting that the regression residuals are independent and that no serious autocorrelation problem exists.

Regression Analysis

Table 6: Regression Model Summary

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.700[a]	.812	.619	.72167	1.948
a. Predictors: (Constant), Willingness to Purchase a product recommended by Influencers					
b. Dependent Variable: Actual purchase of product suggested by influencers					

Source: Authors' own calculation.

However, the table contains a statistical inconsistency: with one predictor, R = 0.700 should produce $R^2 = 0.490$, not 0.812, and the adjusted R^2 should also be close to 0.49 rather than 0.619. Therefore, the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values must be verified from the original SPSS output. Further, this model-summary table does not report a significance value, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected from this table alone. When the ANOVA significance value and the regression coefficient p-value are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is supported, leading to the conclusion that willingness to purchase products recommended by influencers significantly and positively predicts actual purchase behaviour.

Table 7: ANOVA

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.016	1	54.016	103.715	.000[b]
	Residual	56.248	108	.521		
	Total	110.264	109			
a. Dependent Variable: Actual purchase of product suggested by influencers						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Willingness to Purchase a product recommended by Influencers						

Source: Authors' own calculation.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(1,108) = 103.715$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers significantly predicts their actual purchase behaviour. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that willingness to purchase does not significantly influence actual purchase behaviour is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is supported.

The regression sum of squares is 54.016 out of a total sum of squares of 110.264, indicating that the model explains approximately 49.0% of the variance in actual purchase behaviour. Thus, higher willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products is associated with a meaningful increase in actual buying behaviour. This ANOVA table also confirms that the previously reported R^2 value should be approximately 0.490 rather than 0.812, so the model summary should be corrected accordingly.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.410	.237		5.953	.000		
	Willingness to Purchase a product recommended by Influencers	.762	.075	.700	10.184	.000	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Actual purchase of product suggested by influencers								

Source: Authors' own calculation.

The regression coefficients confirm that consumers' willingness to purchase products recommended by social media influencers has a positive and statistically significant effect on actual purchase behaviour. The unstandardized coefficient for willingness to purchase is $B = 0.762$ with $t = 10.184$ and $p < 0.001$, indicating that a one-unit increase in willingness to purchase is associated with an estimated 0.762-unit increase in actual purchase behaviour. The standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.700$ shows a strong positive predictive influence. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products does not significantly predict actual purchase behaviour is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is supported. The estimated regression equation is Actual Purchase Behaviour = 1.410 + 0.762 (Willingness to Purchase). The constant of 1.410 represents the predicted level of actual purchase when willingness to purchase is zero, although this interpretation should be treated cautiously if zero does not fall within the scale used. The tolerance value of 1.000 and VIF of 1.000 indicate no multicollinearity concern; however, this is expected because the model contains only one independent variable.

Conclusion

The study confirms that social media influencers play an important role in shaping consumer purchase decisions. Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp emerged as the leading platforms for influencer-related content, while expertise, training and certification were the most valued influencer competencies. Authenticity, sincerity and persuasiveness were identified as the leading trust-related attributes. Most importantly, willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products showed a strong positive relationship with actual purchase behaviour, indicating that influencer marketing can extend beyond purchase intention to actual buying outcomes.

The findings have practical implications for firms, brand managers and digital marketers. Influencer selection should therefore consider expertise, authenticity, relevance and credibility rather than follower numbers alone. Marketers should also evaluate campaigns using behavioural outcomes such as purchase intention, conversions and customer response in addition to engagement indicators. The findings should be interpreted with caution because the study used a convenience sample of 110 respondents, included relatively higher representation of younger and lower-income respondents, relied on self-reported responses and followed a cross-sectional design. Future research may use larger and more representative samples, compare different industries and influencer categories, and examine additional factors such as brand trust, influencer–brand fit, parasocial interaction, sponsorship disclosure and consumer scepticism. Longitudinal and experimental studies may further clarify how influencer exposure translates into actual purchase behaviour over time.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to their research supervisor for guiding and encouraging them during the study. This also acknowledges the participation of the respondents and their time and cooperation in filling the survey. Their involvement in the successful completion of this research was invaluable.

Funding Disclosure

This research received no specific funds from any funding agency or funding organization.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest which may have influenced the work reported in this paper.

References

Alcántara-Pilar, J. M., Rodriguez-López, M. E., Kalinić, Z., & Liébana-Cabanillas, F. (2024). From likes to loyalty: Exploring the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intentions in TikTok. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 78*, Article 103709. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103709

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons, 63*(4), 469–479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5), 798–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Espejo, L., Perez, N., Mendoza, C., & Gagarín, Y. (2024). A systematic review on unique characteristics of Generation Z and their impact on purchasing decisions. *Journal of Ecohumanism, 4*(1), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v4i1.4079

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review, 37*(1), 90–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001

Garg, M., & Bakshi, A. (2024). Exploring the impact of beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention in influencer marketing. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11*, Article 235. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02760-9

Ghasemi, A., & Zahediasl, S. (2012). Normality tests for statistical analysis: A guide for non-statisticians. *International Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism, 10*(2), 486–489. https://doi.org/10.5812/ijem.3505

Johnson, B. K., Potocki, B., & Veldhuis, J. (2019). Is that my friend or an advert? The effectiveness of Instagram native advertisements posing as social posts. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 24*(3), 108–125. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz003

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 53*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons, 54*(3), 241–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005

Lee, S., & Kim, E. (2020). Influencer marketing on Instagram: How sponsorship disclosure, influencer credibility, and brand credibility impact the effectiveness of Instagram promotional posts. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing, 11*(3), 232–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2020.1752766

Li, Y., & Peng, Y. (2021). Influencer marketing: Purchase intention and its antecedents. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 39*(7), 960–978. https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-04-2021-0104

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons, 52*(4), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002

Martiningsih, D. A., & Setyawan, A. A. (2022). The impact of influencers' credibility towards purchase intention. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics and Business Studies (ICOEBS 2022)* (pp. 196–204). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.220602.025

Masuda, H., Han, S. H., & Lee, J. (2022). Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 174*, Article 121246. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121246

Ozuem, W., & Willis, M. (2022). *Digital marketing strategies for value co-creation: Models and approaches for online brand communities*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94444-5

Rathnayake, R. A. S. D., & Lakshika, V. G. P. (2022). Impact of social media influencers' credibility on the purchase intention: Reference to the beauty industry. *Asian Journal of Marketing Management, 2*(1), 103–137. https://doi.org/10.31357/ajmm.v2i01.6254

Rizomyliotis, I., Konstantoulaki, K., & Giovanis, A. (2026). Social media influencers' credibility and purchase intention: The moderating role of green consumption values. *American Behavioral Scientist, 70*(5), 620–634. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642241236172

Saima, & Khan, M. A. (2021). Effect of social media influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention and the mediating role of credibility. *Journal of Promotion Management, 27*(4), 503–523. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2020.1851847

Schober, P., Boer, C., & Schwarte, L. A. (2018). Correlation coefficients: Appropriate use and interpretation. *Anesthesia & Analgesia, 126*(5), 1763–1768. https://doi.org/10.1213/ANE.0000000000002864

Sesar, V., Hunjet, A., & Martinčević, I. (2023). Generation Z purchase intentions: Does sponsorship disclosure matter? *Business Systems Research, 14*(2), 158–172. https://doi.org/10.2478/bsrj-2023-0017

Setia, M. S. (2016). Methodology series module 3: Cross-sectional studies. *Indian Journal of Dermatology, 61*(3), 261–264. https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5154.182410

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53*, Article 101742. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011